

INTERVIEW WITH LEO SAMUEL

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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MR. FELSON: I AM HOWARD FELSON WITH THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, AND WE ARE AT BETH JACOB SYNAGAGUE ON FEBRUARY 8TH, 1989, AND WE ARE SPEAKING WITH LEO SAMUEL.

Q. COULD YOU TELL US WHEN AND WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

A. I was born in a little town, Czerna, Czechoslovakia. And this is the end of the Carpathian Mountains. From us to Budapest is another mountain, another level, and it was a very important town, and almost three borders were close to it, so whoever controls this town controls the borders.

And this particular part of town was under the Hungarian Austrian Empire for many, many years, and the First World War they took Romania and gave -- took this part to Hungary, and Hungary was allies of the Germans in the First World War, so they give this part of this country to Czechoslovakia and Hungary and divided it between themselves.

Q. AND THE THIRD BORDER WAS WHAT?

A. Hungary, Romania and Poland wasn't too far away either. A very important part of eastern Europe, so whoever had control of this particular part of the border had the control of the country. And then everything started then on the Czechoslovakia in 1939.

Q. When were you born?

A. I was born 1924.

Q. What did your family do there?

A. My family were in the flour milling business.

We had about 25, 30 miles, all around people would come to us for mill and bring their corn and wheat, we had two mills to make their bread. We were very well off, but my father was in the lumber business also, on account of when the Czechoslovakia extended the railroads west to east, my father got involved in it, and America guaranteed all for Czechoslovakia, for the railroad they should bring the railroad east from Czechoslovakia. So my father had a lot of control of a lot of forest, my family owned a lot of forest, a lot of people did in this particular part of the country, they owned forest and made those ties for the railroad.

Then when the American depression started, the depression happened, when the American depression started, my father owed a million dollar debt for the bank of Czechoslovakia, for the railroad, and, unfortunately, the president, the American president did not back the Czechoslovakia economy after the depression, so my father owed the bank, he had to pay off this money, it was an awful lot of money, so our property, he sold everything. It wasn't worth a million, so my father

begged the bank, said, "I have ten children, I will do the best I can, I will still sell bread and forests, and let me stay, make a living." So the bank did not have another choice except giving my father you pay as you go. So when Czechoslovakia went bankrupt, and they had taken over, the Germans in 1939, then everything started.

Q. WAS YOUR FAMILY RELIGIOUS?

A. My father was a very religious man, he had a credential of a Rabbi, but he preferred business.

Q. WHERE WAS YOUR MOTHER FROM?

A. She was from 20 miles of my part of the country, she came from a very good family. Also my grandfather was a very well-to-do Jew down there in his way, and everything went fine until the American depression hit, so we were actually -- I was just a kid at the time, I don't remember much of good times. Throughout our household it was the only -- then we have enough food, we didn't starve for food, we had enough flour and meal and meat and everything else, but everything else we didn't have too much. We lived -- outside everybody thought we were very well off, but inside we were very poor.

Q. DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

A. Yes, I went to the Czech school. First I went to -- the Carpathian people had their own autonomy, so we

went to their schools. And everything was going alright until 1939 when Czechoslovakia give up, when Chamberlain gave away Sudetenland to the Germans. The government of Czechoslovakia said if you took away the best part of us, we give you the government completely, so the Germans moved into Czechoslovakia.

And at best the Hungarians were supposed to move into us, but didn't get the order from the Germans yet to move in. So what happened, my part of the country, there was a man named Volusian, this Volusian was a very vicious man, he was a Ukranian. When he took over the country, he made plans how to execute. His archenemy were the Hungarians. He knew the Hungarians would take over sooner or later. He made a capital in Varvarsova in Shiva in Khust. I was 14 years old at the time, and he took over the city, this Volusian, and took around 20,000 kids from all over the valley and trained them.

One night, got Hungarians, crossed the border to go east, so he took all those 20,000 people, and the capital was Khust, and he took them and trained them one night and took over the ammunition from the army barracks and gave it out to fight the Hungarian end of the city. Five or six tanks they had at the time, the Hungarians, they killed off almost 20,000 people. And in the

afternoon they brought it into our city, Khust, and made a grave in the middle of the city and put in all the 20,000 people, all young kids, none older than 15, 18, 19 years old, and they were already in the Czechoslovakia services, they hadn't come home yet.

Q. WERE YOU THERE THEN?

A. Yes, I was there at this particular time, so when the Hungarians took over the control of the city, we, the Jews, who were the most part of the 100,000 Jews in the Carpathian mountains, they were actually afraid. He made plans how he was going to kill them, each city, take them out to the Tisa and shoot them and let the bodies flow down to Hungary. The Tisa, the second biggest -- Tisa is the second biggest water, so thank God the plan of this Volusian did not happen.

The Hungarians came in and liberated us, and the Jews of this particular part of the country, they were the liberation and we rejoiced very much about it, our very life, and otherwise the Ukranian would have killed us off.

Every day he put on who he would shoot in Khust, every man. Thank God his plan didn't work. Later on he came to California, and many years later he died. He was one of the biggest anti-semites at the time, you know. This is 1939.

Q. WHO WERE YOU SPEAKING OF?

A. Volusian, he was the President, he was the Ukrainian, he declared himself president of Ukrainia from then on.

Life went on under the Hungarians, and the Hungarians did everything the Germans told them to. Our life was rather changed.

Then they called out my father one day and they said, Mr. Samuel, we took over your bank papers, we find out you owe us an awful lot of money and you are very, very -- you are a good man, you can send in wood for rifles, and you are very knowledgeable in rifle materials -- there was walnut -- so then you can pay off your bills. Otherwise we'll take over everything you have got.

We were five kids, small kids, my father, and so my father said, only as long as I pay off, then once I pay off a loan, I work for you no more.

So then I went away to Budapest and learned tailoring. My father was a big believer in the old saying, Malaka meliche (ph), if you have a profession you have a kingdom of your own. So all the kids he sent away to learn professions.

And one brother, a tailor, my older one, and he started way before Hitler came in, he knew he was going

to come, too, so my other brother he became a roofer, very excellent roofer, and I became a tailor, and my other brother was a blacksmith, on account of he knew engineering, the blacksmith. So we all learned a profession in order to be able to support ourselves.

Three years had passed by, and Budapest was -- two and a half years or so, I was coming back and forth to our home a little bit, and Budapest, I stayed about six, eight months a year in Dressau. Being a tailor, I could have worked -- I worked at home a little bit, I worked in Budapest, I helped my father too, but he was very well off when he paid off everything, all the money he paid off in less than two years. My father quit, then he said, I don't want to work, he took all the papers we had on the railroad station, we must have had around ten wagonloads of wood sent to Germany. My father went to the office and tore up all the papers, nobody knows where it goes. In fact, after the war, we still found the woods when the Russians took off in 1955.

