

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Liesl Loeb

Date: November 12, 1996

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Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-1-1]

RB - Rosa Zygmund Burk¹ [interviewee]

LL - Liesl Loeb [interviewer]

Date: November 12, 1996

Tape one, side one:

LL: Today is Tuesday, November 12, 1996. This is an interview with Rosa Zygmund Burk and this is side one of tape number one. This interview is with Rosa Zygmund Burk. That's spelled Z-Y-G-M-U-N-D, Burk, B-U-R-K, maiden name is Tennenbaum spelled T-E-double N, E-N-B-A-U-M, born in Poland, the town's name is S-Z-Y-D-L-O-W-I-E-C on April 20, 1927. Please tell me a little about your family and your childhood.

RB: Okay, I was born in Szydlowiec and we were my family, my grandfather had a big house which we, I had four aunts' families with uncles a large, 16 people to this three story house.

LL: That was the whole family who lived in the house?

RB: ...that was the whole-- my grandfather had a big house; he gave each daughter apartment.

LL: I see.

RB: So we had a nice large happy family, you know, with cousins and uncles and aunts and grandfathers and one day war broke out, 1939 and you know, my father was in the army before the war, he was...

LL: What did your father do?

RB: My father was work--the working class people.

LL: What was his trade?

RB: He was working in a shoe factory. This town of Szydlowiec was like a shtetl, there was about 7,200 people which 90% Jews, 7,200 people, Jewish people.

LL: Before we go much further, I'd like to know the name of your father.

RB: Yes, David.

LL: David?

RB: Tennenbaum.

LL: Tennenbaum, and the name of your mother? [lady's voice on intercom in background]

RB: Ethel--Ethel!

LL: Ethel was your mother's name?

RB: Right.

LL: And what was her maiden name?

RB: Magguwka [from spelling that follows].

¹nee Tennenbaum. Mrs. Burk's first husband was Haim Zygmund. She married Max Burk after the war.

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-1-2]

LL: And how do you spell that?
RB: M-A-G-G [Polish G-I]-U, in Poland the U is an O with a [chuckle]...
LL: Yes.
RB: [unclear]
LL: Yes.
RB: W-K-A.
LL: And you pronounce it?
RB: Magguwka [phonetic Ma-youf-ka].
LL: Magguwka.
RB: In Poland the language would be My-youk-ka [phonetic], I don't know.
LL: That's okay. Okay, and your father worked in a shoe factory?
RB: A shoe factory, yes. This, this *shtetl*, you know, was like a ghetto. The Gentiles would live on the outskirts, occupied the north, of armies and there were a few doctors but the majority of the people, it was really a Jewish ghetto. There were tanneries, there were metal works, there were button factories, there were lots of shoe factories, this was the center of tanneries...
LL: I see.
RB: ...lots of tanneries. There was a whole shoe center, which they sent out shoes all over Poland, and they had factories there.
LL: And they had synagogues and Jewish schools?
RB: They had beautiful synagogue, they had schools, public schools. It was...
LL: Jewish public schools?
RB: No...
LL: General public school?
RB: ...general public school. There was Yeshiva...
LL: Yes.
RB: ...you know, which [unclear] of people attended. There were a big beautiful *shul*, which was, synagogue, which it was early, it was heavy columns, beautiful structure, beautiful architecture. The synagogue was old but something; you go in this one it was just--something like a spired Opera House.
LL: Was it the only Synagogue in the town?
RB: There was one, one big synagogue and then there were smaller for Orthodox. They had separate, you know.
LL: I understand.
RB: Like, this was like more, not Conserve--Conservative because men were downstairs, women were upstairs. It was a huge, huge Synagogue, it was, you know, and when it came Friday, it was everything closed, *Shabbes*, you couldn't...
LL: All day or in the afternoon...
RB: All day, all *Shabbes*. There's nothing you could buy. There were Polish bakeries on outskirts, but everything was holy, holiday.

LL: Was your home kosher?

RB: Well, my father was not kosher. He was, you know, in the organization Bund, you ever heard...?

LL: Yes.

RB: My mother comes from a more conservative family. She was religious, she was lighting candles *Shabbes*. She kept *kashrut* and I had a little brother who was a pre-schooler and [unclear] when the Germans came in, it was September the 1st I think they marched in...

LL: Yes, before we go further on that, did you have more than just a little brother?

RB: One little brother.

LL: Just one little brother?

RB: My parents were young in their thirties. Maybe I'd have more if they...

LL: Yes, I see.

RB: [unclear]

LL: And how old were you when the Germans marched in?

RB: 13 years.

LL: Yes. So this is the beginning of September?

RB: Yes.

LL: 1939?

RB: ...12, 13 years old, yeah.

LL: Yes. And before they marched in, did your family experience antisemitism by the few gentiles who lived in the town?

RB: Not a few, they came to the public school from all over, from in the villages. This public school was a huge building, not like here, a four story, big, huge, there were all classes, first, second, third, fourth, like Junior High and Public School all together.

LL: Yes.

RB: There were Jews, Jewish girls and Jewish boys separate. Boys were separate and the girls were separate.

LL: Yes.

RB: We weren't together boys at school.

LL: Yes.

RB: In the school we had religion which I had my *yizkor* book and I saw my Finkler name was there and I looked at him and I just cried.

LL: The teacher's name was Fink...?

RB: Finkler.

LL: Finkler.

RB: Finkler...

LL: F-I-N-K-L-E-R.

RB: Yeah, he is--I have a *Yizkor* Book...

LL: ...yes.

RB: ...where is written down.

LL: And that was from your religions lessons?

RB: Yeah, he was teaching religion, a very handsome man, young, healthy; his father was a Rabbi...

LL: Yes.

RB: He was a beautiful man, and after religion when came religion a priest came to teach the Catholics...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...and he was not a Rabbi, he was just a religion teacher. He came, he was modern man, of course, he wore a *yarmulka* and where we went to school, the school we were, there was a big crucifix; President one portrait, and Marshal on the other portrait.

LL: These were the officials of Poland?

RB: Yes, when we had religion the Gentiles remained in the school; we went out in a different room to teach us religion.

LL: In a different room in the school, or outside of the building?

RB: Without the crucifix, without crucifix.

LL: A room without the crucifix?

RB: Yes, so he taught us religion...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...and everything about our heritage, about a--they call it our religion, more than just religion.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...and the teachers were not Jewish, most of them were Christians...

LL: Yes.

RB: Most populations were a lot of Catholic, 99% I think, and after--there was an hour religion--after that hour there was a recess. We went out in the yard, you know, like here a recess? Children go out.

LL: Yeah.

RB: ...there were fights with the Jews; "you killed Jesus." There were fights [unclear] fighting, you know, and cursing, cursing and fighting, you know, "You killed Jesus, you move to Palestine, you fight." We reported that to the principal, of course. Well you know...

LL: Didn't do much good?

RB: He told them not to do it but this will go down always the [unclear] Jews to the Poles, and "the Jews take blood for matzos."

LL: Were you ever physically hurt by gentile gangs?

RB: In school? Yeah. I was pulled--I had big long pigtails. They pulled my pigtails, I thought they were gonna come out of my head.

LL: Yes, I understand.

RB: So next time, my mother rolled them around three times over my head and put a ribbon in the back.

LL: I see, and how about your family? Did they ever come to your home? Did they damage your home, gangs of non-Jews?

RB: Well there were pogroms, [cough] excuse me, not in my city, there were pogroms, not in my city.

LL: But not in your city?

RB: No.

LL: All right, okay. Did your family belong to any Jewish organizations or to a synagogue before the Nazis came?

RB: They belonged to a synagogue. My father not, but my mother belonged. My father belonged to various organizations...

LL: Which one?

RB: My father was Bund².

LL: Bund.

RB: All my uncles, four uncles were...

LL: Was that a Jewish organization?

RB: Yes, yes...

LL: I see, but it was non-religious? In other words...

RB: It was their set religion like opium, you know? [chuckle]

LL: So it was more a political group?

RB: ...no, they said that we shouldn't fight for Palestine or Israel but we should fight for our rights here where we live...

LL: I underst...

RB: ...this was their motto.

LL: I see.

RB: You fight where you live. They didn't believe that we could have an Israel ever.

LL: Yes.

RB: And after the war they changed, you know?

LL: Yes. Did any men in your family serve in the national and the Polish army?

RB: My father.

LL: And was that during World War I?

RB: No, it was the Hungar--couldn't be, he was born in '95. I remember when, I remember when I was born he was still in the army.

LL: I see, so he was doing just military...

²The Bund - Jewish Labor Organization of Poland.

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RB: Yeah.
LL: ...duty?
RB: ...duty, military duty.
LL: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit more about life, your life in Poland in the early part of '39 before the Germans invaded?
RB: Before '39?
LL: Yes.
RB: Well before it was a very happy life, we had a family and loving parents, very loving; and we had a large, we had a large family, you know, everybody was here.
LL: Yes.
RB: My grandfather had seven daughters and two sons.
LL: Okay.
RB: ...so all of them were here before the war a couple years...
LL: They were all in their town?
RB: ...except two emigrated to Rio de Janeiro...
LL: I see.
RB: These only survived, and I was going attending school; my little brother was going too. He was a preschooler he was going to a *cheder* they called it...
LL: Kindergarten or nursery school?
RB: They teach him Yiddish.
LL: Oh.
RB: It wasn't like here like Adath Jeshurun, you know?
LL: Yes.
RB: But it was like a rabbi taught *cheder*; privately, he taught 10, 12, 15 children, there were a few, a lot of them...
LL: Yes.
RB: This was their profession.
LL: Yes.
RB: Either way they taught in Yiddish. The fellow Orthodox attended the Yeshiva. Like us, we send the, we send the--I went to rabbi also, to learn Yiddish, Hebrew, Yiddish class, but my mother always was laughing she sent me first time to rabbi and he said, "*Zug aleph*" you know the Yiddish, "Say aleph," so I repeat it, "*Zug aleph*," so he said "Don't repeat it." I said, "Don't repeat"--it was a young guy, it was before I was four or five years old or so.
LL: Yes.
RB: So he gave me a pinch, so I didn't want to go to him. My mother had to coax me in and told the rabbi not to allow him to hurt me and I got a message, you know, so...
LL: And you understood what he wanted?
RB: Yes.

