

Key: MA — Myer Adler, interviewee

JF — Josey Fisher, interviewer

Interview Date: November 10, 1982

Tape one, side one:

JF: This is an interview with Mr. Myer Adler [address, phone] on November 10, 1982, with Josey Fisher. Mr. Adler, can you tell me where and when you were born, please?

MA: I was born in a little town in Galicia. It's called Rudnik.

JF: How do you spell that?

MA: R-U-D-N-I-K, and that was right on the Russian border. Five kilometers from us was the Russian border.

JF: When you were born, what country was, were the...

MA: This was Austria, Austria.

JF: It was Austria. And what was the date of your birth?

MA: The date of the birth, my mother didn't remember. And because, when I was born, the war was already on. The, in 1914, the...

JF: You were born in 1914?

MA: In 1914. The Russians, in that day when, when I was born, my mother recalls that the Austrian Army crossed to the Russian border, crossed to the Russian border. And it was, and the whole town was you know, like, in a war on the battle front. But then in Poland it was a law—it became later Poland—it was a law that every one 18 has to register to the...draft, and when I was 18, I didn't know any other way. I went to register. When I came to register, they find out they have no record about me, because it was during the war. Nobody kept records.

JF: So that...

MA: So...

JF: You were born probably in the fall of 1914.

MA: One minute.

JF: Yes?

MA: So later I had to...apply for a birth certificate. And I had to bring two witnesses when I was born. So, of course the one witness could be the mother, which, she didn't remember. She just said, "It was the day when the Austrian Army crossed this." And the *hebamme* was still alive. You know what a *hebamme* is? A midwife. She was still alive. And the doctor...who was in our town, he was still alive. And they called in the doctor too, and she, and the midwife claimed, said that she remembers that mother had a little complication. I guess the excitement from the war, that is, and she sent for the doctor. And the doctor answered he cannot come because he has to help people who are hurt in the country already because it was a lot of wounded soldiers. He says, "Here is a guy he comes now, came in the world, who needed him?" But anyhow, they established that that was September the 2nd.

JF: September the 2nd.

MA: Yeah, and that's when I keep my birthday, September the 2nd.

JF: O.K. Was your father in that war?

MA: Yeah. Yes, he was that war. A matter of fact, he died in 1922, or '21 I think. And he died still from what he suffered from the war.

JF: War injuries.

MA: War injuries, yeah.

JF: What kind of injuries did he receive in the war?

MA: I was a little boy...it isn't, I don't know exactly and you know, they actually didn't diagnose his sickness. He was very long sick and...

JF: He was sick from the time he came home?

MA: Not exactly. Later. He wasn't the same after the war, no.

JF: His personality wasn't the same? Or his physical...

MA: No, his personality was all right. But his health wasn't...

JF: His health.

MA: Wasn't the same.

JF: Did you have a chance, I realize you were a very young child when he died, but did you have a chance to ever talk to him about his war experiences?

MA: No.

JF: Or did...your mother ever relay anything about it?

MA: No, she never talked about it. She never talked about it. You know...I remember a couple incidents with my father only when I walked with him to the *shul* back and forward. But the one thing what I never forget I guess because I keep it on reminding myself, when I was three years old, when he took me, you see in, at home, if a child, if a boy was three years old, the father carried him to the *cheder* the first time. I remember that.

JF: You remember that. Aw.

MA: He carried me to that *cheder*. I'll never forget it.

JF: That's wonderful.

MA: And I keep it on repeating every time when I have a chance, you know, so I wouldn't forget it.

JF: You still keep it in your mind.

MA: Yeah, oh yes.

JF: That's beautiful.

MA: Yeah, that's all what I remember good my father. And the rest is, I was a little boy of seven years old.

JF: Was your father able to work after he got out of the war?

MA: He had a business, yeah. Mother...well, you know, the life there was a difference.

JF: Maybe you can tell me a little bit about it.

MA: Yeah, I can tell you. Well, when I was born, right after when I was born, they evacuated the whole family, because it was the battlefield. So they evacuated every-

body from there and our family wind up in Czechoslovakia somewhere. And over there, his father died.

JF: This was when you were an infant you were in Czechoslovakia.

MA: I don't remember this. I just know about it. His father died there. And later they took him to the army there, and how long he was, I don't know. I never remember him in a army uniform. And we came back in 1918. We came back from Czechoslovakia.

JF: Do you have any idea where you were in Czechoslovakia?

MA: Yeah. Mother used to talk about it, because we always had beautiful china, not much, but china dishes, beautiful, very beautiful. And we kept there only for Passover. And we put this away for Passover. And Passover we brought these up from the basement. It was made in a *Glasshütte*, *Glasshütte*. That's mean it was a village where they manufactured china.

JF: Oh!

MA: And everybody who went back, they gave them a set of china. And Mother worked there too, she worked there too.

JF: Who gave that? Who gave you this set of china?

MA: The factory.

JF: The factory?

MA: Yeah, the china factory. That's called *Glasshütte*, in Czechoslovakian.

JF: And they gave everyone who left the town...

MA: Everyone who worked there, yeah, yeah.

JF: In the factory.

MA: In the factory, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JF: They gave them a set of china. I see.

MA: Yeah, of course we didn't have the whole set. On the way it got broken. They didn't pack it right.

JF: Right.

MA: But some of them was...it was so beautiful we kept it only for Passover.

JF: Oh. So your father was inducted into the army then while you were living in Czechoslovakia.

MA: I guess so, yeah, yeah.

JF: That was the time that he was there.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

JF: And that was the name of the town or the name of the factory?

MA: The village was named after the factory.

JF: After the factory. I see.

MA: Yeah, it was a village. It was not far from Karlsbad. Karlsbad is a big resort. Not a big city actually, a big resort place.

JF: And how do you think you spell the name? *Glasshütte*. [tape off then on] So it's probably G-L-A-S-S and then H-U-T-A.

MA: G-L-A-S-S, and the H-U-T-A. [*Glasshütte* is German spelling.]

JF: Right. Thank you. When you were able to return to your home, you were about four years old.

MA: Something like it, yeah.

JF: Can you tell me about Rudnik and what it was like as a community at that point?

MA: Yeah! Certain things, you know, it's funny, you don't remember what you ate yesterday but certain things it cannot get out from your mind. First of all, when we came back the house was a battleground. And I don't remember that, but Mother also told me it was our neighbor and she, like, our house, we had our house here on the street, our house here. And the yard reached to the street on the other side. You know what I mean? And here was another street. And here was house that survived and we rented a room in this neighbor's house. Mother always told me later. I don't remember that when we lived there. In the meantime the Father fixed up one room in our house.

JF: In what was left of your house.

MA: Yeah, fixed up one room. The first thing is he put up a roof from it, and fixed up one room. This room, I remember, was the store, and we lived in the room.

JF: What kind of store was it?

MA: A grocery store. But the type of grocery store was different than now, you know. It wasn't the cans. Wasn't packages. Wasn't refrigerated. I guess here it was the same way in that time, everything was in the bags.

JF: Bags and barrels and...

MA: Bags and barrels and...

JF: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MA: I am the youngest. Two sisters and three brothers. Now, one brother, when we came back from Czechoslovakia, he didn't come back. He was at that time about 12 or 13 years old. We had an uncle in Germany, in Cologne. He went right to, he went to Cologne from there. And the rest of us came all back home. I was the youngest, from two sisters and two brothers.

JF: So all of you were living then in this room.

MA: One room, yeah.

JF: In one room.

MA: And that was the store too. I'll never forget. It was, the room was divided here, and that was the little store. And here we lived. Here was a window, you know. And we came in from the store because here was the door and here was the attic too so I never forget it! [chuckling]

JF: Did you live in a Jewish community in the town? Or was it a mixed kind of housing?

MA: It was a small town. It was about 200 Jewish families.

JF: Out of how many, do you think, total?

MA: 10,000.

JF: Total population?

MA: Total population, was 200 Jews. And the Jews were the main business people because they couldn't, for years they couldn't own land. You know, that was only lately in Austria where the Jews could own land. When the Rothschilds became famous and they became lords and they pushed through a law a Jew can own land. But before, you know. And a Jew had no choice. He had to go to business.

JF: Could you own the land that your house was on?

MA: Yeah, yeah, we owned the land, right, yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

JF: That you could own.

MA: Yeah. We, we...

JF: Now, was this a Jewish area where you lived?

MA: Yeah. It is hard to explain to people who weren't there, you know. It was a Jewish area but a church was on our street.

JF: So were your customers non-Jews as well as Jews?

MA: Non-Jews as well as Jews, yeah.

JF: And what experience did you have with the non-Jewish population in your town?

MA: Well, it varied, you see. It changed around. And right after the war, it was still, you know, Poland was always an antisemitic country.

JF: That's right.

MA: Always. Jesuits run the country and you have to read the Jewish history to know more about it. You know, the history records that in the 18th Century, a Jesuit student threw a stone on a Jewish boy in L'vov, throw a stone on him. And the Jewish boy managed to duck. And the stone broke a window. So they took him to court and the Jewish boy had to pay for the window because he ducked. If he wouldn't ducked, the window wouldn't broke. You know what I mean? And right after the war, I remember was a General Haller. [phonetic] You know, right after the war there was like they were organizing Poland: the noblemen ruled the country. And every nobleman had his own army, you know, and he was the law. He could prosecute people without judge and jury. He was the judge and he was the jury. And right after the war it was a Haller, a General by the name Haller. And his army they called the Hallerchickets. [phonetic] And anywhere they go it was, they just, I don't know how to explain it in English. Destruction for the Jews, you know. They just hit. I remember father came once from the railroad station with another...neighbor. You know, most business was with the railroad station because they shipped through the rail there. And he came, and the other guy, he didn't have a beard, you know, he was beardless.

JF: Your father was bearded?

MA: Oh yes, he wore a beard. I'm going to show you a picture of him. And he came, with the beard cut off and his face roughed up. The Haller's army went through and they stopped for five minutes. So the minute he jumped down and how many Jews were on the station, they beat them up. Now to my father they said to him, you know, they used a word like "son of a gun". "Why do you wear a beard? You dirty Jew." And

to the other guy they hit him because, "Why don't you wear a beard?" So either way it is no good, if you wear or you don't. You know what I mean?

JF: Was your father beaten at that time?

MA: What?

JF: Was your father beaten up by the...

MA: They were all beaten up at that time, yeah.

JF: Your, at that time.

MA: Yeah, yeah. His face was all messed up. And he wasn't the one only that... Now later, when finally the government stabilized a little, and Pilsudski, he was actually a dictator, he was very good to the Jews. It's very seldom that a dictator is good to Jews. And we enjoyed..we had protection. But still, a Jew couldn't get a decent job. I mean, a government job? Forget about it.

JF: What experience did you have with the people of the town, the people who might have come into your store, the kids in the neighborhood, who were not Jewish?

MA: Yeah, they...

JF: Did you have any friendships with these kids or was it all...

MA: What do you mean, friendship? We...

JF: Did you play with them?

MA: No. No! You couldn't play with them. We went to school with them, and you see, we were dressed different. We had...

JF: You had the *payes* and...

MA: The *payes* and I always was a target. They pulled me by the *payes*. But you see, you know, you judge things accordingly. You know? The way it was, that was already a big improvement. And we did...appreciate, you know, that...there is not guys like...the Haller's army.

JF: I see.

MA: You know what I mean? It's a...

JF: So it was relatively better.

MA: Relatively better. If I was beaten up, I could go to the police and that boy was punished.

JF: I see.

MA: You know what I mean? But when it came to our job, you know, I moved later to a big city in...Krakow. And there was public latrines. You know what latrines is?

JF: Latrines.

MA: Yeah. Latrines. Here you don't see them. And there was always a man was sitting there, taking care, you know, to see, to clean, not to mess it. And this always was a smelly. The man always had with a...cold towel on his head always with a headache. Even a job like this a Jew couldn't get. So I'll never forget, we...

JF: Because it was a government job.

MA: A government job. Everything connected with the government, and everything did belong to the government: the railroad to the government, the post office to the government. You know, I remember I went to once stay with a boyfriend Shulan Katz

[phonetic] was his name. And he says to me, "Aren't you glad you're a Jew and you cannot get a job like this." [laughing]

JF: [unclear]

MA: Aren't you happy?

JF: Oh. So you went to a public school then?

MA: Oh, it was, you had to go to a public school. You see, during the, when Russia, during the Czar, practically 90% of the people were illiterate.

JF: The section that you were living in was Poland at the time?

MA: Was Poland, yeah, yeah.

JF: Right? O.K.

MA: Yeah. Yeah, but it, you see, it has to do with, it was, used to be Austria but it was Poland.

JF: Right.

MA: Now, Poland also took away...the part of...what used to be Russia.

JF: Right.

MA: You see, Poland was divided three times.

JF: Right.

MA: Between Russia and Austria, and Russia, Austria, and...

JF: Germany?

MA: And Germany. You see, now, the part what they took...from Russia, they were 90% illiterate people. So they put up quick seminars. And they manufactured teachers. And they make that...everyone has to go in school. Once you get seven years old you has to be enrolled...

JF: I see.

MA: To a school. The school was six days a week. And they taught religion in school.

JF: Now what did you do during those classes?

MA: When they taught religion the Jews were, could go home.

JF: I see.

MA: Just go home. In later years when I was out from school, there was a Jewish teacher who taught Jewish religion for the Jewish student. Later, I never enjoyed that.

JF: That wasn't present when you were a child?

MA: No, that wasn't present. You see, and the reason what it wasn't present because there was not trained Jewish teachers. Because there was no Jewish seminars. And one way a guy became a *melamed*, you know what a *melamed* is?

JF: A teacher.

MA: A teacher. And a *melamed*, they were mostly illiterate people. Very seldom there was a good *melamed*, very seldom. Because the reason somebody became a *melamed*, was because, if he couldn't make any other living, if he couldn't be even a beggar [laughs], he became a *melamed*.

JF: So you went, then to a Hebrew school also for your Jewish...

MA: To a *cheder*.

JF: To *cheder*.

MA: I start, three years in *cheder*.

JF: And you continued that?

MA: Oh I continued that till I went to the *yeshiva*.

JF: And when you were in the public school, you were describing before your *payes* and the boys, the non-Jewish boys, pulling your *payes*. Was there difficulty in the classroom for the Jewish kids?

MA: It was more difficult, of course it was a little difficult because when I started school I didn't know a word Polish.

JF: You only spoke Yiddish.

MA: Yiddish. You see, first of all, I couldn't understand what the teacher talks to me. And...

JF: Your parents only spoke Yiddish in the home.

MA: Yes. Yiddish in the home.

JF: Now when people would come into the store who were not Jewish, would they speak Polish to them?

MA: Oh, Polish, yeah. Oh yeah.

JF: But you had not learned Polish.

MA: No, I was a little child. I...

JF: And they didn't teach you Polish.

MA: They didn't teach you Polish and they didn't talk Polish. And again, you see, but we make progress. My sister got married, she taught the children Polish right away. She taught them both, Yiddish and Polish.

JF: So your not knowing Polish when you started school was difficult.

MA: I didn't know a word Polish, no.

JF: It made it hard for you with the Polish kids?

MA: It made it very hard, yeah. You see, it was, the barrier was there. Maybe if I would have known Polish, I would have been able to communicate with them.

JF: What about with the teachers? What kind of attitude did the teachers have towards you?

MA: The teachers? They were very nice. I would say that some of them were really nice and they're people like other people. I don't think they discriminate. They didn't like it the way we dressed or, I guess they would have enjoyed it if they can talk to me right away Polish. But it didn't take long. I learned. You see, if I would, now, in the area where Jewish boys lived with Gentiles, they knew Polish because they learned. Kids from kids. Kids doesn't know from any discrimination. It's the parents. You know, now, I must tell you something.

JF: Yeah.

MA: I told you I lived on the street with the church. When they did go to the church I could play on the street. But when they did go home from church, we had to lock the door.

JF: What would happen?

MA: Sounds like, I don't know, sounds like was something in the sermon what the priest gave them, that the Jew is a Christ-killer and you have to beat him up.

JF: So you were in danger, then, right after a church service.

MA: We locked ourselves and put on the shutters closed, when the church was letting out.

JF: Did you ever experience being beaten up by the Polish children?

MA: Yeah. Oh yeah.

JF: A lot? Or a couple of times?

MA: About, listen, enough of it that I had, that some dreams still follow me now, that I get beaten up. You know, the worst dream is, and I had it so many times that I just cannot run. I mean, here they let out from the church and I...

JF: And you're caught.

MA: And caught. The power is not in me to run. You know, the worst thing was on Easter. They made, dressed a guy like a dummy, a Jew with a Jew's head with a beard. And they dropped him and everybody beat him and killed him and that was going on in the town square and they hung him up on a pole.

JF: This was on Easter Sunday?

MA: Yeah. Every Easter Sunday. And you know, one...

JF: That's enough to give a child nightmares.

MA: One...year, when my wife died, so I had a nephew, when my first wife died, she died in 1959, and the children were small. So for Passover I had a nephew in Brooklyn. He lives now in Israel. So he did want to stay Passover with him. No, that wasn't Passover. That was *Succos*. I thought it was Passover but it was *Succos*. On *Succos*, I came for Passover and later for *Succos*. On *Succos* I was there in Borough Park, and listen to it, on the second floor. And my window was right near, it was a corner there. It was on a telephone pole or on an electric pole. And I woke up in the morning and I see a dummy hangs. I start screaming, and the whole picture got back to me from my hometown. And later slowly I realize, I calmed down and I realize what that is. That was the first year, or the first couple years when the Dodgers moved out from Brooklyn. And the Brooklyn people were trying to adopt the Yankees as their team, you know? But they lost the World Series! [laughs] So they made a dummy, and that's it. I saw a Yankee. [laughing]

JF: Oh! But it brought back a lot of memories.

MA: It brought back memories. You know, it's a funny thing, yeah, a good thing, you forget it. Bad things you try to forget.

JF: But they come back.

MA: You cannot. Like a guy, I had a friend and he was a customer in the store, a gentleman. And he says, "I know what we Germans did," he says. "I'm not proud of it. But you should forgive and forget." So I told to him, "O.K., you forgive them but how can you forget?"

JF: This is a customer of yours in your own grocery store?

MA: Yeah, here, here.

JF: Here in the United States.

MA: In Philadelphia. Yeah, he's a very nice fellow. He's a German. He was born here.

JF: You said that you went to the public school and then you went to *yeshiva*.

MA: Yeah.

JF: How old were you when you started the *yeshiva*?

MA: 14. Well, the *cheder* I started, you see, 14 I was when I left home to a *yeshiva*. You see, in our town wasn't a *yeshiva*.

JF: So you left home at 14.

MA: At 14, yeah.

JF: And where was the *yeshiva* that you went to?

MA: First I went to a small town. It was a rabbi there, Kreshew. Kreshew.

JF: The rabbi's name was Kreshew?

MA: No, the rabbi's name was, they named, the rabbi they named after that city. The rabbi from Kreshew.

JF: Ah. I see.

MA: They didn't know a name of. Very hardly anybody knew a name of a rabbi. You see, like the names like they say the Kotsker rabbi, the Belzer rabbi.

JF: Right, right.

MA: Yeah, you know, very few rabbi, only the Baal Shem they call by the name. That's about all, because, and he was in different cities.

JF: Kreshew was spelled how? Do you know? [tape off then on]

MA: Kreshew.

JF: K-R-E-S-H-E-W.

MA: That's right, Kreshew. And that was in the...state of Lublin, Lublin. Lublin you know how to spell.

JF: And how did you go there? Did you, were you staying with family?

MA: No.

JF: Or did you stay in the school?

MA: No, I was staying, I was sleeping by the rabbi. And they sent me, this was not far from home. And they sent me food from home and the maid, the rabbi's maid, cooked it for me. And I was sleeping in the *bes hamidrash*, in the synagogue I was sleeping.

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler, on November 10th, 1982. Was life any different in the *yeshiva* than it had been in your hometown?

