HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

DANIEL LEVEY

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Patricia Rich
Date: April 14, 2008

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DL - Daniel Levey [interviewee]
PR - Patricia Rich [interviewer]
Date: April 14, 2008

Tape one, side one:

PR: Okay, this is an interview today on April 14th 2008 with Mr. Daniel Levey and I'm going to start, and Mr. Levey, by asking you to tell me where you were born and when, and a little about your family.

DL: Well I was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia, which was to be Yugoslavia at that time in, April 24, 1925. And we had a family, we were a family of 10 people, eight children and the parents, and we had been attacked on, in the month of April of, everything was April, in April 1941, by the Nazis.

PR: Okay, let me jump in for a minute, so you were born, how old were you in 1941?

DL: In 1941, I was 15…

PR: You were 15.

DL: …going 16.

PR: So before the Nazis invaded can you tell me a little bit about what your life was like before the war?

DL: Well our life was not that great. We were a poor family and we had to put up with a lot of stuff because we had Muslims at that time that followed me all the way now to here. It's still happening with the Muslims who used to always pick on Jewish students and look for fights and they used to follow us to the school. In the wintertime, we had to walk for half an hour, no buses, no nothing and we were attacked by these gangs that used to, they would put a stone and cover it up with a snow. So they would hit, throw it at you and then to kind of antagonize you and so on and on. We used to…

PR: Were you-- I'm sorry go ahead…

DL: We used to have all kinds of fights on our way to school and back.

PR: Were there other Jewish people in your community?

DL: Yes.

PR: Was it a sizeable Jewish community in Sarajevo?

DL: Well, in Sarajevo it was the largest one, I guess. It's large, larger, one of the larger communities. It was in, I believe it was 14,500. That was great then. We were a big community, very, how to say, active.

PR: Was there a synagogue? Did you go to *shul*?

DL: There's a synagogue, yes. There was a synagogue in Krya Petra *Ulica*, that's the street where there's a famous Sarajevo Synagogue that had a Cantor Kalmi

Ataras[1]. Cantor Ataras that used to be a tenor, also. And that much I remember and it was a big Jewish crowd always in the neighborhoods around Krya Petra *Ulica* which is *Ulica* is street [in English], I should say. And they had all kinds of shops and pastries and what not. And then, and then there was like a Muslim section there that all the mosque, mosque here and there and they were always looking for trouble.

PR: Now was yours a Sephardic community?

DL: Yes.

PR: So you're from a Sephardic…

DL: I'm from the Sephardic community but we had a both, Ashkenazi.

PR: Whoa, move your foot, your glasses, your glasses are under your foot. Don't put, lift your foot, lift your foot.

DL: I'm sorry.

PR: That's alright; I didn't want you to step right on your glasses.

DL: No, no.

PR: Sorry I didn't mean to push your leg.

DL: I'm drying, my breath is drying out. [pause, phone rings] Oh.

PR: Do you want to stop for a minute?

DL: That's alright.

PR: Okay. So you were saying in, you were in a Sephardic community in Sarajevo. In your family, what did your father do? Did he work?

DL: My father was much older than my mother. It was his second marriage. He was 53 years old when I last saw him and my mother was 37. As we lived up in a, in a section, like a Muslim section of Sarajevo and we were always in some sort of trouble from way back then and…

PR: How did your father earn a living? Did he work?

DL: Oh, yeah. My father used to be, a what do you call it, a tuxedo operator making button holes in a tuxedo…

PR: Oh.

DL: …that had to be, you know, one thread to thread leaning on each other, it was perfect stuff, and he used to work on that and later on he couldn't see good so he went and became a conductor, collecting tickets and the change for the streetcars in the city.

PR: And did your family observe holidays at home?

DL: Yes.

PR: Did you keep kosher in your home or…

DL: We were kind of, yeah, kosher, yes. Not strictly kosher, just a kosher. Like we didn't eat pork or, but we weren't too much into the religion or we were, we were members of the synagogue and we used to observe holidays.

[1]Isaac Kalmi Ataras.

PR: And did any men in your family serve in the army?

DL: Well at that time my father did. He did in the Austria-Hungarian army that used to rule the Ottoman Empire, when they ruled, and he was in the First World War.

PR: Oh.

DL: Not in this. And he even used to say, when they came to collect people to take them to the, on the trucks, he was saying that, "Oh they're not going to bother us. I served in the army. I have medals," everything. Everything was thrown away disregarded and they were taken to to the camp.

PR: Okay, I'm going to slow you down for a minute, okay? So you're living in Sarajevo in 1941 and what do you remember first about the Nazis or about the trouble beginning with the Holocaust?

DL: Well the trouble with the Holocaust begun when one day I, on April the 14th of '41…

PR: Today's April 14th.

DL: Yeah, I remember the date. And isn't it funny, today is the 14th, I didn't even think of that. And they, the Germans invaded Yugoslavia and they, that morning of April 14th, they dropped bombs in Belgrade, Serbia and Sarajevo that same morning. And they declared the war at seven o'clock while they were bombing us at five, prior to. And we were, we all ran out to the street and ditched into the curb as the bombs were exploding and shrapnels were all over, so we were caught off guard that one morning. And as we got caught, we ran out to the other section of the city where we thought it was less horrible and so we had to come back later, it was not much, and it took only a couple of hours, to kind of settle down and that was that. Then we proceeded with the community services. They used to have our names and they used to send us to the labor camps to do the certain labor.

PR: So that started right away after the Nazis invaded?

DL: Just after Nazis invaded, after the while, so I would say that spring '41 was a very important. And they, we were, we were called to work on certain duties in the city. They used to call, have our names and send you a letter to that a fact that you have to show up here and there, at this this date at this hour, and we would have to go there to work. So the first time, they called my, my father and me to have to go work. So I went, we went there to this camp of Germans and they put us line, put us on the line up and asked what we do. So I said I was working as an electrician for my uncle who used to install elevators, just gears now, and he used to give me employment when I was having free time, so I was learning a trade. And so on they asked me and I told them that exactly what I was able to do, as they were building their roadways with the blacktop and they were packing the roads and we had to go pull the, pull this wheel, heavy wheel, and even occasionally beaten if you didn't move fast enough, and this was controlled by this German-loving collaborators.

PR: They were Yugoslav?

DL: Yeah. And, but the-- and the Germans were in charge, because it was a German camp. And I got, when I got interviewed I told them that I have knowledge in electricity in [unclear] and this and that. And other people were students in that times only students. I wasn't only student. I figured that would help me, in order to do remedial work, not to do remedial works, work around, that I could do something that wouldn't be so strenuous. And sure enough the German guy that was in charge, he asked me all that and I, after I told him, so he told me to stay here. "And what did you do? Show your hands." If you had any blisters they would tell you to come on the side. If you did some *mit* heav…

PR: Manual labor.

