

*Tape two, side one:*

JR: O.K., let's continue with this. You were telling me about the trains.

AS: Trains, yeah.

JR: All right, in these trains were there men, women and children?

AS: No, no.

JR: Or just men?

AS: Was just men, just men.

JR: Just men.

AS: Just men. Just...

JR: And did you know where these trains were going to be taking you?

AS: No.

JR: No idea.

AS: They never told us. So finally we wound up in Dachau. We were bombed and...

JR: So Dachau was the second...

AS: Second...

JR: Concentration camp.

AS: Concentration camp, yeah. We wound up in Dachau. When we got into Dachau, they told us to get off the trains. Fifty percent of us were dead. From sitting down we couldn't walk anymore. So while we were walking to camp from the train, we kept walking and falling down, walking and falling down.

JR: How long was the train ride?

AS: For two weeks.

JR: Two weeks.

AS: Because we were interrupted in between, bombing. They had no railroad. The railroad system was—some places we had to walk.

JR: Did you have any more food?

AS: Huh?

JR: Did you have any more food in that two weeks?

AS: No food. No food.

JR: What did you do? You just went without food and water?

AS: You know what I did? At night, many times I thought I am finished. My breath is going out. So every one of us had a little pot, soup pot, whatever you call it. And I had my belt on it. And somehow at that time, it was winter, it was snowing. And I dropped the pot, and I kept picking up snow, and I kept bringing myself back to—life again. This is a very, very few people survived this. Anyway, we got into Dachau finally. I remember also, they were, what do you call it, *blocks*, whatever you call them, apartment houses. I don't know who were there, S.S. or something. And they watched us, the way we walked and we fell down at the camp. They said, they were laughing, from the windows. And this

German asked from the window to the S.S., he says, "What are they, these people?" "Don't you know? They're all murderers! They're Murderers!" So finally, we reached the camp. We got in inside. And then we were, I was assigned to a *block*. I walk into the *block* inside, and I sees people walking like drunk. I says, "What is this?" So the German says, "This is quarantine. You're gonna rest up. And from here you go to, we will assign you to work." Sure enough, we found out, all the people inside had typhoid. And they wanted us to catch from them. The Germans must have been injected or something when they were, the S.S. used to come in there. And, finally, again to survive, we learned quickly to always hold back, every day people died, as you know, something like that. And we kept hiding two or three bodies under our beds, and collect food for them, in order to survive. And every time a person died, we had to put their numbers on the chest, all the way through, and they used to mark him out, make sure that this person is dead. And then they took him away. Whatever they did with him, I don't know. I was there two weeks. When this German walks in, he says, "Aren't you sick yet!?" I says, "I'm as healthy as they come. I'm looking for a job. I want to work. This is not a life for me." So finally, they came in and they asked me what I can do. I says, "I'm a bricklayer." Here I'm a bricklayer again. And they took us, they formed another *Kommando*, were mostly bricklayers. And they sent us to a camp. The camp of, this is named Mildorf.

JR: How did they send you there, by train?

AS: By train, yes.

JR: Was it the same type of cattle cars or...

AS: Cattle cars, yes.

JR: The same...?

AS: But I wasn't far, that wasn't far from Dachau. It was only a ride three hours, that's all. Well, we got off the train. We walked about four miles, five miles. We're walking into heavy forest.

JR: O.K. How long were you in Dachau? How many months?

AS: Only about two weeks.

JR: Two weeks?

AS: That's all.

JR: And how many, how long were you in Gross-Rosen?

AS: Oh, maybe a week. Was just a...

JR: O.K.

AS: Going by, that's all.

JR: O.K.

AS: Finally, we walked into a very heavy forest. The boy next to me, as he lives in Los Angeles today, Polus his name was, yes. He was with me right along.

JR: What is his name?

AS: Polus. P-O-L-U-S.

JR: His first name? Do you remember?

AS: I used to call him, I just can't think of his name.

JR: That's all right.

AS: I'll—maybe, I'm gonna think of it, yeah.

JR: O.K. We'll probably come back to it.

