HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

HYMAN BLADY

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Hanna Silver
Date: October 2, 1982

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HB - Hyman Blady [interviewee]
HS - Hanna Silver [interviewer]
Date: October 2, 1982

Tape one, side one:

HS: This is Hanna Silver interviewing Mr. Hyman Blady for Gratz College on October 2, 1982. Where were you born, Mr. Blady?

HB: I was born in Warsaw, Poland.

HS: And when?

HB: February 11, 1920.

HS: How many were in your family, brothers and sisters?

HB: We had four brothers, one sister, married, and my sister had three children at the time the war started.

HS: What was your life in Warsaw before the Hitler period?

HB: Our life was mainly, as was Jewish life in Poland, and we lived in the middle class, I would say. We were in the shoe industry. We had a shoe store.

HS: So, your father had a shoe store?

HB: Yes, we had a shoe shop and shoe store. We lived just as the Jewish life was, especially as was in Warsaw, in Poland.

HS: Did you work in the shoe store with your father, too?

HB: Lately, my father died in 1933 and the shop was taken over by people who had to run it. The store was run by my mother and then, I was, I would say, I was about 16 when I started taking over the shop and doing it in my own way, which it came in pretty handy during the years of the concentration camps. It practically saved my life, I would say.

HS: Until then, did you go to school?

HB: Yes.

HS: To a public Polish school?

HB: To a public school. Not public school, I went to a Hebrew school.

HS: This was full time?

HB: A full time school.

HS: Did your family experience antisemitism before Hitler?

HB: There's no question about it. All of Poland was antisemitic, if I may say so, because we experienced antisemitism all our lives.

HS: In which way did it show? Give me an example. In school, did it show in school?

HB: Well, like I said, I went to Hebrew school. I went to strictly Jewish school because our home was sort of a Zionist way, a Zionist direction, and I grew up in that but in public school, of course, I had friends who experienced very severe treatments from the schoolmates.

HS: Students and the teachers, too?

HB: Students and the teachers, too. If they were a little better off, if they knew a little more than the non-Jewish student, and the Jewish student-- blamed it on the Jew, that he was distracted by him, and that's why, and the Jew was, as usual, always blamed for it, and the teacher when he asked the Jewish kid, she said, "That Jew, stand up."

HS: Did your family belong to Jewish organizations, to the Jewish synagogue?

HB: A synagogue, of course. We belonged to a synagogue in Warsaw, I remember exactly where. After I left in '35, the *shul* was Tuckenheim Shul, it was called. For many years, for all those years that I can remember, we belong there, it was a nice big *shul* and I was Zionist. I belonged to *Shomer Hatzair* and other organizations. I was in the Zionist directed which were a little bit of hope.

HS: How big was your city about, how many the Jewish population?

HB: Well Warsaw of course was the capital of Poland. It was the most concentrated Jewish city in most of Poland. I would say it was close to half a million Jews.

HS: They were well organized, of course?

HB: Yes, the Jewish community was well organized.

HS: Was there a *kehillah*?

HB: Of course, it was the Jewish *Gemeinde*, the Jewish *Gmina*, in the [unclear]. It was a well-organized Jewish-- of course, I went to a *Gmina Schule*, a Hebrew *Gmina Schule*.

HS: What did your family think of the *kehillah*? Did they think it served the community there?

HB: Yes, I would say, in those years, the Jewish *kehillah* served the community. We were well aware of it. We were very content with it.

HS: Did any men in your family serve in the army, the Polish army?

HB: No.

HS: Nobody?

HB: Nobody.

HS: Then, what happened to you and your family in the first weeks after the German occupation in '39?

HB: Well, when the war started, it was before the holidays. I remember exactly, and my mother, *ole vasholom* [may she rest in peace] went shopping, and we were attacked and our house was bombed. I had two younger brothers, and we went down to the store, thinking that we were going to stay low in the store and we would be safer, but a lot of people came rushing into the store and eventually we had to leave because the shelling became unbearable, so I grabbed the two kids and we ran and the bombs fell and we kept running.

HS: Are you talking now about German bombs?

HB: About German bombs.

HS: Falling on everybody in Warsaw, not just on Jews, just like general bombing?

HB: This was general bombing. Oh, oh.

HS: What happened then right after the Germans came in and took over? Where were you then? Did you stay in your place?

HB: Before that, not knowing where to run, we had an uncle living on the Swiaća[1] [phonetic], and we went to him, and we were so frightened, he put us in the basement where we couldn't hear the detonations from the bombs, and then we stayed there overnight. The next morning I went out to look for my mother. We couldn't find anybody. So, eventually, I made it back to the street where we lived and my mother wasn't there but I found a cousin and my cousin told me that my mother found me dead, she recognized me among the dead already. Eventually, we found each other and of course we were all happy to see each other alive. I told her the kids-- which at the time were small, young children, my brother was six years younger than me and the younger one was 10 years younger than I am-- and I told her where they are and life went on from there.

HS: How long did this period take of bombing and taking over? A week?

HB: Three weeks.

HS: Three weeks. After the three weeks were over?

HB: After the three weeks, the Germans marched in and, of course, that's when the trouble…

HS: And took possession of Warsaw?

HB: That's when the real trouble started.

HS: So, how did the real trouble start?

HB: Where we lived was the business district. We were, of course, in the shoe industry. We had a lot of stock laid away, one…

HS: Did you just sell the shoes or did your father manufacture them?

HB: We manufactured them and we sold them. After the-- there was a big market on that street, which burned down due to the bombardment, and after that, the people got together again and they formed in the street where the market was and they had a market on top of this one. And, of course, every day, which we were not used to it, the Germans came, the soldiers, with trucks, started shooting, killed a dozen or so people and then, they helped themselves.

HS: This was random shooting, at anybody?

HB: At anybody. They didn't choose whoever it was. They--mostly, it was Jewish there, there was no others and then they helped themselves to all the ware that they wanted.

HS: Looting?

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[1]Possibly Nowy Świat street, a historical part of Warsaw.

HB: Loading up the trucks and just taking off, and every now and then, we experienced the same thing.

HS: But this was not because you were Jewish? They did this to all the stores around there?

HB: Yes. There were no other stores there but Jews.

HS: Oh, they were all Jews?

HB: Most of them were all Jewish stores. It was a strictly Jewish neighborhood.

HS: Did you have any contact with Gentiles?

HB: Yes, of course we did. I had good friends, Gentiles. As a matter of fact, in 1941, a good friend of mine, a Gentile, came into the ghetto and wanted to sort of rescue me out of the ghetto. He asked me to leave with him where I would live with his family, but my mother was dead at the time. She died from hunger, just as many Jews died, and my brother, my younger brother, was still with me. The other two brothers left Warsaw. They lived in a small village and when I said to him, "I can't go by myself, I got my brother, I can't leave him, I have to take him with me," and the answer, unfortunately, he gave me distracted me from going with him because he said, "Well, he will die like the rest of the Jews will."