DL: Manual labor. And so there, few were going manual labor, young boys, 15, 16, 14 year-old and older people they didn't do much of that. So, but they would check you by just looking at your hands. And they separated us and they put me on a, on a work detail which had carpenters, lumbers, and electricians, and I being, not the electrician, really full-fledged, I claimed to be. But they asked me, "Can you, can you just wire up a barracks for the troops, with a light and a switch in the wall?" And they had the two, three new, what do you call that, barracks, and I had to go with a German officer, sergeant, I had to go with him to the city and buy the material necessary for the job, as I was to do. And…

PR: Did you know how to do it?

DL: I did know.

PR: You did know enough to do that?

DL: Yes. I did know, there was not a very simple [unclear]. It was to do three lights, to put one or two, three lights to be put in each barrack. And put the switch on one side and then the other which was called three-way switch. And I went and got all this material for which they never paid. They went to the Jewish shop and as it was written, this is the Jewish shop, and there you go. They just filled bill and they sign, the Germans, that's all they did. They didn't never pay for no work.

PR: Did the Jews in Sarajevo have to wear stars…

DL: Yes.

PR: …and all that?

DL: Sure, after a short time they issued orders to go, to where they going to come to have, you going to have a star of, with a "Z" on it, which is, meant Jew Croatian, *Židov*[2] [Jew in Croatian]. And…

PR: What language, so what was your native language?

DL: It's Croatian.

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[2]*Židov* - In satellite states allied to Germany, Jews were often marked with special badges or insignia. In the fascist states of Croatia, Jews were forced to wear patches or armbands bearing the Star of David and the initial "Z", for *Židov* [Jew]. In Croatia "Z" is often pronounced "J". (USHMM.org)

PR: So your first language was Croatian.

DL: And several Croatian at that time. That's where it disappeared, several Croatian armies all separated Croatian and Serbians.

PR: Did you understand German?

DL: Did I understand? I did understand a little bit. Not that I, see I wasn't the, I wasn't the Ashkenazi Jew that at home spoken either Yiddish or is spoken Yugoslav.

PR: But you did speak Yiddish or did not?

DL: I, we did not have Yiddish.

PR: You didn't, I wouldn't think so, yeah.

DL: No, we didn't have Yiddish there, called Yiddish. But we had, we had that what do you call it? We had…

PR: Ladino?

DL: Ladino, yeah.

PR: Ladino.

DL: Spoken at home, which is a called in our, they called it Yiddish, but it wasn't regular Yiddish like you know here. So they-- what I was going to say about…

PR: About the language at home?

DL: Yeah, the language is spoken, so I had to learn two languages, in the school, and at high school already. I took German.

PR: Okay.

DL: So I could communicate better with-- and that kind of saved me from getting picked up. I used to kind of assimilate there and buy cigarettes for the Germans, you know, the kids hanging around in the, near the camp and-- so I was able to, to get away with many things because they shielded like that, amongst them. And I did learn a little German.

PR: So the German kids shielded you, you said? Shielded among the German kids?

DL: There was no, there was no actually German kids. They were *Kulturbund*. *Kulturbund* is called the people from the German background. Did they moved to the country they were called *Hochdeutshe,* German folks. And they were, they were the ones that used to be in charge of all kinds of details in giving people work or picking people up right off the street, "You Jew, come here!" and they would tell you to go and take this over there and get a receipt or take take this and better be quick, or things, so you don't forget. So they kind of use you, that way much easier for any errands you had to comply.

PR: Okay. So they arrived when the Nazis came in, they moved-- or had they been in Yugoslavia before that?

DL: Have, this, yes, they were, those people were here. They, they became the, they became the, you know, sympathizers with their own kind. So they were able to slowly take over. So they did, and I didn't say that my friends who were called to work in these camps. First was the big army camp in, Novus Sarajevo, that means. It was a

big camp, military and that's where we were first taken for labor, so I remember there were guys were advised being [unclear], you know. The other guys were-- what was I going to say…

PR: What your friends did at the labor camp?

DL: Yeah. They, they had to go pack the road and, you know, the real hard labor, and I-- yeah, come to think of that work, it wasn't just simple, like that. I had to now; I had to spend a week there. We used to come in the morning and go at night, home. And that's how they started to keep you at the bay. Then they slowly were calling out whenever they needed people. They would know where to go, but what to do. So, and this sergeant gave me the layout on the job, what I have to do and all that. So I had done coming hard. I even had all the strips I kept up. I gave them to my niece and my granddaughter. She was very anxious…

PR: You mean you tried to write down some of your memories?

DL: She wanted to rewrite it. She wanted to have a summary of sorts of my story.

PR: Well, you know what, there's a lot to get to here, too. I know there's so much detail for every piece of your story. So, you said they started to ask you to stay overnight at the labor camp.

DL: Yeah, they were, they were-- it wasn't a labor camp, but it was a military camp.

PR: Military camp, okay.

DL: Actually. This time, later on it was all kinds of places. So I was figuring out if there isn't much work there, just to put three lights and switches in the two, three barracks, they were just nailed together by carpenters. And I, as I went to get the material with the sergeant, I would bring all was necessary and I would start measuring, you know, where to put the boxes and receptacle with the switch and all and how long will it take. Because I figured if I do it in two or three days then I may be sent over to a crew to pack the road. And I didn't want that. I was little at that time, much, much smaller, and I had to figure out how long might take me to do that and they, the sergeant would tell me, "If you can do it by the end of the week, that's alright." I told him, "I'm not that experienced yet, but I know what safeties and precautions to take." So I, I was able to figure out that just by Friday I, I was finishing up. I didn't finish until Friday everything. And then they released me. But after a while, they started calling and becoming more serious about--that's how they used to trick people. They used to make you come and they say gonna work here and there, and then they took you away to a different labor camps. And that's how they spread out people so to, to be everywhere when they need them.

PR: So at your home were you the oldest?

DL: When I came, where?

PR: In your family?

DL: In my family?

PR: Yeah.

DL: I had older broth-- stepbrother…

PR: Okay.

DL: …but he was the same as a brother and he was, he had, what do you call it-- I used to be able to talk much faster but lately I have like an impediment my speech.

PR: No, you're doing a great job.

DL: I don't know if I how I sound?

PR: You sound very clear.

DL: Do I?

PR: Yes.

DL: Anyway, so I…

PR: So you had an older stepbrother?

DL: Older stepbrother, older sister and a younger brothers and sisters, three, three of the younger brothers and sisters. We were 10.

PR: So when the, was it just the men right now that were going to work details? Where-- what was happening to the women at that time?

DL: Women, women were not being touched until later on that year, by November, from April to November. Women were also taken to do certain work in a community and I have no idea what else they were doing later on. Prostitution and everything. So…

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

DL: Where were we?

PR: By November of 1941, what was happening then?

