Key: AS - Aaron Stolzman [interviewee]
JR - Jerry Rosenzweig [interviewer]
American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Philadelphia, PA
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Tape one, side one:

JR: I just want to make sure it's working. I'm Jerry Rosenzweig, and I'm gonna ask you some questions about your experiences before the Holocaust, during the Holocaust, and to some extent after the Holocaust. Can you tell me where you were born?

AS: I was born in Poland, what city is Dobrzyn nad Drweca [Bydgoszcz Province - North Central Poland] is the name of the city. My, I had a father. I was born, my father's, mother, brother and sister. In 1939 we were evacuated from...

JR: Well, I want to, I'm gonna get into that.

AS: Yeah.

JR: You said you had a brother and a sister?

AS: Yes.

JR: O.K. Where is this town in Poland, what part of Poland?

AS: That's near the Baltic Sea.

JR: O.K.

AS: That's the closest I can tell you.

JR: I want to talk a little bit before World War II broke out. Can you tell me something about what your life was like during that time period, just before the war?

AS: Well, I went to school. I was, I went to about seven grades at school.

JR: What kind of a school was this? Was this a public school?

AS: Was a, it was a public school, but it was a strictly Jewish school. It was a, Jews were not allowed to study with the Christians together in mine, especially in mine, where I lived.

JR: And how old were you about this time?

AS: Oh I was, when the war broke, 1939 you're talking about?

JR: Yes.

AS: I was about 14.

JR: 14.

AS: Yes.

JR: O.K. Did your family belong to any Jewish organizations?

AS: Yes.

JR: What organizations?

AS: My family belonged to a Zionist, my father was a Zionist. We belonged to synagogue. We, I studied Hebrew as a child in *cheder*, whatever you call it. And, life was, my father was in business. He had...

JR: What kind of a business did he have?

AS: He had a grocery.

JR: A grocery.

AS: A grocery business. And life was very nice.

JR: And you said that your father was a Zionist.

AS: A Zionist.

JR: What organization, Zionist organization did he belong to?

AS: Oh, he belonged to *Maccabi*, that's a sport organization. He belonged to, they called *hachsharah*. That was a pioneers, they prepared young people to go to Israel.

JR: Did your father want to go to Israel?

AS: Not specially. I wish he did.

JR: And what about your mother?

AS: My mother, the same. She was a Zionist also, and I guess she, I don't think we were particularly religious. I would say Conservative.

JR: Did you go to synagogue?

AS: Yes.

JR: The family went to synagogue.

AS: Synagogue, yes. We observed...

JR: Was there...

AS: Sabbath.

JR: Kept kosher?

AS: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

JR: O.K. Was it common for the Jews of your town to observe this way? Or were most more religious or most less religious?

AS: Well, my father was more less religious, more modern, I would say.

JR: Than most.

AS: Yes.

JR: Did you speak mostly Yiddish in your family?

AS: No. We spoke Polish.

JR: You spoke Polish.

AS: Polish.

JR: Did you speak...

AS: Very little Yiddish.

JR: What, did your parents know Yiddish?

AS: Yes, yes.

JR: Did you know Yiddish?

AS: Very little.

JR: O.K.

AS: I learned Yiddish, by the way, in this country.

JR: You learned Yiddish in this country! Oh that's interesting.

AS: I picked up Yiddish, let's put it that way.

JR: How would you describe your family's relationships with non-Jews, or your relationship with non-Jews?

AS: Very good, very good.

JR: In what way?

AS: Eh, in what way? I would say friendly. My father was a very giving person. He, being, we were in the grocery business, we did a lot of business with non-Jews. And we also, by the way, had a lot of German. I was brought up in a culture of two cultures—Poles and Germans. So we had a lot of German friends.

JR: Was the store your father owned near where you lived, or was it far away?

AS: No, it was in the same building.

JR: The same building.

AS: The same building.

JR: So you lived in the same building.

AS: Same building, yes.

JR: And that was a...

AS: We owned that building. We owned...

JR: What was the makeup of that neighborhood?

AS: Mixed. Even the house was mixed—Poles and Jews were living together. We were not, it was not a Jewish, strictly Jewish neighborhood or anything like that.

JR: Yet you said that the schools were segregated. Jews were in one school and non-Jews were in another.

AS: Yes, school, the schooling system was segregated, up to high school. When you—got to high school then you were able to go to a—mixed schools.

JR: Was high school mandatory?

AS: Yes.

JR: What about college?

AS: College, only two years they allowed Jews.

JR: They only allowed Jews to go to two years of college.

AS: Yeah, we had to leave, if you wanted to go and get any higher education, you had to leave the country in order to get it.

JR: What about...

AS: If you were able.

JR: What about, non-Jews could complete college there?

AS: Yes.

JR: And what was the reason for that, do you know?

AS: I really don't know. I was too young.

JR: Just a bias against the Jews?

