Interview with BERNARD OFFEN

Holocaust Oral History Project

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MS. PROZEN: This is taking place in San Francisco, on April 22nd, 1992. My name is Sylvia Prozan, and the second interviewer is Nigel French.

Q. BERNARD, WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A. I was born in the City of Krakow in Poland.

Q. WHEN?

A. 1929.

Q. WHAT DATE?

A. April 17th, and I'm 63.

Q. AND WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S NAME?

A. Jacob, Yacov, in Yiddish.

Q. AND WHERE WAS HE BORN?

A. He was born near the City of Krakow, in a place called Tarnow. I forgot what the distance is, 30 kilometers, something like that.

Q. AND HIS FATHER?

A. I don't know much about his father and, but he was born in that area also.

Q. DO YOU KNOW HIS NAME?

A. It was Offen also, O-f-f-e-n. The name has not changed.

Q. HIS FIRST NAME?

A. No, I don't. Unfortunately, I do not.

Q. DID YOU KNOW YOUR GRANDFATHER?

A. No, didn't know my grandfathers.

Q. YOUR GRANDMOTHER?

A. Only my grandmother.

Q. HER NAME?

A. (Rokma Gittle).

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE WAS FROM?

A. She was from the area of Krakow also.

Q. DID YOUR GRANDFATHER DIE WHEN YOU WERE VERY YOUNG?

A. Yes, yes, but I don't recall him at all. My older brother does, though.

Q. AND YOUR MOTHER, HER NAME?

A. Oh, I made a mistake. (Rokma Gittle) is my mother's name. It was Sylvia. Yes, that was my grandmother's name.

Q. YOUR FATHER'S MOTHER?

A. My mother's mother.

Q. YOUR MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME?

A. (Rokma Gittle Schiffer).

Q. AND WHERE WAS SHE FROM?

A. She was born in Krakow, the way I understood it, and she had two different names, (Rokma Gittle Zwarin) and also (Schiffer). That's because of the Jewish marriage, that it's, the Polish government never recognized. So in some way, it sounds very funny.

Q. WHY DID THE POLISH GOVERNMENT --

A. I don't know. I don't quite know. The civil laws were such that, so my mother had the name of (Zwarin) and also (Schiffer), from both sides.

Q. AND WHAT WAS THE ZWARIN NAME?

A. (Zwarin) was my grandmother's name. And (Schiffer) must have been from my grandfather's side.

Q. NOW, YOU DON'T RECALL YOUR PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS?

A. No. Only my grandmother.

Q. YOUR MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER?

A. My maternal grandmother, right.

Q. WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS OR OCCUPATION WAS YOUR FATHER IN?

A. My father was a shoemaker by trade. And in actuality, he was a peddler. He traveled around Poland, generally in the area of Krakow, pedaling supplies for restaurants, like toothpicks, billiard balls, cues and chalk, and other things that had to do with billiard, something that he could carry very lightly. So he was a peddler.

Q. DO YOU KNOW IF THIS WAS A BUSINESS THAT YOUR GRANDPARENTS HAD BEEN IN?

A. I don't -- well, I have to jump. I spent last summer in Poland, and, in Krakow, and I was discovering some family names and history. What my brother told me

about my father is that his family had some kind of an inn in the area of (Donbrovo), and he was -- I discovered some of these family names, and I also discovered that one of the people named Offen was also producing billiard tables, you see. But that's a long story. It's a film I'm working on, so I'm digressing from the interview. So it's a whole other thing that's opened up.

Q. WELL, IF IT'S RELEVANT TO YOUR FATHER PEDALING BILLIARD BALLS, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US?

A. Well, you see, I spent last summer in Poland, and I started interviewing people about my family, my father's business, people that he had contact with. And one of the people said that they met some people during the ghetto time, in Krakow, whose name was Offen, and I got in touch with the Polish people who remembered him. They said, oh, yes, they were producing billiard tables. And the interesting story is that I've been trying to find out, where did my father get these things, where did he buy these things to sell? What I realized is that, in families, in those days, they were dealing in the same kind of merchandise that, you know, someone in the family had.

So when I return this summer, I will be talking more with these people who are were producing

these tables that my father peddled. So that's the connection.

Q. WHAT ABOUT BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A. I have two brothers who survived, Sam and Nathan. Sam is living in Michigan and Nathan is living in New Jersey. And I'm the youngest brother. I had a sister named Miriam who didn't survive. And we're, my brothers are debating whether it was 57 people in our extended family or 59 people, so we're not quite sure. It's between those numbers.

Q. AND DO YOU KNOW WHEN MIRIAM WAS BORN?

A. No, I do not. And I don't even know if my brother remembers. Just last week, last Friday, I was celebrating my first correct birthday. I didn't know till a year ago that I was two years older than I thought, so.

Q. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

A. My brother went to Poland and he started looking, and he found the reports, and he was ten. So he said, but that's not your correct birth date, but I remember when you were born. So in one day, in one moment, I found out I was two years older than I was before reading that copy of the birth certificate. This year is my first year in which I celebrated my correct birthday.

Q. BUT THE DATE IS THE SAME?

A. No. Wrong month, wrong years, everything.

Q. WHEN DID YOU THINK IT WAS?

A. I thought it was March 7, 1931, but I was born in '29, apparently, according to the birth certificate, so I aged instantly two years.

Q. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT KRAKOW?

A. I remember my neighborhood quite well. The apartment building we lived in was a three-story high building, large courtyard. Behind us was a big chocolate factory. It was 99.9 percent Jewish. Only the caretaker was not Jewish. I remember, it was more like a (schtetle), the apartment house. We had a basement, or ground level apartment. Six of us lived in a small room. We were quite poor.

I remember, especially around Succot, where people used to put up their, their Succot, you know. The whole courtyard was just filled with Succot, you know. It was an exciting time. So it was more like a village. It was like that.

Next door to us was a synagogue. But for some reason, my father didn't go there. I think it was too orthodox for him. My father was a traditional orthodox, but he was a -- well, I don't know about traditional. He was orthodox, but he was a modern orthodox person.

He shaved; he shaved his face. He just had a mustache on. So we went across, down the road, and then across the street to the synagogue we used to go. It was more of a working class synagogue, rather than the Shoul of Hasidem, you know, real orthodox. But we were kosher and all that.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOUR FATHER LOOKED LIKE?

A. Very much.

Q. PLEASE GIVE US A DESCRIPTION.

A. It's hard. I never try to describe. He was about 5'7, mustache, small mustache. Physically, it's kind of hard to describe. Gentle features, kind of a round face. Too bad I didn't bring a photograph. I have a photograph of him that survived in this country. Because nothing survived from, with us. So he was a very gentle man.

My mother threatened me many times with, wait till father comes home, and he'll spank me, and all of that. But when he did come home, he usually brought some, some small gifts. And if he was forced into punishing me, all I had to do is just point my finger at him and he would, he was so ticklish that he would start just squirming already. And if I touch him, of course, he forgot all about punishing me. And if he did, it was with a strap on the bottom, you know, like the soft

part, like. But I ended up in the camps with my father until we, through a number of camps, until we got to Auschwitz.

I believe that one of the reasons that helped me in my survival is because I felt loved in my family. I did not know what poverty was till I came to this country, to see how people have things and all kinds of opportunities, but I feel they lead an impoverished life. So I didn't know. I was poor. Although six of us lived in one room, you know.

Q. WHY WOULD YOUR FATHER HAVE TO SPANK YOU?

A. Oh, geez. I used to climb, love to climb over the wall and go to the chocolate factory. And some of these workers would hand me, sometimes, a piece of chocolate or something like this. But I used to have to be on the lookout for this watchman who was kind of a mean spirited person, and with a dog and all of that. So I'd climb over up this high wall. But in those days, you know, I was pretty quick.

Q. WAS IT GOOD CHOCOLATE?

A. Delicious chocolate. I don't think I questioned it, you know. I ate it before I had the chance to ask my mother. So, come to think of it, I never knew that, but, oh, well. We all have our sins, but that was one of them.

Q. AND WHEN YOUR MOTHER FOUND OUT, SHE WOULD SAY, YOU KNOW, WAIT TILL YOUR FATHER GETS HOME?

A. It wasn't so much about the chocolate. It was, I used to build little wagons, racing wagons, four-wheel wagons from baby carriages, and used to run around with other kids from the same apartment house. And sometimes, quite a few times, we were chased by Polish boys, you know, called, calling me Christ killer, you dirty Jew, or one of those favorite names, or throwing stones at us, at me. So that was kind of an existence outside of the apartment house, and especially going to, to (Hader).

But I don't remember, besides doing all those different things, I don't know exactly why. Maybe I didn't do my chores, you know. We cooked in the apartment, and it was a coal burning stove, and you know, I had to carry out the ashes and bring the coal in, maybe the wood, or bring some water into the apartment. We didn't have running water or electricity, though it was a modern apartment house. So who knows what I didn't do, you know. Maybe I disobeyed my mother. But I don't remember her ever being cruel to me in any way. And I really believe that that helped me to survive, really feeling loved.

Q. OKAY. DESCRIBE YOUR MOTHER.

A. My mother, well, always busy, always busy. She was taking care of five people, being a very traditional housewife, mother. She was also a seamstress, so she made dresses. She made all of our clothes too. She made dresses for people. That was extra income to supplement father's income, because sometimes he used to not make much money. He used to be gone most of the week, but he used to return, usually on Thursday, sometimes on Friday. And unless he came home, we didn't have much money to buy things for Shabbot, you know. But grandmother lived in the same apartment house, just around the corner, inside the same apartment house, so we didn't starve or anything like this. Nobody starved, really.

Q. WHAT DID SHE LOOK LIKE, YOU REMEMBER?

A. Mother, she had a, not a round face, kind of a sloped down to a narrow face. God, I've never been asked to describe my mother. Oh.

Q. EYES?

A. Brown eyes, dark hair, very long hair, very long hair.

Q. HOW LONG?

A. Way down the back, to the buttocks. And I always remember her combing her hair, or crocheting, or cooking or preparing for Shabbot, standing at the table,

just watching her knead the dough, you know. And then we'd have the challah, you know. She did it with five strands. It was really a big challah. And she'd make, usually, two trays of cake, chocolate and poppy seeds. I used to carry it to the bakery, which was not too far from in the back of where the synagogue was. It was a community bakery.

Q. WHERE THE BAKING OCCURRED?

A. Yes, where the baking occurred. It was a bakery that some people operated. And they finish all their baking for the day, and then everybody, practically everybody that I knew brought a (choland) to the bakers. So I carried the (choland); it had our name on there, you know, and put it in there on Friday.

On Saturday, on Shabbot, I came to the synagogue, went into this great big courtyard, and there was the bakery. And there was this man with a long, like a pizza shovel, only long. And he used to just shovel out, bring out these pots. Oh, there's ours, you know, and carry it home. It was like that was the, what we lived on, Shabbot, because you didn't light the fire; you didn't do anything like that.

Mother was always, always busy, always gentle. She threatened me with father instead of doing anything herself.

And then I used to run from my grandmother's also. But, and her, grandmother's brother lived across the street, and I remember him, a long beard. He was 104, and I remember him well. He tended a great big garden.

Q. DID YOU MEET HIM?

A. He was 104 years old.

Q. AND WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES DID HE ENGAGE IN?

A. He had a great big garden, right across the street from us. I'm not quite sure what happened to him. He died just as the war began, is my understanding, but I'll check on that detail with my brother. I'm a little mixed up about what happened to him. I believe he died the natural death.

Q. DID YOUR MOTHER HAVE SIBLINGS?

A. Oh, yes, yes. There were four sisters.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THEIR NAMES?

A. My mother's name was, in Polish, was (Gusta). Cecila was the youngest, (Chaia), someplace in the middle. I'm not sure. And what was the fourth one? God, I can't recall the fourth one.

Q. WHERE DID THEY LIVE?

A. They lived pretty much in the neighborhood, within walking distance, you know.

Q. WERE THERE COUSINS?

A. There were many cousins, yes. In the corner house, that's one house next to us, apartment blocks, lived my cousins that was my aunt's children. She had two girls, red-headed girls. I don't remember their names. So I used to just walk over there, you know. But there were family in walking distance, you know. I don't remember about -- I'm trying to see what else I can recall about my mother.