DL: November '41, yeah. They called boys and men. They called them to come and they wouldn't release them. They used to send them home. Now they stopped releasing, and they trick them. They take, telling them they gonna issue a green card like some sort that you can be excused of being just taken anywhere. If you stay in the city then would be no problem and you can work partly when they were called and that's how they want you. And I remember-- what I was going to say?

PR: When they, in 1941, in November when they started to call the boys…

DL: Yes, yes.

PR: …and keep them.

DL: And one day I, they send me letter that I should come to get a green card. I don't remember if it's called green card, something in that order. That nobody would just push you around, they claim, that you would be safe that way. And I didn't trust them, and my father insisted, "You go and get the card and then you will be free. They're not going to bother you." I said, "I don't trust them. That's some sort of a trick," and so I went and I skipped going there to report. And the guys that went to report, they never came back. They were shipped out to one of those labor camps which was just a preliminary to the whole Holocaust. It was building up from way back then.

PR: Did your brothers go?

DL: My brother did not have to go. He was younger; he was like 14, two years younger. He didn't have to go and my father went but they didn't believe him that he was over 60. He wasn't actually, 53, but he looked gray hair in the [unclear] and he looks older so that, he was excused. But first I, I was-- somebody came with a list that we were into a concentrated area, with the guards.

PR: You mean like a ghetto?

DL: Yeah.

PR: Had they formed a ghetto in Sarajevo?

DL: Yeah, yes.

PR: Oh, okay.

DL: They formed like a ghetto and they, they made, they wanted the people there to be, whenever they want you to be there, when they want to need your services. So they went and, the people were very much shocked that they wouldn't release their children, teenagers that were sent out there to work. They didn't release them as they promised them there. I, I would bring that out to my father, you see how I expected that they gonna start holding back people, not let you go back home. So I was in a camp to be picked up to do something. As we were waiting, it was like a ghetto camp, the sergeant would come and ask, "How old are you?" So I would say, "I am just 14, going 15" and,

"Okay you come aside." A couple of other kids, come aside and we did, and they came read our names, "You can leave!" So I, I left and later on my father was released the same way for being older and I, for being younger, so otherwise I would be, this was a selective kind of a camp, that they were going to take the people to, to all kinds of stuff where they want them, and…

PR: So they didn't notice that you hadn't shown up for the other thing?

DL: No, no, the, they didn't, they didn't have no record of anything. They weren't best [unclear] yet, how to know who is what, who is who. They didn't get that organized so that we got away with, and now it came towards the, the release, after we got released, after we got released, oh yeah, I saw the streetcar near this gate and as soon as he said, "Okay you kids, you can go," and I was shooting right straight through into the streetcar and as the door opened, I went in, and I put the dime, which was at that time 10 cents. Over there, there 10 dinars and I would put it in the thing and go in, and then the streetcar would take us to a certain area, from there you had to walk home. So my mother was surprised that we survived, nobody took us anywhere, so and then my father came later. So that we both came, came back home and now, from now on we had to be on the alert and they went-- one day I'm coming from my uncle's shop. I'm coming home, and I see the trucks loading up people. And I was asked whoever it was, he says, "They are Jews. They're taking them away." Because they didn't know I didn't wear no more, nothing. I didn't trust them, so they were making us…

PR: They were loading up the Jews.

DL: What?

PR: You said they were loading up the Jews.

DL: Yeah, they were loading up the Jews and I was walking, I was near the home, maybe 10 minutes away, and I rushed home to tell them to be alert that they are coming to pick them up, everybody. And I would tell my mother, "I'm not going." I can't come with them. If somebody else wants to come with me, nobody would even think, you know. Where you going to go in the world? At that time, a young teenager, what could he do?

PR: So, you were very different than other members of your family in that regard.

DL: Well, I may have been.

PR: You were more rebellious or more independent, would you say?

DL: I may have been, I don't know. I just-- my other brother, younger brother, he, he was really only 14 and even then my mother would make certain things like coconut balls or chocolates and stuff and she would put it on on one of these trays that he would have, with a belt around his back, and he would go in town somewhere and sell those things so we could survive, because my father was thrown out of work, we didn't have much to live on. So he was doing that and I was, I guess, bringing something but I wouldn't get paid for my work from my uncle, from my uncle. I wasn't working like

full-time, part-time. And the school I was thrown out before that, they first throw you out of school.

PR: All the Jewish kids?

DL: Yeah.

PR: So people knew you were Jewish but you didn't wear the star and you could pass as non-Jewish, is that what you said?

DL: Oh, yes. Well, I, I took a chance with that and I was able to pass but the point is you couldn't pass for too long because the neighbors know you and even so, if you disguised yourself with one of those fez, fez you know, the Egyptians wear the red fez. I once took a picture with that red fez and with that picture I got the ID card.

PR: Oh.

DL: And I, on the ID card I had, instead of Daniel Levey, I had Gerald Levvage [phonetic] with the same letters and then I was able to kind of maneuver with that for a while. So until it became real hot so…

PR: So that day when you went home and you warned your family, what did they do?

DL: Oh, that's it, I skipped almost, that's important. We were just about 12 o'clock, no, we were sitting down at the table to have lunch and my mother made me specialty or some sort of, it's called *pastale* [phonetic], *pastale*. It was spinach and cheese pie and that was something specialty. And my mother would make it real good, and we were 10 people in the house, she had to cook for. So we had just sat down for lunch and somebody knocks on the door said, "They're here! They're here!" My brother and he didn't realize they are here to get him. As soon as I heard, "they are here," I jumped out the table and I went around into the backyard. We had a backyard with a fence. I went over the fence and I stood there to see if they going be taken out. And they, my folks were all told to get ready, and to get ready and to pack up in 15 minutes, 15 minutes to be ready. What can you do in 15 minutes? So I, as I was hiding behind the fence, the, my father walked out from the lower level because we had a stairway out, out in the yard, in the yard that connected to the sleeping quarters upstairs and my father told me that they are expecting us to, they are expecting us to…

PR: To pack up?

DL: To pack up and get ready in 15 minutes. They didn't even sit down to eat lunch and that was important. And that I heard that they have to be leaving, I said to him, "Goodbye," that I'm not going to go. So one backyard I went over the fence to the other and I kind of wound up to another neighbor. I thought she was a good neighbor. So to give me shelter, you only gave me like to have the lunch at that time. Nobody completed their lunch of that day and I started from there hiding and they were all put on trucks and taken away to a concentration place in the city. And they, that's how that went there. And I started to look for places where I'm going to be able to kind of hide, and I went to

some neighbors. They wouldn't even want to talk about it because it was dangerous to hide any Jews. You could go, too. Like if you hide a Jew, you going to be liable to…

PR: Sure, they were endangering their own lives?