So then the trouble started, the Hungarians come in and took us to the ghetto. They come into our houses and they accumulated all the Jews. Most Jews were well off. They take maybe on the other side of Khust, east of Khust the Jews were very poor Jews there, there used to be a town where there were more Jews than

non-Jews, so the Jews live a very poor life. In this part of Hungary the Jews were pretty well off.

So when the Germans came in, the Hungarians told us we have to leave everything behind where we stay. So before this happened a new law came in where every Jew has to wear yellow stars, and my father, he was very much against it. He says, "I don't find a star is a star, I find it a hole in the ground, they will bury us with this particular star by telling everybody who we are. I am proud to be Jewish, but when they can see on my arm I am a Jew, I have a beard, I have kids they are showing, nobody can tell me I am not a Jew, I don't have to wear a star to show me I am a Jew." But many times he got roughed up by the Hungarian militia and the German militia for not wearing the star, but this was his belief.

And then when they took us all together --

Q. WHICH GHETTO?

A. Khust, where the capital was of Ukrania, around 20 miles from us, they took a big part of the town. We used to be the Jewish tamitora (ph) and put together all the Jews from all over the little villages and towns around. And then things started to be bad, we have to live with 50, 60 people in one big room, like a big sanctuary, and have very hard life. We were there about

a month, month and a half or so, and then we were forced -- they told us they are going to come after us, they are going to send us to a labor camp to work.

Now, we never heard much of Auschwitz at the time, Auschwitz, we never heard the way Germany operated Auschwitz. Even people in Auschwitz did not know what goes on, you know what I mean, people know people are burning there in the ovens, but most of them did not know. They would have done something if they had known about it.

So they put us in a wagon, around 60 people in one wagon, and the cattle trains come up to the city of Khust, and they took out by thousands from the ghetto and sent us out.

Q. When was this?

A. 1944, 1944 after Pesta.

Q. So you were living in your own home until 1944?

A. Yes, we were under restriction, but we were living in our own home yet. If they waited would have waited three months, we would have been liberated, but this guy was such a vicious man, this Eichmann, he unpacked all the German trains to carry ammunition to Germany, and unpacked it in -- (inaudible) -- the city, next door to us there is a big railroad city, one of the biggest in Europe. He unloaded all those trains and

emptied the trains from different parts of Europe to pick up Jews. I didn't believe if Hitler -- if Eichmann -- if Hitler had won the war, Eichmann would have been executed anyway on account of he cost many hundreds of thousands of German lives. He unloaded the eastern Europe, my home town, he unloaded all German trains with ammunition and sent those trains to different places to pick up Jews for Auschwitz. It was more important than saving German lives in Russia.

So when we come in, this is -- they took 60 people in a wagon, and packed up maybe around 5,000 Jews in those particular wagons, they took us to Cachou, Slovakia, and from Cachou we went to Poland to Auschwitz. It was very hard, they didn't give us no water, no nothing.

Q. SO YOU DID NOT GO TO WORK CAMP?

A. No, no work camp at all. From the ghetto, this is the reason it was so terrible, we did not realize how the German mind works. You take a man from a regular life, you know, never think of a death, we didn't know about death existing. Some of our soldiers, Hungarian soldiers would come home from vacation, would tell us the things, and we thought maybe it is not true, we didn't believe -- the paper did not publicize anything like it, and we didn't have a radio yet to listen to the west at

the time.

So we come, 5,000 of us come to Auschwitz, and we come to Auschwitz, there was every three hours come a big train from the 5,000, at least in this particular time, beginning of '44 to all of '44, and we are coming to Auschwitz, the whole family. We were traveling around three days, and the food, we had enough, but water we did not have.

Q. YOUR WHOLE FAMILY WAS WITH YOU?

A. Yes, the whole family was with me, five of us. Actually mother, my brother and three sisters, two sisters and a brother, my father and mother. We come into Auschwitz and -- we come into Auschwitz, we see an awful lot of Germans there on both sides of the road, you know. And they were counting people here, and counting people there, you know, and he says, "Leave everything on the cattle wagons, you'll get it later."

So you finally -- then you see Germans going down the street with lollipops, SS, and a child cries and they give them a lollipop, you tell them humanitarian, Dr. Mangele, the biggest murderer who was in the Jewish trial, he was giving them candy, they shouldn't cry. So we think these people were humanitarians, you never believe what goes on there.

So they took us in, they counted so many people

there, and so many people to the right and to the left, we didn't know what this means anyway. But I remember my mother, she was a good-looking woman, the Gestapo came to her and took away a child -- my mother took my sister's baby, grandchild -- so my mother said "Let me, I want to carry the baby, she is tired." The Gestapo says, "No, go on this side, I am telling you." So my mother went on the side, and she grabs the child and goes with the other children, and those people went to the side where they were killing them. They took them to a big place.

The only thing I took with me was a pair of drills, and I left my drills outside, and when I go inside they put numbers on the back. And after we washed up real good, and we washed up, they give us some kind of other stuff so we shouldn't get lice.

And I didn't know they put a number on the back, and here I jump over and get my drill, I don't want to leave my drill, it was a very expensive drill my father got me when I got my Bar Mitzvah. So these people know I don't belong there, I am without clothes, just a pair drill in my hand, you know.

So the guy come and -- Jewish guy from Poland, unmercifully he hit me, he said, "I am doing you a favor. If I tell the Gestapo what you did," he said, "they'll kill you right away." And I was put together with other

people again who were washed up.

And then there was -- they would take us to a barrack and this barrack had a thousand people there, you can go to a bathroom once or twice a day, you go together in the bathroom, was far away, and it was tough really at the time. But we were not eating anyway so we didn't have to go to the bathroom too much anyway.

So one day I go to the bathroom, about two or three days later, and I find a Jewish man, I say, "My family comes here three days ago, can you tell me what happened to them?"

Q. YOU ASKED HIM?

A. I asked him. He said, you know, "I can get shot by telling you, but I am going to tell you something, and don't make a big noise about it. Your family after three hours in Auschwitz, they executed them." And he -- you look at the ovens, you see those tall ovens, and each time, each puff means five people are dying. He says they burn up, and with every puff every two seconds. So I couldn't believe it, I cried, and nothing I could do about it, I just have to take care of myself. My brother Abraham, the little guy -- is in Israel now -- was two years younger than me.

So we stayed in Auschwitz, and we stayed there around two weeks. It was very hard, there was a lot of

beating going on, so we tried to live the best we can. And then they asked for tailors. I told my brother, "You come with me, I will teach you a little bit about it." So we went down, they counted up, and then he was left behind. I never seen him until the end of the war, after. I never believed he was alive.