I always remember her as being busy. I remember her doing needle work. It was like crocheting. It was the kind you put a needle up, and then put it down. I don't know. What do you call it? Stitchery, some kind of --

Q. EMBROIDERY?

A. It was, yes. She did a great big portrait of Moses being put into the Nile, into the Nile River, and saying, you know. Well, she worked on it a long time. She actually, her eyes, she spoiled her eyes from doing that for a long, long time.

Q. WAS THAT FOR THE FAMILY, OR FOR SALE?

A. Oh, for the family. That was for us.

Q. WAS IT, DO YOU RECALL IT IN YOUR APARTMENT?

A. Did we what?

Q. DID YOU HAVE IT AT HOME?

A. Oh, yes, yes, of course. It was quite large,

about this high. It was kind of a longish kind of thing.

Q. AND DID YOUR FATHER HAVE SIBLINGS?

A. Yes. My father had two brothers, and I've never met any of them.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?

A. In the Tarnow area, where my father was born.

Q. AND WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT SAM, YOUR BROTHER SAM?

A. Well, Sam is the, yes, Sam is the oldest. He's eight years older than I. Sam used to go to work. He became, he apprenticed as a furrier, and he started working at that probably before the war. And that was one of the reasons that he had a trade, so it prolonged his life. It actually saved his life, because of that.

And Sam and Nathan, it's like they slept together in this fold-out bed which was rolled out into the hallway, because the room was so small. I don't, I don't remember fighting with my brothers. I don't know if I'm, if I am blocking that kind of memory out, but I really don't recall fighting with my brother. With my sister, I remember fighting a little bit. She was a year older than I.

But I think we were a pretty harmonious family because of having lived in one room. There's something

about accommodating one another, you know, when they -- in a smaller space, there's a harmony, I believe, something like that.

Q. TELL ME AN INSTANCE OF ACCOMMODATING? AT BEDTIMES?

A. Well, bedtimes, we had to go out in the hallway and roll in this bed and fold it out. That was in front of the stove. And things had to be picked up and put in the stove, because there wasn't much floor space there. And just, the bathroom was outside. It was a bathroom for the whole apartment house, for those who didn't have it inside their apartments.

No one has ever asked me that kind of a question, but that's a good one. I just don't have memories of really having conflicting things that were happening between us.

Q. WELL, THE APARTMENT WAS ONE ROOM, OKAY. AND YOU SLEPT IN THE HALL?

A. No, no, no, no. We slept inside the apartment, but the folded bed was pushed out into the hall in the mornings, and brought in at night. It had to be unfolded, and that kind of thing.

Q. WELL, SAM SAM AND NATHAN SLEPT TOGETHER?

A. Yes.

Q. AND YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER SLEPT TOGETHER?

A. Yes.

Q. AND WHAT ABOUT YOU AND MIRIAM?

A. Well, the four of us, I slept next to Nathan; next to me slept my sister; and next to her was my brother. And my father and mother were on the opposite. And it was kind of like we were in the middle, and so it was, it was very small.

Q. WHEN NIGHT FELL, WHAT HAPPENED IF ONE OF YOU WANTED TO READ OR WRITE BY CANDLELIGHT?

A. There was a kerosene lamp, and yes, that's what we did.

Q. AND THE REST WANTED TO GO TO SLEEP, DO YOU REMEMBER ANY FRICTION?

A. See, I remember some of that. Sometimes we wanted to read and sometimes someone else wanted to go to sleep, you know, to turn off the light and go to sleep. But my brothers spent -- they, being a little older, they already acquired a lot of other interests and they spent time with their friends. The library, they loved the library. And so they spent a lot of time outside of the house, as you can well imagine.

Q. WHAT WAS THE LIBRARY LIKE?

A. I don't know because I never got to it. There's an eight year difference between Sam and I. And eight years, I was barely -- school was barely starting

for me when the war started, so.

Q. WAS THERE ELECTRICITY IN THE LIBRARY?

A. From what I understand, yes. Yes, of course, yes. There was electricity. There was electricity in most of the apartment houses. Except some of the lower apartments that we were in, the electricity was still not brought in. It had to be specially, you might say, piped in, you know, like water, running water also.

Q. AND HOW DO YOU REMEMBER YOURSELF?

A. Well, I think I was a happy-go-lucky kid, played a lot, had a lot of friends in the apartment building, did a lot of venturing out with friends, way down past the block and through the hills surrounding the area we lived in, in Krakow. And I remember venturing out lots of places.

Q. WERE THEY PLACES YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO GO?

A. There was places I was not supposed to go.

Q. TELL US ABOUT THOSE.

A. Well, I was not supposed to go into the hills behind the area we lived in. It was like way up hills. They were called (Trimonki). We were not supposed to go up there, but I did. I went with some friends. Sometimes I went alone. That's when I used to get into trouble. Some Polish kids used to catch me, or something like that, or throw stones at me, but I used

to extricate myself, ran fast. I was pretty nimble.

Q. WHO WERE YOUR FRIENDS?

A. Name one?

Q. SURE.

A. Yonkle Goldstein, (Hamak Goldshatove). And what was the kid's name, Bernhard? I forgot his first name.

(Laughing) I just recall these contests that we, as young kids, used to have. And I was totally totally jealous of this, this one kid. We used to have contests of who could pee higher, and he was such a champion that --

Q. TELL US ABOUT IT.

A. I was jealous of him because he could pee higher than anybody else.

So I remember, we used to build those carts also. We used to, like the whole apartment house, the other kids, used to build them. We used to race them.

Q. WHERE?

A. In the courtyard or out in the street. Out in the street, there was a little hill. And we used to go up there and just race down, kids turning and kids steering, you know, one of those, where you put your feet up there and you steered it. There were lots of things like that, you know, jumping on the wall. And

they were getting chocolate too, and trying to divert this man who was the watchman, with the dogs. And one went in while the other one kind of, you know, played games. Strangers that might seem, probably helped me in my survival.

Q. DID YOU EVER HURT THE WATCHMAN?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

A. Well, we usually, we used to arrange something; one start at one end, and the other at the other end. And so someone saw him, and someone was on the roof watching for him, and he used to tip us off. So we very seldom got caught by the watchman. I mean, a few kids together like that, and we can drive him crazy. Probably did.

Q. WAS HE POLISH?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. WAS HE JEWISH?

A. I have no idea. I have no idea. He could be, but I don't know. It was a watchman.

Q. WHEN THESE KIDS WOULD CALL YOU NAMES, DO YOU REMEMBER HOW THEY WOULD SAY, CHRIST KILLER, OR THE OTHER EPITHETS? CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT?

A. Well, they used to -- what was the other one? -- dirty Jew, or Jew City. Palestine, in other words.

What are you doing here? Why don't you travel? Translates to, why don't you go away to Palestine? I can't even say it. My Polish isn't that good. There was all kinds of epithets they used to call. And it's like, it doesn't stick in memory the exact word. It was just a feeling of just being verbally abused, you know, sometimes physically.

Q. WHAT FEELING COMES TO MIND?

A. Feeling of fear and anger, fear and anger.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST RECOLLECTION OF HAVING THIS FEAR AND ANGER? HOW OLD?

A. I was preschool. I didn't start going to school until I was about seven. I remember once, having a stone thrown at me, right here, and I was bleeding. Came home with, you know, blood streaming, and I don't think I was fatally wounded or really deeply hurt, but I was bleeding a little bit and it hurt. I remember that one in particular.

I remember lots of other times, being chased, and just being on the run from Polish kids. It wasn't just Polish kids. They were the ones who chased me. But just having a feeling that, just stay away from the Polish people, that they hate me, hate us. And I didn't know how much that affected me. So there was a lot of anger for a long time.

Q. IN YOU?

A. In me, about that, about that. There was other things later on. But I have, since that time, looked at my anger and what happened in the past, and I'm looking at it from a different perspective now, than I, it was then. So that's why I'm able to go back to Poland, to work on examining that and writing about it. But it still comes up. It still comes up.

Q. THIS FEAR THAT YOU HAD AS A CHILD, DID YOU TALK ABOUT IT WITH ANYBODY ELSE IN YOUR FAMILY?

A. No. That was not a subject of discussion. I think it was more understood on a deeper level than that. It was not necessary to discuss it.

Q. DID YOUR MOTHER EVER SAY ANYTHING TO YOU?

A. She just comforted me. They talked about it between themselves, you know, listened to me, but --

Q. WELL, WHAT DID THEY SAY?

A. I really don't recall any specific discussion on that, because I don't know why. I just don't recall any particular discussion. It doesn't come to me. Sometimes my father went out looking for these kids, you know, that were chasing me, or something like that. That I remember. Or my brother. But they were generally gone.

Q. DID HE EVER CATCH THEM OR SAY ANYTHING TO

THEM?

A. My father had some discussions with some of these Polish kids who chased me or my schoolmates, or something like that, but I don't know what the results were. I really don't know. I only know that he went to talk with their parents.

Q. HE WENT TO TALK WITH THEIR PARENTS?

A. Yes. Some of these kids that chased me were my schoolmates.

Q. BRAVE THING TO DO, WASN'T IT?

A. Yes. I thought so too.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR SIBLINGS COMING HOME AND TALKING ABOUT PROBLEMS?

A. I remember my middle brother, Nathan, coming home and sometimes boasting that he beat up some Polish kid. He was a pretty, pretty tough guy. He was a amateur boxer, so he took care of himself, probably, and took care of me too, in some ways. So I don't recall any specific, other than hearing about it, just generally and discussions among my brothers sometimes, incidents.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY INTERACTION WITH ADULT POLISH PEOPLE, BEFORE SCHOOL?

A. No, no. Other than the caretaker of the apartment building. It was a woman, and she lived next

to us, actually. No. It was a nice older woman.

Q. DID YOU TRAVEL TO OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY? DID YOU EVER SEE OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY?

A. I did, just before the war, go to the main part of the City. We lived in the suburban Krakow, which was cross the (Vishal) River area, called (Pagusha). So once in a while, I used to go to the cinema, and used to walk across the bridge on the (Vishal) River to go to the cinema. And it was a great venture too, to go. I used to sneak into the cinema sometimes also.

Q. WOULD YOU HAVE HAD THE MONEY, OR THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY TO SEE IT?

A. There was no other way to see it, than to sneak in. And I was pretty good at that too.

Q. HOW DID YOU DO THAT?

A. I used to wait. When the people came out, and as they were coming out the door, I used to sneak in and lay down in between the seats, and just stay there until the movie started. When the movie started, I used to sit up.

Q. DID ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS ACCOMPANY YOU?

A. Oh, sometimes, yes.

Q. WAS THIS SELF-TAUGHT OR DID SOMEBODY ASSIST YOU?

A. I'm sure that -- I think, as a matter of fact, yes, there were. There were a couple other kids that taught me this trick. Yes, I do recall that.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THE MOVIES YOU SAW?

A. Yes. What's that one about the seven dwarfs?

Q. SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS?

A. Yes. Hi-ho, hi-ho, and off to work we go (singing). I remember quite a few films, yes. I used to love American.

Q. MOSTLY AMERICAN?

A. Mostly American.

Q. DID THEY HAVE SUBTITLES?

A. I don't recall the titles of the -- I just remember the Seven Dwarfs, though.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER UNDERSTANDING WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE MOVIE?

A. Not -- well, you get the theme, and you know, it's animation. You don't need language for that, actually. I mean, it's just a story for children, and adults actually. And it was communicated. Language was not a problem. But I remember melodies.

Q. WITH NO ELECTRICITY IN YOUR HOME, THIS MUST HAVE BEEN --

A. Oh, it was paradise. It was, it was a very exciting, very powerful, very -- it expanded my world

into fantasy, especially. I remember also seeing some American cowboy films, you know, and certainly got my imagination going about America, and Hollywood, of course.

Q. AT THAT TIME WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT AMERICA?

A. Well, I thought Hollywood was America. And I've heard stories about the streets being paved with gold, you know. That's the old classic words that I heard about America. I remember grandmother receiving some mail from America, didn't know from where, you know, had no idea, but it was exciting.

