

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HENRY ALTSCHULER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher  
Date: March 17, 1981

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HA - Dr. Henry Altschuler [interviewee]

JF - Josey Fisher [interviewer]

Date: March 17, 1981

*Tape one, side one:*

JF: Dr. Altschuler, can you tell me where and when you were born?

HA: I was born March 28, 1923, near Jaroslaw, Poland.

JF: Can you spell that for me, please?

HA: J-A-R-O-S-L-A-W.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about your family?

HA: There was my father, my mother, and I have one brother. My brother is about seven years older than I am. I had two sisters, who died as young children before the war. Actually, I didn't know any of my children, of the sisters. I didn't know any of them. My brother knew one of the sisters, because one of the sisters was born after his birth. But they both died during the war, the First World War.

JF: And this was before you were born?

HA: Yes.

JF: I see.

HA: I think I was the result, might be result because my mother lost both children.

JF: Can you tell me about your parents, what your father did, what kind of life they led?

HA: My father was a rather [unclear] parent. And he was actually going to private schools. After finishing high school, he went to Budapest. He was studying to repair watches. He met my mother, and they got married in 19-- I can't remember, I think they got married in 1914 or 15, something like that.

JF: Where were they both originally from?

HA: My father was from Boryslaw. This is a town in Poland. It is spelled B-O-R-Y-S-L-A-W. This is the part of Poland called Galicia. This was a rich part of Poland, because it contained all the oil in Poland. My grandfather was the owner of apartment houses. He was a rich man, and my father was the son of rich parents, and when they got married, my father was taken to the army. He was in the Austrian army as an officer.

JF: He was in the Polish Army?

HA: In the Austrian army.

JF: And what kind of experience did he have in the Austrian army?

HA: He was wounded several times. He was in the hospital near Vienna, and there he met Kaiser Franz Josef's sister. She was the, actually she was the leader of the hospital, apparently was [unclear] a handsome man. That's what they told me. He had a good time. He had two children; my brother was born in 1916.

JF: Did he have any kind of antisemitic experience while he was in the army?

HA: No, I don't think so. In the Austrian army there was no antisemitism, because my mother tells me during the Austrian occupation they didn't experience any antisemitism. Actually, this was part of Poland occupied by Austria, was a part of Poland which the Jews could do anything. They could study, they could go to the university, and everything else. So, there was no [unclear] of antisemitism. My mother, for example, finished college in Austria.

JF: In Austria.

HA: Yes. And my father didn't go to college, but he went to a school, it was a trade school.

JF: You're talking about before the First World War? And the name of the town where they were living?

HA: They were living in Jaroslaw. My father comes from Boryslaw. His whole family comes from Boryslaw. He had a big family. But, he lived also in Budapest. He also lived in Bratislava, he lived in Czechoslovakia for quite a while.

JF: But Jaroslaw was part of Austria?

HA: Yes.

JF: Before the First World War? Okay. Can you tell me about their religious behavior?

HA: My mother was very religious, and she comes from a very religious home. But my father was completely areligious.

JF: He was areligious.

HA: Completely areligious.

JF: What did this mean as far as your upbringing was concerned?

HA: My upbringing was religious, but as far as my father considered, he didn't care about it. But he was doing it because of my mother, because the parents of my mother were living in Jaroslaw, and my only brother of my mother was the president of the *Aguda*. This is a religious organization. You know, *Aguda*, there is an organization here in America also.

JF: What kind of education did you have? Religious education?

HA: I went to *cheder* from the age of five, six, until the age of 13. Until my *bar mitzvah*, and then I rebelled; I didn't want to go anymore.

JF: No more education.

HA: No more education, Jewish education, I didn't want it.

JF: Was that fairly typical in your town?

HA: No, it wasn't. I said to my mother, "I don't want to," and she accepted this, but however, as religious as we were at home, because we had a kosher home, everything was kosher, we had to go Saturday to school.

JF: What kind of school was this?

HA: Polish school, public school, Polish. My brother went to school and I went to school Saturdays. Because in Poland we went to six days to school, Monday through Sunday. [Mr. A. probably means Saturday]

JF: So, after the First World War, your town became part of Poland?

HA: Poland, yes.

JF: What changes did that mean to your family that it became under the Polish government instead of the Austrian government?

HA: I really can't tell you because I don't remember the Austrian time. I just remember what my mother used to tell me and my father used to tell me.

JF: Do you remember what they used to tell you?

HA: Yes.

JF: About the differences?

HA: They used to tell me it was very good during the Austrian time.

JF: It was better during the Austrian time.

HA: The Polish Government was always rotten.

JF: Was rotten.

HA: Sure, it was antisemitic. There were always some laws against the Jews. But I didn't experience anything.

JF: You did not experience any antisemitism?

HA: In school, a little bit.

JF: In what way?

HA: Oh, they used to call me a dirty Jew, dirty Jew, and they used to call me, they sang songs about the Jews, they used to fight with us because we were always the smartest in the class, I don't know why, I wouldn't say that because it was me, but, as a whole, the Jewish boys in the class were the better students. We had students in the class, all these students who were Polacks, who barely could read, whereas we were always the first in the class. So there was jealousy always among us, always fights between us. But we wouldn't let ourselves. If I got a hit from a Pole, I give it back, which means it wasn't so bad. Of course, the authorities would never stand up for us, only against us. I remember there was an occasion in the school, we were working before Christmas, we had some handiwork to turn in to the teacher, and I was working all evening to make some Christmas decorations for school, so I brought it in, and I worked very hard and very nice, and I brought it in, and since I was the first one in the class, Altschuler, so I was the first one. He called me in and he looked at the thing, and he said, "Ah, it's nothing." He gave me a 3, which means he gave me--it was "adequate" which made me really mad. I went back to the class, and right behind me was sitting a boy who was a friend of mine. He was living right near my house, and he says, "Henry, I have forgotten my work to turn in. Will you give me your work and I will turn it in instead of my work?" So I said, "Surely, Ashua."

JF: This was a Polish...

HA: Polish, oh yes, Karikula was his name, he was actually in the middle of the class. There were about eighty students in the class. So after forty people, he gave it to the teacher, and the teacher said, "Oh, it's very nice." He gave him an A. It shows you--this was our teacher. He was a lieutenant in the army, and it shows you what was the character of the people.

JF: Now this boy was your friend, and he was a Pole. There were times, then, that you had friends who were non-Jewish. Did your parents also associate with non-Jews?

HA: Yes, quite a few. Quite a few, because we were living in the part of the town which was completely non-Jewish.

JF: Was that a problem?

HA: No, no, no, no. We lived there, this was it, and there were a few Jewish families who were living in this part of the town, and were living there and it was ok. So--my brother also my brother was in high school, it was *Gymnasium*. *Gymnasium* was paid, you had to pay for *Gymnasium*, but my brother was free from tuition. He didn't have to pay any tuition, because he was a very good student.

JF: This was a Polish...

HA: Polish school, *Gymnasium*.

JF: Was there any problem in Jewish children going to the *Gymnasium*?

HA: There was a quota.

JF: There was a quota?

HA: Definitely. So he went to *Gymnasium* and he didn't have to pay anything, but in the 8th class of the *Gymnasium* because he went to the old *Gymnasium* because after 1936 we went only six years to *Gymnasium*. This was it. My brother went four years to grammar school and eight years to *Gymnasium*. So I remember the eighth grade of *Gymnasium*, he went to a burlesque show. He was caught by the professor; he was missing from school. So my mother went, and she was humiliated, of course, by the director and things like that, and finally, he was let in the school, but he had to pay tuition.

JF: Were there any other instances that you can recall of antisemitic treatment of your family, or of the Jews in general in your town?

HA: Oh, there were pogroms in our town.

JF: That you recall?

HA: Yes, but we wouldn't let them. When we had a pogrom in the town, all the Jewish boys, there was a nice group of Jewish boys, there were over 5000 Jews in our city, all the young Jewish boys stood in the doors of the houses, and stood steadfast, and they wouldn't let them.

JF: Who were carrying out the pogroms?

HA: The peasants from the villages and some of the lower elements of the, and usually, the people who were in the universities, they used to come from the universities and carry out the pogroms.

JF: Along with the peasants?

HA: Yes...

JF: Or was this a separate group?

HA: Yes, together with the peasants, because they were too weak by themselves.

JF: But the Jewish youths, the young men, fought back?

HA: Sure, we fought them back.

JF: How often would something like that happen?

HA: It usually happened during the Christmas vacation. This was a time when the Jews were selling a lot of fish, for example, to the gentiles. Because it was a Jewish trade, fish, the fishmarket. So they would bring their own fish they would sell their own fish, and they would make a lot of trouble, but we had our own tricks, the Jews. For example, we had these big containers of fish, carp, for sale, and we had a few of these guys, these thieves, known thieves in the town, Poles. They would do anything for a dollar, they would do anything for a *zloty*. We gave him a *zloty*, and he went to look for the fish, for example, and we had poisoned this, and we poisoned all the fish. They didn't have anything to sell. This was [unclear] we fought back this way. We wouldn't let ourselves--for example, they used to go before the synagogue, when the Jews used to come in the evening, from the prayer, my grandfather--they used to tear the beards out, and they used to beat him up. I remember I was in high school that time, and there was a group of students in the high school who were playing in the orchestra with me and they all disappeared towards evening, and I was wondering, why they disappeared. They had something to play or something to do. And I found out. They used to go fight the Jews. So we took care of them, too. One evening there was a son of a [unclear]. He was a thief, a known thief, a Jewish thief. We paid him some money. He got a few of his friends, and they used, they went ahead with knife, and they really knocked the shit, excuse me, the shit out of these *Endeks*,<sup>1</sup> these academians. He cut off an ear, [unclear]. This was... [unclear]

JF: Did they get in trouble with the police for that?

HA: Who?

JF: The Jews.

HA: No. Because the police was on our side.

JF: The Polish police were on the Jews' side?

HA: Sort of, sort of.