LL: I see.
RB: And if I would reach the age, I would join the young students, they call it "The Yugent." The young like here?
LL: The Girl Scouts, maybe?
RB: ...Girl Scouts, yes.
LL: And what type of activities did you...
RB: They have all kind of, they have, like boys club, boy scouts and that group.
LL: You had hikes?
RB: Outing, hikes...
LL: Yes.
RB: In spring...
LL: Yes.
RB: ...and all kind of, you know, educational you know like recitals I didn't attend I was too young.
LL: Oh. But you said you did go, you didn't get to go there?
RB: No.
LL: ...because the Germans invaded, is that right?
RB: Because it was too late...
LL: I see.
RB: ...when the war broke out, it was...
LL: How old did you have to be to join the Bund.
RB: I was 16-17, 16-17 years...
LL: Oh, when you were a teenager?
RB: Yes.
LL: That's when you joined the Bund, the young Bund.
RB: Youngest, yes.
LL: But you were too young...
RB: They call it [unclear].
LL: But you were too young at the time?
RB: I was too young...
LL: I see. And you already said over 7,000 Jews lived in...
RB: 7,200 were in 1939.
LL: In 1939 there were 7200 Jews.
RB: 7200.
LL: Was it a well-organized community?

RB: Very well. That house where my uncles lived what grandfather gave us; there were one belonged to Zionists, one was a Revisionist, one was an Orthodox, one was a Bund, my father³.

LL: I see.

RB: So it came a weekend, they didn't work, was politics. They were yelling, screaming. One was for Jabotinsky, he was for Herzl, I didn't understand what was going on and they said all this yelling, all this screaming. I went out to jump rope.

LL: Right, but it was friendly.

RB: It was a happy life, happy life, yes.

LL: Yes.

RB: And there were all these books and papers and a little radio to listen. We didn't have of course, radios, televisions like it is...

LL: Yes, no.

RB: ...now but little radios to hear...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...my father was very well read, he was educated man, you know? As much as he could in a *shtetl*, you know.

LL: What did you speak at home, Polish or Yiddish?

RB: We speak Yiddish. Went to school, no Yiddish were allowed, only Polish.

LL: I see.

RB: If they heard anybody talking Yiddish they're called out and put in Polish, you Jewish, Jewish pig. We were not allowed to use Yiddish like we did, only at home. When we came home, we were talking with our parents Yiddish.

LL: Yiddish, right. What happened to you and your family during the weeks following the German invasion?

RB: When the Germans came in, first thing you know my father told us--there was shooting, there was a lot of shooting going on, not bombardment, but there was shooting going on, there was cannon shooting--so my father said, we should go down the basement and close the shutters. The first floor there were big thick wooden shutters--in Poland was cold. When the Germans marched in we lived close to the main highway, when the Germans marched in with their tanks, motorcycles, by foot, they were running and yelling, "*Schweinehund, mach doch auf die Laden!*" [open up the shutters] we didn't know what they were, what he was talking, they came in the house, we run out of course when we heard noise and they all start beating with the rifles over the head, so my father said--when I saw this, I just couldn't understand how they could hit my father, he's so good, and opened the window and wanted everyone to go greet him and we had our, you know, we were in front, we had our shutters closed...

LL: Yes.

³Ms. Burk is discussing the varying political and Zionist organizations that were present in Poland.

RB: ...so they didn't like it, they marched in, as soon as they marched in, they settled down, hell broke loose. It was like living in hell.

LL: Yes. Did they take over certain homes?

RB: They took over the homes from all the wealthy people, those that had fancy. Our home wasn't, it was just an apartment, two rooms for each one, not big...

LL: Yes.

RB: They took over the main part offices, they had the main district was in Lodom it was near Szydlowiec.

LL: How do you spell that?

RB: L-A-D-O-M.

LL: Lodom, and that was the main...

RB: It was the main district...

LL: District.

RB: And right away, his name was Frank, I don't know what his name was, the Nazi General...

LL: Yes.

RB: And he, when he came in, there was always raids, taking people out for work, some of them never at home. Always came in, you know, marching in for fun, taking out Jews from synagogue, cutting the beards, making [unclear], took our beautiful Rabbi, the head Rabbi of our town, cut his beard, his black beard, he wore a black like a full not a hat that's like a *Yarmulka*?

LL: Like a *shtrayml*⁴?

RB: Like a *shtrayml* and they made them cut the beards and clean the streets; and my mother said, "God, where's God?" You know, men who you had always looked up to, respected and role model, where's God? How can he see this? They were beating and taking out people to the cemetery, they shot, for any little thing. If somebody didn't like the way we had to wear armbands, white with blue Star of David.

LL: I see.

RB: So, and they knew, they had all their map, everything, that the city was Jewish.

LL: Yeah.

RB: They didn't have to make a closed ghetto. For the first time they came in only they made the *Judenrat*.

LL: Yes.

RB: Organized the *Judenrat*, so the *Judenrat* was supposed to give, every time they came, the SS with the black uniform, they came in, they were just, you know, they give goose bumps all over everybody you know how it is, trouble!

LL: Yes.

⁴*Shtrayml* – a fur -edged hat worn by rabbis and Hasidic Jews on the Sabbath and holidays.

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RB: They wanted money, contributions, they wanted so much and so much and the *Judenrat* had to supply.

LL: Who was the head of the *Judenrat*?

RB: The *Judenrat* was, that teacher of mine...

LL: Oh the teacher, yes.

RB: There was prominent people, really...

LL: I understand, yes.

RB: Wealthy, prominent people...

LL: Yes.

RB: They were, that little [unclear] also, his little boy was 10 years old. The Germans came in and they--there were well, very wealthy people, they had a button factory.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...and they want to take his camera, a child of 10 years. He didn't let them, he screamed you know like a 10 year old boy he probably pampered, a rich child, he didn't let the German take the camera. They drove him out, they took him to Lodom.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...and they killed him. [unclear]

LL: A little boy?

RB: A little, this was the first victim, 10 year old boy, beautiful [unclear]. This was the first victim and then there was not one week by, which there was no killings, on the cemetery. They took him right...

LL: To the cemetery.

RB: You know, it's not like big, small city and everything was compact...

LL: And the Jews and the community then had to bury the people?

RB: They left them there and then they came and they buried them there.

LL: ...they buried them, yes. Did you receive any kind of help during this time from non-Jews? Was there any non-Jew...?

RB: There was no--when the ghetto was open, a lot of people like my mother used to take everything what she had, linen, and take it to the farmers, you know, for a piece of bread, potatoes, anything a cabbage whatever she could, she sold slowly, everything. Finally, after a year open ghetto, they closed it. Not with barbed wires but there were guards around outskirts, you couldn't go to the villages, to the farms.

LL: So the whole town was a ghetto?

RB: It was ghetto.

LL: ...it was open for a year.

RB: A year.

LL: ...and then the guards surrounded it...

RB: Surrounded it and out, you know, outskirts you couldn't go to [unclear]. You had to go to the villages, this was sealed off, you couldn't go. But people, hunger,

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you know? You risk your life for hunger, hunger hurts. They risked their life for a couple potatoes.

LL: And so they went out anyway?

RB: They went out anyway, some of them I guess they were lucky to get away and most of them were shot with the potatoes with everything. That's why you were starving, you were hungry. We got ration, we got some bread, something, I don't know, margarine, a little bit of ration food.

LL: So in other words when the ghetto was closed that was 1940?

RB: The ghetto was closed, would be about 1940, end of or beginning of '41 or something.

LL: And the ghetto's name was the same as the name of your town?

RB: Slovia, Slovia like it's a ghetto. Slovia itself is a ghetto.

LL: At that time, nobody had been sent away yet?

RB: Yes, every time there were raids. Raids were going on all the time; they're always taking people out. Nowhere, nobody knew. There was not one week by, they took people to all kind of places, you know, 10, 20, 50 every day.

LL: Was it for working or you don't know?

RB: For work, some of them never came back, we don't know where. Some of them never at home, some of them came back.

LL: And when they took you out to work, could you come back at night?

RB: No, they didn't take me out to work. There were...

LL: But people, in general? Did people go out...

RB: Yes, yes.

LL: ...to work for the day and come back at night?

RB: For a time being, yes, for a time being.

LL: I see. And that was in that first year?

RB: That was in 1939, '40 they came back...

LL: I see.

RB: ...late at night.

LL: I see, did you meet refugees from other cities or countries in your ghetto? Or did they come from other towns in to your town?

RB: Yes, I want to bring to point. When people find out, found out that Slovia was open ghetto, it was not like Warsaw because they closed it, people came from Krakow, from Warsaw, from, all over to Slovia, the number swelled to 16,000 Jews.

LL: Oh my goodness. And you people had to take them in?

RB: We had to, everybody had to take in a family. We shared whatever we had with them. There was hunger, and it was awful sickness. People got typhoid fever cause of all this crowded, and this was like 1941.

LL: Yes.

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-1-12]

RB: There was a lot of people there, but when I went to camp--you want to hear how...

LL: Yes. I still want to ask you a few other questions before that.

RB: Yeah, okay.

LL: When--did the people in your house go to work?

RB: They also was caught, you know, taken out, always they came out in the tent [unclear] to take out with people...

LL: But they came back at night?

RB: No, no.

LL: No, nobody went to work on a daily basis?

RB: No, no.

LL: How did you live? What--how did you support yourselves?

RB: We had ration, rations.