AS: I guess, [unclear]. I guess the antisemitism or hatred or what. Laws, I, probably the laws were that way. I don't even really know.

JR: In Poland...

AS: Yes.

JR: When the Nazis started to take power in Europe...

AS: Yes.

JR: How did that affect your life? How did that change your life?

AS: Well, my fath-...

JR: I'm talking about between 1933 and 1939.

AS: My father was the oldest veteran in town, Polish veteran. He fought for a free Poland in 1914. Very few Jews were officers in the Polish Army. My father was one. So, the first thing when the German Army came in, they looked for my father. They had his name on their—papers, whatever.

JR: When did the Germans come in?

AS: They came in in 1939, in September.

JR: September of '39.

AS: Yes. I don't know exactly the date. First thing and my mother was smart enough and she said to my father, "Don't go." And he went down in the cellar and somehow, she says, "My husband is not home." "Where is he?"

JR: Why—did the Germans come for him?

AS: Because he was an officer.

JR: Because he was...

AS: They took—were mostly teachers, professional people, and anybody had a, mayor in town, or whatever. And that was the, they even took non-Jews, by the way, not only Jews. And he was on that list. And I remember like today, my father had a uniform. And before the Germans came in, my mother poured gasoline on the uniform and burned it so they shouldn't recog-, know that he was in the army or anything like that. That I recall.

JR: Do you know how the Germans got his name?

AS: No, I don't. Must be Intelligence or something like that, as far as I can—say.

JR: Let's go back a little further in time, back to—before 1939. Tell me something about the—house that you lived in. What kind of a house was it? You mentioned that other, there were other people living in it, or was this sort of a, like an apartment complex?

AS: Was a mixture.

JR: It was an apartment complex?

AS: It was a mixture, yes. Well, there must have been probably, I say 15 families, something like that, in the whole house.

JR: How many rooms was your apartment?

AS: My apartment was a bedroom, kitchen, two bedrooms...

JR: Two bedrooms.

AS: Two bedrooms and a kitchen. I remember like today.

JR: O.K.

AS: And we could have walked out almost to the store, from the same apartment. That building was, by the way, bought by my mother's father.

JR: O.K., that was my next question. Who owned that building?

AS: We did.

JR: You owned the building.

AS: Yes.

JR: O.K.

AS: Yeah.

JR: You were, Jews were permitted to own buildings, property and so forth?

AS: Oh yes, some, some.

JR: Only some Jews were.

AS: Some, not some, but I think that some, there were more Jews who owned property.

JR: Your family was then more or less well-to-do in this particular town?

AS: I would say so.

JR: Did—your father have people working for him in his store?

AS: No. We did...

JR: It was just a family store?

AS: It was a family store, yes.

JR: And you helped out?

AS: My sister helped them.

JR: Your sister helped.

AS: I helped very little, because I was too—young.

JR: Your sister was older than you?

AS: Yes. She was older.

JR: And your brother?

AS: Younger. He was the youngest.

JR: He was the youngest. How—old, when was your brother born?

AS: Oh, I'd say he's about two years younger than I am, so he must have born in, I'm in '25, so he would be in...

JR: '23. [He must mean 1927.]

AS: '23. [He must mean 1927.]

JR: And your sister?

AS: Sister, my sister must have been about, oh, I'd say five years older.

JR: Five years older.

AS: Something like that.

JR: O.K. I want us to talk about the—actual war time now in Poland. This is after the Nazis came into Poland. You mentioned that it was September of 1939 when the Nazis came in.

AS: Mmm hmm.

JR: What was the immediate affect that it had on your family? What did your family think? What did you think about this?

AS: Well, we had a little, before that we lived not too far from the German border. And we had an experience that the German Jews were driven out from Germany. It was about, I don't know before the Germans came into Poland.

JR: You knew about this, then?

AS: I remember that, yes. And they brought the Germans, they threw them on the borderline, no man's land. And they couldn't go nowhere. And they were staying there, actually sleeping on the outside. My father, being he belonged to the Jewish community, he was in the, how would you say, Jewish organization or stuff like that, and he was a veteran, so he went, he interviewed, he talked about, he went in to the Polish government and tried to bring these German Jews[1] into Poland, because we wanted, we didn't want them to stay on the borderline. So, what happened is, they allowed on one condition, that every family has to bring in a German family, into, that they'll—never come to the burden of the Polish government. So most of the Jews signed up and somehow we got these—Jewish families, German Jewish families into Poland, yes.

JR: Did someone come to live with—you?

AS: Yes, yes.

JR: Do you remember who they were?

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[1] Jews of Polish nationality who had lived in Germany for decades, but were deported to Zbaszyn, Poland in 1938.

AS: They were from Ostpreussen. I don't remember, Königsberg or something like that.

JR: Do you remember their names?

AS: Oh, no I don't. I don't remember. Was a—husband and wife and a daughter.