And eventually, after the war, after the liberation, after living in England, I wanted to go to America. After being liberated by the American Army, especially, I wanted to go to America. I don't think I knew -- I knew a lot more then about America, but my knowledge of it was still not the truth, not the whole truth, and not -- it was still about the Hollywood, because I saw a lot more American films by that time. But the impression, I didn't understand, I don't think. And I was still in survival, emotionally, for many years after the liberation. So anything to do with America was, and my liberators, was, of course, greatly expanded and fantasized and, and really elaborated on, you know. My fantasy was really at work.

Q. CAN YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WENT BACK TO YOUR APARTMENT, THE (SCHTETLE), FROM THE MOVIE THEATER, WHAT YOU WOULD FANTASIZE ABOUT AMERICA? OR DIDN'T YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT GOING TO AMERICA?

A. No. I don't think I had any thoughts about going to America back then at all.

Q. DO YOU RECALL WHETHER YOUR MOTHER OR GRANDMOTHER WOULD SPEAK ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THIS LETTER THAT ARRIVED?

A. Not to me. I just heard about it. And I remember her receiving some money from America also, and she shared with us. It was just about this great country called America, or encapsulated in Hollywood, you know. I had no idea of the vastness of the country, and the diversity.

Q. WERE THERE ANY OTHER VENTURES IN KRAKOW?

A. We used to go to the castle, which was the seat of Polish Kings, in the old days. And the prime minister is called (Vavel), which is like a national treasurer. I remember going there and having to put on these special felt boots so we wouldn't damage the parquet floors. And I remember going, sneaking out from the -- not sneaking out, but actually, avoiding going to the (Hader), and go to a football game instead, or something like that. And if my father found out about

it, they caught me, it was -- for that, I got a spanking. He did not really care about anything I might have done, but when it came around to not going to learn Yiddish, and that I got spanked for, definitely.

So it wasn't such a big world for me, as far as outside of what I mentioned, going to this palace, going to the river, going to the river by myself. I remember once getting lost. I think I was around four years of age. I wandered away from the apartment house, stark naked, and I went around the corner, across the street. And there were trams going on the street and trucks and whatever. And some neighbors recognized me by a birth mark that I have on here. And they say, oh, that's that Offen kid, you know. So they walked me home, you know. It was like a large neighborhood, with the people living all over. It was still a schtetle. People knew each other.

Q. WHAT TIME OF DAY WAS THIS?

A. Oh, it was during the day, but it was -- I wouldn't have remembered. I wouldn't remember time of day.

Q. WELL, I WONDERED, WAS IT THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?

A. Oh, no, no. It was during broad daylight, you know. Yes. I remember, it was daytime, of course.

Q. WHAT ABOUT THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS, PASSOVER, FOR EXAMPLE? DID YOU HAVE A SEDAR?

A. Oh, yes, of course, we had a sedar. We usually had it in our own house. But there were, we also went for a sedar -- I'm not sure if it was the first night. The first night, I think, it was usually at home. Maybe it was the last one, or maybe -- because usually, we celebrated every day, I mean, for eight days. It was not just like here, first day only, and maybe last day, or first day only. It was like holidays for eight dates. It was wonderful.

I remember father bringing home matza, these long paper wrapped. They were about this long, and this round, matzas, just round matzas. They were not square. Hmm, they were not square. They were round. And bringing several of those packs to last for Passover. And mother was especially busy, baking stuff and --

Q. AT THE OVEN AT THE SYNAGOGUE?

A. No, no. Those are bought. Those are bought. And I don't know where they were baked, but --

Q. BUT YOUR MOTHER IS BAKING?

A. Baking cakes, all kinds of cakes, matza meal, from matza meal, and especially sponge cakes, especially sponge cake.

So there, we dressed in our best clothes. I

remember having this brown suede short, shorts and a jacket, that mother made me. And I had blond hair at that time, at that time. So I always remember being dressed up. I got into trouble if I got my suit messed up, or anything like that.

Being in the synagogue, I tried to sneak out of the synagogue. Or my father, said, okay, you can go out and play, while he was praying. There was this great big courtyard that, in which the bakery existed. There were horses stabled there, and there was all kinds of things in there. So we used to go out there, play with the kids, but I couldn't get dirty. And then I'd have to come back into the synagogue, you know, in that time. I just remember about my father, how, about when they, the prayers started, which certain parts my father wanted me in there. I mean, I better come in or I was in trouble.

I just remember that, about my father getting married. And I heard this story, that in those days, if you wanted to get married, you either had money or you had a trade. No money, no trade, no girl. That was the way it was in those days. So since he didn't have money, he apprenticed himself to my grandfather, whom I never knew, who was a shoemaker. So he, his trade, he became a shoemaker. And I didn't know that he was a

shoemaker till the war started and he started practicing his trades. So I sat at his side and I learned how to repair shoes. And later on, we were working for the German Army, making boots. And we sabotaged boots also. That's an interesting story.

But that's the way he was able to get married. In order to get married, you had to have a trade. I just recall that.

Let's see. What else? I used to look forward to when my father returned from his travels, because he was bringing a gift or something like that.

Q. WHAT WOULD HE BRING?

A. Well, usually, it was some fruits, something exotic, like an orange, which doesn't exactly grow in Poland, or banana, something that was not quite expensive yet was exotic.

Q. AND YOU WOULD ALL SHARE?

A. Oh, yes, of course.

Q. ONE ORANGE?

A. Well, usually, there were, you know, oranges for everyone, yes. But we never were hungry, really, because grandma was living around the corner, and it was a schtetle.

Q. WHAT KIND OF A WOMAN WAS SHE?

A. Very short, under five feet, a little on the

heavy side.

I remember, the last wedding that she made for, for (Yudka) -- the youngest daughter, it was (Yudka). And there was a great big barrel -- not a barrel, but a, oh, a tub, of live fish, big carp. I mean, that's the way. There was no refrigeration. You kept those things alive until it was time. So I remember that.

And I remember grandmother making a barrel of sauerkraut and pickles. I remember always going to her house and always being treated royally. I was the youngest, and I was the baby, so I got extra special treatment.

Q. HOW COULD YOU MAKE A BARREL OF THESE THINGS, WITH NO REFRIGERATION AND NO --

A. It was pickled, you know. We don't need refrigeration. In those days, that was the methodology of preserving something. Kosher pickles, you know, that's what it was, preserved, some kind of a brine, or something like that. I'm not quite sure what they --

Q. DID SHE ALSO HAVE ONE ROOM?

A. No. Grandmother had two great big rooms, yes, and I remember, this great big oven. It was about three feet square and very tall. You made a fire and you stood up against it and kind of warmed yourself up, the

whole back, kind of hugged it, you know. That was the methodology of heating, a (kufloder). That's what it was called in Yiddish.

Q. SO IT WAS A TREAT TO GO UP THERE?

A. Yes, yes, it was, very much so. So I remember the wedding. I remember lots of people having fun and all kinds of food and people.

Q. WHERE WAS THE WEDDING?

A. It was in grandmother's apartment.

Q. IN THE APARTMENT?

A. Yes.

Q. AND --

A. It was just before the war.

Q. WITH A LOT OF PEOPLE?

A. I remember a lot of people.

Q. DOES ANYTHING ELSE STAND OUT?

A. Not particularly. What stands out is those live fish swimming around in this, in the tub, this wooden tub.

Q. AND HOW DID THEY EVENTUALLY --

A. Those details, I don't know. Grandma handled it.

Q. BUT YOU WOULD HAVE HAD TO COOK THE FISH --

A. Oh, yes, of course.

Q. -- IN THAT OVEN AND PREPARE IT RIGHT THERE?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. AND DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE OTHER FOOD?

A. I remember cake and, I remember cake and fish. Cake and fish, I remember. I don't remember much of the other food.

Q. DID GRANDMA COME TO YOUR SEDAR?

A. No. But we went to hers, and we went to, in the -- there were some other cousins living a number of blocks away. And I think I stumbled into the courtyard on this last visit. It looked familiar. But it's like, I'm getting this history together, and I remember a courtyard being very big and being a garden in that courtyard, and lots of people at the sedar table. It could have been at a different holiday than the sedar. But I'm not sure. But I remember the sedar different places.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY YOU CELEBRATED PASSOVER EVERY DAY, WHAT DID THAT MEAN?

A. Oh, that means that we ate matzas or everything kosher, and that means that we went to the synagogue at the right time. That means that we dressed up; that didn't mean blue jeans. That means the best clothes that we had. It was a festive occasion, very special and different from everyday.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ASKING THE FOUR QUESTIONS?

A. Oh, yes, definitely, absolutely. That was my job. Also, my job, sometimes, was to carry the, the cake and challah to the bakery to be baked. But also, it was to take the chicken to the slaughterer, to the (shochet), to slaughter the chicken. And I remember how I watched how he used to do this whole process, and say the blessing over the, before he slices the throat of it, of the chicken. And then he used to go there and hang it up, and the chicken used to be all flopping around, and it would be all bloody. You'd get a little blood on you.

You saw very basically what life was about, and how there was an honoring of this chicken whose life was about to be taken by the (shochet), you know. And well, I mean, we've got a lot of plastic today. And I think, in many ways, we've lost the essence of what life was about, and is about, the basics. And we don't see that. We take the life of a chicken, simple chicken, you know, or other animals that we consume. Because we're not connected with the process. It comes very conveniently packaged, and we don't see the connection. So that's, those are some of the things that I did some times, you know.

Q. YOU SAY YOU BROUGHT THE CHICKEN TO THE (SHOCHET)?

A. Yes.

Q. WHERE DID YOU GET THE CHICKENS?

A. Oh, my father and I went to the marketplace, which was a few blocks away from us. And he was an expert in buying fruits and vegetables and everything in the market. And it was like he, he always brought home a chicken that was fat. That was important, because we got the chicken fat, because that was part of our, you might say, you know, juice. They use that as the fat, instead of oil, to cook in. This was the fat for us. The oil was the chicken fat. And he always used to make sure that the chicken also had some eggs on it, inside of it, you know. There was a whole string of eggs. My father just felt them, and he was able to buy these things, get the bargain, because we were poor, you know. You had to know how to sustain the family on very little.

Q. HOW MUCH DO YOU IMAGINE THE CHICKEN COST?

A. I only remember that it was a few pennies, a (groshen). It was, in Yiddish, pennies. I don't exactly recall.

Q. YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR FATHER WAS A PEDDLER. HOW DID HE -- DID HE HAVE A CASE OR A CART? HOW DID HE TRANSPORT THE GOODS?

A. Well, he sold these billiard supplies, which

is balls, cues and the chalk, and toothpicks, but he sold other goods also. But these were his main supplies. That's why -- he carried it in two suitcases and a pack on his back. So he walked a lot of places. He took a bus or a train or horse, horse wagon, and he went from village to village. It was not usually the big towns. He went in the small villages. So he dealt directly with people in bars and restaurants.

So those are the people that I am looking for, who had some kind of a relationship with my father, the peddler. And who was this human being who has disappeared, times six million, because he was such a threat to the super race, meaning the Nazis. So this is the simple human being, you know, who came home every Thursday or Friday for Shabbot.

So then, I'm trying to paint the portrait of a human being, from something with two photographs that I have of my father. That's all.

Q. WHEN IT RAINED OR SNOWED, HE WALKED?

A. Yes, yes. That's --

Q. DO YOU RECALL HIM BEING SICK?

A. I don't really recall him being sick. I remember that he rested on Shabbot a lot, chased us out of the house. We were invited to go out and do things, dressed up, not to get too dirty, but to be back by a

certain time to go to the synagogue. But it was the only time my father and mother had privacy, is when we went out of the house. It was interesting. It was a rich existence. That's what I mean that, about poverty, I don't think we were in poverty. I didn't know I was poor. Everyone else around us was pretty close to it. There were other people who were well off, also, in the same apartment house, but I didn't --

Q. BUT THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY ELECTRICITY?

A. They had electricity, and most the other -- not everyone had electricity. Yes.

Q. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT ROSH HASHANA OR YOM KIPPER?