DL: …go to the camps. And I, on the second or third night I was told that I can't stay no more in this house of the neighbor, supposed to be like good neighbor because they are forbidding everybody to, to, whoever hides a Jews gonna pay penalties, even death. And so, I was, this one morning, five o'clock, they wake me up, the neighbor, and said I better go and look for another place. They can't keep me there no more. So I, I understood. I couldn't be choosing. So I went and slept underneath abandoned buses at nights. I slept under the bus not on the bus itself because they was looking for you. I had some kind of blankets, put underneath and I would hide there during the daytime and at night I would go around looking for, for food or some clothes or what I needed and that's how the days went and then I, and then I was-- I was supposed to-- yeah, then I went to the, they issued a proclamation that we, every citizen has to sign in this card, some kind of an ID card.

PR: National ID card.

DL: So I said, I'll go, my-- I spoke with my cousin who was a bright guy, really. He was an "A" student and he always was designing plans to, how to solve problems. So he told me how to go about and get the, get the ID first and get the passport second on that new false name.

PR: Is this the one where you wore the fez?

DL: Yeah, and I went and I got the picture with the red fez and they didn't want you to wear it. But I told them, I said I had-- so I, I was able to get through with places much easier. And I used to go from one friend or relative to another to bring them certain monies or foods or cigarettes or whatever. I became a dispatcher like that and so they would give me something to have for food. And…

PR: So you lived by your wits?

DL: Yeah, well I have to go from there to another-- and, so what happened then?

PR: Do you want to have another drink or take a rest for a minute?

DL: Okay.

PR: Are you okay? Let's pause this just for a minute. [tape paused]

PR: Okay, Mr. Levey, you were saying that-- did you have word from your family after they were taken?

DL: Well, not yet, no. I didn't hear nothing of other part of my family. And what I was now to do, I had to get a passport that would make me, un, really, unreal, to make me a volunteer to go to Germany, to go work. But with a plan, you know. So I, when I went to apply, I told them that I am a Muslim. I used to know their accent, how they used to talk and then they would believe me, so they would-- I went to the city hall with this new ID that I declared to be and they gave me, like a release to apply for this

volunteer work. They couldn't care less you volunteered to go to be a slave, so I volunteered. They didn't think somebody would be so stupid. So I went in one office and another office and I got all the stamps from Germany consulate, Austrian consulate and I went through all that. Oh yeah, I came, there was a station, very busy railroad station in those days. That was the departure, no airports, just a, they a the railroads…

PR: Railroads.

DL: …so I had, I had a cousin that she, her father was part Muslim and she was wearing their attire also. She was very pretty and she, she came to escort me. There were Gestapo there. They were all checking everybody and I would see this poor old Jewish couple, they were picked up because they would sell you the papers to get away from the city, and send their henchmen to catch you. And then they figured when he paid the 10,000 dinars or 20,000 for the tickets to go leave the country, they must have more money. So they, so they took him away, and naturally stole everything that they had with them and put him, put him to be shipped out to the camps. And what I was going to say that, yeah. The, my cousin, she looked-- you know, typical fascists with a cap, with a "U", they had this "U", *Ustashe*[3] it's called, the collaborators-- so she looked perfect collaborator and she was escorting me, so nobody paid much attention a little kid and a girl. So she took me there and there was Gestapo guy, he said, "What's you have here?" I had two valises as I was told, one of them to put the working clothes and one to put some cheese. I remember getting one of those hard Ementhaler cheeses like a little tire, so I took the whole thing to have for out, for wherever I was going. And when I, when I came to the train, I was to load the train and I wanted to sit down and there were Muslims there. Now I had to talk with them, their accent, and they can think that I am one of them. So they would tell me, "Where you going? Going to Germany? Going work there?" He said, the guys say, "There's no, nothing there but war, going to be making ammunition and guns." "No, no, they told me this they're going to have electrical, some sort of equipment that they're going, they're going to be manufacturing there and that I should be…" And I found out later that was a factory for the ammunition and other war material, but I never got to get there somehow. I, I told them I need a, what they call a relay visa before I get there I needed it to visit my mother who was ill in a city that I declared to be born. So it kind of matched up, so I was able to get to stop off there and tear up all the passports, everything that I had…

PR: Oh wow.

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[3]*Ustashe* - "Ustaša, also spelled Ustasha, plural Ustaše, Croatian fascist movement formed by Ante Pavelić that nominally ruled the Independent State of Croatia during World War II… To make their state more purely Croatian, the Ustaše set about exterminating its Serb, Jewish, and Gypsy inhabitants with a brutality that shocked even the Germans and occasionally obliged the Italians to intervene. Although many Yugoslavs reacted to their brutality by joining the resistance movements, the Ustaša remained in control of Croatia until May 1945, when the German army protecting them collapsed and Pavelić and his supporters fled before the communist Partisans." (Encyclopedia Britannica, "Ustaša", https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ustasa.)

DL: …any trace.

PR: Was that still in Yugoslavia?

DL: Yeah.

PR: And you-- and the Muslims on the train, you passed. You were able to pass, they didn't figure you out?

DL: Yeah.

PR: Yeah.

DL: They didn't know that I am not that stupid. That I'm going to go, going to go to Germany volunteering for the war. Like GIs were coming, liberators and the, of course, the B-29s they were going overhead and they were bombing Germany later on.

PR: Gee.

DL: And I…

PR: So where was this place that you said your mother was?

DL: Mostar.

PR: Mostar.

DL: Yeah. That was a fancy antique bridge, old bridge that was blown out during this war.

PR: Recently.

DL: They had a war recently there…

PR: Yeah, yeah.

DL: …and they got, they blew out the bridge in Mostar and there's a river Neretva, river called Neretva. That was a real rough river and they blow the bridge even then, and we had to cross over on the other side so it was rough. We didn't even swim that great, that was like a colonial river, you know with the canoes and all that. So but we weren't even having canoes, we had some logs that we used to sit on them, logs, and to try to cross over. Somebody would pull on something and, and guide us in to get to the safety and we finally made it to that Mostar and there, naturally I don't have the mother yet. My mother was taken away with my sister, older sister. They were taken to this camps, which I found out later. And I corres-- had a correspondence single postcard till a good while back and somehow it got lost.

PR: Oh that you had kept. So they sent you a postcard?

DL: My mother and sister send me a postcard from the camp that they were collected in.

PR: Do you know what the name of the camp was?

DL: Yes.

PR: What was it?

DL: It was called Djakovo

PR: Djakovo?

DL: Djakovo.

PR: Can you spell that?

DL: D-J-A-K-O-V-O.

PR: Okay.

DL: Djakovo and that was the camp for women…

[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one:

PR: Okay.

DL: Yes. So…

PR: So how did you get a postcard? Was that after you were in Mostar that you got the postcard?

DL: Well, yeah.

PR: How did they know where you were?

DL: After I arrived in Mostar, I was digging into the informations and I found out where my mother and my sister were and then I wrote to them and all of the sudden I thought they wouldn't allow them, wouldn't allow them to answer.

PR: Oh, okay.