MA: Was in a way it was different, because my father wasn't alive any more at that time. And there was no, and mother had to work for a living, and everybody had to pitch in.

JF: Were you helped at all during that time of your father's illness and death by the Jewish community, by the...

MA: No, no, we didn't. We weren't in such a bad shape to need it help, no.

JF: You were in that bad shape?

MA: No, I wasn't in a bad shape, because, a matter of fact, we were considered in a very good shape because my mother's brother was here in America. And if you sent \$5.00 a month, you was already a rich man.

JF: I see. Were you involved, or was the family involved, in the *kehillah* at all?

MA: Everybody was automatically involved, oh yeah. Oh yeah. It is a, that's how we survived all those years. You see, over there, the *kehillah* was different than here, a congregation. A city, it doesn't matter how big that city was, or how many synagogues there were. They all were ruled by one body. It was like a city hall. And it was, one rabbi for the whole city could be, it was a city like Krakow was about, I don't know, 50, 60 synagogues there. But there it was only one rabbi. And there was, besides the rabbi was ten more helpers. That means a *bezin*, what they call it a *bes din*. And in every city it was very organized and every city had...all kinds of organizations. But the organizations were not only to, you know, have meetings. Because this organization didn't have any meetings. They just did work. We did get help, I remember. It was a *chevra lena*.

JF: What is that?

MA: What is that? So I'm going to explain it what's that mean, *lena*. The word *lena* means, in Hebrew, to sleep.

JF: O.K.

MA: Because if somebody was sick in a family, the people from the family usually were exhausted. They were, so somebody came in the night time to take care just to watch over the sick person.

JF: I see.

MA: And to, so the family can take a rest. My father was a member of this *chevra lena*. He always used to go somewhere else, if somebody was sick.

JF: So then...

MA: But even, you didn't have to be a member. They went in the whole city, you see.

JF: But when your father was sick, a member of the *chevra*...

MA: So they took good care of him because he was...

JF: Would come.

MA: Yeah, because it was fellow members, you know what I mean? He always, also was a member in the *chevra kiddushah*. You know what a *chevra kiddushah* is? He was always a member and mother was a member. You see, mother was, women, they were separate because they took care of the, you know, the female deaths. They dressed and washed and dressed them. And they did the work of what an undertaker usually do. But they didn't get paid. They did it because it was, I guess the responsibility what one Jew has to the other one.

JF: So, was there any difference that you noticed, between the two communities?

MA: It was a big difference. First of all my life was a little different. I didn't have to do any...I was devoted nothing but to study. I...got away from the daily routine.

JF: Was the goal for you to become a rabbi at that point?

MA: Not my goal, but mother's goal. [both laugh] If my goal would have been, I guess I would have been, became a rabbi, I guess. But...

JF: You would have been what?

MA: If...that would have been my goal, I would have been a rabbi, I guess. But I never wanted to be a rabbi.

JF: I see. I see.

MA: And to study in the *yeshiva* at home is not everybody wanted to be a rabbi. Just everybody studied. But very few only...

JF: Actually went...

MA: Became rabbis.

JF: Became a rabbi.

MA: And my mother's dream was, I guess every mother's dream is [chuckles].

JF: What did you want to do?

MA: I...didn't know. I liked art work. I always wanted, but I was thinking that's a impossible dream. [chuckles] I always did something, made something, painted something.

JF: That's quite a contrast to a traditional upbringing.

MA: Right away was [tape off then on].

JF: Mr. Adler, your interest in art, dating from the time of your childhood, apparently has developed into one of your current talents which has been written up in the *Jewish Exponent* and is now on display at the Jewish Museum in Philadelphia.

MA: Yes.

JF: Can you tell me just a little bit about it? Let's take a diversion for just a second.

MA: Well, I always liked to do something. We, I always was good in art at school. I always got an A in art. And I liked to work with wood even, because that was the main what I had a chance to do. We, you know, everything came packed in...

JF: Crates?

MA: At home, in the crates. And the wood was tempting. You can do something with this. So, I always builded something and that's how I started...a *grager* [noisemaker

used on Jewish holiday of Purim.] My brother, my older brother, he is now, he is a painter. And...

JF: He's an artist.

MA: He's an artist. He's considered a good artist. I can show you all the pictures here what I have. That's his pictures. See, he painted them.

JF: So you were making *gragers* for Purim.

MA: Well, I wasn't a professional *grager* maker. Just I make myself a *grager* every year Purim.

JF: From the time you were a young person?

MA: A small boy, yeah. At home, if you did want a toy you had to build it. But we even, I even made myself a football. We, who could afford it to buy a football?

JF: What did you make a football out of?

MA: You know, we went to the slaughter house, and there was a certain things in the animal, it's like a bag, like a, like the inner tube of the football, you know, but that's not from rubber. It didn't last long but...the guys in the slaughter house, they knew, they saved this for us. And we filled this up with air and we made a cover, from old shoes. We collected old shoes pieces and made a cover. And this football, it didn't last too long, the inner tube, but, and so, they slaughtered every day there!

JF: This was, was the inner, the, an organ from inside the animal?

MA: Animal, from the animal something. We used to call it in Polish a *pecherz*. [bladder] I don't know how it would be in...English.

JF: But the *gragers* that you're making now are now famous in the city and now on display at the Jewish Museum.

MA: The Jewish Museum. And they bought from me from New York Museum they bought four *gragers* this week.

JF: So four of yours are also in New York.

MA: Yeah, three of them I think wound up. The fourth one is the, the girl who bought this, I think she will keep one.

JF: Oh. Wonderful. But at the time, you were supposed to be a rabbi. You were supposed to be in *yeshiva*, not making *gragers*. Was this looked down upon, for you to have an interest in art when you were in the *yeshiva*?

MA: Well...

JF: Was it a conflict?

MA: No, it wasn't a conflict. I always liked. I was sitting down on the balcony and draw the scenery. It's a matter of fact, when the *yeshiva* needed some artwork, they always called me. They knew about it. They called me to make signs. They usually they make signs for collecting money, you know, on the street. So they put up signs. So they called me. I always painted the signs. I'll never forget there once was, you know, our *yeshiva*, the *yeshivas* in Poland used to be owned by the rabbis. They used to call them the Gedereben *yeshiva*, the Bubaveis *yeshiva*, [phonetic] you know. I was in a *yeshiva* what used to be run by the *Hasidim* from the Radomsker rabbi. And I remember the Radomsker rabbi came once to Krakow and he wasn't a very well man. He was always a

little on the sick side. He was a diabetes. And they didn't let in any people, only the crews, the big shots, you know. They made him, and the dinner. So they hollered out, "Myer Adler!" I was thinking. So they took me in. The crowd was outside by thousands of people. So they paged me and they took me in and they gave me paper to make a sign, "*Baruch habah.*" They wanted to paint a sign.

JF: What does that say?

MA: *Baruch habah. Baruch habah.* That means welcome. Welcome Rabbi.

JF: Oh, Welcome Rabbi. Uh huh.

MA: And of course I made the sign and I was get to stay there, which that was...

JF: Oh, I see.

MA: I was thinking that was the biggest reward, the biggest paid I ever got!
[chuckles]

JF: So you were in a *Hasidic yeshiva*.

MA: Oh yeah, a *Hasidic yeshiva*.

JF: And the, it sounds from what you're describing of your upbringing that your upbringing was *Hasidic*.

MA: Well, my father, he was religious, but not *Hasidic*.

JF: He was not *Hasidic*.

MA: You see, there is, religious and *Hasidic* is two different things. He wasn't fanatic. Let's put it that way. He was just a religious person. But he was also an educated man. You know what I mean?

JF: Yes.

MA: The *Hasidim* usually didn't...

JF: He had a secular education as well.

MA: A secular education, yeah. He went...you see, his mother educated all the children.

JF: Why then, given that, and also the fact that you had gone to a public school, did you choose a *Hasidic yeshiva*? Or was it because of the quality of the education there? Or...

MA: It was because, that's right. No, there is something else to it. I'm glad you mention it. You see, after the father died, my sister got married. And the husband came into the family, because this was a, the man in the family, you know what I mean? And we lived together. He was strictly religious. And he changed the life of our family.

JF: He was a *Hasid*?

MA: He was the *Hasid*, you know what I mean? And that's how...

JF: That's where the influence came from.

MA: The influence came.

JF: It was after your father's death.

MA: After my father's death.

JF: I see.

MA: A matter of fact, I mentioned I have three more brothers. The one brother didn't come home, went from Czechoslovakia to Germany. And from Germany he

wound up in 1922 or '23 he came to Philadelphia. And he went to college here. He became an accountant, which he was a big help to our family, to my mother. Without him, I don't know, we would have been forced to...receive from the...*tsedukah*, you know what that's mean?

JF: Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm.

MA: The Jewish welfare.

JF: Yes.

MA: And accounting on him we were a respectful family. We even gave *tsedukah*, you know what I mean?

JF: Right.

MA: And you know something? I find out later, when I came here in this country? That when he sent out money, he borrowed some money. He paid interest. He paid interest for the money and he sent us.

JF: So...

MA: And the other brother left to Germany. The other brother later left to Germany. And now I was, and he is not here, that brother what left Germany. He is not here. A matter of fact, he came here and he had to run away from Germany when Hitler came to power. And he went to Brazil, and from Brazil the brother who was here brought him over. And later both brothers brought me over here. And later I had another brother, even till 1932 he went to Israel. He was one of the pioneers, and he started off a *kibbutz* in Israel. And every time when I go to Israel I stay in the *kibbutz*. I wait all day. They take good care of me. They all remember my brother, you know. He was one of the founders of the *kibbutz*. And I was the one only left at home. My mother says, "I have one *kaddish* with me." [laughs]

JF: So, when you, were at the *yeshiva*, how long were you able to study there?

MA: What do you mean?

JF: How many years were you able to study?

MA: In the *yeshiva*?

JF: Yeah.

MA: Oh, years. I was there till I was, oh, till I was about 21.

JF: So you were there seven years.

MA: I studied in a *yeshiva* on and off, in different *yeshivas*, yeah.

JF: I see.

MA: Till I was 21. And when I was 21, you know, that's, you see, like I told you, when you're 18, you had to register for the draft. And you, when you're 21 you had to report to the draft. [laughs]

JF: So what happened?

MA: You see, when you're 18, you just register. That's all.

JF: And was it at this point that you got your birth certificate?

MA: Oh I got my cer-...

JF: Did you have the witnesses...

MA: Yeah, oh yeah. I got my birth certificate.

JF: That was when you were 18.

MA: When I was 18. And when I was 21, they call you to the draft and they qualify you. If you qualify it, you are, you, they take you to the army. And if they don't qualify you, they, you get a, they were so, "A", "B", "C", and you know, qualification. "A" was, that's mean you are in the army. "B", you are in the reserve.

JF: And where, how did you qualify?

MA: I qualified "C".

JF: Which is?

MA: "C", that's mean only if a war breaks out. And the reason what I qualified "C" because all the *Hasidim*, they...gave "C", because they didn't want them in the army either.

JF: Why?

MA: I don't know. They claimed that the rabbis had an agreement with them something. [laughs] I don't know. Maybe it is, maybe not. But it was not such a big deal to be in the Polish Army because you know, you, it was no future. It isn't, it wasn't the army like it is here—you can learn something, you...became out a *mensch* from the army, you know, the army makes men they say here. But over there you just was discriminated and you were, and there were very little Jews in the army. And people spent fortunes to get out.

JF: But the *Hasidim* were excused?

MA: Mostly excused, yeah. Yeah, mostly excused.

JF: Now during the time that you were in your *yeshiva* studies, Hitler came to power and...

MA: No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

JF: No?

MA: Hitler came to power later. Hitler came to power in 1939.

JF: Well he...

MA: Oh, oh, oh. I mean...the war. Yeah, Hitler came to power. That's right.

JF: Right.

MA: Yeah.

JF: Now, were you receiving much news about what was going on in Germany when that happened?

MA: We didn't read papers at all, no.

JF: You were in your own studies.

MA: We were in our own world, that's all. We didn't read any papers. A matter of fact, you wasn't allowed to read papers.

JF: This was forbidden by the *yeshiva*?

MA: By the *yeshiva*, yeah. No papers reading. You see, and that's how I got out from the *yeshiva*, because I started reading the paper.

JF: When you were 21.

MA: When I was 21. Yeah, I started reading paper, and you know, when you find out, and when you read, you...not only do you read the [unclear] news, but articles, you know? And it was a very...

JF: What made you start? Excuse me. What made you start reading the newspapers?

MA: I don't know. I just started. I just, you became aware that there is a world going on there, you know what I mean, that...this is not, the whole world, if the world would depend on us, that there would be no world. [laughs]

JF: But you were in another one.

MA: I found out there is another world there...what keeps the world going.

JF: Yeah.

MA: And I start reading the paper, you know? According to the studies is the world is flat. And if somebody would told me that the world is round, I would argue with him because, it says clearly in the *Gemora* that the world has four corners, and in every corner stays an angel, you know, and the names of the angels: Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel. That's the four angels what they hold the world on their shoulders. And if I will not do, if I will not be so religious or good, if I will not stop studying, and one of the angels can slip his shoulder, you know what I mean, and the whole world can collapse. And when I start reading in articles, I remember I read once an article about the galaxy, how many galaxies there are, and then how, in order to maintain the gravity it has to speed so many thousand miles per hour and... It was a new world for me. I was trying to find out what [laughs]. I was trying to find out more and I...remember I asked a guy to, you know, he was, he was, his beard, he trimmed his beard a little, you know? So I was thinking he probably is a little modern and that he, to recommend me a good book to read. So he slapped me in the face! [laughs] He slapped me in the face and I enrolled in the...library. There was private libraries there was a lot of. Libraries was a business. It wasn't free libraries like here.

JF: You're talking about a library in the community.

MA: In...well, some communities had libraries, yeah. Oh yeah. Our town had a library in our community, and...

JF: Was this a Jewish library or this was a...

MA: A Jew-, all kinds of books. Jewish and...Polish.

JF: But private, for the J-, owned by the Jewish community?

MA: No, a private people-owned library.

JF: Private people.

MA: Private people. There were community libraries too, oh yeah. But the libraries was a business. It was a lot of private libraries. And when the, and he was a very nice man, he recommended me books, and later I got myself a job.

JF: So were you enrolled in this library while you were still in the *yeshiva*? Or had you left the *yeshiva*?

MA: No, I left the *yeshiva*.

JF: Now, you said before that they found out that you were reading newspapers,
or...

MA: If they would find out, they didn't...first of all, I quit the *yeshiva*.

JF: You quit the *yeshiva*.

MA: Yeah, I quit the *yeshiva*, yeah.

JF: O.K., when you started being interested in the newspapers and other reading.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

JF: This must have been quite a crisis for...

MA: Mother, mother, I was thinking she will never forgive me. To her was it a shock.

JF: Did you go home to explain it to her?

MA: Yeah, oh yeah. I told her and I explained it to her and I told her I will be religious, but you know, it is, you couldn't talk much with mother. I remember mother once caught me reading a paper. I read a paper and mother didn't know it. And she caught me once reading and not a just a paper, but a paper it was published by...a religious organization. You know what her saying was?

JF: Hmm?

MA: [Yiddish] *Kenst du itst geynen shmadrn*.

JF: Can you translate that for me?

MA: Now you can convert to a Catholic.

JF: And this was a Jewish newspaper.

MA: Yeah. Mother, she wasn't so, you see, I don't remember so much because when my brother-in-law came to us, I was still small. But my brothers and my sisters told me that mother never was so...fanatic religious. It's only since father died and the brother-in-law came.

JF: So when your father took you to *cheder* when you were three, that was not a *Hasidic* group? Not at that time?

MA: No, in this, no, that's, a *cheder* was a *cheder*. That's the...

JF: There was no difference.

MA: No, it was no difference, no, no.

JF: Mmm hmm. But the change then occurred when he died, for the family.

MA: Yeah, when the brother-in-law came in.

JF: Now when you left the *yeshiva*, you were 21, which would have made it about 1935?

MA: Something like it, about 193-, it was 1914, 1935, yeah.

JF: And what were you hearing at that point? You were reading the newspapers then, and you were in the world.

MA: Well, well the first thing what I did is to get a secular education.

JF: And how did you do that?

MA: I had it a private, I went to a private school. And I went to a private school and I...

JF: Was this an adult school of some kind?

MA: Hmm?

JF: Was this an adult school?

MA: Yes. Oh yeah. A private school, and I got private, I, and I finished that way business college I finished, privately.

JF: Was this a Polish school or was this a Jewish...

MA: Run by a Jew, no, run by a Jew. And it was...you had to, you see, they...taught you, they didn't, and you have to, they went to the Board of Education and they gave you an exam. And which I passed the exam very good. And...

JF: So you were there for how many years, in school?

MA: Oh I took in two summers. You see, in summer time, my job...didn't call for the, in summer time was very slow, was no season.

JF: I see.

MA: And they all left, you know. And only one took care of that store. A matter of fact this was about three, four months I had. In these three, four months I put in...twelve or thirteen hours' schooling. It's like a crash course. That's was for two years. And I finished...you know, the seventh grade, and later I went to...

JF: You finished seventh grade?

MA: Seventh grade privately, yeah, in the first year, and I started business college. And when I finished business college, I got a job as a bookkeeper.

JF: And what year was this?

MA: That would be in '38, I think.

JF: 1938.

MA: In 1938, I think. Yeah, that's was a year before the war, because later I was hired to another company and I never made it because the war broke out. And...in the place where I worked, they did want me to run the books.

JF: Sure.

MA: And I started, I look on the books. I don't know nothing about it. [laughs] I didn't know a thing what's going on there, you know what I mean? So I was so disgusted, so, I mean, I spent so much time, you know? I spent 50% of my wages I spent for schooling, to pay the tuition. And...here I don't know, I am graduated. I have a good report card, and I don't know nothing. So I went to the professor, to the director from the school. And there was no telephones that time. You know, you couldn't. So, when you go there, you always, in order to make sure he is home you go during dinner time. [laughs] So, that's what I figured out. If I go during dinner, I'm sure he will be home, because it was a long way to go to. And I came there and he was eating dinner. And then I came in, and he saw right away. He says, "You are troubled. What's wrong?" So, I told him. And he says, "Sit down." And he told his wife to give me a cup of tea. "Sit down," he says slowly. So I told him my, "I don't know from nothing. And you always told me I am so good." So, he picked up a fork and a knife, he picked up, you know? He says to me, "You see, this is a fork and this is a knife. We are not here to take care of the fork and knife. The fork and knife were invented for our convenience. We're not for the conven-

ience of the fork and knife. But they are for our convenience.” I say, “What does that do with me?” He says, so he says, “You know the whole system of bookkeeping,” he says. “Never mind what the guy did there with it. You adjust it to your own convenience. You’re not to, for the convenience to the fork,” he says. “You’re not for the convenience for the books what they, somebody else wants it. You set up a system the way you want it.” And when he told me that, so you know, a couple of months later he came to find out. [laughs] I set up the system and, he says, “You know...how the system works,” he says. “And if you go deeply, if you go from the beginning,” he says, “you will follow his too because you know the,” he says, “there is one way how the bookkeeping goes.” You see, but in Poland it was actually two ways, what they used to call there now double entry and the Americanka entry. The Americanka entry is what we do now. In Poland it used to be, some people used to have there now double entry. And I learned both ways.

JF: I see. Now you, when you left the *yeshiva* and you went through this, the schooling and your business college, and now you were working, did you shave your beard at that point, and...

MA: You know something, the beard I never let grow.

JF: You never let the beard grow. You kept, you had the *payes* [earlocks].

MA: The *payes*. But the beard, I never let grow.

JF: So what happened when you left? Did you...

MA: Cut off the *payes*.

JF: You cut your *payes*.

MA: Oh, sure.

JF: Yeah.

MA: Sure. I...cut them systematically, every week a little bit. [laughs]

JF: You mean, a little shorter each week?