A. Generally, the same pattern, being dressed up and going to the synagogue, and sometimes being -- not wanting to be in the synagogue and wanting to go and play, and my father had to restrain me, to be there. Not restrain me. All he had to do was look at me and, you know, grimace, and you know, I'd be there, and I was. I was a pretty good kid, generally.

Q. DO YOU RECALL A BAR MITZVA OF NATHAN FOR SAM?

A. No, I do not recall that. My bar mitzva happened in a time in the ghetto. And what it was is that my father -- I put on the tallit, and it was just my father and I, and we said some special prayers. I

had the tallit on, and that was it. That was the whole thing. And it wasn't like it is over here, where you have a big -- it's wonderful. I'm glad people are doing a larger celebration. But for me, it wasn't that, at that time.

Q. WHEN DID YOU START RELIGIOUS TRAINING?

A. Pretty early. I started way before I started public school. We used to go to (Hader), and I didn't like (Hader) very much. And I also remember being spanked by the teacher. He used to carry this cane. And you used to have to put your hand out, and like your hands got smacked if you didn't memorize what it was you were supposed to memorize. Pretty old-fashioned.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THE TEACHER'S NAME?

A. Oh, no, God no.

Q. IT GOT ERASED?

A. My brother remembers more of those details.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE OTHER FRIENDS WHO WERE THERE WITH YOU?

A. Not really, no.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING YOU LEARNED THERE?

A. I learned some of the prayers that I still recall portions of, not the whole thing. It was a long time ago. And I don't understand some of them, but the melody is still there and the words are still there,

especially, when I start reading or I am in the synagogue and people start singing. It's like, oh, yes, I remember that. So it's still there. But there was not much of understanding of these prayers.

My view, views about God and such were very childlike. This great big man, long beard, someplace in the sky, you know. So when I, during when the war broke out, I was angry at God, and arguing with God, and not believing God, and other times, totally believing in God, and all of those things. And how could you do this? And you know, why don't you just wave your hand and get me out of this concentration camp, you know? And there's lots of that. For many years I did not believe in God. And still, there's times when I don't. But most of time, I do. So there's --

Q. DID YOU GO TO A (HADER) EVERY DAY?

A. Oh, yes, every day.

Q. WHEN?

A. It was usually in the afternoon, usually.

Q. AFTER LUNCH?

A. Yes. Actually, there were two parts. There was the (Hader) in the morning, but that was before I went to public, Polish public school. But once Polish school started, it was not during the morning. It was afternoon, after Polish school, so.

Q. FOR HOW LONG?

A. It was a couple of hours, something like that. I don't quite remember the detail of the length of time. I remember more about my past events and seasons, and not so much dates or specific hours, you know, that kind of thing. I remember incidents; I remember those details.

Q. WHAT INCIDENTS?

A. Oh, are we talking about --

Q. ARE THEY INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH THE (HADER)?

A. With the (Hader), the incident of being spanked on my hands with this cane, you know, for not listening to the (Malamet), or not memorizing something, or for being absent, skipping (Hader), and being punished by my father about that. But that was not very often.

Q. WERE ALL THE OTHER JEWISH YOUNG MEN, BOYS, GOING TO (HADER)?

A. As far as I know, yes. There were some exceptions that I have heard about, and don't personally know. Yes. I don't personally recall. The friends I played with, they did go to (Hader). I remember that. But I don't particularly recall a specific incident with that.

Q. HOW FAR WAS IT FROM YOUR HOME?

A. Well, it was a long block up the hill, and then on the edge of the neighborhood, where the hills were, and then, oh, kind of a block and a half over. And the school was kind of in the back of, against the background of the hill. And usually, coming out of the (Hader), there were Polish boys hidden up on the hills, and they were throwing stones, and they were in the woods there, and things like that, I remember. That came to my memory, especially last year, when I walked out into that neighborhood. And it still exists. The school exists; the whole neighborhood exists.

Q. WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL LOOK LIKE?

A. It looks like everything is the same, same staircase. Paint looks different. The building is just totally the same. It's used as some kind of a school. And when I went, I walked into the school, and I was guiding some people through the neighborhood. And I walked upstairs, and I was making comments about this used to be a classroom, here, and there was this other classroom there. I started talking with the Polish people. And like, they were in total denial that this was a Jewish school. They were still denying it last year.

And the same incident happened when I walked into what was the synagogue. And the bakery was in the

back of that, we used to walk to. The door was open, and there were some people with me. And I said, well, this was the synagogue, and there was another room behind that wall there, and over there was the bakery. And all of a sudden, some man came out, and I tell him I'm Polish, that I used to come here, to the synagogue. He says, oh, no, no, no. This is private. This was not the synagogue. It was just like denial. I said, I used to live here and I used to come here. He said, no, no, no. This is private, still in denial about it, thought that I was coming back to repossess the property, or something like that. So there was a lot of that going on.

Q. HOW MUCH OF A WALK WAS IT FOR YOU TO GET TO (HADER)?

A. It was five, seven minute walk, just a walk. If I had to run, which sometimes it was, I got there pretty fast, in three minutes, two, three minutes.

Q. WOULD IT STILL BE LIGHT OUT WHEN YOU WENT BACK?

A. Oh, yes, yes.

Q. EVEN IN THE WINTER?

A. Even in the winter.

Q. WHAT LANGUAGES DID YOU SPEAK AT HOME?

A. We spoke Polish. We spoke Polish, but mother

and father used to speak Yiddish between themselves. Grandma spoke Yiddish. And lots of people spoke Yiddish, so I still remember Yiddish.

Q. WHEN DID YOU START POLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL?

A. I was about, I think it was seventh grade. I was about eleven. It was not long before the war, actually.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW OLD YOU WERE?

A. I was about eleven.

Q. ELEVEN?

A. Yes, I believe I was about eleven. I remembered there was a Yiddish school that started much earlier, when I was seven. No. It was -- seven. I was seven, right. Not eleven, seven.

Q. BECAUSE OF THAT CHANGE OF DATES?

A. Yes, yes. The reason for the mixup, my birthday is some -- one is, we didn't celebrate birthdays as we do here, you know, on the exact day. But it was around this and this holiday, I was born.

The other thing is that, during the camps, I had to start lying about my age in order to pretend to be older, because the younger kids got killed a lot quicker, just by being a certain age. So when we got to Auschwitz, there was some, some prisoner came up to me and said, in Polish, to lie about my age. So my father

told me to tell him I was born a certain age. So that's how that birthday got mixed up. I had forgotten. So that's why I didn't remember my true birthday.

Q. SO YOU STARTED SCHOOL AT AROUND SEVEN?

A. Around seven, yes.

Q. AND WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THAT?

A. Oh, I remember walking to Polish school, which was about the same distance as the Jewish school. On the top of the road, on (Runkufka), I used to turn right, instead of left to the (Hader), and go up.

I remember also, that when the Polish kids used to go have catechism, or something like this, that we Jewish boys stepped out and we went to a, either we were in the hallway or we were with a Jewish teacher, and we had some kind of a Jewish lesson, sometimes. Not always.

Q. WHAT SUBJECTS DID YOU LEARN, DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. Something about Biblical history. I think we were reading about the exodus from Egypt, and just exodus from ancient Palestine.

Q. IN POLISH SCHOOL?

A. Yes, yes. Yes, that was happening. Those were one of the times, either going to school or coming from school, that I was chased by Polish boys, you know.

(Tape malfunction.)

Q. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE SUBJECTS IN THE POLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL. YOU REMEMBER LEARNING RELIGIOUS STORIES FROM THE BIBLE. AND WHAT ABOUT LEARNING TO READ? WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO READ?

A. In the Polish schools, of course. That was the beginning. Actually, I was learning to read a little bit at home also. But it was primarily in Polish schools there, I started getting my education, the beginnings. And it didn't last very long, of course, because the war was not, was not far away from the time I started learning, so.

Q. AND ARITHMETIC?

A. Yes. That was, you know, arithmetic, reading and writing, history, geography, well, you know.

Q. WHAT WAS HISTORY?

A. Polish history, world history.

Q. AND WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT GEOGRAPHY?

A. Very little, very little. I don't think I was a, I don't think I was a good student. Part of it is, I realized that I wasn't really fully there, because I was in fear about being beaten up, you know. So that affected me much more than I realized. So I know that, even in the courtyard in school, you know, in that, I was being called names. And so, you know, emotional survival, and whether the fear is real or not, I don't

think I was a very good student.

Q. DID YOU EVER SEE SOMEBODY BEATEN UP?

A. I saw kids being hit in the beginning, but not till the ghetto started.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER WHO THE BIGGEST BULLY IN THE SCHOOL WAS?

A. No. But I remember the biggest bully in my apartment house.

Q. WHO WAS THAT?

A. Oh, Yonkel -- I don't know the kid's last name, but I was always afraid of him. He was just a strong kid and he used to just dominate many of us.

Q. HE WAS JEWISH?

A. Yes, yes. These were all Jews in this apartment house, except for the caretaker.

Q. DID YOU EVER THINK ABOUT, WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE BOY, DID YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO WHEN YOU GREW UP?

A. Not really. I just had a lot of fantasies. I fantasized a lot about being a pilot.

Q. HAD YOU SEEN A PLANE?

A. I saw a plane in the air, you know, but not close up. I saw planes in movies. But I remember dreaming a lot about the becoming a pilot.

Q. ARE THESE DAYDREAMS OR ACTUAL DREAMS?

A. They were, they were night dreams. They were daydreams also. It was not about dreaming that I would become a pilot, but dreaming that I was the pilot, and of course, do all of those, you know, fancy flying and all that. I was being the pilot, as kids imagine, you know. I remember that one.

Q. ANY OTHER DREAMS?

A. Not that I recall.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOLLECTION OF HOW MANY, HOW LARGE KRAKOW WAS?

A. I understand that Krakow was about 300,000 people at that time.

Q. AND WHAT PERCENTAGE JEWISH?

A. I don't know percentage-wise, but there were about 50,000 Jews, from reading some statistics not long ago, in the beginning of the war in Krakow.

Q. AS FAR AS YOUR IMMEDIATE KNOWLEDGE, THEY WERE LIKE YOU, AND YOU KNOW, WERE LIVING IN A SCHTETLE, MORE OR LESS?

A. The apartment house and many of the streets themselves had many Jews. There was a, not a -- I wouldn't know if it was a predominantly Jewish area, but I knew of a lot of Jewish families in that area. There were other people, non Jews living in the same area too.

Q. WERE THERE MANY SYNAGOGUES?

A. Yes, yes. I recall the one next door to us. And then the one we went to was across the street. And a block in back of us was a big synagogue. That's about the only three that I remember in my neighborhood. Then there was the big synagogue in Krakow itself. Because we were in an area called (Pagusha). I remember going with my father there, a few times, to hear one of the great cantors during one of those holidays. It was a, just a special treat to do that. And that is one of the synagogues that remains there to this day. That's about all the synagogues I remember. I've discovered since that there's a great deal more synagogues than I knew at that time.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT THE RABBI FROM THE SYNAGOGUE YOU FREQUENTED?

A. No, no.

Q. HOW DID MOST OF THE MEN DRESS?

A. Well, my father dressed in a suit. That's how most people, most men dressed, is in a suit, for any of the holidays, or Shabbot. It was like standard code, like.

Q. WERE THERE SOME HASIDIC JEWS?

A. Not in the synagogues, synagogue we went to. There were orthodox, but not Hasidic.

Q. WERE THERE ANYTHING OTHER THAN ORTHODOX? WERE

THERE, YOU KNOW, LESS ORTHODOX, CONSERVATIVE?

A. Yes. My father was a modern orthodox person.

Q. WHEN YOU LEARNED ABOUT GEOGRAPHY, GETTING BACK TO SCHOOL, WAS IT EUROPEAN GEOGRAPHY? DID YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE COUNTRIES AROUND YOU?

A. I learned something about them, but I learned that more from my father and other people around me, who knew about Germany and Austria and Hungary, and all of those areas, and Russia and the Ukraine and Czechoslovakia. From my father, from my father.