And they send us over to Krakow, Poland. Krakow, Poland used to be a very, very big concentration camp, 25,000 tailors. We made for the German army brand new uniforms, and we fixed old uniforms. If somebody got shot and had a bullet hole in it, we took out the sleeve and put in a new sleeve, or something like this, we made it perfect and put it back on the front line again.

It was a hard camp. Life was tough in this camp. We had -- I knew a Lagerfuhrer, his name was Gett, Hauptsturmfuhrer Gett, he was one of the top men there, head of 25,000 tailors there. It wasn't all Jews, there must have been at least 25 percent of the people who were there Polish also. This wasn't a camp where they were killing Jews, Jews they send away. They come to our camp every week, they come up once every two weeks and took out 500, took out 500 Auschwitz, and each few days a new transfers come in, we have to eliminate the people. There were not -- very few people die from tailoring, you know what I mean? The women had a camp, some men were in

the camp and their wife was in the women's camp. They took off all of their hair. They looked like heck, all of them. And they were working in the tailor shops many places.

The only problem was if a women got pregnant, and they never know when the Gestapo come in and take out 50 women and 100 women and look at them if they were pregnant, show anything with the stomach, bango, they kill them. So it wasn't for the women too well; that and we worked very much.

This was a very, very tough camp. The Gett, Hauptsturmfuhrer was the commander there. In time Gar Silovich was the Jewish Lagerfuhrer, he was a very fine man. People hated him, what Gar Silovich used to do. A lot of people didn't know the operation, but being his tailor, I know his operation. I become his tailor and work for the boss too, sometimes. This guy Gett used to come and say "I need 500 Jews," and he had all the books from every 25,000 prisoners by age, so he never going to go down and get young people, he get 65-year-old ones, then 60, he goes down the line, and he says, "My goal is here to save young ones who can do something for us," you know what I mean? He even sent away his own father to die. The kind of people that holler to the commander of the camp, "how come Silovich left his father alive?" You

know, but he was very much hated.

Silovich was a lawyer in his private life, very fine person, he was there with this child, only Jewish child in the whole camp, maybe a little -- young little girl around eight or nine, cute, his wife was blond. And I used to work for him sometimes private, away from the camp. I used to talk to Silovich, I'd say, "How come you are so hated by everybody? I wouldn't want to be in your shoes even if you have a good life." He says "Why?" "Well, you know, first of all, I think you write letters to the boss, to Germany, to your family, you write perfect German," and he used to send letters, others had relatives in France, he used to write it for them, you know, too much about this family, you are the first one to go. But he is such a good friend of mine, I say, "Hey, you cannot trust him, you will see. I hope I am wrong."

So we were there in Auschwitz, in ^{Plaszow} Plasho, Poland about five or six months, and the big Russians move down to Tarnoff. Tarnoff is someplace in Poland, maybe 50 miles from Krakow, and they stood there, they never closed the river. When the Russians got to Tarnoff they took this big camp of 25,000 tailors, they dismantled them, send everything, everything was sent to Germany. I was with the last 500 men were dismantling

the camp, this machinery, the materials, everything, sent away to Germany.

And then I transferred with other Jews, was passing by the city of Krakow west, so they stopped by our camp, they brought us Jews to our camp, and they took all the 500 people who were there left to liquidate the camp, which I was one of them. And in the meantime, I heard them bringing back, exactly the last time I didn't, it was too much mixed up.

Silovich, what happened to him, the commander of the camp put up a Pollack to sell Silovich a gun, and he sold him a gun and told him to put the gun on the right side of his back pocket under his big coat. And before we left, sent out, we were the last 15 or 20 leaving there, and he makes his spiel, Mr. Gett, and comes over to Silovich's wife and gives her a kiss on both sides of the cheek, and the child also, and Silovich also, but when he gets to Silovich, he knows exactly where to go for the gun. The gun was loaded, and he took this gun and he killed them all three.

And I come into a little problem there for one reason. When he fell down, when he shot him in the head, he almost said -- they didn't understand him, but I understood him, "You were right, this man hates me."

So the Lager Commander wanted to know to whom

he talked to. The only thing they know, he say, "It must be you." I said, "I hated him, he sent my father to Auschwitz to be killed." I said, "If wouldn't have had a chance to kill him, I would have killed him," I say, you know, I had to get myself out of it. He looked at the people there who were lined up to go on the train, and he thought the only one he talked to must be me, but I talked myself out of it.

And then come very bad times, we were up there, he left, then come the local people. They took the big machine guns that -- not machine guns, but had those guns and started hitting the people. They were hitting them on the head in this particular camp. An awful lot of American money. Who brought them, the Jews from France, from Greece, they brought a lot of money. So there were an awful lot of American gold pieces there, and many, many things there. They said, "Jews give us your money," so in every wagon they were hitting. So much my luck was, I was in the front, and they were hitting with the rifle butts over the heads of the people. I only get hit a little bit in the side. Too much in the beginning, if they had started hitting in the beginning, I would have been in trouble. I was the third one inside. They ruined a lot of people's lives, a lot of people got killed from the rifle butts, and they were bloody all

over, it was terrible.

Q. WHILE YOU WERE BOARDING THE TRAINS TO LEAVE?

A. To leave Krakow, Poland. So finally we made the Krakow, Poland. We had departed with everybody and every wagon, every wagon all the way down the line, they were hitting whatever they can there, Ukraine & Pollack, for money. They did give them money.

So we were traveling around three, four days. We come to this big camp, Mathausen, and this camp they put us in -- 100 people in one wagon, no water, no toilet, no nothing. Imagine how a wagon look with 100 people without toilets, without nothing, it was terrible, you could die just from that alone. Sometime used to scratch out -- I scratched out with something, a little nail, enough in the wagon would for those three days, just to get enough air coming fresh from outside, you could die just from the inside.

Somewhere down the line I must have passed out on account of I fell down, and I had a friend of mine name of Freund, a man around 45 or so, I know him before the war, he was together with me in the tailors, and he was -- when we come off the wagon, he was looking for me, he knew I was in the wagon, couldn't believe I would die, and the guy he know that, so he go over to the dead people and pulls me out and throws me up on his shoulders

(and carries me. I find myself under a shower. And yet there was a mountain to walk up. I asked him "How could you take, an old man like you, how could you take me?" He said, "I wanted to have a son-in-law."

(Mr. Samuels took a few moments to compose himself.)

So we become very close.

spelling
(So from there, this particular camp was very bad, almost as bad as Auschwitz, and used to be big places where they took people to work for no reason, just to work on stones, carrying stones, Mathausen, probably one of the second killers in Germany, Mathausen lays exactly around 70 miles from -- Mathausen is 70 miles from Vienna and 25 miles east of Linz, if you know, right on the Donau.