JR: A husband...

AS: And a wife...

JR: A wife and a daughter. And how old was the daughter?

AS: Oh, about—I'd say about 15, 16 years old.

JR: And where did they—sleep then?

AS: They were with us on the, they slept wherever we—found, on the floor, wherever we found place for them. Every family took somebody in. We, there was a—you had to do it. There was no way you could say, they came in to you, the Jewish organization came in and says, "Look, we gotta help our brothers. There's no way out." And my father was the organizer from that.

JR: What was being said at that time in Poland about what was happening in Germany? Was there any...

AS: Well...

JR: Thought that this was going to happen in Poland also?

AS: I have mixed, I have a mixed feeling. I don't know. My father was, I know, I remember my father crying when he, first time when he read the paper, about the German Jews.

JR: What did the paper say, do you remember?

AS: Well, it says that they, nobody wants the Jews and the Polish government didn't want them, and we have to do something about it, get them out of there. So, they had an emergency meeting right away, and that's what happened, what I told you before.

JR: Did anyone realize, in your family realize, did you realize, did your father realize, just how serious the situation was in Germany?

AS: That question puzzles me still till this day. My father was a very intelligent man. He was smart. And he had chances to come to the United States. My uncle from Connecticut wanted us to come here. As a matter of fact he wanted to send us, I have some documents, he wanted to send us tickets to come to the World's Fair at that time, just to get out of there. And I don't know, somehow, I don't have an answer for that, till this day.

JR: O.K. When the Germans came in, what specifically, what movement occurred with you and your family? Did the Germans come in and arrest you father or arrest you or...

AS: No, first thing they came in, maybe they were a half an hour they were asking where our father, for my father. And being we had a store, that by the way was only the Wehrmacht. I don't know what, what you knew, that's the regular army, the German Army.

JR: Yes.

AS: The S.S. didn't come yet. But they came in, they said, my mother says, "Welcome to—Poland," in German! She spoke a beautiful German. And they came down, "Ach!" he says, "You speak German? It's beautiful!" And, he says, "What do you do?" "This is my store." "Open the store," he says, "for business!" So my mother says, "I told you they're not so bad, the Germans." And we opened the business. It was fantastic. We were doing business, because there was no, we had a lot of merchandise, and we were quite busy. Everybody was buying quick, you know, because everybody was feeling that they—knew their money will be no good. And, in about three weeks later, first of all they start the arrests already. The Jewish leaders, the Jewish teachers, the Jewish, they only left common people. And whoever was smart enough ran away from town. By the way, this part of Poland was also evacuated, also the Polish people had to leave that part of Poland, not only Jews, because Hitler claimed that that was part of Germany. So, anybody who didn't have any German blood in him had to leave that part of—Poland. By the way, while we're at it, I don't want to miss that. We had a German family—the name was Schlachter—who lived almost next door to us. They had a farm, dairy farm. And at that time the Polish Army and the Polish people persecuted very much against the Germans. They, in fact they were killing some of them. And we took that family, we hid them, in the same cellar where my father was. And that same man threw us out from our home. We saved their lives. It was a father, and a mother, and three sons. They were with us because there was bombing before the army came in. And my mother said to him, "Schlachter," she says, "how can you do—this to us? I saved your life!" He came with a swastika and a gun. My mother had in her hand [weeping]...

JR: Are you O.K.?

AS: I'll be fine. She had sugar beets, squares.

JR: I have some tissues if you need them.

AS: And he went with the gun, and he hit it, I remember as like today. And the whole sugar was all over the floor. He says, "If you don't get out of here, you'll be dead." And we left. Being my mother looked like Irish, she was blond, she rent a horse and buggy. They told us to leave, whatever we can take in our hands, that's all. While we left—my wife met these people in Israel—there was a boy and a girl and a fa-, a boy and a mother sitting on the steps and crying, "Where we gonna go?" So my mother said, [weeping] "Wherever we go, you go." And we took ‘em on the wagon. I think that's because this boy is still alive today, in Israel. He lives in Israel. So we went in the wagon. My sister paid a Pole, I don't what it was, a certain amount of money, and, we were able to come back into the house, because one of the, one side of the store wasn't, they put like a seal on the doors, so you can't open the door. But they didn't know about the other door. So we were able to take the food out of there, and put it on the wagon back again. And we had enough food at that time—I'll never forget

that—to eat almost, quite a long time. While we were driving, we knew where we were going. We had an uncle in, there was a ghetto. The name was Mlawa, what I marked here. We took that voyage over night, and a half a day, with horse and buggy. And while we were driving with the horse and buggy at night, every so often the S.S. came in, "What do you Jews got? Rings? Watches? What do you got? Anything you got, we want." Every now and then they came to us and they just molested us. Every so often during the night we heard trucks with Jews screaming. That was forest we went by, and you could hear shooting from machine guns. We really didn't see what was going on. You can put those things together. It was a horrible venture from, from our town to the ghetto. And we went to the ghetto. And my uncle lived there. And...