JF: Why do you think that was?

HA: Because, number one, they were paid by the Jews; the Jews were paying them. They were on our payroll.

JF: They were on your payroll because of the section of the city that they were working in, or this was extra money?

HA: This was extra money.

JF: I see.

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<sup>1</sup>*Endeks* or *Endecja*: a right-wing, antisemitic political Polish party.

HA: For example, my father knew all the police, because my father was a special--he used to, for example, when somebody stole some jewelry, there was a big theft of jewelry, of diamonds, and my father used to go and look at it. He was sort of evaluating, an official evaluator, so he knew all the police, everybody, and they used to come to our store. Everyday, there was some of the police at our store. They knew my father very well. As far as the police, there was nothing to worry about, and they knew, and from the police there was nothing. But, by and large, the people from the army, the people who used to go to schools and the universities, used to come home, these were the people who used to make all this big business about the Jews...

JF: The people in the army and the students at the universities were primarily the people...

HA: ...were antisemitic.

JF: Who were antisemitic. Was there an active *Gemeinde* or Jewish organization?

HA: Yes, the Jewish *Gemeinde*, Jewish organizations. There were some Zionistic organizations, *Ha-No'ar*, *Akiba*, *Ha-shomer Ha-tza'ir*-- There was no *Bund*<sup>2</sup> in our town.

JF: No *Bund*, but a very active Zionist organization.

HA: Zionist, *Ha-shomer* was leftist, and in the middle of the road was *Ha-No'ar*, *Akiba*. There was *Aguda*, this was the religious organization, and my uncle was the president, and there was *Ha-No'ar* and the *Betar*, Jabotinsky's organization. My father was an officer in Jabotinsky's. In our family was a variety of parties. My cousins were in Israel, two cousins were *Ha-shomer*, leftists. My brother and I, we were in the middle in the *Ha-No'ar Akiba*, my father and my one cousin was in the *Betar*, the Revisionists. This was Begin's party, Jabotinsky's, Begin's party. My uncle was completely on the right, the religious party, so we used to have discussions, sometimes violent discussions. But it was a lot of fun. We used to go Saturday in my grandfather's house, every Saturday, Saturday afternoon. We used to go to my grandfather, all the grandchildren were there, and it used to be, it was very nice. It meant something to us. I remember when my parents had their 25th wedding anniversary, and my grandparents had their 50th wedding anniversary the same day.

JF: What memories do you have of the 1930's, before the invasion?

HA: Well, the 1930's, of course, being so close to Germany, we could feel this surge of antisemitism coming into Poland. Of course, we had the refugees from Germany coming into Poland, a lot of Polish citizens who were in Germany, Jews, predominantly Jews. They were deported back to Poland.

JF: Did you have many of these people come to your town? What did you learn from them about what was happening in Germany?

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<sup>2</sup>The Jewish Workers' *Bund*, a socialist organization.

HA: We learned from books and from them, there were beatings and the Crystal Night, all of these things, we learned about these things. I was a very good reader. I remember I read in 1933, 1934, I read all the books what has happened in Germany. I was very scared about it.

JF: Did your parents ever talk about the possibility of something happening in Poland?

HA: No, they didn't talk. My mother, especially, my mother was a [unclear] German. She was pro-German, because she was actually educated in Germany, in Austria, and she spoke German, fluently German, and she said, "How could this happen? The German people couldn't do it." She didn't believe until the last minute when she died herself.

JF: And your father?

HA: My father believed it, yes.

JF: Did he ever talk about leaving?

HA: There was nowhere to leave. In 1923, before I was born, when he was in Karlsbad, he had a store in Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia. During the summer, he used to go to Karlsbad, and there were a lot of Americans coming in, used to deal with diamonds, things like that. So they used to say to him, "Why don't you come to America?" He came to my mother and said, "Let's go to America." She said, "Why do I need America? I have America here." So this was the story.

JF: What happened, in your memory, right before the invasion in 1939?

HA: I remember the first day of the war, when the world war broke out in 1939. I was 16 ½ years old. I was serving as sort of liaison between the police. I was living in an apartment house. In the downstairs of the apartment house was the police, the police force.

JF: This is where your family lived?

HA: Yes. The street was called [unclear]. Or it was called [unclear]. This was a big apartment house. It had two sides, from one side to the other side. One street was [unclear], one was [unclear]. This was the main street right across the post office, near the court. We lived in a nice neighborhood. I remember I was the liaison between the police and all the people, and I was going with the police in the police car, looking out at the destruction what the German airplanes did to the town. I saw the people blown up.

JF: You went around in the police car?

HA: Yes. My mother was a nurse, also in the police.

JF: She was a nurse for the police?

HA: Yes that time temporary. Of course, this was September first. On September 7th, I remember the policeman one policeman came, what do you call it, a policeman who is out of uniform?

JF: A plainclothesman?

HA: A plainclothesman came in and he said to my father, "You better flee your town. The Germans are going to come in tomorrow morning. The rumors are they are

killing the Jews." So my mother was hearing this, she said, "You guys go, go out." So I went to find my brother, he was with a friend, and we got together, about two o'clock in the morning, a couple of friends, neighbors, and my uncle, we went on the road.

JF: Your whole family?

HA: Yes, towards East. We started to march. We did not have any vehicle, our transportation was nothing.

JF: Did you try to take much with you?

HA: Nothing. What you could take was in your hands. We walked, the first night we walked 35 kilometers. Until we came to a town Oleszyce. We came to this town, and there was a panic in this town, because a lot of people from Krakow, and from other towns in Poland also going, everyone was going east toward the Russian border. You couldn't walk nights, you couldn't walk by days because the Germans used their air force, used to strafe the roads and everything, so you had to go at nights. So we stayed in Oleszyce, in some house, a Jew, and toward evening we walked farther. We went to Lubaczow, the next town.

JF: How do you spell that?

HA: L-U-B-A-C-Z-O-W. Then from Lubaczow we went to Sokol, and several times were startled by the...

*Tape one, side two:*

HA: In Sokol, there was one of our. neighbors, he was from Sokol. His parents were there, his parents-in-law were still living there, and so we stayed there for a few days, and one evening, I remember, there was a tremendous [unclear] of the city. The Germans had bombed the city and they hit apparently a train with ammunition. The ammunition exploded. There was fire all over the city. Everybody was scared and we started to go farther. So we were going farther and farther, on the way we met the Polish army. This was already the territory of the Ukraine, mostly Ukrainian territory. Very antisemitic, very antisemitic.

JF: This was part of Poland?

HA: Only Ukrainians lived there.

JF: I see.

HA: So we were going, we were going, we finally came to Rowno [Rovno], a very large town right near the border of Russia. One night we woke up and the Russian Army was, it means we were invaded already from this side by the Russian army.

JF: Where were you staying when you were there?

HA: With a family.

JF: With a Jewish family?

HA: With a Jewish family.

JF: What was your experience then with the Russian army?

HA: So, we were talking with the Russians. They promised us everything; "Don't worry." In the meantime, they were stealing bread, because we didn't have anything to eat, they were stealing bread. My father said, "Look, what kind of army is this?" They were *schleppers*, they were nothing. So my brother had a watch, he sold his watch. He got a lot of money for his watch. He thought he got a lot of money. He could have sold it later on for ten times as much. But this was nothing, this was a small thing. So we started to go back.

JF: You started to go west again?

HA: Back west again, yes. There was a time when we found ourselves in a land of no occupation. There were no Germans and no Poles, no Russians, just for about half an hour, and the Russians came and we were going, we bought a pair of horses, and a wagon, we started to go back home.

JF: Were you in any way stopped by the Ukrainians that you mentioned before?

HA: No, no, they didn't do anything to us. We were traveling better during the day. There were a lot of people who were killed by the Ukrainians. And, finally, we came close to our town. Our town was like that, you see, Jaroslaw was at the river San, and San was the demarcation line between the Russian occupation and the German occupation, so the city was German, and right after the river were the Russians. We came to the river and

met some people from our city. They said, "Where are you going?" "We're going home to see my mother." "Your mother, your mother is here some place, you better find her."

JF: This was on the other side of the river?

HA: Yes, on the Russian side.

JF: On the Russian side of the river.

HA: I say, "What do you mean my mother is here?" "Don't you know about it? Your mother was thrown out of the city with everybody." So, finally, I found my mother, I found my aunt and my cousin, two aunts, three aunts, actually three aunts and my uncle.

JF: On this voyage that you're talking about, your parents were not with you?

HA: I was with my father. My mother stayed in the city.

JF: So your father and your brother and yourself went with some other family members?

HA: Yes, and my mother stayed in the city. So, finally, I found them, and my mother said her mother died in the city. She has to go back to the city to bury her. So I went with her. She got a permission from the Germans to return to the city, but I couldn't get, permission, I swam the river, walked three miles ahead on the side, because I knew the river very well. I swam through the river and entered the city, but I didn't make it to the funeral. The cemetery was about seven miles from the city, seven kilometers from the city.

JF: The Germans permitted the Jews to bury their dead?

HA: Yes, they did. Especially if there was a German in the city, a *Volksdeutsch*, which means he was of German origin. His parents were very good friends with my mother and my father. His brother was a very good friend of my brother; they used to go both to school together, and my brother was a good student. He was also a good student, so they were good friends. The parents we met always during school visitations and similar things, so she went to him, and said, "Mr. Schmidt, would you permit a burial?" He let her stay in the city. So she buried her mother. I was walking. I went to the house and took everything what I could from my father's tools, cause this was his livelihood. I brought it over the river and to the Russian zone.

JF: You swam back with the tools?

