

Interview with HENRY KRUGER

Holocaust Oral History Project

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Interviewer: Anne Ferbelman

Transcriber: Marsha G. Shaw

Q: WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A: Yes, I was born in Poland, in a small town northeast of Warsaw named 0034. I was born September 4, 1923.

Q: AND WAS THIS SMALL TOWN WHERE YOUR FAMILY LIVED, WAS IT LIKE A VILLAGE? WAS IT AGRICULTURAL? WHAT DID YOUR FAMILY DO?

A: It was a small town of 25,000 population. My father was in business in building materials, and in coal and wood for fire. Because we didn't have no steam heat or gas heat, we had to heat the home in the wintertime, which we had strong winters, we had to heat with wood, all kind of wood.

And I had a family with three kids. I had a little brother, sister, myself. I was the oldest. My father and mother, the rest, 30 or 40 family members.

Q: DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?

A: Yes. We went to public school. A Jewish public school. There were four schools in town. Number three was the Jewish school in one part of town. It was no ghetto.

We all lived where anybody wanted. We had a certain part of town where most of the Jewish clustered around their little businesses, and trade people. Most of them had little stores.

A lot of us used to go to Warsaw. It was only 18 kilometers from Warsaw. And the people brought merchandise to my home town and they did some work for factories, like jobbers.

We had a nice Jewish life with a lot of activities between the Jewish people. We had all kind of clubs and organizations, Zionists, and Revisionists.

Q: DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY ANTISEMITISM? WHEN WERE YOU FIRST AWARE OF TROUBLE?

A: I was born with the feeling of antiSemitism. The Poles were not the best of our friends. We were good for them when they needed us as business people, as tradesmen, doctors, lawyers, barbers, shoe repair guys, blacksmiths, retailers. Everything was Jewish.

A few days ago, the President 0177 said we would need small business people, maybe he was referring to us Jews to come back to Poland. That's why they need us because we were supporting him. In the villages, in the towns and even in Warsaw, everything was practically 75%, 80% Jewish operated. On a very small scale, it was Jewish, done by Jews.

Q: HENRY, WHEN DID THE FIRST AFFECT OF THE WAR AND HITLER, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, IN YOUR LIFE, IN YOUR VILLAGE AND YOUR SCHOOL, TO YOUR FAMILY?

A: What happened? We knew about Hitler's thinking about Jews into the middle of the '30s, and '35. We reading papers and listening to the radios we used to have. We knew the feelings of Hitlerism, or fascism. Only we never believed that something like that can ever happen. Never.

We, I was going to school in Warsaw. The Polish kids used to throw out my books, clothes, my hat. I used to come home scared. Mama says,

"Thank God they didn't throw you out from the train going to school." I was 14, 15 years old to business school one year going to school only. I went for one year, because the war came right after. I was 16 years old at the time.

The feelings about Hitler--we were scared. We were never told about the war with Hitler in 1936 or 1937. We knew what he had in mind, but we didn't know he was going to go after Poland and after the Jews, because in 1938, we had the first influx of German Jews, who were Polish citizens Hitler kicked them out of Germany. And they came to Warsaw. We gave them quarters in the synagogue. We had a lot of synagogues in Warsaw. Plenty of them, and we filled the little synagogues with Jewish refugees from Germany.

We fed them. We dressed them. In the meantime, they found jobs. They spoke--some of them spoke Polish, all of them spoke Yiddish.

And when the war broke out, September the first, was on a Friday at noontime. We saw a dog fight over my hometown. We thought it was nothing. It was maneuvers. Polish fighters having maneuvers over the city. This was already war. Was around 11:00 in the morning, around at 1:00 the volunteer fire department put up the siren, and it started howling. We didn't know what it was. Then the news over the radio came--Poland was attacked early in the morning. And then when the theater began, we started running. Mostly the kids from school, used to go to the east and during the day they used to ~~go~~ down on the highways with the fighter planes. People didn't know where to go.