MA: A little shorter every week. I didn’t do it all, oh no. I wouldn’t...have the guts to do it.

JF: You eased into it.

MA: I wouldn’t have the guts. [laughed] Every week a little bit, trimmed it off.

JF: You eased yourself into the...world.

MA: The world, that’s right.

JF: Now during this time a great deal was happening in the rest of Europe. Were you aware of what was going on during these years?

MA: Not in the *yeshiva*, but later I was a...

JF: After the *yeshiva*.

MA: Oh, later I was aware. I took advantage, you see, I lived in Krakow. Krakow was a big cultured city.

JF: This was where you were working now, in Krakow?

MA: Yeah, yeah. And I took advantage every lecture what I could, you know, attend by that.

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape two, side one, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler on November 10, 1982, with Josey Fisher. We were talking, Mr. Adler, about your finding out about what was happening in the rest of Europe, in the late '30s, and whether or not you felt that this was going to influence Poland.

MA: Well, the Polish government assured us that they're strong and that they're not afraid.

JF: Were you afraid?

MA: We were afraid.

JF: Did you think at any time of the possibility of leaving Poland?

MA: How could you? We, I was thinking many times, and everybody, who could leave, left. Palestine didn't let you in. My brother had a chance. He left for Palestine and took quite a couple years. He was on *hachsharah*. You know what a *hachsharah* is?

JF: Describe it to me.

MA: If a young man or girl did want to leave for Palestine through an organization, they had to go into a camp, and to get used to the, to prepare them to the life in Palestine. And at the same time they taught them how to fight too, because there always was, the Jews were always, you know, attacked by the Arabs. And he was for two years in a *hachsharah* on and off. And after, if you qualify, if you, see, there were a certain, a limited, a kind of certificate what they used to call. The English government gave out so many thousands, not much was it. I don't remember how many thousand a year. And so they, the people who qualified, they got the certificate and they could emigrate. And my brother was one of them. And he left in 19-, just in time when Hitler came to power. My other brother left for Germany in 1927, before Hitler came to power. When Hitler came to power, he sent them back to Poland.

JF: He sent him back to Poland.

MA: And, that's right. And when he came to Poland, there was a, right on the border, a town. It's called Zbonszyn. He dumped a lot of Polish Jews there. Little did he know...that he did him a big favor, Hitler did. And when he came to Zbonszyn, my brother, and he didn't want to go back to Poland. He hated Poland more than Germany. So he smuggled his way back to Germany, and from Germany to Belgium and France and he, well, he couldn't stay there because he came illegally. And finally in 1938—or in '37 was it? I don't remember which year; it doesn't, or earlier, no, in '36 I think was it—the relief organization sent him to Brazil. He found out that Brazil needed farmers, so he says, "I'm a farmer." [laughs] He went to Brazil and he was in Brazil till my other brother who is here in this country, Felix, he brought him over in 1941, he brought him over here. And when he came here, he joined the army right away.

JF: There was no chance for you to get out, then?

MA: No, I, mother, maybe I would have a chance, but I didn't try because I didn't want to do it to mother. Like I said, mother said she wants one *kaddish* [A son to recite memorial prayers following her death.] with her, so.

JF: So you stayed...

MA: So I stayed.

JF: To be with your mother.

MA: And I lived in Krakow and my mother still lived in Rudnik.

JF: Now what happened in 1939? You were living in Krakow at that time?

MA: I was living in Krakow at that time and that was the September the 1st, this was on a Friday.

JF: Did you have any feeling, or knowledge before that time that the invasion would occur?

MA: No. No, I knew it. But it happened they prepared. They mobilized the Polish Army because Poland made a big mistake that time. The biggest mistake they made, when Hitler, before Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia, he talked in Poland to attack the Sudeten part of Czechoslovakia.¹ And Poland took it. And after Poland took Sudeten, Hitler says he wants all of Poland. And in September 1st, 1939, he marched in. And Krakow wasn't far from the border.

JF: What happened in Krakow with you?

MA: First of all they bombed Krakow right in the first day.

JF: Where were you when the bombing started?

MA: In Krakow. There were shelters. We run to the shelters and that was on a Friday. And on Tuesday I left Krakow. I had a sister there, a sister and two children and her husband.

JF: In Krakow?

MA: In Krakow. So I asked...my sister and my brother-in-law, "What should I do?" Everybody runned. They didn't know where they run and they didn't, but everybody runned, and asking what they do. So my brother-in-law told me, he says, "How can anybody advise you what to do? You have to use your own with this." So I said to him, "What would you do if you would be in my situation?" And he says, "If I would be single, with no wife or children attached to me, and I have a mother somewhere, I would go to unite with my mother." And that's what I did. And I walked all the way. And, which on the way the Polacks, even the war was going on, they were robbing us blind, beating us. We had to be afraid of them.

JF: The Poles?

MA: The Poles, yeah.

JF: Something...was set off in the Polish population, then, by the invasion?
Once the...

MA: What do you mean? The...

JF: The Poles became...

MA: Propaganda?

JF: The Polish became...

MA: Oh, of course.

JF: More antisemitic at that point?

¹ Poland invaded Teschen not Sudeten.

MA: Oh, they were, a couple [unclear] they became antisemitic. There was an organization, what they call them, *Endeks*. [National Democrats] And they were awful, they were open antisemitic. They didn't hide it. They just beat up Jews wherever they could. And they were trying to push us and a lot of priests belonged to this organization and a lot of, especially the...student body from the universities, which there weren't much Jews anyhow there. They were the rulers of this organization. And they were very antisemitic. And we had...pardon me, and we had a lot of trouble on the way from them, but I finally, I left, Tuesday I left Krakow and Saturday afternoon I arrived to my hometown. And when I came in my hometown, I, the whole town, there was no Polish authority more in the town. Everybody did what they want. The Polacks went...robbing everybody. If somebody left, you know, people run away, so they busted open their houses and robbed them out.

JF: What do you mean, there was no Polish authority? Do you mean the Germans were in control, or the Polish authorities had left?

MA: The Germans didn't come in yet, and the Polish authority already run away. The Polish government start running right away. As soon as the war started, they start running. So there was no Polish, no nothing. And when I came...home, I remember it was a guy by the name of Payosz. [phonetic] He was a crazy guy. Everybody knew. You know, he was a mentally disturbed guy. But he wasn't dangerous. He didn't hit nobody. A peaceful guy. He slept in the *shul*. He slept always there. But he was an idiot. So when he saw me, he says, "Heh, heh, heh, they called *me* 'idiot,'" he says. "Look now here. Everybody runs away, and *he* [to Myer] comes." [laughing]

JF: Oh!

MA: So, anyhow, I ask him if...my mother is still, and he says, "Oy," he doesn't know. He says, "Everybody run away," he says. "There are houses." And I saw all the stores open, you know. They were already being robbed, everything taken out, the Polacks. And when I came to our house, the, it was locked all over. So I say, "It isn't robbed out. Must be somebody there." So, I knock on the door. Yeah, when I came, I had, I came with a boyfriend what he was from the same town. And we lived in Krakow both. We were both in Krakow and we were both from the same town. So, we walked all the way home. Now when we came, I lived in one side of the town and he lived in the other side. So we decided we will go—I go home and he go home. But we didn't know either one family who survived, who is left. So we...agreed so. If his parents, if he, if one of the parents is left, we both stay with his parents. And if not, we will find out later what to do. But meantime, I am going home, and if my parents are home, I stay home. If my parents are not home, I wait near my home. If my mother is not home, I wait near my home. And he will come to me either way, even if his parents are there or not, he will come to my house. So I knock on the door and nobody answers. Nobody answers. I had a sack, you know, a sack with a string, this. So I took it off and put this on the steps from my house. And I was thinking, "Oh, I will wait for my boyfriend till he comes." In the meantime I hear somebody is, walks in the house. Well so as I was sitting there I got so, I was thinking, who? Maybe somebody took it over. And I see they are slowly open, trying to open

the door. And I see that's my mother. She said later because usually when the *goyim* captain, they, here was a gentle, maybe some other friend needed something, somebody. So she came to open up. And I find out mother was home still. And she said, "Everybody run away. What to do?" I say, "No, well, the worst thing if you leave home, that's the worst thing what can happen to a place." And I saw, I was walking from Krakow and I saw what happened. I say not to go. And we stayed and later my boyfriend came and his parents were home too. And we were staying and that was Saturday afternoon.

And Tuesday the German Army came in. And they came in like all hell got loose. They first thing, as soon as they came in, they didn't open the door. They knocked the doors open. And, "All the men out." Just the men. They took all the men out in the market square. And they didn't make any distinguish Jews or not Jews. Man is man. And with all the gentiles, everything. And later—it took a couple hours till they round up the whole town—and after they rounded up, they say, "Who is not a Jew shall leave." So, all the gentiles start going in the side. So later they said to the gentiles, "Anything you want from the Jews, take." So they took off from the jackets from us, if you wore a good jacket. Even the shirt they left you. And the Polacks, they listened. They took away everything. They left you without nothing. And in the meantime the whole town is on fire.

JF: They set the entire town on fire.

MA: On fire, most of the town. Not the entire. Most of the town they set on fire. And they shot a couple of people, just if they didn't like them, they took them out. Yeah, they said to give away all the watches that is. So a guy, later a Polack took from him the pants. He likes the pants so he finds a watch there. So they shot him because he didn't give the watch. But anyhow, it was like around 12:00 or 1:00 at night was it they came with a tank and they said to line up the whole thing and they will shoot us up. They will, the tank will, the tank will kill us.

JF: The tank will kill you.

MA: Yeah, yeah. And, you know something? It didn't matter to me. It didn't matter I lived, if they killed me or not. I don't know, something, I didn't care.

JF: What do you think, what were you thinking? What were you feeling then?

MA: I don't remember nothing. I...got blanked out.

JF: Why do you think now, as you look back, that you didn't care? Do you have any ideas?

MA: Yeah, because the chances of survival were very little anyhow. If you don't kill me now, I can some later, I be suffer a little more. That's all. You see, the whole, I didn't know if my family is still alive. You know what I mean? So, who needs to be alive? And I don't know, somehow in the last minute a guy comes, an officer. It was like, to them, was it like a show, you know? In the meantime they took pictures, you know, how they, oh, they, how they beat there, you know. If they wore a, if somebody wore a beard, they cut him off only on one half. They didn't cut off the whole beard. And they took pictures. It was like a, it was a miserable thing to watch, the beard, to be, even...I couldn't understand how they can watch it, you know. And me, they cut off the hair here a little bit, a machine they cut. I had very nice hair, wavy hair.

JF: And they cut the middle of your hair?

MA: In the middle a hair cut, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, with a...

JF: All the way back?

MA: All the way back, yeah. Like and, and they took pictures how they're doing it. And later, around, I don't know exactly what time it was, and a guy came and gave orders to...let us go. And they gave the orders that in five minutes, if they find somebody in the street, they will kill them. We have to run away. So I run. In our town, right across the street where I live, I see was full on fire. Our house was saved. I don't know how, how a couple of houses, three houses on our row, was saved. Anyhow, but I didn't know that. Because you see, the whole street is like in fire. So I run to the back street and to a neighbor there. And I went in and I came there. Nobody was there anyhow. And I sit down, because I was trying the first house to find shelter because after five minutes they will kill you. And I sit down right near the window and look out if there are Germans that don't run it. And another man comes in there. And I didn't recognize him who he is. But later, you see, we used to roll cigarettes. You know, we didn't roll. We had a machine to make cigarettes. You know, you put in the tobacco and you had a tube here, you know? And my brother-in-law used to always, with his teeth, pull out the tube so the tobacco would go in a little more. And he finds there tobacco, you know? Sees, and he makes himself a cigarette, and I see he makes it just like my brother-in-law. And I was thinking, nobody makes it the way that cigarette like only him. So I say to him, "Myer?" His name was Myer too. I say, "Myer?" He didn't recognize me and I didn't recognize him. His beard was half cut off.

JF: Oh!

MA: So, his beard cut off half, and half the hair here.

JF: Oh!

MA: I didn't, so he start fall on me and we start crying. And he says, I say, "What happened to the family?" He had six children. We stayed there and over the night.

JF: Do you know what happened to his children?

MA: Yeah, we stayed there over the night, we stayed there. And another couple of people came there. And in the morning they chased us out from there. The Germans took over the house. It was the woods across the city. We came there. It was the whole, all the women and they went there. And we ran in the woods there. And when we were there we, that was Wednesday or Thursday was it? I don't remember. Anyhow, when we were there, a plane came by and it was a little wood, not much. It was a big field and a, a field [unclear] set in a strip of wood. That's where we were there. A plane passes by and all of a sudden drops spraying with, I don't know if it was bombs or a machine gun. But he missed us by about five, six yards.

JF: And you were with your brother-in-law at this time?

MA: My brother-in-law and my mother and his wife and six children. And they missed us by a couple of yards. Anyhow, and later we find out our house we went in back to our house. And I had to report every day to work.

JF: What kind of work?

MA: To repair the highways. That was the main work. And...

JF: You could live in your house?

MA: Yeah, we were living in the house. And that took two weeks with them.

JF: What kind of treatment did you receive?

MA: Bad.

JF: When you were working on the roads?

MA: Oh, awful...you know, they were...they didn't give us nothing. They didn't pay you, no, didn't give us nothing. Once a guy came and gave us dry...crackers, you know, it was a big cracker, a dried cracker. You couldn't bite in it. And he holds a gun and they watch, and in two minutes you have to finish, chew up the cracker. We were, everyone he gets a cracker. In two minutes, if not, we're all killed. And I tried, and a couple of guys broke their teeth on it. And he was laughing and later he just walked away. He didn't do nothing. He just walked away. You know what I mean? Things like this they did, yeah.

JF: They would torment you.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

JF: What happened with the shop? Was the, the little market that your mother had, was there anything left that was not confiscated from her store?

MA: No, it was nothing left.

JF: They took it.

MA: They took it. Of course they took away everything and we just...we were thankful we can stay there. And later that was, you know, they came around a couple days before *Rosh Hashanah*, a couple of days...before *Rosh Hashanah* was it. And on *Succos* they got, you see, like I said before, the town was, used to be on the border, of the Russian border in, before 1918. Now, when Hitler and Stalin made an agreement, that Stalin will take that part of Pole what used to be in Russia before the 1918. So, in the other side of the river, the Russians did supposed to arrive. You know what I mean? So the Germans chased us over to the other side.

JF: So they chased you from your town.

MA: To the...

JF: To the other side of the river...

MA: That's right.

JF: Where you would be under Russian occupation. Because you were what, about five miles, you said, from the...

MA: About five miles, yeah.

JF: From the Russian line. Why did they push you back over the Russian side?

MA: Because they did want to get rid of the Jews. Very simple. So that was the easiest way. Let the Russian have it.

JF: O.K. So this was after two weeks?

MA: After two weeks, yeah.

JF: After two weeks.

MA: And they...

JF: Where did you go?

MA: One minute. They gave us 24 hours. But the Polacks didn't give us any time. Soon as the order came out, they just chased us out, because everybody did want to get a hold on your property. So the Polacks chased us out right away. They want to take the furniture, that is. And we, in the same day we crossed the river and to a little town called Ulanow.

JF: How is that spelled?

MA: Ulanow. Ulanow. [tape off then on] -A-N-O-W.

JF: And what was the name of the river that you...

MA: San. San.

JF: O.K. And what happened when you reached this town? Were you...

MA: When I reached the town there was no authority there at all. The Polish government wasn't, and so we opened our, formed our own militia.

JF: How?

MA: To keep order, that's all, not to get slaughtered by the Polacks. You see, the militia was against the Polacks, not against the [laughs]...

JF: This was a Jewish militia.

MA: A Jewish militia, yeah.

JF: A Jewish militia. Did you have any arms?

MA: No. No, just with clubs, just...and we were wait...

JF: Was there much, I'm sorry, for a minute, was there much of a Jewish population already in this town?

MA: In this town was, oh, it was from a couple towns they chased them out there.

JF: I see.

MA: From a couple, you see, we were close to the border. Some of them a little bit farther even they...

JF: They pushed.

MA: They pushed them out.

JF: So, what was the, what do you think the Jewish population of this town became, when everyone was pushed there?

MA: Well, every Jew was very helpful. A matter of fact, what they got, they shared with us. Because, a little town, and all of a sudden it finds four times population. You know what I mean? So, every Jew, every native there, you know what I mean, took in, a guy took us in and gave us room. You know what I mean? And so the, the Jews anyway, they were, it's a funny thing. To be a Jew is a big advantage. Because anywhere you came, there were Jews, and the Jews is always, *gemillah chesed*. You know what *gemillah chesed* means?

JF: Tell me.

MA: *Gemillah chesed*. That's mean to do it a favor a person, or *tsedukah*. That's the Jewish weapon, you know? I remember when...every time when a pogrom started, you know, before the Polish authority could come to stop it, there were already from the Joint, from New York with money, to distribute money for the people, you know what I

mean? They, that's one thing what, that's one of the...advantages to being a Jew. You're not alone. And we got a big help from them. And later, it took a couple days, the Russians came in. Oh, we gave them a welcome! [laughs]

JF: What do you mean?

MA: We were so pleased to be with them, because we were afraid, you see, now, there is a law in town. We don't have to be afraid. You see, you were afraid of the Germans and of them both, and of the Polacks. And here, especially it was a Jewish Colonel. He was in charge of the, he couldn't speak Jewish, but...

JF: But he was a Jewish Colonel who was in charge of the Russian Army...

MA: Yeah.

JF: Who came in.

MA: Yeah, and...

JF: So what was their treatment of you like?

MA: But, their what?

JF: What was their treatment of you?

MA: What do you mean?

JF: The Russian Army.

MA: Oh, they were, you mean as an army? Well they, I didn't evaluate the quality of the army, but...

JF: No, the...

MA: But I saw a friend, you know. I saw a relief came in there.

JF: Were they treating you all right?

MA: Oh sure. Oh, yeah, it was terrific. They...distribute food and oh, it was no comparison. It was like...a *ganeden*. [Garden of Eden] It didn't last long. They make a mistake. That's mean, the...German soldiers what they told us that the Russians will come to the San, they make a mistake. Russia, you see, it was a [unclear] line, what they call a [unclear] line. You see, Poland was divided three times. And that was, the line's supposed to be, you see, now on the third time when they divided Russia took till the San. But on the second time, they were much farther. So that's means the Russian Army will have to go back.

JF: In other words, the territory was not actually Russia's?

MA: No, no, will be German, they decided.

JF: Because they went by the second division.

MA: By the second division. That's right. So...

JF: How long were you there, then, before this was decided?

MA: A week or so.

JF: I see.

MA: That's how long, a couple days. I don't remember exactly. But anyhow, it was, oh no, it was only a couple days, because the first day of *Succos* they came in, we moved over, and that's was *Shemini Atzeres* night we find out and we, and, that's mean tomorrow they will run away. Tomorrow they start moving.

JF: The Russians would start moving back.

MA: Yeah. So, me, and my brother-in-law, and my brother-in-law's son, he was at that time about 15 years old. So we decided the young man, the men to, we start walking. I don't know how we figured out, he left the whole family. I don't know how. But that's the way it happened. And we start walking and we came about 300 kilometers. 300 kilometers, that's will be about 250 miles or something like it. We arrived, that was Tuesday, and we arrived on a Saturday, on a Friday night we arrived in a little town it's called Holoszyce.

JF: How do you spell that?

MA: Holoszyce.

JF: H-O-L-...

MA: I think...in English will it be better to, Holo- [tape ends]

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler, on November 10, 1982. The spelling of that town, then, is H-O-L-O-S-Z-Y-C-E. Now, who was with you when you went to this town?

MA: Me, and my brother-in-law, and his son.

JF: And you left your mother and...

MA: Yeah, Mother and his whole family, yeah, yeah.

JF: His whole family.

MA: And we went there. And when we went there, when we did go during that, during the whole day it was like a pilgrimage. People were going, the whole highway was...

