# HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

# JERRY JACOBS

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Gerry Schneeberg
Date: November 12, 1995

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JJ - Jerry Jacobs [interviewee]
GS - Gerry Schneeberg [interviewer]
Date: November 12, 1995

*Tape one, side one:*

GS: This is Gerry Schneeberg interviewing Jerry Jacobs on November 12, 1995. This is tape one. Please tell us for the record, the date of your birth, the place, and a little about your family.

JJ: My name is Jerry Jacobs. I was born on April 25, 1929, in Lodz, Poland. I have had two older brothers, parents, grandparents, assorted cousins, uncles, etc. My father was an accountant, or CPA and his hobby was music. And he was the associate conductor of the Lodz symphony, so that we had constantly in our house on every Friday and mostly Saturdays anywhere from 4 to 15 people who would be playing music of various kinds.

GS: [tape off then on]...sure that your voice is coming through clearly please. [tape off, then on] Can you tell me something more please about your family life, before the war?

JJ: Well, life was fairly nice, especially for me since I was a very young child. And my parents, especially my mother, would be spoiling me on a constant basis, since I was the youngest of the three. And my father would give me a certain amount of time, Saturdays and Sundays, since he was working most of the time. But life was good. We were fairly rich, since my father owned a number of buildings in Lodz, which included a high school as well, five apartment buildings. And I was born on a street called Lipowa. As a matter of fact I went back there last year for the first time, with my wife. And on April 20, 1939 we moved to a building, an apartment building that my father owned, and we had, I think the whole floor in the building, fairly well furnished with lots of crystals, lots of expensive furniture, pianos, and all the things that are needed for a good life. Now the reason that I remember April 20, is that's the day that Hitler's birthday is. And when we moved from Lipowa to Abramoskiego, which was sort of a fairly gentile suburb of Lodz, I saw lots of demonstrations because people were already expecting the war and Hitler was already speaking about either annexing or going in, and most of the Polish people were very scared. But when the Jews, and especially my father who even was told many times by family which was outside of Poland that things may not be very good, because in 1938 an uncle who lived and was born in Berlin was thrown out of Germany and sent to Poland. So we knew that things were not gonna be good. But I think because of his involvement in real estate he was just not able to leave. And I don't think he had the nerve or maybe the foresight to just run away from it. And so our first couple of months in the new apartment was fairly nice with the exception that of course the demonstrations were becoming more frequent and Poles and the Germans were becoming more

irritated and closer to the edge of the war.

GS: Could we go back to a earlier time before this move, and tell me something about your education, where you went to school?

JJ: I went to school in a public school. I think it was on a street called Zowatska. But since I was only there for three years, and this is 50 some odd years later, it's fairly difficult for me to remember names. In fact, I have a lot of older friends who have gone through the Holocaust in various ways. And for some reasons they remember their teachers and classes and dates and so on. And I only have a general description of it in my mind. And even then it's fairly vague. So I know I went to a public school and I think it was a Jewish public school, mostly with Jewish kids, because the section where I was born was quite predominantly Jewish. After the third grade, which I graduated, and if I remember correctly, I think I was the Valedictorian of the class, because I remember getting very, very excited in the middle of my speech and that sort of never left me. That was the extent of my education. Because at this point in September 1, war was declared, of 1939, and by September 5 Lodz was occupied by the German troops.

GS: Just to go back for a moment to your days in school, among non-Jews, either in your school or in your neighborhood, did you encounter any antisemitism?

JJ: Yes. I mean antisemitism was constant and especially shown outside of Lodz. And we were going every year to, for summer vacations, to the suburbs. I think it was called Green Trees. Yolana Boda, no, Green Mountain. So my parents would take me and my brothers to suburbs and there I've been, I've encountered a lot of antisemitism in various forms. Young kids who would haunt Jewish kids, especially if they were religious and if they wore long hair or *peyes* [Yiddish: side curls worn by religious Jews] on the side, they would beat them and do all kind of things that would be only described as very antisemitic. I had I think one or two occasions but they were not that involved because I had two older brothers who always came to my defense. So I was the youngest one and I felt like I could start out with anybody, because I would have some extra protection. But antisemitism, under the government of Poland, was fairly prevalent and Poles in smaller towns-- farms, etc--which was the, probably the big percentage of Poland anyway, were illiterate. And by virtue of being that, and by virtue of going to church and being fairly religious Catholics, would think that Jews had horns and that every Passover, which was a critical time in Poland for Jews, which is Easter, they would feel that the Jews abduct Polish kids and drain the blood out of them, etc.