HA: No, I came with a pair of horses, somebody brought me to the river, and the Germans said "Was there a search?" I said, "Yes, I was searched," and I went to a boat, because the bridge was destroyed, I went with a boat to the other side and my brother was there, and some other people helped me out. And my mother stayed in the city. She was actually mad at me; "Why did I carry these things of my father?" She thought she would be able to bring everything, because she had my grandfather there. Her father, he was a sick man, he stayed in the city. So, the next day I came to the river again. The Germans wouldn't let anybody in and anybody out. They told us, the Germans, that the only Jews will come out to Seniawa, [Sieniawa] it was twenty miles up the river; another little town, Seniawa, it's S-E-N-I-A-W-A. So I went over there with my cousin to Seniawa. The Russians were on this side, and the Germans were on the other side, and I saw what

happened there. My mother came with my grandfather, and they searched my mother's clothes, everything else, they took some clothes away, they took my violin away. She had my violin, and they let her go. She came down, and it was already dusk. We couldn't travel anymore because it was three kilometers into the city, so we stayed all night on the bank of the river. The next morning, it was bandits, it was the Ukrainian bandits, the next morning these men started to take everything, everything away from everyone. My mother was a very strong woman. She wouldn't let them, and she got knifed, a knife into her hand, and, finally, we got into the town and they took away practically half of whatever we had. So we stayed there about a day, and we left to this little town, a little village near Jaroslaw on the other side of it, and we went from there to Lubaczow.

JF: Which is where?

HA: This was farther east.

JF: Farther east.

HA: Yes, about 50 kilometers east.

JF: Did you have any trouble with the Russians moving from town to town? Did they restrict you in any way or question you?

HA: No, in the beginning, there was no problem, but later on, once we were settled down, they said we had to register, number one, we had to register. We told them we were born in Poland, lived in this town. They said, "What do you want to do?" We said, "We want to stay with you." We were not as smart as some people, some people said, "We want to go back to America." Some people said, "We want to go back to Germany." All these people who said they want to go back to Germany were deported to Siberia. Maybe this was better, because maybe they survived. You see?

JF: Did the Russians want you to become Russian citizens?

HA: Yes.

JF: And what did you do about that?

HA: When we reported ourselves, we said we didn't want to go to Germany or back to Poland, or something, we want to stay in Russia. We had the status of refugees. We couldn't travel because we were right near the border. This was a border zone.

JF: And which town were you in at this point when you had to register?

HA: Lubaczow.

JF: And how do you spell that?

HA: Actually, we were in Chrobieszow [Chrobieszow], which was a little village, Chrobieszow, C-H-R-O-B-I-E-S-Z-U-W.

JF: And this is where you registered with the Russians?

HA: With the Russians, yes.

JF: And this was approximately when?

HA: This was about approximately '39 or '40, the end of '39 or '40.

JF: You registered saying you did not want to be anywhere else but in the Russian area? Did they ask you to become citizens?

HA: Oh, this was automatically, we became citizens.

JF: Automatically you became citizens.

HA: This was, I don't know, whether it was a mistake or it wasn't, because maybe my parents would be alive.

JF: Did your family then all do the same thing? None of them refused to become citizens?

HA: All my family refused to go back to Poland. My uncle and my two aunts and one aunt went to some other place. My parents... [unclear, could be Lvov]

JF: What was the general kind of treatment on the part of the Russians toward you and your family?

HA: No, no [unclear].

JF: Did they talk about what was going on in Germany? Or saying things like how the Jews were being treated there?

HA: No, at that time they were allies of the Germans. Ribbentrop at that time and at that time and Molotov and Litvinov were members. This was the pact between Ribbentrop and Litvinov. You are too young to remember these things.

JF: Did your father get work in this town?

HA: My father worked as a watchmaker.

JF: What about you?

HA: I went to school. I went right away to school. I went right away to [unclear] to Lvov and to school.

JF: And your brother was in Lvov.

HA: Yes.

JF: And you lived with him?

HA: No, I lived in the students' house.

JF: What kind of school was this?

HA: It was a trade school, a very excellent trade school, one of the best Jewish trade schools in the whole of Poland. It was [unclear]. It was actually a *Gymnasium*, a trade *Gymnasium*.

JF: During that time, did you meet any writers or other kinds of visitors from the Soviet Union who were coming through the town? Did you have a chance to talk to anybody from the interior of Russia?

HA: Yes, I met quite a few people from Russia.

JF: What kind of experiences did they relate?

HA: It was very difficult to [unclear] when I think about; it was very difficult to believe them, because they all boasted about Russia, how good it is there, how wonderful it is in Russia, all these things, it was all lies.

JF: These were ordinary citizens who were coming through?

HA: They were soldiers.

JF: These were soldiers.

HA: Jewish soldiers! Communist party, all lies.

JF: Why do you think they were lying to you?

HA: Because when I think about the things, what they are telling me, I can compare what they have now, I could see it was lies. They used to buy all the things, what they have seen. I say, "Why do you buy this?" He said, "I want to buy a gift for my parents. This is a gift from Poland to my family." They didn't have anything. He used to buy anything. Little machines to grind meat, you know, used to listen to it if it plays. This was complete, a nation of people who were completely uncivilized. I had spoken to some Russians, they were drunk and he told me he had a five-year-old daughter. He says, "You know, my daughter has never had sugar."

JF: These were primarily Russian-Jewish soldiers that you were talking to?

HA: No, I was talking to a, this was a Russian woman. She was the wife of a lieutenant, a Russian lieutenant. "You know, this child has never seen any sugar. This child has seen a beggar in the village on the street." She said, "Look, *dadushka*; she called him *dadushka*, Russia.

JF: Did you meet any writers? Any authors?

HA: No. No.

JF: Any citizens who were not in the military?

HA: Yes, I met yes, quite a few.

JF: And did they talk about the conditions in Russia? Everybody was praising. Stalin was the best. There was nothing better in the world, but Russia.

JF: Except the woman who talked about her child not having sugar. And that was when she had been...

HA: She was drunk...

JF: She had a drink. Okay. Did your family ever consider trying to leave that village? Or did you try to leave or think about leaving Lvov?

HA: No, no.

JF: Did you feel that that was a good place to be?

HA: It was a good place to be. Number one, I hadn't finished school yet, and I had good, my father had a good job.

JF: Did you have many contacts with other Jews in that community, other refugees, or Jews who had lived there before?

HA: We had very little, because they were not educated, they were not people, we didn't have anything in common with these people. We just knew each other, said "Hello," but nothing special.

JF: Did you have any contact with anybody from your hometown during this period of time?

HA: [No response.]

JF: Did you have any knowledge of what was going on in the rest of Poland or in Germany during these years between '39 and '40? What kind of information were you getting?

HA: We used to get second-hand information from people, from Poles who used to smuggle from Germany to Russia, from Russia to Germany. They used to say what happened to the Jews.

JF: How much did you know?

HA: Approximately everything that was happening in Poland.

JF: You knew about the camps?

HA: There wasn't any camp, there weren't any camps in Poland. After '40, there were many camps.

JF: When did you first hear, then, about them?

HA: I heard the first around '42.

JF: What happened then, to backtrack just a minute, what happened in '41? Did things change for you?

HA: In June, the 22nd of June, the Germans, of course, overran Poland, the Germans overran Russia, and they came into Lvov on the 29th, and since then there was nothing but beasts.

JF: What happened? Can you describe it to me?

HA: They came into the town. Right away we didn't have any water in the student house. There was a restriction for the Jews to go to, I used to go into town, used to visit my brother. It was very dangerous, because they used to kill Jews on the street. The Poles and the Ukrainians, they used to take them to the prison in the city.

JF: The Poles and Ukrainians used to do this?

HA: Yes.

JF: This is before the Germans.

HA: No, the Germans were in the city already.

JF: This is during the time of the German invasion.

HA: Yes, exactly. They surrounded the city, they used to check papers. If you were a Jew, come inside, they used to take watches, anything you had on your hands, rings, watches, and they used to take you to the prison.

JF: The Poles and the Ukrainians who were doing these things, these people would not have done it under the Russian occupation?

HA: They couldn't do it.

JF: The Russians controlled them, but once the Germans were there...

HA: They had a free hand. I was caught in one of these, during the raids, I was caught and I was going already to the prison. Many of the Jews were killed. Just before the prison, I turned and walked on another street, and just walked away, and nobody saw me, and I met a Ukrainian girl. She was very nice, and to the Ukrainian I said, "Let me go with you." She said, "Sure," she took me by, under her arm, and we were going, but two little

boys who saw me, they started to yell: "Oh, Jew! Jew! Jew!" So I said, "Shut up because I'll kill you right away," and they were afraid and they shut up, and didn't say anything, and I went in a completely different direction with the girl and she took me out to [unclear] house. She was a decent person, was a young girl.

JF: What happened then?

HA: I came to my brother, my brother's house, and I told him what happened, and he said, "Why did you have to come to my house?" I said, "No I didn't have to come, but I wanted to see you." I stayed there overnight, and the next morning I went back to the school, to the student house, and then came the Germans. They told us to register and then to work. We went to work.

JF: What kind of work was this?

HA: Day work. They took us to the railroad station to unload cars. We worked during the day. We had Ukrainians supervising us.

JF: What was that like?

HA: They were very brutal. And since they didn't understand German and we could speak a little bit German, we used to tell them, "The Germans told you to do this and this." We used to lie and they would let us go. So this was the state of life. About three weeks later I went back home to Lubaczow, to [unclear].

JF: How did you go home? They let you go home?

HA: I got a permission, a permit. I went to the Gestapo, the police station. I was waiting for hours, and finally I got the permit, a piece of paper. It was worth nothing.

JF: When you were working in Lvov, were you still living then at the school?

HA: Yes, at the school.

JF: And were you eating the same, as you had eaten before? Or things had changed?

HA: No, no, no, no--changed. Everybody was for themselves. I had to worry about the director of the school, his wife; I had to feed them too. It was all the people.

JF: You had to feed them, too?

HA: It was my duty to feed them, too.

JF: What happened after you went home, or back to where your parents were living? Did your brother go also?

HA: No, my brother stayed.

JF: Your brother stayed.