JF: What was the idea of going there and leaving the women and the children in the other town?

MA: I guess everybody has their own experience, because the first thing the Germans did when they came in, is they tortured the men. So we were thinking, you know, it will repeat again. So the women and the children, they didn't do nothing.

JF: But you felt that they would, the women and the children would be safe.

MA: Safe, yeah, more safe than we are.

JF: I see.

MA: But...

JF: Now this town was within the Russian territory, then, Holoszyce.

MA: Yeah, yeah, this was supposed to be...

JF: This was behind the Russian lines.

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's really, it just...crossing the...line to Russia. And, but later the officer, the Russian officer, my sister went to the Russian officer and she told them that her husband and I left and so he gave him a horse and buggy, he gave my family, to go to.

JF: So there were still some Russians there in the town.

MA: Oh yeah, we got...a head start. I got a head start.

JF: And they gave the rest of your family a horse and buggy in order to follow you.

MA: That's right. And when they...left, they left, actually the Russian Army left with them. That's mean they were the last ones to go out...

JF: I see.

MA: Of town. And later that's was around Tuesday or Wednesday I find out, somebody told me that, "Your mother arrived." Oh, I was so glad! And we were together again. And we were staying there, again, every Jewish family had, it was like, every Jewish family who lived there, you know what I mean, took in as many as they could. That's doesn't mean as many as they have spare rooms. As many, as, if they have a spare little floor. And of course, the synagogues were all packed with people. That's the first thing what you do. You go to the synagogue. I told this many times when I came here and I see

these plush carpets in the synagogues. I say, “It’s such a bad timing. If our synagogues would have plush carpeting, would be...”

JF: Ohhh...

MA: “Would be so easier!”

JF: It would have been more comfortable to sleep on!

MA: Comfortable!

JF: Yes. So you were taken in by a family again, in Holoszyce?

MA: We were taken in, not, I was in the...I find actually a boyfriend, I find who was with me in Krakow, and he was looking for me and he took me to his home. And my mother and the whole family, there was, from our town was a family what their brother, his brother lived here. And he find out and he knew my family, and he took in the mother and the, well, we were split up a little, but it was still, still it was, we were together. I knew where they are, at least, and...

JF: Was the Russian government in control of this town?

MA: Yeah, yeah, the Russian government was in control. And later we moved, we find out, we, in Greidek, Grodek—in Yiddish is it Greidek it’s called—we find a nice little apartment there and that was...

JF: This was another town?

MA: Another town, not far from L’vov. And...

JF: How do you spell that?

MA: Grodek is G-R-O-D-E-K.

JF: And that’s where you finally settled.

MA: We finally settled down there, yeah. And that’s was, you know, when that’s was in November, I think, October or November.

JF: Of 1939.

MA: 1939. We were in Grodek.

JF: Were you able to find a room or a family that took you in there?

MA: A family, well, a family gave us a room, yeah, a family. They had a nice little house. The children were married, and they gave us a kitchen and a room, you know? And my sister’s youngest child was at that time eight months old, nine months old. But she start talking, she talked everything! [laughs] Like a grown-up! She started talking when she was eight, nine months old. And she was so little, so skinny. And the...owner of the house, the lady what gave us the house, they lived, it was like two houses connected, you know? She took in this little girl, Musha, [phonetic] and she kept her in her house, because she didn’t, she was only her and her husband. So she kept her with her. So, later she says, you know, she knew, as little as she was, she knew that we are out from the house, we’re chasing out, you know. So she says, “At home we had all the good things,” she says. “But a *balebosta* we didn’t have there.” [laughs] Well, she was so happy with this, because the lady did for her so much. She says, “We had everything good there, but a landlord we didn’t have.”

JF: Aw. Now, were you able to work when you were living there?

MA: No, I, I don't know. I didn't look for a job. I blackmarketed. All what I had to do is to stay in line and get something. Later I sold it on the black market because to work, you couldn't get, first of all I didn't, I couldn't get a job either. I couldn't.

JF: With your background?

MA: No, because I wasn't...

JF: You weren't...

MA: I wasn't from there.

JF: So when you say you blackmarketed, what do you mean by that? What did you do? You were...

MA: Right away, when the Russians came around, it became a black market. You couldn't get things. You, everything got on the black market. You see, they controlled, you have to sell things to so-and-so much the price. But they didn't, it's hard to explain. You see, in Russia, even now is a black market. During all the years in Siberia, always was a black market. When I got paid in Siberia, when I got paid, it didn't mean a thing. The money what I got for a whole month I could buy one loaf of bread on the black market. You see, but...the benefits what they gave me, what they paid like a couple pounds of sugar during the month, that...was more than they paid. Sometimes I didn't go and pick up the money even! [laughs]

JF: So this is how you existed during your time...

MA: At that...

JF: In Grodek.

MA: That's right. And later, in 1940 came out that everyone, they gave us a choice, in Donbass. Donbass, that's a coal region, coal mine region, to emigrate to, to go to Donbass. Everybody has to register and go. And...

JF: Wait, the choice was in Grodek whether or not you would go to...

MA: No. They gave you a list of the cities in this Donbass region.

JF: Oh, I see. I see.

MA: So you could go in there and you could pick your city, but only in Donbass.

JF: I see.

MA: In Donbass is the coal region, the coal mine region.

JF: So you were there for a year before you had to move on again.

MA: Almost a year.

JF: Almost a year.

MA: Almost a year.

JF: And which, what town did you pick?

MA: I didn't go.

JF: You didn't go. What happened?

MA: I didn't...want to go to Donbass, to Russia. I was thinking, if I go there, I never come back. So, in the summer, around June, they started catching every, every young man they saw on the streets they caught and they checked him if he didn't have, if he wasn't born in this, if he didn't have there no documents. You see, if he was from the

other side, what they call it, the *Bezhnetses*, that's mean, how do you call it in...English would it be? Like a foreigner what came so you...

JF: An immigrant.

MA: An immigrant, yeah. Every immigrant they took them, they arrested them, and sent them, sent him to Donbass. So, we were hiding. We were, took to the woods. I took to the woods.

JF: You took to the woods along with anybody else in the family?

MA: No, because the rest wasn't, because, and my brother-in-law, they wouldn't do it, because he is married. He has children.

JF: I see. So the rest of your family was not put in the position of having to make this move.

MA: No. That's right. But I was in danger. I couldn't, you see, they came checked on the houses and in the city I couldn't walk around there freely, so I was hiding.

JF: Did they want you to become a Russian citizen?

MA: A Russian, see right away you became a Russian citizen. They gave you a Russian passport and...

JF: You had no choice about that?

MA: No.

JF: That was automatic?

MA: That's automatic. You cannot...no, if you go, you became a Russian citizen.

JF: O.K.

MA: If they give you a Russian passport then you go.

JF: If you went to Donbass.

MA: That's right.

JF: O.K. And you were resisting...

MA: I resisting. It's in a lot of other young people resisted, and we were hiding in the woods and...

JF: Now who were you hiding in the woods with? Was there a partisan group?

MA: Yeah, partisans. No, we, I wouldn't call it a partisan group because a partisan group fights. You know what I mean.

JF: O.K.

MA: We didn't have nobody to fight. All what we have to do is to hide, not to be caught.

JF: O.K. All right.

MA: You know, we didn't do any damage to nobody. You know what I mean?

JF: O.K., right.

MA: A partisan is a fighting group.

JF: Unaggressive, yours, yeah.

MA: Yeah. We were just to, you know, be safe, just to hide not to get caught and not to be sent to Donbass.

JF: How many of you were there?

MA: We were a group of, oh, there were a couple, there were other, yeah, our group was about eight, nine people. It varies, you know, if some of them get back and we connected with other groups.

JF: Mainly young men were involved?

MA: Mainly young men. Young and single.

JF: The married men were not involved in this.

MA: Involved, no.

JF: O.K.

MA: So, on a Fri-, yeah, and my sister's daughter, she was at that time about 11 years old, ten or eleven years old. You see a child like this, they didn't look. She was the go-between. She knew where we are.

JF: I see. Did she help you get food?

MA: Sometimes they helped us out something there. We mostly lived from the, we were fishing. [chuckles]

JF: And where would you sleep? Did you...

MA: It was in June months. That was no news to sleep on an open...

JF: You just slept in the open.

MA: In the open, that's all. That was no news. No, I mean, yeah, I was used to it, since the war started.

JF: Were you being sought after, though? Was being in the open in the woods dangerous, in terms of being found?

MA: Yeah, if, well we have to have lookouts, you know. In the woods, if you're in the woods you can hear every sound, you know. So anyhow, around Friday, on a Friday night, my sister's little girl would come, came, and she contacted us, and she said, "They loaded the whole town on boxcars, to, you know, ship them out, and we don't know where."

JF: So your family was on those boxcars? Except for her?

MA: She was too. She was, she sneaked away from the boxcar. She sneaked away and she told me this. So I was thinking if they take Mother and I don't know even where. I went and I voluntarily, you know, I gave myself up.

JF: To the boxcar.

MA: To the boxcar. And that's how they shipped us to Siberia.

JF: What about the other men who were with you in the forest? Did any of them also go back?

MA: Some of them did, some of them didn't. The ones who did, I heard from them later. And they who didn't, I never heard of them.

JF: You mean the ones who stayed in the forest were never heard from again. How long were you actually in the forest before the, this deportation took place?

MA: About a week or so.

JF: About a week.

MA: Probably, because I don't know, I didn't keep, you know, one thing about my life, I never kept a diary. [chuckles]

JF: Yeah. So you're talking about the winter now, of 1940?

MA: No, no, it's still summer. It's still, they took...

JF: This is the summer.

MA: It's summer. They took us to Siberia in summer. We arrived, to Siberia we arrived just in time for the winter.

JF: In the summer of 1940?

MA: 1940, yeah.

JF: And can you tell me about that trip on the boxcar?

MA: Yeah. We were 35 people. It's usually a boxcar what they transport, you see, in 1939 in the war, they still used horses a lot of. They usually transported eight horses in this, in a boxcar like this. There was a...door in the middle, you see. And here was staying four horses, and here four horses.

JF: And 35 people were in there?

MA: And we were, here it was was made shelves, like a shelf here was made. People were underneath and on top. Underneath and on top. And both sides were like shelves made and with 35 people we were packed like sardines. And the first couple days they didn't open the boxcar even.

JF: Did they give you any food?

MA: Not in the first couple days. Till we reached the Russian soil. They were afraid. We were still on the Polish soil, you know. Plus the first couple days we were staying and we moved slowly and you see in every town they maneuvered them, put in another couple boxcars, another couple. Because they formed a big transport. I don't know how many cars there were there, 30 or 40 cars.

JF: These were primarily Jews that they were transporting?

MA: There were some *goyim*, some...

JF: Poles?

MA: Some Poles too, yeah. Yeah, yeah, there were some Poles.

JF: Did you have any...

MA: Not much. Not, very little.

JF: Did you have any idea where you were going?

MA: No. No, they didn't tell us. [laughs] And, again, the first stop when they opened was Kiev.

JF: When they were well inside Russia.

MA: Inside Russia, yeah. Stopped at Kiev. We had little windows we could open. And the Jews in Kiev find out that they're carrying Jews. The whole town was there. They throw on us food. And they were kicked by the soldiers, you know? And with, this.

JF: They were beaten with clubs?

MA: Yeah. But they, with a...

JF: Were you able to get any of the food?

MA: Yeah, oh yeah. You know what it mean, that's a Jew?

JF: Mmm.

MA: I'm sorry. I cannot tell. I [begins to weep; tape off then on]

JF: How long were you on this boxcar?

MA: We were six weeks. No, no, no, no. In the boxcars where we were three weeks. Six weeks took the whole trip. We arrived in three weeks later we arrived in Irkutsk.

JF: How do you spell that?

MA: Irkutsk. I-R-K-U-C-K. [Irkutsk]

JF: Now, when you say that you were three weeks on the train but the whole trip was six weeks, does that mean you stopped and stayed in certain places for a while along the way?

MA: No, no, no, no, no. Later...we took a boat. And after the boat we took trucks. And after the trucks we took another boat.

JF: About how many people do you think were in this group?

MA: It's 2,500. You see, we went, we came to Irkutsk. From Irkutsk we got on the river Angara.

JF: Angara?

MA: Angara.

JF: A-N-G-A-R-A.

MA: Yeah. Yeah, I can show you on the map this. Angara. Now, the Angara, yeah. Now here goes a river called Lena.

JF: Lena?

MA: Lena River, yeah, Lena.

JF: L-E-N-...

MA: Le-, L-E-N-A.

JF: L-E-N-A.

MA: Yeah. The Lena River flows into the north Russian, you know, near Alaska. That's [unclear]. Now, we got on on the Angara in Irkutsk. And we went till Krasnoyarsk.

JF: This was on a boat. You went on the...

MA: On the boat, till Krasnoyarsk.

JF: K-R-A-S-N-O-Y-A-R-S-K.

MA: Yeah. That was the city Krasnoyarsk here. In Krasnoyarsk we got off, and they took us with trucks. Not buses. Trucks. [chuckles]

JF: Right?

MA: To a city on the Lena River. It's called Zajarsk.

JF: Z-A-J-A-R-S-K.

MA: That kind, Zajarsk.

JF: Which was on the Lena River.

MA: On the Lena River.

JF: And then you took another boat?

MA: Yeah. And took another boat on the Lena River, note, and later, here, it comes out a river it's called Vitim, W-I-T-I-M. And we turned around to the Vitim and we went to a city it's called Bodaybo.

JF: B-O-D-Y-...

MA: B-O-...

JF: B-O-?

MA: B-O-, yeah. Bodaybo. This city is a...is the capital of the gold region there.

JF: Now on this trip, did the Russians begin to give you any kind of regular food or water?

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. On the way they fed us, yeah.

JF: They fed you?

MA: Yeah, once we came on the Russian territory.

JF: Their treatment toward you changed.

MA: Yeah, every day they gave us a couple loaves of bread and a couple buckets of soup.

JF: Of soup.

MA: Yeah.

JF: And they'd let you out of the train for a little while during the day or no?

MA: They opened up the train to do the, you know something, on the trains there were men and women and girls and boys and there was no latrine on the train. You know, I mean...

JF: No latrine.

MA: Yeah. Now, when they let us out, everybody had to do something. It didn't matter a boy or a girl was there. One next to the other, it didn't mean nothing. You lost your whole... The girls, once we got taken on this train and no girl had a period till...way, till a couple years later, you know, till the war was over practically. Some of them were...thinking, you know, the younger kids knew right away something's wrong [unclear] a change in life is so easy. [laughs] And you wasn't any more a man and you wasn't a woman. You was a, you became an "it" right away.

JF: On that train trip.

MA: Yeah. You became converted to an animal.

JF: Were the Russians rough with you on the train or were they...

MA: In the beginning, yeah.

JF: In the beginning meaning when you were still in Polish territory.

MA: In Polish territory, yeah. Oh, they were very rough.

JF: And what happened when you hit Russian territory, they changed?

MA: Mmm?

JF: They were different once you hit Russian...

MA: Yeah, they changed, you know, the Russians changed too.

JF: Oh, the people changed, themselves.

MA: I mean...

JF: There were different guards.

MA: The, that's right.

JF: I see.

MA: You see, the guards changed too. And they, this, oh yeah, you know, we were...escorted all the time with the, they hold you with a...

JF: A gun?

MA: This knife, was a bayonet, you know, like would be a [laughs] who knows what kind of dangerous people we are!

JF: So, this Bodaybo, this...

MA: Bodaybo, yeah.

JF: Was the town, that was your final destination in Siberia?

MA: Not quite, but that was the final trip, yeah. And from there, and there, they again gave us a list of villages. One is 40 kilometer, one is 60, one is 80, and you can get together groups to be with.

JF: You could decide which village you were going to go to?

MA: Yeah, to sign up.

JF: So all of the people, these 2500 people that you're describing on this trip, were people who had, did not take on Russian citizenship.

MA: That's right.

JF: And this was the reason for the deportation.

MA: That's right. If I would have, you see, if you took Russian citizenship, so you had to leave right away anyhow to Donbass. They didn't leave you there. You had to leave anyhow, right away. So, we didn't take. Now later when we came there, they, you had to decide where to go. And people right start organizing the groups, you know.

JF: Families could stay together that way.

MA: Hmm?

JF: Families could stay together?

MA: Families could stay together. And you didn't know from one way where is better, where is worse. You didn't know. So I went, I asked Mother, "Mother, what should I do?" She says, "What can you do? If you sign up somewhere, you pick out this, how about if it will not be good there? So you will blame yourself. So let's wait what will be so at least I will not blame myself what happens."

JF: You mean, she wanted you to put the decision in the hands of the authorities, or...

MA: No, to the destiny.

JF: The destiny.

MA: That's right. In Yiddish, is *héys'n, der goy-r'l*. Destiny, whatever happens, let's hope for the best. And you know, people start and all of them, in meantime here, they fed us good there, when we were staying there. So...

JF: Where did you stay?

MA: In a...stable, an empty stable was there, a couple of stables. I don't know.

JF: Did you meet...

MA: It was still warm. It wasn't cold yet.

JF: Did you meet any of the native Russian population on your trip?

MA: We met them, but we, they weren't allowed to no associate with us. Oh no, they weren't allowed to associate with us. And we didn't know Russian language at all either.

JF: So where did you end up, and how?

MA: So, later, everybody went, every day was left a transport with people and every day was less people and less people. And later it was a small group left, about...around 150, 160 families was left. So they, what, we didn't say where to go. So they took us on a place. It's called Sinuga.

JF: How is that spelled?

MA: Sinuga.

JF: S-I-N-...

MA: Sinuga.

JF: S-I-N-U-G-A.

MA: Yeah, Sinuga. And this was the capital of all those villages. And...

JF: What does that mean? Was it a fairly large town, then?

MA: It was a village. It wasn't a town.

JF: It was still a village.

MA: A village. Now all that, all the villages there is...on the bank of the river, you know. You travel yourself from one to the other one. Now this was...just in the middle, you see. Like here is the river. This was in the middle. And all other villages were here or here, here or here, here or here.

JF: So it was the capital because it was centrally located, not because...

MA: Centrally located. And over there was the main bakery and over there was the main office. And you know, that was the main, that was the best place and later we find out it was that.

JF: Oh. Now this was on the...Vitim River?

MA: Witim River, yeah. Now, there was something else. The main work there was to lumberjack, to cut woods. This, the village was here. And the thing was surrounded with mountains. This was mountains. And it's called the the Tundras, the mountains.

JF: The Tundras.

MA: Yeah. And on the top of the mountains was barracks where the workers stayed there and cut the wood. So all the young people had to go to the mountain. So, my mother and my brother-in-law—and they left too, because he had children—they gave him work there. And I had to go on top of the mountain. And I was 15 kilometer from the village.

JF: I see. So you weren't actually living in the village with the rest of your family there.

MA: No, I was...on top of the mountain. And over there it was only a barrack, just a barrack, that's all. We went every day to work and, ...

JF: What kind of housing did your family get in the village?

MA: It was a barrack. You see?

JF: In the village itself.

MA: Yeah. It was a couple, or, plenty barracks like this, you know?

JF: Uh huh.

MA: And the barrack has here, [drawing] here was a little hallway in the barrack.
You see?

JF: Mmm hmm.

MA: Now, and here was like, like closets.

JF: So there was like a central hallway with...

MA: Yeah.

JF: Small...

MA: Closets.

JF: Closets off of the main corridor.

MA: Yeah. One minute. And here, here, here. O.K.

JF: And this is where your mother.

MA: Yeah, all the way, all the way, one minute. And that was how they, that's
was a kitchen here.

JF: With one kitchen in a corner.

MA: One kitchen in the corner, yeah. And here lived, depends about some of
them five, some of them six, some of them were eighteen. Well, so it was two kitchens in
the middle, you know. And they just squeezed in nine, ten people in...

JF: In each of these closets.

MA: In each closet.

JF: Were there, there were beds in these closets?