GS: Your own personal experience, was it mostly when you were outside of Lodz? You mentioned being at Green Mountain.

JJ: Mmm hmm [affirmative], mostly, right. Mostly outside of Lodz. In Lodz itself I think that the discrimination was against older people, meaning I was just a child. So either I didn't sense it or maybe I don't remember, but I know that my father came back many times and spoke about certain things which made him very unhappy, which had something to do with shows of antisemitism.

GS: Was your family observant, religiously? Did they belong to a synagogue, or to Jewish organizations?

JJ: No, not at all. I think that they were observant Jews, but not necessarily religious. I know that my father would go to Temple on high holidays, but other than that, no. And basically we spoke Polish, which was also a different thing from Jews who lived in smaller towns, where Yiddish was the primary language. So, no, they were fairly assimilated, and I don't remember too many Polish friends that they would socialize with. But they had a fairly active social life between some of the partners that my father had in his real estate ventures. As a matter of fact, one of them, whose son was my age, we became very friendly and saw each other frequently, and used to go to movies, starting with the age I would imagine seven, eight, or nine for me. So that's how life really was in Poland, for us anyway. My mother was I think predominantly very happy. I think they had a good marriage, and spoiled me. I think, I know that I was the spoiled one. And they gave very little attention to my middle brother, who always had some sicknesses, that I remember. And my oldest brother was groomed, and actually became a protégé of music, played violin excellently at the age of 15 or 16, playing solo violin concertos. And I know now a little bit about music, where if he continued on the path that he selected, that he would have been one of the great violin virtuosos.

GS: Did you have any music education yourself?

JJ: No, because with my oldest brother being a violinist, and my second oldest brother starting on the piano, my father wanted to have obviously a *Kinder* orchestra. By the time it came to me, I think we made this move in early '39 and of course after that things changed drastically. So I feel that, after I tell you about my projects that I have for the next number of years, and what I have been doing till now about the Holocaust, I feel I was greatly deprived. And sometimes I get very angry about that, but that's water under the bridge.

GS: Well, we'll speak of that later. Can you tell me anything more about the Jewish community in Lodz? Were you aware, I realize you were very young, but were you aware of an organized Jewish Council, a *Kehillah*? Your parents, do you remember their ever speaking of Jews coming together in any way as a group?

JJ: Eh...

GS: On that...

JJ: Yes, first of all, until last year, I-- my knowledge of Lodz was that out of a population of 600,000 there were 300,000 Jews. So that by itself made it one of the largest populated cities in Poland. Ever since I bestowed a lifetime achievement award on Professor Luejan Dobroszycki, who makes that figure 245,000-- and I will bow to him because he is much more learned than I am. My parents were part of a Jewish group, and I'm not quite sure what it was. But yes, they were socially gathering with other Jews for the purposes of being together and probably laying out some plans for whatever time.

GS: All right, let's talk about what happened now, when the Germans invaded.

In that first period, if you have any recollection, in September, was your family, this was the time when your family made the move to the new apartment?

JJ: No, way before. That's April 20, which is...

GS: Oh, oh, yes.

JJ: Which...

GS: So you had already to moved to this...

JJ: Right, oh yes.

GS: Suburb.

JJ: Yes. We moved to the suburbs. And...

GS: And how was your life affected?

JJ: Well, I think that we had some fear of antisemitism, because I remember it came evening or so that they would draw their drapes and so on. But we lived on a second floor of the building that my father owned. But I think he felt fairly protected, because he was a very good guy. And I think he treated everybody very, very well. So, he really didn't have any enemies. But September 1 came and a couple of days of bombing of Lodz, went through with planes flying very low because there was no resistance from the Poles. And either the 4th or the 5th of September whole battalions or groups of Germans were coming in on motorcycles with the attached little seat. And there were a tremendous amount. And it didn't take very long. In fact I would imagine it probably didn't take more than a few days before they set up posters and ordinances which prohibited Jews from having radios, having large musical instruments, having I think they also had a curfew for Jews especially. And of course we started hearing about all sort of dramatic things that Germans were doing to the Jews, to the girls, to the men, to embarrass them in whatever way that they could. I haven't seen that, because starting with the war, school stopped of course. So that I had no reason to be going out. And my parents were not allowing the kids to go out at all. My father would go out from time to time, but even then you knew that he was very scared because the Germans would do all sort of things to people who were more religious, people wearing a beard and so on. And for some reason they were able to spot a Jew from a non-Jew, almost instantly. So life started changing in a very drastic mode.