HA: I went, and it was a nightmare. The trip was all right, but when I came home, the Ukrainian police took us one evening, about two or three evenings after I came home, they took us all together and started beating us. Just without any, for nothing. Actually they killed three people, and about two or three months later one morning I was just lying on the [unclear] you know, I was still at my mother's-- [unclear], so I was just taking off my clothes and a Ukrainian policeman came in and he said, "Let's go." My mother said "When?" "Pronto, let's go to the police." I was taken to Lubaczow.

JF: This was just you?

HA: And a few other people from the village.

JF: Your parents were left, though, at home?

HA: Yes, my parents were left home. And from there, my family went to Rawa Ruska [alternate spelling Rava-Russkaja]. It's called, it's spelled Rawa - R-A-W-A Ruska - R-U-S-K-A. This is a town with two names, Rawa Ruska. We had heard about this professor, this guy who was a Ukrainian, they were trying to deport him. He was from Rawa Ruska; so they took us to Rawa Ruska, and from Rawa Ruska to Lemberg: Ruska; we stayed in Lemberg for two days, and the Germans came and took us to a concentration camp.

JF: How did you go to the concentration camp? How did they take you?

HA: By truck.

JF: By truck.

HA: I went to a concentration camp, called Jaktoruw-Rushka, it's called J-A-K-T-O-R-U-W [Jaktorow].

*Tape two, side one:*

JF: Can you tell me what your experience was at this camp?

HA: This was a small camp. There were about 200 people, 160-180 people, it depends.

JF: Both men and women?

HA: No, men, only men, mostly people from Lvov, and the people they brought from our neighborhood, and from the surrounding villages. Our duties in this camp were to clean up the road to Germany, the main highway to Germany, to Russia, excuse me. This was the main highway to Russia. We had to go to the highway, clean it up from the snow and everything else. It was a murderous task. It was very cold, this was the winter where we experienced weathers of -41 Celsius.

JF: This was the winter of what year, then?

HA: Of '41 to '42.

JF: The winter of '41 to '42. What kind of clothing, what kind of food, what kind of living conditions did you have?

HA: The clothing was whatever we brought from home. There was no specific clothing, only what we brought from home. Food, we were given in the morning, a little bit of coffee, a piece of bread, and during lunchtime we were given some soup, mostly water. Sometimes, if you found a potato you were very lucky, and in the evening we were given coffee. No bread. A lot of people were actually starving. I knew a fellow peasant, a Jewish peasant, who was always hungry; he used to steal bread. He used to steal food, and one day he decided to go to work and he froze to death. He couldn't do anything, he just committed suicide.

JF: He froze to death while he was working?

HA: No, he, while he was working, he lay down in the snow and he wouldn't move. He was a big fellow. He had some food, and in this camp, the first time in my life I saw two people being shot with my eyes.

JF: Why were they shot?

HA: Because they were, some people escaped from this camp, and there were two people who were sweeping the floor of the camp, the grounds of the camp, and the guy, the SS Fox was his name...

JF: His name was what?

HA: Fox, his name was Fox, he came around, he was mad, he said, "*Ich muss, ich muss, ich muss*, I must shoot somebody," and he shot this 18-year old boy and a 48-year old man, and I saw it, and I puked. This is the first time I saw, I got a temperature, I got sick. So, this is the camp, the first time that I was there I was beaten by the Germans.

JF: What happened?

HA: I was working in a room, in a special room. I was filing—they had the saws to cut wood, and I was trying to make the saws sharper, sharpening the saws. Well, you

know, you work all day, I rested a little bit, and the Germans came in, "Why don't you work?" I said, "I'm working." He said, "No, lay down." Twenty-five on my ass. I got 25 hits on my...

JF: With what?

HA: It was a leather, it was a bullwhip, leather, 25 times.

JF: Was there any way of taking care of wounds for something like that, or did you have to nurse it yourself?

HA: No, no, you had to nurse everything yourself. There was nothing you could do. You had to do everything by yourself.

JF: You said there were two people who were successful in escaping?

HA: Yes.

JF: Did you know of any other kind of attempts to escape or resistance that was going on?

HA: In this camp? Maybe there were some, but I don't remember. During my [unclear] in this camp, and later we had typhus. Typhus broke out, and it was a killer. Typhus, not typhoid fever, typhus, we had lice, I'm telling you you could come into the house and pick it up just like that. So lousy, it's just a shame to have to, we used to have autoclaving, sterilizing, sterilization, we used to get undressed and they would take the clothes and put them in the autoclave, it was worse, because the temperature apparently in the autoclave was not high enough to kill the eggs. It was actually where we got the eggs.

JF: Did you get typhus?

HA: No, I didn't get typhus.

JF: How long were you in this camp?

HA: I was in this camp November until March. My mother bought me out of this camp.

JF: Your parents were still in the same village?

HA: In the same village, yes.

JF: And she was able to buy you out of the camp. Were there any other things about the camp that you remember?

HA: The typhus, of course. There was also another disease, something that grew, a parasite, it grew under the skin, I don't remember what kind of a parasite. People used to get it, it was--awful--of course-- oh, the beating was tremendous. They used to beat and shoot; they used to have two Ukrainians, we used to call them Sadist No. 1 and Sadist No. 2. They were really sadists, I'm telling you.

JF: The Ukrainians were in charge of your work details, or the Germans?

HA: No, the Germans were only supervisors of the camp, but the Ukrainians were in charge of enforcing it.

JF: Any Poles involved?

HA: No, no Poles.

JF: Do you have any memory of any religious ceremonies or worship services that were going on?

HA: Yes, yes, I remember. This boy I told you who froze to death died, we went behind the camp to bury him and we used to say *Kaddish*, and the Ukrainians would scream "Get away from here!" and we stood our, we stood fast, and we said the *Kaddish*, and he screamed, he yelled, he kicked, and he couldn't do anything. Otherwise, there was nothing. Oh, they used to have, their favorite torture used to be, used to come at night and inspect the, inspect the cleanliness of your feet.

JF: How did they do that?

HA: They would go from bunk to bunk. There was no bunk. There was no bunks. This was, this was, just-- This was no bunks, single bunks-- it was just-- big...

JF: What? A plank...

HA: Planks, big planks of wood, and people were sleeping in them, with straw and the top, another...

JF: Two rows. Two levels.

HA: Two rows, and the people used to urinate from up, from up, because it was very cold.

JF: They would urinate on the wood...

HA: ...on the wood, it would come down to the other people. It was-- You wanted to go outside to the toilet, but it was dangerous because they would shoot you. So, it was terrible.

JF: These were slatted wood, then?

HA: Yes. So, they used to, they didn't like you, for example, they wouldn't like your feet, they're dirty, according to them, they would take you out, give you 25 on your ass.

JF: What kind of facilities did you have for cleaning yourself?

HA: No cleaning, no facilities.

JF: So there were no facilities. Did you have any blankets? Anything at all to cover yourself? Just the clothes that you had worn when you entered the camp? How did you find out that you were free from this camp?

HA: From the *Judenrat*-- These people used to come in and they told me.

JF: The *Judenrat* came?

HA: *Judenrat*, yes, the Jewish Community.

JF: The *Judenrat* in that specific village, or...

HA: No, the *Judenrat* in the village from Jactoraw-Ruska where the camp was. There was a *Judenrat*, and yes, there was in the little town of Pizemyslany, [Przemyslany] it was another town, Pizemyslany, it's P-I-Z-E-M-Y-S-L-A-N-Y.

JF: And a representative from that *Judenrat* came?

HA: Yes, came to the camp and told this commander that he had these people, he had that much money or whatever.

JF: There was more than just you who was then released?

HA: Sure, sure. There were five people.

JF: The *Judenrat* had received money from families in order to get you all discharged from this camp?

HA: Yes. My mother sold her earrings, her diamond earrings and she sold them. And for this money she was able to buy me out from the camp. Which meant nothing. This was nothing, some were worse; two months, three months freedom. But...

JF: You then went back to the village where your parents were living?

HA: Yes. In the interim, when I went to Przemyslany, first I went to Przemyslany from the camp and stayed overnight in a house of a friend of mine, who used to go to school with me in Lemberg, Lvov. I said, "What happened to him?" She said, "They took him away and we don't know." He was a wonderful boy, one of the brightest boys I have ever seen, I ever met.

JF: And this was his mother?

HA: His mother and father, yes, they gave me his bed. I slept in their house. I also met some people from our town. They were surprised.

JF: Were you able to find out any more about what was happening to your town from these people?

HA: No, they didn't know anything. I had only found out about one of my best friends that he was arrested by the Russians, and he died in Lemberg.

JF: He was arrested by the Russians, and died in what way?

HA: In a Russian prison, because the Russians murdered some prisoners.

JF: Why do you think that was going on?

HA: We don't know why. The Russians did some atrocities, too.

JF: Once the Germans had invaded Russia, did the Russians change way they talked about the Germans' attitude toward the Jews?

HA: Oh, sure.

JF: Did they tell you any more about what was going on with the Germans as far as the Jews were concerned?

HA: The Russians, they didn't talk too much about it. They talked about the Fascists, nothing very much.

JF: What happened then?

HA: Then we stayed about two days in Przemyslany and by truck we went to Lemberg, to Lvov, and we stayed in Lvov in the *Judenrat*, and over there we found about the camps.

JF: You found out about which camps?

HA: The camps.

JF: This was your first knowledge then?

HA: Yes, about the camps, that they were taking Jews out to camps and killing them. For example, about Treblinka, about Auschwitz. This is the first time I found out.

And from there we went again by truck to Javorov, from Javorov we went to Nemirov, and from Nemirov we went we went by another truck to Chrobieszow to this little town, this little village where we lived. I came home. Of course, I took all my clothes what I had and everything burned. I saw my parents, and my aunt and uncle.

JF: How had they been treated during this time that you had been in the camp?

HA: They were very harsh to them.

JF: The Germans had occupied the town.

HA: The Ukrainians, the Ukrainians, the Ukrainians were doing it mostly, it was a Ukrainian administration.

JF: It was a Ukrainian administration. And then?