MA: No, shelves.

JF: Shelves.

MA: And we were very lucky. I told you I came from a lucky family. We were
ten people in our family, so we were by ourselves. And can you imagine in a small little
thing you put together a couple families? Sometimes three families even. It was murder.

JF: So, the rest of your family, except for you, stayed in this barrack.

MA: Yeah, stayed in this barrack, and I went there. And I could, every other Sat-
urday I could come home. Saturday after I finished work I had to walk [laughs].

JF: Right.

MA: Yeah.

JF: Now what...was the experience that your family had in this village with the
native...

Tape three, side one:

JF: This is tape three, side one, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler on No-
vember 10, 1982, with Josey Fisher. Mr. Adler, we were discussing the relationship that
your family had with the native population in the town.

MA: They related very nice to us. They practically worshipped us.

JF: Now why did...

MA: Because I lived through my time when I was born, we, it wasn't electric. And I saw in my time electric coming through, even water pipes. And now, when we came to Siberia, we were pushed back like a couple of hundred years, not only electric. There wasn't even lamps. There wasn't even candles! It was such a backward...

JF: What did they use for light?

MA: A little bit, if they could get of a little bit fat.

JF: Fat?

MA: Suet, with a, you know, every, the Russian standard jacket for the winter, the Siberian, is with cotton inside. You know?

JF: Lined with cotton?

MA: Lined with cotton. They pulled out a piece of cotton and made a wick out of it and [chuckles]. And all of a sudden there came people, they, you know, a lot of people made a fortune if somebody had a pleated dress. They straightened out the dress and cut out half of it and they paid a fortune for it. Oh, they, for everything, for ours, it was a, they never saw it a shirt, especially the women, a bra. They gave away everything. They never saw it. Or for a, you know, the Russians, some of them, they were very well off. They were, but they never saw a luxury thing. There was...a public bath, you know, what every Saturday they heated up and when they saw, when the Russians girls saw the girls how they wear, you know, panties, you know, they went crazy about it. They never, they all wear men's clothes, the girls. And they saw something, you know, they never saw it before. They...recognized ourselves as...they knew we are more cultured than they are.

JF: So they treated you with respect?

MA: Oh, very respected. They, it's a matter of fact, if it wouldn't be for them, there wouldn't be so many survivors. They helped us with a, they were so nice. They, I have no words for them.

JF: How did they help you? What do you mean?

MA: They helped us with everything, with the work, and they, and a matter of fact the Russians, they didn't, the authority I mean. I mean, when I talk about the Russians I mean about the authority. They...didn't tell us, when we came there, they gave us a saw and ax and going out to down trees. And we didn't know how to. [laughs] We didn't know how and what. It's a matter of fact, when we, the first day, I remember, so we saw in this other tree and then the other side and around and the tree didn't...move. So we left it go and started on another one. We start sawing and nothing, we couldn't let down a tree. And so we started a bunch of trees and nothing happened. And when we came home, they asked us, "How many trees did you let down?" [laughs]

JF: And you didn't, you hadn't cut any.

MA: Nothing. So the next day we came back, the meantime, in the nighttime it was a wind and it knocked down one tree and like a chain reaction knocked the other tree together. And a guy was there, you know, a very religious guy. He says, "Thank You, God. God opens, He gave." Now, it didn't take long. We learned...you know, in a hard way we learned how to let down trees. And later we, [unclear], we let down forty to fifty trees a day.

JF: Did the native Russian population help you learn the ways [unclear]?

MA: Yeah, but we did, in fact, we were mingled with them, you know? Later, when we got together. You see, they kept us separate. They kept us separate from them.

JF: Oh I see. I see.

MA: And oh, later, they have, later they were happy to work with us. They were happy to work with us. A matter of fact I became a brigadier for a whole Russian group, when we, I was a one, one only with the Russian bunkers. And I was there, I was in charge over that.

JF: So the Russian authorities put you in that position?

MA: Yeah, in charge over them. It was on a whole story how I got there, how they took me under them, it's a very long story. [laughs]

JF: How did the Russians feel about having you, as a Jew, [unclear].

MA: They were glad to have us and they felt sorry for us, because they, all of them were sent one way or another way, you know what I mean there. Over there, there wasn't just plain natives. They all had...

JF: They were all sent, had been sent to Siberia.

MA: Of course. They all had been sent, and...that's doesn't mean that they were criminals.

JF: So, in [unclear]...

MA: The same way how we were, so they felt sorry for us. You see, they were all...in the same war, so that's how they felt sorry for us. And it doesn't make any difference [unclear]. You know, if you came to a Russian house, he wouldn't sit down to eat without inviting you if you wouldn't join him. And he shared with you the last piece of bread. And I will tell you something else. If they sent me somewhere, and I, and the night falls, the first house, I didn't care who that is, the first house. I went to them and I felt like home. And they put you up. You know what I mean?

JF: Among these people, were there any Jewish Russians who had been supp-...

MA: We find, we, yeah, the leaders. All the leaders were Jewish.

JF: Did you have a chance to talk to them and find out about...

MA: Oh many, oh sure, oh sure.

JF: And what did you find out about their experience?

MA: You see, the Jewish people, a lot of them, were sent, as leaders. And a lot of them joined up voluntarily because if you came voluntarily you had a priority. The...secretary of the party was a Jew. The secretary of the party is one of the biggest jobs there. And there were...

JF: Of the local party, you mean.

MA: Of the local party there. And for the whole region, yeah. And a matter of fact...no, no, in that village there wasn't this. In, but the war, when we, you know, the first when they brought us over the war, there was there, that was a nice big city. But our people didn't live there. They didn't let us. We had to move on. But over there it was the secretary of the party was a Jew. And, oh, it was, him I met, and I met the guy who is in charge of the food supply. He was a Jew. Now, how did we meet this guy? I must tell you

a little interesting story. When we came to get the boards, the first day we came there, so, two woman, a one young one and one older woman came to us, and they, they ask me. Yiddish, they talk Yiddish, especially the old woman talked a very good Yiddish. I cannot tell you how the old woman, how old she was, but she was a pretty old woman. And she asked me if it is anybody from the *chevra kaddisha* [Jewish burial society]. Yeah, by my mother, I told you was always in *chevra kaddisha*, and there was other women there, and other men. And she took him. And she asked him a favor, when she dies, she has shrouds ready. When she dies, to promise her to give her a Jewish burial. So, they promised her. Next day, this younger woman came, and she died. They took her and gave her a Jewish burial and her son, he didn't say who he is, what he is. Her son was there. And he said a beautiful *kaddish*, and he shed a tear. He was to the burial. A couple days later, one minute, a couple days later, the paper comes out. You know, over there, everybody digs into somebody else, you know. That secretary of the party, his mother died, and he gave her a Jewish burial.

JF: Was he criticized for that?

MA: Oh yeah.

JF: Yeah.

MA: Criticized, and he was sent away.

JF: Away where?

MA: Nobody knew. They sent him away. Nobody knew. Meantime, when we were in the this, you know, when the war started, when Hitler attacked Russia, it was very critical and we were very mistreated. And we had a guy who was in charge of us. Came a new guy. And he very mistreated us. He didn't...want to give us nothing, not even food. "Don't you know," he says, "a war goes on there!"

JF: This was in 1941.

MA: That was in 1942 already. In 1942 already. He says, "A war goes on!" And what can you do? Just suffer. Meantime, a ration guy comes, a Russian native. And he says, "Why don't you write a letter to Moscow? I'm sure Moscow wouldn't...they wouldn't be too happy to see what they do to you people. Why don't you write a letter?" And he helped us write the letter, a complaint letter to Moscow, and he knew the address where to write. And it took about six months, and we got an answer. And they said that they sent out a man to investigate the whole thing. And it took another couple of weeks, and the man came. And you know who the man came? The same guy! [laughs] You see, they sent him away, and he became bigger! He became the head in Moscow somewhere!

JF: You mean the man whose mother had died?

MA: Yeah.

JF: He was the one who came back! Oh.

MA: He came back to investigate, and he settled that. Oh, he was so happy to see us. And he, and the things improved.

JF: Now, were you getting any kind of news while you were in Siberia? Of the war?

MA: Of course...we got the news, but we got, it came Russian paper there once in, a Russian paper came, a *Pravda* or is just a, the paper was three, four months old.

JF: Was any of the news of what was going on as far as, say, concentration camps were going on?

MA: No!!! We didn't know from nothing. Oh no, oh no.

JF: None of that information got to you.

MA: No, no, no, no, not, but, you see, you see, now, in 19-, we were taken in 1940, right? Into Siberia. In 1941 the Germans attacked Russia. And in 1942 they were near Stalingrad already I think. And by 1942 the tensions against us eased a little because they find out we're not, you see, as long as they were...in a treatment with the Germans, you know, they treated us, like the Germans wanted, you know.

JF: I see. So when the Germans invaded, you became allies.

MA: We became, that was...one of the happiest days in our life. You see, it's funny, but that's the way it was. Because we knew that Germany will not influence them any more.

JF: Did you find out about the *Einsatzgruppen*, the German units that were coming in and killing the Jews in the Russian, the front lines in the Russian areas? You didn't hear about any of that.

MA: No, no. We didn't know nothing. I'll tell you when we find out. So...in 194-, the end of 1942, they already, it formed, a Polish government formed that time, in exile, with the general underseer, the head of the government. And they eased, I think, on us, very easy. We were not any more prisoners.

JF: The Russians saw you differently at that point.

MA: Yeah, yeah. You see...

JF: Starting in 1941?

MA: No, it took a year for the, yeah, till a Polish government settled, found. And in the end of 1942, around in the end, you see, we could, if we would leave the villages to go to the main city to, where they were, you could.

JF: You could travel between cities.

MA: Yeah, not, and but that's how far you could travel, that's all. Farther you couldn't. You could go there. And so me, and a niece of my...my sister's daughter, we got out from the village on foot. It was about 180 kilometer was it. It was still winter at that time. It was still snow. It was, you know when that was, could be, in Jewish is it, when...about a month before Purim. It was...I guess in February. You see, only in the winter you can travel. In the summer you cannot travel there. Because there was no highways. There was no...that was the reason we never drive south in the woods, you know what I mean?

JF: The ice was easier to travel on than the mud.

MA: And the ice, you see, the river became the highway.

JF: I see.

MA: You can, on the river you traveled.

JF: You could walk on the river? Or you would...

MA: Trains are going on the river, what with tractors, they walk on there, she says. Tractors! That's the main highway in the winter. You see, we here, when a snow falls down, everything gets paralyzed. Over there, when the snow stops, everything gets paralyzed in summer time.

JF: Oh, oh.

MA: And when they, once the snow falls and everything gets frozen, everything becomes alive again. The horses, in the summer time they let them loose because they have no use for them. They get, and once the snow falls down they came back by themselves because they cannot find food in the woods. So...we got on our way and we came to Bodaybo. And I got a job, I right away find a job as a stevedore there. And later...and the niece became, and we got a little room there. And anyhow, you see, again, you could do it. You know, here, you cannot do all things like this. Because if you came in a terrible, where you go. Over there, to any Jew, you walk in there, they put you up and they... Now let me tell you something. I had a brother-in-law what he was in Korea. And he was in the Korean War. I mean, one was in the Korean War anyhow. But he was sent from the Washington an advisor to the Korean government for two years. He set up the...federal reserve system there. He's on economics. He works for the government. And he was there two years. And while he was there I married his sister, you know. And I got married here. And when he came back, he has two more brothers and two sisters. And he decided he wants to stay with me. I was happy. Yeah, I didn't, I wasn't so furnished, the house wasn't so big here. I didn't have such, I didn't live here at that time. It was a smaller house. So...I didn't have a house...a room for him. So we took the double mattress, you know, took off and put this in the living room on the floor, and they slept on the mattress. So, we were sitting and talking, and he says, "You will wonder why I want to stay with you and not with my brothers and my sisters," he says. "They are American-born," he says, "they didn't got through what we," he says. "I got through in Korea," he says. "I can't imagine what you got through," he says. "To you it doesn't mean nothing I took the mattress." To him it would be I hadn't got a separate room for you, you know what I mean?" So that's the Russian people. As long as they had a piece of floor, you didn't have to know him. You, I mean, if he was a *goy* or a *yid* or a this, they put you up anywhere. So that's the reason I didn't, whether I came the first house, I walked in and they treated me like a guest, you know?

JF: Let me ask you a question, before we get to your move here, which was in late 1942. Were you able to practice any of your religious tradition?

MA: No. No, you was not allowed. Nothing whatsoever. A matter of fact, a couple of people got, you see, over there it was a jail too. Put you in jail. Especially it was a rabbi there. The rabbi from Lanset, oh, he got, they tortured him practically. And later they sent him away. I don't know where, we don't know where he wind up even.

JF: They tortured him for trying to practice Judaism in, while he was in Russia?

MA: Yeah, yeah, they, for some reason they find out he was a rabbi too. Yeah. And they caught him *davening* [praying]. Yeah, no, you wasn't allowed. And now...

JF: So you couldn't even do it in secret?

MA: In secret, yeah. In secret. You could do it in secret, of course. If it's secret, if nobody knows. In secret you can do everything in Russia. You see, when you do something wrong, when you get caught doing something wrong, they don't say you did something wrong. They say, "He got caught."

JF: Were you able to get a *minyan* [group of 10 men necessary to conduct public prayers] together or...

MA: No!

JF: [unclear] do it alone.

MA: No, no. Maybe, well, it's very, later we got a *minyan*. I get to it. You see, when we were sent back from Russia, from Siberia, and we go near Stalingrad.

JF: But at the time, let's wait for that. At the time when you were...

MA: No, you couldn't get a *minyan*.

JF: In these villages.

MA: No, no.

JF: You just, whatever you could do privately alone.

MA: Yeah, we got a *minyan* now and then we got, if somebody had *yartzeit*, we did it. A couple of people stayed watch outside. And we got a *minyan*. Oh yeah, we got, we got together a *minyan* every time now and then. But...

JF: Was there any way of teaching the young children about their religion?

MA: At home you could do it. I guess you could do it and...you didn't have the time for it. You're all day at work. You came home. You were knocked out like a, this.

JF: What about regular schooling? Were the children permitted to go to public school?

MA: Yeah, yeah, it was a regular school. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was a school, yeah.

JF: And they learned Russian, I suppose?

MA: Russian. Right away Russian.

JF: Secular subjects?

MA: Yeah, yeah. I remember my, a cousin of my, he went to school. He came home. He says, "Well, I find out when...Stalin was born. I don't know when he will die, but I know when he was born." [laughs]

JF: All right, so now we have you in Boday-, Bodaybo.

MA: Now I came back to Bodaybo.

JF: And...

MA: And later my parents came. And I worked as a stevedore there. And I'm sure God forgives me. I was a *gonef* [Yiddish for thief]. You know, to work as a stevedore was, it was like, the most, the richest guy there. You know, I could take 50 pounds, 50 kilo. What I'm talking pounds? Kilo. You know, in the pants. One thing I'm gonna tell you something. When I started to work as a stevedore there, we lived in a small, a small little, it was a room and a little foyer here. And you know, it's a way nobody ever locks the door. It was nothing what to steal there [laughs].

JF: Right.

MA: But, they didn't, nobody bothered you. You go away and nobody to take your, the, our *yiddim* wouldn't do it, and the Russians, they were very, no, not like here. Not like, you know. So, we had there, and my mother was very religious. And we had, from a...burlap sack, you know, she opened up the burlap sack and she bleached it in the sun and made it for a table cloth Saturday to have a tablecloth, you know.

JF: What kind of sack was this?

MA: A burlap, burlap. You don't know what burlap is?

JF: Oh, burlap! Burlap!

MA: Burlap.

JF: O.K., a burlap sack, right, O.K.

MA: Yeah, yeah, it just is brown.

JF: Yes.

MA: She, you know how to bleach in the sun if you want to bleach.

JF: Yes.

MA: You soak it in water and you hang it out in the sun. And she made a table cloth because Saturday, we didn't have what to eat, but a tablecloth has to be.

JF: O.K.

MA: So, listen to it. So I worked in the shift, in the afternoon shift. I went to work around 12:00. No, around 4:00 was it. 4:00 and you worked till 12:00 at night. And while I went to work—that was on a Saturday night—while I went to work, I came there. That's was the second day work. I know the first day the Russian lady, I was between Russian ladies. I was one, they looked on me funny. And they didn't know at that time a flour being loaded. You know, they looked at me funny. Why, I didn't know what it is. The second day, that was a Friday night. Now Saturday night I went to work. And they start talking to me. They find out who I am. You see, they didn't see so many people hardly. Now, they were afraid from the beginning maybe I am a spy, you know? Later they find out I'm...

JF: I see.

MA: So they all took stole flour, you know? Took flour. And they were equipped with this, with the clothes too, there.

JF: What, like pockets in their pants or...

MA: No, no, no. Double pants.

JF: Double pants, O.K.

MA: Double pants. And the besides in the pockets too. You know, any way you took it. So I was like this, I went like this, you know. And they look on me and they were thinking, so, in order to be safe, so I have to steal too. Because if I don't steal, they...

JF: Ah, then they'll be to...

MA: So they practically forced me. You see, he practically, one guy, they took the belt here and tied it up here so that flour wouldn't run down, you know?

JF: Right.

MA: And [unclear]. And the other guy poured on here, full with [laughing].

JF: With flour. So your shirt, your top was full of flour.

MA: Yeah, yeah. I had a jacket too.

JF: Yeah.

MA: And I went home, and on the way home, and oh, this one [laughing] it's like a bandage with... Anyhow, when I came home, and, Mother didn't wait for me because at 12:00 you came home. The door was open. I came in by myself. And I saw what to do with the flour, how to take it off. I didn't want to waste. Once I have it, I didn't want to waste like this. So I took this table cloth what she made, you know. It was folded, it was right there. It was Saturday night right after, when the *Shabbos* ends she folded this and put it aside. So I took this and put this on the floor. And I kneeled down, you know what I mean, and I...[laughs] took the flour out. [laughs]

JF: And emptied your shirt onto the sack.

MA: Onto the sack, and I...

JF: Tied it.

MA: Tied it up and put it on the table and I went to sleep. And Mother got up, at least she said *Tilim* [psalms] every day. She gets up, she sees something white on the floor and she looks, and she looks at the flour. And she knew right away that I stole it. She didn't wait till I got up. But she started beating me, "I don't want my son a *ganef!* [thief] And I don't care!" She says, "There is no excuse for *ganevis* [robberies]." And she, you know, and what can you do. You don't want get a beating, so you run out. I wouldn't hit her back. And keep on staying and being a punching bag? So I run out and, without shoes I run out. And I wanted, you know, that was Sunday morning was it, and Sunday morning is usually, about every Sunday is a bazaar, the black market day. So I went on the bazaar and I walked around and walked around. And at 4:00 I had to go to work. It was already around 9:00 in the morning. I was thinking, "I have to get some sleep!" So, I go near the house. I didn't dare walk in. As I come near, as my...sister's boy, the youngest boy, he was at that time, I don't know, about five, six years old. And he sees me, and he runs! He said, "*Oy! Mi esst un mi esst...* [We are eating and we are eating...]" You know, they made, how do you call it...they mix it with water just like *matzas*, you know. And, only we didn't have an oven, on the stove, just that. "*Oy!*" He says, "it's so good *kemach* [flour]." And when I came in, Mother start crying. She says, "I hoped God will watch over you." And from that time, I, every time I had a chance, I stole. And I made our own rule, I made, just to use it for food. Never, never for any luxury.

JF: So you would, would you sell some of what you got?

MA: Yeah.

JF: You would sell it.

MA: Sell, and buy a pair shoes. Sell and buy a shirt or something. Oh, oh sure, I brought so much home that it was impossible to finish eating! [laughs] And that was a fortune over there. Whatever I want, sometimes rice, sometimes sugar, some, anything. It's a funny thing. You know, once they gave us clothes, they gave us. So once I bring home a pair, a *valenkis*. [phonetic] You know, *valenkis* is high boots but not from leather. It's like pressed wool what they wear there in Siberia.

