

OK, you were just telling me--

As the main body of people became less because they moved through the line where the German, whose name I'll never forget, his name was Ralke, and he is the one who made life-and-death decisions on who would go on what side. Those who went to the left, to the good side so to speak, went all the way around and came back to where they came from to the Democratic Platz. The others were taken over the other side.

So as those who had not yet gone through the selection there was a piece of room between those who already gone through, those who had not, and occasionally some would realize this was the good side and they would sneak over, even though there were Lithuanian guards guarding all the way across the line demarking those who had not yet gone through the selection and those already who had gone through to the good side.

That went on until very late that night. And when it was over, those who had gone to the right side, to the bad side, were taken to that small ghetto that I described earlier. And there they were held. Us, we could go back to our homes. And when we came back to our homes, we weren't quite sure what to make of it. And the wish was that they would be living in the small ghetto and ours would become, because we are people, the healthier and the older children, we would become a workforce and they would become someone that had to be helped. But that was just the wish. We, deep in our hearts, we knew that this was not going to happen.

And we had gone to sleep. We were very tired. At 4 o'clock in the morning my father woke me. And of course at that time our household was reduced from 16 members to nine. Seven had gone to the other side. And my father woke me and said that they are beginning to move the people from the small ghetto out towards the hill towards the Ninth Fort.

And since my mother was not in very good shape, he said that he will stay with my mother and watch her. Because she had gone into a stupor and she just sat there and would not speak and would not eat or anything. She couldn't sleep. And she hadn't slept at all. And he asked me to go back to take a look what was happening.

I did go back. And because they wouldn't let us close to the fence of the small ghetto I was standing-- That was the Jewish ghetto police who kept us about 10 meters away from the fence. But I saw columns of people walking up the hill. And the first 100 meters or so the road they were walking was very close to the fence of the large ghetto. And they were walking right by and then it turned away from it.

Those people realized what was happening, and those who had very small children, babies that were rather light and they carried them, began to throw them over the fence, the babies, hoping that-- hoping someone would pick them up and care for them. One baby got hung on the barbed wire and I saw it, perhaps more did. I saw one that hung on the barbed wire and the child was screaming from fear and pain. And a Lithuanian guard shot the child point blank in the head and it splattered all over. We knew what was happening at that time.

I went back home and didn't say anything to my parents. They didn't see what I saw, and to this day I never told them. Because they never knew. They are dead now, both of them.

But as the morning progressed, we lived very close to the hill and we could hear the machine guns starting to work in bursts and we knew what was happening. Every time the machine guns would start shooting, I could feel my stomach turning inside out. I could feel the pain and that I will never forget. That was something that has stayed with me forever. There are many things that happened during the four years of ghettos and concentration camps that I have forgotten or I don't think about it. But this day is one of the two days that stays with me forever because I witnessed all that.

My mother, who was sitting and still not speaking, suddenly got up the next day-- because it took more than one day to kill 10,000 people-- she got up and said, Oh, I hear the machine guns, she said, but I know they are shooting over their heads because they are just trying to make us believe that they are killing them. But they are just scaring us. They want us to stay in line so they are shooting over their head and making us think that they are killing those people.

Of course, let her believe that. That was her way of coping with the tragedy that she lost her sister, her brother, and

nephews and nieces, and her father, my grandfather that disappeared in that selection. Some of the things that her sister left behind she kept for the rest of the time that we were in the ghetto. She would not let anyone touch it because she says, when my sister comes back she's going to want that. That was the end of the innocent time in the ghetto. And that two days, 10,000 people, or nearly half the population of the ghetto, were killed. That was a tragedy that will remain with me until the day I die.

Then you were 12. Then you had to work and you had to try to find food, among other things.

That's right. That's correct.

Tell me about the kinds of things you did.

Well, when the 10,000 people were killed, of course, there were empty spaces left in the ghetto, or what the Germans and Lithuanians thought were empty spaces. So they cut a piece of the ghetto off and made the rest of us move in towards the front of the ghetto. So where we lived we had to move out. So we eventually found a small, empty little house we moved into and we again started to try to make some sense out of the rest of our lives.

I grew up very quickly in those few months. And I knew that part of our survival would have to be that everyone has to pitch in to provide something to eat. I joined at first the workforce, the brigade to we used to go outside to work. And there we would take things with us to trade with some of the Lithuanians outside for food.

So we're talking about daily life and training.

I personally worked in for a time it was called the children's brigade. Our job was to pull weeds out of gardens. So that was a good place to work because we pulled out the gardens. Usually there were carrots and potatoes and all sorts of different vegetables, radishes. So we could at least eat some there when they didn't see us. And occasionally we could even take some and bring it home.