HA: The only thing that helped us, our family, was my mother spoke very good German, and everybody needed something, for example, they needed something to say in German to the authorities, they used to come to my mother and say, "Write me this and write me that," and my mother used to write them everything, and she used to get a piece of bread, potatoes. So this was a little help from the population.

JF: What happened next?

HA: Next came, again, the police came again. They took me again to Lubaczow.

JF: This was after how much time?

HA: Three months, four months, I don't remember exactly.

JF: During that period of time, were you or any of your family members able to work in any way, to get any kind of money?

HA: No, my father couldn't work, and my mother couldn't work. My brother was with his wife. Was she dead? No, she wasn't, she died in '42, but I worked for the peasants.

JF: How?

HA: In the fields, in the peasants' fields I worked, everything I used to pick potatoes, dig for this, dig for that, I did every type of work that I could do, I worked, just for food. A piece of bread here, a piece of bread here, so I brought it home so my family could eat. I had a little cousin who was six years old...

JF: What was the attitude of the Polish peasants toward...?

HA: There was no Polish peasants.

JF: These were Ukrainian...

HA: Ukrainian...

JF: Ukrainian peasants. What was their attitude toward you?

HA: Well, I must say, they were very good to me especially. We had very good relations. Because during the Russian occupation, where we had money, and they used to come to us to ask for some food and some things like that, my mother used to give them always food and they remembered. There was one peasant, he was a known thief in the village. I remember when I came from the camp, he was, he gave me his last potatoes. He was so good to me. Until later what he did for me. So they took me back to Lubaczow, and [unclear] Ruska, but in Rawa Ruska, they released me, because I was already in one camp.

JF: Where did you go then?

HA: I came back home. Then it came close to '43. to move to Lubaczow, to the ghetto.

JF: What was that like?

HA: It was, I don't know how to say, it was a few streets, not necessarily [unclear] but just a few [unclear] streets in the city where the Jews used to live, nobody could live there. No peasants were living there. No Pole was living there; no Ukrainian was living there--just Jews.

JF: There was no boundary?

HA: No boundary, no.

JF: How did you get from the first village to this ghetto?

HA: By horse and buggy.

JF: The horse and buggy that you had?

HA: No, no, we rented the horse and buggy.

JF: How many of you were taken?

HA: Several from our family. The rest of the Jews...

JF: ...from the area. What was your experience then in that ghetto?

HA: It was lousy. All we see is the same people. I met one girl, a very nice young lady from Lem-- from Lvov. She was living near the school, where I used to go. So we became friendly and we used to go out together, go out together, where? There was no place to go. I used to go out from the ghetto, used to work...

JF: You could work outside the ghetto?

HA: Sneak out from the ghetto and work.

JF: And you could get away with that?

HA: Yes, I got away from that, yes.

JF: What kind of work did you do?

HA: Some people's, cut wood, to do certain things for people, what they needed, I would do anything.

JF: Who was administering this ghetto?

HA: The Germans. The Ukrainian police was in charge of it. There was a Jewish police.

JF: What was that like that, the Jewish police?

HA: They were in charge. They had a lot of power.

JF: What was their general attitude toward the Jews? Did they have any sympathy, or were they any crueler? Did it depend on the person?

HA: I dare not to say. Some, there were some, they were animals, and some were nice people. But in general, they were nice people. But there were some misfits. The people in a situation like that gave them [unclear] to do something wrong. They would do anything. But by and large, they were nice people.

JF: You had rations in the ghetto?

HA: Yes, rations when we get them.

JF: What were they like?

HA: Small rations, potatoes.

JF: Did you have any contact with family or friends outside of the ghetto when you were in it?

HA: Contacts with my family?

JF: Any family who was not in the ghetto? In, family in other villages or other ghettos?

HA: There wasn't any other, there wasn't anything in this part of Poland, everything in ghetto. There was already everything was in the ghetto.

JF: Could you have communication with any of the other ghettos?

HA: Yes, there were communications, sure.<sup>3</sup>

JF: What happened then?

HA: In the ghetto? I worked a little and, finally, in 1943, there was one morning, my mother told me to get out from the house, because they were going to surround the ghetto, and they were going to take us to the train. They were going to take us to Belzec. It was the gas chambers.

JF: To Belsen.

HA: To Belzec. This was a gas chamber. You heard about it, one of the biggest gas chambers in Poland. And half-an-hour later the Germans came and surrounded the ghetto, they took all the Jews together. I wasn't home.

JF: Your parents didn't leave?

HA: No.

JF: Why?

HA: Where could they go?

JF: Where did you go?

HA: I went to a pharmacist's house. I was hidden in his house.

JF: This was...

HA: Ukrainian pharmacist--he didn't know about it. I was hidden in his house, he didn't know about it.

JF: How did your mother find out about this?

HA: People were coming, saying things, I guess.

JF: But they didn't attempt to find somewhere to hide also? Were your parents then deported on the train?

HA: [No Response]

JF: Did you find out what happened to them?

HA: [No Response]

JF: How did you find out?

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<sup>3</sup>It is possible that Mr. A. misunderstood this question. Generally after December 1941 communications between ghettos were cut.

HA: Spoke to people.

JF: What about the rest of the family that was in the ghetto with you?

HA: Everybody went.

JF: And this pharmacist, this Ukrainian pharmacist, hid you?

HA: He found out later that I was in his house. He couldn't do anything about it. I stayed with him for another day and later his sister, or somebody from his home, went to the village to [unclear], so I went out with her, with a sled and the horses and we went to [unclear]. I went to this peasant to this thief, to his house...

JF: The one you mentioned before?

HA: Yes, I went to his house, I came about 12 midnight, to his house, and I knocked at the door, and he said, "Who is it?" I said "Henry," so he said, "Wait a minute," he said, [expression in Polish] . I said, "Okay." I waited, he took all the children out from the room to the other room, and he brought me into the house. It was warm. He put me on the stove, they had a stove, you could lay down on the stove; it was very warm. He said, "Lay down, relax. We'll fix something. In the meantime, I don't want anybody to know that you're here. Because they were looking already for Jews, around here." So I stayed overnight until the morning. In the morning he told me to go to his stable...

*Tape two, side two:*

JF: You were telling me about the Ukrainian boy.

HA: Yes, and he used, this little boy, a seven-year-old boy, used to bring me every half-an-hour, every hour, a cup of tea or cup of coffee, so I should be warm, and then toward the evening he brought me back home, and he said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Would you take me with a horse and buggy to Nemirov, the next little town?" He said, "I don't have horses." He was a poor man. But he said, "I will take you to the village so nobody will touch you." So, I came back, he took me through the village. He gave me cigarettes, and he gave me money, and he said, "Godspeed, I hope I will be able to see you."

JF: Where were you going to go?

HA: I was going to Lemberg, to my brother. My brother's wife was killed. In the meantime, they killed my brother's wife.

JF: How did they kill her?

HA: They shot her.

JF: Was this right in the town?

HA: This was in [unclear], another town. He was in Lemberg, he was on *Arisch* [Aryan] papers. He had papers as a Pole, which means he had a birth certificate as a Pole. He looks like a Pole. My brother looks exactly like a German. He is blonde, blue-eyed, and everything. So he could have, he never went to a camp. He was, I went to my brother.

JF: He had what kind of papers?

HA: Polish papers. We call it *Arisch* papers, Aryan papers.

JF: Aryan, I see. So you went to him, and what happened then?

HA: He found me some place to live. It was very bad. I was living there for a month, and it was getting dangerous. I had to have another place. I was living in another place, and finally, this was a *razzia* [raid].

JF: Excuse me for one minute. The places that you were sent, were these homes...?

HA: Of Poles.

JF: Polish Christians? What was their attitude toward you in hiding you? Were they sympathetic, were they doing it for money?

HA: They were doing it for money. And after being in "freedom," so-called "freedom," I was caught again and brought into the camp in Lemberg.

JF: You were put in a camp in Lemberg?

HA: It was a big camp in Lemberg. And in this camp I worked, until '43.

JF: This was in '43.

HA: Until November '43.

JF: What month was it that you went into the camp?

HA: March or April...

JF: What kind of work did you do there?

HA: Any kind of work, every kind of work, whatever there was to do. I volunteered for every kind of work.

JF: What were the conditions like in this camp?

HA: Horrible. But I was strong. I was young, I was strong. I could withstand a lot, food didn't matter to me anything. However, there were times when I wished I were dead. There were times. In '43, this was November '43, I was working, a riding academy, cleaning up after horses. This is a little bit out of town, and right near the riding academy was a Polish family, a little house with a Polish family, and I used to, during lunch, I used to cut wood for them and do everything for them, and they used to give me bread and soup, and one day I said to them, "I won't see you anymore." He said, "Why?" "Because" I say, "they're going to destroy us tomorrow." He said, "Why don't you stay with us?" I said, "Do you mean it?" He said, "I mean it. Stay with us." So I stayed with them.

JF: How did you find out that they were going to destroy you the next day?

HA: Because we knew it. In the camp there was always a grapevine; you knew what was going to happen.

JF: What did that mean, they were going to kill you at the camp?

HA: No, they were going to take us out from the camp and shoot us in a certain spot, 16,000 people.

JF: And did this happen?

HA: Sure, it happened.

JF: They killed 16,000 people...

HA: Young people...

JF: The next day...

HA: The oldest was 26.

JF: Was this also a camp of men? Of young men?

HA: Men and women, men and women.

JF: Men and women. Was there anything different that you might be able to tell us about this camp from the first camp that you described?

HA: This was a camp, Number One, it had about, it went to this camp, about a quarter of a million people went through this camp. This camp was run by Warzog, brother-in-law of Himmler. He was a vicious murderer.

JF: Were the living conditions similar?

HA: Like in any camp, no food, and work. It used to be, at times, there was a commandant, one of the commandants over there, Wilhaus. This is the Wilhaus<sup>4</sup> that Leon Uris describes in the book. He wrote the book, the first book he wrote, Uris.