HS: What time do you talk about? How many ye…

HB: This was in 1941.

HS: We were talking about '39. So, from '39 to '41, you stayed where you were?

HB: No, I did not. I escaped from the ghetto, I got out of the ghetto.

HS: You didn't tell me yet that you went to a ghetto. So, we were in '39 and you told me that you went and the store was looted. Did you then go back to the store and try to…

HB: No, we would look every once in a while. We would look. Our life became unbearable. We couldn't take it anymore, so my mother suggested that I leave Warsaw at the time. A lot of people left Warsaw and they ran east to the Russian occupied zone, which I did, too. I can talk about just this trip that I undertook for about two days.

HS: Were you by yourself or did you take your brother with you?

HB: No, by myself, with the cousin and a few friends and we made it to the Russian occupied zone.

HS: How did they accept you?

HB: We didn't have a paradise; we didn't find a paradise there, either. I stayed there for about three months and then I had a chance, I found some people from our neighborhood, and they said they were going home and something hit me and I came back to the ghetto.

HS: When were you taken to, deported to the ghetto, in which year?

HB: I was there right from the very beginning.

HS: When was that, '39?

HB: This was in 1939. As soon as they came in, they marked out the Jewish neighborhood, the ghetto.

HS: So, you were taken to the Warsaw Ghetto?

HB: Yes.

HS: Did most of your community go to the same ghetto at the same time?

HB: There was no other place to go. They let us know that all the Jews must concentrate in this spot; all the non-Jews must get out from the Jewish staked-out ghetto, and so one day we got up and in 1940-- I don't remember exactly the dates, I have it written down somewhere, I don't remember exactly the dates, and the ghetto was locked, sort of, so we couldn't move anymore, and we had to stay inside the walls, and then they started to build a wall around the ghetto.

HS: But before that, you just had to live in the ghetto. You went outside to do some work?

HB: Before that, I was still was outside the ghetto and when we found the ghetto locked, I jumped a wall and I went into that friend who tried to rescue me. We were very good acquainted to his family, where I stayed a couple of days in order to get some equipment out of the store, and some leather and other stuff which could be used so I could go back to work and make some kind of living inside the ghetto, which they helped me get it out and I got it back and afterwards the store was outside the ghetto. Funny, they built the wall right up the sidewalk and so life, again inside the ghetto, we had to leave everything behind and take an apartment, which we took from other people which moved out, apparently, and so we stayed in the ghetto.

HS: What kind of work did you do inside the ghetto? Were you put into a labor unit or were you free to find work on your own?

HB: We were not free, never, at any time. We were subjected to all kinds of tortures but we tried to manage to live. What we did in the ghetto, me as the shoemaker at the time, I bought some old shoes, took them apart, took usable parts together and build other shoes with those usable pieces from the other shoes. In the beginning, some non-Jew, Christians, Poles, came into the ghetto.

HS: Could they move in and out?

HB: …yes, at the beginning they could…

HS: …freely?...

HB: Not freely, no.

HS: They couldn't just walk in.

HB: They had to be smuggled in through rooftops or through the canalization, through whatever, however they could, through walls, through holes, through windows, and because we had to make some kind of an effort to live, because what we received in the ghetto was practically nothing.

HS: Not enough to subsist on?

HB: Not enough even to live for one week with what would have to last for a month.

HS: Did you get some support from those people or did they just come in to do business?

HB: They came in to help themselves.

HS: Not to help you?

HB: Not to help us, no way.

HS: They paid for what they got?

HB: They paid as little as they could.

HS: Could you buy something for money?

HB: Yes. It was organized. A group was well organized. They smuggled in all kind of fruits and other stuff into the ghetto.

HS: And you could buy that.

HB: I would say a very small percentage could afford to buy it. It was well known the ghetto was starving. Every morning you woke up and the streets were littered with corpses. I used to help, myself, carry them every day out in the street because they were not picked up from the homes, so we had to put them out in the streets to be picked up.

HS: But your family stayed together as a unit in one place inside the ghetto?

HB: I was in the ghetto and I received a letter from the Polish police that I have to go to some kind of a labor camp, which I refused. I stayed outside, I didn't stay home. The police was looking for me. Eventually, I got smuggled out of the ghetto and I lived about 45 – 50 miles from Warsaw in a small village, disguised as a non-Jew.

HS: And you worked there?

HB: And I worked there among the villagers, among the farmers, as long as I could until I received a note from the ghetto that my mother died.

HS: Inside the ghetto?

HB: Inside the ghetto and my brother was left alone. So, at that time, I packed everything over there and I went back to rescue my brother because there was no one.

HS: So you went back into the ghetto?

HB: I went back and I smuggled myself back into the ghetto.

HS: And you found your brother? How old was he then?

HB: I found my brother. He must have been about 12 years old.

HS: And your father?

HB: My father died in 1933.

HS: So, he didn't even go to the ghetto?

HB: No.

HS: So, what did you do then with your little brother?

HB: Well, again I started to work, as little, as much as I could, to, just to

sustain our lives.

HS: Did you try to smuggle yourself out of the ghetto?

HB: It was impossible then. There was-- not only was it impossible for us at least, it was no place to go for us.

HS: Where you had been before, you couldn't go back there?

HB: No. I could, maybe, but I saw nothing in it to go there because we received-- I had two brothers living there, too. One brother was married already. My oldest brother was married and he was there. He had no family. He had a child before which died in the bombing. And eventually, he got stuck in the ghetto until the…

HS: Until they closed?

HB: Not until they closed, until they cleared the ghetto, until they liquidated.

HS: Did you meet refugees from other cities inside the ghetto?

HB: Yes, people came in and they had over a half million Jews living in the ghetto.

HS: Were they treated differently by the Warsaw Jews or were they readily accepted?

HB: No, we made no difference from one Jew to another. We didn't know one Jew from another. They came, they came, they came mostly from Lodz, with the yellow stars on them. We didn't have those, we had the arm bands.

HS: And after, did you have any contact, while you were in the ghetto, with anybody from the outside? As long as the people came in to buy from you, you had some kind of contact, didn't you?

HB: Yes, we did have contact with some Poles. Like I said before, one even came in to rescue me from the ghetto. But they came in strictly to help themselves, as I said, to use us, which they did. They took everything, everything they could take out of us and gave us practically nothing. We were starving and we had to settle for whatever they gave us.

HS: Did they give you any news from the outside? Did you know what was going on in other places of the world?

HB: Yes, we did get news and we sort of sorted it out for ourselves, knowing that France was invaded and other parts of Europe by the Nazis. Unfortunately, they were successful in the [unclear] of the army of the Führer. We just sorted out all that news and we made our own conclusions and we hoped that someday some kind of a *moshiach* [messiah] would show up and rescue us.