GS: It must have been frightening for you as a child.

JJ: Very, very, yeah, right. Very. Because you know you had no protection, and of course probably no more than four to six weeks after the Germans came in, I remember my father had a person that he knew, probably worked with him or knew of him, and who became part of the German police. Because I think he was a *Ostdeutscher*, meaning German who had been living in Poland for a number of years, but now that the Germans were coming back became more involved in German issues. And I remember seeing my father giving him lots of money, paper money and gold and things, for hiding. And I remember my father speaking to my mother about that, that if this things goes by, that we still will have some of the money involved back. But as I said, no more than four

to six weeks which will take us into the middle of October, 1939, we heard a knock on the door and four people came in, four guys, dressed in civilian uniforms and identified themselves as German police or whatever, and gave my parents 30 minutes to leave the apartment that we had. And they had to do that. I think my fear of what was going on prevents me now from sort of even knowing what they took, and how they took it. But all they could do is take whatever they had in a half an hour and had to leave. And that's the last time of course I saw the apartment until after the war. So we moved to a poor section of Lodz. I think that was called Baluty, B-A-L-U-T-Y, and found a place for us. At the time of course my uncle, my aunt, and a cousin, who lived in Germany all their lives, that's the uncle who was thrown out of Germany in 1938-- and of course we took them in then--and his wife, that's my aunt, my mother' sister, and a cousin who was oh I would imagine two or three years older than I am, and felt totally German in his upbringing and his culture and everything else, and couldn't wait for the Germans to come in, we went and obviously got some sort of lodging with whatever possessions we were able to take. Not too long after, they were proclaiming a ghetto in Lodz and they spoke about people going into the ghetto. And we must have done that, some, one way or the other, because my next recollection is of another apartment in the ghetto, where we were together. And probably December or January of 1939, '40, as a matter of fact I remember my older brother had a girlfriend and we were dragging whatever possessions we had to the new place that we found, and her, the girlfriend's father had a heart attack. And there was nothing to do but leave him there right in the street, because there was just no where that you could get any medical help and the Germans, I mean they absolutely had no sympathy for anything, and would just proceed with their plans of moving the Jews as fast as they could into the ghetto area. I think the ghetto was closed in early 1940 and with that life changed very drastically.

*Tape one, side two:*

GS: This is side two of tape one, interview with Jerry Jacobs. Please recapitulate briefly the period in the ghetto, your working experience and the end of the liquidation of the ghetto and your move to Auschwitz.

JJ: We had a little problem as you, as indicated yourself, with the tape.

GS: Yes.

JJ: And a lot of my recollections about the liquidation of the ghetto and coming into Auschwitz was not recorded. And let me just sort of do it in a brief version. Every, I don't do this very often; in fact the only other time I did that is for *Shoah*, for Spielberg, because I think that the project that he is involved in is extremely worthwhile and I now after many years of not being able to talk about it at all, have come to the decision that as we're getting older, these things have to be told. And they have to be told so that history doesn't repeat itself and that we do something about not allowing this to happen again. So let me go back briefly into the ghetto and the work, selection processes, the deaths, and the eventual liquidation of the ghetto which came about in August of 1944. And at that point my aunt, the one from Germany, died as well. And that was an expected thing for almost anybody. Our hopes were raised from time to time by various reports of people who were coming from other parts of Europe, who were sent from Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc., even Germany. And most of the people in Lodz either didn't want to believe that these things were happening, or hoped that these things-- and I'm talking about extermination-- were not happening. And Jews went fairly peacefully into the transports and were loaded into cattle cars where I was loaded with my family and about another 100 people, which made the cattle cars a very inhuman place to be. There was no space for urinating or anything else, and people were standing up. Most people would not have a space to even sit down. And at one point in our journey as we started out to what eventually happened to be Auschwitz and something that we did not know where we were going, somebody in my car cut out a piece of the floor so that people who were, had defecated, urinated, thrown up, and anything else and just had no facilities, or anyplace to go, were able to do it maybe partially. People were fainting. I know when we left the car, and I think it was the next day, in Auschwitz, and got off the, onto the platform, we sort of knew already then that what we hoped was just a hoax and a propaganda by other people were really a truism. You saw the chimneys and you saw the way they treated the people as they got off, by both Germans and the inmates who were there before and who helped in organizing whatever luggage there was. And when my father asked one of them, "What's going on?" He replied with some reference to *Tisha b'Av*,[1] which meant to my father that we probably will never see each other again. And of course they started separating the women from the men. And as we started