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(So we were sent to this particular camp, the name of the camp was Mellick. It used to be an old Catholic monastery, so the Germans decided to build underground shelters to make ammunitions for -- they didn't feel they were losing the war for some reason, so they brought in 25,000 people to this monastery, they put up a big camp there, and they took us every morning, every morning to work, to work with the train underground. And there I got introduced to air hammers, and I know exactly how, in the first one I used to dig in

the bottom, another guy used to dig the top, and before you know it in a few days you have a round going. And all the mountains there, unfortunately, were made out of sand, solid sand, was the Donau not too far from there. So we made around 12 train entrances there.

And then the camp people were dying awfully fast. Then what happened is a lot of where you build bunkers, you are supposed to take certain precautions, it shouldn't cave in, and the masters of the bunkers weren't the greatest masters, they put up the bunkers, they didn't put enough strong wood between one piece of road and another piece of road and it would cave in. And people used to throw their sand on a big rubberband to carry it out. And they used to carry -- it used to be 25, 30, 40 people killed. It wasn't exactly a Jewish camp, it was 70-percent Jewish, 30 percent not Jewish. The food wasn't good. Everything is kind of -- you could live with it.

And the Germans started to shoot from all over the eastern Europe, bring down the prisoners to us, bring them down to us to different camps. So our camp had to -- more people had to die. It was too good for the people so they cut down a little bit on the food so more people would die.

So I was assigned to -- assigned to this

(particular Block 17 with a thousand people there. I forgot to mention -- can I go back two Khust?

I got the names. In the ghetto there were people from little towns, and the fellow in charge of this ghetto, his name was Musgo Bresky, a multi-millionaire, he spoke German quite well, and he always used to shoot out to work people from little towns, not from the big towns, so little towns, we were working very hard loading ammunition to Germany, to the eastern front, you know. So I went down to the Gestapo one time and I complained, I said, "Why does he send our Jews, only Jews from little towns?" I went right down to the front, I said, "Musgo Bresky is not a very good commander, he sends out people from little towns only to work hard, but he keep people from big towns." Musgo Bresky, he beat the devil out of us. I tell Musgo Bresky in front of the Germans, I say, "Someday in my life I will pay you back," never think about it, it may happen. See, when I came to Vienna, I bumped into him, Musgo Bresky, he is no big shot, he is almost a Muslim man, thin, maybe weighs 110 pounds, so I find him there in the camp. He didn't recognize me, and I had with me five dollars in America gold piece, small. I go down to the man to the camp, one of guys in this particular block, I say, "I will give you the five-dollar piece if you let me

stay, I want to be close to Musgo Bresky. He is there with his son." The man say, "Okay, you can have a place." He gives me a place right there, right next to him. He never knows where I was, he was so weak, and I hid, I watched him, I watched him every day.

I go to work, I came home, and I had two shifts, 12-hour shifts, and to make the caves, those big bunkers, tunnels, and every day I would come home and watch Musgo. I took a bed, I want his son next to me, I want the father under me, so the guy for five dollars, he done that for me, an American five-dollar gold piece. I got it from somebody from Greece.

And I watch him, go down one month, two months, three months, I watch him. I don't talk to him, he never knew who I am. One day I see a hand go under a pillow from the bottom, and I jump down, we had wooden shoes, take my wooden shoes, and I said, "You steal in bed from your own father -- from your own son." And I told him who I am. I tell him, "I promise you I am going to get you, get even with you, you know I am going to get even with you, I can kill you myself or give you to the Germans to kill you." Before I come to hit him, I couldn't hit him. I just told him, "Take my bread, you want to keep your son, maybe he will be better tomorrow." He died the next day. And he recognized me, and he said,

"I am glad you didn't kill me, you have a right." You steal bread from another person, you can call the Gestapo or you can kill him yourself, this was the law. Then I told him, "I am not going to shoot you, the Germans made us so immoral that you can steal bread, especially a multi-millionaire like you, to steal the bread from your son. You know your son maybe gets up tomorrow and he cannot eat, he'll die You'll do it. We have trouble enough from hunger, I don't have to hurt you any more." Then he died a month later in the camp. They were going to work and a cave caved in under him and it killed him.

There was this camp, it was a real tough camp, people used to come there, people from Holland, and I used to work in the streets there some time, sweeping the streets, and I used to tell them in German that -- most Holland people speak German -- I said, "Don't work until the Germans are here." They said, "We are strong, we can do it." I said talk to me, I will be here two weeks from today, talk to me then. Two weeks later you see those people, half of them died out already. They were big eaters. A lot of them speak Yugoslavian. I used to speak Yugoslavian. I say, "Don't work, you show the Germans how much you do and they force on us all the work you guys do, and this is not good for you, you don't get enough food to do so much work." So it was a very hard

camp.

And I am going back right now where I had three friends, they come from Poland. One guy, Harry was his name, one is Clausner, one other guy, Leonard, and they all professionals, no youngsters there, they are all professional people, and this particular camp they slap five people in one bed.

Q. Which camp?

A. Camp Mellick. The things were rough, they told the people if you want a deal for yourself go down by the wire we have, we have water all over the floor, got the wire, you will be dead. Unfortunately my bed was freezing, the five of us stayed in the bed, was a very cold winter. Doctor says to me, "Samuel," he says, "I want you to make the war, I am 45 years old, I don't believe I will make it, but you try to make it, and I will do the best I can." He was very good. He says, "I am going to show you how you are going to feel better," so he takes me, we went to the hall to eat, and he talks to me somehow, and I am satisfied with the bread, looks plenty big for me, I wasn't hungry like other times. He brought in my mind I am doing all right. He always says, "My goal is," he says, "try to make the war so you can tell the people if you ever survive what happened here." A Jewish doctor from Slovakia someplace. And he watched

over me all the time. He says "If you feel hungry," he says, "it is cold," he says, "but run out to the latrine and take a cold shower and you will feel beautiful afterward." And I done it. I never got a cold. I used to walk under snow, sometimes around 200 feet away from the barracks to the latrine there, and I never got a cold coming back without clothes, you know. So he had a lot of responsibility in that.

Going back to Clausner and the other guys, those guys were three very fine Jews from Poland, the people who have -- professional people. I was a youngster. So one time the Gestapo calls them out to the station, to the police station, and they go up to the station, and they came back, they said they would like to have me with them, I should also go. Then they come to me, and they come back to me and told me, "Leo, things are so bad in the camp you need more bread, you can help more people, why don't you join us? We joined to be a Capo." A Capo is to be a camp policeman. Well, I say, "Listen to me, the war is going to be almost over. I don't want to take no position to help the Germans. I will try to live through the way I can right now."