JR: What was your uncle's name?

AS: Charno Broda. [phonetic] And he lived there with—my cousin, and a, he had a son and a daughter. He opened their home for us. And my uncle says, "From now on," he says, "I'll take care of you. I'm your father. You don't have a father. And don't worry. Everything is gonna be fine." And they formed a ghetto, the Germans.

JR: Wait, let's back up a little bit. Your uncle told you that he would be your father. What happened to your father at this time?

AS: My father, the last thing that we know he went to his division. I heard this from somebody who was there. And he asked for arms. He want to, for fight the Germans. The name of the town was Torun. And the place was all full of German spies already. They says, "There's no arms. There's no nothing." He says, "If I don't have arms, I'll get them." And the last thing we know, that he fought the Germans and he got killed somewhere. I really don't know exactly where.

JR: When—did he leave your family to fight the Germans?

AS: Oh, about the same week when they came in.

JR: The same week when they came in.

AS: Because he was already...

JR: So this confrontation that occurred between that German you had sheltered and your mother occurred when your father was not there. O.K., it was before that that your father had left. I see. So that when you left for this ghetto, it was you, your brother, your sister, your mother, and these two other people that were picked up.

AS: Yes, yes.

JR: Do you remember the names of those two people?

AS: Yes.

JR: What were their names?

AS: Lisberg. [phonetic]

JR: Lisberg. They were...

AS: Here his name Yeshu-, Yeheshua Lisberg [phonetic], and his mother I don't remember the name.

JR: But it was—a man and his mother?

AS: Yes.

JR: O.K.

AS: A son and daughter. A son and mother.

JR: Mother and son, right.

AS: Yeah.

JR: O.K., getting back into the ghetto, what were the living conditions like in the ghetto?

AS: In the beginning my fa-, my uncle had the dairy concession of the ghetto. So, automatically he took his whole family into work. We all worked there. We had, everybody had to work, to do some...

JR: Now during this time you didn't know where your father was.

AS: No. My mother tried to find out. She, in fact she went to a city, Budgoszcz. That's where I think he got killed. Remember I told you. And I saw some evidence that he got killed there, but I haven't got...

JR: What evidence did you see?

AS: Pictures, of, they were taking Jews there. But I haven't got, I'm really not sure. I don't, I didn't see his picture. But I seen some of the people he was with.

JR: I see.

AS: So, that's the only thing we could, we know about it.

JR: And you've never found out what happened to your father.

AS: Really we don't know. What else you want to ask me? In the ghetto.

JR: In the ghetto, yes.

AS: In the ghetto, for a year, for about six months, I would say, it wasn't bad. It was nice.

JR: Nice in what way?

AS: Well, we had, we worked. It was quiet. People were forced to go to work. Nobody was beaten up. So, people figured, "We'll wait here till the war is over and things will probably..."

JR: Who ran the ghetto?

AS: Jews, and under German observation. There was, they called it a *Judenrat*. And...

JR: Was, your uncle was a member of the *Judenrat*?

AS: I don't...

JR: You didn't know any of these people.

AS: No, I don't know.

JR: No. And the Germans at that time weren't interfering with the operation of the...

AS: Oh yes, they were in there and controlled the whole thing. They controlled how much food came in and...

JR: Oh, I see.

AS: All that stuff. But, things weren't bad. Things were, people weren't hungry. People were doing fine. Finally...

JR: Were people allowed to go to synagogue?

AS: No! Was, there was no synagogue, no schools, but you, I went to school secretly, to teach, teachers taught, saw us and—Finally, one day I walked the street in the ghetto, and this German came in. I can't recall his name. And he took this girl. First he starts shootin' people, right on the street. And I watched this, from a side. And then finally, I was—at the street at that time, on the street. Finally he took this girl, which I knew the girl very well. She lived next door to us, a young girl. He made her undress, and he—really molested her and shot her, finally, right in the front of. I saw this. That was the end for me. I told my mother, "I'm leaving this place." My mother says, "You're a child. Where you going?" I said, "I'm going into the woods. It doesn't make any difference. I'm gonna get killed here anyway." Finally, I found out an organization in the ghetto who trained young boys. We had to speak very good Polish, which I spoke Polish. It was no problem. They taught us all the prayers. And they gave me a passport. My name was Yanovski [phonetic] or something like that. And they put a picture of me on the top. I had blond hair. I wasn't dark as I am now. And I was a perfect—And I went out, by myself, not too far from the ghetto. It was about, I say, about sixty miles. And I went to a Pole, and I told him I was, my father and mother got killed and I'd like to get a job, do something on the farm. He was happy as just, he took me right in. And I worked for a while with him. But I always thought about my family. Once, only once, I organized some food with me in a bag and I hitchhiked by bus, by train, back to the ghetto. When dark got, I cut the wires and I got into the ghetto. And my mother was just, couldn't believe it that I am home. And I brought food. At that time things were already bad. And I told her what I'm doing. She says to me, [weeping] she says, "Go." She says, "Maybe you'll save yourself." So I went. And I went back to that place. I said, "I'm not gonna work here. I'm gonna try to revenge, do something." So I went and I start working for the German Army, as a Pole. I worked in the kitchen. They had armies all around there. I had connections with the Underground. Was a mixture of Poles, Jews, very few women and children. They lived in the forest, underground.