[1]Annual day of mourning, commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.

walking toward the separation place or rotation place, my mother and my father instructed us that if we are ever alive after the war, that we would meet back in our last apartment in Lodz. And so separated the women and we went into the right hand side.

GS: You were with your brothers?

JJ: I was with my brothers, my cousin, and my father. And they had rows of five. And in order, my brother at that point, brothers, instinctively protected my father and myself because they probably thought I was very young. And we were almost passing by the Germans to the right when one of them grabbed, with the end of a cane, my father, and switched him to the left hand side. At that point we knew that we are never gonna see him again. It was a place that is not very nice to recollect. We went through delousing, put into a bathtub full of naphta, stripped of our hair with electric machines as we were passing by, stripped of everything that we had on, and wound up with a concentration camp uniform of stripes, brown stripes. Now this is a little over 50 years later and I still don't wear any brown suits, shirts, or anything else, because it becomes a symbol of something that I am very much against. The time in Auschwitz was extremely difficult. You started out at four or five in the morning with a roll call, and you may have been standing for 10, 12, 16 hours in the cold, without moving. If you remember *Schindler's List*, what I remember about specifically Auschwitz, and I think we went later to Birkenau, Birkenau being an extension of Auschwitz, is the mud. Constant mud that you had to stand in cold weather with just a jacket and a pair of pants, of course without any kind of a size direction. If you go into the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, look at all the memorabilia that are there, and notice you will find no underwear. My wife and family that went there to see did not realize that until I brought it to their attention that there was nothing but just the jackets and the pants and wooden shoes. Everything else are memorabilia of people who have been either exterminated or somehow went through it. But anyway, going back to Birkenau and Auschwitz, that was a very difficult time for me, realizing that my parents were gone. At that point I am 15.

GS: Were you put to work?

JJ: And, no, no, not right away.

GS: No.

JJ: We spent all of our time in Auschwitz, Birkenau, just mostly in the roll call. And then whatever other time we would spend I remember spending in the bathroom. You say why did we spend it in the bathroom? Because they, there was a holes, toilet holes, quite a long way up. And people congregated in one of the corners or two corners. And as we were standing very closely to each other, we at least generated some heat. And that was one way of staying alive and keeping warm, because outside, even though it was only September, it was very cold. That, 1944, was a very cold year. After a day or two or maybe a couple of days I was numbered in Birkenau. And again my brothers tried to protect me. And I have number B9483. My oldest brother, is B9482. My

older brother is B9484. And after a couple of weeks we were selected for work by again a selection process. But this what was, this one was for work rather than extermination. And there we were sent to a labor camp, which we built not too far from Auschwitz, where we were working on a bombed out railway station. And we were moving the debris and trying to make some sense out of that. Of course, under the eyes of the German soldiers, and maybe some of the SS who supervised us. And we were brought back every day, back to the labor camp, with just a little more food than we had in the ghetto. Because in Auschwitz the food was even scarcer than almost anywhere else. And I now hear stories that there was a hospital in Auschwitz, etc. I certainly was not aware of anything other than the barracks where we spent the nights huddled together, six, seven, eight people. And one of the reasons that we liked that was that it generated, again, heat. There was no covers. There was no pillows. There was no anything.

GS: Was there any stove, a single stove to...

JJ: No, no, no, no, no.

GS: In the barrack?

JJ: Well there was an outside water, what do you call these things where, like you know the feeding where animals roam and they drink water?

GS: Oh, a water trough.

JJ: Trough, with some spigots. And of course this is cold water. And...

GS: It took...

JJ: At least I wasn't too interested. Probably once or twice I had to do something, because between the mud and standing outside and maybe falling or so, I must have gone and washed myself. But I really don't remember using it too often.

GS: It took courage to wash in cold water in that weather.

JJ: Mmm hmm [Affirmative].

GS: I'm sure.