Well, they asked me this. They asked another guy; the other guy took it, I didn't know the other man. Those people were trained for three weeks. When they

came back from the training they were such a vicious people those three, unbelievable, they used to go down on all the friends we had from Krakow, Poland they killed. You know, take away their food and will kill them. They were going to send them to very dangerous places to work, and everything else, they had a chance to do it.

When I see everybody dying around me, all my friends from Krakow, the friend, Freund, who carried me from the camp, I used to watch him, he used to sell bread for cigarettes, and each time I caught him I used to complain, I said, "Freund, it is not right to do what you are doing. You cannot sell bread for cigarettes because you have to live. This bread gives you just enough to live." And this bread wasn't real bread, either, at least 20 percent of the bread was sawdust, you know what I mean? So when I used to catch him, I used to holler at him, and he used to listen to me, but it did not help him. Unfortunately he passed on. He went to the camp there, and he was eating or drinking something, and he got killed and died immediately.

There was a lot of water coming out from the locomotive, there were a lot of trains coming in there, and the Jews did not know this water was taken from there, from the water, but I know the waters are poison. One of the Czechs told me don't ever drink that water, it

is poison. They take hot water, it was too cold outside, so Freund, my friend, he died. So I see everybody dying around me from my camp to Krakow. I said to myself, it comes time. Harry, he becomes a big shot in our town, people, he's picking on me, and I know he did the same thing to the other one, he doesn't want witnesses to what he did. I was disillusioned with everything. I thought to myself, I will go down to the kitchen, maybe somebody give me something, a cup of soup or something. I heard a Hungarian Gestapo, talks Hungarian, so when he talks Hungarian, I go out I took off my hat and I go down to this man, the Gestapo, and I say, "I am very happy to see a Hungarian man here like you, a beautiful person, I know if you are Hungarian you must be very nice." He said, "Don't bet on it. Who are you?" So I told him where I come from, I come from eastern Hungary. "And you look very bad, disillusioned with something, something bothers you. If you are hungry I give you a cup of coffee, a cup of tea, a cup of soup." I said, "I need more than soup, I need a favor from you." He said, "What is the favor?" I said, "Harry become Capo, and we live together in Poland, a very nice human being, but since they trained them, he is killing off all his friends, and I am the only one, maybe one other left who -- I don't want nothing from you, I only want you to tell Harry to give

me all the food I got coming." He took care of the food and the clothes. He said to give you the food, I don't want no favors from you or anybody else, I want to get what I got coming me, I want to try to make the war, I don't want to die like all my friends died after Harry, or take me away to another block, you know. He said, "I have no authority, I am in the kitchen, but if you think I can catch something on Harry." I said, "I can't show him he shouldn't do things like he does." "Well," he says, "I heard about Harry before, he takes the bottom of the food, he saves it for himself on the bottom. I will go out and check him over."

So the Gestapo comes in and he finds in Harry's room and office, he finds around 20, 20 gallons of soup, real thick soup, and he took all the people who were there, two shift people who were sleeping, supposed to work at night, and he waked everybody up and he says, "Come have some soup," and he gave them the soup. And he worked Harry over, and he said, "Harry, I don't want you to give this man Samuel nothing, don't pick on him, if you pick on him I will be after you." I could have gotten soup, I don't want him to tell him, the only thing I wanted was to try to make the war.

And he was very, very -- he never give me nothing this Gestapo, he used to come in and ask me how I

am doing. I say fine. He say to Harry to stay away from me. Harry comes to me and says, "Let's be friends," he says, "I am going to try to come all the time in the bottom comes so I can give you more better food." He knew I had put it up to the Gestapo, this man.

So we were there the whole war and things were going pretty bad there, always, always more people. They were coming into the camp and we were building a new crematorium ourselves, from work when we came we build the railroad station, and we rode the railroad every morning to work. And when we came home, each one takes two bricks and brings them up to the camp. Before you know it, all the wagon bricks -- 24,000 people work, three or four days later we had all the bricks. Then they build a crematorium, a small crematorium, not a big one, 10, 15, 20 people a day, and the rest they send to Muthausen, people were dying every day on account of the shafts were always caving in.

Q. So they were burning people?

spelling
A. They used to burn them at Muthausen, plus the people they died in cave-ins, they put them together in the back of the camp on a big truck, put together maybe 150, 200 people, cover them up and take them to Muthausen to be burned.

So life was going on there very hard. You can

see death in your eyes all the time. The commander of the camp wasn't a too kind person. He find you to be just --- look around you when he come into the camp, he shoots you. Many times he used to go outside and just shoot people when they come into work, you never know the time is up for you. Very tough place.

So we were there the whole time until the Russians come in across Poland, they come into -- how you call it, the part of Germany, eastern Germany. So then they took us from this particular camp, they took us from Mallick back again to Mathausen, and Mathausen eliminate a lot of us too, a lot of them died there over two days, and they picked us to be shot, and to live and everything else.

From there they send us to Ebensee. Ebensee is just like Lake-Tahoe-type place, big ocean, big sea. It is just like big lake on top of the mountains. And there was hell. There was people coming from all over Germany, there was no food available at all, and it was early spring then. Most of the leaves, most of the grass in the whole camp was all gone, there was nothing left in the camp.

So I walked around the camp disillusioned. I thought Mallick was bad, I figure this is worse. I never seen anything like it, you know. So I walk around this

(*spelling*) camp, I walk into my Rabbi from my home town, Rabbi Teitelbaum, he is the big Rabbi you heard about in New York, murdered by one of his nephews. He was Rabbi in my home town. So I said, "Rabbi Teitelbaum, it is nice to see you, I am happy to see you here." He said, "No, not as happy as I am." I said, "Why?" He said, "I feel something will change for us, all our people from our home town are here in this camp, and they are all sick and dying." He says, "I feel you are going to help." I said, "Rabbi, how can you tell me something like this? What do you base your saying?" He says, "I don't know, I just feel you are going to help me." I said, "How can I help you," I say, "I am in the same place you are." He said, "You will see, something will happen in the next two or three days."

(In the next two or three days happen is they looked for people for the kitchen, and they weren't to be just the Germans here, they took every nationality, they took one person to carry the food for the kitchen and work around the kitchen. So you got double food, instead of one soup you got two soups. So I just never even dreamed of this happening. So I stay up in the line, people stayed in the line, and I didn't pay attention who was behind me, and I was the first, the German asked me "What are you?" I said, "A Czechoslovakian Jew." He

can't tell it from me. He says, "You don't tell the others not to wear the yellow, it doesn't show too much," he say, "Would you like to work in the kitchen?" There is nobody here, everybody would give his life for the kitchen to work there. I looked behind me and I thought maybe they like to interview somebody else, there was another guy who wasn't Jewish there, but he was very sick, must have been 50 years old, some of the political prisoners from Czechoslovakia could hardly walk, and right away he was going to take me. I looked pretty healthy.