DL: So in the beginning they were able to answer me and to send me a postcard where were they, and that I should remember my brothers if I can save them and from where they went I didn't know…

PR: So they were still…

DL: …that time, where they were picked up. Finally, I get a, somehow I get a card from my brother, younger brother, who sends me the card that he can not do anything for the save his brothers or anything to that affect. So that he, he, what was I going to say?

PR: Where was he?

DL: He was in a concentrated area of the Jewish children, where they collected the children.

PR: In Sarajevo?

DL: No, no, this is something, this was a camp after they did picked you up, the whole family and they were picked up and taken to this camp, collection camp, that was in a different section of the country.

PR: Okay.

DL: And so, it was a very productive ground there but it didn't lasted too long and they…

PR: They sent people to different places from this place, it sounds like.

DL: Yeah, and they were attached to different families.

PR: Oh.

DL: They were attached to the families and I got a hold of them and I wrote then to what he can do, my brother, he was the oldest, to try to get him out into the Italian side. Italian people, that's why I went to this Mostar. It was the Italian people were ones that occupied that area and they were mild in as far as torturing people. Italians really have saved me.

PR: That's interesting.

DL: Because later on when I joined the underground, the Italians were very, very factual of what's going to happen to me about when I got caught as a prisoner because I joined the underground.

PR: When did you join the underground?

DL: In Mostar. I lived there for a couple of months and one day I got arrested for not wearing that Jew.

PR: So they knew you were a Jew there?

DL: No, no, they didn't. I was talking to the other Jews so they got me picked up and asked me my credentials. Now I had, I had to, I couldn't tell them that I was, I had that card because I don't have nothing else, all those papers that didn't pertain to me, different name that I couldn't use. So I went and took the, as I was going to be arrested, I took from inside pocket, my ID card and I put it under my arm. So as I was a little bit back of the guy, I dropped it near some sort of trash. So I was able to go inside and then they search you, I didn't have no ID and so they can't now press me to go back to Sarajevo where I finally escaped from.

PR: Right.

DL: And the, under the Gestapo nose, he was distracted by my cousin because she was real pretty and attractive. I'll never forget…

PR: Wait, this is in Mostar?

DL: Yeah.

PR: Did your cousin go with you to Mostar?

DL: No, no, she didn't. She escorted me to the station.

PR: Just to the station?

DL: Right, when I boarded the train to go to Mostar.

PR: Right.

DL: And…

PR: So now when you were arrested in Mostar…

DL: Yeah. Well, I had some friends and they came and they paid the fine.

PR: Oh.

DL: So that was not bad. So I was able to go through with it.

PR: So how did you hook up with the underground?

DL: Well, I lived in Mostar for a few weeks and there was a man that kept on bugging me. He says, "You know they are issuing all kinds of things you have to, they're collecting the Jews here, too" and do I know what can happen? "Well" I said, "I know that I'm not safe," and this and that. So what's safe? There was nothing safe here. Alright, so I-- he gave me the contact, who to contact to talk to him. Where do I, where do I meet with them? And I only took a little handbag with me and I went to the mountain spot where the, one of those little trucks, was going to pick us up. There was some other guys. And so we went on to the partisans there. And there's a war there all

the time and so we were sent to the all kinds of combats. I was seeing people falling down and all the others jumping over.

PR: I don't understand. You said…

DL: People were being shot.

PR: Were people being executed?

DL: Not executed now, this is the partisans.

PR: Okay.

DL: That was the combat, they…

PR: Were these Jewish partisans?

DL: Not only Jewish. No, there were Jewish and there were others, volunteers.

PR: The others…

DL: Yeah, they were in these groups there. And we joined one of these groups and I got instructions if you want to know what you, what's good for you when you go there up in the mountains. The peasants were not allowed to go to the city or if they were they would be used as a spies, to spy on the underground. So they, they made it hard for them to go in the city. So I should take any kind of dress, shirt, jacket, t-shirts and stuff with me to exchange for food. So I would go to a peasant there and ask, "What can I have for breakfast?" So they would say, "Yeah, we'll give you for one dress shirt, you can get a dozen of eggs breakfast every morning." I would say, "A dozen, that's all?" I had the most was two or three eggs and here they became like forbidden, all those eggs, yolks, no. So they say, "Okay, I'll give you six eggs," and sure enough after that six eggs breakfast, that they, they take the churned butter with a scoop, and they put on this black hanging on a chain, some kind of a thing, what do you call it? A frying pan, black frying pan, like Indians had, and they drop the butter, half a pound or so, and put in there and they would take the eggs and just break them and throw them in there sometimes with the egg shells and all and so we would…

PR: So you would eat for breakfast?

DL: For breakfast and they would give us a chunk of black pumpernickel bread that I didn't believe it that I was going to be able to eat all that.

PR: So it was more food then you could eat, huh?

DL: There was more food that I can eat but it eats it out of your way, later, within an hour I got hungry. The area there was up in the hills.

PR: Oh, so you were climbing.

DL: And you were hungry all the time. I couldn't wait to get away from there because you, you know, you were eating and then…

PR: What were you starting to say, Mr. Levey, about people jumping over other people?

DL: Oh yeah, well we were caught on a-- that's much later on. There's much to it but I don't know if I can go that much. They, we were sent to, to a detail that this attacking force were in the area and we should repost them. So they gave me a like a

U.S. one rifle and that's one shot at a time. And we couldn't even learn how to shoot. They didn't have any bullets. So we had to shoot without the bullet. They would light up, they had us throw wood. They would make the stand, like the rack and you put the gun, and you could move the gun and line up with a, with a, what do you call it?

PR: Target or…

DL: Target. And then the guy would come, the sergeant or whatever, he would come and check it if you are lining up right. If not he show you how to move it and so that's how we learned. And we were told, when we finally got the bullets, the gun, the shots, 16 millimeters, anyway, so they, or 30 millimeters, not 16, they were giving us a dozen of bullets, rounds, a dozen of rounds and the guy said that that 12 Germans at that time over there. That's how they used to go, 12 Germans, nothing more or less. So I said that would be rough kind of for a guy who never fired a gun, to get before they get you.

PR: Right.

DL: They had much more guns then you could ever want.

PR: Right.

DL: So they were attacking here and there and we went to the, to the further up there, mountains and we were encountering fire fights. So we joined in and we were shooting and one at each other from the underground, and the other people they were also, the people from Albania. They also invaded the area, because like, it was a grab for land, whoever wants it. So whoever had more guns they would come ahead. So not only did you have to go fight your own enemy, you had to fight your other guys that came from…

PR: Opportunists.

DL: Yeah, and so we…

PR: So what did you do with your 12 bullets?

DL: Well, I, I never got to use them. You won't believe it because by the time I got to confront any of that directly. You can't shoot until they come right near you 50 feet, so you don't miss it, because if you miss it, you're going to be done. So that's how we were told. Everybody had to aim right**.** But that's-- later on, I was in two episodes. I was with the underground. I got picked up as a prisoner by the Croates and Italians. When I got picked up by them, it was that they were in a ranks of partisans, there were different currents of fighters. Everybody was fighting for something else. So they came, this-- I was going to say…

PR: Croats?