JJ: Mmm hmm [Affirmative]. Outside at like 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, because I think roll call was 5:00, maybe 5:30. Then you would stand there until decided, that they had the roll call. If some, somebody made a mistake and counted one or two more--I would imagine that that was the reason-- they would just let you stand until they got the call right. Or they may have just made you stand there to make you feel that you're not a, an important part of life at all. But...

GS: When you started to work in this labor camp, do you remember how long a period that was?

JJ: A few weeks. And I think what happened is that the Russians were coming in from the East and they tried at that point to move the camp. So we went through a death march of at least two days, where whoever started out didn't necessarily finish. The group was decimated, because if you fell and you couldn't keep up for the death march, you would be just shot behind. And then so people behind, there were soldiers, there were SS behind. And I mean you heard it every couple of minutes that

somebody would fall out and just couldn't continue for whatever reason.

GS: Were your brothers with you?

JJ: Yes, my brothers and my cousin. They stayed on together and supported each other. And maybe that was one reason that we were able to, and try to whenever we went to a labor camp, for instance, we asked the guy who selected the people-- and I think he wanted 150 or 200 laborers-- I think at one point he must have omitted one of us and I don't know who it was-- and we asked him if we could, it must, my cousin must have asked him because he would be the one who spoke German well. I mean everybody spoke German, but he would be speaking you know, a *Volksdeutsch*. And they allowed. So we went to the labor camp again together.

GS: Do you remember any of the names when you left Auschwitz?

JJ: No.

GS: It's hard to recall isn't it?

JJ: No, no. Not only it's hard to recall. But I think for 40 some odd years I tried to forget that.

GS: Put it aside.

JJ: And really had absolutely nothing to do with anything that had to do with Holocaust survivors and anything else, not realizing that maybe I was doing that not to talk about it. And when my children or friends would ask something, I would make a joke out of that. And when somebody asked me what the numbers were, people who didn't really know, I would tell them, "That's my private telephone number." That was my answer. So you know that I was not a verbal fellow who would talk about that too frequently. I think only because of my wife now am I able to express myself a little bit more. And then I'm very involved and organized a organization that produces concerts every year in memory of Holocaust. As a matter of fact, I have three compositions by three fairly distinguished composers, dedicated to me. Two of them I premiered at the concerts, which draw audiences of anywhere between 1500 to 6500 people in New York City. So it's becoming a yearly annual interfaith concert of remembrance. My last one was October 7, 1995. And that was the sixth annual. And we held that at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

GS: Oh yes, I know of this.

JJ: Which is now becoming a extremely social center for anything in world affairs. Dean James Parks Morton is a wonderful human being who is totally supportive [unclear], whose cathedral is a permanent exhibit of the Holocaust itself. So I find that I'm being in a lot of respect honored by that. Maybe that's one of the reasons too that I'm able to talk about it and go into the history of what was going on.

GS: It's a very important and constructive way to deal with the memories...

JJ: [unclear] I'm trying to stay with it even though it's very difficult to get funding. And I do, I'm the Chairman and Executive Producer, and unfortunately, I'm doing everything about the concert myself, from programming to selections to fund

raising to--so it's taking its toll in some ways. I hope to be able to continue for as long as I can.

GS: I hope so.

JJ: So...

GS: I hope you, I'm almost certain we've gotten a notification of this...

JJ: Probably.

GS: At our Archive.

JJ: Yes, we've expanded our...

GS: But I want to be certain that we know of the event next year when it takes place.

JJ: So now going back to...

GS: Let's go back to this march...

JJ: Labor day and march...

GS: And la-...

JJ: Death march, which took us to...

GS: The next labor camp.

JJ: Which took us, no, which took us half way to another train ride in railway cars. But this time that they were open. They were only half, you know, they had no roof and...

GS: Right.

JJ: They only had a door. And that took about, oh at least three or four days, and with no food. And the only food that we would get or the only thing that we would get that would keep us alive is the fact that it was snowing a lot of time. So we would try to consume as much snow as we can, not to be too dehydrated. A lot of people froze to death. So, and we got to Buchenwald, another extermination camp. But this time, again we went through a selection process and went through it and again were placed into a sort of a labor camp, from which we went to another concentration camp. But this one was a labor camp, called Rehmsdorf, R-E-H-M-S-D-O-R-F. We worked on, again, fixing up not necessarily a railroad station, but the railroad bed.