So I go down to the Rabbi and I tell the Rabbi Tietelbaum, I said, "I never believed in miracles, but I sure believe in miracles this one." He said "Why?" "Well," I say, "they hired me to work in the kitchen. Maybe I am able to help you and your brother here and all the people from Chesna who lived there in the camp."

So I started to -- when I started, when I started working there, they always give me the leftovers without measuring, you know, canteen was left free to people. I take the whole thing that is left over in a rag and take it down to the camp, and Rabbi Teitelbaum is there waiting for me, and he lines up ten, 15 people there, the food, we are going to give Leo his share, he takes his cut, when he gives his cut and I finish eating,

and he gives a spoon left over for everybody. He says, "I told you you are going to help us."

It was very, very tough in this camp. You hardly, you thought this is it, if the Americans don't come in, myself kind of, no food at all, no water at all, no grass to eat, no leaves on the trees, everything was eaten up. The Frenchmen, they were expert, they were expert on wheat taken from the ground out, roots, the roots and wash them up and eat them, just plain roots, used to sell them for cigarettes, just the roots. You couldn't find the forest, you couldn't find grass, you couldn't find nothing. Things were very bad, I don't know how we ever survived there.

Then came -- we were there about two weeks, hardly making it, maybe three weeks, and we -- the Gestapo come in one morning, in to tell us, "Guys," he says, "you better do something about it, you have to come up to the camp, the Americans are here. We bombed this camp today." We heard the bombs every day in Linz, not too far away, about 15, 20 miles. We heard the bombs dropping there. There was no news in the camp, nobody know nothing about it, so we go into the camps to work, and even just to hide before the Americans come in, they are going to bomb.

So what happened the night before the camp,

what happened, the Germans took out 50 dynamite people and they put dynamite at the entrances from this particular camp, and some of the Gestapo must have been really more humane at the time, because they figured there was enough killing, so when we were marching to the bunkers to go into work to hide there, the Germans called out, they told some of our people go back again, don't go there on account of the entrances are all bombed. If you get in there, it will destroy everybody, try not to go in there.

They start shooting in the air, we run back to the camp, and they tried to line us up again, and they shoot a few people, and they line up again, and we start going again, and again he stop us, and he says run away back to the camp, try not to, if you go back it is 100 percent you will be killed. Here at least your chances are to live. And then it happened so fast, before we come back a second time we find American GIs -- (crying) -- they were singing the stars and stripes, and from then on, even today when I hear it I cry.

spelling
Then we tried to save some of the guys and the Teitelbaum family, the boy was 18 years old, it was too late, he was almost gone, so Rabbi Teitelbaum tells me, he says, "Leo, he says, we need a little chicken, so forth, maybe it will pull him through for a few days

until we take him to the hospital." And we run down 2-1/2 miles down the mountains to German farmers, a big farm, and we go in there, it must have been around 10, 15 Germans working inside and outside, we go into the chicken coop, and we want to take out ten chickens. There was a big lock on -- a real heavy lock. Rabbi Teitelbaum -- at that particular time I say, "How can you break a lock like this? We have no keys." He said, "Give me a rusted nail someplace." And I opened up, I give him the nail, and he goes and opens up the coop, just like a miracle, and the Germans didn't do nothing, didn't say a word to us. And we just take the chickens and we left. We told them we have sick people who will die, who are very much in need of it. And until we got to the camp he gave away eight of them.

I told him, we come back to the camp, his boy was very, very sick, and Rabbi Teitelbaum says, "Leo, I have no right to kill the chicken, I have no right, I am a Rabbi, I am not supposed to do it. You do it." I take an axe and chop off the head and put it in the oven, and take off the feathers, you know. I make a big soup out of it. And we tried to feed him, but he was -- it didn't help, and two days later he died.

So Rabbi Teitelbaum, he says, "Leo, you have got to help me." I said, "What do you want help?" In

(the camp in the meantime was chaos, American GI's seeing all those dead people lined up, all those people, and they were 100 and 200 people at places, people who died, they stacked them up like wood. And they felt so sorry for everybody. They took all their rations, they had a truck load of army rations they had for the whole Army around there, and they unloaded in that camp. And this killed, three or four thousand people, killed again, they were eating all those heavy foods after so many years not eating. So then the MP came in and they said -- 2,000 MPs surrounded the whole camp and lined up all the food, they took it. People had mattresses, they took all the mattresses and burned them and took out the food, and they started to feed the people with crackers and soup. So there were a few that survived.

And I decided to go home. I took a couple kids from Khust, and I told them, "I take you guys home, your father died, I promised your father I would take you home."

So we went down to -- I took them, I went down from Linz, I went to Vienna. From Vienna I went to Bratislava, Blatzburg, and from Blatzburg we went to Budapest, is not too far from there, and in Budapest a miracle happened for me, I go down to the train, because eastern Budapest and western Budapest had two big

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railroad stations, eastern goes to us, Carpathia, and to Romania. And I find the men who worked for my father in the mill, and I find them there, and I grabbed them and I say, "What is new, is anything home in my family?" He said, "Samuel, you are the luckiest man within 40, 50 miles from this town on account of you have three brothers waiting for you at home. You are a very lucky person," he says. So I kissed the guy I was so happy to see it.

So I came home. To have my brothers was like a miracle. Out of all those people to find one man who worked for us, for my family, still worked there at the time. I came home, he told me all the good news, and I delivered those kids, they belong to their brothers and uncles left off when I get home.

When I get home the Russians were not too friendly to me. I thought maybe when I went home -- I went through the Holocaust -- they come to me and they said, we got to go, after I be home three days, they come and say, "You have to work and repair bridges where the Germans dumped." And all over this part of the country the Germans destroyed the bridges, so the Russians couldn't go across it.

So I told the man, I said, "Listen to me, I was working for the Germans so many years, I don't feel I

should go work bridges for those people who were here at home, they should work their own bridges, they were home, they never left home."

He said, "We are the bosses, not you. You want to be a boss, be a boss, fine. Tomorrow morning I expect you to be at the bridge working." I thought to myself, I am not going to work for the Russians here. I told them, I say, "First of all, I never thought to work for Russia, Russians belong in Moscow, not here. You guys don't belong here, this was always a free country." "No," he said, "You can get in trouble you keep on talking like this," he says.