AS: Finally, he—said, "I think they're gonna finish us off." We don't see no buildings. We don't see nothing. Finally we walk into a place. We see a big fence, but no buildings. The fence made us feel a little better, and then we saw guards near the fence. So we tried to put things together, and they say, "Walk straight." Why, as we walked into the inside, we see people coming out from underground. To my surprise, people lived underground. That's the first time I saw a camp underground.

JR: Mildorf was a...

AS: Mildorf.

JR: Underground camp?

AS: Underground camp. They dig ditches, it's a ditch. And on one side they left the ground higher. So they put hay over the top. And on the other side had hay. And then over the top they put boards and stone and sand on the top. And you just walked in under—the ground.

JR: Do you know why they built them that way?

AS: I guess it was quick. Finally, next day, they assigned us to work. And sure enough, we find out we work for the German Air Force. We built—maybe we'll find it when we go now to Germany—we built, we dugged out a mountain from the inside. And we poured concrete over the top. And the airplanes drove in under the mountain. So that was the last of the German Air Force. And I saw it.

JR: Is this the camp from which you were liberated?

AS: From Mildorf, no, no, no. No, no, no, I didn't get liberated yet. It's not yet. It's not that easy. Finally, they made us, some of us, they made us load up the planes with the bombs, but the fuses they put it in themselves. But they were afraid that we might blow them up. I remember like today. They had two bombs on each. They were light planes. Underneath hanging, you know, on hangers like. And while they, there were about, oh, I say, at the most, fifteen planes they had. And we heard already that there were, all over spies, American spies there, between us, between the prisoners talking. And all of a sudden, while they're just about, they all were ready to take off, the planes, the American Air Force came in and they start, they finished them all off. They bombed them, and all night long the bombs were, kept exploding. Every time the fire hit the bomb, and they took us off quickly from the jobs, brought us back into camp. So whatever, the work was done half way. We never finished it. And they also used us in that camp, transformers, we built, because everything was bombed. So, finally towards the end we got a break, in the same camp. And we were guarded by the German working brigade, something, I don't know. We were much easier. And they help us organize. They didn't have food themselves, potatoes, at least, yeah, I remember, we had sugar canes, stuff like that, just to survive. He says, "We

don't have it ourselves." They didn't wear, they didn't have guns. They used to walk with shovels. But, escape was so hard, because you were all surrounded from Germans. And it was all, the army, we were close, almost—on the front line. It was near. You could hear at night shooting, bombing, at night. So finally one day they came in, "Everybody out!" They put us again on a train. They put us on a train. While we're going through Munich, the city of Munich, that was in Bavaria already, you could see commotion in the city. We looked out from the—freight trains. We see Germans running with cars, with bikes. I said to my friend, "Look, how close we are to freedom. But I don't think these bastards are gonna let us live. I think they're planning something else for us." I says, "They're already finished, but they want to finish us off." So finally, we went to a city, a train, I don't know how many—wagons there were. And it was a very long, long train. I could see it when, when it turned a little. When we passed Munich, the conductor from a station, a very small station, came out, and he says to the Germans, "Do you know the war is over? The Americans took over. Get out of here! Take off!" And the Germans started to take their lapels off. And they started to run, just straight in the field. The prisoners are running after them. I said to my friend, Polus, "Don't run. You don't have to run. They're gonna be free. We're gonna be free here, too. We don't have to run." "So what do you have plans?" I said, "I have plans to survive. Let's go into the freight train, the wagon where the S.S. was in there." We walked in there, we opened the door, don't ask. Plenty of food. Plenty of bread. Drinks. They had everything else. We went in there. I took a couple loaves of bread. I cut them in half, put them around my pants. My friend took a big salami. And I says, "Let's go to that lake. We'll go underneath there. We'll just sit there nice and quiet. Will be water, and we'll wait, to see what's gonna happen." Sure enough, about half an hour after, I guess they were, they were caught between the front line. We were in the middle of everything. And they start to throwing back all these prisoners to the freight trains.

JR: Who started to, the Germans?