LL: Oh you got cards, yes.

RB: Cards that was all, they gave out food, so much and so much, was not a little to die, but we had, we had rations.

LL: I see and this continued as long as the ghetto was...?

RB: This continued...

LL: ...was in existence?

RB: ...as long as I was there.

LL: As long as you were there? And after the ghetto was closed were you able to have contact with the outside?

RB: We were never able to have contact with, there was no mail, there was nothing, but through people, you know, writing back and forth we found out what was going on.

LL: And would you have anything to say about the *Judenrat* in your town?

RB: The *Judenrat*? The *Judenrat* did, you know, tried to save the city.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...the, the, what's the [unclear] forgot that name, what the General was. They bribed him, they gave him money and he kept promising that the Szydlowiec would survive. The Szydlowiec gonna be an open ghetto. So they gave him--he wanted jewelry, he want money, they gave, they wanted some, so much is so much, it had to be some of the wealthiest, 20,000, 50,000 *zlotys* [Polish money] it had to be or there was trouble.

LL: Okay.

RB: So they gave him what they want, then they want jewelry. Everybody should bring, if they find someone wearing jewelry or hiding jewelry they gonna shoot on the, on the place, and fur, you had to take up every piece of fur that you owned, from the collar from the cuff, from the under the [unclear], for Poland is a very cold country, it's like Russia...

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LL: Yes.
RB: You had to strip all the fur, you know, and put it in the place they told us.
LL: Yes, I see.
RB: They did what they could, they tried to protect us but in the end, they end up like us.
LL: Yes, did you readily accept Jews from other cities...?
RB: Yes, yes.
LL: ...and they were friendly...
RB: They were helpful.
LL: Everybody was helpful?
RB: They were helpful. We were helpful we tried and we shared. They brought their belongings, you know, like clothing, whatever, and then they sold it what they could to Poles, what they could get out...
LL: Could the Jewish children go to school...
RB: No.
LL: ...after the Nazi occupation?
RB: Nothing, everything ceased.
LL: I see. And did you ever hear anything through newspapers or radios or just through...
RB: Nothing.
LL: ...the word of mouth.
RB: Mouth, no newspaper.
LL: Were you aware of any underground activity in the ghetto?
RB: No, no.
LL: And how did you feel about possible resistance to the Nazis?
RB: Well, you know, they took out--us, us we couldn't resist because the [unclear] came in, in the ghetto and the police, the Polish police, German, Gendarmeries, S.S., and the Fire-men [phonetic] and they said from 12 to 60 years they said everything come into the market. They were going around shooting and killing people, they emptied the ghetto, very fast. They didn't take the 12 to 60 but they wanted 12 to 60 women and children not, they called them to the marketplace.
LL: You mean the men between 12 and 60 had to...
RB: Men and women, yes.
LL: Men and women?
RB: Yes, I went there too.
LL: To the marketplace?
RB: Through all the raids, I hid, my father hid. Through all the raids, we hid-- we had a hiding place.
LL: I see, in your house?
RB: In the attic, this was in the factory we couldn't live there.

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LL: Yes.

RB: There was no water, there was nothing; you could stay a day. After raid, you know, we went back down.

LL: So when they did a raid, they wanted everyone...

RB: The first raid.

LL: ...between 12 and 60...

RB: This was the first raid that all the alarms were sounding from--it was like, you know, the alarms from all the factories, it was so scary, it was...

LL: It was tough. Was sirens?

RB: It was so scary, sirens, I mean, it was scary, the police and Germans and Ukrainians were running from house to house kicking, and shooting old people couldn't work, babies shooting. There were just--I don't know how humans can do this to humans.

LL: Did you see it or did you hear about...?

RB: I saw, I saw, I was there.

LL: You were in hiding?

RB: It was a police action. No, this you couldn't hide this. That you couldn't hide.

LL: Yes.

RB: The first raid you couldn't hide none. You knew they said there was going to be a raid, the commandant said they're gonna be, they walk from door to door, they knocked the walls with the carbines with the rifles...

LL: Rifles?

RB: There's no place, there was no hiding.

LL: And everyone had to be at the marketplace?

RB: Except yeah my, women and children, little children, some of them they killed. When we went there, my father was there. They took us to the camp.

LL: They took you to a camp?

RB: All of them 12, not to 60; my father was the 30, the rest I don't know what happened. I found it out later when I was in camp already...

LL: Your father what?

RB: I found out later...

LL: I see.

RB: When they took us to camp, there were Skarzysko?

LL: How would you spell that?

RB: [sigh] S-K-A-R-Z-Y-S-K-O.

LL: And this was outside of your village?

RB: Oh yes, this was a different city.

LL: Was it far?

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RB: We walked; it was a death march. We walked I don't know how many kilometers, I don't know. I think, I don't know 10 kilometers?

LL: Yes.

RB: Must be like this, I really don't know.

LL: You don't know?

RB: I know we walked and some of them couldn't walk, they shot them in the woods.

LL: Yes.

RB: Took them in the forest because some were hungry, you walk without food and so many kilometers we stopped a couple times. The Germans on motorcycles and they stopped finally, you know, we reached the Hasag⁵...

LL: The what?

RB: The Hasag, this was ammunition plant that they made all kinds--it was a huge section where they make all kinds of ammunition, bullets, for cannons, grenades and that, cannons, everything, it was...

LL: Well how do you spell that?

RB: Hasag?

LL: Yes.

RB: H-A-S-A-G, this is ammunition... [tape one, side one ended]

⁵Hasag - third largest of the privately owned German companies that used concentration camp prisoners as forced laborers. By June 1943 Hasag's camps held 17,000 Jewish prisoners, who were subjected to terrible conditions and periodic selections. (www.yadvashem.org, article "Hasag")

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-16]

Tape one, side two:

LL: ...side two of tape one, interviewing Rosa Zygmund Burk; interviewer is Liesl Loeb. We stopped on the previous side when you reached the Hasag Ammunitions factory spelled H-A-S-A-G and that was in the end of August 1941. You also told me that you were with the first...

RB: '42, it was '42.

LL: ...1942, yes, I'm sorry, 1942. You also told me that you were in the first transport...

RB: First transport--this was, wasn't the first when they just raided, that's a different story. This was the first time they rounded up the whole town. This was the first raid, which really took us away for good.

LL: Could you take anything with you?

RB: Just a knapsack, that's all with a little clothing.

LL: They didn't tell you to take along...

RB: Just a little clothing.

LL: ...suitcases or...

RB: No.

LL: How 'bout food?

RB: No, we didn't have enough food to, when I came--okay it will next you will ask me...

LL: That's all right, go ahead.

RB: ...when I came to the Hasag, after marching us with him, hungry and tired, very hungry and very tired; hungry from the whole war and tired from the whole war, I met my father. It was two lines, my father had a slice ration already, what they gave him in Hasag, but they were still not ready for to go to work, yet. First, then, you know, Germans are very punctual, they took records of everything. So he gave me a piece of his ration bread, he dug out a piece and gave it to me, you know, I was hungry. The last piece of bread that he could, he gave it to me and then I never saw him.

LL: You never saw your father again?

RB: The Hasag had--no--the Hasag had three [unclear] Work R, Work A, Work B, Work C, [unclear].

LL: And each one made something different?

RB: Oh this one was farther away. Each one made some--where I went we had, we made bullets for guns and rifles.

LL: Was your mother with you?

RB: No, my mother was home with the child, she didn't come with us.

LL: I see.

RB: She had a child, she wouldn't, childless people who wouldn't go for whatever, but they didn't take 60 years, 50 years even, they just took younger, and good-looking, healthy people.

LL: I see. So...

RB: My mother...

LL: ...it was you and your father who were in the first transport?

RB: Yes.

LL: Okay.

RB: And then, and then from there they separate us and I never saw him again. He went to a work [unclear] which people turned yellow. Everything was yellow, your eyes, your eyebrows, your eyes inside, your skin, your nails, everything, your lips. Why do I know this, because when they took us to the showers once in a month and delousing you know they call it, they brought people from that [unclear]. If you want to meet somebody, you go to the bath, take this...

LL: To the bathhouse?

RB: It was a packed house so I saw people, yellow, people I know from my town, beautiful boys, all yellow, yellow like...

LL: Do you know what it is...?

RB: ...a canary...

LL: ...from?

RB: From, this what they make grenades, I don't know, the powder which was deadly, lungs they didn't survive this. Before the war, people were probably wearing some special protection, you know, this ate the lungs and the heart out...

LL: I see.

RB: ...all yellow. So I never saw him [her father] but I once I saw my uncle yellow, a young man with red, you know, red cheeks, so blood, you know beautiful skin, was all yellow, broken down and made him this way, 20, 30 I don't know, oh like babies, young family and I was in "B," *Werk B, Werk B* we had a *Meister*. You know what a *Meister* is?

LL: A boss [unclear].

RB: A boss, German boss...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...his name was Herring.

LL: Herring?

RB: Herring, this was the angel of death. There were other *Meisters* which they were, had a little soul. This what I had was the angel of death. We had a machine, you know, where I stood there, right there. You have to stay 12 hours and catch these, check these bullets, these, wasn't yet bullets. It came from one machine to the other, these [unclear] bullet and you have to stay, you know, and we wear wooden shoes, in Polish, Poland was so cold, it was so cold, it was ice and you walk with those wooden

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-18]

shoes, the ice got, the snow got stuck, you keep falling with them. So I was standing by the machine, I was still, recently came from home, I had still some skin on myself--the pigtailed I cut off myself. I cut them, I put them in the bag and I was standing like this, I worked day after day, 12 hours and in the night time, you know, you feel like, the smell of eggs came up, they gave us the soup at night, and one cup of soup and a slice of bread was the whole rations.

LL: That was all you got all day?

RB: All day, for 12 hours working, yes. And that came up, you know, it felt like you will excuse my expression "throw up".