GS: Tracks.

JJ: Yeah.

GS: Before you speak of this experience, in Buchenwald...

JJ: Right?

GS: You were there a short time.

JJ: Very short time.

GS: Very short time.

JJ: Probably no more than, less than a week I would imagine.

GS: And you think this was perhaps the end of 1944...

JJ: Oh yes.

GS: Or early 1945?

JJ: No, it would have to be toward the end of ’44 because Rehmsdorf was a terrifying camp, very strict. People were running away from it and on a daily basis every time somebody would run away they would call roll call again, and keep us there overnight for hours, until they would find the person who ran away. And then they would hang him in front, which was not anything that I hadn’t seen before because they did that in the Lodz Ghetto. They were hanging groups of people at the same time. So, the memory of a young teen seeing that is not terrible. Anyway, it’s terrible. Not not terrible.

GS: So, would you say that you were at Rehmsdorf the end of ‘44?

JJ: Yeah.

GS: Still the winter.

JJ: Winter, heavy winter.

GS: Yes.

JJ: Snow and everything else. And we started talking. We met a lot of people from Lodz. And we started talking to my brother. At that point I’m already 15 years old, so I’m becoming a person. And we started talking about running away-- my two brothers, my cousin, myself, and another fellow who we knew very well. And so we had found shirts. We had a shirt or whatever. And I had a belt that I hid. Because you were not supposed to wear a belt. And this one day, probably January of ‘45 already, we decided to make the break, even though we saw on a constant basis that everybody who ran away would be brought back. But things were so terrible at that point, and maybe because I was 15 and my brothers were 21 and 22, we thought that we could overcome them. And we decided to make a break. And my brothers and my cousin and the other fellow decided they don’t want to do it, that they are scared. And I’m like, at that point I don’t know what happened to me; I started running away, and wound up, I stayed a little while in a field, farm field, farm.

GS: And you went alone?

JJ: I went alone, and stayed overnight in some haystacks which were standing there, and started walking East, and used the sun as a guide. And I had the belt, still had the prisoner garb, and when I passed by one of the first villages-- and that was dark at night-- there were some clothes hanging out to be dried by most likely Polish farmers who were moved from Poland from their home to do labor work in Germany. And so I now had clothing, no shoes, still wearing my Dutch...

GS: Wooden.

JJ: Wooden things. And eventually fell asleep near a fence and was woken up by two German policemen. What happened is that I fell asleep in a security zone. There was an airport right behind me and I didn’t realize that. So they took me to a little police station that had nobody there. There was a phone and two guys who were there, and they were calling in that they found somebody who was sleeping. And then I decided like after a little while I’m not going to go on that way, and started running. And these were probably older people. So this was sort of a police militia, probably were older Germans

who were staying there. And [I] outran them, and again started hiding for a little while in various fields and old demolished buildings and so on. And now I started telling the people that I'm running away from, I heard while I was sleeping that the Americans bombed Dresden, which would have been a big bombing. So I was telling people that I was running away from Dresden, that I left all my papers, that my parents were killed. And at that point I already spoke a very nice German. So I was a *Ostdeutsch*, meaning I was a Polish German who was running away. And after a while I got a job on a farm. I just walked over and, "Yeah I'm ready to work." And they took me in and gave me, you know, some hard work to do. I, what I did is I shoveled manure most of the time, wearing long sleeve shirts...

GS: So no one could see your uniform...

JJ: So that nobody could see that. When I went to take a shower or wash myself I made sure that I had nobody around me and so on. And the reason that I remember the dates, so I was on the farm it must be three, four weeks.

GS: This is still in January of...

JJ: No, it must be...

GS: '45 or now February...

JJ: No, it must be going into February, maybe even a little later, because I started, one of the guys who was Polish was telling me that they don't like my looks and so on. And I, he said, "You know, I think that they're going to call and get maybe a cop to sort of see who you are." And so the following morning, like at dawn...

GS: You left.

JJ: I disappeared, and again started walking East, back home. At that point-

*Tape two, side one:*

GS: This is tape two, side one, an interview with Jerry Jacobs.

JJ: Anyway...

GS: You left this farm where you had been working, posing as a...

JJ: A Polish German...

GS: German, right.