DL: What?

PR: You were saying the Croats?

DL: Yeah, the Croats were with some troop attacking there and we, we were in the few combats but later on we went on a long trip. We were told we have to go to defend one part of the land where it was very productive, and that to save the wheat, wheat and grain. So where we went to fight, it was real rough. The Russians in that near

the area of Mostar, the Russians, Russians, yeah Russian Cossacks, they were there, too. The Russian Cossacks that goes under the guys on horses. They were underneath the horse and they were shooting at us and you never saw anything like it. It was-- well they used to come in the mornings, we were told, they were coming in the mornings to steal all the thing that they made up, cheese, cream and milk, bacon or whatever, the farms…

PR: They would come to steal food from the farmers?

DL: Yeah.

PR: And the Cossacks would come?

DL: Yeah, the Cossacks and Germans almost like weekly they used to come and we were told to stop them. So we went up the roads, narrow country roads. We went and took a positions and they said they going to come. These guys are real wild and you can't let them get close to you, so 50 feet you have to shoot. So they all got 50 feet and we start shooting and the horses and people with the blood all in the ditch and that was really something, on early in the morning, hour like before dawn. And they were surprised that we were there to defend, whatever we were supposed to defend they…

PR: Did you, did you manage to push them back? Were you successful?

DL: Oh well, yes. We were successful there and we had good commanders and that was Tito army.

PR: So you were with Tito's army?

DL: Yes.

PR: So were you in the National Army at that time or were you still a partisan?

DL: Partisans, yes. Partisans was called, but they happen to be under, led by Tito. So…

PR: Was that before he became a leader in the country?

DL: Before, yeah.

PR: That was before, yes.

DL: Oh yeah, he was the leader alright. He formed the country back again and he gave us a good name. Around the world, everybody knew Tito.

PR: Right.

DL: He was helping the GIs and not that he was a lover of GIs but he was a-- also in need of medical materials and stuff to carry on the war, so the United States helped him.

PR: So did you spend the majority of the war as a partisan? Were you a partisan for most of the war?

DL: For most of the war?

PR: Uh huh.

DL: Not really, not that long. I was in a prison, sent when I was captured and then in a prison is another story, we were, we were to have to-- what was I going to bring up, in a prison, they, what the…

PR: Try to remember.

DL: I don't know what I was going to bring up.

PR: What you were going to say? Okay, it'll come back.

DL: In a prison there I got, I got [ringing noise in background]…

PR: Where was the prison?

DL: Oh, the prison was-- we were captured, that's captured in Mostar again, near Mostar. We were sent there to, to join this force in Mostar and they, they were disband, disband, with a inter, inter, intervenience by the Serbs, Chechnics.

PR: Oh, okay.

DL: They infiltrated and they kind of confused the underground which was partisans and they, they-- what I was going to say.

PR: So you say that you got, you were supposed to meet this other partisan group near Mostar but they'd been infiltrated…

DL: Oh yeah.

PR: …and then they disbanded and when you showed up, is that when you got arrested?

DL: No, no, no, not that.

PR: Okay.

DL: I got, yes, I was detained, yes.

PR: Detained, okay.

DL: And they looked at me, I was a little guy and I would tell you that, that-- what I was going to say?

PR: So you were detained?

DL: Yeah, yeah.

PR: Is that when you went to prison?

DL: Yes, that's I was detained and then-- women were, were in charge of us. We were a bunch of kids. So they told us to sit here. They come and take us and they put us in a group. They put us in a group to go back to the city because there they can't-- I can't be there no, no longer…

PR: Okay.

DL: And they want us young boys to go back to the city. So we were heading for the city. As we were heading to the city, that was in 194- what, 1942 almost that I was told we going go to the city, and then when we are ready, we can come back to fight. The war was going on, but they did not know much at that time.

PR: So were you in prison? So you were a partisan at that time and then you were just detained for a short time?

DL: Not a short time, no.

PR: You were detained for a long time?

DL: That prison, prison was in a Boka Kotorska it's called, the little seaside port, a little port. But nearby there was an island called Mamula.[4] It used to be a fortress in a World War I and they used that to put us up…

PR: Oh.

DL: …and it was all stone and concrete. And we were laying on a straw mattresses, no pillows, nothing.

PR: So who ran the prison? Was that German, a German prison?

DL: That's Italian.

PR: That was an Italian prison?

DL: That's an Italian occupied area.

PR: Okay.

DL: If it wasn't for Italian, I wouldn't be here, because that with the Germans would not make you survive that kind of a…

PR: So how long were you in prison?

DL: So I was there at this prison a good, I would say seven months. And when Italy capitulated in 1943, now I don't remember the dates how is that going to be but I was there in '42, '43 times.

PR: Okay.

DL: And Italy fell apart in '43, near the end, September the 9th of 1943, Italy capitulated.

PR: Oh.

DL: September the 8th to be exact, yeah. They capitulated and they again came in, the underground came to the camp and they were up to like to our friend. They wanted to keep us going so they came to organize the camp. So I worked in a hospital there.

PR: Was this, I'm a little confused Mr. Levey, was this before, after you were let out of prison? Was this before…

DL: No, this is after.

PR: …when you say the camp, was this before prison or after?

DL: After.

PR: This was after prison. So how did you get out of prison?

DL: How did we get out of prison?

PR: Yeah.

DL: Well the prison was declared no prison, no more or they-- that was a prison, Mabula [phonetic] it's called. It's a little island with a fortress and all and they, they were near by the big camp, a concentration camp of the Jews and some other sympathizers.

PR: Do you know what the name of that camp was?

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[4]Mamula is described by Mr. Levey as an island with a fortress/prison. He sometimes pronounces it as Mabula or Mambala.

DL: The camp was called Mambala [phonetic].

PR: The prison was Mambala [phonetic], right?

DL: Yeah.

PR: But the concentration camp was also called Mambala [phonetic]?

DL: No, no, the concentration was farther up north called Arbe or Rab, Italians Arbe and Yugoslav they called it Rab.

PR: Okay.

DL: So they people wanted to go from the prison into that camp where the Jewish people we thought if anything why don't we go once with the rest of them. By that time it wasn't that tough to go.

PR: Okay, so it wasn't, okay.

DL: No. And, so once I was driving at to bring out to--I get a mental block suddenly.

PR: Yeah, it's okay. So you wanted to go from the prison to the camp?

DL: Yes.

PR: You thought it would be better to be with the Jews…

DL: Yes, yes, that's right.

PR: …you're going to be-- okay.

DL: And I came to the camp and one day a guy comes in the off…

[Tape two, side one ended.]