JF: Pressed wool.

MA: Yeah, pressed wool. When I came home, I had it, you know, on my shoulders that... So, the boy, you know, who met me, so he says to me, "Did you work, did you unload today *valenkis*?" He was thinking I was [laughs].

JF: Oh!

MA: They knew everything what I unload, I...

JF: You bring home, huh?

MA: I...oh, sometimes butter, sometimes soap. Soap was a biggest profit.

JF: Was there any control on the part of the authorities of the black market?

MA: Yeah. Well...

JF: On the black market?

MA: No, the black market, you see, the black market keep them alive.

JF: That was a way of life.

MA: That's a way of life. They couldn't con-, if they control it, the whole thing would, with the whole country would be a disaster. You see, that's the one way, even the big shot, he sold his things there. You know what I mean?

JF: Even the big shop?

MA: The big shot. You know what I mean? Like a...

JF: Oh, the big shot.

MA: Yeah, the big shot. You see, he made the money there too, because that's how he could get rid of the, you see, he got an access to...certain things. So how does he cash them in? So he had his agent what he sold them, and they sold it to him. And if he closed down then...the black, the whole country, anywhere you go in there was a black market in Russia. But anyway, anyway, and that's usually near the railroad station.

JF: So this bazaar that was on Sunday was-

Tape three, side two:

JF: This is tape three, side one [two], of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler on November 10, 1982. We were saying that the Sunday bazaar, the black market bazaar, was open. There was no supervision? There was no [unclear] who would break up...

MA: People brought up things and they traded and they bought. They did, you know, in Bodaybo where I lived, that was the headquarters of the gold mines, the main, of this, of the gold mines. Because, and the others, and we were on this side of the Vitim and on the other side on the mountains, there were gold mines. And how can you control a guy? If you caught him stealing a piece of gold in the mine, he got punished. He got, I don't know, ten years, or how much. It was very dangerous. The same thing like if they caught us stealing a piece of food where we worked. But in the same time there was a store. It called a gold redemption store. Was in this store you could get everything for gold. If you, they didn't take money. No ration there. Everything had a price in gold.

JF: So they would arrest someone who was...

MA: Hold on a second.

JF: Yeah.

MA: If I would work in the gold mine, right, and I stole gold there, I stole a piece of, I came across, you know, when I dig the gold up, find a piece of gold and I take it with me?

JF: Yeah. Yeah?

MA: You know what I mean? And I take it with me. If they catch me, they put me in jail. And if I run, and if I touch the knob of the gold redemption store, they cannot touch me nothing. I, you see, we thought...

JF: So if you can get away with it...

MA: Yeah. If you came to the store, to the redemption store, they don't ask you where you got it, from where you did. Because as long as you turn it over, [chuckles]...

JF: So the issue was if you could get away with it.

MA: That's right.

JF: And they ended up getting it back anyway.

MA: That's right. That's right. The same thing is with the bazaar. They didn't care. On the bazaar you could buy, you could buy everything.

JF: Could they have caught you stealing the flour or sugar or whatever, as you were doing it, and arrested you?

MA: That's right. That's right.

JF: You were in danger, then, while you were actually taking it.

MA: That's right. You see, and if they came in my house and they find the flour or the sugar, I bought it on the bazaar.

JF: Then you were safe already, if you got it home.

MA: If you got it home, I could be safe, yeah. Because if I...

JF: But what about while...

MA: Said, if I don't admit [chuckles]...

JF: But what about walking from the warehouse or whatever to your home? If they caught you...

MA: Oh, oh.

JF: Then you were...

MA: Well, they usually, they didn't do it. No, no, I don't know. I, a matter of fact, I...came once home, I went once home from work, and the guy who was in charge on our base and he went from a meeting somewhere in the night time and he stopped and he talked to me, "What did you do today?" He says, "What did you unload today?" I say, "Was soap unloaded." So, he says to me, "You know," he says, "my house didn't see a piece of soap I don't know how long." The way he said it, you know, I...so I took the half and I gave it to him.

JF: You took it out of your shirt?

MA: Yeah. And I gave him a piece of soap.

JF: How long did...

MA: And...one minute, we're not finished.

JF: Yes?

MA: So, in a couple days, his wife was...came there to...receive the husband. And I didn't know her. I didn't know who she is. She didn't know who I am. She says, "Where is Mishkah?" They called me Mishkah at that time. "Where is Mishkah?" Ah, where Mishkah is. And I say, "I am Mishkah." You see, she grabs me and she kisses me and she says, "Thank you for the soap." [laughs]

JF: How long did you live doing this in...

MA: In Siberia?

JF: In Siberia, yeah.

MA: In Siberia? Well, all together, in Russia, six years, since I was taken to...Siberia. That's mean, because in 1944 they...shipped us away from Siberia. They shipped us near Stalingrad after the liberation of Stalingrad.

JF: Why did they ship you away from Siberia at that point?

MA: First of all, they were, their reason, I don't know what to tell you. I can only guess. They didn't give us a reason. Over there, they don't give you a reason why they do it. [laughing]

JF: They just do, right.

MA: They just do it. I can't, the Polish government maybe asked them to do it, to take us out, from Siberia.² And second, you know, near Stalingrad was, it's called Engelstown, Engels, like Marx, Engels? Engelstown. It was a whole territory there, and this territory was a, it's called a German territory. It lived nothing but Germans there. And they put up a model of a territory. They, very beautiful was there. And they managed it very nicely. And then when the, Hitler surrounded Stalingrad, the Germans let down paratroopers to this Engelstown. This Engelstown wasn't just a town. It was about 15, 20

² Stalin had already broken relations with the Polish Government-in-Exile and was by 1943 planning a Communist regime in Poland.

cities there. You know, and villages. It was a territory. That's was on the, between Saratov and Stalingrad. And the Russians came in the morning and they saw that they let down paratroopers. And they were hiding them, these Germans, they were hiding them. They didn't getting out. So next day they shipped them all out. And on the way, when we came here, we crossed their path. You know, their, we were parked. Our transport on this side and their transport on this side. And they told us they are from Engelstown. See, so they took us there, and then they took on our place.

JF: Oh, they shipped them to Siberia?

MA: To Siberia, yeah.

JF: And you lived in Engelstown?

MA: Yeah. And later we lived in...the Engels territory it is called. And I lived in a town it's called, well, you know, I forgot already how it's called. It, you know, bad things you're trying to forget.

JF: Mmm hmm. So, well you lived in a village in this territory.

MA: In a village there, yeah, and we worked agriculture. It was a...*sovkhos*. You know what a *sovkhos* is? You know what a *kolkhoz* is.

JF: Describe it to me.

MA: A *kolkhoz* is a collective farm.

JF: Right.

MA: The *sovkhos* is a government-owned farm.

JF: O.K.

MA: And the people get paid to work in the farm. That was a *sovkhos*.

JF: So you were paid then.

MA: Yeah, if you call that paid.

JF: And how long did you live in this area, then?

MA: We lived there till '46. We came back in '46, in March, '46 we came. They sent us back.

JF: You were sent back to?

MA: To Poland.

JF: Now, during those two years, was there any difference that you can describe in your experience? Your living experience?

MA: Of course it was a lot of difference. You see, that first of all, we want confidence with them, you know. We were good workers, most of us. I was a *stakhanovite*. Do you know what a *stakhanovite* is? If you work on 400%, you're a *stakhanovite*. Like, they say, every work has... Now Stakhanov was a guy by the name Stakhanov, and he worked in the coal mine. And the coal mine was, you had to give up so many tons, a guy has to dig up so many tons a day. So many tons, that's a normal day's work. That's where you get paid so much. He dug up four times as much as the...which is called 400%. That's was the highest what he did. And every good worker who works on 400% in any kind of work, it's called a *stakhanovite*. Now I was a stevedore, and the stevedore, we had to give up so many tons a day from the ship. You know what I mean? And I usually worked, my brigade worked on 400%, which we used a little, a little, you know, how do

you call it, you know, let me explain you. Like, if you had give up on a person five ton a day, right? We were a brigade from 20 people. We have to give up 100 ton a day, right?

JF: Yeah?

MA: 100 ton a day. That's if the ship is straight to walk and no steps and no, and the distance is only ten feet, you know what I mean? And I always put it like if the ship was here, you know what I mean, if we came up from the ship here and we have to, here was, the scale was here, you know what I mean? So I always put up here a piece of junk here. So we had to go around. But you didn't have to go around but it was written out you have to go around. And always manage to put a step, so from this five ton they came a one ton to a person.

JF: I see. So some would be lost along the way?

MA: No, no, no, I mean, because the distance is longer, so you don't have to carry five tons.

JF: I see.

MA: The distance is longer and you have steps. So, we always had something, you know. Being a bookkeeper, you know.

JF: I see.

MA: You know, help me with this thing, writing up this thing, always help me. And we got, our brigade was very, we got more food than any other because we [laughs].

JF: O.K. So that in other words you weren't expected to carry as much if it was a longer distance.

MA: That's right.

JF: I see.

MA: And how can you do it? You see, if there's a longer, how can you? It's measured according to the distance and according to the, if you have to walk steps, is it.

JF: I see. So even though it was there originally, you couldn't be expected to carry all of that onto the boat.

MA: That's right.

JF: O.K.

MA: So that's how we did it. And where were we?

JF: You were talking about any of the differences or new experiences that you had.

MA: Yeah.

JF: In Siberia.

MA: You know, when we came near Stalingrad, so we came with a reputation that we are the best kind of workers. You know? And when I came there, the authority had already my records. And so they gave us a room. The room was nothing but empty. Empty except a stove was there.

JF: Now you were still with your family at this point?

MA: Yeah. My mother was still alive and the whole family was there. You see, being a stevedore helped the family survive, the food what I stole. That helped a lot.

JF: Right.

MA: So when we came, and when we came there, it wasn't, you know, I didn't mind sleeping on the floor, but Mother, I didn't want her to no sleep on the floor. I did want to, I took good care of Mother. I'll tell you why, because she suffered a lot since Father died. And she suffered with us a lot, to give us. She did want to give us the best, and to raise a family and to she didn't have any help except from with my brother from America helped her. But anyhow, I did want badly a bed there, because you see, I was still used to the winter from Siberia, which the winters here wasn't much easier anyhow! [laughs]

JF: Now...

MA: So, I went to the guy to give me a bed. He said, "What will I give you? Where will I give you? I, if I don't have, how can I give you?" I say, "Give me a couple pieces wood. I'll make it myself a bed. He says, "Are you a carpenter?" I say, "No, I'm not a carpenter, but a bed I can put together." So he came. He brought a crow bar, you know? And a saw, and an ax, and nails. And he came with me. And he looked around. And he, "Where you came? From somewhere to a house to no?" And he steal a couple [laughs] pieces wood.

JF: Oh, from houses!

MA: [unclear; laughing] He stole a couple pieces wood, and he sat down and he watched me make the bed. When I finished the bed, he says, "You're a carpenter. You will work as a carpenter!" [laughing]

JF: So this was right after you got to this area?

MA: Yeah. So I worked as a carpenter!

JF: Making furniture, or building buildings? Or what did they ask you to do?

MA: [laughs] As a carpenter over there to do is, so, in the stable if something is broken to fix, and to open maybe a window doesn't, to fix it, that's all. And if you needed wood, if you needed nails, they give you a crowbar, go ahead. [laughs] So sometimes whole days we were going around and just pulling nails from the other.

JF: From buildings?

MA: From the [unclear]. We were hunting for nails! The, the chimney, ours was something wrong with the chimney. It was, the smoke came out, so I did come to him to give me bricks. He said, "Go, take bricks." O.K., I took bricks. So I say I needed a day off to fix my chimney. So, "O.K., you have a day off." He was so nice to me and I say, "Can you give me somebody to help me too?" And so I finish it in a day. If not, maybe takes longer. He says, "I will help you." He came and helped me. And then he helped me fix the chimney. He says, "You will build chimneys from now on." [laughs] Listen to it! So, I build the chimneys. Not only chimneys, only anybody who needed to fix, you know, stuff. So I had a guy who worked with me. So it was already cold, the winter, right? And I builded a chimney in the office. And not in this office. In the office from the, where the tractors there, the shop from the tractors are. Because this was a agriculture, a farm actually. So I had to build a new chimney there. So I told him to give me wood. Wood was very scarce. That was not Siberia. You see, here was no wood at all. To give me wood, to warm up the water and to mix that cement, because with the cold water it

just got frozen and so he says, "What else would you want? You must be kidding!" he says to me. I talked to him and he says, "You are here to build a chimney and build it," he says. "And that's all what I know." And I talked it over with the guy with me. He says, "Let's build him a chimney." So we didn't use even mortar. We used snow and water. And it got frozen right away, you know? It got frozen right away. We built a, it was so, it was a pleasure. It got frozen right away. And we builded this. So all what we needed him to assign us that we built it so we will get paid for it.

JF: What happened during the thaw?

MA: One second. So we, he signed us. In the meantime, they made a fire there, and my partner says to me, "Let's go out quick from there." We go out and stay and watch and see that no smoke goes out from there. And we're watching the smoke. We see it thick settles a little bit and later the whole thing falls down! [laughs] So, they called me in. So I told them the story. They gave me wood. They warmed me water! [laughs] You see, here was, the life was, it was like from hell to heaven to get. It wasn't exactly heaven, but...

JF: Comparatively.

MA: Comparison. Oh, and not only this. You see, you worked in a, you didn't work in the, you worked in the in a farm, it was food. It was enough to eat except the winters were awful.

JF: What, was the housing better also?

MA: Oh, the housing was much better. In Siberia was, you know, in Siberia the housing wasn't even insulated. And you know how we had to do? We had to cover the houses with snow all in the beginning. But you had to do it with the first snow when it comes out. Because the first snow was a little wet, and it got frozen, it was a insulation. And if you waited, you had to evacuate it, the shack. Because later when the snow falls down, the wind blew it away, it was crisp, you know, and they didn't...

JF: Drier.

MA: Yeah, and over there again we had winters awful winds. The winds, if a wind started, a wind could take, could last about five, six day a week sometimes and you couldn't go out from the house. So I'll never forget, it was there, it was the war going on at that time, you know what I mean? And all the men were away, the Russian men. A matter of fact, they mobilized me to the war too. And they hid me. They sent me away.

JF: Who did? Who hid you?

MA: That guy who was in charge over, in the, as a stevedore.

JF: Hid you?

MA: He knew that I am called to the army. So over there, in Siber-, this was in Siberia. So, you see, all what they can do is during two months they can do it during two months, because after, when the water gets frozen, they, everything gets. Only in the two months they. So, he sent me away somewhere else and he says he is away on a mission. And after the water got frozen, I came back.

JF: I see.

MA: He says, "I wouldn't want to lose you."

JF: Now you had said to me before when we were talking about the difficulty in having any religious observance, that there was a change once you got...

MA: Yeah, yeah.

JF: Outside of Stalingrad.

MA: Now when we lived outside of Stalingrad, my mother died there. And that was already after the war. The war broke up in March, and she died in July.

JF: She died in July of 1945?

MA: 1945. So, I sat *shiva* and they gave me off the eight days, the seven days that I sat *shiva*, and I didn't shave. I didn't shave, and so the *upablysher* [phonetic] what they call it, he is the head of the whole thing, he says, "Why you don't shave?" I say, "I cannot get razor blades." So he brought me a package razor blades. So I told him, "Thank you, but I will not shave," and I told him the whole true. He says, "I appreciate you telling me the true," he says. He didn't do nothing. And I told him it's a religious purpose and he didn't say nothing. Later, so I organized a *minyán* to *daven* in our house. Every day they came before we went to work. We had a *minyán*, and they knew about it. And I didn't care.

JF: Did they say anything to you?

MA: No.

JF: What do you think the difference was?

MA: One minute. And on *Rosh Hashanah*, on the first day *Rosh Hashanah*, nobody went to work. So they saw something. So they sent right away to the headquarters. That's was in Kasnamaz, [phonetic] the next town was the headquarters, like the county seat, you know? And they notified them, they telephoned him that so and so, nobody went to work. And they came the whole brass came over, you know? And they find out that they *davened* in my place. So they came over and of course a couple of guys were staying guard. I was staying in front. I, and everybody was *talesim*. And we see them coming and we didn't say. Everybody was quiet. You could drop a pin. And all of a sudden, my brother-in-law, how he got the idea, I don't know. They didn't say nothing. They were watching what's going on so quiet. And he takes a *shofar* [ram's horn] and blows the *shofar*. They all, not they walk away but they run away.

JF: Where did he get a *shofar*?

MA: He made it by himself. He made it from a ram's horn. Yeah, he made it by himself, the *shofar*. And he is a very handy, he was a very handy man, awful handy. And when everybody goes away, they send me, they called me. And you see, the war was over already, so they got a little softer. And I don't know, the exact reason I cannot tell you. I cannot, I couldn't read their mind. But you know, my mother always said, "If you give something, you can demand something. If you don't give nothing, you cannot even buy nothing for nothing. If you're a good worker." And I always, I was trying to follow her otherwise. And I was a good worker always. When they needed me, I never let them down. You know what I mean? And I let the whole brigade, you know? And they called me, what it is. And I told to them, "Listen, nothing what you can do. This is a kind of a holiday. And [unclear] tomorrow is another day. And later will be *Yom Kippur* again." So

he says, "I'm going to send over tomorrow Shulka. [phonetic]" Shulka was his secretary. "I'm going to send over Shulka and she will make a note. Who is not there, I'm gonna take them off." [chuckles] And that's what he did! So I notified them. I say, "Whoever will not be *davening* will have to go to work." They all came. [laughing]

JF: Oh! You were able to bury your mother in a Jewish manner?

MA: A Jewish burial, yeah. She was, we had another woman die before. And she got a Jewish burial. And Mother, Mother had her shroud, she made it during the year. She collected sheets and she made herself shrouds. Because she even didn't, you know, when we lived in Bodaybo that first year, came spring, it was the awfulest time. People died like flies.

JF: With the warm weather?

MA: When the warm weather started, yeah. The conditions where they lived, you know, the conditions were very. You know, we were lucky it was nine months cold. It would be longer cold we would, and nobody would be able to live there.

JF: I see. There was more disease that spread in the warmer...?

MA: Diseases was so, people died, you know, we could be, we went out in the morning to dig a grave so they told us there is ten people dead. So we dig a grave for now twenty. And when it comes to, you know, close up the graves, they didn't fit any. People died like flies. And I was so lucky that my family, none of them till, in the end, the mother. What can you do?

JF: She died of old age? Of...illness?

MA: I, you could, 61 years? You call that old age?

JF: Mmm.

MA: But she looked a girl. [moving] Excuse me. [tape off then on]

JF: Now from the time of your mother's death, which was right after the end of the war, you said that there was not as much concern over religious observance on the part of the authorities. Were there any other changes after the war was over, as far as your treatment was concerned?

MA: Well, the life became easier a little, and the situation when the war was over, and the economy was... You see, the economy had a, we were not in business, but this economy were bad, our time was, our situation was, we didn't have so good. And if the economy was better, they treated us better. That's like in a household, if you make a nice living, you give a child a bigger allowance and you buy better food. And the same thing was there. And we could notice it. And...

JF: So there was more around.

MA: More around. We had, and so, usually we didn't have a day off. We had to work Sundays even. Now we got a day off and like I told you, at *Rosh Hashanah* we took off. It wasn't such a big crime. They let us go. You know what I mean? They, with the time, if their situation improves, ours improved.

JF: Were you getting any more news, after the war was over, about what had happened?