So there was one Russian officer there, this guy jumped on me all the time, the Russian officer was a Jew, or not Jew -- I say -- I think the Mayor of the town, is Mayor -- "I can't figure out how he could make a man like this Mayor." He says, "Why?" "When the Germans was here, he was groveling his hand, he would take from the Jews, he would take from the Jews and you guys made him Mayor." I said what kind of people are you to, when the Russians were here -- I am going to tell you, I am a tailor, I can take an old garment," I say, "and turn them over from the inside and make it new." I said, "I am a professional man, and this I can do, but how can you change your face. Yesterday you were a fascist and I was

a communist, today you are a communist and I am a fascist. You handle me like I am a fascist." He said, "You are a fascist, your father owned land." I said, "Thank you very much." The guy told him don't jump, I don't want nothing to happen to him, and this guy killed another Jew, nobody knows about it, he must have known about it. I found out later he killed this Mayor. So he told the Mayor, I want you to stay away from this Samuel completely, stay away from him. He has a lot of point what he has to say. If you are found missing you have to answer to me, he says.

So anyway, I did not listen to nothing they said. I have to work, I went down to Bucharest, which is around a thousand kilometers from us west. I went down to Bucharest, Romania, and I worked there a little time. I had a lot of family living there. And I find out a lot of Romanian Jews are left, the majority of them -- of the Romanian Jews were left. And according to the men who were friends of mine, who was a Rabbi and some relative of mine, he said when Michael was King there, the Germans came in and told him they wanted Jews like he wanted in Hungary. Hungary give them the Jews. And to the Germans Michael said, "What do you want to do with the Jews?" They said, "We are going to kill them." So he told the Gestapo, what you should do tomorrow, you come into the

(main square, and you find out we can kill our own Jews, we don't need the Germans to kill our Jews. So when the Gestapo -- when the men came down the next day, the Germans come down the next day, they found 40 Jews in a butcher shop there, hanged by the back, just like a cow you hang them up. So the king says, "I showed you we can kill our own Jews, we don't need you guys to help us." They never bothered after the Jews. Actually, by killing 40 Jews they saved a couple hundred thousand Jews in Romania. Not one Jew was taken away from Romania. So I was taken care of in Romania.

(In the meantime I come home, I made a few tours to Budapest to bring some stuff on the black market to make an extra buck. And then my brother, Bernard, and Miriam, they went down to Frankfurt, Germany and they settled there. They wanted to come to America, and I got a letter from Bernard, he said you better come live here, there is no good news from there, anyway, you better start to get away from there. We are here in Germany, things are not the best, but still we are free.

So I go down to the -- I go down to home from Romania, and I find -- from Budapest I come home, and I had a letter. I am thinking of getting away. In the meantime, the headquarters for the FBI, like ours, NKVD, is about 30 miles from us, a city name is Chop, Chop is

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on the Hungarian-Russian border, the new Russian border. So he called me up there, the man, and I talked to him, NKVD, the big shots from the Russian officers. He says I want you to do something. You haven't been too good at all since you come back from Germany. You thought maybe you have something coming, you don't have nothing coming. We don't owe anybody nothing. If I were you, he says, I want you to leave the country, you and your brother Abraham. They used to take people across the border, people come from all over Poland to eastern Europe, they come to us in the train, the Samuel brothers would take you across the border. We lived on the border, about a mile away from the border. So when I go down to Chop, he said, "What are you doing, don't you know what goes on around you?" I say, "No, what is going on?" He says, "I want you to know something, within less than two weeks, not even a bird will be able to fly through this border." He said if you -- he knows everything about my family, what I did wrong, what my brother did wrong. He said, "They send you to work, you made a mistake, you went to Romania, had a good time, your time there, three or four months, you didn't do nothing to help the Russian cause. You told them right out there you hate communism, you want to be free. You have no intention to stay here. So I am telling you right now," he says, "tonight is the

night you are leaving."

Q. THE RUSSIAN POLICE?

A. The big officer. So when he tells me this, he told me like secretly, not in the open. He take me to another room. I asked him, "I would like you to tell me the truth, why are you suddenly interested in me and my brother?" "It was a good question, I expected you to ask this question." He says, "When I was a kid the revolution broke out right then. My father was a little merchant, with a little store, hardly made a living." He said he was selling materials, yardage good, small yardage good store, very small. "I remember when the communists come in," he says, "I was six years old when they called my father a dirty Jew, and they took a bayonet and put it in my father's stomach and my mother's stomach -- I was hidden under the bed, my father told me to stay so I wasn't touched. The next day the Russian come, and Communist party, they took me and they send me away to a school of consomols. Consomol in Russian means a communist school where they really indoctrinate you, but" he says, "I never forget my father's blood." And he says, "the only reason he died for was because he was a Jew."

And he takes -- he says, "You are quite a hard spoken young gentleman." He had the Geroi Sovietski

Soyuz, the biggest medal of honor, like the Presidential Medal of Honor, he says, "It doesn't mean anything to me," he says, "I want to help Jews get out of this country."

I said, tell him I have a wedding tonight, one of my friends is getting married, can I stay another day? He said no, he said, "Do yourself a favor, when you go home," he said, "go the other way in the fields." And you are allowed to go there. He gave me a document, I can go there on the border, we have hay there, and I only live a mile away. I never seen what goes on there, I was always in the big cities. He had the whole border with a brand new highway, three-lane highway, or four-lane highway going down the whole border. And there is every place where they have dynamited the border, they put out, how you call it, wires, if you touch the wires it goes up, right on the border, the Romanian border.

So when I go home I see everything happen. I think maybe this guy means it. So I come home, and I don't have any money, so I find a gentile fellow who always wanted to buy a certain piece of land, so I said let's go down to the Burgermeister, I am selling you the land right now. So he gave me around 10,000 rubles then, \$10,000 like, you know, and a couple of cows. I said the cows belong to my brother, this money I take with me.

And this man gave me -- this Russian man gave me a map exactly how to go. He says, "If you go to this particular station where I am right here, there will be a warrant out for your arrest right there tomorrow, and your brother's. You try to make around a thousand-mile detour from your home town, you go straight to Chop." I would be in Hungary, from Hungary I go. But he said, "I want you to go from Talamara to Satu Mare to Roudmara to Budapest, a different direction, more east then west. So he gave me a map, "How about farther down after Budapest?" He said, "I tell you what you do, you come to Budapest and you cross the border into Slovakia. In Slovakia you buy yourself a train ticket, you have enough money." Russian money is the best money right then.

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"And they will give you a train ticket to Prague, Czechoslovakia, and you stay in Prague. As long as you want to stay there, the freed Czechs are not a hundred percent, it will be a couple of years before we get control there." He said, "There's a lot of Americans in Prague, a lot of Czechs in Prague, a lot of British in Prague, a lot of Russians in Prague."

So I stayed there a couple of weeks. From Prague he said you take a train to Hapt. Hapt is the border of Sudetenland, it is place the Germans first took away from Czechoslovakia.