Tape two, side two:

DL: …working in a resort hotels used to be there, converted into hospitals for the Italian officer, and I volunteered to go work in a laundry, and it was a real hand laundry, everything's steamed. I never saw nothing like it, so I went there into the backyard under the guards from the camp. The guards would guard you to that place and they would, were going to give us some lunch. In the meanwhile, I saw some kind of a pots and pans and stuff that sitting there by the big, deep sink outdoor in a yard. And I took some sand, some kind of a sand that they had there to clean it with. So I cleaned all this pots and pans and I turned them upside down to drain out while these other two, three guys they were with me. I say, "What are you doing that? You silly. What are you going to gain from it?" "Well I may gain something," I said, so, then I went and-- the cook comes out from the kitchen. He asked, "Who, who cleaned those pots and pans so good?" You didn't see somebody clean it before that good, I don't know. So I cleaned it and I rinsed it out good. He said, "Listen here. Would you want to work in the kitchen?" At that time, this was-- I was like now almost, but I had more strength yet left and I was much younger.

PR: And you were very thin, you were hungry, right?

DL: Yeah. We were hungry like wolves. That time I had a good appetite, not like now. And so I, the other guys were called by name, they're going upstairs to the laundry, used to be on top floor. And the guy told me to wait there, the cook, Italian cook, short guy, I remember. He said, "You're going like it. You stay here with me." And I would help them cook spaghetti and stuff at that time, and then on the weekends I was able to save some cheese, parmesan cheese, that's what they had, and all kinds of olives and things, whatever I would've get. And on the weekends I would take it to the camps and some friends I had in the camp, and you couldn't, they couldn't get nothing, couldn't buy no food, nothing and they would wait for me like a big benefactor, I would come with a couple of bags of food and fruit, yeah. The fruit I would buy the fruits from peasants on the way to the market. We were, we were carrying the soup in a big pot, a soup some sort, and we would deliver it to the hospital nearby from the kitchen. And they-- on the way back, we were going empty, so we, I would ask them, "Well how much are those figs?" They had figs, grape, grapes and figs, as fruit there; it was like a coastal group, food. It was cheap. Like a whole basket of these, what is it, fresh figs. You know that's very expensive, like even here, but I would get the, these fresh figs in a basket full for 50 cents.

PR: Were you getting paid? You were slave labor, right?

DL: Yeah.

PR: So how were you getting money?

DL: Where?

PR: To buy the fruit?

DL: Oh, oh, oh, well there was-- I had an uncle in a city nearby there, where the Adriatic coast was. The city was, oh, I don't get it, name. Makarska. Yeah, Makarska was a city where he lived, my uncle and I didn't even know. I was just a kid there when I later came there. I never came there before visiting. So he knew I was his nephew and he says, "Yeah, I may be able to help you. I'll send you about something equivalent of 10 dollars every month." And anyway that was my pocket money that I was able to buy stuff. And the people would give me, at the camp, also sometimes to add up to to buy some extra for that, and I would buy same. Oh yeah, the chef in the kitchen, he was, he was always telling me, here you have a cheese, what's left from lunch, and this and that and spaghetti or so. So I would-- I can save it and take it to the camp, to the friends. They were real nice, the Italians, yeah. The Italians were the only people in the World War II that were to be recommended like to how they conducted themselves. Real humane. How I got saved from the town? By the Italians, I got saved because one of the, one of the tanks noticed that we were being beaten on the way to a prison again, and they were, we were noticed by the tanks patrols. How they were beating this, must be underground. So they, then they-- what I was going to say?

PR: The tanks. The Italians and the tanks…

DL: Yeah.

PR: …saw you getting beaten?

DL: Yeah, we were getting beaten as we were being captured that time before we went to this Mabula [phonetic] and they took us there in the prison and they would hide behind the door, and as soon as you come, as soon as you will come by they would, bang, hit, hit you in the head, those Croats to get even because they, they were accusing us of stealing their cattle. I don't know from no cattle and I never went stealing or whatever. I wasn't-- I was only going 17.

PR: So you said, just to go back for a minute, you said that you were getting beaten and the Italian tanks came and did they stop them from? You said, "This is how I was saved."

DL: Yeah, yeah.

PR: You said the Italians…

DL: Yes.

PR: …and the tank, what did they do? Did they stop them?

DL: Well, we, they reported to the command what they saw on the road. And they reported that we must be the underground people and that we were caught prisoners and it looks like that the Croats not going to waste much time before they shoot every one of us, and they kind of were going to do that. And, they, that was in the nearby this Mostar. It's called [unclear] and nearby, and that's where that happened. And they marched us through the city and that's how they noticed us; otherwise we would have been slaughtered the same night. Yeah, we were all condemned to be shot.

PR: By the Croats.

DL: Yeah.

PR: And so when the Italians called it in were you protected somehow? Did the Italians-- who protected you from the Croats at that point?

DL: The Italians…

PR: They came out or…

DL: …command, they were in charge, so they told them that we have most likely information regarding the Germans or something, prisoners. That they should not do any harm to us, so we were saved. We were saved from being slaughtered, and that's how, that's how we got to be sent to this island prison.

PR: Oh that was before you went to the prison? I see.

DL: Yeah.

PR: I see.

DL: And there I used to go to this camp where-- am I mixing in now?--the camp where I used to go every week, I used to be able to go back to the camp. That's where I kind of belonged now. No more Mambula [phonetic].

PR: Okay.

DL: And, from you know, from the camp there was no more going back and…

PR: Let me jump in for one minute, okay?

DL: Yeah.

PR: I'm just going to stop this for a minute. [tape paused] So where were you at liberation?

DL: At liberation, I was working in a hospital for Italian officers and I was a cook there. Actually I was given the job by the cook originally-- the one that I mentioned that let me save some food and stuff to take, and the girls that worked in the hospital also nurses, they weren't getting much food. So I used to save some food and give them on the side there when they would come in the yard, in the backyard, to eat. And they remembered me. I met somebody in the middle of the room with their father and she said, "Hey, that man he saved my life."

PR: Oh, wow.

DL: I didn't know I was save nobody's life. She was hungry. I saved her food. I didn't…

PR: You ran into her after the war, you're saying?

DL: Yeah.

PR: And she remembered you?

DL: Right in the middle of, so anyway, they made me [unclear]…

PR: So at liberation you were working, still working in a hospital?

DL: Yeah, I was still working and I forgot the name of the, it used to be hotel. But I knew it for a while and then I forgot the name, but anyway, the name of the hotel turned out to be a hospital later. So they converted it. They didn't have any buildings left, so how did I get the conversion from, from the war…

PR: Well how did you-- when did you, so you were-- what do you remember about the war ending?

DL: '43, '43, yeah, September 8th…

PR: How did you hear about it?

DL: '43.

PR: Okay.

DL: That was the war ending there in that section. So I…

PR: How did you learn about it? How did you know the war had ended?