Tape one, side two:

AS: Finally, about 1942 in September I think it was, these people got the news the Germans couldn't pass the roads any more. It was pretty bad for them, especially at night.

JR: What month was this now?

AS: In '42.

JR: What month?

AS: September.

JR: September?

AS: Yeah. And they came in with tanks and they bombed the place, burned it right out. Firebombs they threw. And most of us had to come out, they made us come out from the bunkers.

JR: And you were in there at this time?

AS: Oh yes. The older men they shot on the spot. And the young ones they took, like me.

JR: Where did they take you?

AS: I wind up in Auschwitz.

JR: In Auschwitz.

AS: Yeah.

JR: So that was your first concentration camp, was Auschwitz.

AS: Yes.

JR: When did they take you there? This was in September?

AS: In September, yeah.

JR: How long were you in Auschwitz?

AS: I was in Auschwitz from 1942 till 1945, almost to the end.

JR: All right. I notice here you also have Dachau.

AS: That's later, later, this camp.

JR: This came afterwards.

AS: That comes...

JR: 1944, '45...

AS: About 1945, the beginning, in January. I was liberated in May. In 1945 in January, they came, Auschwitz was closed, and, well, let's not talk about this. We're going too far.

JR: Yes, we're going too far into it. Tell me something about life in Auschwitz. What were the conditions there, the rou-...

AS: Well...

JR: What daily routines were there? Food?

AS: I am one of the few people who built Auschwitz. Was 200 of us young boys they picked out. They took us to a school, to learn how, we, to learn how to lay bricks. And then, after three months—they put us between two master bricklayers, each one of us. And I used to lay almost 300 bricks a day. And I am actually, I built Auschwitz. When I came to Auschwitz in 1942, there were still Russian prisoners there, but there were Jews coming in. But the survival for Jewish people was a week, two. They fed us, because they needed us. We were...

JR: Needed you to build.

AS: We were, they want us to build.

JR: What was your, you mentioned you had bricks and so forth. I—had thought that Auschwitz was—the barracks were made of wood.

AS: No, no, that's Birkenau you're talking about.

JR: Oh.

AS: Auschwitz was a different story.

JR: A huh.

AS: This was a model camp.

JR: A model camp, I see.

AS: A model camp they called it. And in this camp, this was the only camp I think they allowed the Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross to come in. People who were there were treated, well, I wouldn't say fairly. I learned how to survive in Auschwitz. I learned how to organize food. I learned how to survive.

JR: When you were in Auschwitz, were you alone, or was your family with you...

AS: No.

JR: At all?

AS: No.

JR: What happened to your mother during this time, and your brother and sister?

AS: Well, my brother—and my sister, as far as I know, my brother, my sister and my mother—my sister was in Birkenau in a camp. She died, I think, what I heard from some people from my hometown, she died after, I think, three months being in Auschwitz. My bro-, my mother and my brother, they were taken on the side and they were gassed. So, that's all I can tell you about that. How...

JR: When did you find out about this? Was it during...

AS: After the war.

JR: I was after the war, not during the war.

AS: Yes, not during the war.

JR: You knew nothing of the fate of your family during the war then.

AS: No.

JR: What about your uncle?

AS: My uncle? Well—my uncle died in the ghetto. My uncle died in the ghetto of typhoid before we left. My aunt and—my cousin and my cousin, the other, brother and sister, she died. She went to the gas chambers. And my cousin, the boy, I tried to help him but it was too late. He got diarrhea and I, I was in good shape at that time already when he came. And he came in about three or four months later to the camp. But he got, he developed a diarrhea and he died. So, I couldn't help him. I tried to help him but I couldn't.

JR: When you were in Auschwitz where did you live? In a barracks?

AS: *Block* Seven.

JR: *Block* Seven.

AS: Yes.

JR: Is that where you were tattooed?

AS: No, we were tattooed when we came in to Auschwitz, right away.

JR: Oh so then you were, but Auschwitz is where you got the tattoo.

AS: I got in Ausch-...

JR: What is that, what—does the triangle mean?

AS: The triangle means, at that time it meant a political prisoner.

JR: Why did they consider you a political prisoner?

AS: Don't ask me. Ask them.

JR: O.K. The other people who were arrested with you from that bunker...

AS: Yes.