My father was in the World War I. And later, he was in the Austrian Army. And he was telling me many stories about these different countries that he's been to. Also, he, since he started practicing being a shoemaker, in the beginning of the war, lots of people came to him for advice, because he was more traveled and knew more, many more things than some people who didn't travel. So I remember hearing stories about that.

Q. HOW DID HE GET TO THE AUSTRIAN ARMY IF HE WAS FROM POLAND?

A. Part of that, Poland, parts of it were taken over by the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. And so he was drafted in the Army, in the Hungarian -- in the Austrian Army. And it changed after World War I. He was drafted, once again, into the Polish Army. So it

changed hands. It's a long history there.

Q. WHAT KINDS OF THINGS WOULD HE TELL YOU?

A. He told me, he told me that he was in the battle front and he fought -- who was he fighting against? He was against the Russians, yes. He told me a story about an uncle of mine, in which this uncle of mine was on guard duty and he fell asleep. And his officer came around and caught him asleep. So he removed a part of his rifle, bolt, and he walked away. And when my uncle woke up and discovered that, he ran to the barracks and got another bolt from another rifle.

And this officer came, came back, and my uncle challenged, you know, you're not supposed to -- you know, who goes there? And he didn't stop. And he shot him. This is what I heard. I didn't know the true side, but I remember hearing that story. So it's little things that stand out.

I remember my father telling me about learning how to be a shoemaker, and his grandfather. That is, I don't know how many years after he came out of the Austrian Army, but it was during the time when he was drafted in the Polish Army, there was some kind of a border incident, or something, and the Polish Army wasn't mobilized. And so he was drafted again to the Polish Army. And he was given a medal by the Polish

president, (Pelsutski), an award for being the first one to report to his garrison, you know, whatever, that was. So he was given the medal for that. I recall that.

Q. DID YOU EVER SEE THE AWARD?

A. Yes, I did. It was a cigarette case. It was a silver cigarette case, or what appeared to be silver. He was very proud of that. And as a result, being that he was a veteran of some kind of campaign, military campaign, he was given a tobacco concession. In other words, we were able the sell cigarettes from our house. It was a little sign outside the window, and people knocked. Yes? I'd like to have two cigarettes. Open up, sell two cigarettes. And we were selling newspapers and cigarettes.

Q. FROM YOUR APARTMENT?

A. From the apartment. So I had to learn about business kind of like that.

Q. ANYBODY WHO WAS THERE --

A. Yes, right. Somebody was always there, because that was part of it. That's what would help. So he was given this tobacco concession, which wasn't easy to get from the President (Pelsutski), who was a very great hero in Poland. Anyway.

Q. DO YOU EVER REMEMBER BEING HUNGRY AT THIS STAGE?

A. At this stage, no, no. Never, no. It wasn't until the time of the ghetto that that started happening.

Q. AND WHAT DID YOUR FATHER SAY, ANYTHING ABOUT GERMANY AT THIS STAGE?

A. Well, it wasn't only my father who was saying something about Germany. It was an uncle of mine that was expelled from Germany, and came to us, to grandmother, and stayed with her for a short time after he was expelled from Germany. He was one of those who were forced out across the border prior to the war. So I remember him. I don't know his name.

I remember the story, also, that he said, and my father, and what was being done, which was, he was being expelled from Germany and being beaten up, and other things, things we, property being confiscated from the people there. So it was a little disturbing for me to hear that. But I wasn't grasping.

Q. WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER OR YOUR FATHER? DID THEY MENTION THIS TO YOU?

A. Not so much my mother. My father did, and my uncle, who lived around the corner. And we didn't have a radio, but my uncle had a radio. So I remember it was a (Bladpunk) radio, had one of those eyes in it, kind of expanded and contracted, kind of. And so we were

listening to broadcasts from Germany. And I remember hearing Hitler, or whoever else it might have been, not understanding everything, but I remember them gathered around the radio and catching their, being disturbed and afraid of what was happening.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW OLD YOU WERE?

A. Oh, that was shortly before the war. I was eleven. I was eleven by that time.

Q. DID YOU EVER LISTEN IN YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S APARTMENT?

A. My uncle's apartment.

Q. THIS WAS YOUR FATHER'S BROTHER?

A. No. It was my mother's sister.

Q. THEY LIVED IN GERMANY AND THEY WERE EXPELLED? YOU SAID SHE HAD SISTERS?

A. You see, whose apartment it was, it was my mother's sister's. Who was expelled from Germany was my grandmother's relative. I don't know who he was really, as far as relationship. There was some kind of relationship. I think it was at least a cousin, if not an uncle. I'm not sure.

Q. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN THE FIRST TIME THAT YOU WERE AWARE OF ANY KIND OF THREAT?

A. Yes, right.

Q. THAT YOU WERE LISTENING TO THIS?

A. Right. That's the very beginning.

Q. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU RECALL ABOUT THAT BROADCAST?

A. Other than a kind of a staccato kind of a voice on the radio, not really. I didn't understand.

Q. YOU MENTIONED ABOUT 57 OR 59 PEOPLE IN AN EXTENDED FAMILY BEFORE THE WAR. THAT WOULD INCLUDE YOUR GRANDMOTHER, YOUR AUNTS AND UNCLES?

A. Yes, cousins.

Q. AND YOUR GREAT UNCLE THAT CAME?

A. Yes.

Q. THAT MAKES THE TOTAL 57 OR 59 IN KRAKOW?

A. Yes.

Q. OKAY. AFTER THIS BROADCAST, WHEN IS THE NEXT TIME THAT YOU'RE AWARE OF A THREAT IN GERMANY?

A. Well, I remember the air raids, and having blackouts, where windows had to be covered up and not to show any lights. And I remember like anti-aircraft shooting, and father finding some, some kind of metal in the, in the backyard. And he says, well, this is from anti-aircraft explosions. And that was the very days before the Germans invaded, days before.

And the first real contact happened on the day that the German Army walked into, marched into Krakow, into (Patgusha), that I was fascinated. There was tanks

and guns and trucks and horses and artillery and soldiers marching, and it seems like it went on for a whole day. And I wondered -- and there was a curfew that was imposed. Everybody was supposed to be inside the apartments. And I walked out through the main gate of the apartment and walked to the corner. And I was shot at on the first day. I remembered that, when I returned to Poland. Then I ran off. And when I returned to Poland, I went to look for that wall where the bullet hit. And there was a great gaping hole. And the wall was gone, but I recall the incident.

And I realize now that, having walked through that place, that the distance from which I was, where I was and where the solider was shooting at me, had he wanted to hit me, he couldn't have missed. So it was more like to scare me, is what I realized, what it was. So I don't think he really was aiming at me. So that was the first day. After that, I got scared.

Q. YOU WERE TEN YEARS OLD?

A. No. I was eleven.

Q. AND THIS WAS '39?

A. '39.

Q. DID YOUR PARENTS DISCUSS THE AIR RAIDS WITH YOU? OR WHEN DID YOU KNOW THAT PLANES WERE GOING TO BE COMING OVER? WHEN WAS LIKE A WARNING?

A. The sirens themselves were the warning. And there was a -- well, my father was not showing a great deal of fear, but in the apartment house itself, there was a lot of activity, and hurt, and people were picking up their belongings and starting to leave. And my father decided to leave also, within the -- that's before the Germans actually walked into Krakow. And he left. And it was a few days later that he came back and he said that he could not get through to -- he was heading for Russia, wanted to get to Russia, but the borders were closed, and they were all turned back. And he also said that, whatever happens, he wants to be with the family. So father came back.

And within a few days after these Germans walked in, they started issuing orders that Jews must register to get the ration cards, to be issued through -- actually, before the Germans walked into town, many warehouses were opened up to the population. They contained flour, sacks of flour, and bakeries, large bakeries, and cigarette factory, chocolate factory. And we went out with those four-wheel wagons that I helped to build, and baby carriages, and we schlept a lot of foodstuffs and goods home, which helped to -- I did it with my brothers -- which helped to sustain us, because there was quite a bit of turmoil once the Germans walked

in, and we couldn't walk out because there was curfew. Only certain time, only to get food.

And we started lining, before even the ration cards were issued, we were lining up at bakeries, if they were selling any bread or other foodstuffs. So between the six of us, there was always someone in line. And someone came to relieve them and stood there all night, you know, just to get food, you know. And once we registered with the authorities, they started issuing food rations. And also, they were coming into the area and asking for volunteer laborers. And they paid with bread.

Q. WHO?

A. Well, they were Polish contractors that were working for the Germans, and they were also Germans that came in with trucks. And sometimes, at the point of a gun, get on the truck, you know, and they're taken away, and worked all day, and sometimes worked for a few days. They were brought back and they paid them with bread.

And they fed us for different ways in the beginning. So we worked all kinds of different jobs, military, barracks, cleaning up. Or I remember once, working on the military installation where there were lots of damaged trucks, German trucks, military trucks, cleaning them up and gathering stuff from them, and

sorting it out, and stuff like that, and sometimes finding food there. And we were allowed to take some of it; some of it, not allowed to take. And it was confusing. I heard of people being beaten up, but I was not mistreated, at that time. There was a lot of fear, but it was still pretty normal. We were still together, the whole family.

A little later on, my brother Sam and Nathan were picked up, one of those trucks, one of those raids, and they were gone for quite some time. Then they came back, and then it happened again, where they were picked up and they were taken to work. I don't know exactly where, military, usually military installation. Later on, there was a work camp.

Once we had to wear the arm bands, with the Star of David, we were being restricted more from going anywhere without special permit. And then the ghetto, the first ghetto started in Krakow, the first one.

Q. ABOUT WHEN WAS THIS?

A. This was already '41. I believe that it was '41, yes. The ghettos started happening, and they started building a wall at the end of the street. And many of the streets were being blocked off too, by building the wall with, very high wall, and glass being embedded, sharp glass, at the very top of the wall. And

they were putting up a barbed wire fence, one of the streets where the streetcar used to run on. And there were other gates in the ghetto also. But I didn't see those other gates till later on.

Grandmother was one of the first ones to disappear. I was forced to work in a brush factory, on the same street that I used to live on, (Karakusa) Street.

Q. WHAT WAS THE STREET?

A. (Karakusa).

Q. AND THE ADDRESS?

A. Well, I used to live in No. 9. And I used to work in this brush factory, which was on the same street, a little ways down, or up, towards the hill. And they showed me how to make these brushes. So we were making brushes for the German Army.

Lots of people believed at that point in time, if you have a job, make yourself useful for, for the Germans, that they would not deport you. And that was true, to some extent, in the beginning. Or if you had some kind of a trade, or you were employed in some kind of a work which they considered as useful, you were kind of protected. You were given an (osfice), a pass, a (kincarta) it was called. And if you had that, when they made these raids, the SS, or came in the ghetto

with --

(End of Tape 1; beginning of Tape 2.)

Q. WHAT DO YOU RECALL ABOUT MIRIAM WHEN YOU WERE A YOUNG BOY? WHAT IS YOUR RECOLLECTION ABOUT YOUR SISTER?

A. I'm afraid that's one area that I have difficulty in, in remembering a lot of details. I played with her. I mean, she was only one year older than I, and we slept next to each other. I remember playing with her, lots of games.

I remember that she hated butter, and that mother was concerned about her not getting enough nutrition, and that she used to prepare the sandwich for school, and she used to cut it in such a way and spread some butter in there, and so my sister wouldn't detect it. But she always did and brought back the food, and she didn't eat. I mean, she was really, Miriam was really -- she disliked butter. I remember that very much about her.

I remember she had long dark hair, and brown eyes and, and we played well most of the time. But once in a while, we argued. I don't remember really anything traumatic with my sister.

Q. WAS SHE FUN?

A. Yes, yes. She was fun. But there was

something about, oh, she's a girl, you know. You know, I played with the boys, and there were lots of boys to play with.

Q. WAS SHE THIN?

A. She, she was not fat. She was thin, yes. Definitely, she was thin, yes. She played with a doll that mother made. My mother used to make clothes for her, for all of us. And I was more into playing rougher games, and building, constructing things, which she was not into.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HER HELPING YOUR MOTHER BAKE?