In addition to that, we used to take some things to trade. And occasionally you would get a stick of butter or a piece of bread or a sack of flour. One time I remember I got a chicken for a tablecloth. And the chicken was live and we had to kill it. But the woman gave me a small ax and I had to chop the head of the chicken. And I did, but the chicken got up and started running around without a head.

And finally it died and I put the chicken inside my pants and tied my pant leg around so that nobody would see the chicken. And when we walked back to the ghetto gate, I carried a small sack of potatoes that I had gathered and the chicken that nobody did see.

But they started searching us. And all the time while I was walking I was so happy that I would bring home a chicken from my mother. We hadn't seen a chicken perhaps by that time maybe a year. And I was so happy that my mother would see a chicken. And when I got to the gate they started searching us and they found the chicken and took it away. I was heartbroken. They let me keep the potatoes, but they took away my chicken. Something that you remember, something that I remember.

But generally speaking, we had a relatively period of quiet in the ghetto. Every day people were being killed and being shot and dying. The underground was working, and that we heard about. They were taking up arms against the Germans in the forests and in the highways. And the Germans were shooting back and taking revenge on some of the Jews in the ghetto. Because they had a standing order that if anyone kills a German, 100 Jews would die if they could prove to themselves, which they didn't really have to. They could kill Jews anytime they wanted to and they did it sometimes.

But other than that it was relatively quiet. They had taken 500 people to send them for work in Riga, Latvia. Because all the Latvian Jews had been completely destroyed and massacred the same as in the beginning, the same as in Lithuania. The one thing is that in the first 7 to 10 days of the war all the Jews in the small towns were massacred completely. All died. All my relatives, my grandparents were killed by the Lithuanians, not the Germans.

They took them out in the middle of a square and machine guns were waiting and just mowed them right down the middle of the square. And then whoever volunteered to carry the body for burial would get to keep their clothing and whatever else they were they had with them. So this is how they got Lithuanians to do the work, in addition to the fact that their hatred towards the Jews was such that they did it very gladly.

And so in another time they took several people to Estonia to work, and my sister and her husband and her husband's mother went to that area. And so this was the last of our relatives in the ghetto. And after my sister and her husband and child--

She had a child, but what happened was the child was supposed to go with them and so her husband's mother substituted herself for the child because they knew the child wouldn't survive. And the child stayed with us. So my mother raised or took care of that little boy. And that was it. By that time we were only four left from our family. The rest of them were gone.

But as time went on, things sort of quieted down. I finally got a job working in a shop inside the ghetto. We had shops that were making wooden shoes and toys and clothing. And there was a tailoring shop and all sorts of different things. And so many Jews were employed to work in what they called the werkstatten. And I finally got a job working in there because you had to. And you got a certain certificate that you could stay in the ghetto and work there.

And they had two shifts, day shift in night shift. And my father also got a job working there, so my father and I worked the same but not the same unit. We worked in different units but in the same place. My mother, on the other hand, she would still go outside to work in some brigades. Because one of the things had to trade for food and that of course, we had to work. So we switched back and forth so somebody could stay behind with the child. So when I worked night shift, they worked day shift, and then we would switch back and forth so somebody could care for the baby.

And that pretty well went on for about a couple of years until the beginning of 1944. And that was another thing, one of the other days that has completely stayed with me forever. You know there were many things that happened in those two years that were pretty bad. But things that were so often that you don't remember the incidents one of the other. But when something horrible happened, that stayed with us.

That was almost at the end of the ghetto. Many people already had left. Another group of people had been taken over to the airport they were building. Rather than walk them every day they just took the people and moved them over there in barracks. And by that time the number of people in the ghetto was less than 5,000. And our family was still there. My father, my mother, me, and that little boy. We still stayed in the ghetto.

And one day, and that was March the 27th 1944, I was working night shift that day so I was home in the morning with that little boy, with my nephew, and my parents had gone to work. And the night before again they had doubled or tripled the guards around the ghetto, so we knew something was coming up. But we didn't quite know what could happen. There was only less than 5,000 people there, only a few children left, and what could happen?

But the thing that we didn't even contemplate happened. I heard screams, and I looked out the window and there were buses. There were three buses lined up in front of-- The window of our apartment faced the gate of the ghetto, and I saw buses lined up on the ghetto. And there were Ukrainian soldiers that had joined the Nazis and Germans the SS that were taking small children and putting them on the buses.

Instinctively, I knew what was happening. They were taking the children. We later called that what we call the Kinder

Aktion, the selection of the children. In addition to that, they also took some older people that were incapacitated as well as the children.