

Seven. You were talking about--

--about religion, right, yes. Now, as I said, we were traditional, more than-- really, very, very observant, to a certain degree-- to keep kosher? Yes, to the point where, once, as I said, my mother smuggled in foods, whatever she could, and she got some pork and what is called in German speck. I think that's it's what you make bacon off it. I'm not too sure. I'm not too familiar with-- but I think it's what you make bacon.

And it wasn't the-- but it was all white. I don't know how it's processed, how it's done. It was called speck. I didn't know what it was. I've never seen it in my life because I've never eaten it.

But my mother and my father decided that the children need nourishment, need fat, so they lied to me. My mother fried it or whatever, and she told me that it was lamb so that I would eat it because I was brought up to eat kosher.

As far as observing the religion as a rule, not to that extent. In the ghetto, it was difficult. There was really no synagogue that I remember. The people must have gone together to have a minyan, a quorum of 10, probably. I don't think my father was involved in that.

What about marriages or holidays?

All right, now, marriages-- as I mentioned before, I know of this couple who live in Toronto now, and they got married in the ghetto. And I know of children that were born in the ghetto. I heard of other people who got married, but I never met them. But this couple I know to this day.

Observing holidays-- no, not in my experience. It wasn't a matter of not observing. It was a matter of not having the means. You couldn't get ready for the holiday. You couldn't prepare yourself for the holiday. There was no way to get the right food for the holiday, for the atmosphere, for the state of mind for the holiday.

And you had to go to work on the holiday. It wasn't as if the holiday was a day of rest. It wasn't anymore, so there was no such thing as a day of rest. So you made of it as best you could, I suppose, from what I-- I don't really remember that well. I don't recall celebrating to make it a point to celebrate the holidays. I remember fasting Yom Kippur later on, when I was-- later on, yes.

In the quiet period in the ghetto, do you remember having fun?

Yes, there were-- yes, a matter of fact, there was such a time, a quiet time. As a matter of fact, I remember going to the beach because we lived-- it's interesting that you should even-- sometimes I think of it, and I think to myself, is it possible that there was such a time? But now that you mention it to me, yes, there was such a time.

And our street was next to the river. There was a field of pasture. After that, people who lived on the side of the river-- they had little gardens in the backyards, potatoes, and all kinds of vegetables. They grew all kinds of vegetables. And passed that, there was pasture for cattle, and beyond that there was a beautiful white, clean beach.

People pay hundreds of dollars to go all over, to Nassau and wherever you go. We had it in our front yard, so to speak, and people had it in their backyard. And there was a time when we were allowed, the kids, to go. We were allowed to go to that beach, to go to the water. It was quiet.

Tell me about the Kinder Aktion.

OK. Life went on. Every time the ghetto got smaller, smaller, smaller, people were deported to Estonia, and people were deported to Latvia. And all of a sudden, we had to move from our quarters. All these years that we-- until the end of 1943, we stayed in that part. I think it was the end of 1943. That's when my photograph was taken, actually, now that-- because we still lived in that part of the ghetto, and we were required to find our own quarters. Nobody said to us, now this belongs to you, or you come here. You have to go and find your own quarters.

And now I have to retract a little bit. When the Russians came in-- they were there with us for a year-- they built far into the-- where it turned out to be deep into the ghetto and turned out to be with the other gate. There was another ghetto gate. Then it turned out to be the main gate later on.

They built three buildings, and they called them blocks. Like they are apartment buildings. They were supposed-- they were putting in running water, and sewers, and the toilets, indoor toilets, everything, beautiful. And they had to-- our street was dug up because they put in the sewers, and eventually, we would have probably had running water in our house, too. But it was never to be.

So there were the three blocks, A, B, C, A, B, C. We ended up in the block C, and we have to fight over it, over the quarters. We had to fight with other people. The block C was an unfinished building. The other two, the A and B, were finished, so to speak. I don't know if they had the running water, but the rooms were done.

Here, nothing was done. I don't know if there was a roof. It was all open. There were stairs, but there were no guardrails or anything. It was in the middle of building it. And we ended up in that building, but the people who were there ahead of us or something wouldn't let us take a corner, and that's exactly what we wanted, just a corner, because there were no rooms there.

People partitioned off their own corners, and that's what my father and mother wanted was one corner. It so happened that my mother had a friend who had an acquaintance who was in the Jewish police force, the militia in the ghetto. So she told me to please go to this man to ask him for his assistance, would intercede on our behalf so that we should be able to stay in that corner.

And it worked. We stayed in block C, in the block. We stayed there. That was by the end of, as I said, I think by the end-- it was during the winter by the end of '43. Come March '44, the end of March. By some fluke, my mother stayed home that day. She didn't go to work. Whether she was allowed to-- I really don't know. The point was, she stayed home.

And we didn't know what was-- now, how should I-- I have to retract a-- no, I'll retract after. We didn't know at first what-- we were hear rumors that they're taking children and elderly. Now, by then, I was 11. My brother-- in '44, he was seven.

Sure enough, we hear steps, like running, and the military, and yelling, and running, and yelling. And we were sort of-- the three of us-- my father was at work, and the three of us-- and here I have to go in the way our quarters, our accommodations were divided.