A. Yes, definitely. She helped mother with the cooking, and all kinds of things. What I was helping with is not with the cooking, but bringing in the coal, carrying out the ashes, bringing the wood to start the coal fire, and helping to keep it going, or get some water or errands. But she was more involved -- it's like she was getting trained to be like my mother, you know, a housewife. That was what was expected, and she certainly was being trained in that.

Q. DO YOU RECALL ANY FIGHTS WITH HER?

A. No. I don't know. Sometimes, I believe that I'm blocking some fights I must have had with her, and focusing in on the good things. But I also remember and know that we were, we were so crowded into that one

room, the six of us, that we really had to, were close, be nice to each other, with each other. So it just wasn't tolerated, you know. There wasn't another place to run off to and turn on the television. So we got along very well, very well.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY FOODS THAT SHE DID LIKE TO EAT?

A. I think she pretty much liked -- she didn't eat a lot. She was a little on the thin side, and that was my mother's concern. But I know butter, she definitely did not like.

Q. HOW ABOUT THE CHOCOLATE?

A. Oh, chocolate, she loved, and -- yes, definitely chocolate and cakes and all of those things.

Q. HOW ABOUT FOODS THAT YOU LIKED?

A. Oh, I was big on chocolate, and still am. I've got a sweet tooth. I'm a nosher, first class nosher, and I have to limit myself. I like cake. I liked especially taking the cake -- no, picking up the cake from the bakery, because on the way back, I would kind of nibble here and there, you know, those uneven parts, you know, break off a little piece, my little rewards. I wasn't too keen carrying it to the bakery, but back, I was very keen on. And I've never -- one of these days, I'm going to try to make this, this cake

that I still recall, you know, watching my mother making it, kind of looking up the table. So the memory is still there, how she made that thing.

Q. WHICH CAKE IS THIS?

A. The cocoa, or chocolate, and the poppy seed cake. And my sister always used to help my mother, involved in the process. I was the watcher. I was not the doer of that stuff. And, but my sister was also learning how to use the sewing machine and she was being definitely trained to be a housewife.

Q. DID SHE LIKE SCHOOL?

A. God, I really don't recall that detail.

Q. OKAY. NOW, BRINGING YOU TO THE PERIOD WHEN THE WAR STARTED, FIRST THERE WERE THE AIR RAIDS. AND THEN HOW OR WHEN DID YOU LEARN THAT GERMANS WOULD BE COMING?

A. We learned it on the radio that there was, there was talk of a war. And as soon as war started, I, we were expecting them, you know. It was like -- but I didn't know when, how soon it would happen. In some ways, I didn't believe that actually they would invade, because there was a lot of propaganda that the Polish Army was going to defeat them, and all of that. But it happened very quickly, that they lost the war. And within, within a week of Germany crossing the Polish

border, they were in Krakow.

Q. WHAT DID YOU THINK THEY WOULD LOOK LIKE?

A. I had, I had no idea, really, but I was very impressed. They all looked so big and so, so together; together in terms of, there was all these trucks and tanks and horses and artillery, and there were these motorcycles that they came on, with one guy driving and then, on the side car, was another soldier with a machine gun on there. And it was like they moved in very quickly and moved out, and scared everybody, shot at people sometimes, in the very beginning. It was scary, but I wasn't terrorized. Terror came much later. In some way, it was still an adventure to me, like the movies. I was eleven years old, you know. It didn't sink in, and not, not for quite some time.

Q. AND YOU HAVE SPOKEN OF YOUR FATHER TRYING TO WALK TO RUSSIA. DO YOU RECALL ANY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LEAVING, GETTING OUT?

A. I recall that he said that he's going to try and leave, because he was afraid of what the Germans will do to Jews. So he left, like I said, but in a few days, he returned because the borders were closed. And he said, also, that no matter what, he wanted to be with the family instead. So I recall that he seriously started doing shoe repair, and that helped to sustain

us, by making some extra money. And I started also helping him and learning.

Q. YOU SAID, WHEN HE RETURNED, THAT HE WANTED TO BE WITH THE FAMILY. DO YOU KNOW, WHEN HE WAS TRYING TO GET TO RUSSIA, WHETHER HE HAD VISIONS OF ESCAPING AND SENDING FOR YOU OR --

A. I don't know that. I don't know that. All I know is that, when he returned, is that he realized he wanted to be with the family, no matter what happened.

Q. AND YOU ALSO MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO WERE LEAVING THE APARTMENT. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY WERE GOING?

A. No idea. My father, when he returned, he started saying, you know, they won't do anything to us. I served in the Austrian Army, and I have -- I'm a soldier, and they understand, and they will respect me. Nothing is going to happen to our family. Everything is going to be all right. And in the very beginning, that, some of the German, the (vermokt), they respected some of that. But later on, once the ghettos started, there was -- it didn't mean anything. But he still, he was using that. He was hoping that that would work. He said he was a solider too, but it was a delusion in many ways, later on. Once the ghetto started, the walls went up and barbed wire fences, and of course, the arm bands.

Before that, as he worked for the German Army in this factory, he was also working as a shoemaker afterwards. And how to sustain one's self, we used to steal whatever we could from the Germans. And I remember that he, he was able to bring home brand new soles, leather. And one time, he showed me how he did that, because they searched him.

Q. SEARCHED YOU WHERE?

A. They searched him, to see if he was carrying anything out from the factory.

Q. FROM THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY?

A. From the chocolate factory. That was a shoe factory and clothing factory and all. And what he did is that he nailed soles to his own soles, and heels on there, so in fact, they didn't discover it. And so that was material that we could, he could use to make someone's shoes, repair, and get paid for it. It was like, there was no place we could earn money, and materials were not available. So that was in the beginning of the ghetto.

And also, my brothers disappeared and we didn't hear from them for a while.

Q. LET'S SAY IN 1940, HOW OLD WAS YOUR FATHER?

A. My father was 47 at the time. Yes. He was 51 at his death in Auschwitz. He was 51.

Q. AND YOU SPOKE ABOUT YOUR GRANDMOTHER DISAPPEARING?

A. Yes.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER APPROXIMATELY WHAT YEAR?

A. That was in the beginning, even before the ghetto happened. So that would be '40, '39, '40, because --

Q. AND ABOUT HOW OLD WOULD SHE HAVE BEEN?

A. She was 94.

Q. WHAT MEMORY DO YOU HAVE OF HER DISAPPEARING? WAS SHE THERE ONE DAY AND NOT THERE THE NEXT?

A. Just like that. There were, there were raids in the Jewish area, before the ghetto, and they came in with trucks and rounded up people and just forced them on the truck, especially the older people in the beginning. And they were the first to disappear, and the ill people. It happened just like that, that she disappeared.

Q. HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHETHER THEY CAME TO THE APARTMENT OR THEY PICKED HER UP OFF THE STREET?

A. It was a raid on the whole apartment. Not just the whole apartment. The whole streets were cornered off, and they went all up and down these streets and dragging people out.

Q. DID YOU SEE THEM DRAG HER?

A. No, I did not see that.

Q. DID YOU HEAR ABOUT IT?

A. I heard about it, and she was just gone.

Q. HOW DID SOMEONE DISCOVER SHE WAS GONE?

A. I presume by my mother or father or brothers came home and just told me about it, because I didn't see it happen. I was in -- I mean, I was chased out of the apartment house too, at the same time. And you know, we were forced out of the apartment house and into the street. And I was like, with my father or mother, you know, being held by the hand. And they usually round up people who were infirm and old and just kind of drive them off. I didn't see it happen.

Q. DID THE GERMANS KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND ORDER YOU OUT OF THE APARTMENT?

A. Oh, yes, yes, yes. The Germans and the Jewish police and the Ukrainian police.

Q. WHEN DID THE JEWISH POLICE COME INTO BEING?

A. I'm not quite sure of the date, but pretty much, as the ghetto was starting, they came into existence. They were Orthodox.

Q. AND THE UKRAINIAN POLICE?

A. They were already in existence, and they were like brought in. And if there were any raids, there was the Ukraine and the police that, and Polish police, the

blues, in blue uniforms.

Q. WHEN YOU WERE TOLD ABOUT YOUR GRANDMOTHER, DO YOU RECALL FEAR, OR WHAT YOU FELT, IF THERE WAS CRIME?

A. Of course, of course. I remember, you know, I remember going to her door and watching, and they locked up the apartment house and started moving some things. And then there were also some people who were being crowded into her apartment, actually, even before the ghetto started. There were other people being crowded into other people's homes and apartments.

Q. OKAY. WHO LOCKED UP THE APARTMENT?

A. The Jewish police.

Q. WHY DID THEY LOCK IT UP?

A. They were supposed to preserve any goods in there for the Germans. I don't know.

Q. FOR THE GERMANS, NOT FOR --

A. No, no.

Q. AFTER YOUR GRANDMOTHER DISAPPEARED, WHAT'S THE NEXT EXPERIENCE?

A. Well, actually, the next was my mother and sister, and that happened in the second ghetto.

Q. BEFORE THE SECOND GHETTO, PERHAPS WE SHOULD GO BACK TO THE FIRST. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER FIRST ABOUT THE GHETTO COMING INTO BEING, THE WALL BEING BUILT?

A. That was, I believe it was '41.

Q. WHO BUILT THE WALL?

A. Polish workmen.

Q. WHAT DID YOU THINK WHEN YOU SAW THIS WALL?

A. Well, it was a mixed feeling about it. The rumors that were going around was that it's going to be better for us, we're going to be safer, we're not going to be persecuted, we're going to be able to work. So there were all kinds of rumors floating around. And for me, many of these things didn't mean anything, because I don't think it really registered fully, because I was still with my parents and I was being protected by them. I was still very dependent on them. And they protected me, so.

Q. HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO BUILD THE WALLS AROUND THE GHETTO?

A. I think it was done within the couple months.

Q. WHAT --

A. That's my guess. I'm not totally sure of that. I just remember the area, and that there were many people working on it. I think there was also some Jewish labor involved in that also. The people were forced to, you know, do that. I'm not totally certain of that.

Q. AND WHEN IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF THE JEWISH POLICE?

A. Very much as soon as the ghetto was enclosed.

Q. WHAT KIND OF ORGANIZATION DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. I just remember them having their uniforms on and carrying clubs. And they came with lists of names, round up people, and took them to, took them away. So I was beginning to be scared of them, and just from the general feeling I had from my parents and people around me. And they didn't have a good reputation. They were being hated.

Q. WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS SAY TO EACH OTHER WITH YOU?

A. There wasn't much of a discussion, as far as I know, between me and my parents in regards to that.

Q. WHAT LANGUAGE DID THE POLICE SPEAK, THE JEWISH POLICE?

A. Yiddish and Polish.

Q. WHAT AGES WERE THEY?

A. They were usually young people. Well, they were not that young. They were not 18. I would say they were, to some, to about 40 some, at the most, at the high end of the 40 something. I knew one, a man who became a one of those policemen.

Q. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. Well, he, his family, he and my brothers were friends. And some of these people who became the

policemen thought that they could save themselves by becoming policemen. And most of them didn't survive. Very few did. So this guy, like, he was friendly with us and helped. But others, he probably was not very friendly. So he did his work of arresting people who didn't have work permits and taking them to the headquarters.

Q. DID EVERYBODY KNOW WHERE THEY WERE GOING?

A. I'm not show sure about anybody. I didn't. By that time, I heard that, and saw that there were some people that were shot. But it was just a few people that were shot. I saw some corpses laying here and there, and I heard of people disappearing. But what I heard mostly about was that these people were taken to some farms where they worked, and they were working and they were being treated okay. They were being relocated.

Q. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF SEEING SOMEBODY SHOT?

A. What's my --

Q. YOU SAID THAT YOU SAW PEOPLE BEING SHOT. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. Well, I didn't see them being shot. I saw the body. I was frightened the first time I saw a dead person. There was a -- it was a fear already that some

reality started to happen that I didn't understand.