AS: The Germans. And they start to holler, "What do you think just, we gonna let you live? No way! We're not gonna! We gonna finish you off!" And they, I had a chance; that time I made a big mistake. I had the chance to stay there, or bury myself underground or something. But I see everybody running. I ran too. We walked in, and that was the biggest mistake I made. And they just brought back the people back. I don't know how many, maybe some escaped, I guess. And they start shooting into the freight trains. I know one or two people next to me got killed. I don't know, G-, I guess Somebody didn't want me yet. And, the train, finally the train start to move. The train moved. We got to Tutzing, a small town. It was May 1st, 1945. And we hear a knock at the door. And this German, he happens to be in the, in the *Wehrmacht*, the regular German Army. I guess they didn't have the S.S. or what, I don't know. And he says, "I have an order from Himmler to shoot you all. But, I broke, I made the locomotive, I broke down the locomotive. We're not going away from here till the Americans come. If you cooperate with me, and don't give me any problems..." And, about daylight, five o'clock, we could hear light machine guns all around

us. And all of a sudden a lot of noise, a lot of tanks. We were on the top of a mountain, the train, and this, the road was on the bottom. And, there was a lot of revenge at that time. I guess I was very young. I didn't understand. I had a blanket over me. I just cried. But the Greek Jews—were the only ones which I never knew, that were there on the same train—they said, "It's time for revenge." They were the only ones who took revenge afterward, after them. And they start to shoot them down.

JR: The Greeks were...

AS: Greek Jews, from Saloniki.

JR: Were shooting the Germans?

AS: German, the guards who were with us.

JR: Where did the Greek Jews get the weapons?

AS: From them. Took it away from them. They weren't so brave any more. They were brave right along, but they weren't brave after. And, finally I walked down the mountain. I seen the American Army, the Third Army, crying, that's all. They were throwing food at us, sardines, all kind of food, which was poison to us at that time. A lot of people died from, I had a little diarrhea, but not too bad. And this, this major from Brooklyn, a Jewish man, I don't recall his name, he organized the camp, Feldafing is the name. And while I was standing there watching the army going by, I was thinking, *I don't think anybody is alive. I don't think there's any Jews left.* All of a sudden [pause; weeping] I look, and the tank stopped on the road. And one Jewish man came out. I don't know where he comes from, to this day. He took out a *tallis* and *tefillin* and he prayed. [weeping] And we ran over to him. And we asked, "Are there any Jews left? Is there anybody left?" He says, "Don't worry, you'll survive. Don't worry about it." And, they formed a camp which, Eisenhower came to meet us, at that time. And he gave an order that every German family had to bring a bed into camp for us to sleep. There was no beds. And Jewish boys [weeping] in the American Army, waiting on us. They fed us. Doctors came. And they, one doctor, I don't remember, he was from Canada. I don't remember his name. My teeth were loose. He examined me. And he took me up in the air. And he kissed me. He says, "You're O.K.! There's no trace of your..." They took me in a truck. They gave me x-rays or whatever was. I don't know, they had quick, and they put me on a diet, orange juice and food. Within two weeks I start to come to myself. And I guess that's part of my story. There is, it wasn't easy to tell, but I guess I have to tell.

[Young woman's voice]: Daddy, tell them how you came here.

AS: Oh yes. Finally, one of the Jewish men came up to me. And he says, "Do you have family in America?" I says, "Yes, I do. I have three uncles in America. But I don't know the address. But I'll give you the name." And I says, "The names I know." He says, "Give me the names." And I give my names of my uncles. One of my uncles, he's not a, well, he was a cousin of my, he married my mother's sister in Cleveland. He was a rabbi in Cleveland. He happened to read the Jewish paper, the *Forwards*, at that time. And he picked up my name. And my uncle quickly knew of a boy from Waterbury, Connecticut,

who was in that area. And he found me right away. He came up to me in Camp Feldafing. He was going from one camp to the other.

JR: Where was this camp located now?

AS: Near, between Munich, near Munich, yeah.

JR: It was a...

AS: It was a strictly Jewish camp.