JR: Were they also considered political prisoners?

AS: Oh sure. We were also, when we got to Auschwitz we were already hooked up to another transport. We were only part of a, they didn't bother to take only ten or twenty people. When we got into we were hooked up with other Jews.

JR: Oh I see. Were there any opportunities in Auschwitz for education or religion, so forth?

AS: No.

JR: It was all work?

AS: All work.

JR: When you didn't work, what did you do?

AS: When you didn't work?

JR: Yes. How many hours a day did you work?

AS: As many as they want you to.

JR: About how many hours was that?

AS: We used to go out in the morning about four o'clock, and leave camp every day with music to work. I say was about, we used to leave about six and come back about five, five thirty, something like that, every day. So when we got home we were pretty tired.

JR: You were tired. Just enough time for sleeping then.

AS: Just enough time for sleeping and stay in line to get a little soup.

JR: How many...

AS: If they gave you soup.

JR: How many people were in the same...

AS: In the same *Block*?

JR: In the same *Block* that you were in?

AS: Oh, I think each *Block* probably had a couple thousand. There were three bunks.

JR: And these, the bunks were spaced very close together?

AS: Oh yes, oh yes, oh sure. But they were, compared to other camps this was really nice. [chuckles] I built, by the way, I built the camp, and as you know as, when you build a building, as you go higher, Jews had to bring us bricks, the cement. They had to carry it by hand from the—trains, freight trains, to us. They used to come right close to us. Water, whatever we needed. Everything was done by hand. It wasn't done by automation or anything like that as you see today. Most of them by the time they brought the bricks, by the time they went down, they have these big trains with cement. They used to shove them in, in the—cement. And they used to suffocate. Some of them, they took the numbers off, and they said, "Pour over concrete over." And we did. So, it was quite a sight for us to work there and see all these people. They survived a week, two. That was the most at that time, especially older people who couldn't make it any more, any longer.

JR: You were in Auschwitz from '42 to '45. Now how many of those years did you spend actually doing the building?

AS: Oh, all the way.

JR: The entire three years that you were there?

AS: I did, I worked different companies, with different people, different jobs. Not always, we finish one job, they found an-, we were like a *Kommando*. We finish one project, they put us in another project.

JR: Who was in charge of these projects?

AS: Oh, it was S.S.

JR: The S.S. was.

AS: Sure, yes, sure. Sure. We built ammunition factories. We built, in fact one time we built transformers underground, because they were bombed. All the electric companies were bombed during the war. So we built them, we put them underground.

JR: And this was in Auschwitz.

AS: In Auschwitz! Oh yes!

JR: They had these factories.

AS: Oh, they had a lot of factories. They had chemical factories. They had shoe factories. They had, oh my God.

JR: Well, while you were in Auschwitz, did you hear anything about the news from the outside world?

AS: With, people talked about it. Sunday was our day off, usually. So people talked about it every, it's all rumors, rumors, rumors.

JR: What rumors did you hear?

AS: Well, that the Allies are coming, hold on, hold on, don't give up. Stuff like that.

JR: Anything about the mass murders?

AS: Oh this was steady.

JR: So that people there realized that Jews were being methodically killed.

AS: Oh sure, we knew that. Sure, we knew that. Every day, we could smell. We didn't have to know it. You could smell the—from the outside, the—The only thing, on the end I built a bakery. I happen to be in the bakery business today. I built a bakery, and after the, we finished the bakery, I said, "If I work in a bakery, I will, at least I can feed myself. I'll have enough bread to eat." So I went over, they volun-, they asked for people, for bakers. And I signed my name in. That was the only time I didn't work as a bricklayer. And the bakery was not too far from the gas chambers. You could see them burning.

JR: The gas chambers were within Auschwitz?

AS: In, oh yes, about...

JR: And the crematoriums also...

AS: Three miles...

JR: Were there?

AS: Three miles. That's Birkenau was the name. Birkenau was the name where the cre-, the gas chambers were.

JR: They were not in Auschwitz.

AS: Not in Auschwitz, no.

JR: Not in Auschwitz.

AS: No, not in Auschwitz.

JR: And how far...

AS: They had the...

JR: That's all...

AS: About—I think say the most five miles.

JR: Five miles, so that you could actually...

AS: You could actually smell and see. Oh, the smell. If the wind was, with the fire, was right, you could smell it.

JR: How many inmates were in Auschwitz during this time when you were there?

AS: Oh my God. I say at least 150,000.

JR: How many Germans were, German guards were there at the time?

AS: Oh, who knows. This I can't give you figures.

JR: Was there ever any talk of overpowering the guards or breaking out or...

AS: It was impossible.

JR: Why do you say it was impossible?

AS: I'll tell you why. First of all, in camp was all electric wires. The only way you could run, you get electrocuted, number one. Number two, you went, as I, like I said, I was in Auschwitz long enough to know, they had three borderlines. In other words, if you escaped one borderline, there was another borderline, and another borderline. So you, actually you had to escape three zones in order, if you didn't get caught in one you get caught in the other—which I tried once myself.