When I come to Sudetenland to Hapt, we were arrested by the Czech police. He said, "What are you guys doing?" I said, "They take all our money away, the Czech police," and we speak Czech, so I go into the main station, and in the station, how people -- how life goes, you never know what goes on there. You find a man, if you live on the border there was a lot of border police always hanging around the Jewish people, and the Jewish people used to be generous to help them out and also they would -- they come from Czechoslovakia, they were always strangers and they used to come into the Jewish businesses, and the Jewish businesses used to be nice to them.

When I come in the station I found a fellow by the -- his name was Brankovatch, so Brankovatch, I say, "You don't know me?" He says, "no," he says. "I am surprised you don't know me." He took my money away. I said, "So many times you ate at our table with my father and mother. My father and mother liked you very much." He said, "Who are you? I don't remember seeing you." This was many years later, 1945. I said, "I am Samuel from Czerna, you used to be stationed here before the war, before the Czechoslovakia. I always remember you being very kind man." He said, "I am still a kind man." He said, "Take your brother and come over to my house and

be my guest."

So I go there, I stayed with him, and he says -- he buys me kosher food, nothing take from me. There was a kosher butcher there. And he says to me, "Any time, you can stay as long as you want, any time you want to cross the border I will take you across to the American side."

I stayed there two weeks. After two weeks I told Mr. Brankovatch I would like to go across with my brother. In the meantime a lot of people get killed in many places, but not in -- but I am not worried about me. I took my little brother and me, we come to the border. And he says, "Samuel, come back here." When I come back he give me back the money. It wasn't too much. I changed the money there for the American -- how do you call it? I didn't have Russian no more, I had scrip money, occupying money, I had \$128 American money. He said, "Take it all. I don't want nothing. Your father was very good to me." He said, "The Americans will catch you in a few minutes." He said don't worry about it. He goes to the border, starts shooting there, a whole lot of G.I.'s come on this side. So he take me in the jail there in the city of Hoff in Germany, it is right on the border of Bavaria and Czechoslovakia. And then the Americans, the G.I.'s come in, the American G.I.'s come

in, the Jewish people from the American army, and they took me out and send me to my brother. They bought me a ticket, send me to my brother, to Frankfurt, Germany. They were in the kibbutz already there, life was very good then. Then we waited for the Americans to come here, three years there, and come to this country, to Oakland.

Q. WHEN DID YOU COME HERE?

A. 1948, February 5th.

Q. What kind of work did you do here?

A. Same thing, tailoring, opened up a shop right here. I was working for J. C. Penney's here in Oakland around three months. I had a German passport, and when it comes to Rosh Hashanah, they -- it comes Jewish New Year's, they told me "We cannot give you a job." I had the job already. I said I want to take off, it is part of the Jewish holiday. They tell me why Jewish holiday, we don't hire Jews, you are not Jew, you are German. I said no, I am Jewish. And they fired me.

The next day I come back, Monday, I live on Fourteenth Street by Highland Hospitals, I get up Monday morning about 6:30. Samuel, you are dismissed from this organization. You are a good man, but you are dismissed.

So I go down to the headquarters where my tailor shop was right across the street from the Phelan

Building, I say -- I go in there and say, listen, I am the president of the Newcomers of America, we have a membership close to a thousand, how would you like to have a little demonstration in front of your store tomorrow? People don't know you buying stock for your place and you guys are having prejudice. You told me I was hired, only niggers you hire for washing the floors, but Jews we don't hire at all. So I said to him, we went down to the Jewish Center, East Fourteenth Street, used to be the Jewish center in Oakland, and the center is the same place it is today in San Francisco, and told them this is a common thing with J. C. Penny's.

So when I went, they told me to come back later. I came back later to the Phelan Building, they told me, Samuel, don't bother nobody, just go back to work. So I went back to work. The manager for J. C. Penney's, the brand new Penney's on East 14th Street, they were, he said, how do you like to work when they don't like your kind, he tells me. I said I love it, I live in a country, they don't like my kind. In my country there's more Jews than non-Jews here in Ukraine before the war. I love to live in places they don't like me. I can prove I can do it. So he says, "Okay, fine," he says, "you went over my head," he says, "you got a job."

I spoke pretty well English, and I used to work with the Americans a little bit in Germany. And I worked all day. I worked, and he passes by before I go home, he passes by, doesn't talk to me. I grab him by the belt and I say, "Hey, come over manager, I don't need your job, I am going in business in San Francisco. I found a store today." I'm 37 years old. I buy the shop for 200 dollars a month. I have a machine, and I have just enough money to go in business, I said, and I am going in business there.

You know this man came from one of my best friends a year later, every time his tailoring, he came to me, "You proved a point," he said, "You want to work, you opened your own." I did then, after San Francisco he come up to J. C. Penney's, "I would like you to come see my shop." He came down, he passed by, and every time go near the headquarters I come and see you. This is the end of it.

Q. WHEN DID YOU GET MARRIED?

A. 1949. I met a girl in Pennsylvania,

Q. DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

A. We have four children.

We have -- one son of mine is a rabbi. He is a rabbi in Fresno, California, he used to be a Rabbi in San Francisco, and he used to be an Orthodox Rabbi there,

and Rabbi Tillerman, 25th Avenue.

Q. HOW MUCH OF YOUR STORY DO THEY KNOW?

A. Who?

Q. YOUR CHILDREN?

A. I could never tell them much, very little. I did not -- I never go through the agony of telling them. They know I was in the camp, you know. There was many things happened within times, you know, but in the country where you can't put everything on tape, remember every little detail about.

Q. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A. Today life is good, I am retired.

Unfortunately my wife has leukemia, but otherwise life is very good.

You can never choose a life, you know how it happened, you forget it. There is an old Jewish saying that says "Mensch tracht und Gott lacht," means you can make plans in life what you are going to do, when it comes to the end of the plan, God comes, one little clue he puts in and messes up all your plans. The same thing happened to me, I had planned to travel a lot and do a lot, unfortunately I can't do all those things.

Q. OKAY, THIS IS IT, THANK YOU.

A. It is very hard for me to go down, my sister-in-law talked to me the first time, too, says it

is important to tell. Like I say, this doctor told me in Germany, the guy who helped me out, he said, try to tell the world what happened, nobody is going to believe what people can do to other people. He was right, he never made it, unfortunately.

Okay. Miriam told you the story about her family. I forgot to tell you one thing. Miriam, when she come home, when Miriam come home from her episode with her brothers, my father was home, and my father said this thing could never happen, he told me it couldn't happen. When Miriam come home with her mother, and all her body, not even a clear piece of flesh, everything was in torns, and she was run away by nighttime over the fields, and the people were working in the day time, so she used to hide in the fields and at night travel west to come home. When she come home, she told this horrible story about what goes on in Poland. My father says, maybe they are not 100 percent there. She was there. People couldn't believe it.

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