LL: Yes.

RB: ...I don't know what kind of food this was. There was a soup, there was beets in it, I don't know, maybe a piece of horsemeat, how would know. Somewhere around flying...

LL: Yes.

RB: So one was this happen my foot, my left foot swell up, left swollen, it was really hurting, so I took my scarf and wrapped my foot, and that *Meister Herring* was away and I sat down a little box I found, the still machine worked, but I was sitting, I could do sitting. With my luck, he just came and his hair stood up on his head, his face so red, he was so red like a lobster, tall man, blonde, he marched in and he looked at me, and he called in Silverman, there was a Jewish *Kapo*, he was nice, he wasn't bad, he called him in, he had a *Kapo*, he called a *Kapo*, he surprised us often. He came in and they caught a couple people who were tired just, you want to sit down, and he marked on the list, *selection*. I shall, I was supposed to be *selected* to get shot. So just, there was supposed to be *selection* from the whole camp. Every couple weeks they made a *selection*, people got weak from this food and this work, you couldn't survive too long, so a lot of people swell up, their bellies, swollen legs and everybody gave out a list for people to get shot, to eliminate...

LL: Yes.

RB: So they came you know, they made a gathering in the, in the barracks, in the place that we [unclear]...

LL: Was it like an *Appell Platz* [place]?

RB: *Appell, Appell* and they took all the people out. A week later it was *Appell*. You know, I was sleeping and I don't believe in dreams, I believe all kinds of nonsense in my dreams, all stupidity, which I don't want to repeat but this dream was, it was, I was in a big barrack, I was really sleeping in this huge barrack with straw, you know, bunk, straw beds, straw and I was sleeping, cold, very cold, and I had a dream that my mother went to the cemetery to her mother, and she was crying, she was crying so loud, she was crying and praying and I woke up in a cold sweat and I sat up. I was thinking what was happening? I saw my mother and I used to go with her sometime to

the cemetery to visit her mother. I was sitting... [Short pause in tape as it was turned off then back on.]

LL: Okay.

RB: It took like another week...

LL: Yes.

RB: till they have the...

LL: After the dream it took another week?

RB: Another week till they, they guarded us...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...from the place, they had to take us out. My foot healed...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...in the week. My foot cleared up, it cleared up, the red went away, the swelling went away. In fact, I still got a little black mark from it, I don't know whether a blood clot, I don't know what it was...

LL: Yes.

RB: The foot cleared up the swell, itself, so that *Kapo*, his name was Silverman, went to Herring and said, "*Herr Meister, Sie ist doch so eine gute Arbeiterin sie hat Schmerzen gehabt...*"

LL: Excuse me.

RB: Yes.

LL: He said, "She was such a good worker..."

RB: Yes.

LL: "...she had a pain in her foot..."

RB: Yes and that I was so tired because my foot was hurting me, and he liked it, that Herring favored him [unclear] Jewish he's your favorite, you know, every anti-Semite has a Jewish friend.

LL: Yes, so Mr. Herring, the boss liked the Jewish *Kapo* Silverman.

RB: Yeah, he was like you know...

LL: Yeah.

RB: He was a clean-cut man and he did, you know, watch the people work...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...but he didn't mind I was sitting...

LL: Yes.

RB: You know.

LL: Yes, I understand.

RB: He had a Jewish soul, he...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...he didn't, he ignored, he saw me sitting. He didn't beat me. He knew I worked. The machine was working, you had to be up there; you couldn't shut it off. So I was rescued. Yeah, before this-- is not finished. After I was rescued and together all

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-20]

these people, we had a bigger barrack, a couple hundred girls in the barrack. So after all these people they selected to die, put in our barrack for the night, because it was late and didn't have the facility there was soldiers Ukrainians, come to take them to the forest whatever...

LL: They what?

RB: Ukrainians, Ukrainians.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...guards, they waited for to take those people out, trucks, I don't know what.

LL: I see.

RB: So they put them in our barracks, there were 100 people, men, women, old people who are, you know?

LL: Who were supposed to be executed?

RB: Yes, so, you know, they were saying *kaddish* after them they were crying in pain, you know, don't even know what's happened, and I was just sitting, you know, still dreaming about the dream. Is the dream something? In my foot heals, what happened? I could have been with them together; I could have been there. I could have-- I was one of them. In that time they took out four girls, a couple more. Second time, there was another selection, not from Herring, that was from the *Lager Führer*.

LL: From the head of the camp...?

RB: Yes.

LL: ...the Commandant.

RB: Yes, yes, another selection.

LL: Yes.

RB: So he came by me and he said, you know that I have a dirty face, dark spots, so I said--he asked me, "Don't you wash your face?" I said, "Yes." He goes, "How can you wash your face, cold water always, no soap." They gave us soap but it came from Treblinka. If I washed this, it wasn't stained, this was fat, it was fat from malnutrition. I developed black spots...

LL: Yes.

RB: It wasn't dirt, so I took--you know, I spit on a--then I wiped, wiped...

LL: You spit on a piece of cloth?

RB: [unclear] then wiped and then they realized [unclear]...

LL: It didn't come off.

RB: It didn't come off. Also that *Kapo* also said, "*Herr Meister* she's under *nährt*. [correct German-*unternährt*].

LL: She's undernourished?

RB: Undernourished.

LL: Yes.

RB: The Jewish *Kapo*. So anyhow I was there and worked there until--yeah, after this they took me away from this kind of machine and they gave me another machine, a huge machine, huge, it was working on soap, suds, suds. The machine was working on suds.

LL: It was running on soapsuds?

RB: Soapsuds, they gave you like a tumble...

LL: A thimble.

RB: A thimble, thimble, and this machine pushed out and made it like three inches long had a name of Kol-ly [phonetic] but you wouldn't understand...

LL: Yes.

RB: It had a wheel, a huge wheel with a belt like this wide, a six inches wide belt...

LL: Yes.

RB: So I was attending the soap machine and also catching, I had three machines like this, go one to the other...

LL: Was this a machine that made soap?

RB: Made bullets.

LL: It made bullets but it ran on soap?

RB: They made bullets of lead, bullets are made of lead.

LL: Yes.

RB: The lead gets stretched from a thimble it stretched out to be bigger. It goes through three machines till it gets to the full size of a rifle bullet.

LL: I see.

RB: So I was, I had three machines to attend, and catch here, check for--*Ausschuss* [damaged items], how you say?

LL: Production?

RB: No, to make damage.

LL: Oh...

RB: [unclear] they call it [unclear] defective, yeah.

LL: Defects, yes.

RB: Defects.

LL: Yes.

RB: So I was catching three and doing all check. Once I was standing by this machine, it was nightshift, and the belt broke on my hip...

LL: Oh my...

RB: The belt opened--can you imagine the power of a huge motor, a huge wheel, stopped mine, I had on my hip, knocked me down, I was laying like, you know, I saw stars. I didn't know if I had pain or if I was frozen. I felt like my head swells. I don't know...

LL: You were stunned, you were complete...

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-22]

RB: I was just lying down. So finally they took me over this machine. I worked for a couple months and they gave me to a nicer machine, a clean machine, I had to wear white gloves. I had six machines to check a night. They had a special thing, which you check it, not with your hands. A special, I call it, what you check the bullets, the size.

LL: Yes.

RB: [unclear]...

LL: A ruler, a measuring, something to measure?

RB: It had all kind, the width, the length, the--so I checked all the six machines, walking night from one to other. Once, one was the, then there was another *Meister*, no pairing, [unclear] he was quite a *Mensch* [a human being] he was miserable but he was, had a soul himself. He knew after, we took advantage of how...

LL: What was his name? Do you remember that?

RB: I forgot his name.

LL: Well that's okay.

RB: It come, it come, it come...

LL: And he was German?

RB: Yes, sure. And he came in the night and he checked, you know, also checked what I left, other people and everybody who made [unclear] damage like...

LL: Yes, damaged bullets.

RB: Like a little scratch or something...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...he took the, send them to the guards and they get beat the hell out, with the whip, with the horse whip...

LL: Did they do that on purpose?

RB: No, no.

LL: That was not...

RB: The machine, the machine...

LL: The machine didn't do it right.

RB: I made a lot of mess, I did a lot of junk but could you work six machines and not--it's a machine, it comes and gives a scratch. I took out every time a couple and check it but it still but they didn't care, they thought we do it on purpose.

LL: Yes, but you didn't.

RB: I worked; I did my regular you know. So they took the girls, they beat black and blue. They came down sometimes to take a shower and especially all of them, you could see like rounds, you know black and blue...

LL: Bruises.

RB: ...skin broken through.

LL: Yes, bruises.

RB: So this *Meister* came over and checked my machine and he found a couple and I said, "Oh, oh" and then I say, He, maybe he's going to feel sorry for me. He felt like a fatherly type, even the German. I felt like he has a soul, he's not Herring. So he gives me a note to go to Wache.

LL: To go to the night watchman?

RB: To get hurt, to get whipped.

LL: Oh, to get whipped?

RB: Whipped.

LL: Oh, I see.

RB: Oh, I was never whipped before.

LL: Yes.

RB: I started crying hysterically. I knew I can do it with him. I was crying so much I forgot this thing it just slipped out, Yip-ka, or something.

LL: Yes, but it's not important.

RB: Yes, and I was crying so much, tears coming my eyes. I was all afraid but I saw the girls black and blue, you know, [unclear] to their body, the black skin broken, bleeding. I said, I'm going, I'm not gonna go, I not say it to him. Every time he came by I was still sitting crying. The last time, he just looked at me, he stood and looked at me-- he probably had a daughter like me at home. Like I was crying, a little girl, you know, crying and he kind of felt a little, you know, *rakhmones* [Yiddish: pity], as they say by the Jews, so he sit, he came over he gave another note, I should stay, instead to go home seven o'clock, from seven o'clock night to seven o'clock in the morning, to go to the barracks, I had to stay and work till one o'clock.