JR: You tried to escape once?

AS: To escape, yes.

JR: Could you tell me something about that?

AS: Sure.

JR: When did it happen, first?

AS: Well, I worked as a bricklayer. That was in 1944.

JR: You'd been there for almost two, two-and-a-half years at this time, right?

AS: Yes. And I got acquainted, we worked with Poles, civilians, which very few prisoners had the privilege to do that. So we start to organize. We have business with them, dealings. I used to bring them watches, diamonds, clothing. And they in turn used to bring us bread, salami.

JR: Where did you get the watches, diamonds?

AS: Through, inside, the people who worked with the transports that used to come to Auschwitz. And we had the inside. So if you got to know, like I told you, how we—to organize food, and how to organize food. And as a matter of fact, one time I even brought in whiskey into camp. But I didn't use it. I sold it to somebody for food. Anyway, I had an arrangement with this Pole. We had, the toilets were outside. And we built sort of a drawer underneath the seat. I went in inside first, left my watch or my diamond, whatever it was, or my clothing. And after he—came in, took the stuff down, and he put his salami or bread, whatever it was, into it. We couldn't talk to them. And, finally, I got very friendly with him. I worked with him for quite a long time. And he says, "I'm gonna get you out of here." Being

we didn't have hair, you know, I was shaved completely. So he says, "I'll get you artificial hair." That was his first thing for me to do. And we were, they call it an *Appell*, they used to count us ev-, three times a day—in the morning, during the day, and at night. Because we worked, they call it outside *Kommando*, so they were always, even though they had three zones, they were always afraid somebody's gonna take a chance and leave this place. So, he told me his plan was—he drove a truck, this Pole—his plan was for me to go under the sand, and he'll build an opening underneath, from boards, whatever. And he says, "We're gonna try to cross couple zones." We knew everything about the dogs. The dogs smelled you. We knew all this, all the ropes, how to escape. But that didn't work. By the time I crossed the other second zone, the firing, fire alarms went off. And I didn't want to, I didn't want him to get hurt with me. And I jumped the truck and I went on the side of the road. It was fall. And I covered myself with leaves. I knew, I had with me, on me money. I had civilian clothes. I was all prepared. But I also had my prison uniform underneath. Quickly, I devestigate myself from all this stuff; my money, I buried it. And I kept crawling on my stomach further, up, up, up, up. I knew the dogs would come and get me. Finally, I could hear motorcycles, the sound of motorcycles. And the dogs start to come from the rear. And I come out, my hands up. But I came out in my prison uniform. And I don't remember his name, he was just a, they had a trial in Germany, he just got caught only about five, six years ago, this same S.S. who caught, who found me at that time. And I came out, and the dogs start to rip my clothes. And he came close to me, he wanted to see if I have arms. He took all my, just left my pants on. And with his bayonet he start to beat me up. I was bleeding all over, my face and my, everything. And he says, "Run in the front." How he didn't kill me at that time, don't ask me. He ran—me over with the motorcycle. It was a heavy motorcycle. Maybe three, four times. I kept falling down, and he ran over with me. It was about, oh, three, four miles to camp, and I kept running. I don't know what maked me run that time, till this day. When I got to camp, they took me, and they took my head and they kept, against the wall, back and forth, back and forth. They kept asking me what connection I have with the Underground. I says, "No, I got lost. I was hungry. And I just got lost." They didn't want to believe me. Finally they put me in between the electric wires. When all the workers, more than 100,000 workers saw me, between the wires. They had a special place, people should see if somebody wants to escape, this is what he gets. So they had a door between the wires, and you have to stay there. And they have a big sign in German written down. And everybody kept looking at me and saying goodbye to me. And, finally they took me to *Block* Eleven. I don't know if you heard about *Block* Eleven.

JR: Tell me something about that.

AS: *Block* Eleven was a *Block* what they brought only people, political prisoners, they brought people who tried to escape, partisans were brought in there. Very few people