JR: Strictly Jewish camp, and it was operated by...

AS: By UNRRA, well, HIAS, HIAS was in there, the Joint. But UNRRA was the beginning. U-N-R-R-A, [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organization] was a, I don't know just exactly what the, what it means, the initials, but the, after the Jewish organization took it over. And I guess the UNRRA must have been a organization who were functioning right after these DP camps were formed. And then after some of these ethnic groups took over. And he found me and he lives today in Waterbury, the same man. And we are very good friends. So...

JR: How long did you live in this, in the DP camp?

AS: Oh, not too long. My uncle, I came here in '46. My uncle didn't want me to stay there.

JR: You came to the United States in 1946?

AS: Yes.

JR: And you have here December 20th, 1947.

AS: Oh, '47. Excuse me, '47.

JR: All right, '47. For the two years after you were liberated, you lived in a DP camp?

AS: Yeah.

JR: In the same DP camp?

AS: No, I was in Munich DP camps.

JR: Several DP camps.

AS: Several. No, not several. No, just, I was, my home was, mine, it was in that Feldafing, Camp Feldafing. But I used to travel to Munich to see friends. I tried to look for my family, tried to, maybe somebody survived or something like that. But, there was no, no hope for that.

JR: Did you work during this time?

AS: No, I went to school. I went to school. I went to, belonged to a Zionist organization. I played soccer. I tried to...

JR: Did you ever have any thoughts of going back to Poland to live? Or did you make your mind up that you wanted to come to the United States? Now I'm asking this question because, you know many people did want to stay. And it was considered to be, they considered Poland, Germany to be their country. And I...

AS: Not for me.

JR: You thought that it was an alien country.

AS: It was an alien country for me, and I had no doubts in my mind. I didn't even want to go back. I had many chances to go back. As a matter of fact, the Polish government came into our camp and tried to persuade us to go back to Poland. They came in with trucks, I remember like today. And they were so fooled. There was not one person, especially Jews. There was no way. Nobody went up. They promised us to get us back the homes and everything else.

JR: Did you know you wanted to come to the United States at that time or...

AS: No, well, I was caught in between. I was gonna go to Israel. But, then when my uncle found me I said, "I don't have anybody." I really thought that was my first priority, to come to see my family, because I don't have nobody left.

JR: And then you came to the United States.

AS: Yes.

JR: [tape off then on]

[A young woman's voice]: That'd be a whole other story what...

AS: That's another story.

JR: What was the question again?

[A young woman's voice]: My mother was...

AS: In camp.

[A young woman's voice]: My real mother, this is my step-mother, was also in camps. Well, she was in the ghetto, in Lodz Ghetto, for most of the time. And they met in a DP—Didn't you?

AS: Yes. We met in Munich, and we married in this country, in America. But she, I would say, I wouldn't involve myself with my...

[A young woman's voice]: No, I just, I...

AS: Her mother.

JR: O.K., what, when you were in the DP camp, though, you met your...

AS: Yes.

JR: Your first wife?

AS: Yes. I went to school and I met her and that's how we...

JR: And you both came to the United States?

AS: No, no, no. We came separately.

JR: Separately.

AS: She came as an orphan. She came as an orphan. We came separately. And then after...

[A young woman's voice]: She went to Chicago and he went to Connecticut. And then they...

JR: Well that is a whole...

AS: That's a whole complete other story.

JR: Yeah, that's a whole separate story.

[A young woman's voice]: What group sponsored your coming?

AS: What?

[A young woman's voice]: What group sponsored your coming? [tape off then on]

JR: This is, your first recollection in Auschwitz?

AS: In Auschwitz, yeah. When I got in there, the first day, I remember there were Russian prisoners, and they, and they had bread, a truck with bread was wide open, came in. And there were two S.S. sitting on the truck with machine guns. And the Russians were very hungry. And they start to run after the truck. And as they run, they almost reached the loaf of bread. They were shooting them down. And the truck kept going. That was my first horror in Auschwitz when I came in. That was the second day. I says, "I'll never make this!" [chuckles]