HS: In time?

HB: In time, hopefully.

HS: Did you have a *Judenrat* [Jewish council] in your town?

HB: Yes, of course, we always had, always had a *Judenrat* and we had a …

HS: How would you describe it?

HB: I had nothing to do with it, unfortunately, or fortunately, because they did

try to help mostly. I was young, I worked as much as I could, I helped myself as much as I could. I didn't go through them. They were-- a lot of people which were starving, they couldn't do much for them. I used to come there to ask for work. What they used to do is, they sent us out to work for the Nazis, for the Germans.

HS: They knew then that these were Jews and the sent them?

HB: Oh, yes, we used to go out for the day's work and come back to the ghetto and I did everything I could to sustain life at the time because otherwise, we wouldn't have made it.

HS: Was there any semblance of a synagogue or religious service while you were in the ghetto?

HB: Of course, all these things were forbidden. No schools, no synagogues, no services of any kind but we had them, quietly. We celebrated our holidays as much as we could, or as little as we could. We many times, we were attacked by soldiers. I remember exactly, there was in our house, in our tenement house, there was one apartment which was converted into a synagogue but one time, through the non-Jews or somebody, and one day it was some kind of a holiday, I don't exactly remember, and the Nazis, the Germans, came in and started to beat and shoot and kill a few people and this was the result of trying to be a Jew.

HS: Did you know about any underground in the ghetto and did you have any contact with it?

HB: No, unfortunately, I did not. I…

HS: You didn't even know about it?

HB: I was left practically alone. I knew about it, I knew what's going on. I had my brother to worry about and we were chased around and we had no family at the time. My other two brothers were outside the ghetto and I had one uncle left, my mother's brother. He was an old man, he was a tailor before the war, doing very well, but they couldn't do anything for us. We just tried to live from day to day as best as we could, not getting involved with anybody. I don't know, at the time, I was very confused.

HS: Did you think in your mind of possible resistance, or just there was no way?

HB: At the time, I was thinking of staying alive from minute to minute, hour to hour, day by day.

HS: Yeah. So, the Poles who surrounding the ghetto, from them didn't come any help, did there?

HB: Well, I would say the help that came is what we could deliver to them and as little as we could get out of them until early '42, where the ghetto was shut tight and then they declared that they're gonna liquidate the ghetto and started to liquidate the ghetto at the time and the Poles didn't come in.

HS: Did the Poles help the Nazis to persecute the Jews, as far as you know?

HB: Yes.

HS: In which way?

HB: In every way they could.

HS: In form of police or also as individuals?

HB: They had police. Unfortunately, Poland, at least the Poland that I knew, the people that I knew, thought that they were rescued by the Germans against the Jews. Antisemitism was at the highest. I'm afraid even if the Germans did not invade Poland, Poland would have gone back to the times of the pogroms...

HS: The pogroms, yeah.

HB: …and liquidating, whatever they could. They couldn't wait to get into the Jewish houses and help themselves with whatever they could, which they did with my house.

HS: Did you experience anybody's taken in the pogrom? Did you witness anything?

HB: During the war, during the German occupation…

HS: No, before?

HB: No, not before. We didn't-- we had skirmishes before, which they attacked. That's why we were concentrated in a strictly Jewish neighborhood, where we could resist these attacks as much as we could.

HS: And then they closed the ghetto, they liquidated the ghetto in '42 and what became of you and your brother?

HB: Well, they started to liquidate the ghetto. Every day, of course, it is known to the world now, they said that they were going to sort of take us, or resettle us to a place because they said the ghetto is too crowded and of course, we didn't believe, we knew what's going on. I had my sources of information. We tried to fight back as much as we could by just resisting and organizing but…

HS: This was a kind of a silent resistance?

HB: This was kind of a silent resistance, our own groups, because we tried to persuade a lot of families, which they freely, voluntarily marched to the *Umschlagplatz* [place of assembly] from where they were transported, unfortunately, to the death camps, sort of, Treblinka, Majdanek.

HS: Did you know this at the time?

HB: Yes, we knew, but a lot of people didn't believe us. It's very hard even for me now to realize, to believe, how hungry we were, because they let out a newsletter that they will-- every person that would come to them would receive a free loaf of bread with some marmalade that would last them for two or three days for the time of being resettled, and strange enough, a lot of people believed them and they freely voluntarily marched to the *Umschlagplatz* to receive that loaf of bread.

HS: They were taken away?

HB: Whole families, unfortunately, whole families, we see them like a parade going to the *Umschlagplatz* freely…

HS: For the loaf of bread.

HB: For the loaf of bread, knowing that they're going to die, they still done it. We tried to persuade them not to do it.

HS: So, how long did you stay then, did you get your rations?

HB: The rations that they gave us was minimum. We did live like animals eventually, I would say. They used to go around, after we resisted, they used to go around and circle neighborhoods and grab everybody they could, chase out everybody from their homes and put them on whatever they could, buses, some kind of vehicles, hustle buggies and just drag them out from the ghettos to the *Umschlagplatz*. Unfortunately, one small episode that I remember, as we heard that they were grabbing us, I ran into a burned-out building where through a hole I observed what's going on outside and seeing them grabbing the people and dragging them and shooting and yelling and I saw a mother, well dressed yet, with a little boy about six years old, five, six years old, I would say, and she held some kind of a piece of paper. She must have been some kind of either a policeman's wife of some kind of politician's wife and she walked up. As soon as I saw her, I understood the rest, I just pretended what she was doing, showing that little paper. But before that, she told the little boy to hide behind the door, which he did, and she walked up to one of the policemen and showed him the paper but she never came back to that little boy.

Tape one, side two:

HS: So the woman never came back and the little boy was standing behind the door?

HB: She never came back. I was observing that little boy. He was standing there crying. Eventually, they must have done with the mother what did with all the rest of the people. He jumped out from the hiding place and he started crying, "Mommy, Mommy," and ran until he disappeared from my view. Well, a lot of shooting went on. After it quieted down, when we went out from the hole, we had to help clear the streets from the corpses and I found that little boy who was chasing after his mother, shot in the head. When I saw a big Nazi on a motorcycle chasing after the little boy, he must have killed him.

HS: Are you talking now about the time of the uprising?

HB: No, no, no. This was…

HS: …this was before?

HB: …before, this was when they tried to liquidate the ghetto.

HS: So, you kept on living in the ghetto?

HB: Not long afterwards, we were caught eventually, my brother and I, by the Nazis and put in, on a place, a school, where they kept us and thousands, many like us. Then, they took us outside the ghetto and eventually they took us to the *Umschlagplatz* also and from there we were transported to my first concentration camp.

HS: By truck?

HB: By train.

HS: By train.

HB: By train, which was in German-occupied White Russia, Bobronsk [Bobruisk][2], to be exact.