LL: In the ee--in the night time?

RB: No daytime, this was, I worked nightshift from seven to seven morning.

LL: And you had to work from seven in the evening until one o'clock...?

RB: Then I had to go till seven morning, I was suppose to go home seven o'clock morning instead to go get whipped, you know, with the whip, he gave me a chance to get just the work cut out from seven [unclear] to one o'clock.

LL: Yes.

RB: To work [unclear]

LL: Yes.

RB: So I worked and I thank God, and I say to him, "*Danke Schön, Herr Meister, Danke Schön, a thousand time Danke Schön,*" and I did more work better than to be able not to sit on the behind.

LL: Yes.

RB: So after this they transferred me to another machine, it was a mirror machine, a mirror [phonetic].

LL: Yes.

RB: And the bullet goes lacquer and the-- they were full bullets...

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-24]

LL: They were what?
RB: Full, ready bullets.
LL: They were finished bullets?
RB: ...[unclear] they go by a band, and the mirror checked--I had to take out each one which was a little...
LL: Yes, damaged.
RB: ...so there was a German who lady *Meister*, lady--oh, this was some lady, Marianna, Marianna...
LL: Marianna [phonetic].
RB: There was another one, Pabloska. This was some ladies they like to beat up men, so she sit--I was sick then and I was sitting look in the mirror, I was from fever, I was burning up, I felt hot, burning, I felt so sick, my eyes were watery. Was all watery, the eyes. I couldn't say, tell nobody you're sick, cause if you were sick, they gonna take you out, so she grabbed my head, my hair, and looked at me, you know?
LL: Who was that Marianna or the other one?
RB: Marianna, Marianna.
LL: She was a German girl?
RB: Devil.
LL: And the other one was a Polish one?
RB: The other one was also a *Volksdeutsche* and she looked in the mirror and I looked in the mirror and I saw her face. I was showing the bullet but I could see her--she saw my face too, and she saw it was red, my face wasn't red, I was always pale like this, and the eyes were watery, I was fever, I was chilled, I was sick. So she sent me right away home, to the barracks, she called the *Kapo* once in the barracks they put me in the hospital, I had typhoid. Typhoid was at the hospital, they would throw you just in a room with beds of straw and they...
LL: Like an infirmary?
RB: Yes, they gave you a piece of bread. I couldn't eat a piece of bread. I put it on my, behind my bed, head. If I survive I would have some bread to eat. I saw mice, rats, mice started eating the bread. They came in the hospital and they told everybody to walk.
LL: Who came in?
RB: Germans, the...
LL: Soldiers?
RB: Soldiers, to walk.
LL: To walk out?
RB: Not to just try to walk--who couldn't walk, on the truck outside, took him out. I walked with all my strength, with my mother's energy I think she gave me. I walked out. I was so sick, not, no medication just a cup of soup, a slice of bread, and a cold, unheated barracks, I survived it.

LL: And you got better?

RB: And I got better, they sent me back to [unclear] and when there I was working, we worked in the big barrack, huge, it was so cold, so cold winter. It was so cold, if you want to go to--you didn't have clothes to wear--good. They brought the clothes from the gas chambers which they killed the people, they gave it to us.

LL: Were they the striped uniforms or were they the regular...?

RB: No.

LL: ...clothes?

RB: We got the clothing from the people who were gassed in Treblinka.

LL: Yes.

RB: Shoes and, and there it was night, winter, bitter cold, you cannot sleep, you has to go to bathroom with you, to go you know. Every couple minutes I have to go, it was cold, it was--you cannot go to bathroom. You have to walk a half a mile, you cannot walk out of the barracks. You have to say, ask the guard--you cry guard, can we? He said, "No" you have to stay cold in the door and wait for a lot of girls, it was all bitter cold, but they keep going to the bathroom. So finally you went, you couldn't wake up again, you have to go again, you know, because with this cold weather thin little blanket cold weather and no heat. The barrack had a middle had like a trash can and they put saw dust in the trash can and then there was a pipe out. They made high so everyone won't sit close and warm up a little. So the stronger ones sat around, the weak, the little ones were freezing in the back. So finally they liquidated the Work B.

LL: Work B?

RB: Work B.

LL: Yes.

RB: And they send out the Czestochowa?

LL: How do you spell that please?

RB: C-Z-E-S-T-O-C-H-O-W-E.

LL: And what was that?

RB: Another camp.

LL: Was it also a *Werk* [work camp or factory]?

RB: Ammunition also. This was, there was also two kinds, the seven, they divided two camps, they sent me to one, the other was...

LL: So part of your *Werk* B was sent to Czestochowa?

RB: Czestochowa, yeah.

LL: And the other part was sent to another camp?

RB: Yeah, also there in Czestochowa, but another camp.

LL: Also an ammunition...

RB: Yes.

LL: ...producing place?

RB: Yes.

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-26]

LL: Okay. So now you arrived there. How, did you have to walk there?
RB: No, no.
LL: They took you in trucks?
RB: They took us in trucks.
LL: How long of a ride was it, do you think?
RB: It was a couple hours ride.
LL: Okay.
RB: ...three hours, two, three hours...
LL: And it was all women, all females?
RB: No, everybody...
LL: Okay.
RB: Everyone, they gave us numbers, we wore numbers.
LL: Around your neck?
RB: Yeah, like soldiers...
LL: You were not tattooed?
RB: No, no. We wore numbers, we wore all the numbers...
LL: Yes.
RB: ...and over there, there were constantly selections, constantly selections. People you know, got sick and couldn't work, it was take them out and eliminate, all the weak and all the--so in Czestochowa I was told January 16...
LL: When did you go there to begin with, when did you leave *Werk B* and go to Czestochowa?
RB: It was like in 1944.
LL: In 1944, okay.
RB: Yes. 1944 they took us to Czestochowa.
LL: And how long were you there?
RB: In Czestochowa we was from 1944 to 1945, January 16.
LL: I see.
RB: So while we were there, you know, we could hear bullets flying, they were shooting the Russian was nearing. The Russians were nearing, they were bombarding. We had to go down the basement, every time, you know, go to the basement, and I say, "God, they should bomb this place. You know everybody was praying and we had a rest, we were resting a little. We worked 12 hours, you know, for this little food, you stay on your feet for 12 hours with this malnutrition, you know, you were, I was just skin and bones. I also hurt my hip, it was so painful I cried, I was just skin and bone, nothing more, skin and bone. So, and then every time they bombarded, we was so happy, we thought the Russians were coming. They knew that Poland, who can bombard Poland, only the Russians, not America, Poland just close to Russia. So they bombarded to the, quiet again, another week again bombs, we went to the shelters, under the basement of the ammunition house and we worked, we lost so many friends I lost.

LL: From the bombardments?

RB: From the selections.

LL: From the selections, not from the bombing?

RB: No, the bombing--they were smart, the Russians, didn't bombard, they knew that the ammunition plants, they were not going to bombard the ammunition plants. They bombarded the city but they knew very well that they were going to need these ammunition plants, they didn't want to ruin it.

LL: I see.

RB: So I, well we didn't know it but they didn't bombard it.

LL: And they weren't concerned about bombarding the camps?

RB: We didn't know, we had to pull down the--there...

LL: The shades.

RB: ...was a blackout, pitch black, everything, and we were, we were relieved I didn't care for a little bomb, I get killed so what? My mother, father gone, so why am I--so why should I survive? What am I, different? I didn't care; I know I didn't have nobody around, so I said this is it. Anyhow, it was the third time they were bombarding really bad. It was shooting cannons, airplanes, there was so much noise, there were--third time the German *Meisters* and Jewish *Kapos* said to everybody, we have to leave here or nobody going to be alive. So I'm a stubborn person always, I'm not going to leave here, to myself, I said. I went to a big latrine, I wore my big blanket, it was January in Poland, so it was cold, maybe 10 below zero, I don't know. I took a can, a big can with water, I took the can of water to the latrine, I don't care, let them bomb. You want to go. My cousin said, come you're gonna get killed here. So what, is this a life? This a life to live like this? Where you going to go? Where you going? Can get killed, I told my cousin this, "you can get killed on the road from the bombs, like I can get killed here. So I'd rather stay here, I am tired. I am tired, I don't care what's gonna be, *Que sera, sera*." So he left.

LL: Your cousin?

RB: A lot of them left.

LL: Your cousin?

RB: Hundreds of people left, hundreds, they went on a death march to Buchenwald.

LL: There was a death march to Buchenwald?

RB: To Buchenwald. I never saw my cousin, I never saw these people. Some of them went to Buchenwald and some of them died on the road.

LL: And nobody knew you were hiding in the latrine?

RB: No, a lot of people hid, not just me, there were a lot of them. Not all women, a lot, some of them in the latrine, some of them in the barrack, but I preferred the latrine because I wasn't sure if the barracks was going to burn, the wooden barracks. The latrine was made of...

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [1-2-28]

LL: Concrete?

RB: Concrete. So anyhow...

LL: Did you have any food or just the water?

RB: No, water.

LL: Just the water.

RB: So anyhow, all the sudden it's quiet down. I look around; most the people are gone. There's still a couple hundred left. I see somebody walking around near the barracks. So the people start walking out.

LL: Were any guards left, were there any guards left?

RB: We didn't know but when it was quiet, some young, strong people, they're going to go out. They walked out that was between Russia coming, the Germans going. So there were so many victims killed, that liberation night of the liberation. There were so many dead people, unnecessary.

LL: You were liberated then by the Russians?

RB: Yes.

LL: Is that correct? And this was in January of 1944?

RB: 16, '45.

LL: ...'45?

RB: So I was waiting till it was really quiet, really quiet. Then I found a couple girls from mine hometown, we had nothing to wear, we said we'll go out, let's go out. It's quiet, no shooting, you can go out now. So we walked to Czestochowa, I never was in Czestochowa, where do I go, to who, to where? Anyhow, we walked with the blankets covering us...