JJ: Who was bombed out of Dresden, had no papers, family was killed. I was 15 or 16 so I mean I must have aroused sympathy. But I didn't look for sympathy because I didn't look for any people to begin with. I did most of my walking, the traveling was purely walking, on side roads, small towns, bypassed as much people as I could. Many times I was, like on the farm, I was just sitting around and I would hear Polish language which meant that there were Poles. And they were taking me in, very warm and very nice. And my feeling is that they knew that I was Jewish. After five years of being where you are, you cannot act very normally. So, but they gave me some new shirts and maybe another pair of pants or something. It isn't anything that I wanted to take because I didn't want to have any baggage with me anyways. So when I walked, I walked around just with what the things that I was wearing. And I remember about April 6 or 5, 6 of '45, I met up with the German Army, with the American Army. And they were passing me by and dropping all their K rations. And I would grab the dry milk and sugar and mix it together and have the, for a couple of days probably one of the finest meals, dinners, lunches and so on I'd ever had, which of course produced a diarrhea, of all kind of things. And the reason already that I remember the date is that they asked me to do some spot checking and asked me about whatever was happening in Germany. Now since I didn't speak anything but German, Polish and some Yiddish, they found a sergeant from Chicago. And of course I'm sorry at this point that I don't know his name or whatever. And he, a Jewish fellow, spoke Yiddish. So he was my interpreter there and so on. And I scouted for the American Army for four, five, six, seven days, the troop movement of the Germans, where they were and so on. It felt good. And one day I come over and everybody is very gloomy, and they had a newspaper which I see April 12, 1945, FDR died.

GS: Yes.

JJ: And so that's how we, some dates you probably die with.

GS: Are stamped on...

JJ: You know. April 20. That's like something, people who, you know, when I say to them, "Do you know what today is?" But now, and I mean nobody would even think of Hitler's birthday. I'll never forget that. That's like I'm gonna go to death with it. And life was sort of beginning to be good, and plenty of food, plenty of everything else that you wanted, almost plenty of money if I wanted it, because the German banks were available. We had no problems going in there and taking whatever we wanted. And in

fact there was a group of people that all had gotten organized themselves. And, but then after a while I started, I decided that I want to go back. So I would imagine toward the end of April I started hitching rides on trains, freight cars mostly, but this time in a different form, to go back to Poland like, and crossed the border with no difficulties, and arrived in Lodz some time in the end of May, 1945. And of course the first thing I did, in the clothing that I was wearing or whatever, is get to the place where we lived. And of course there was nobody there. I couldn't go into my apartment because somebody else was there though I don't even know whom. And that was the first time. I stayed in Lodz for about a year, with friends that hid in Lodz. And they were friends of my oldest brother. In fact he had a girlfriend who probably he would marry who went on one of the last transports. She didn't want to stay and hide. And of course she was killed. So they took me in. Her older brother and his wife and the other portion of the family that knew of our family, knew of my oldest brother, because they were supposed to get married or, you know, they were going to get married. And some time in, and I got a job in the textile...

GS: Lodz was a big textile center.

JJ: Of course. Textile line, and stayed there for a good year, '45, '46. Some time in the middle of the year I found out that my two brothers were alive and that they were in Germany, in Landsberg. So I started my trek...

GS: Back to Germany.

JJ: To Germany. But this one was quite different, because you had to do it in hiding. Borders were closed so I had to go from Poland to Czechoslovakia, from Czechoslovakia to Austria. And all these borders I traveled at night, with guides. Austria, eventually to Germany, to Munich, and of course to Landsberg. And my friend in Lodz, a lady who is, I'll never forget of course, gave me a five dollar bill. Dollars. And she sewed it in to my pants, that if I ever need it, that I, it was available. So I needed it of course, to pay most of the guides. They wouldn't take anything else but dollars. We're talking about any European currency. So we went to Bratislava, Prague and Vienna. And of course there were at that point organized centers for displaced people. So when I got there that was fine. But crossing the borders was still...

GS: You had to do that illegally.

JJ: Oh illegally, totally illegally. But once I got, like I, in Austria, I was in Vienna, and they had a Jewish center where you could go in and, you know, feel good. I went to Innsbruck and Salzburg and so on. There were people who would take me in and so on. And eventually we went up to Landsberg and from there on we had family in New York who sent affidavits. And my oldest brother went to America in December of '46, but I had to be escorted by a adult...

GS: Because...

JJ: Because I was under 18.