HS: Could you repeat the name?

HB: Bobruisk.

HS: Bobruisk.

HB: It was a city in White Russia.

HS: And that's where they took you?

HB: That's where they took my brother and myself, thousands of us to that camp. When we arrived there, of course there were people, Jews which were taken there before us. It was one of the most gruesome places that I ever experienced. It was my first concentration camp, and, by some sheer luck, they were looking for shoemakers and I stepped out as a shoemaker and I was threatened by a Nazi. He couldn't believe, I was small and young and he didn't believe that I can do some kind of work. He said, "If you

[2]Sounds like Bobronsk but probably is Bobruisk, also spelled Bobroisk and Bobrujsk. The rest of the transcript will read Bobruisk.

can't make shoes like mines I'll kill you," and, of course, he meant it. And they took us out of the main camp into a place in town, in Bobruisk, where we worked as shoemakers.

HS: And your little brother held onto you?

HB: My brother stayed in the camp.

HS: He couldn't go with you?

HB: No, he stayed in the camp.

HS: Did he survive?

HB: He survived, thank God, he did, yes.

HS: So, you were taken into the shoe…

HB: Yes, there was a factory where some 25 or 30 Russian shoemakers and there were some six Jewish shoemakers working there and several hundred Russians which worked in tailoring, which they fixed and repaired uniforms for the SS, strictly for the SS.

HS: Does this mean that you didn't have to go out in the cold?

HB: It meant, a little better, and I was in a little better position than my brother was.

HS: Did you have contact with him?

HB: From time to time, I had contact with my brother because those soldiers from the camp where he was came to the factory and oh, we can talk about it for days, just …

HS: In which camp was your brother? So he had to leave Warsaw, too?

HB: Yes, with me, at the same time. He was very young and very small at the time and I was frightened for him. I did the best to shield him.

HS: He didn't have a profession yet, right?

HB: He didn't have anything. He was maybe 12 – 13 years old and, but somehow, through some miracle, because if I would have to tell you every detail about him-- he lives not far from here.

HS: Some people must have taken him in and taken care of him a little bit, whatever you could take care of?

HB: He was taken to be shot one morning in that camp. Like many others before, he was led to a place where he was told to undress, which he did and the Nazi who was supposed to shoot him looked at him, he was so little and so young, that for some reason, maybe he had a change of mind or something hit him and he took him over to another pile of clothing and he said, "Put on the best that you can put on," and instead of shooting him, he said, "You're going to be my…

HS: Assistant?

HB: …shoe *Putzer* [polisher]".

HS: Shoe *Putzer*, yeah right…

HB: …*Putzer*. Yeah and he take him in and he was polishing his boots every day.

HS: That's a good way to save a life.

HB: To make the long story short, from that camp, our part, where we were, left after the fall of Stalingrad, after the Germans suffered the defeat at Stalingrad, they started to retreat and they retreated us and they took us back so from the whole camp, including us and them, only 91 left alive. All the rest perished in that camp.

HS: They were shot, or probably from the conditions, from cold and hunger, or did they kill them outright?

HB: They went through something like if a Nazi or the Russian-- the White Russian or Ukrainians volunteers, what served in the German army-- if they killed a Jew in the morning, they got two eggs for breakfast; if they killed two Jews, they got four eggs for breakfast; so something would happen to them and they couldn't wait to kill Jews. They used to come up and give a Jew a bullet and tell them, "This is your visa to heaven," and the next morning, they went back to that Jew and they took the bullet from him, they took him out in the forest not far and they shot him.

HS: What nationality were the guards? You mentioned Ukrainian?

HB: Ukrainians, White Russians and Nazis. Well, they practically did the dirty work for the Germans. There were some Germans. What we knew is this camp was guarded by German criminals, so we couldn't expect much out of them.

HS: But there were Nazis, the commander must have been an SS?

HB: They were all SS.

HS: They stayed in the background?

HB: They stayed in the background. They did some pretty bad killing of their own. We were, we were degraded to where we were treated like, what can I say, an insect, a cockroach. We had no, any defense of any kind.

HS: And the whole time you were in this camp Bobruisk, did you work in the shoe shop all the time?

HB: Yes, yes, I was fortunate enough to stay and that saved my life.

HS: How long could you stay there, until the end?

HB: Until we were evacuated from there. From there…

HS: It was too far into Russia?

HB: It was-- no, it was White Russia. It was near the big city, the capital there was Minsk.

HS: Minsk. And they had to give up Minsk, the Germans?

HB: Then, we were taken to Minsk, there were other places, concentration camps. Of course, the Jews from that region were all murdered when the Germans came in.

HS: And you were by now a small group, too?

HB: And we were by now a small group, which we were taken from Bobruisk and there was Mogilev and there was Molensk [phonetic][3] and we were taken and concentrated into, into one group in Minsk, where we stayed there for about 8 to 10 days and then we were loaded back on trains and brought back to Poland.

HS: And where in Poland?

HB: We wound up in Majdanek.

HS: In that camp.

HB: They divided us, they sorted us out and a few hours later, I was back on the train, where I was taken to another camp, a labor camp called Blizyn, near Radom, in Poland.

HS: Was it a large group taken there?

HB: It was a large group. From our group, most of those left behind, which we found out later, with others which we found, that the whole group was liquidated, which I had very good friends of mine, which we lived together all these years from the Warsaw Ghetto, and the year in Bobruisk, that we stayed there for about 13 months.

HS: How long did you stay in Radom?

HB: In Blizyn, we stayed for about eight months.

HS: And what-- did you have to-- did you belong to a labor unit?

HB: Yes, we was involved– we used to fix the *Partonentaschen* [Ger.: cartridge boxes] for the German army and we did some shoe making, those wooden shoes for the Jewish prisoners, people in there. And until one day, unexpectedly, they grabbed us, separated us from the others and they said we going to another place, where I was separated from my brother for the first time, and they sent us, ordered us in trains and we went to a place called Plaszow, near Krakow, another camp.

HS: Inside Poland?

HB: Inside Poland. I was separated from my brother, which I haven't seen him, not knowing whether he's lived through or not until after the war.

HS: How long did you stay in this camp?

HB: In Plaszow, I must have stayed for about six months.

HS: How were the conditions there?

HB: In Plaszow, I would say, in comparison to the others, it wasn't bad. It was a pretty good *Arbeitslager* [Ger.: work camp].

HS: Relatively speaking?

HB: Relatively speaking, it wasn't a bad camp.

HS: How was the food?

HB: [laughs] comparing to the others…

HS: …or was there any food?

[3]Molensk [phonetic], possible that he is referring to a very small town Molinsk which is located 75 miles SSE of Mogilev according to www.jewishgen.org.