MA: Oh sure. Oh yeah. A matter of fact, when the war was over, not only when the war was over, when they start to advance, when the Red Army started to advance, we were looking forward to the, get the paper, the *Pravda*. We knew already the Russian language. We could already read Russian, you know, and we mastered the Russian language real good. We learned this very quick, the Russian language. I guess we were between the Russians and that's how you learn a language and it is a Slavish language also which was similar. And we learned this very quick and you know, Ilya Ehrenburg, he always was a good writer. But as long as he had to write what they tell him to write, he couldn't bring out his talent so much. Now he went with the Red Army, and he start sending home articles. Practically in every *Pravda* was an article from Ilya Ehrenburg.

JF: So Ehrenburg's work was not as censored then, after the war?

MA: No, no, they didn't tell him what to write. He just wrote what he saw. And that's what he saw was, we...start to love Stalin what he kept us away from there, what he took us away. You know what I mean? And we find out, you know, I still had hope—not only me, other people—that we left behind relatives that we will see them. We were thinking they are better off than we are. We were thinking in the beginning. But it didn't work out that way. They were in a situation when we, when I start reading Ilya Ehrenburg's articles, I was thinking, "I will better keep my mouth shut. Who am I to complain?" I was in a heaven comparing what they was.

JF: So Ehrenburg's articles started appearing when the Red Army really started advancing into western Europe?

MA: That's right, western Europe, that's right.

JF: Which was about what year, then?

MA: I guess in 1944.

JF: '44?

MA: Something like that. I don't remember exactly. It must be on the records on the history what time he, I don't remember exactly. I was too busy with myself to keep diaries.

JF: But that was the first news that you had, his articles?

MA: The first news, yeah. His articles was the first news what we had. And we find out about *Babi Yar* at that time. That-

Tape four, side one:

JF: This is tape four, side one, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler, on November 10, 1982, with Josey Fisher. You said that Ehrenburg's account of *Babi Yar* was one of his first accounts?

MA: Yeah, it was, what I read about it. Of course what I read, I don't if this... And the Russians were very nice, because the guy who was in charge over us, he saw to it that I get a *Pravda* every time when it came.

JF: So these articles appeared in *Pravda*.

MA: In *Pravda*, yeah.

JF: As you look back over the information that Ehrenburg was able to put into these articles, were they fairly complete reports, with what you know now of what was going on?

MA: Well...

JF: Or do you think that some of it was kept out?

MA: Well, there is...how do you know what is a complete report? But, his articles make me realize that Stalin did me a big favor, that he took me out from Europe.

JF: Were his articles balanced in their reporting, or do you think he was required to put a Russian slant onto his reporting?

MA: I don't think he has to put. That's what he saw was enough.

JF: He didn't have to slant it.

MA: He didn't have to do, no, he didn't have to exaggerate nothing. And I don't think, you see, it's only one person's...

JF: Observation?

MA: Opinion. Observation, I mean. And that's what there, that's what did go on there, I don't think anybody will be able to give a complete report.

JF: During your time there, did you meet any other of the Russian writers, or actors? Any of the artists who were kept away from the cities during your stay in Siberia or the [unclear]?

MA: No, I, you mean any celebrities? No. No, we were, I wasn't in any big city, you know. No, I didn't meet Ilya Ehrenburg either. I just read his articles. And a matter of fact, till I read Ilya Ehrenburg's articles, a *Pravda* paper wasn't so interesting to read at all. All of what it was is a report from this factory and from this, how much they work, how much this and that's about all. There was nothing, and you know, the Russians, in the beginning they were thinking that we were very, very big fans of their Communism. Because when we came to Siberia, there was bookstores, the bookstore there. So all what you could get is the history of the Communism, in Russian. The volumes very nicely, you know, Lenin's, well, Lenin's work and Stalin's work and Engels and Marx and this. And we bought them all up. They were very reasonable. They were very cheap, comparing, you know? Because they were not on the black market. Everything what was on. And they were thinking they were reading it till they find out what we're using it for!

JF: What were you using it for?

MA: Toilet paper! [laughs]

JF: Oh, that's a wonderful story!

MA: When they find out what we're using it for, they didn't want to sell us anymore.

JF: Oh, oh, that's wonderful. So, tell me what happened in '46. You said you were in Stalingrad until that time, or near Stalingrad until that time.

MA: That was near Stalingrad.

JF: Yes, in the Engels territory.

MA: Well, we, I got married later. In September of '46 I got married.

JF: This is somebody that you had known? Or...

MA: I had known her before the war.

JF: She was from your hometown?

MA: No, next town, but they were all the time in Siberia with us. She was all the time in Siberia with us. I knew her, and that's what I married and she was a distant cousin. I guess, I don't know. Her mother and my mother were maybe the sixth cousin or something like it. I don't know. A very distant cousin. And I married that time. And...

JF: Could you have a Jewish wedding?

MA: Yeah. I had a Jewish wedding and...

JF: Could you have had one before the war was over?

MA: Yeah, but who did want to get married? [laughs]

JF: People didn't want to get married.

MA: No, the people didn't. Nobody, no, they didn't want to get married. And I'll tell you something else. You could have everything if they don't catch you. What do you mean a Jewish wedding? You mean to a Jewish caterer or a...?

JF: [chuckles] No.

MA: Of course there was no, no rabbi either. There was no rabbi.

JF: There were no rabbis?

MA: No. We don't need it a rabbi. We performed ourselves, what a Jew should be. And my brother-in-law performed the whole thing. You see, I performed a wedding once. They, but...we went to that city hall and, to the Russian city hall, and over there they put you a stamp and...

JF: And you're married.

MA: Hmm?

JF: You're married.

MA: And you're married. Over there it cost, five *ruble* it cost a marriage license and 25 *ruble* cost a divorce! [laughs] A divorce is much higher than a wedding.

JF: But there weren't many marriages before the end of the war? People were too...

MA: No, I cannot recall it.

JF: They were too skeptical of the outcome of the war? Or it would have made life more difficult to have been married?

MA: There was no reason. The life was very,... and besides, you had no desire for sex even. You had no desire for sex.

JF: What do you think the reason was?

MA: You [pause] I don't know if I can bring it out in English for you, but you get so knocked down, you know, the feeling, the feeling is, I had the same feeling when two guys came when I was staying in the store, with guns, and demanded the money. I had the same feeling in the stomach, like the stomach drops, you know? It's a, I'm nobody. You know, who am I? A flicker of his trigger and I'm dead. You know what I mean? And another time I got a feeling. Once I came and opened the store and during the night time they robbed me, you know?

JF: You're talking about here in Philadelphia?

MA: Yeah, here, yeah. I came with this. I had the same feeling, you know?

JF: The fear.

MA: My,... the fear. My stomach turns. You know, here things happen, nothing what you can do, you know what I mean? We were in the mercy of a bunch of guys what they run, what they did with a, if you came ten minutes late to work, you know what I mean, they could arrest you for it. And they did arrest you! If, the first day if you came late to work, they give you 6-25, which it was nothing, you know what I mean? You know what 6-25 is? For six months they took off twenty-five percent of your wages. Which it didn't mean...but it meant a lot like in points. Because the second time if you're late, they give you six months there. And usually, people who got two, three years jail, they survived. And this six months, very seldom anybody survived. Then they go tell me why.

JF: You mean if people were jailed for two to three years, they would live.

MA: They would live. They got out later during, the time came and they get out. And these who got six months, very seldom anybody survived. I don't know. I, the...one thing I can figure it out, the guy who got six months was thinking, "Eh, it's only six months." He didn't, you know what I mean?

JF: He didn't prepare himself maybe?

MA: And he didn't prepare himself, that's right. You know what I mean? And these who got a couple of years, they, right away they start thinking of survival. You know, you know, when people died there, you know what they say? "He's dead, he's dead a long time. He just didn't have no strength to fall down." I remember, with my sister, we, I met once my sister. I remember I went home from work. She says, "I stopped and they said that Moshe Reizenberger, [phonetic]" a friend of ours, he used to work with her. She says, "I went to visit him and," she says, "I think he will be all right." I say, "What makes you think he is all right?" You see, she, I met her, she was there ten minutes ago and I was later there, and when I was there he was already dead. He was already dead. But she says, "I think he will be all right." I say, "What makes you think he will be all right?" She said, "Because he has an appetite." I was laughing. "An appetite?" I said, "What do you mean?" Because she was with the boy and the boy had a piece of bread and he was looking on the piece of bread. So she took the piece of bread and gave it to him. She says, "In a minute he finished it." I say, "Well, he is not all right any more." You know what I mean? It's, if you live a life like this, you don't care much about, yeah, I don't think anybody get married. They get married, the husband and wife, they didn't live like others. They didn't care. No, it's a...

JF: So when things relaxed after the war was over, you were not as anxious? You were not as worried?

MA: Well, once we got out from Siberia life was a little easier. You know, it was already... But not enough to get married. [chuckles]

JF: And when you got married, in September of '46...

MA: September of '46.

JF: You were still there. You were still in [unclear].

MA: Oh, we knew already we're going out.

JF: But you knew you were leaving.

MA: Oh, sure. We had already all the papers ready, all the this.

JF: O.K.

MA: We knew soon as spring came, we, because they wouldn't send us, in winter they cannot send, because the, you would freeze in the boxcars. And they sent us again with boxcars.

JF: So...

MA: But in the boxcars, you see, instead 35 people, we were between 18 and 20 people in the car.

JF: Oh, that's luxurious!

MA: That was first class!

JF: First class! So what month was it, then, that you left?

MA: We left in the end of April.

JF: The end of April of...?

MA: '46.

JF: Wait, you said you married in September of '46.

MA: September, September of '45. I'm sorry.

JF: And, oh, O.K. I'm sorry.

MA: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. September of '46 I wasn't there already. You know.

JF: Oh, O.K., so you married September of...

MA: September of '46 I was already in Germany.

JF: O.K., so you married in September of '45 and then the end of April of '46...

MA: They sent us back.

JF: You went back where? Where did they send you?

MA: They sent us to Poland. And we could get off wherever we want in Poland.

JF: Where did you go?

MA: I got off in Krakow because I was from Krakow.

JF: And what did you do when you got there?

MA: When I got off from Krakow, first of all, you see, the main reason what I got off in Krakow, because my sister was in Krakow and I was thinking I will...

JF: You hoped your sister was still there.

MA: I hoped I will find her. And I came in Krakow, and I lived in the, in a public house. Was put up for us a public house. And there was right away I had to register to the Joint Distribution. They supported us. It was right before Passover at that time. We got *matzos*. We got wine. We got food. Gee, it was a different world. And I start looking for the sister. It was no [pause] No, I got, I find a girl what a neighbor. And she told me the last time they, she heard from them is they were on the Plaszow Ghetto, in a ghetto they were. But later I heard the Plaszow Ghetto was all killed out. They killed them all out there.

JF: So, your sister and her husband?

MA: And two children.

JF: Two children, as far as you know, died there.

MA: Yeah.

JF: In the ghetto?

MA: In the ghetto. And later, my wife became pregnant.

JF: In Krakow? When you were living in Krakow?

MA: I find out in Krakow, yeah. So I was thinking, I have to get away. As long as I see Russian soldiers, I have to move on.

JF: What was the attitude of the native Polish population towards you?

MA: Very hostile. See, they were, "Oh!? You're still alive?" If you saw some, "You're still alive?" And not only this. And they kept on killing people. We had to live like together to protect ourselves. You couldn't go, they were very hostile, very, very, they were worse than the Germans even. Because the Germans wouldn't do it if they wouldn't have orders to do it. You know what I mean?

JF: But the Poles would have?

MA: And they did it for pure pleasure. They were worse than anybody else. If we, I don't know, some people asked me when I had, in the store, when the Polish, you know, when the Solidarity was starting, "What do you say about the Polish people? They suffered so much." I didn't want to say nothing but [laughs]...

JF: It's hard for you not to remember what they...

MA: I haven't got a place in my heart to feel sorry for them. Oh no. Sorry to say it, you know, it's a sad thing. I love the Russian people. You know, when I heard, I read in the paper a news that the Volga got polluted, my heart was aching. I felt sorry for the Russian people. When I heard that the Polish people get mistreated, it doesn't mean nothing. I wouldn't rejoice, because you don't rejoice on nobody who is in trouble, but I don't guess a...

JF: Can you give me, excuse me, can you give me any specific examples of things that happened to you after the war, in Krakow, with the Poles?

MA: Yes I will. First of all, I attended every couple day a funerals what they got killed by the Russian, by the Polacks. But they, and...we had to...you know, live in groups and to keep watch for the Polacks not to come in and attack us. And I finally, got a contact to cross the border to Czechoslovakia.

JF: You had to smuggle into Czechoslovakia?

MA: Yeah. To smuggle. We paid a guy.

JF: And who went? You and your wife?

MA: Me and my wife, yeah. She was pregnant.

JF: And, alone. I mean, none of your other family?

MA: Well, I lived separate. No, and my, you see, I was already a family by myself.

JF: Yes, yes.

MA: I was a family by myself. My sister lived with her children and we lived not far from each other. And my sister sent away the children. All the children she sent them away. The three small children she sent to, with a, you see, there was a, the *Haganah* op-

erated there. And they took the children to smuggle out from Poland and they took them to Czechoslovakia. And I knew they are in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, but I didn't know where. And so the three small children were in Czechoslovakia. The two, the son went from the *Agudah*, from a religious group they sent him to Germany, to Frankfurt. Now was left my sister and her husband and two children, and later they worked out legal papers. My brother-in-law had a sister in Paris, so they worked out legal papers and they went to Paris much later than I went.

JF: But you and your wife went to Czechoslovakia.

MA: Czechoslovakia. That was in...

JF: When?

MA: In...August.

JF: In August of '46.

MA: '46.

JF: And did you stay there for a while or did you move on?

MA: The end of July was, summer, the end of July there. Hmm?

JF: Did you stay there for a while?

MA: One second. Listen to it. So we were a whole group, about 20 people, we got together, and paid, we didn't know how to go or how to cross it not to be caught. Because if the Polish border guard catches us, we weren't afraid for the Czechoslovakian border guard, because they welcomed us. They knew we're running away and they welcomed us, you know what I mean? But for the Polish border guards, they would put us in jail. So, there had to be a guide. And the guide was taking, he take us. And he took us, we came already on the Czechoslovakian border and we saw the borders and they, a couple of bunch, he had set up a couple, a bunch of more guys, with machine guns, to give them away everything. If not, they will kill us. And a lot of people got killed that way. And we didn't know how they got killed because they find them killed on the border. We were thinking that they tried to cross by themselves. So we gave them everything and the Czechoslovakian guards, the Czechoslovakian border guards start hollering for them to no let us go. They didn't want to listen, and they even shot to death the Polacks. So, finally we give them everything and we can...[laughs]

JF: Without anything.

MA: Without anything. Here sits my wife with her stomach that was bulging.

JF: That was your fortune. That's all. That's it.

MA: We came to Czechoslovakia. Right we came to Czechoslovakia the *Haganah* was waiting for us. And we had so much joy at that time, to see the *Haganah*. And they took us to Prague. I came to Prague. We were kept in a camp, and we were said in the afternoon, we will march on farther. So, from now on I didn't have to do nothing. I wasn't in the guidance. So I asked for permission, because I knew my sister's children are in Prague—to go and find them. “Where are they?” I say, “I don't know.” [laughs] So, anyhow, they told me but to be back by around 3:00, because on 3:00 we will move on. So I went, and where do you go? So I find somebody, a Czech, and I told him, I didn't, I couldn't talk Czech. But the German language during the war, you know, it got

popular. In German I talked to him, "Can you recommend me where the Yiddish quarter is...?" And they know Jewish. So he showed me, "Here lives a *Yid*, a Jew, go in there." So I went in there. So he told me where the Jewish Quarter is and I went there. I went in the Jewish Quarter. I still, I didn't know, and I saw a bunch of kids marching, you know, girls marching. And one of the kids gets up from the group and the teacher runs after her. And she runs and she runs and I was thinking I'm going to catch her and turn her back to the teacher. And she jumps on me! That was my sister's younger daughter!

JF: Oh!

MA: She recognized me! So the teacher later understood. She apologized. She was going back to her. And she took me, the teacher with the whole group, she took me to the boys where they are, and I spent a couple hours with them. And the little boy had a *siddur*. He has an extra prayer book. He gave it to me. I still have it. [laughs]

JF: Who gave you the prayer book?

MA: The little boy.

JF: The little boy.

MA: My sister's boy, yeah. Yeah, he says he, somebody gave it to him.

JF: That was the first one you had seen in a while?

MA: The first one I'd seen in, in fact a couple months. Yeah, so later I had to come back. When I came back they already were ready to go and my wife didn't want to go, with her stomach. She says she will wait for the husband! [laughs] So everybody waited. When I came, we start right marching. And we went at that time to, we crossed the border to Austria. And in Austria we went to Vienna. You know, and you know, these was these transit camps, you know, where we were staying. And groups were coming and going. And you know, the first thing we came, you looked on the walls. Everybody signs a name, and you find out who went through there. It was like a information center.

JF: Sure.

MA: And I signed my name and less or more what I know of where I go, I marked down there. So that was our...

JF: Communication.

MA: Our communication. You find out from the first, since we came to Czechoslovakia this started.

JF: Who established these transit centers?

MA: The *Haganah* I think.

JF: The *Haganah*?

MA: I think it was under the leadership of the *Haganah*.

JF: And what were...

MA: And the HIAS, the Jewish organizations, yeah. It was supported by the Joint Distribution.

JF: By the Joint.

MA: Oh sure.

JF: And were these buildings that had been sort of appropriated for this purpose, or were they built...

MA: No, they were, you see, during a war is a different story. In Vienna we were staying in Rothschild's Hospital. Used to be a Rothschild's Hospital we used to go. We were staying there. And mostly was the place where we were staying was army.

JF: Army barracks?

MA: Army barracks, *Kaserne*, what they called it. *Kaserne* army barracks was there mostly.

JF: So what happened when you went to Vienna? Were you there for very long or...

MA: No, they took us to Salzburg later, a couple days, I think, a couple days. And I was very, you know, I say, you know, my wife's stomach was the fortune. Because as a pregnant woman they treated us better. We get better treatment. We get better everything, yeah. They took it under consideration. So...

JF: How did you travel? Excuse me, how did you travel between these cities?

MA: With trains and we walked all the time, a lot of the time when we had to cross the border. We had to cross the border. We had to be quiet. We went through West Germany, you know what I mean? It's in one place when we went from Vienna to, you know, Salzburg, a shorter. I don't know, somehow we had to, we did walk. We went in the night time and crossed the border. But anyhow, in Salzburg we were I think three weeks we were in Salzburg, and, till they worked out the papers. And later, and when we came to Salzburg, they put us on a train. It was already American soldiers. The American soldiers took us over and they took us to Ulm.

JF: How do you spell that?

MA: U-L-M., Ulm, Ulm.

JF: Which was where?

MA: In Bay-, in Germany.

JF: And what was there?

MA: They took us to Ulm. In Ulm they put us in a DP camp. We arrived to Ulm in September.

JF: Of 1946.

MA: September. My boy was born September 21st. We arrived the 19th.

JF: He was born the 24th?

MA: 21st. I think a couple days earlier we arrived. There was one boy born, as soon as we arrived one boy was born. The same day we arrived. [laughs] He was the second boy born there. And they put us in the Sedan. It was an army camp there. And we organized right away a militia. And I was between the militia there. We, you see, we still weren't, to see if somebody is after you, they want to kill you. They want...

JF: You were still frightened.

MA: Still, still in with this. And we kept the gates closed, you know. And everybody who got in, we checked. And I remember I was, I got off duty. I was staying on the gate and I was in the house there, you know. And the guy that was right with the first week when we came in, we came there Thursday. And Saturday, Saturday we kept the gate closed completely. Closed completely only you couldn't go, drive in only a gate

open. So, and a guy was staying on the gate holding, you know, a guard. So he calls me out. "What's this?" A jeep was blowing the horn and he wants to come in. And he didn't let him in. So he calls me out, "What's this?" He says, he says he is a rabbi. I say, "A rabbi? Why does he come on Saturday?" [laughs] I couldn't understand! I couldn't imagine a rabbi to Saturday to drive a car? So I go over to him and he hardly could talk a Yiddish and he talked a little German. I said, "What the heck? A rabbi?" He says, "Every rabbi in America he goes..."