JF: Uris, Leon Uris?

HA: Yes, this was his first book.

JF: In *Exodus*?

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<sup>4</sup>The commander of the camp at Janowska, *Exodus*, Doubleday, 1958, p.1958

HA: In *Exodus*, he describes a Wilhaus, [unclear] he describes another, those are all regular names. These are the true names of the people that he describes. I mean his was fiction, but the names, certain names that he describes, these are true names.

JF: They were real people.

HA: Yes.

JF: Did you have the beatings, and that kind of experience there, as you did in the first camp?

HA: [No Response]

JF: The same kind of behavior?

HA: Shootings and beatings, shootings and beating, shooting and beating.

JF: What happened, then, when you went with this Polish family?

HA: I stayed with them until '44, March, when one day she came into the house, she says, "You have to get out from the house because the Germans are looking for people."

JF: You were with them from November '44 [1943] until March of '44? You were able to work for them during that time?

HA: I was hidden. They were very nice. She said, "You have to go out." So I went out to the park, where I was recaptured [unclear].

JF: What happened then?

HA: Well, I was actually put to death. Don't get scared, I'll tell what happened. It was Hitler's birthday, it was July, no it was April 20, and I was taken back into the prison...

JF: The prison in Lemberg?

HA: In Lemberg, Lonski Prison. L-O-C-K-I it is actually L-?-C-K-I, because in Polish there is "a" with a little apostrophe underneath the "a", if it's "a", it is "o" so this is the way we spell it. Locki Prison, so I came in there. I was beaten up, roughed up by a young German, because he asked me something, I didn't say "Bitte." [please] I say "Was?" [what] I didn't say "Bitte" I said "Was?" and this was insulting to him. So he taught me a lesson in German. So, anyhow, the next day I was put into the death cell, underneath the prison. There was a death row, and in the death row, in the cellar, I found three people, two Jews and one Tartar. The Jews were also from Thousand-eight Commando. You know what the 1008 is? The Thousand-eight Commando was a special commando that the Germans formed. They were actually, [unclear], of the graves of the people who were killed by the Germans, hostages and everything else in the beginning of the war. They had a lot of hostages, Poles, and Jews. Digging up the graves and they were burning the graves. These people were chained by the legs, and these were called the Thousand-eight Commando.

JF: And their job was to dig up the graves and...

HA: And burn the bodies, and they were burning the bodies of French prisoners, of Italian prisoners, and so forth. There was an escape from this camp. There was a reward

for catching anybody from this group. If you caught a Jew, you used to get a bottle of vodka as a reward for catching a Jew.

JF: Any Jew?

HA: Any Jew, any Jew. For catching a Thousand-eight Commando, a Jew, would get a bottle of vodka and 1000 *zlotys*.

JF: How do you spell that kind of--that commando, the word that you are saying?

HA: Thousand-eight Commando...

JF: Yes.

HA: Thousand-eight.

JF: One thousand eight, like the number?

HA: 1-0-0-8.

JF: Okay, thank you. What happened?

HA: So there were these two Jews from the Thousand-eight Commando, and there was this Tartar, and I came in with them, and I said, "What is going to happen to us?" They said "We are going to be shot." I said, "Okay." So the Tartar, he was a Russian soldier who went to the Germans, to serve the Germans. During the second World War, he was taken prisoner by the Russians, by the Germans. He was wounded. So he said, "I'll go to work for the Germans," but he wasn't working for them, because he was a Communist. He wasn't working for the Germans, just using this as a pretense.

JF: Was he a spy?

HA: No, he wasn't a spy. He was a Communist. He said, I'm a Communist-- [Russian phrase]. He burned several cars, he got drunk and this and that, and they put him to prison. He was shot.

JF: He was shot?

HA: Three days later he was shot. And I was sitting in this prison for five days. On the fifth day, they came in and said, "*Alle klamotten mit*" "Take all, the things together and get out. You are going to someplace. We got into the car over there, in the prison. There were five people. There was one more Jew, and one more a boy came in and three Jewesses, three girls. One girl was about 18 or 19, beautiful, and one was about 35, something like that, and one was 55. She was a woman who was married to a Pole and he got tired of her, and he gave her to the police.

JF: What happened to the other two Jewish people from the Thousand eight?

HA: Thousand-eight Commando, they were also shot.

JF: They were shot.

HA: So we went to the camp...

JF: Which camp is this?

HA: The camp that I escaped from.

JF: Back to the same camp?

HA: The same camp. We were put into a, the doors, the gates of the camp were hanging on two posts, and the posts were completely empty inside. See, as he opened the doors, they were doors--See, could I draw it? It was like that, there were the gates, and these posts, you see, and this was empty inside.

JF: It was a hollow...

HA: Hollow, hollow...

JF: Post on which the gates were attached.

HA: Exactly, and there was a door to it.

JF: To the post?

HA: To the post, yes. So they put us into this, actually, very little space for five people.

JF: Five people were in each of these tiny posts?

HA: Yes, so we were there sitting for about two hours, three hours, and finally, the German came out from who was on guard. He said, "Are you hungry?" I said, "Yes." I might as well die not on an empty stomach. I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, I'll call the kitchen, they will bring us something to eat." So he called the kitchen, they brought us bread and coffee. A half an hour later he came with a big sandwich with meat. He said, "*Heute ist mein Geburtstag.*" "Today is my birthday. Here, this is for you."

JF: He gave you a sandwich with meat.

HA: Yes, a sandwich with meat. He looked, for his look you would give him 25 years, right away. But he was the sweetest man of them.

JF: This was a young German soldier?

HA: An SS man. He told us would you like to go to the latrine? We said, "Yes." First I asked him, "Could we have a cigarette?" He said, "Sure." He gave us cigarettes. I said, "Can we pick up the box." He said, "Come out and pick up the box with cigarettes, papers, and everything else." We had quite a few [unclear], we had some cigarettes. So he said, "Why did you let yourself get caught today? The Russians are already 40 kilometers from the city." he said to us. So I said, "The Gestapo caught us, we couldn't do anything." So he said, "Those bandits." He said, "If I could do something for you, I would do it." But he couldn't do anything. I said, "What will happen to us?" He said, "You will be shot tomorrow morning." So while we went to the latrine, we were sitting in the latrine, the latrine was two sided, you could get from this side and the other side to the latrine, so from the other side the Jews came in, who were in the camp already. There were about 70 Jews, 50 Jews I can remember, and they came in and said, "From where are you?" I said, "Never mind, what is going to happen us?" They said "They will shoot us. So far every transfer of Jews who came from camp from prison were shot."

JF: Any time Jews from a prison from outside the camp would come in, they would shoot them?

HA: They would shoot them. So I said, "What are our chances?" They said, "Our chances are very slim." "How many Jews are there?" He said, "About 60 or 70." I count exactly how many there are-- actually, there was about 24 Jews, Jews and Jewesses.

JF: There were 24 Jews from the camp who were in the latrine, in addition to the ten of you?

HA: There was five of us.

JF: Five of you, yes.

HA: They came to us. They were living in a little house, there was three shoemakers, there were about two tailors, three furriers, there was a woman, there was a little boy, five year-old boy, beautiful boy, and the next morning we got up.

JF: You went back to this post?

HA: To the post, stayed all night in the post, and I started to pray a little bit, and this Olga, Olga Hauser, she said to me, "Don't worry, Henry, this will take only a second, One shot and it's all over."

JF: This was one of the woman who was with you?

HA: This young girl.

JF: The people that you mentioned before, these were only part of the people in the camp, or this is who was left in the camp? The 24 Jews that you talked about?

HA: These were left, these were actually people who were brought into the camp after the camp was completely destroyed. They were brought from other towns.

JF: So that was all that was left in the camp in Lemberg, were the 24 Jews, plus...

HA: 24, 25, 30, and they took us in the morning to the latrine again, because they didn't want us to soil the clothes. We went to the hole, because they didn't have a [unclear].

JF: Where was the hole?

HA: In the camp.

JF: In the ground, inside the camp?

HA: Yes, inside the camp. They told us to undress. I started to undress, I was already in my underwear, and all of a sudden someone came on a horse. His name was Bitner, SS man. He said, "*Halt! Anziehen!*" "Get dressed." I thought maybe they were going to torture us first. We went back.

JF: All of you were together at this point?

HA: Five people. We came back and we waited for the commandant. We were standing. I was standing, the last one. The boy was standing near me, and all of a sudden the little, he had a big dog and a little dog, the little dog came up to me and right away he knew me from previous. He started to jump around me. I didn't know what to do, I didn't know what to do. Finally, all the men came in. He looked at me "*Heinrich, Heinrich, wer wast du?*" He said, "Where were you Heinrich?" I said "I was in forest." He said, "*A partisaner?*" I said, "Yes." He said, "*Wellst duarbeiten?*" "Do you want to work?" I said, "*Jawohl.*" So he said, "Give him some clothes and some shoes and let him go to work."

JF: Who was this who was?

HA: Warzog [phonetic] this commandant, Himmler's brother-in-law.

JF: Had you ever talked to him, the first time that you had been in the camp?

HA: Sure, in '43 I was in the camp, I used to be a mechanic in the camp.

JF: He knew you then?

HA: Sure, he knew me then because I used to fix his locks, everything. He knew me then. I remember he hit me once with a pitchfork, across the back. He almost killed me. He was a ruthless killer, a killer.

JF: Why do you think he let you work at that point?

HA: It was luck. So I said to myself, "Boy, if he lets me live, I will have to escape from this camp, if it's the last thing I do. I'll have to escape from this camp." And he asked the other ones, "What are you doing?" and everybody said, "I am doing this, I am doing that, doing this." Finally, he let everybody go. He said, "If one of you escapes, you'll all be shot." So the reason he let us go, he had potatoes in the camp, and in Poland they store potatoes over the winter, because they didn't have storage places, they stored them outside. It looked like that, see, they put them into-- [he is drawing a picture; long pause] just like that, a triangle, you see. It was covered with straw, and this soil.