We had a big-- there was a big room with corners, and we had the first corner. But there was also a little alcove with a door to go into our partition. And through our partition, you had to go in through the next family, so everybody-- they had to go through our room. And there was a door, as I said, to go into us and the big door to go into everybody. So there were two doors. So the big door to go into everybody was open, and also, the door to go into us was also open.

Mark.

OK, so you're describing--

I'm describing. I was sort of left on my own to make my own decision what to do with me. Now, I have to go back a little bit to the way our corner that we had was-- how it was situated, rather. There were two sofas, head to a sort of-- not head to head exactly but one this way and one that way. And there was a space in between.

My mother didn't know what to do with my brother. The best thing she could do is put him behind one of the sofas, sort of hide him this way. And me-- where do I go? What do I do?

Instinctively, I put myself behind that door that was-- like this is the door, and there was a corner between the door and

that little alcove. That's where I stood. Now, all those-- there were Ukrainians, Lithuanians who were really did the actual taking away the children, and they spoke in their-- and how do I know it? Because they spoke to each other in their own tongue, and all one had to do is just inadvertently just look like that, look behind the door, and there I was.

But nobody did. I saw them run by me just from behind the door through the-- didn't see my brother. They just ran in and out, didn't take anybody. I didn't know at that point what happened to the children in the other-- like there was a wall cornered off. The other family or families-- and ran out, and here we are. We weren't taken away.

Thank God. We are safe. For the time being, we're safe. Now what? Meanwhile, the day's gone. My father comes back from work, and bad news travels fast. He didn't know what he would find or who he wouldn't find anymore, if he would come back to empty walls there, whatever. Lo and behold, we were there still, but my parents knew-- and everybody-- there was sort of a gathering of the people because we practically lived together in one compound with boarded-off walls.

There weren't walls. There were partitions. And there were other kids, also, that remained, that weren't taken away, and somebody must have known-- I don't know how it came about-- that there was a hiding place within the walls of this block C. Now, what was the hiding place? There was a space between two walls, very narrow, and that night, all the children that were left behind that day were put to hide in between the two walls, including my brother and me.

We spent the night, not a peep out of anybody. There was even a baby, probably a two-year-old, not a peep. And children just new. Children just knew not to cry.

But the following morning-- I don't know what time it was-- the door was opened to that-- it wasn't really a door. We crawled in, and we crawled out. It was opened to that hiding place, and we were ordered to get out. And we were found out. We were found out.

Now, how we were found out-- later on, we learned how we were found out. The Jewish militia were taken to the Ninth Fort, and they were-- that was what we were told, that they were taken to the Ninth Fort, that they were threatened. They and their families would be killed if they know of places and don't tell.

Well, whatever reason that was, however it happened, we were found out, and we were taken out of the building. And this was March, and the building that we lived in for the few months until then-- there was lots of mud and still traces of snow and lots of mud because it wasn't finished. As I said before, it wasn't a finished building, so there was lots of mud and ditches around that they were still digging for whatever reason. Maybe they were going to put up another building, too, yet.

And we were chased out our doors in front of the building, and there were trucks standing around. There were soldiers with guns. There were dogs, German shepherds, around us, surrounding us. And we are ordered to get on the trucks.

We need to stop recording the tape.

Mark.

Now, I must add that my mother was not with us, with my brother and me in this hiding place, and my mother had to go to work that day, too. So we were just left, the two of us, with the rest of the people, the children and some mothers who were hiding together with us. I don't remember how many there were. We were a group, and there was just myself and my brother, for me to look after my brother.

Now, I stand there. We are told to go, And I don't know whether I'm told to go or not, so I don't budge. But what I remember-- how my brother-- I was holding him. He pressed with his back to me. I was holding him right in front of me, like this, and with my arms I was holding onto him. And I didn't move.

And a dog jumped under-- it was told by somebody, I supposed, to jump on me and jumped on my arm and bit me. And I let go of my brother, and before I knew it, he was taken away from me. And I was left standing there. And the last

thing-- and to this day, I remember my brother's eyes looking at me and that I didn't go with him voluntarily. I stayed behind, and he just turned around. And he went off, and that was the last time I ever saw him.

There is not a trace that he ever existed. There's not a photograph of him anywhere because my parents were lax in sending photographs to family from out of the country, to Canada-- have had relatives here-- not a trace that he ever existed. Once I die, nobody will ever know that he existed, and that is-- and I was just there, and my hand was bleeding. And I didn't know whether I was in shock and what happened because I was bitten by this big-- this big dog jumped on me.

And they were driven off, and we were left behind. Some mothers went with the children. Some mothers stayed behind and let the children go because maybe they had other children. I don't know. Who's to judge, and who is to say, and who's to guess?

Well, when my parents came home, there was good news, and there was bad news, the good news that I was still here. And the bad news was that my brother was gone.

We still stayed in the same quarters where we lived. That was the end of March 1944. To this day, until I saw the photograph of myself-- again, I have to refer to the photograph-- all my life I've wondered, I have questioned, I have thought, why-- I know that they've taken away-- I've heard who was taken away, youngsters whom I used to know, whom I knew. They were taken away with the children. I was left behind. Why was I left behind?

Now, I look at this photograph, and I can see I looked, probably, 15, 16 years old. I don't know what I looked to them. I don't know what I looked like, but if I looked like on this photograph, then I look older. That's my answer. I cannot imagine what else that was that I was left to stay behind or maybe just to give testimony like I do now.