JF: He was an American rabbi.

MA: [laughing] He was a...actually a...chaplain.

JF: A chaplain, mmm hmm.

MA: A chaplain, yeah. No, we had, when I talked to him, we had so much fun. A rabbi!

JF: Right.

MA: You see, it isn't funny here. No.

JF: No. There that was a big thing.

MA: That was a big thing.

JF: Yeah.

MA: And we were in Germany and we got from UNRRA, we got support from UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association].

JF: How long were you in this camp?

MA: Three years.

JF: During the time that you were there, did you find that the people talked about their experiences during the war, or were they reluctant to talk about them?

MA: We stayed away from talking from it. It was too much, you see, you did want to live a little, you know? If you talk from it, life became miserable. But you know, as the years go by, I think we should talk about it.

JF: But at that time, during those years you were there...

MA: We, no, we didn't talk about it.

JF: You tended not to talk about it. Was there a Jewish community set up within the camp as far as services and education was concerned? Yes?

MA: Oh yeah, it was a whole, I'm going to show you. I have [tape off then on]

JF: There were seven camps within...

MA: Ulm.

JF: Seven different DP camps in Ulm.

MA: In Ulm. Yeah, yeah, you see, Ulm just happens, it was an army city. It was seven, seven army camps. And every army camp became a DP camp. They put in the people. And I was in the...I was, the first ones, they came to Sedan. Sedan was the center of all...

JF: Which one?

MA: Sedan *Kaserne*. It was, in the camp where I was, that was the center of all of the...

JF: And how do you spell that?

MA: Sedan, like a sedan car, you know.
JF: Oh, it's S-E-D-A-N.
MA: That's right. And...
JF: And then the second word was...
MA: Camp. A camp. Sedan *Kaserne*. *Kaserne*, that's, you know what *Kaserne* means.
JF: A camp.
MA: A camp. Yeah, that's in German, *Kaserne*.
JF: Which is what, C-O-C-E-?
MA: *Kaserne*, K-A-S-S-E-R-N-E [*Kaserne*].
JF: O.K. And that was the central camp...
MA: Yeah, yeah.
JF: Among all of the ones at Ulm.
MA: Yeah. Right away, when I came, I came there Thursday. Or Friday, I think. Thursday or Friday, yeah. And Saturday I find out that a couple kilometers from me is a camp from children. They...
JF: A DP camp of children?
MA: Yeah, that they brought children in from Czechoslovakia, a DP camp nothing but children.³ So, I was thinking, I'm going over. Maybe they brought my...
JF: Your niece and nephews.
MA: My...nephews over, my two nephews. I came over *Shabbas*, they didn't let me in. So-

³ The name of the DP camp for children was Bleidorn.

Tape four, side two:

JF: This is tape four, side two, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler, on November 10, 1982. You said they would not let you in because it was *Shabbas*.

MA: Because of *Shabbas*. So I start talking to his conscience, you know? A child, he would be glad to see me. Anyhow, he let me in. And I find out they were there!

JF: They were there!

MA: Oh, that was such a joyous...day that time. And later they, you see, they came to me every time and we were together again. And the little girl was there too. Yeah, and I remember once she was sick. Her eyes, something, and they took her to the hospital. So, I went every day and she didn't want to eat the food in the hospital. So, my wife made, I bought a little, you know, in Europe was a, they call them a *nashkis*, you know, it was one dish on top of the other with the one handle, you know? You could carry it. And I took a dinner. I took her every day a dinner. So, on Thursday she says to me, "You know, I'm getting more hungry. Tomorrow bring me more. Bring me double." I was always glad, I say, "You, listen, you will get too fat!" She says, "Oh, I'll never get too fat." She said, "Bring me more." So, I brought her, so, I brought her more. We came there. I came there, so she divides in half. This she eats today, that's tomorrow. I say, "What do you mean tomorrow? I'm going to bring you." She says, "No, I don't want you to bring me. Tomorrow is *Shabbas*. I don't want you to."

JF: Oh.

MA: [laughs]

JF: Observant little girl.

MA: Oh yeah.

JF: Yeah.

MA: She, she is even now from, in Israel. She lives in, they all live in Israel now, all the children.

JF: Now when you were living in the camp, were you, you said you were supported by UNRRA. Were you able to work also?

MA: Yeah. I worked. I worked in the camp.

JF: What did you do?

MA: That's my work. You see, *Yidishe Shtatishe Komitet* in Ulm.

JF: What does that mean?

MA: That's mean the *Yidishe*, Jewish, *Shtatishe*, that's mean a city, city-wide, *komitet*, the organization, in Ulm, that's mean's so every, every camp had its own government, right?

JF: Was this like a *kehillah*?

MA: That's right.

JF: O.K.

MA: *Shtatishe*. No, a *komitet* is *kehillah*. *shtatishe*, that's mean city.

JF: And comm-, oh, that's like a committee.

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MA: Yeah. You see, every camp had his own ruling, right?

JF: Mmm hmm.

MA: Now there were one group what was over like the county seat, you know, rules over the cities. It was a *shtatishe komitet*. We were the highest instance of all, we...were the...

JF: The governing body.

MA: The governing body of all seven.

JF: So what...

MA: And we couldn't tell them whom to elect, but we could tell them, you know, everything else, you know, about the schools, about the work. Now I worked as a secretary of the labor.

JF: You were the secretary of the labor division?

MA: That's right.

JF: Meaning the...

MA: *Gevitmit*. That's the dedicated. *Technischen leite fun arbeitsamt*. I am the labor secretary.

JF: O.K.

MA: M. Adler.

JF: That's you. This is the book that you're looking at now which is...

MA: That's right.

JF: All about the work of the committee.

MA: That's right. That's right. That's right. That's right. Here, they were...that's the elected bodies, the four of them. There were four elected bodies. Now he was from the...he was sent from the UNRRA and he was from the *Sochnut* [Jewish Agency]. That's a, he was a delegate from Israel. This was already...

JF: So you're showing me pictures now in the book, of people.

MA: Yeah, yeah, and that's, that's, she was from America. She was from the Allied Jewish Distribution Committee. And that's from *Sochnut*. That's the same four guys what you saw there.

JF: And you were paid, then, by UNRRA for your work on the committee?

MA: That's the four guys. Yeah, here. That's me. *Technischer Leite fun Arbeitsamt*, [technical work expert] M. Adler. Now, you see, you got paid, you, everybody got the same thing. But if you worked, we didn't get paid in money. We get paid in practical things. You know, like what's his name, the committee, you know, he was a teacher. I forgot what's his name. He died a couple of years ago. Sam Levinson. He used to say, "My father gave us for Christmas a practical gift, like a haircut." We got paid practical gifts, like, you see, it was according what kind of work you did. If it's cigarettes, sugar and butter. Like, the main thing was the cigarettes. Cigarettes was a fortune there on the black market.

JF: And then you would use the black market...

MA: Oh, you sold it. That's right. You see, I got paid with 13 cartons cigarettes a month.

JF: I see.

MA: And a carton of cigarettes a month was enough. Because every cigarette you took, you split in three.

JF: Each cigarette you would split in three?

MA: Three, yeah, that's right, and turn it with...

JF: I see.

MA: [laughs]

JF: So you worked, your three years, you worked on this committee in this camp.

MA: I worked in this, yeah. I worked every, all the time there in Germany.

JF: Was your second son also born in Germany?

MA: Yeah.

JF: In the camp?

MA: Second son was in camp right before we, he was about six months, yeah.

JF: Before you left.

MA: Before we left.

JF: So it was what, 1949?

MA: In 19-, he was born in '48. He was born in the end of, he was born December 21st.

JF: 1948.

MA: 1948.

JF: Had you applied for a visa to the United States or...

MA: No. I'll tell you how it was. Actually, I wanted to go to Israel. Because once I came out from this, you know, I just want to be, that was my, my goal, to go to Israel. And a matter of fact, my brothers wrote me to come to America. And a cousin even sent me an affidavit. Which, an affidavit wasn't too good anyhow. They didn't recognize it, but anyhow, my...goal was to go to Israel. And in the beginning it wasn't easy because I came in in '46. And the State of Israel only started in '48. And that's mean in '46 and '47 it was very, a lot of my friends, yeah, I had friends, they were on the *Exodus* and they came back. Right away the *Exodus* what they were showing the picture, [Hollywood film] it didn't happen that way. [chuckles] I have news for you!

JF: You mean they didn't get in.

MA: No, they didn't get in. Never got in. No, they came back all of them. A lot of them got arrested. Their captain was hunted. We had, you see, we worked in the *Shtatishe*, in the committee, I, we had, we also, our job was also do the illegal work for Israel.

JF: So what happened? The boat returned and...

MA: The boat returned and the captain was hunted. They did want to arrest him. We hide him. We did hide him eight days. We hid him in Ulm. And later we sent him to Augsburg.

JF: The captain?

MA: The captain, yeah. But they, if they would caught him, the English would arrest him. And the Americans would give him out. Oh, they would, because they want to get that.

JF: The Americans would have handed him over?

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MA: Oh, they would handed him over. Oh sure.

JF: What about the passengers themselves? Where did they go?

MA: They came back, most of them. All of them.

JF: They came back to DP camps in Germany?

MA: Yeah, to the DP camps, yeah.

JF: They were not in danger. It was the captain who was.

MA: No, no. I don't think so.

JF: It was the captain who they sought.

MA: No, no, no. That's right. They, wanted, what I knew, what they were on the [unclear]. A matter of fact the one who lives next door to me, their daughter was on the *Exodus*. They weren't, no, they weren't in danger at all. And after '48, when they won the war, so it was a legal thing. You could register to go to Israel. So listen to it. So now a camp was, in the, not in the *shtatishe*, but...I also belonged, you see, I worked in the *shtatishe*, the *shtatishe* committee didn't have actually people. Only we ruled all the seven camps. You know what I mean? But every camp had his own government and we elected every year new people, you know, who to be in charge. So there was a guy there, a teacher. And he was a very greedy guy. And he did run for this. And I saw that he will not make a good representative. You know, I was against him. I didn't run against him. But I supported somebody else. So, he took it very serious and he was a very sore—he didn't win—he was a very sore loser. Later, when the Jewish State became a State and we formed a committee to, you know, to, about the emigration, he was the secretary of the emigration. When my papers came up, he put them on the bottom. I was already ready. I already had, I was thinking for sure, because I was the one from the first one to be registered. And my brother wrote me that he has quarters for me. He has an apartment for me. And so I had a cousin. He lives now in Philadelphia. And he lived in Kassel. That's near Frankfurt. So, I find out, the General Consul, his name was Fingerwood [phonetic] that time, from the Israeli Consul who is in München, he is, I knew him from before, he was with me in the *yeshiva*! [laughing]

JF: So you went to him...

MA: So, I was thinking I will go to Munich and tell them the whole story and maybe he can do something about it. So, the bus who went to Munich came from Frankfurt. You know, the same bus came from Frankfurt, stopped in Munich and...

JF: Mmm hmm.

MA: When I sit, want sit down on the bus, my cousin from Frankfurt comes out. He says, "Where are you going?" I says, "I'm going to Frankfurt." He says, "I came to see you!" He says, "Now you're going away!" O.K., I exchanged him a ticket. The ticket could be any day, you know. Over there you bought a ticket it can be any day. So I took him home and we start talking and he says, "Why don't you go to America?" He says, "You see, it doesn't work," he says. "Maybe your destiny is America." He said, "Don't fight this. He doesn't want to let you go; maybe it's for your own good." And you know, I'm not superstitious, but when it comes to big, that's a big decision I think. So I was thinking maybe he's right and here are my two brothers, they're begging me to come. So I wrote to my brother in Palestine,

in Israel, "Sorry. I'm going to America." And I wrote to my brother and he sent me right away papers. Not only sent me papers. When I came I had an apartment.

JF: Here to Philadelphia?

MA: No, Chester. Yeah, it was in Chester.

JF: This was in Chester first.

MA: What they did for me is hard to say.

JF: Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences during those years?

MA: Well, I had a very bad time when my wife died.

JF: Your wife died here?

MA: Yeah.

JF: You had gone through a great deal together.

MA: [weeping] That's the hardest thing.

JF: She died in 1959?

MA: 1959. And my se-, later, after three years, I remarried. And that was even harder yet, when she died. She was a wonderful girl. She took care of the children like they were her own. And of course my brothers were a big comfort, both times.

JF: And when you...came here, you started the market that you had in West Philadelphia?

MA: No, when I came first I worked for my brother in Chester. He had a store in Chester. You see, he had, he was a story. He was a sergeant in the army. And he trained me like I would be in the army! [laughs] He took it serious. He's a very serious guy. And of course like a brother, like a good brother, you know. First of all, he didn't let me read no Polish paper, no Russian paper, no Jewish paper. He start me off with the *Bulletin*. He says, "You live here. You have to learn English."

JF: So you learned English.

MA: I learned English.

JF: And gradually after that you got the small grocery store in...

MA: After three years—I worked with him three years—he says, "You can run a store by yourself. And both brothers got together. And they gave me the money and we started the store. And I started the store. I'll never forget this one incident, in West Philadelphia, 50th and Brown. I needed a new cooler, for soda, cooler. So Pepsi-Cola sold that time coolers. And I made the arrangements because I remember \$200. I didn't have the \$200. In beginning, you know, you start off a store. [unclear] [chuckles]. The first day I took in 20 some dollars. The first week something like \$180 a week I took in, you know? I had a big competition, a big store across the street. But anyhow, my brother comes and visits me and, yeah, and so I applied for credit to pay out. That is, I paid him \$20 down and would pay out. So, I got; later, so they checked my credit. I didn't have credit nowhere because I always I bought something I paid cash. I didn't have any charge cards nowhere no. So they sent me back the no check and, "Sorry, no credit." So my brother comes and we're sitting and talking and he sees a letter from the First Pennsylvania. He says, "What do you deal with the First Pennsyl-

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vania?" I say, "No," I show it to him, "it's just a letter." He says, "Oh bunch of son of a..." He says, took out \$200, pay in cash for a soda machine! [laughs]

JF: Oh.

MA: But anyhow, later when I...got together some money I paid him up. This brother, he took from me right away the money. Every time I got a couple of dollars I give him. The other brother I knew he is an accountant. I knew I will have, he will not want to take it, and I didn't want his. So, we got together the money. I remember it was a guy Harry Fein. He supplied us with meat. So I took every week and I paid him every week. So later I knew the brother supposed to come and I owed him \$1,000 and I was thinking I have to get a, I had already about now six, seven hundred dollars. So I was thinking I owe this Harry Fein \$200 and Louie Pinchas \$100, you know what I mean? So if I pay him next week, I will be able to pay the brother the \$1,000 Sunday. So when this Harry Fein and so, that was Thursday. I told him, "Harry, will that be all right if I will not pay you this week? I'll pay you next week." He says, "Why?" The first thing he says, "Why?" So I told him, "Because so and so, I want to pay the brother." He says, "For crying out loud!" He knocks on the block, on the butcher block. He says, "If you needed more, why don't you tell me!? And if you owe somebody, pay it!" And he runs out. He didn't say nothing. He runs out. I didn't know what to make out of it. And so he runs out. He says, "Whom else you will not pay?" I say, "Louie Pinchas." "How much do you owe him?" I say, "Over \$100." And he doesn't say nothing and he runs again, keeps on running. And he lived not far. He lived here on the K apartments, you know, in Wynnefield. And he comes back, in a half an hour he comes back with a check, with his wife's name signed, Sylvia Fein, \$350. He says, "Here. You needed money? Here is \$350. And if you owe somebody, pay him!" He says, "And when you have, I don't ask you when to pay me back. Anytime when you have, pay me back."

JF: Aw, that's wonderful.

MA: You know what I mean? You have an experience like this. You change. If somebody does you something wrong sometimes, you know, that makes up for it. Now, another experience I got when we were in Chester, and so the first week, they, when I came to Chester, they, I didn't work. They took me around to this cousin, this cousin, this cousin. And they bought the kids things and this. And the apartment was furnished, everything, including a refrigerator, and everything! I'm telling you, including flowers on the table! And later, what else to buy us? So, my wife says to me, "You know, with two children, I could use," at that time, the first time they came out with a wringer washing machines, you know? "But I will not tell them. I want to buy it from my own money," she says. "I want to have a feeling out of my own."

JF: The feeling, yeah.

MA: Yeah. O.K., after the week I went to work and I got paid. I got \$50 a week, which I could make a living from it. And I paid \$15 a week rent. And I still saved, managed to save \$5 from the \$50, and the cooperation in *shul*. And they, it was right after *Rosh Hashanah*, you know, right after I came around September here, in this country. And I paid them every week \$5 and they kept them. They paid me interest. And before, later when I got

saved up \$95, because they advertised, a wringer washing machine they advertised \$95. All the stores. All the appliance stores, furniture stores in Chester. So I got saved up \$95. I took it out. And we took my wife and the two children and we walked downtown in Chester. We go to one store. A wringer washing machine, \$95 here. So, how many months you want to pay? I say, "I want to pay cash." They didn't want to sell it to me.

JF: [chuckles] You were in America now!

MA: I didn't realize what America is! I went to another store, and they didn't want to sell it. And later I find out there is another store, Morton's. Morton's Appliance. I went there. And that was the third store, the last store. And I start arguing and I talked with Yiddish there. And my English was very bad that time. And I, [Yiddish], "My money is not good for you? I'll pay cash!" And I couldn't understand why I have to charge it. So, and I was thinking might as well I be charge. You know? So I, the guy comes out from the office. He says, "Where is the greenhorn here?" He heard my language. He says, "What's the matter, greenhorn?" So I told to him, "They don't want to take my money." He says, "Why?" So I told him the story. He says, "Come here. Which washing machine you want?"

JF: Oh.

MA: And he did. I talked to him and I said, "Oh, you give me the best. I don't know which one." He says, "Take this." And it was, I think a Maytag was it. And he says, "That's all?" "Yeah." "You have the \$95?" He took from me the \$95. He took \$5 back. He got me, "Here, here, here is...start saving again," he says.

JF: Oh, wonderful.

MA: He...told the driver to take me. He says, "Here, leave everything," he says. "I don't care. Take them home." He took us, me and the wife and the children. He took us home and...

JF: Oh, that's wonderful.

MA: So, so that's *yidn*, you know what I mean?

JF: Yeah, yeah.

MA: You know, the Talmud says, "*Yisroel af alpi shechata Yisroel hu.*" That's mean, "A Jew, even if he sins, he's a sinner, he's still a Jew."

JF: Mr. Adler, thank you. Thank you very, very much.

MA: Can I make you lunch?

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL FOR MYER ADLER INTERVIEW BY TELEPHONE, FEBRUARY 14, 1983 - WITH JOSEY FISHER

On Tape 4, side 2 of his interview, Mr. Adler refers to a DP camp of children in Ulm, Germany where he found his 2 nephews and niece.

The name of this camp was Bleidorn. It was one of seven DP camps in Ulm. Mr. Adler was in Sedan Kasserne also in Ulm. This camp, to Mr. Adler's knowledge had

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about 300 children up to the age of 14, most of them orphans and most of whom went to Israel eventually.

Mr. Adler's niece and nephews were not orphans. They were with him in Russian and returned with him and their parents to Poland. It was difficult to leave Poland, however, and a Zionist group, probably under the Haganah, arranged to transport the children across the Polish border - safer for both the children and their parents who also had to cross illegally. They were taken to a transit camp in Prague, again only for children (Mr. Adler does not know the name) and then taken to Bleidorn where they were taught Hebrew and prepared for Israel. The children's parents (Mr. Adler's sister and brother-in-law) left Poland 2 months after their children, together with 2 older daughters and went to Paris. Their oldest son went to a youth camp in Frankfurt under the Agunah.

After 2 years, the children were reunited with their parents in Paris, with Mr. Adler's help, and the whole family went to Israel.