I remember, down the street, where the brush factory was, in the same building I worked, in the basement, that there was an old man that was killed on the stairway to this apartment house. And that, I found. I mean, the corpse was left there. And where his head hit, it was kind of stairs made of stone. Where his head hit, a piece of stone broke off. I don't know why he was shot, didn't move fast enough or something. I don't know. But I remember him laying there, and that I saw some other bodies, and they, they, they lay there. And they sprinkled lime on these bodies, for some reason. I don't know if some kind of chemical to -- I don't know why, but I know that they said it was lime that they sprinkled. Anyway.

Q. WHO WAS THIS THEY?

A. I don't know. Some health organization that was told to leave the corpses there and just do something with them, like they were ordered to. So the corpses were just left there, for us to see and to frighten us.

Q. HOW LONG WERE THEY LEFT?

A. A few days. That was in -- those were the first deaths that the people, they saw. Yes. Then many, many, many people disappeared on transports.

Q. YOU SAY THE POLICE CAME WITH LISTS?

A. (Affirmative response.)

Q. WERE THEY PAPER LISTS?

A. Yes, they were.

Q. PAPER. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY GOT THE LISTS?

A. I don't quite know, but I remember that there were some of these policemen going around our apartment house, and writing down who lived where and what, and you know, like everybody's name. And where they got the names was quite easy, because if your name was not registered, you couldn't get a ration card and you didn't get any food. It was like a double bind of not having food, if you're not registered. And if you're found unregistered, you were surely picked up. And, but if you were registered, the chance of getting food -- and this (kincarta) too, you were not picked up, if you had it, by the police, the Germans or the Jewish police, or the, the police.

Q. DID YOU EVER SPEAK TO ANY OF THESE JEWISH POLICEMEN?

A. Yes. But it doesn't stand out for me as to what the conversation might have been about, you know. I was just ordered to go here or go there or something like that, but.

Q. DID THE UKRAINIAN POLICE EVER COMMENT AT THIS

TIME?

A. Not unless it was a raid, where the Germans came in and the Ukrainians came in and the Jewish police.

Q. WOULD ALL THREE COME?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. HOW WOULD THEY COME? WOULD THEY COME IN WITH MOTORCYCLES AND TRUCKS?

A. The Germans and the Ukraines came with trucks, or they walked into the ghetto itself. I mean, the trucks were outside of the ghetto. They just walked in. Usually, they walked into the ghetto, and the trucks were outside, usually. I remember seeing a couple times in the beginning, just a truck, where they forced us to get on the truck. But usually, they walked into the ghetto, just surrounding the streets for blocks, and the whole ghetto, part of the ghetto, just coordinate off.

Q. WHAT WEAPONS DID THEY CARRY?

A. Rifles, submachine guns and sometimes they also had machine guns stationed on the corners, pistols.

Q. WHAT DID THE JEWISH POLICEMEN CARRY?

A. Nothing, no weapons.

Q. WHAT WERE THEIR UNIFORMS LIKE?

A. Some kind of a brown uniform.

Q. THE GERMANS?

A. Well, the Germans had, sometimes they had kind of a whitish coverall. Sometimes they wore uniform of SS, you know. But the Ukrainians had black uniforms.

Q. DO YOU RECALL WHETHER ANY PRAYERS WERE SAID FOR YOUR GRANDMOTHER? ANY PRAYERS?

A. I don't recall that, but I'm certain that, because I remember my father and some other neighbors, praying in the courtyard for the people that were shot. But I don't particularly remember prayers from my grandmother.

Q. WHEN THIS FIRST GHETTO WAS BUILT AROUND 1941, WERE YOU --

A. Could have been '42 already. See, I remember more seasons than dates.

Q. SEASONS?

A. It was summer, definitely, spring or summer. It was not cold. It was not cold.

Q. THIS WAS AFTER YOUR GRANDMOTHER DISAPPEARED?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. WERE YOU GIVEN REGULATIONS AND RULES TO FOLLOW?

A. Oh, God, there were lots of regulations and rules. I remember, in those posters there, but I don't remember thoroughly reading that. I just remember reading parts of it, being more told about it by my

father. And I do remember those posters going up.

Q. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE POSTERS?

A. Well, they were put up on a, on a kind of a round kiosk that was down the block and across the street, right close to where the synagogue was. And there were other places that they were posted too. But I remember that particular spot.

Q. WAS IT ALL WRITING, OR WERE THERE ANY KIND OF LARGE HEADLINES OR EMBLEMS ON IT?

A. Yes. They were large; it was printed in kind of a print. And it was in Polish, and it was Yiddish. I don't know if it was in German also, but I remember it was in Polish and Yiddish.

Q. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FATHER TOLD YOU ABOUT THE RULES?

A. Yes. I don't recall particulars of those orders, because this was like I was -- I did what my father told me to do, you know. It was like we were there together. He explained to me. It was not like I understood everything. Or I might have seen it or read a few words, but it was like picking up something, not really reading and understanding.

Q. CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID? ANYTHING?

A. Well, I remember he said, well, we could not go out of the ghetto unless we had permission. We had

to report. There were other regulations where we had to turn in fur coats, or valuables. Also, that we had to report for work. Also, that -- those are the main things I remember, that I just mentioned.

Q. DID YOU HAVE ANY FUR COATS OR VALUABLES?

A. We didn't have valuables, really. We didn't.

Q. THAT'S A GOOD TURN THEN?

A. No. Well, we had, father had some kind of a fur coat, fur hat, and we had some silver candelabra, some -- those were the things that were most valued, that we had, I guess.

Q. DID YOU TURN ANYTHING IN?

A. I don't recall what happened to those details.

Q. WHAT ABOUT REPORTING FOR WORK?

A. That I remember. We had to report to work early, early in the morning. And we were marched out of the ghetto, and we were under guard, either a Ukraine, or I believe this was a Polish policeman in blue uniform, might have even been a Jewish policeman also. That doesn't stand out for me. Sometimes we were taken by truck someplace, and then we were brought back. Usually, on the same day, we were brought back, usually. I recall at one time where we stayed overnight there, and we were paid with bread or some kind of way.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER BEING HUNGRY DURING THIS

PERIOD?

A. Yes, yes. I recall being hungry already at that time. As soon as the Germans marched in, within weeks, there was really a hunger starting to happen. We still had some staples that we got from these warehouses that were opened up to the Polish population. But within weeks, there was already the beginnings of hunger and shortages.

Q. WAS YOUR MOTHER STILL ABLE TO USE THE OVEN AT THE SYNAGOGUE?

A. It was, yes, it was. That was still going, because that was a bakery and they were baking bread for the ghetto population, so that was functioning. And if we had some food, if you wanted to make a cholen or something like that, in the very early part, it was still, that part was still functioning. Once the ghetto was established for a while, that was only occasionally that I was able to use that community bakery oven.

Q. AND AT THIS TIME YOU WERE ABOUT 12, 13?

A. Yes. I was 12 by then, getting on 13.

Q. WHAT FOOD DID YOU HAVE EVERY DAY?

A. It was mostly bread, potatoes, some vegetables. Occasionally there was some kind of meat, some margarine. It was potatoes, a lot of potatoes, a lot of vegetables. They had those great big, I don't

know, (carobes) or rutabagas, big ones, and potatoes and bread.

Q. AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST GHETTO, WHERE WERE YOUR BROTHERS?

A. My brothers were picked up, and I didn't quite know what was happening with them, where they were. But later on, I found that they were working in different kind of construction sites, in factory. And after a while, they were turned to the ghetto and they were, then they were picked up again, and they were sent to a salt mine, not too far from the City of Krakow. And that was the last time I saw them for, for quite a while. I didn't know really what happened to them, always was wondering what happened to them.

Q. WELL, WHAT DID YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER SAY ABOUT THIS?

A. Oh, they were protecting me and my sister a lot. They did not discuss that much with us. At least I don't recall whether that was discussed with me. And my father was an optimist, and so was my mother. And they were always saying, you know, now, this will pass, we will survive. Well, we just had to do what we needed to do, what they wanted us to do, and then they would leave us alone, and they won't last long. That was the other thing.

Q. WHAT ABOUT THIS RADIO DURING THIS TIME, WAS IT STILL FUNCTIONING?

A. No. That was, as soon as the ghetto started, all of those things were confiscated, had to be turned in. No radios. You're caught with that, you were shot for that.

Q. THERE WAS NO CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD?

A. Not for me, not at least at that point.

Q. DID YOU EVER, OR YOUR FATHER EVER TAKE YOU OUT, VENTURE OUTSIDE OF THE GHETTO?

A. I not only thought about it, but I did it.

Q. YOU DID IT?

A. Yes. When the ghetto was made smaller, all the people disappeared, and they reduced the ghetto in size. My father continued working, repairing shoes, and I helped him. But I also started smuggling food into the ghetto. So I snuck out of the ghetto and got some money from my father, that he earned, and, or took some kind of a something to trade, some kind of a valuable. Usually, it was some kind of clothing or -- mostly it was clothing, or it was money, Polish money. Because there was also ghetto money. And I traded that for, for food, foodstuffs.

And I used to have a little, in the beginning, a little pack on my back, but that became conspicuous.

So I had these pants that were kind of tight on the bottom, on the feet, you know. They were tied there. So I filled the pants with foodstuffs and stuffed foodstuffs into my jacket also, and I brought that for the family. And we also traded, sold some of the food, made little money that way. I did it for quite a while, a few months. And I used to either sneak under the wires or walk through the gate and bribe the guards.

Q. YOU BRIBED THE GUARDS?

A. Bribed the guards.

Q. WITH MONEY?

A. Yes. I used to -- I had this pass that says that you're working someplace, or something like this. But basically, it was just a big piece of paper that looked official, and kind of closed up, and inside had money. And so I kind of presented it to them. They open it up, and they used to kind of look at it and pocket the money, and you know, let me go.

And it was one of those times that I was out in the ghetto that, when I came back, my mother and sister disappeared. I came back and they were not there. It was -- that was it. My father told me what happened. And he said that they were picked up in a transport, and he didn't know what happened to them. That was the last time I saw them.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER HE SAW IT HAPPEN?

A. No, he did not see it. He was at work. See, people that were left in the ghetto, that were, did not work, at that particular time, were the ones that were rounded up, and that was my mother and sister. They did not work at that time. They worked at other times, but not that particular time. So they were forced out to the street and forced out of the apartment.

Q. AND SOMEBODY SAW THIS AND TOLD YOUR FATHER?

A. My brother, my middle brother, Nathan, witnessed it. And he tried to go up to them and talk with them, and say good-bye to them. It appears they were only taking women and children that time, because the guard knocked my brother to the ground with his rifle butt and knocked his teeth out.

So he told me about this incident not many years ago. Maybe six, seven years ago, he told me that little incident. I didn't know about that. Because even the three brothers, we have never discussed together our camp experiences, not the three of us. We've talked about a detail or an incident, but not a discussion about, where we told our stories and, you know, like where were you, brother, when I was over here, or where was I when they were over there. So we didn't discuss that till just a few years ago, the three

of us. So that's, that's when it came to light, that incident. So that still comes back to me.

Q. WHICH POLICE TOOK THEM?

A. I don't know. I have no idea, but I imagine it would be the same. That was the Ukrainians, the Germans and the Jewish police, all three.

Q. YOU DON'T KNOW WHICH?

A. No.

Q. DO YOU KNOW THE DAY?

A. No.

Q. THE YEAR?

A. It was prior to the closing of the ghetto, so it would be, probably early '43. Early '43 is my guess.

Q. WAS IT COLD OUTSIDE?

A. No, no, it was not.

Q. DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE THEY WERE TAKEN?

A. We have some information now. We didn't at the time. The story we received at that time was that they were taken to some farms and resettled in the country. They were okay. And some people received postcards -- and they were postcards, not letters, from what I've heard, because we didn't receive any mail -- that these people were okay, they were working hard, and that things were hard but they were okay. And that was the information.

But what it turned out to be, and that's years later we found out, that they made them write these letters and they were killed, either shot or gassed, depending on which camp they were taken to, which extermination center, rather than camp, you know. Camp, work camp or extermination center. And people received those letters. They were long dead already by that time. But that was hindsight information.

My father was very much subdued by that time. Although I still remember him being protective of me, in many ways, we continued working, repairing shoes. We carried on.

