

Now I want to take you back to the ghetto. Tell me as if I'm a kid. Describe to me the werkstatten in the ghetto. Who were they for? Who did they service? How many different ones? Were there a variety of things there?

The way I understand, the committee in the ghetto, and that is Kovno ghetto, I think they were more loyal to the Jewish people in the ghetto than what I hear in other ghettos. They really transformed the ghetto in a work lager, in the workforce, making the Germans being dependent on the labor that the ghetto was providing. And I think that is maybe one of the reasons that Kovno ghetto survived longer than other ghettos. Because after a while, they became to be dependent on the labor force that used to go out to the ghetto in different areas to perform work.

In the ghetto there was a kleiner werkstatten and the [? graze ?] werkstatten. The kleiner werkstatten were doing small things and also services, like I said before, for hothouses, for other areas, for farmers, to supply them with the necessary things. But the [? graze ?] werkstatten even more so. They did a lot of things like fixing shoes and fixing things and clothes and stuff that the Germans really needed it. And therefore this idea was everybody should be employed. If somebody could not be employed, they were hiding it and pushing it under, making sure that everybody has a name and a number they are employed. And this was the idea in the ghetto, and that's why I think the Kovno ghetto survived longer than otherwise.

With this in mind, that was the idea that I became a tinsmith and I came to concentration camp in Dachau. They ask, do you have any profession? Yes, I'm a tinsmith. The end was I ended up in taking care of one of the officers in the morgue. For a long time and took care of the hut. I had to make sure that as they sweep up. The foremen, they were Germans, and there was a big, big foreman that he had his special room. He was a big shot there. And the other ones had the front room but I had to make sure that every morning I come in the morning, I make the ovens, I make heat, and I make the water. And they come in for lunch I have the kettle on and so forth.

This helped me too because I was a kid of 15, 16 and I used to do a good job and used to clean up and make sure that everything is clean and everything is neat and everything is in order. And the way I always orderly, always the place for a long time. I worked like that. It was a time when I did go out to work and we used to work 12-hour shifts. And in the 12-hour shifts you only had two breaks of 15 minutes. And they used to give us what they called soup. Actually used to be moldy bread that was actually green. And that's what they called-- They boil it. They made soup out of it. The soup was green. And that was you had a bowl and that's what you ate.

One break like that and we were working in the forest knocking down trees and cleaning it for the lumber. I laid down on a bunch of branches and fell asleep. They probably wouldn't have missed me if they were not called back because the main work was to carry the cement from the bags into that van there that they had a system where they are pulling out the cement from the bags on the ground and there was a screw that was pushing the cement to the machines that are making the concrete.

But when the wagons were not there with the cement, they didn't come in time, they took us to the forest to do other work. When the wagons came, we were called back. Every 20 people had an SS storm trooper watching us besides the foreman German to tell us what to do. And that was for [? mo. ?] I fell asleep and they had to go away and they counted and somebody's missing. Now the German watchman, the SS man, he would have gotten hell for somebody missing. They were looking around. It took about a half hour to 3/4 of an hour. And finally they were shouting and I woke up.

That night, if I survived anything, that was the time that the God that saved me. Because when we were marching we were five abreast, 20 lines, 100 people marching. We had to go from one place to the other place. We had to stand abreast, three, four, five abreast, and that's the way we were marching so the German could see exactly who is marching, how many people we are. Because he was late and he got hell for not watching his men, he wanted to take it out on me. He took the rifle, and holding it by the barrel he wanted to hit me over the head with the butt. Because if I'm dead I'm accountable, but if I'm missing, then he gets hollered at.

Fortunately, he didn't hit me over the head, he hit me over the shoulder and the barrel broke in two. The rifle broke in two. He kept it on a sling over his shoulder, half a rifle on the front, half on the back. But wherever he just looked for me. He wanted to kick me, hit me. So the people protected me by if he went on the right side, then I changed places to

the left side. A whole evening. The only time I was safe if I was carrying cement because he wouldn't dare to break and ruin a bag of cement. That's when he will not hit me.

So the minute I was in line it used to be like this. Used to be 10 people. Two people were loading on the shoulder, six people were running and two people were taking it off. So the minute I was in line with the six people to take the next bag, I may have been the fifth or the fourth, if I see him coming, I was the first with a bag on my shoulder running back with the cement. And that's the whole night that's how it went down. That was one experience. There was other experiences where I had a gun or a rifle right to my face. And somehow, I don't know the reasons, but I'm still here.

Did you build the alarm clock in the ghetto?

Yes.

Tell me about it.

I don't know how you know about the alarm clock. We didn't use Saturdays there was a little electric but I told you before, in the same room we ate, the same room we prayed, and the same room we slept. And we needed a little light and Saturday we don't put out the lights. Before the Holocaust or now, we have either a regular alarm clock, a regular time clock, and we have people that are allowed to put off the lights so it's no problem.

But there was a problem. So what we did is I took a regular alarm clock that you wind up and you take a piece of string and put it on the switch. You put the clock tight on the wall, and when the time comes and it starts ringing, it shuts off the light. This we build ourselves if that's what you call alarm clock. When the time comes, it shut off.

Tell me about the council. Tell me about the administration in the ghetto, what you knew about them.

The administration. While I was in ghetto, I had little to do with them because I was a youngster. Except with my father and he being a prominent Kovno citizen, knew everybody and everybody knew him, so all the politics that went on more or less we knew it in our house. And all I know is what I overheard the adults talking about.

And the council was-- He had many, many predicaments. Like if the Germans made a demand to make an Aktion, they had to make a decision. Are we going to cooperate with them or we'll say, no, we're not cooperating? By not cooperating it means two things. Either they can kill them all and the Germans do it on their own, or they can maybe sometimes intervene. But they did not, I think, that the council did not cooperate, did not collaborate with the Germans as much as they could.