HB: …it was pretty good. Fortunately, I would say, we had there Jews from Krakow which were a better class of Jews, and they were pretty well organized and, of course, it was up to the leaders, the German leaders, some people there must have been to some degree of a better quality people, and they allowed to cook better and to live in a little better conditions than the other.

HS: You still lived in barracks?

HS: Of course, we lived in barracks, yes. We were quarantined for two weeks something like that. But the people helped us a lot.

HS: The ones who were there already?

HB: Yes, the ones who were there already, yes, they helped us a lot because we came from-- they looked at us and they couldn't believe at the time because we came from very bad conditions living for about a year and a half already.

HS: What kind of work did you do in Plaszow?

HB: In Plaszow, I did also the shoemaking and *Sattlerei*.

HS: Saddle work.

HB: Saddle work.

HS: They had classes?

HB: No, no, we just fixed things made of leather for them, and then we were grabbed from there unexpectedly. Of course, there the Germans were chased by the Russians and we heard all kinds of rumors that it's not going to be long now, but standing at the *Appellplatz*, we could have heard the detonations from bombs already.

HS: This was Russian bombs?

HB: This was-- we didn't know, but we could have figured out that the fighting is going on not too far away from us.

HS: Coming closer?

HB: Coming closer, until one day, in a big hurry, they evacuated us from there and they took us to Austria to a camp, Mauthausen.

HS: Mauthausen. That was the end?

HB: That was no place of milk and honey. We suffered a great deal there, and then, we stayed there. From there, we lived through a quarantine for weeks.

HS: You stayed in Mauthausen until the war was over?

HB: No, no, they then took us from Mauthausen to a branch from Mauthausen, a place called Gusen, where they build a underground factory in the mountains there to build the Messerschmitt, the first Messerschmitt airplanes for the Germans.

HS: Then was it '44, 1944?

HB: It was '44, yes. It was '44, 1944 already and we were working in the factory.

HS: Everybody was working in that factory?

HB: Everybody that was over there was working in that factory. They had a small shop, a shoe repair shop, and tailoring which they did, but unfortunately I couldn't get in.

HS: So, did everybody work in that…

HB: …everybody was…

HS: …and there were no selections? They grouped people while they were there?

HB: Yes, there were selections. Every once in a while, every once in a while, they sorted out the good from the bad, the bad from the good and they took him out and they took him back to Mauthausen, where they had a big crematorium where they cremated him, where they destroyed him, and they also destroyed a lot of people right there. This was sheer hell. That camp was one of the worst that I have experienced.

HS: And yet you had to produce!

HB: And yet, I stayed alive as best as I could. We worked in the, in the holes in that underground.

HS: It was a factory, didn't they want you to produce?

HB: It was not a factory yet. We were building that factory.

HS: Oh, you were building the factory.

HB: We were building that factory, we were boring underground factory and *Stollen* [Ger.: horizontal tunnels], and we were building that factory.

HS: *Stollen*, yes.

HB: *Stollen*, *ja*.

HS: *Stollen*, yes, that's what they have in mines, yes.

HB: In mines. That's what we were working, that's what we worked with. I was a builder which I worked with a power hammer what they call...

HS: A sledge hammer?

HB: Not a sledge hammer, no. Compressed air. And, so the same life went on, as bad as it was.

HS: Did they give you at least a minimum of food?

HB: A minimum is the right, is the right way to put it, yes. They gave us a minimum of food and we lived, but, from day to day, went as best as we could.

HS: You must have had already hopes that is an end near, or did you not?

HB: That hope we hoped from the day from the Warsaw Ghetto. We always hoped that one day we'll wake up in the morning and it will be something like a bad dream.

HS: The nightmare will be over.

HB: Like something that we will have to tell our children that it happened, but that hope filled it from day to day, from year to year.

HS: And from camp to camp.

HB: We kept telling ourselves this is, this is the end, this is the end.

HS: Did anybody ever try to escape? Did you know of anybody?

HB: Of course, a lot tried to escape.

HS: And what happened to them?

HB: A lot of them got caught and a lot were brought back and some of them, in front of us, got shot or hung.

HS: Did some make it?

HB: I really don't believe it. We don't believe it.

HS: But…

HB: Maybe a few did, but...

HS: It never occurred to you then to try to escape because it was very little hope to make it, right?

HB: There was no place, in my opinion, there was no place to run. There was no place. If you got caught by a Pole or by a Russian or by anybody, he was rewarded for handing you over to the Nazis. So there was no place to hide.

HS: What kept you going? That you didn't have another choice? Was it religion or was it hope?

HB: My sheer will to stay alive, to survive. I fought with my last breath of air just to stay alive for another hour, another day.

HS: Now, you were in your early twenties by then, right?

HB: I was in my early twenties by then, yes. From time to time, we received news that what's going on, that the Americans entered the war.

HS: How did you get this news?

HB: …just rumors...

HS: …just rumors, yes.

HS: Did you think they were leaked by the Nazis to somebody?

HB: We, we really don't know. In Plaszow, they used to make announcements through the intercom and the radios, but the Nazis did that, and, of course, all they announced was how many tonnage of shipping, of the enemy shipping that they had sunk, how many, how much and what cities they had bombed, their successes, but we sort of sorted all these things out, knowing that, knowing, and trying to figure out how far they are, where they are being chased, who is entering the war, how far it's going on. We just tried to make some kind of sense, just to give us a little hope that maybe tomorrow.

HS: You didn't have a little radio that you could…

HB: No, there was no way we could have it.

HS: How long did you stay in Gusen?

HB: In Gusen, we stayed until late-- well, first at the beginning of the year, they figured that we need to be *entlaust* [Ger.: deloused].

HS: The delousing.

HB: The camp was already overgrown with, with, with insects, with lice and all that, so they took us to a city, Linz, in Austria.

HS: Linz is in Austria.

HB: Austria.

HS: Where Hitler was.

HB: Yes. They brought in a train, they took us to the train, and we entered the train.

HS: You mean a large number again?

HB: Yes, they were in the thousands. There must have been there about 20,000 – 25,000 of us.

HS: And they took all of them to Linz?

HB: Well, yes. Some of them, I don't know where they took all of us. But it took all-- but I know they had a large train, a cattle train, and I entered one of them which was a refrigeration…

HS: *Wagen*.

HB: *Wagen* [railroad car], which I hoped-- it was in January, it was very bitter cold, which I hoped this would be a warm place to stay, but it was overfilled already and they threw me out because there was something like 120 of us in there, and they said some must go out, and I was one who was thrown out. I barely made it to another place, to another *Wagen*. Fortunately, for me, when we arrived, out of over 100 in that *Wagen,* died from suffocation, because it was hermetically closed like refrigeration, and something like seven or eight, the weakest ones, the sickest ones, survived. The strongest ones perished, died. And then, being there a couple of days, we were fortunate to be bombed by the Americans. They must have seen a big concentration of people, and thinking that maybe we were soldiers or the army, they bombed us which again, a lot of us died there. Eventually, they said that they're going to come and see how many of us died, and how many of us is going out of there. They gave us slices of salami and they counted the slices of salami. We came back to the camp.