JF: This is how they would store the potatoes in the winter?

HA: Apparently, they didn't cover them very well, and they were going bad. He had a lot of people to feed. He had a lot of soldiers to feed, because he had flak artillery in the camp.

JF: Flak artillery...

HA: Yes, anti-aircraft artillery, so they had to be given to eat, so he needed the Jews to make it good.

JF: So this is how he saved your life, or why he saved your life.

HA: Exactly, this was the only reason. So we started to work. And [unclear] also always beaten. There were some SS men, pure animals, animals, I'm telling you, just unbelievable. It's difficult to describe. About three months later, I went to work, and then to the magazine of the, to select the clothes from the dead people.

JF: You were still in Lemberg. The other people that you mentioned before, were they permitted to live also?

HA: Yes, they were living.

JF: And who are the dead people now that you're talking about?

HA: From the camp, all the people in the camp from Auschwitz.

JF: From the other camps?

HA: I've seen people who died, children, especially children, you would see blood stains, from blood on the collars, so we had, what we had to do, we had to segregate the clothes, into good, into rags, into semi-good. What we did, we used to-- there were three of us working, we used to tear it apart, only a few clothes we used to give back to the Germans. We used to find a lot of money. Here,

JF: In the breast pocket?

HA: Not in the breast pocket.

JF: In the seams?

HA: In the seams.

JF: In the seams of the clothes, you would find money.

HA: We found a lot of money, and we found a lot of arsenic, a lot of cyanide, and there was a very interesting case. There was one of a new group of people who arrived from prison, a mother with three daughters. The daughters took, while on the way from the prison to the camp, they took cyanide and took arsenic, all three and the mother. Nothing happened to the mother. one daughter lived in the camp for about two hours, she died, and the daughters died. The mother couldn't...

JF: The arsenic didn't work on the mother.

HA: Didn't work on her, no...

*Tape three, side one:*

HA: ... so I had this girlfriend, and she had much more freedom than I had. She used to go into town, to work in town. So I used to give her this money and she used to bring bread and she used to bring something else to eat. She was as old as my, she could have been my mother, but at that time, who was choosing? She was a girlfriend. She was very nice. So, finally, one of these days, I was working in this work, and I found a gold coin, a little coin, and the boys told me, "Henry, you take it. You'll do something with it." I said, "You take it, Mr. Cohen, you take it." "No, no, Henry you take it." So I took it. I put the coin in my wallet and completely forgot about it. I went to the barracks after work, and I was laying down in the barracks and finally, SS Bitner came into the barracks, he said, "Henrick" they called me Henrick, "would you go to camp No 2?", because we were divided in six camps. "Will you go to camp No 2 and bring my slacks from the table?" I said, "Sure", and I forgot about the money. I had to go to these various posts, and I went to one post, second post, third post, and finally came to the fourth post, there was standing this Warzug [Camp Commandant] and a civilian German, a Nazi. So I reported that I am going to pick up the slacks for Mr. Bitner, and this Warzug said, "Go ahead," and the civilian said, "Wait a minute, what have here in your pocket?" "I have my wallet." So he picks up my wallet and he found the money, and I saw this money, I had my heart in my mouth. I got a [unclear] in my mouth, I fell down.

JF: This is the civilian German?

HA: So he said, "Get up, take off your clothes! Let's go to the general!" All the prisoners, everybody has to see-there were about 60-70 Jews that time already, 2000-3000 Poles and Ukrainians, and they put me in the chair, a chair like that [unclear].

JF: [Describing Dr. A's actions] Dr Altschuler is talking about a dining room chair now...

HA: It was a dining room chair. There was a hollow chair, I had my head in the chair, it was laying down, and they started to beat me.

JF: There was an opening in the back of the chair, of a straight chair? It was through this hole that you had to put your head?

HA: Yes, and they started to beat, and I had to count. I counted until I counted to 180 times.

JF: This was with the leather...

HA: ...leather *Peitch* with two rubber, not rubber, lead balls in them, until I went unconscious.

JF: You went unconscious?

HA: Unconscious, and I went incontinent. I actually, with everything. So he poured water over me and he said, "Take him to the barracks." He took me to the barracks, and that night was an air raid, I had to go for the air raid.

JF: Where did you go for the air raid?

HA: Outside, because you couldn't stay in the building. So the next morning the Jewish fellow, the leader of the Jews, he is now a professor in Yale University, no, in Princeton University. I forgot his name. He told me that I could stay in the camp. I said, "No, I'm not staying, because they will shoot me." I went to work.

JF: What do you mean that you could stay in the camp?

HA: He said, "Stay in the room."

JF: You didn't have to go out to work, you could stay in the barracks?

HA: Yes.

JF: You said he was the leader. What do you mean?

HA: He was sort of the elderly, the eldest, not by virtue, he didn't do anything. He was just a nice guy. He was a wonderful guy but the Germans made him as a leader of our group. He said, "Stay inside," I said, "No." I went to work. I went back to work, and they started to beat me, these two Germans. They started to beat me with a pistol with the handle of a gun. They broke my nose. See, I don't have anything here. Everything was cut out from here, the muscle of the eye, tooth, blood was coming from all over, from every orifice of my body, blood was coming out and I didn't say anything. They wanted me to who was my partner. I said, "Nobody was my partner," because I could imagine, one shot to Mr. Cohen, he would be dead.

JF: Who was your partner because of the coin?

HA: Yes. Mr. Cohen was an elderly man. And the other one was Edward Adler. He is in New York. So I didn't say anything so they were not touched. It wouldn't help me, they would have beaten so everything so it didn't matter to me. So this way, about a few days later, Warzug saw me in the fields working. He said, "You should have been shot." Well, a very interesting thing happened. While I was in camp, this is after the beating, I was working one day in the field, plowing something and there was a, a lady was standing there, a very elegant lady. She was dressed in black. She was the owner of Bally shoes in Poland, of all the Bally shoes in Poland. She introduced herself. She said, "Young man, may you stay alive! If you stay alive, and you will be in Lemberg, would you go to the Russian prosecutor, and tell him that my husband and my son were killed by this and this people?" She tells me who killed her husband and her son. Do you know, after the war I went, because I was [unclear] at the meeting, so after I recovered, I went to the prosecutor, and going to the prosecutor, I met this woman. She was safe.

JF: Was she Jewish or not?

HA: She was Jew, Jewish, from Lemberg.

JF: She was in the camp? She was a prisoner?

HA: She was brought into the camp about two or three days earlier. She was brought in the camp when the time was they were not shooting anybody.

JF: What kept you going, during these...

HA: ...the beating?

JF: Most difficult times? Yes.

HA: I really don't know.

JF: Did your religious background help at any point?

HA: I think so. I think so. Very much, although I am not religious right now.

JF: You're not religious now, but at that time, you were still very involved in your religion?

HA: I was very much confused with religion. There was a time that me and my brother, we wanted to convert to the Catholic religion. I was already going for lessons to convert.

JF: Your brother wanted to convert, and he wanted you to convert also? This was later?

HA: After the war. He said, "Why, what the hell, what do we have to suffer all our lives?" Later, he said to this girl who saved his life, this woman who saved me, [unclear] a young girl and her mother; the grandmother was in this house. The young lady, she thought that my brother would marry her.

JF: You're talking about later now?

HA: No, I'm talking when she invited me to stay in her house, you remember? In the meantime, I introduced my brother, and she thought my brother would marry her. I don't know how she got this idea, but my brother told her, he said, "Look, you are a daughter of Jesus, I am a son of Moses. This won't work."

JF: During the time in the camp, when you were undergoing all of these beatings, at that point religion was a very important part, still, of your life?

HA: I think so. Yes.

JF: Did you think that you were going to survive? During those days?

HA: The last time when I was saved by the Germans, and he said, "Henrick, do you want to work?" I said, "I'm going to survive." I knew I'm going to survive. I knew I'm going to survive. Otherwise, I didn't have a chance. I didn't believe in it.

JF: You didn't believe?

HA: In surviving.

JF: Before that time? After that time, your attitude was different?

HA: Completely different.

JF: It was after that time, that you underwent the worst of the beating?

HA: Exactly, and yet, this didn't deter me. The beating didn't deter me.

JF: What happened then?

HA: Then came the Russians.

JF: When was this?

HA: The Russians came, oh, we were moved from Lemberg. From Lemberg, we were moved, and this girl who I told you, this girl who was with me, this Olga Hauser, a young girl...

JF: The young girl who was with you originally...?

HA: Yes, she was moved to the Carpathian, Carpathian Mountains, another group of people, and they were trying to escape, she and four other girls were lost in the mountains, and they were killed by Ukrainian partisans, and the other people were going toward Russia, and the Russians met them, and they survived.

JF: And where were you moved to?

HA: I was moved to Lemberg, I was moved to Crakow, to Plaszow.

JF: Which was what? Another camp?

HA: Another camp.

JF: How do you spell that?

HA: P-L-A-S-Z-O-W, '41, this was in '45, in January or February.

JF: How long were you at that camp before you were liberated?

HA: I was in this camp about six months, seven months.

JF: What was it like there?

HA: Camp, like any other camp.

JF: Did you work there also?

HA: Yes.

JF: Doing what kind of work?

HA: Any kind of work. I was ready to do anything.

JF: Did you experience the same kind of beatings?

HA: No, at that time the Germans were a little bit easier on us.

JF: In '45.

HA: Because they were already, they had enough killings, the Germans.

JF: The Germans were in control of this camp also?

HA: This was a big camp, yes.

JF: Was this further east or...

HA: This was near Crakow. Near Auschwitz, not far from Auschwitz.

JF: Anything else about that camp that was different from the other experiences that you had had?

HA: No.

JF: When you say it was a big camp, about how many people were there?

HA: A quarter of a million people.

JF: Do you have any memories of children in these camps?