LL: You walked out of the camp?

RB: Yes, with the blankets, thin blankets and a little. We walked it was four, five girls from my hometown.

LL: By that time, you were how old?

RB: Oh about 18, I don't know?

LL: Yes.

RB: Something like this.

LL: Yes, 18.

RB: Something like it, and we came, we walked there was nowhere to go.

LL: Yes.

RB: We just walked, where we go? No train, no this... [tape one, side two ended]

Tape two, side one:

LL: This interview with Rosa Zygmund Burk, tape number two, side one, November 12, 1996, interviewer Liesl Loeb. We left off with the liberation and your...

RB: ...the way out.

LL: ...your way out on January 16 when the Russians liberated you...

RB: [unclear]

LL: ...and you last mentioned the fact that you were out of the camp and...

RB: Yes.

LL: ...looking for someplace to go to.

RB: Yeah, we were walking [unclear] yeah the [unclear] we were walking out of the camp with all the girls and, yeah I got this--there was a colony where the Germans who lived on the colony, before you go into the camp there was a German colony where the [unclear], the bosses, the *Meisters*, the bosses were living, the living quarters with the German staff. So there are, you know, the Germans run, so whatever they left we girls went in and to put down, so since I came in...

LL: Was it a house or was it a whole colony?

RB: Colony, a colony, colony there was a...

LL: Yeah, and they had left, they had run away?

RB: Yes, they left, they took everything but they left some *shmattes* [rags] you know? Girls, whatever we saw, we took it, something to wear.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...but there I find not much, so we had a little bit clothing, not much. They took most, you know? Only thing I found is a wash, a wash cloth you put on your hand, there was sugar, sugar was, a can of sugar, so I filled the wash cloth, dirty wash cloth with sugar. I never saw sugar in all these years...

LL: Yes.

RB: So I had sugar to eat. With this...

LL: Did it agree with you?

RB: I didn't get heartburn. [chuckle] The can, the can water I carried in the latrine spilled on my dress so I had a ice compress.

LL: Oh my.

RB: Ice on my dress.

LL: Yes, yes.

RB: Ice, ice patch with a blanket and, like this we walked out, skin and bone on the colony...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...and I took that little thing with sugar and I went looking for quarters [chuckle] it was, you know, tragic-comedy like. Finally we found a empty building which the Nazis, the S.S. occupied through the war. We said, "Oh this is a nice place,

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-30]

let's get out and make ourselves comfortable." So we took our room, there were five girls there, they took rooms and we went out, you know, looking for something to eat, some Polish *courves* [prostitutes] they gave us some bread, whatever. After living there about a week or so we were glad we had found this and all the sudden this Russian Major comes in, and he says that this is going to be a hospital for wounded Russians so to get out. So again, all of us start crying, "Where we go?" So they asked us where we come from? I say, "We come from the Nazi camp. We were in a camp, in a forced labor camp." "What did you do in the camp?" "I made bullets." "You made bullets to shoot our soldiers?" And I said, "No I didn't make bullets, I made bullets because it was a forced labor camp. I had to work, if not, I would go, I would get shot. I had to work, I did my job to work, I had to make"--they were this. I made a lot of mess there but that's all I could do. So finally we begged him, you know, to let us stay there, give us a room or something, find a small room, and he gave us a room under the condition we have to work in the hospital. And they brought the wounded, the wounded soldiers in. We had to work as, like nurses. So we got, you know, food, barley, greasy barley, very greasy barley, whatever they gave us, you know. We had to do our job, to work also hard and then the girls, some of the girls said, "We want to go back and see how our hometown looks?" I said, "No, N-O, I don't want to go." I knew my father died in camp, my mother went to Treblinka, we knew when I was in camp they told us that Szydlowiec, all Szydlowiec going to Treblinka, nothing left no more. Szydlowiec is *judenrein*.

LL: And they all went to Treblinka...?

RB: Treblinka.

LL: ...the ones that were left behind?

RB: All of, all of them. This they told us in camp. It was hard, then some Poles came to work in the factory too, but they came from home.

LL: Yes.

RB: We marched from the barracks to the factory, to the plant. We slept in the barracks and marched by guards to the working place. But they went home, so they told us. They took all the Jews to the cattle wagons and they took from Szydlowiec, it just no Jews left. So I knew that, I said, "I don't want to go home, see the Poles, I don't want to see them." The girls said, "I still want to go home, see how it looks." They went home, from the forest came out Poles and they beat them out black and blue. They took away all the stuff that they found in the German colony, took everything away from them. Because this was [unclear]

LL: Yes.

RB: And they went to Szydlowiec with nothing, there was still a couple Jews left, there were 15 which they came after the liberation to look for relatives.

LL: I see.

RB: So the Poles came in and they said, if you not going to leave here, we're going to do what Hitler didn't finish, so they left. The ki--girls came back to Czestochowa...

LL: Where you are?

RB: ...and they said, "You were smart, you didn't want to go." I said, "So far my mind tells me and I listen to my mind. I was rescued once, that's the second time I don't need to get beat up from the Poles."

LL: Right.

RB: I didn't go back to Poland.

LL: How long did you stay in this place and play nurse?

RB: In Poland?

LL: In this place, in this place, and play nurse.

RB: In Poland, I had a cousin too...

LL: Yes.

RB: Which, a cousin which he was newly wed had a baby infant, a girl and they were wealthy, very wealthy people.

LL: Where did they live?

RB: Skarzysko. Was a city, Skarzysko?

LL: Is that where, where...

RB: City.

LL: Where, it's not Czestochowa?

RB: No, Skarzysko is Hasag is, where the Hasag is.

LL: Oh where the Hasag is?

RB: It's where the city, Skarzysko, yeah.

LL: Yes.

RB: So they get, they knew what to expect. They gave the baby away to a Polish woman and they gave her everything they had, they were wealthy people, to rescue the child; if they came back alive they want to take away. The parents died and they never came back but a cousin, one of my cousins survived. He was in the Russian army. He came and wanted to take the baby, then she was already a couple years old.

LL: Yes.

RB: He wanted to take her out. This woman didn't tell her that she was Jewish. She looked like a Jewish girl, black hair, black eyes and my cousin in army came, and he wanted to take her away. She didn't want to do that. She said only thing he can do is marry me, then you will be a father to your niece. He didn't want to marry this--she was a nurse.

LL: So she was not a Jewish woman?

RB: No, Polish.

LL: Yes, but she took good care of the child?

RB: She raised the baby.

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-32]

LL: Yes.

RB: She didn't have children of her own. So she hid that baby as hers, she moved to other city and she raised the baby.

LL: And she wasn't married?

RB: No. And then my cousin went back and he want to organize to kidnap the child, don't want to give back the. So the Polish underground found out there was a cousin left. This was his brother's child. Then from her mother's side there was an uncle left and an aunt. There were still four people left.

LL: From your family?

RB: From the mother, from the family of their mother who gave the child away.

LL: Okay.

RB: So they went there while living in the house they rented one room, a room or something [unclear]...

LL: All four of them?

RB: Yes, to work to get the baby back but couldn't get it back with money, with nothing. So they, my cousin is down there they're gonna come and kidnap the child. So they found out, Poles and they told this to the Polish Underground. In the nighttime they came and they killed two people out from the family, an uncle and an aunt, after the war because they want to kidnap the child. So since my cousin found out what happened, he gave up. But still when they emigrated--when they went out from this Polish city went away to Warsaw, he tried to you know, patience with her. He went there and he talked with the girl and he told her he wants to see his niece. The niece said, you know, [unclear], "How come I look like that gentleman, that nice gentleman?"

LL: Because the other people were blonde is it?

RB: Blonde, she was exactly look like cousins and...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...pictures...

LL: Yes.

RB: And then they opened the [unclear], they told her, but she didn't want to leave her mother, a child six weeks tell her this is not my mother. Tell Gabrielle that you're not her mother, give her...

LL: How old was she, six years old at this...?

RB: She was '39, she was born in '40, 1940.

LL: Yeah.

RB: ...this was '45.

LL: So she was about six years old.

RB: Yeah.

LL: And she wanted to stay with her mother.

RB: Yeah, she said, Yeah, I will go to America with you only with my mother. The mother said, "Where am I going to go, I speak only Polish." She didn't want to go so she, but they were in touch so my cousin emigrated to Israel and they were in touch. They send presents only. She raised a son, she married, she raised a son, which my cousin send through medical school, she lives in Poland.

LL: She still lives in Poland now?

RB: Oh yeah.

LL: But your cousin...?

RB: Now my cousin died, died of cancer just recently.

LL: Are you in touch with this person?

RB: Not personally, she knows about, but she, you know, writes Polish and she doesn't know English. I can write Polish perfect...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...but no, no, she knows about.

LL: Okay, now let's go back to when you were playing nurse in this place...

RB: Yeah.

LL: ...and you then decided to leave or when...

RB: Yes.

LL: ...did you decide to leave?

RB: When I played, when I was nurse working in hospital, finally, you know, decision you had to get out, you know. I forgot this, why did we get out I was to stay in Poland longer. It was also not a *Judenrat*--a *Gemeinde*--a Jewish *Gemeinde* [congregation].

LL: And where was this?

RB: In Czestochowa

LL: Yes.

RB: And there were a lot of Jewish people, which used to live in Czestochowa came back. There was a riot against the Jews they killed--the Poles made a pogrom and they killed a pregnant woman with her husband. So they want us to go see it, from the *Yiddishe Gemeinde* [Jewish community] and we went to see this. After we saw this all of us came together we have to leave, leave this bloody earth, we got to get out of here. After what we saw this woman pregnant in time, her husband both dead, for what? Want to stay on this Polish, bloody earth. No, so we went underground, somebody who knew the, crossed the border from Germany to American zone in the nighttime. The guard who took us close to border said we were about 12 people then there were some more people came to cross the border. We were in a *Gasthaus*, we were overnight, we were suppose to go nighttime close to guard, Russian guard.