HS: By then you were deloused in Linz?

HB: Yes, we were deloused, as many as they could because the next day, the place was destroyed by the bombs. They couldn't go on. A lot of us had to leave that place naked.

HS: Because your clothes were burned?

HB: Because our clothes were caught or burned or whatever, and we had to come back.

HS: Did you have any eye contact with the people of Linz? This is a big city?

HB: Oh no.

HS: Nobody saw you?

HB: Oh no. We were encircled by guards, which they stayed in bunkers, disguised, in disguised bunkers, because when we were bombed, we broke the gate and tried to run out, so they start to kill, they start to shoot at us, and we had to return back

because one side we were bombed from the air, the other side, we were bombed-- shot by the Germans.

HS: So, did you then from Linz, go back to Gusen?

HB: From Linz, they took us back to Gusen.

HS: What happened to the naked people? How did they get clothes?

HB: We went through a big selection, where the weak was sorted out from the stronger ones. They asked us to pick up rocks, big rocks, and run with them a certain distance. If you couldn't make it, your number was written on your chest, and you were-- this was your death sentence. You never went back to the camp, you went to be destroyed already.

HS: And you went back to the camp?

HB: I was fortunate to have went back to Gusen and then until, I would say, late March or April…

HS: '45?

HB: '45, they begun, they took us from Gusen back to Mauthausen. In Mauthausen, we stayed a few days, and we started to march by foot from Mauthausen to a place called Gunskirchen, in Austria. In Gunskirchen, it was a camp where we were supposed to be destroyed. That's what we heard, the rumors, after we were liberated.

HS: At the very end?

HB: At the very end. The *Lagerführer*, [camp commander], the German, after he surrendered to the army, to the Americans, told us that we were for two days eating poison already.

HS: Did some die from it?

HB: Lucky for us-- yes, they didn't bury the dead there. We didn't go to work anymore. We didn't do anything. We just sat there and waited to be destroyed.

HS: You waited for the end?

HB: Fortunately for us, as far as we made out, the crematorium wasn't ready and, a few days later, May 5th or the 4th, May 4th, the German guards pulled out, as we sat outside watching them pulling out as they usually did, and the other guards never pulled in, and we were surprised. There were a few young boys there which started to climb the wire fence, and went over the other side, and there were no guards and that's when we realized that something has happened. We broke loose, we run like crazy maniacs, not knowing where to run. Where we run, where I wound up, was in a kitchen, some kind of a kitchen. I was very hungry, I jumped into a kettle which had ground coffee grounds, and I ate as much as I could the coffee grounds. Then I found some kind of kidney beans.

HS: Turnips.

HB: Turnips some kind and I ate them until I ate myself sick.

HS: You ate them raw?

HB: Just as they came, whatever I could find. Whatever I could find. I almost died from it. Well, we realized then that the Germans were gone. We stayed overnight outside but never returned to the barracks. We stayed outside. The next morning, at daybreak, we walked up to the gates; no one was there.

HS: They were open?

HB: They were open. No one was there and people out of the camp started drifting out slowly. There was a city called-- I forgot the name of the city, not far, but we-- Wels.

HS: Wels.

HB: Wels, in Austria. But we saw the mountains, the Carpathians, and we said we're going to go through the mountains into Switzerland and we went in the opposite direction and we would up in a place, in a big, big gigantic farm where we were invited in by other foreigners.

HS: How large a group were you when you say we?

HB: Eight, eight boys. We would up there and we stayed on that farm for a little while.

HS: And they gave you food?

HB: I was pronounced dead already there on that farm. They thought I died.

HS: Were they Austrian?

HB: Yes, they were Austrians. Of course, run by Germans. It was a big farm, where the administration was German. The Americans came in; they brought us some food. I was very sick, I ran a high fever. I was taken to the hospital in Lambach.

HS: Lambach. This was also in Austria?

HB: Austria, yes.

HS: How long did you stay there?

HB: I stayed in Lambach for a couple of weeks. It was a very big surprise for me when they accepted me to the hospital, because I was running a high, a very high fever and taking me to the wash room and have two men in uniforms, German uniforms, washing me and cleaning me and putting me on a stretcher and carrying me to a bed, to a clean bed. I was very surprised.

Tape two, side one:

HS: The interview of Mr. Hyman Blady. You were saying about the end of your ordeal, so you were taken to the hospital and you stayed there for two weeks…

HB: I stayed there for two weeks.

HS: And did you have anything else besides fever and malnutrition?

HB: I don't know what I had at the time. They didn't give me much. I was on a certain diet. I didn't want to be separated from my friends with whom I was liberated from the concentration camps.

HS: Those eight people?

HB: Those eight people. Then they came up, and I was told I am going to be transferred to another hospital somewhere outside the city. I didn't want that. I had no one. I got dressed. It was in the same hospital, it was a big hospital, many German prisoners, prisoners of war, and at the gate there was American guards. I got dressed, I went downstairs, walked up to the gate, sat down with the guards, and we sat there. I asked for a cigarette and so on and so little by little I crawled out from that hospital and I walked back.

HS: You were not detained by the…

HB: I was not detained, no. And I walked back to my friends.

HS: But how about those eight, were they so well that they didn't…

HB: They didn't need any hospitalization, no. Of course, over there, then, they had plenty of food, they had enough to eat, and we stayed there for-- can't recall maybe five weeks or so, until the-- one day the Americans came with a truck and gave us something like 10 or 15 minutes to get ready, they picked us up and took us to a displaced person camp near Wels [unclear] where they deposited us there behind locked gates.

HS: There were many others, were there not?

HB: Oh, yes, there were thousands of us there already, and they collected around, and for some reason, the Austrians must have complained about us that we run in the streets or were they ashamed or were they felt guilty, or…

HS: It may have been the policy to have people together in one place to care for them…

HB: I guess maybe some of us did take revenge, or did something, that they complained, and eventually they picked us up from the streets, from the private houses, and they took us to these…

HS: Not by force that they took you, right?

HB: I would say they took us by force; we couldn't resist them.

HS: Yes, but they were not unkind? Gentle force?

HB: No, we were nice treated. I couldn't say that we were mistreated. Of course, in the camps we were, we had very comfortable accommodations, very

comfortable at the time; what we had in comparison to what we had before, this was comfortable.

HS: You had your own bunk probably, right?

HB: Yes, and we were supplied by the UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration].

HS: And food and clothing?

HB: And food and clothing, so little by little we came back, and we began to act as a human being.

HS: And did you stay together with your eight friends?