HA: Yes, I have very vivid memories of one particular child. This was in the Lemberg in this camp, there was one child when I came to the camp, his name was Ushi, I only remember Ushi. He was a Jewish child, he wouldn't let anybody to undress him. Only one woman would undress him. Mrs. Somers, she would undress him, because he was apparently left by his parents staying in some place in Lemberg. He didn't look like a Jewish kid. He was blonde, beautiful hair, completely a Catholic child, a gentile child. Something happened, the parents had to flee and they had to leave him. He was taken by the Germans to the camp, and he was treated wonderfully by everybody. Actually, there

was a German captain who wanted to adopt him, and take him to Germany. But he already came too late, because he was taken to Mauthausen where he died.

JF: The child was taken to Mauthausen.

HA: And died at Mauthausen. I met the parents after the war in Crakow.

JF: How do you understand that a German officer would want to adopt a Jewish child?

HA: Apparently, there were some humans among them. I know some Germans who had hidden Jewish girls in their houses for many, many months, until the end of the war. I know the two ladies. There was no sexual reason, nothing sexual, nothing for reasons like that. My sister-in-law was a nursemaid to a German family.

JF: During the war?

HA: Yes, and she looks like a hundred Jews.

JF: They knew she was Jewish.

HA: No, they did not.

JF: They did not know she was Jewish.

HA: No.

JF: In your experience in these camps, was there any underground, any resistance movements that you were aware of?

HA: In the last camp, Lemberg, in the camp before last, there was some.

JF: What was it?

HA: We were trying to organize. We had some Russian guards, and we were talking to the Russian guards, and they said maybe they would do something.

JF: Did anything happen with it?

HA: Apparently, something happened, but nothing very big. Because nobody survived.

JF: What kind of thing happened?

HA: Apparently, they were trying to escape, and some Germans found out about it and they started to shoot, and some people were shot at the wires.

JF: This was after you had left the camp?

HA: Yes, after I left the camp.

JF: So you were there in the planning stage?

HA: I was in the planning stages.

JF: Any other instances of resistance that you can recall? Was there, any help from the Polish underground?

HA: Zero, null, nothing, and we were trying to give them money, we were trying everything.

JF: You tried to give who money?

HA: To the Poles.

JF: And what happened?

HA: They refused.

JF: They refused the money.

HA: They refused everything, any cooperation with any Jews. Fifty percent of the Jews would have been saved from Poland, if not for the Poles and Ukrainians. Seventy percent of Jews would be saved because the Germans didn't know the Jew. They didn't know how to recognize a Jew.

JF: And the Ukrainians and the Poles identified the Jews? Within the camps themselves, you mentioned that the Ukrainians had been particularly abusive. What about the Poles? What experience did you have.

HA: No, the Poles, no. They didn't have any power. They didn't have any power; they would have been abusive, but they didn't have any power.

JF: Were there any other instances, other than the one you mentioned before, of religious ceremonies or prayers?

HA: Not that I remember.

JF: Was there any kind of self-education, meetings, discussion groups? Anything like that going on?

HA: You have to remember that this, it wasn't only, there was a variety of people, you couldn't, you couldn't do anything. You were always afraid that somebody will start to talk. You couldn't talk about escaping. You couldn't do anything. If I want to escape, I couldn't say anything to anybody.

JF: The variety of the people in the camp made it too difficult?

HA: Very difficult, exactly.

JF: Was there anybody in the camp that people looked up to, who took the role of a spiritual leader or helper? In any of the camps that you were in? You mentioned the one man who was the leader of the Jewish group.

HA: But he was made by the Germans. He was also made by us, but this was already, we were only about 50-60 people, 70 people, this was nothing. In the prior camps, there was always a leader chosen by the Germans. He was an engineer. He was as bad as the Germans.

JF: Did you have any knowledge of what was going on in other camps when you were in these last two camps? Did you have sources of information? [unclear] What were those sources?

HA: Mouth to mouth.

JF: You knew what was going on in the extermination camps? You knew what was going on in the war?

HA: Yes, sure, sure. We knew what happened. We had a barometer. When the Germans used to be beaten in the war, they used to be beaten in the Front, we used to be beaten. We suffered. You remember the communiqués from the German headquarters, "We have to move back in order to straighten out the lines," or something like that. So we knew what this was like. We used to have a joke when the Germans wear their uniforms with their buttons tied in the back, so when they go back they think they're going to the

Front. See, they used to have buttons tied in the back, so when they go backwards, it means they go forward.

JF: When, then, were you liberated and by whom?

HA: In January.

JF: In January of 1945?

HA: January or February.

JF: This was by the Russians.

HA: The Russians.

JF: Do you recall how it happened? Was there any warning?

HA: We knew this, but it wasn't a great event. I thought it would be much nicer, but it wasn't.

JF: What happened?

HA: The Russians came in, and they started to ask us questions "How come you stayed alive?"

JF: How come you stayed alive? Meaning what?

HA: How come we stay alive? What did we do? Did we collaborate with the Germans?

JF: Was there any kind of understanding from any of them, any kind of help?

HA: None whatsoever.

JF: What happened to you? Where did you go?

HA: I went back to Lemberg. To find my brother.

JF: Did you find him? And what happened?

HA: I was sick, very, very sick. I was emotionally exhausted, completely exhausted emotionally. I was physically ill.

JF: Could you get any medical care at that point? No. How long did it take you to recuperate?

HA: Very hard to say. I was always so hungry. I could never have enough bread. You may be thinking about a good steak, about, I dreamt about a piece of bread. I received a loaf of bread. It took me no time, it took me ten minutes, I would eat three pounds of bread. I was always sweating here.

JF: On your upper lip?

HA: Yes, upper lip, sweating, weakness.

JF: How long did you stay in Lemberg?

HA: [unclear] '46.

JF: At this point, your passport was a Russian passport?

HA: No.

JF: You still had a Polish...?

HA: I didn't have any passport.

JF: You didn't have anything. Were you technically a Russian citizen?

HA: I received a Polish citizenship.

JF: How did that happen?

HA: Because the Russians gave us permission to go to Poland.

JF: This was after the war? While you were still living in Lemberg, you could get back your Polish citizenship. Then at one point did you leave Lemberg and why? Where did you go?

HA: I went to Crakow, first, from Crakow I went to Ivenyagura [phonetic] These were new territories of the Germans.

JF: Where were you going? What was your goal?

HA: I wanted to finish school first. I finished school.

JF: You finished school.

HA: I went to [unclear]. High school finished, and then I went to Germany.

JF: Then you went to Germany. Was your brother with you at this point? Or he had stayed?

HA: He stayed in Poland.

JF: Why did you go to Germany?

HA: This was the only way that I could come to America.

JF: Your goal was to come here.

HA: My goal was to go to Israel first. I wanted to go to Israel.

JF: Could you get in? Is that, then, why you came here?

HA: No, something different, because I met my wife.

JF: You met her where? In Germany?

HA: In Germany.

JF: Was this in Stuttgart?

HA: Yes.

JF: She had been a student. Were you also a student? Did you marry there?

HA: No, here.

JF: When did you finally leave for the U.S.?

HA: September, I left September '49.

*Tape three, side two:*

JF: You were talking about the freedom.

HA: Yes, the freedom, this uncertainty, whenever you went down the street.

JF: You're talking about the freedom of the time in between your arrests.

HA: Yes, between my arrests. Going down the street, walking on the street, you could never find what is going to happen in the next minute. Somebody would recognize you, because after all, I lived in this city. The city of 800,000 people, so it was no small city. But nevertheless, there was some small chance that somebody would pick you up.

JF: So the uncertainty of those times...

HA: Exactly. This was the reason, this was the fear that somebody would recognize you, and all of a sudden, a German may come up to you and ask you for your documents. And ask you for this, and especially the Jews were circumcised. There wasn't any buts and ifs, once they let you put down the pants, you were done.

JF: There was no identification that you've described as far as a star, a yellow star, or any kind of, armband?

HA: We had bands, in the camp we used to wear red stars, yellow stars.

JF: You wore an armband on your lower arm?

HA: I should have worn it on the upper arm, but I used to wear...

JF: You wore it on your lower arm?

HA: Exactly. I used to wear it, I remember, in the first days when the Germans first came in, I used to go Ukrainians to deal with them, some things. I used to hold my hands behind my back, and I used to speak Ukrainian with them, and they would talk with me for half an hour, and they didn't know that I was Jewish. All of a sudden I showed up my arm, and he said, "The devil with you. I speak with you for a half hour. I didn't know that you were Jewish." So he says, so-- but this uncertainty, this was the worst time. I'd rather be dead or in the camp, because in the camp you knew what was coming to you, what was going to happen. But in the streets, it was terrible.

JF: When did you find out about your parents? Or did you ever find out for sure?

HA: I found out the next day, I saw them going to the camp, to the train.

JF: When you saw them going to the train, you never heard anything after that time?

HA: As far as I know nobody has ever escaped from this camp, from Belzec. They must have died, around, let me see, it was Ukrainian Christmas, January, I don't remember.

JF: What about your grandmother you mentioned?

HA: She died, yes, she died.

JF: She died in the town.

HA: In Poland, yes. In Jaroslaw.

JF: In the town itself. Were there any other survivors from your family, other than you and your brother?

HA: Yes, my cousin, he survived in Russia.

JF: In the interior of Russia?

HA: Interior of Russia, yes. No, he apparently, during the beginning the war, '41, he was taken to the Russian Army, and he was taken to the interior of Russia.

JF: He became a Russian citizen?

HA: Yes, yes.

JF: For that period of time. And he was in the Russian Army?

HA: Yes.

JF: Did he ever relate to you his experiences as part of the Russian Army?

HA: No, he didn't.

JF: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

HA: Well, I am glad that I am here, that I am in these United States. Of course, I am glad that I have three children, I have three good boys, I can be proud of, and I have a wife I could be proud of, very proud of my wife, and try to make a living. And that's about it.

JF: Thank you so much, Dr. Altschuler.

HA: You are most welcome, any time.