LL: Were you in a *Gasthaus*, which is a guest house...?

RB: In Czestochowa.

LL: Okay.

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-34]

RB: And in the nighttime...

LL: And the person who was taking you was a Pole?

RB: No, Jewish man. He had a friend--the Russian guard was his friend.

LL: I see.

RB: And he got some money paid, he gave everybody, everybody gave him some, he did us a favor, and he took us across the--so in the night, middle of the night, we were supposed to go out, so he said we should form a chain, a human chain. How holding, to a forest, you go in the night time, it's trees a lot, Polish forest are thick. So we go...

LL: And you held hands?

RB: Held hands for, I don't know, it was about maybe 30 people all together and he came in and [unclear] and to go. So what happened--three people, me included fall off the chain, fall off the chain in the nighttime, I fall down from my hill, from a hill, down the ground, and I fall down. I hurt myself and I start moaning. Then I heard somebody else moaning. I said in Yiddish, like Polish, "Who is this?" And I hear a very familiar voice, this man, I know he was with us, in the group, he fell down, too. Of course he got stuck in the, you shouldn't talk, couldn't say nothing. We had to go through the trees in the chain, so I fell down that mount--that hill, that hill and got really bruised. So I said, there was just two of us fell down. Then later, two others came back, from that *Gasthaus*. They also got lost. In the morning that man who crossed us to go there, he was in the army, in the Russian. He had friends in Russia, he knew who was going to be the guard at nighttime, you know, whatever. And he came over, he said, where is Rosa, where is Harold and others. We got to go back to get us.

LL: Did he find you?

RB: He knew that, the only place we could go was back to the *Gasthaus*.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...*Gasthaus*. So he came and picked us out.

LL: Yes.

RB: ...we went across to Frank--to Germany we were in Erfurt and other little cities...

LL: What was the first German town that you came to?

RB: It was the Erfurt.

LL: The Erfurt.

RB: The Erfurt, Erfurt.

LL: Yes.

RB: I think Erfurt.

LL: And we spell that E-R-F-U-R-T?

RB: E-R-F-U-R-T, Erfurt.

LL: Yes.

RB: Another city that I don't remember. I don't remember lots of cities too and from there we got to Frankfurt am Main, to Zeilsheim.

LL: Zeilsheim.

RB: Zeilsheim.

LL: Yes, we spell that S-A-L...

RB: Zeilsheim German.

LL: It's Zeilsheim.

RB: German, German, Zeilsheim.

LL: Yes, okay.

RB: We came to Zeilsheim, there was a D.P. camp...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...for displaced persons.

LL: And this was near Frankfurt am Main.

RB: Yes, it was near Frankfurt. So we went into the D.P. camp over there, we had kitchen supported from Joint. They gave us our food, they gave us immigration, you know, rules, so I was with Israel. They wanted most people to go to Israel to the *Haganah*--to fight liberating Israel. A lot of people went to Israel. Then I met my husband and we were married and I had a son.

LL: And that was Mr. Zygmund?

RB: Yes, our father.

LL: And he also was a D.P. Camp person?

RB: Yes, he was liberated in Buchenwald. I didn't know him before.

LL: I see.

RB: I met him in D.P. Camp.

LL: And was he in Buchenwald all the time?

RB: He was in Buchenwald, oh yeah.

LL: Yes.

RB: He was wearing the stripe. I still got it, [unclear] I can look for it, probably in the garage, and I met him in the D.P. Camp. And after this, you know, General Eisenhower came in to look us over, you know, the survivors in D.P. camp and he decided we shouldn't live in barrack. What is the city, Hoechst? The pipeline was built just for the Nazis--to work for I.G. Farben Company.

LL: Yes.

RB: They all had to give up their homes for the D.P. people to [unclear]

LL: Right. What is it when you say Hoechst? Is that part of Frankfurt, Hoechst?

RB: Hoechst, Hoechst, yes, it's also before Frankfurt, a little.

LL: It's not Zeilsheim though, it's another place?

RB: Zeilsheim is near Hoechst. Hoechst had the I.G. Farben [unclear].

LL: Okay.

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RB: [unclear]
LL: Okay. So you're, you've met your husband?
RB: Yes, I met him in D.P. Camp.
LL: Yes.
RB: And we married and we had...
LL: You married in the D.P. Camp?
RB: Yes.
LL: How long were you in that camp?
RB: In the camp, we emigrated 19-. We were in the camp a couple years and then we moved to Frankfurt, because the camp people were emigrating all over. Some went to Israel, went away. Some want to go to United States, we wanted to go to the United States...
LL: Yes.
RB: ...so we moved out from the D.P. camp, from the houses and we were, you know, in Frankfurt am Main living.
LL: And how, where did you live in Frankfurt, also in a D.P. Camp?
RB: No, no, we rented and we were supported by Joint. They gave us support.
LL: And you had an apartment?
RB: We had an apartment, one room, you know.
LL: Yes.
RB: And we registered for the United States to come to...
LL: Did you have to come to the States on your Polish quota?
RB: I think, I don't know.
LL: How long did you have to wait?
RB: No, I don't think so Polish.
LL: No?
RB: We were come from Germany.
LL: Yeah but you were Polish citizens.
RB: We were Germans. I really don't know this.
LL: You don't remember? How long did you have to wait until you could come to the United States?
RB: About two years.
LL: Two years. And the Joint helped your emigration?
RB: The Joint, yeah, yeah, the Joint give us, the, when we came down on the ship, they gave us a pin like, you know, Joint, like we belong to the Joint.
LL: That was when you landed here. Now when you were in Frankfurt, did you do anything? Did you work or you just stayed in...?
RB: No, we were supported, we were supported by the Joint, we had our, we got support, you know...
LL: Yes.

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RB: ...and a couple years we were there, we were supported.
LL: And when you came to the States did you have relatives here?
RB: Germans gave us [unclear]. We got, I got about \$1,500 dollars and my husband got \$1,500 dollars.
LL: When you came here or when you were still there?
RB: Germany, yeah.
LL: They gave you...?
RB: When we came here, this was something, I don't know why. What kind of gift, something, I don't remember, my husband took care of everything.
LL: Yes.
RB: It was just for poor--paying something, then I came here then I applied for the [unclear] *Wiedergutmachen* [restitution].
LL: I see, also from Germany?
RB: Yeah.
LL: Even though you were Polish?
RB: Yes, I get from Germany.
LL: Yes.
RB: I get from Germany *Wiedergutmachen* every month. My husband didn't live to get it. He applied...
LL: Yes.
RB: Then while he applied, he developed cancer...
LL: Oh.
RB: ...and then they send me his [unclear], his \$7,000 they send me the check...
LL: I see.
RB: ...because he didn't live to get it.
LL: I see.
RB: This was he died '66.
LL: I see.
RB: He got the whole *Nachzahlung* [back payments] from whole time...
LL: I see.
RB: ...they gave to widow.
LL: And I'd like to backtrack a little bit and ask you, were you ever aware or in contact with any resistance group, Jewish or non-Jewish? Now you spoke about the underground that helped you cross the borders from...
RB: [unclear] Yeah, he was, he wasn't underground. He was the Russian Army and my cousin too but I hadn't contact with him...
LL: You did not have contact?
RB: No.

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-38]

LL: Did you feel strengthened in your experiences--in other words, your strength to survive, was it through religious faith, or an ideology, or Zionism, or socialism, or just hope in a speedy Allied victory, what kept you going?

RB: I just hoped, I, sometime I just hoped, I didn't hope at all sometime I was just pitying. I was thinking nothing clear, I was thinking I had enough. But then I saw reality. I saw real life, you know, that be free, we can go out, I can eat, I can, I had seen food, I see people, then I wanted, I was thinking, you know, I was thinking not by Bund. They were wrong, have to have our homeland. You know, I said if we would have a Israel, we would have somebody to talk for us, to raise voice, to care for us, maybe Hitler wouldn't take 6 million lives away.

LL: Did you want to go to Palestine at that time?

RB: I wanted, my husband wanted. I think I got pregnant and they didn't want to take me.

LL: Oh.

RB: After I married a couple, 10 months later and they were taking people to sign up for Israel, I find out I am pregnant, so they didn't need a pregnant woman there in the war. I wasn't accepted, but later I could have gone but then we, you know then you got registered to go to United States...

LL: Who didn't want to take you, the Palestinians?

RB: No, the organization which...

LL: Oh.

RB: ...which registered people...

LL: I see.

RB: ...to go to Israel.

LL: Did you have relatives in the United States?

RB: In the United States, no.

LL: No.

RB: I had a cousin, but no, nobody in the United States.

LL: No.

RB: And the cousin who survived, only two people survived. A cousin and a sister.

LL: Out of how many people?

RB: Oh, I probably can't imagine, my grandfather had seven daughters, two sons, all of them had children...

LL: So that...

RB: Large family, 100...

LL: A large family.

RB: ...maybe more of them.

LL: Yes. Did you ever during your suffering think of escaping?

RB: There was no way. There once was a couple that escaped, once, and they caught them and they both got hanged...

LL: Yes.

RB: ...in the middle of the camp. They were--not, impossible to escape. I had a cousin, the same cousin, she was in camp with me once, and she was also dark haired, beautiful girl, there was a Pole, he came to work, he was like an engineer and he fell in love with her, he wasn't in the camp, he was home. He wanted to marry, he want to take her out.

LL: He was not Jewish?

RB: No, he bought clothes, he wanted to dress her like a Pole and take her out of the camp.

LL: Yes.

RB: She said No, they gonna kill me and they gonna kill you too, but he brought her food, he brought her bread from his, wasn't allowed to bring her, so he gave her every time some, but you know, she didn't want it, she emigrated to Israel, she's in Israel still.