HB: We stayed together, and then we started to drift apart. I myself sort of took oath to myself never to return to Poland. Unfortunately, I suffered a great deal from my co-patriots, and I said I shall never go back, knowing then for sure what happened to Warsaw, knowing that I had no place or anybody there to go back to.

HS: While you were in these DP camps, were you able to communicate with other camps; were there other DP's? I understand the Red Cross was there, experts in finding…

HB: Yes, we also travelled by passes from one camp to another looking. I was looking for my brother.

HS: And others returning to the same…

HB: I found, I found friends with whom I, we were together in the concentration camps, and they said they saw my brother was taken after Bobruisk, where I was separated from him going to Plaszow, he was taken out of Bobruisk and sent to Mauthausen, not Mauthausen-- Auschwitz. He was taken to Auschwitz where he stayed, where he was. Fortunately, he lived through Auschwitz, and we couldn't find each other until eventually I didn't go back to Poland. We stayed on; some of us drifted apart, and our friends went back to Poland. They thought maybe they'll find some of their relatives, that they managed to live through the war, just as they did, and I was thinking of emigrating to Israel and we were taken from there by, what we thought would be by the Sokhnut [the Israeli acting government]. We travelled from Austria to Germany, where we wound up in a DP camp, Föhrenwald, near Munich, about 32 kilometers from Munich, and from Föhrenwald we were supposed to get ready to go to Italy, or Greece, to travel across the Mediterranean to Israel.

HS: Which then was Palestine.

HB: Which then was Palestine, and I worked there with Poalei Tzion [a movement that originated in Russia, combining Zionism and Socialism], and then one night we celebrated a wedding of friends which got married, and one of our friends which attended the wedding the next day went-- he lived in another DP camp; at the time we were free already, not guarded by any guards, when going back to Feldafing, I saw my brother in München, in Munich, and he told them that he attended a wedding in Föhrenwald, and that I was at the wedding, not knowing that my brother didn't even

know about me at the time, and he said, "Are you sure it's my brother?," and he said, "I know you and I know your brother; we were together in this and this concentration camp," and before I knew, my brother came and this was our first visit.

HS: This was a reunion.

HB: The first reunion after that ordeal that we went through and we were not separated since.

HS: And he was still a kid then?

HB: He-- well, when I left him he was still a kid, a young boy, maybe 14, but when he came in, he was 18, big, tall, he was a man already.

HS: How did he look, was he in good shape physically?

HB: He was in pretty good shape, he lived near München, near Munich, with a German family and he was pretty…

HS: At that time, but he had been in the camp 'til the very end or did he get out before?

HB: No, he was liberated from Auschwitz.

HS: Yeah, so he had to stay through the whole time?

HB: Yes, yes.

HS: And what happened to your sisters, do you know anything about them?

HB: My sister came to the Warsaw Ghetto; she lived there in the suburbs of Warsaw. It was a family pretty well off at the time, so they moved into the ghetto because all from surrounding places from around Warsaw had to go into the ghetto. They couldn't stay in the ghetto; they paid a lot of money to, at the time they called them *schmuggler*, which they supposed to be smuggled them out of the ghetto and they went to a place, to a city called [pause]…

HS: Also in Poland?

HB: Also in Poland.

HS: Near Warsaw?

HB: Not near Warsaw. I can't at the moment remember the place…

HS: They smuggled them?

HB: Anyway, they went there to live there; they made it pretty good, but then all those people from that city got liquidated.

HS: The Jewish people?

HB: All the Jewish people got liquidated from that city, and I'm afraid this was the fate of my sister and her family.

HS: So from your whole family, only you and your brother survived?

HB: Only my brother and I, yes.

HS: And where does he live now?

HB: He lives in Philadelphia.

HS: Oh, in Philadelphia, yes. Now, your brother was a child in the concentration camp. Did you see many other children in the camp?

HB: Yes, as a matter of fact, in the camp in Blizyn there were many children, quite a number of them, until one day they said they have to collect all the children for resettlement. We knew exactly what's going to happen. I feared very much for my brother. I did everything I could. He almost died in that camp, by the way. He was suffering from typhoid fever, and he was practically dead. He was revived actually from the dead, and he was saved from that [pause] from that taking, when they took the children.

HS: Did you hide?

HB: He stood right behind me at the *Appell* [roll call] when they collected all the kids.

HS: So he looked like he was…

HB: And they took them away…

HS: …an adult.

HB: I don't know, some kind of a miracle, which he was left alone. He was, at the time I would say about 13. He could work, but they left him alone, but the other kids were taken to Auschwitz, which we found out later, and a lot of mothers went with them, and they were there taken to crematorium, met the same fate as 6,000,000 of us did.

HS: Do you remember when you heard for the first time that people were being gassed and killed and burned?

HB: Yes, as a matter of fact, we heard it in the ghetto.

HS: Already.

HB: In the Warsaw Ghetto.

HS: In the very beginning?

HB: At the very beginning when they said they resettle us, but we heard that they're not resettling us, they're taking us that we're being gassed and cremated.

HS: Did you believe this possible?

HB: To some degree we did, but then we tried to-- I was not completely involved, but I was involved to some degree. We tried to say, "No," and that's why when we tried to persuade a lot of people not to go to the *Umschlagplatz*, to tell them that it's not true, you're not being resettled, you're being destroyed, don't go. Because the Jewish leader from the Warsaw Ghetto, his name-- oh God, I can't recall, he committed suicide with his wife. He refused to sign the papers for the resettlement because he knew that he'll have to send between 10 and 15, 000 heads a day for liquidation. They committed suicide. And then we-- some people came back which went on the trains to see where they're being resettled, and they found out that they're not being resettled, they're being gassed and destroyed and cremated.

HS: And they came back from there?

HB: They came back, a couple of them, and we were told and we knew exactly, but people, at the time, it was somehow very hard to conceive that in the 20th century the German people, which were considered one of the most intelligent in Europe,

if not in all the world, would commit atrocities such as those, and some others to whom we looked up to said it's impossible. It wouldn't happen! The world wouldn't allow it! It can't be, not the German people, not in this century! These are not the dark ages, but to our dismay it was.

HS: And how many selections did you personally have to go through?

HB: I can't even recall.

HS: Many times?

HB: When you're young, I always escaped.

HS: You were [unclear].

HB: I jumped from windows, through the walls, from rooftops, even in the concentration camps, in Gusen they used to have them. Somehow I got away, I got through. I kept myself physically and mentally alerted. I was very determined to stay alive.

HS: So your determination and what you call almost a miracle helped you to survive, and your hope.

HB: As much as I was determined, as much as we tried, as much as anybody tried, it was a sheer miracle, as you mentioned it, that any of us survived, because you could have been, you could have been a king one day and nothing the next. You could have had the highest position, you could have been supported by the best and the biggest, but eventually you were destroyed just like anybody else.

HS: Were you ever sick that you had to go to a camp medical facility?

HB: Yes, m'aam.