came out alive. Here I was lucky again. There was a man, a Jewish man was in charge of *Block* Eleven. He happened to be, they called him The Strong Man. And, I was in a room, oh, I say just about, there was no bed, just cement. And I was pretty well beaten up. I was all swollen. And this man came in. His name was Kozhelshik. [phonetic] He was from Bialystok. And he says to me, "Son, you're a lucky man." I says, "Why am I lucky? To be here?" He says, "Whatever you're saying, keep saying." He says, "They'll beat you up, and I'll feed you." And he kept bringing me in food. And they took me out every day, for interrogation. They took me once on a, was a dark room and a candle was lit, I don't know to scare me or what. And there was a chain hanging down. And all of a sudden this German came up to me and he spoke Yiddish to me. And he said to me, "You know, if you're not telling the truth, you'll hang." I said, "I have nothing to say." So they put a wire bar between my legs, and they put the chain on the top here, on my neck. They pushed me up on this thing. And they was banging me here, right on my head, forehead. And they kept asking me, "What connections do you have with the Underground? Who did you know there? Why did you go there?" And I kept saying, "I don't know. I was hungry. I got lost." Finally I could feel the chain like drops. I, I fell on the floor. They pour a bucket of cold water on me. I got up. And by the way, when you're in *Block* Eleven, you get death clothes, like when you're persecuted to die, when you're set to assassinate. They gave me wooden shoes, a special white uniform. And I happened to have a, I gave to the Yad VaShem that picture. I hold it for many years. When I was in Israel, I gave it to them. It tells, shows you how they take you to these places. This man was on a bike, and I walk in the front. This artist painted this picture. Oh yes, I remind myself, the name of the...

JR: The S.S.

AS: S.S. who caught me.

JR: Who was it?

AS: His name is Kadduk. [phonetic] He spoke Polish and German. He had a mixture of Polish blood and German blood. By the way he was, he just was persecuted not too long ago. They had a trial in...

JR: Prosecuted.

AS: Prosecuted, yes. They had a trial in—Germany, yeah. And...

JR: How did you get out of the *Block* Eleven?

AS: How did I get out?

JR: How did you get out?

AS: Finally, I don't know if you heard about Höss. Höss was the *Lagerführer* of Auschwitz. He wrote a book in Poland. He was hanged after the war. And I walked in, and this was the verdict. And he's supposed to say one way or the other, if I should live or die or whatever, to do. They brought me in, they trained me. They told me how to report myself to

him in German. I remember like today. He says, "*Der Häftling* number [English - this one word] *sechs sechsundsiebzig, sech dreiundvierzig meldet sich gehorsam zu die Stelle*." [Prisoner number 676643 obediently reports present.] In other words, "I am ready and willing to take any decision you make." And I remember he was sitting in a red velvet big chair. He had, and he come up and he says, "Why do you want to escape? Do you know that I can bring you a death sentence from Berlin?" Exactly the words he said to me. I says, "I know." "Why do you want to escape?" I says, "I have it good here." I had a good job. "I am a bricklayer. I just got lost. And this is the truth." And he looks at me, and he says, "O.K., this is the last time," he says. "I'll let you go." That's just what he said to me. "But you cannot work outside of the camp. Inside you're gonna work." And they gave me a red ball on my, plus my Jewish star, they gave me a red ball in the front I had to wear, and on the back. That means I'm dangerous. [chuckles]

JR: O.K. Now all right, you were in Auschwitz till '45. Right?

AS: Yes.

JR: After Auschwitz, where did you go?

AS: There comes the real McCoy. Like I said, I did very well up till '45. I was pretty well fed, which was, I survived well, very, really well. Besides, scared or afraid, I was, once you live in that environment, you learn how to live. And I guess I was young, I suppose. They took us with a death march to Gross-Rosen. I didn't mark this camp. That was the first...

JR: After this you have Gross-Rosen.

AS: Yeah, Gross-, yeah did I?

JR: Yes, you did.

AS: Yeah. We had to march by foot. Can you imagine? There must have been at least, I'm not saying, from all the camps around. It wasn't only Birkenau and Auschwitz and Buna, all these camps, they were pushing us all towards Germany. And every time we passed a cemetery, people who couldn't walk, they kept shooting them down, right through. Here I was again a witness here. The same man, Kadduk [phonetic] what I told you, came over to me. He says, "*Junge, kommen Sie her*." "[Boy, you] Come here," he says. "You gonna carry, you gonna pull my bike." And he was going towards the end. He had his, the few things he had, he had on the bike. And I—pushed it for him. I was very much scared. He was drunk. And the Russian Army was in the back of us. We knew that. And he kept shooting people left and right, right in the front of me. And I just, I says, and he says to me, "*Junge*, not you, not you, not you. All the others no good. You're good." And he says to me, "Shine my shoes. Wipe me off my face." Stuff like that. And he says, "*Junge*, you hungry?" I says, "Yeah, I'm hungry." So he threw a, every now and then on me some food while we were, finally we arrived to Gross-Rosen. We arrived to Gross-Rosen. They picked us out again. And they

asked me what I can do. I said, "I'm a bricklayer." And they put us on freight trains again. The freight train was bombed on the way. They gave us one slice of bread, and on the end of the bread was a piece of margarine. And they says, "Hold onto that bread. This has to last you two weeks." I was hungry now. Me, I ate it up right away. And, people were dying left and right. The S.S. were sitting with machine guns on top of our freight trains. And during the night, we had no—toilet facilities, nothing like that. We were put in there like sardines. So during the nights while they were found asleep, we're throwing the bodies out, to make room...

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 digged 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 day light, 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]