LL: I see. Can you tell me anything about the education of Jewish children before 1941 and later in the camps or where you were? Were there children and did they have any kind of learning?

RB: There was no children, there was my age, there was no small children.

LL: ...and you had no kind of learning possibilities?

RB: We went to, you went to school first, public school then we had to, even went to night schools...

LL: But in the camps, nothing?

RB: No, no, no.

LL: Did you go to night school after you were liberated, did you say?

RB: After, before I had a baby I went to school [unclear], night schools and I learned, you know, [unclear] public schools that I learned in Poland [unclear].

LL: I see. Do you remember when you first heard that Jews were being murdered or were being gassed and did you believe all of that?

RB: When I was still, when I was [unclear] before the first roundup, we knew-- we heard that there were cattle wagons waiting for people.

LL: Yes.

RB: I saw my father put on a white robe like prayer, they were praying, they went to the Synagogue to praying...

LL: He put on a *tallit* [prayer shawl].

RB: Not a *tallit* but a whole long robe they put on people when they die.

LL: Oh yes, a shroud.

RB: [unclear] white bearded man and they all pray what you do? You pray to God, and they prayed, you couldn't believe they were going to take just people for no

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-40]

reason and kill them. Maybe they're going to take us to some other country, or didn't believe, even you. [unclear] then the farther, when they found out, they said, you know, some people just follow the guards. This I saw, which he couldn't attack with the bare hands he just fell on him. He got shot, a lot of people got shot for this, there was no ammunition.

LL: In other words, they tried to fight the guards?

RB: They tried to. One committed suicide from the Germans, you know the Germans coming again, he hung himself. A few of them who committed suicide...

LL: And your father saw this, you say?

RB: My father, I don't know if he saw but I saw it...

LL: You saw it?

RB: Yeah.

LL: And this happened on the cemetery?

RB: Not on the cemetery, the homes, they came in the homes.

LL: I see, and the people just...

RB: They came in the homes and the man said that he's, he knew that he got the gun [unclear] what you going to do with it? He attacked him, self-defense but it was, there was no hope.

LL: Yes, I understand. How many people do you think were in the camp with you?

RB: In the camp or in my work, were a couple hundred or I don't know, there were...

LL: How many were in your barracks?

RB: ...factory, in the factory? I don't know there was a lot of people there were, a couple thousand...

LL: Really, and in your barracks?

RB: In my barracks, were 200.

LL: I see. Were there ever religious services...?

RB: Yeah.

LL: ...or secret prayers?

RB: Yeah, they were secret, yeah, yeah.

LL: Yeah.

RB: Even these people who took out, select to die, they said *kaddish* [prayer for the dead] it was in their prayer books and they prayed...

LL: Well did you, at the time when it was maybe Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur or Pesach were there secret services going on?

RB: They were praying, Passover, Seder, private [unclear] I went away with before Rosh Hashanah two weeks later the town was liberated. [LL coughed] Two weeks later they took the whole city out.

LL: Which city was that?

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-41]

RB: Szydlowiec, my hometown.

LL: And was there a figure in the camp who helped you and others to hold on, to survive, to lift your spirits?

RB: No, no.

LL: There was nobody like that?

RB: There was no spirit. You just lived like animals.

LL: And most of the people in your group were young people like yourself?

RB: Yeah.

LL: Teenagers?

RB: Teenagers, seventeen, eighteen, twenties...

LL: You were among the youngest, is that correct?

RB: No, I'm among maybe a [unclear] year or two younger, but this was the last generation.

LL: And the Russians were your liberators--how long did it take you to recover physically?

RB: Oh I was just like, you know, we didn't know what happening. I couldn't believe what is happening, what's happening? We're shooting, we see Russian, the camp is overrun. It was oh my God, a nightmare, you know.

LL: But when you walked out you were in good physical condition?

RB: Skin and bone, weak skin and bones.

LL: And how long did it take to get...

RB: When I started eating, I regained my energy, when I started eating.

LL: Did you have a problem with food at first?

RB: First? Yeah, we had to go to Poles and where and tell them that we were hungry...

LL: I don't mean it that way. Some people couldn't digest the food because they were so undernourished and they got sick from it.

RB: We didn't...

LL: Did you have that problem?

RB: We didn't get rich foods, we got a piece of bread [unclear] took much. It was an old woman yeah. She would give us potato just to keep you going a little bit, not a good meal like you sit down and we eat and that.

LL: Yes.

RB: Then we started to work in the hospital, slowly, the Russians, you know, they gave us a barley, they eat grain a lot. Millet, kasha [unclear]...

LL: Yes grains.

RB: Yes.

LL: And, tell me, when did you arrive in the United States?

RB: I arrived in 1950, February 2.

LL: February 2, 1950 and what happened then? Did you find work?

ROSA ZYGMUND BURK [2-1-42]

RB: No, I had a baby, my son was a year old. My husband got a job from the Jewish Federation...

LL: Did you come to Philadelphia right away?

RB: No, we came to New York, to Pittsburgh we came.

LL: Oh.

RB: The Jewish Federation took over, they gave us food and meat, everything and they found a job for my husband, work. [unclear]

LL: And how long did you live in Pittsburgh?

RB: In Pittsburgh we lived four years.

LL: And then?

RB: No, yeah, for '50, yeah for three years. After Pittsburgh, my husband had two brothers, they're twins, they survived concentration camp. So they each found each other. So they took us, three brothers, we had a little money what we got from Germany, they got money, they got three thousand, we got three thousand, we put down a little money and we buy a, we bought a chicken farm in Vineland, New Jersey.

LL: Oh.

RB: It was Vineland, Jersey, but most, a lot of people from D.P. Camp come over because you didn't own the land--rich. It was the best thing after, you know, farm, you don't have to talk to the chicken. [chuckle].

LL: Yes.

RB: So we bought a farm, unfortunately there were doctors, [unclear], lawyers, committed suicide. He had to work to feed the chickens, couldn't make a living. And my husband was a very brilliant man and he said this is going to be, I'm going to work to feed chickens? That's why I came to America? They took the coops, chicken coops apart, you know, and they sold the lot. If we had money we could develop it. It was close to the city. Since we didn't have enough money... [tape two, side one ended]

Tape two, side two:

LL: He took the chicken coops apart and you sold the land?

RB: Sold the land with the house, with a little house.

LL: Yes, okay.

RB: We sold that and we got our money out. We gave the brothers, we gave his brothers the part that they gave us, took the money and came to Philadelphia. Philadelphia holds a store, a beer distributor. A beer distributor would make a nice living, 29th Street, North Philadelphia, one hold-up, second hold-up, third hold--three times hold-ups [unclear] we gave it away for almost nothing. Then I went to work so we were able to live, I went to work. My husband was looking for something else to make a living. Bought another store also in West Philadelphia then he got sick. I was two years in that store, he got sick, he had cancer of the lung, kidney, and I was left with two small children, 12 and 17. Well since then, you know, we applied in Germany and they gave us the *Wiedergutmachung*.

LL: Restitution.

RB: [unclear] it helped. They called it *Wiedermachung*.

LL: Yes they do.

RB: [unclear]

LL: *Wiedermachung* spelled W-I-E-D-E-R-M-A-C-H-U-N-G.

RB: *Wiedermachung*.

LL: Yes, it means restitution.

RB: So, anyhow, after he died for four year I married my future husband and he was a real chemical engineer. He's a chemical engineer. He worked for TRW.

LL: TRW?

RB: Yeah.

LL: I see. And where was that, in California?

RB: Los Angeles.

LL: I see, you moved to Los Angeles then.

RB: So we moved to Los Angeles partly, I took some--and I lived there for 18 years, I guess, came back to Pittsburgh with three children till my daughter gave birth to first grandson. Was tired, I want to stay here, my roots here, I have a grandchild, I lived to see a grandchild. My children didn't have grandparents, they didn't have nobody. I want mine children to have a grandmother.

LL: Your grandchildren?

RB: ...grandfather.

LL: Yes.

RB: I want my grandchildren to have a grandparent, at least one.

LL: Yes, so you came back to Philadelphia when?

RB: I came back when he was born, well I kept going back and forth but...

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LL: Yes.
RB: ...finally I came back he's almost over eight years.
LL: I see.
RB: My husband came...
LL: Yes.
RB: ...here, a couple years since he was in...
LL: Yes, yes.
RB: But he came twice, but he has a family within the same age, 47 years like my son.
LL: Yes.
RB: But he doesn't want to leave his son there, doesn't want to leave his son alone, so...
LL: So you're having a long distance relationship?
RB: A happy marriage, if you call it marriage, I don't know it. I'm legally married still.
LL: Yes, you've had a hard life.
RB: I had a hard life. Still...
LL: I want to thank you very much for...
RB: Yeah, I can see my daughter's coming in?
LL: ...for sharing all of your experiences with us, and I want you to know how valuable your testimony is, and I hope I didn't cause you too much pain...
RB: No.
LL: ...in having to recall it.
RB: No, it took me, she ask me. [tape cut off]
LL: This is the interviewer Liesl Loeb, I want to add some things that Mrs. Burk had forgotten to mention. She called me on November 14th, two days after this interview to tell me the following: That the Germans, when the Germans occupied the town, the Germans and the Polish police burned the Synagogues in the town. There was no running water and the whole town had to pass buckets to put out the fires at the big and the small Orthodox Synagogue. Also during the war, people prayed at private homes with a *minyan* [quorum of 10 men]. The Synagogue was burned out entirely, everything was burned and the silver ornaments of the Torah disappeared. The Synagogue was very old and was built a long time ago. In addition, she wanted to mention that her son, Harry Zygmund was born on February 2nd, 1949, and that he was an electrician at the Spectrum in Philadelphia. That's all. [Tape two, side two ended, interview ended]