DL: Well, the word gets around quick even though we were isolated kind of. And we had, we had been not caught by surprise, it was expected anytime. And as soon as the war was over, they, they-- as soon as the war was over, they, the word got around fast and we were-- the Italians were walking by with their hands up and we, I was approached by the underground guy, one of those sergeants of theirs, and he would tell me what I'm to do as I'm on a very strategic avenue there, at the resort place. That's the resorts were on Arbe, Rab that's where the resorts were all along, there near Dubrovnik and Splits and Sibenik and all these fancy coastal resorts, and then…

PR: So the Italians were surrendering?

DL: The Italians were throwing all the guns. I was given order by the, one of these captains, whatever, to allow the, no guns to be moved from there because the early people would grab them or the Germans would grab them or anybody was, was always looking for guns there, at that time. So they told me to let, drop all their ammunition and their rifles and machine guns, and what not and put everything in a pile, and the food stuff in a big, like a pool of some kind, some kind of a pool, whether it was outdoor pool, I don't remember but all the food cans were thrown down. And I remember an episode where a guy, a big heavy set guy, he took more cans of food than he was supposed to, so I, I told him to drop it, drop it. You can only keep four cans of this and four of that, and that's it, and the rest goes to the army that fights. So they, he tried to get away the guy and I went behind him and I pulled the, what do you call the, the hand, backpack, I pulled it with the weight in it. It was not hard when you're heavier the harder you fall. I pulled it and as heavy as he was and all the food fell down and all the cans. I'll never forget, they went all over, and I took and put them there in the pile, and he had to help me, too. And then I gave him what he's allowed to have, to go. Nobody would bother him.

PR: So was it the Russian-- who liberated that area? Was it the Russians?

DL: Nobody, nobody.

PR: Nobody once the war was over and…

DL: It was funny. That's right. It's very unusual, usually you have to fight and then somebody wins. Not here, there was no, no combat, nothing. Just there, there were Italian army officers being treated by, by the doctors and doctors of domestic, domestic people and the, and the ex-prisoners, they were in charge. So I had been told

that I can confiscate everything that I see useful and fit for the underground to go fight the war, and they…

PR: So they…

DL: …they made me collect all kinds of stuff so I had…

PR: Can I ask you…

DL: I didn't have any clothes, any clothes left, during all this what had transpired. I had a, only a hospital coat, hospital coat, underwear, socks and slippers. Meanwhile, I'm told now that I can take what I want to get dressed, like a soldier. So I, I got those duffle bags. There was a duffel bag from a colonel, a big Italian colonel. But he wasn't that big. He was short guy, like me and I, he carried it he carried that, carried the duffel bag, a soldier carried a duffel bag for him and I said, "What's in that duffel bag? Do you have any boots?" "Yes, I do," and he kind of want to give me, give him the key and I said, "Don't need. I have a box cutter," and I something like a…

PR: [unclear] it open?

DL: And I slit it open and I pulled and I saw in there a good brand new pair of shoes, Alpine shoes, which in those days was like a, worth a million dollars, couldn't buy nothing, and the uniform of the officer, naturally he was a colonel. So I tried it on, it was a perfect fit and the belt, and I wish I had a picture of that. I don't have.

PR: So where did-- at that time did you know what had been happening in the rest of Europe, at that point?

DL: Oh yeah.

PR: Did you know, had word been traveling about…

DL: Sure, about…

PR: …everything that was going at the camps?

DL: …everything, the killings and the camps, and yeah. We were, we were, we knew all what was going on, not all but whatever we were able to know. And that's how I went and I got dressed with a silk shirt and a tie, military. I got dressed finally in a uniform. Someone thought, thought I was an officer. I wasn't anybody, and I remember even a bottle of vermouth was there, vermouth after all this times, I didn't have anything left. So they made me have, they let me have what I wanted. And…

PR: So where did you go at that time? When did you find out about your family?

DL: Oh, oh, my family. There was-- way back when I found that my family was no where left.

PR: So you had known that earlier during the war? Did you say you had known that, you had learned that earlier?

DL: Oh yeah, much earlier, sure. We heard, we didn't know particularly what date they were, they were shipped out to the camps, Buchenwald, wherever, Auschwitz, I don't know. I have no idea where, what happened to my family. They were all disappeared, one by one.

PR: Do you want to say their names for the record, for the history?

DL: Yes.

PR: So tell me your father's name?

DL: My father's name is Isaac Levey; it was actually Levi, L-E-V-I. It was pronounced first, and my mother was Lun-nit-sa [phonetic] Levi and my brother was Morris Levi and myself and my sister, Olga Levi, and Esther, Claire, and Esther, Claire and Abraham, David. Did I have everybody? Eight, we were eight children.

PR: Eight children.

DL: Did I have them all? Abraham, David and Kalmi, Kalmi.

PR: Kalmi?

DL: Yeah, he… [someone in the background started spelling K-A-L-M-I] He is the one that's…

PR: K-A-L-M-I, Kalmi Levi.

DL: Yeah. He was, he was also, he survived and he went to Israel later. And I went to visit him in Israel just a year when Rabin was assassinated. I came there, it was all in the mourning, the whole country, and young children from schools used to come there to the *Platz*, wherever that place [unclear] where he made a speech. That's where I went to see…

PR: That's where you saw your brother.

DL: …all these mourning. That was the fourth day after the assassination.

PR: Oh boy. So your brother, so after the-- when did you come to the United States?

DL: Oh well, when I came into the United States was in, first I went to Canada.

PR: Okay.

DL: I was in Canada until they kept me there for not being allowed, not like now, they let anybody go, come, come and go. At that time, I had to have an affidavit. I had to be on a list.

PR: What year did you leave Europe? What year did you leave Europe to come to Canada?

DL: To-- I left Europe in 1948, and I arrived in Canada, in Halifax, in Halifax, Canada I arrived in, what was that, in…

PR: '48?

DL: '48, yeah.

PR: 1948. Now after the war ended, did you go to a DP camp or, between the end of the war and coming to Canada, where did you live?

DL: Oh, I lived first in New York.

PR: No, no, no, when you were still in-- after the war ended, before you came to North America…

DL: Yeah.

PR: When you were still in Europe…

DL: Yes.

PR: What did you do for those years? Where were you?

DL: I was in Milan, Rome, Florence.

PR: Okay, so you were in Italy?

DL: I was all over Italy.

PR: Okay.

DL: And that's where I had my best years after all, all that I went through. If you have a map handy, I don't, but in Italy I went from the most southern place in Italy, in Sicily and I went to Taranto, Brindisi, Calabria, all this cities down south and then Bari and Florence, and Sienna, Rome and I can name them, we were there. And I had the best years of my life in Italy, and that I would suggest everybody that can go and to really see something, Italy.

PR: So let me ask you. You covered so much, before we end is there anything important that we've left out about your story during the Holocaust? You know something especially-- I know there's a lot you couldn't tell today but anything right now that is on your mind that we didn't talk about before we end?

DL: I have many notes and I [unclear] quite a few important things but I don't off hand like this. What we miss out.

[Tape two, side two ended. Interview ended.]