GS: Of underage.

JJ: So my older brother, Sydney would-- stayed with me in Landsberg for a little while and then we went up to Bremen, and March 12, 1947 came to New York-- since everybody was speaking in Europe about money or gold, it's laying on the streets of America. I will never forget, when I got off the boat and my family was there-- my brother and his wife-- the first thing I went down, and these were the cobble streets on the pier, I looked down to see where the gold was. So that's the end of the story, and here we are now.

GS: And you've had a very successful life here I gather.

JJ: Yes, very difficult but successful. And I'm now very involved in the concerts that I produce, which take up probably nine months of my year. And between the work that I do and the company that I have and the work here to be done on the concerts, I'm fully occupied.

GS: Well you've had a fascinating history and a wonderful final chapter of your story.

JJ: Mmm hmm.

GS: I'd like to go back, if we can, just to see if there's anything more you can add to the period when you were in Rehmsdorf, which was brief, I know. And was there anyone, either there or at Auschwitz, who offered any help, any support, any sympathy?

JJ: No, not at all.

GS: No one among the *Kapos* or the guards or...

JJ: You mean, oh the guards? The German people?

GS: No, what...

JJ: We had no, we had basically no, even though they were standing next to you, they had no contact there.

GS: No contact at all.

JJ: That was I mean as totally -- they were superior people and we were the...

GS: *Untermensch*.

JJ: Vermin, yeah, *Untermensch*.

GS: How...

JJ: Now...

GS: How about the *Kapos* within the barracks?

JJ: Depending on who they were and how you responded, they were either very bad or fair. I mean they really did not come out with roses...

GS: No.

JJ: Or cakes and so on, to greet you. No, no, no, no, no, no. They had to do a job and their life depended on that. And they did their job. I mean we went through that and had no choice. Now, the little story that I wanted to add to it is that two years ago I went to hear a conference on Lodz and the Holocaust. And there were two speakers in New York City on Stern College of Women. And one of them was an American, Professor Shapiro. And the other one was a person from Lodz, who still resides in

Poland, who lives in Warsaw, and who comes to, he is a learned guy and he talks about Lodz Ghetto, because he was there throughout. And I went there, I introduced myself to him, and left after the conference. I spoke to some of the people who were there. And he called me later because his daughter lives in Chicago and she's a flutist and he heard about my music and concerts and he wanted to know maybe I could do something for him or whatever. And I said, "Why don't you come down to my office and we'll talk for a few minutes. We'll see what we can do; we'll have coffee or whatever." And he came down and I found out that he was not just from Lodz but he lived not too far from where I was born, that he went to Auschwitz either the same day or the next day and that we went to Birkenau, and that he had the number. I said, "What's your number?" And his number is something like 70 numbers away from mine. So he must have been there 10 minutes before me, five minutes before me, 15 minutes before me. And that was very fascinating, I mean, it really made me feel like he was my brother. And subsequently, the following year, we went to Poland for the first time. And he acted as a guide for me for a couple of days, a very knowledgeable historian. So he went through the cemetery in Warsaw and all kind of places and we had a very-- his name is Marian Turski. I just wanted to, T-U-R-S-K-I. He still resides in Poland and I hope I see him in New York at one point because he comes in to the United States to give lectures and so on. But that was...

GS: That's a very special...

JJ: Special occasion, yes.

GS: Relationship with a *Landsman*.

JJ: Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh.

GS: Well, I have to thank you very much for this interview and I'll be happy if you wish to send you a copy...

JJ: [unclear] yes.

GS: Of the tape...

JJ: Very much so.

GS: And let you know in what ways it can be useful...

JJ: Okay.

GS: To us.

JJ: And as I mentioned to you, the Interfaith Committee of Remembrance, which I organized and I Chair and I'm the Executive Producer, is helping any community. As a matter of fact right now I have a very good friend who is the President of a temple in Conestee, South Carolina. And we are trying to build a little, small Holocaust Memorabilia, call it museum or exhibit or whatever. And I volunteered my services, anything that I could do to get them started and help them. So that if you have anything that would relate to Holocaust, I would be more than happy to get it from you people or if you can let me know what you have. I've been trying to make some sort of a introduction to other people who may want to have that in their archives or in their exhibits. So we can...

GS: All right, we'll keep in touch with you.

JJ: Okay.

GS: And again I thank you.

JJ: My pleasure.