HS: And…

HB: Also in Blizyn. I suffered from typhoid. Only a miracle that I got out of there, only a miracle.

HS: Did they give you any medicine?

HB: I don't recall giving me any medicine or any food or anything. I remember working; I collapsed at work. I went up to the, they took me in to a doctor, he was a Hungarian Jew. I remember he took my fever, he measured and he said, "You have a 32."

HS: That's about 103.

HB: That's about 103, 104. I got scared, and I said, "I don't want to go to the Revier, which was the hospital, I knew what's happening there. I went back to work. I said don't tell. I begged them. He said, "Do whatever you want to." I went back to my work and I collapsed.

HS: Could you manage to stay in a bunk for a day or two until the fever went down?

HB: I went, I was taken to the hospital, which was a hospital, I had nothing with me. It was cold, I was freezing. I remember a man coming in, also sick, and he was

put at the next, next to me. There was one large bunk, he had two decks [*decken*, or blankets]. I begged him…

HS: For blankets?

HB: I begged him let's lay on one and cover ourselves with the other. He was very sick. He said, "No, I need them both."

HS: And you had none?

HB: And I had none. I don't know how, but during the night I cuddled up to him, and I covered myself with his blanket. In the morning when I woke up, what woke me up, actually, was that he was dead, and he was being pulled out by the others to be buried. I didn't know, and I slept with him all night. Well, I took advantage of the situation and I said that these blankets are mine, and I wound up with two blankets. It was riches at the time. I lay there, I would say about eight to ten days. My brother collected my rations, and he brought it in to me. Whatever it was, I got better somehow, I got out of there.

HS: I would like to ask you again about the guards when you were in Austria, like in Mauthausen and the other places, were they still non-Germans, did you have Austrians?

HB: No, they were SS.

HS: Yes, but German SS?

HB: Germans. Well, you couldn't determine one from the other. They all wore the same uniform, and they all had the same insignias. To us they all had the SS on their caps, on their arms; this was the SS. All through my years I was by the SS. We started in Bobruisk, we worked for the *Truppenwirtschaftslater* [troop supply camp] by the Waffen government SS.

HS: Were there any guards who were somehow decent to you, civil? Were they all bad?

HB: Strange enough in Gusen we went by a small train sort of to work every day. I struck up an acquaintance with an old man, an old guard, and from time to time he used to look around and look me up and come over and slip me a slice of bread. I don't know whether he was Austrian, whether he was German, but from time to time he used to do that to me. I guess there must have been some people there who had some feelings for the human race.

HS: And how about the *Kapos*, what was your experience with them? How did they treat you?

HB: I mostly tried to stay away from them. *Kapos*, like guards, some were bad, some were unbearable, some were not so bad, others were good, but it was very confusing. It was a time where you had to survive; you have to disregard everything else and just make what you could to stay alive.

HS: Was there anybody who stood out above the others, who tried to give others encouragement, or help, or assistance, or spiritual guidance?

HB: Yes, yes, yes, there were always some among the guards, among the *Kapos*, among our own, who stood out, people with intelligence. We even knew when a holiday was, a Jewish holiday, some of them tried to keep a calendar, of course, all this in hiding. I remember going with one guard to carry something. He told me, he asked me, if I think that I'll live through the war, and I said to him, "I don't care," and he slapped me across my face and he said, "Don't ever say that!"

HS: This was a German guard?

HB: A German guard. I don't know who he was, what he meant by that, but he said, "Never give up!"

HS: And you certainly never did give up.

HB: I never did, I never did. I fought with everything I could, everything in my possession, to stay alive from day to day.

HS: Did you have any religious training as a child? You went to the religious school?

HB: I went to the religious school. Of course, in those days every Jew was religious. It was a Jewish, strictly kosher Jewish home.

HS: Did you keep your religion up all the way through?

HB: No, I can't say I did. I was very much disappointed in my religion. As you know, we always blame it on something, on somebody, on somehow, and I was somehow angry, asking if we are the chosen ones, why are we chosen to suffer all our lives? I was a Jew at heart, I still am, I go to synagogue, I love my religion, most of all I love our tradition, which I try to keep up, with which I brought my children up, my family, and my grandchildren, and we hope that-- we were not strictly religious, Chasidim, as they say, no, but I had my Jewish upbringing and Jewish training just like every other Jew in Eastern Europe.

HS: How long did you have to wait until you could leave for the United States?

HB: This was a complete surprise to me. In 1946 we got married…

HS: Your wife had been in the camp, too?

HB: My wife I met in DP camp, Föhrenwald.

HS: She had been in Auschwitz?

HB: She was in Auschwitz. She's a survivor from Auschwitz. In 1946 we received papers from my wife's family from America, which I had no intention of going to Israel, of going to America.

HS: You wanted to go to Israel?

HB: I had every intention of going to Israel, to Palestine at the time. I didn't even register the papers. I didn't even think of going there, but fate changes everything.

HS: But also there was no legal way to get into Palestine?

HB: No, there was *Aliyah Bet*, you had to be smuggled through, which at the time was Cyprus. My wife was pregnant at the beginning of '46, no, not '46 because my son was born in '46, so it must have been before '46.[4]

HS: Yes, it takes nine months.

HB: She was five months pregnant when we were to go, we were ready to go, to board, to take them to Italy. I had the shots, I had the passports, when the ship Exodus was caught by the British. Because of it our transport was postponed, until they settled with that ship. By the time they settled, we were brought back to Hamburg. My son was born, because it took some three months.

HS: So he was born in Hamburg?

HB: No, no, he was born in Föhrenwald, because of Exodus, our transport did not make it…

HS: …was delayed.

HB: …was delayed and we never made it to Israel, at the time. Then we couldn't go because we had a newborn baby, then the American, the United States government passed a law that they are willing to take in a certain amount of refugees from Germany.[5] Being in Munich at the time, at one time with some friends, they said, "Let's go in, let's put our names down, what do we got to lose?" So we went in, and we registered our names to emigrate to America, and strange enough, three months later we got papers and everything set to emigrate to the United States.[6] My wife has a big family here in America, which we communicated with them at the time, and they all begged us to come to America. I went with the intention of being here a short while and then from America to travel to Israel. Well, this is where the story ends.

HS: So your only relative in the whole world is now your brother, and he lives around the corner here, which is…

HB: He lives in [unclear], not far from here.

HS: And is he in good health?

HB: Yes, thank God, yes. We spend holidays together and we have a very good relationship, thank God for that.

HS: Thank you very much. A happy ending.

HB: My pleasure.

[4]Mr. Blady's personal history form indicates that his son was born in October 1947.
[5]The United States' Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act on June 25, 1948. www.ushmm.org
[6]Mr. Blady's personal history form indicates that he was at Föhrenwald DP camp until November 1949. His daughter was born in the United States in March 1950.