It was months later that we were ordered to assemble in the square called (Platzgadi) for, to work in these barracks in the camp nearby. We knew that this camp was built, and it was told that, since we have these work permits and all of that, I would just simply transfer there and we're going to be working in this camp. And we knew that some people were already there and working. So we reported to this place and we were marched through this camp. It was a few hours walk from the ghetto, from the Krakow ghetto. The camp was called Plaszow.

And a few days after reporting to the Plaszow Camp, I mean, being transferred there, we were told to

take 25 pounds of luggage, or pack whatever we could carry. And we did that. And as soon as we got to the camp, all our belongings were taken away. I was put into a barracks with my father. And my father was, my father and I were put into this shoe factory in the camp, and we started working on building boots for the German Army, which some of them were sabotaged.

The ways in which, in the beginning, when the boots were sabotaged, and they detected these boots, by testing them, you know, looking at them and also testing them, and the heels broke off, and so they used to just, they knew who made the shoe. They took them outside and just shot them right there. So we slowed down that.

And, but a few days after, I was at the factory. I was ordered to stay in the barracks, not to go to work. My father went to work. And I was one of the young kids in the camp. All the kids were ordered to report. And we had to, because if you didn't, they found you later there, they'd just shoot them right then and there. It was like, there was no choice.

So we were put on horse-drawn wagons, and we were taken out of the Plaszow Camp. I overheard from the guards -- they were talking in Ukrainian -- they were saying that they were shooting the kids at the Jewish cemetery, which was very close to the camp, the

old Jewish cemetery. So I and a few others, we jumped from the wagon. I don't know what happened to the others. I don't know if -- I don't remember any shooting, so it could have been that they didn't see us, or they looked the other way, or I don't know. But all I know is that I got away.

I knew that an uncle of mine, different uncle than the one that used to live close by. It was, let's see, Uncle Meyer was his name. And he was my aunt (Chiya's) husband. He was a tanner by trade. He used to work with animal hides in this process of tanning and getting the flesh off the hide. I used to see him do that. He, I heard that he was in another camp nearby, a labor camp, and he was working on the construction site not too far from where I escaped. So I went to -- no, no. That was later. That did happen, but that was later.

After I escaped, I went up into these hills behind the town, like, and walked across town to this Polish family that I remembered who were friends of my brothers, because I didn't know what to do. Their name was (Chasheknik). I found them, and they hid me for one day and one night. And the following day, morning, they gave me some extra food and they said that I must leave. If I would have been caught at their house, they would

have been shot. So, but these people risked their lives, and they hid me for one night. So my life was saved for one more day.

It was then that I returned to the same area I escaped from, because I didn't know where to go. And I remembered my uncle, my Uncle Meyer working on this construction site. And I hid myself on the site. And when they came to work -- this transpired in a few days time, because it took me a few days to walk across those hills.

And while I was hidden, I got the attention of the one of the prisoners, one of these Jewish prisoners, and told him who I was and that I was looking for my uncle. So he went and got my uncle. And my uncle's name, I almost forgot, but Meyer (Gutlite) was his name. And he came and spoke with me. I was still being hidden. He got some food for me somehow. I continued to stay hidden for several days, because he didn't know what to do with me, what to tell me. He says, I don't know where you can go or where you can hide. And so I hid out for several days.

And in the end, he said, the only thing I can advise you to do is come back with me. So he was in this small concentration camp called (Ulog), or (Udenslager). It's a camp with the Jews. There was a

number for this camp. I don't recall the number. It had a designation. And all I remember is that the camp commander was called Miller, a sadist killer.

Anyways, so what happened is that I smuggled myself in with these other Jews, into this concentration camp because I didn't know where to go. I never heard of anyone doing that. So I remained in this camp for a few months. For a few weeks, I remained hidden in the rafters of the barracks, because the camp emptied out during the day. Everybody went to work. The only people that remained were sick people, and they had to report to the sick bay. And my uncle told me to stay hidden, be quiet.

And so I was up in the rafters, and there was a window underneath me. And behind the barracks, they were, the Ukrainians were executing people right below. So that was my view from the window for several weeks. And I had to be, just curl up and be quiet.

It was a few weeks later that my uncle somehow arranged with I don't know who, but I was registered as a, quote, "legal prisoner." And I was issued food and I started going to work. And I was assigned with another young kid to this -- excuse me. I'm just feeling tense.

Q. DO YOU WANT TO TAKE A BREAK?

A. No, no. I just want to get it done.

I was assigned to work in raising pigs for these Germans soldiers. There were a bunch of pigs. And the food that the pigs were given was the left over from the German Army food, you know. And so, of course, we ate some of the food and we brought some of the food back to the camp. That was the beginning of what I later realized, I was being helped by some unseen hands of people which contributed to my survival. So here, I was given this lighter job, not heavy back breaking work, like most other men were given.

Later on, it was within a few months that I contracted typhous, typhoid fever. And by that time, I was already legal in this (Ulog) Camp, and I was staying right below my uncle's bunk. And he somehow got some medicine for me, and I survived that one. So that was another step wherein which I was helped by other people.

Eventually, this whole (Ulog) Camp was liquidated, and I was marched with my uncle back to the camp from which I escaped, to the Plaszow Camp, and I was reunited with my father. And I was put into the shoe factory again.

And by that time, they devised a better way of sabotaging the boots that didn't break so easily. And he showed me how to do that. So I was working, building boots, and just one boot had a flaw in it, not both

boots, just one. So after some rough usage by a soldier, it tested okay. It tested fine. But the heel came off. And you know, a soldier is not effective unless they have good boots, especially in the bad weather. So that was our contribution. But people were shot for being caught for doing that. People don't know what sabotaging or resistance is about. They think, oh, you have to pick up a gun, to go to the corner store and buy it, yes. Ha, ha, ha.

So it was during this period that I was working at the shoe factory that, almost daily, there were truck loads of people that were brought, were driven by the factory and they were driven to an execution hill a little past the factory. And I remember them driving by the factory, usually a few trucks, with SS and Ukrainians standing on those running boards, both sides, and motorcycles behind them, and disappearing over the hill, and hearing machine gun firing for quite a while.

And it was one of those times that, after they've left, that I went out in the factory. I went over the hill and I saw these corpses that were stacked up, just like cord, like cord wood, with wood and corpses and wood and corpses, and wood and more corpses. And then they were doused with gasoline and set on fire.

And the corpses were burning for days and days and days on end. And once you smell human flesh burning, you never forget it. Never. So that was the time I really got frightened, when I saw that. The reality set in of what was happening to people. And this was not an extermination camp. There were hundreds of people that were being executed. This was a labor camp.

I worked on the shoe factory with my father and we had a quota to produce. I forgot what the quota was, but we had a quota. I think two people had to produce one pair a day, or something like that. I don't recall that detail.

A few months afterwards, we were -- the camp was being liquidated. Plaszow was being liquidated, and we were put aboard a cattle car. And to this day, I mean, I remember the journey. I remember the journey to Mauthausen. This is in Austria. It was three days, three nights more on the train, with people dying in the cattle car right next to me. And I remember my father protecting me from the crush of the people. And it is not till I started talking with my brothers a few years ago that they said to me, Bernard, don't you remember, we were all in the same cattle car. My brothers and my father and I were together, and I don't have memory of them being in the same cattle car with me, with my

father and I.

So I remember that we arrived in Austria, in Mauthausen, and we were there a few days. I recall my brothers in Mauthausen, but I didn't recall them in the same cattle car. They were still not willing to talk about that particular incident. So in Mauthausen, we were separated again. My father and I were sent to Auschwitz, and my brothers were sent elsewhere. We found out after the war that they were sent to this camp called (Guzen), which was a stone quarry. So we were reunited, my brothers and I, and my father and I, in the cattle car, after not seeing them for a long time, didn't know they were alive. I had no memory of them.

I thought it was very typical of Germans to keep everyone organized by the letters, the alphabet. They put us all together. How ironic, the efficiency of those killers.

Q. BERNARD, I'M STOPPING HERE BECAUSE IT SEEMS AS IF IT'S A LOGICAL PLACE. THIS CAN'T BE FINISHED TODAY, BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH MORE.

(Recess taken.)

Q. SO YOU GO TO AUSCHWITZ?

A. My father and I were put aboard a train, another journey of three days and three nights to Auschwitz. And I remember that on this journey to

Auschwitz, that it was, it was just a repetition of the journey to Mauthausen, of people dying around us and my father protecting me.

And it was during this three days that one person was allowed to get off the train and get a bucket of water, and I was picked to get off the train and get a bucket of water. I remember being guarded by this SS man, and I was getting, filling up this bucket, and I remember looking at the eyes of the guard, just making just a momentary contact with him. And he looked away, the other way, and he let me fill up the bucket of water, because he was shouting and beating people. I was, for some reason, allowed to fill up the bucket and carry it back to the train. And then I was pulled aboard and the door was shut.

So, and when we arrived in Auschwitz, I remember that we were chased out of the cattle car by people in striped pajamas, like other prisoners, and SS with dogs. And before that happened, that we arrived there, very early in the morning -- it was still dark -- we could see on the horizon fires burning. And though I have smelled the smell of burning flesh before, it didn't register again. I was blocking it out.

There were barbed wire fences on the left and barbed wire fences on the right, and we could see guard

towers and we could see lots of barbed wire. And we were in the train till morning, till daylight, when we started being chased out of the train. And I remember, of course, clinging to my father. And then we were kind of between train tracks, between trains, actually, on the ground, and they were forcing us to start moving towards, in one direction. And gradually, they were narrowing us down from a whole bunch of people to, and then until like fives, and four, and three, and then gradually into ones. And I was behind my father.

It was before, when we were being kind of gradually narrowed down, before I got into the line of one, that some prisoner said to my father for me to lie about my age. And it's then that I really forgot about my age, because it was like, it became the truth for me. I got mixed up about my age.

And I was behind my father and we started walking towards someone, and there was this SS man. And my father went in and left from my view, and I went to the, to the right. And I was being hurried and chased to go that direction. And I remember looking at my father from a distance, and somehow we knew that that was the end for us. You know, I kind of, just a feeling, and just kind of looking at each other. And that was the last time I saw my father. And of course,

he ended up in the gas chamber with, probably on that very same day, with others.

I was sent to the showers and tatooed, and I was sent to the quarantine camp, which interestingly enough, is the only part of the wooden barracks in Auschwitz or Bergen now that survived, that is there today, the very barracks I was in. And that's the end. That was the end of my father.

I was there for almost four weeks, in quarantine camp, didn't work. There were many, many incidents. But essentially, I was sent out of the camp with the, on the truck with other people, other prisoners, to Germany, to a place near Landsberg. There were a number of labor camps near Landsberg, and I was in the labor camp. I was given this really light job with the blacksmith on the construction, blacksmith shop on the construction site. And I was given this by other people helping me. And to this day, I'm wondering who these people were who helped me.

It's like, I also remember marching in columns of five, and we always marched in columns of five to and from work, you know. And somehow, I was always put into the center, because I was small. I was scrawny. I was like a skeleton. So I was protected from being beaten on the sides, as people, usually, on the sides were

being beaten and really abused or shot. But I was always put in the center, so I was helped by these unseen people who thought that, if I survive, maybe their son will survive, maybe their daughter will survive. And so I feel an obligation to tell the story, to be witness for them.

And from this camp in Germany, I was -- as armies were moving closer through Germany, we were being marched someplace from this labor camp. I don't know where to. But along the way, we were mistaken by American planes. They had mistaken us for soldiers, but they stopped. Some people were killed. And I was liberated by the American Army May 7th, 1945. And of course, if it wasn't for the Americans, I would have been, I wouldn't have lasted much longer either.

And of course, in the end, after I came to this country, I became a soldier. I was sent to Korea. And that's how I was naturalized. My naturalization papers say, naturalized in Korea, so I don't know if I'm also a citizen of Korea besides being a U.S. citizen. So, but that's there too.

MS. PROZAN: THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY TO STOP. I THANK YOU FOR AN INCREDIBLE STORY, FOR SHARING THIS.

(End of Tape 2.)