And September 10, my mother was killed from a German stuker Sunday afternoon. My two aunts were killed. I was wounded. The house

was completely demolished. There was 17 people killed in a few seconds. This was the first time we felt what war was. What war is.

I found my mother on the sidewalk with a torn off head. I buried her the next day. When we went to the cemetery, they used to strafe us with the machine guns, the German fighter. We buried mother. We came home. There was no place to live.

Then we lived with an uncle a couple blocks away. One room. He lost his wife, my father lost his wife, and another uncle lost his wife in our building.

Every day the Nazis used to come to the ~~0408~~ It is like the little city hall for the Jews in particular. We had members, so many guys belonging to it. We had president, and they used to work with the Germans. They needed so many people to clean the horses, polish the boots, clean the wheels from the artillery pieces and everything else. We did it.

They used to beat us up in the beginning, call us dirty names. This was a part of our survival for centuries--to do to us what was done by the Germans.

After awhile, it was getting miserable. We were afraid to stay even in the one room. The Polish kids, teenagers used to come around and walk with the German soldiers and say, "There's a Jew. Here's a Jew. Go, take them." They used to take us out, beat us, then we used to work. The ones that brought us to the railroad station put us in an empty place and kept us around 11:00. And the Poles used to go around and make fun, spitting on us. We were used to it. It was not that bad.

Then, they started taking out from the factories, from the tanneries, the roll of leather, the cowhide, all wet, full with the stuff, stuff on it. We used to do it with our bare hands.

One incident, we used to fall down, they used to take the rifle, hit you in the neck. Neck or on the back, and you fall on it with the face, and the gook used to burn the skin.

We loaded this up, then, they start taking to load up the wood, the lumber from the--from the Jewish businesses to Germany.

There was one incident, one of those SR German soldiers in a black uniform, my sister came with a pack of milk and few potatoes in it. He took the spoon, and he mixed it, and he said, "How can you eat this garbage? You work hard. How can you eat it?" I say, "I don't have nothing else to eat." He gave me an apple. I thanked him for the apple. The next day he comes back. He said, "Why don't you go to the Russians?" He says, "They're only 60 kilometers away, because we'll kill you all." That was in 1939, October sometime, the beginning of October. He says, "You better go to the Russians, because Hitler will kill all the Jews."

That was easier said than done. My father was, at the time, a broken-down fellow, 41, 42 years old with no mother, with no home, with no business, with no money, with no clothes, nothing to sell to the Poles. Nothing. I used to scrounge together some food. Food from the Germans, left over by the soldiers. I used to bring it home. My little brother was only 5 years old. My sister was 9, 10.

After awhile, I got tired of being beaten, urinated on, locked in a toilet. Locked up for a whole day.

Then I decided to go to the Russians. It sounds maybe horrible. Not today, not 30 years ago. I say to papa, "The Germans didn't take away the wagon from the business, let's go out, buy a little horse, and go to the Russians. We have nothing to lose. No mother, no home, nothing left, only three of us, four of us. Let's go to the Russians." "Oh, no," he said. "I don't want to become a communist." Which was silly. I said, "What do you mean? They don't need you to become a communist. Take care of your three kids. This is your obligation. Not to become a communist." He was an orthodox Jew. I was brought up orthodox Jew as a kid. Not with ^{DS95} and things like that. We were brought up--I went to ^{DS99} and we were brought up strictly orthodox--kosher meat, milk, everything separate. Papa says, "No." And I say, "I'm going myself. I cannot live here like this." I was not even 16. Papa didn't say yes or no. Go. One less mouth to feed.

Then we took--bought a ticket and went to a border town on the river ⁰⁶²¹ and the little town named ⁰⁶²³ and I met my cousin there who was invalid from The Polish/German war. On the neutral path there was around 10,000 people. Some Italian, some French. Maybe communist, regular communist and the Germans didn't go back, and the Russians didn't go forward. And the people were going crazy, particularly, women, were getting out of their minds. No food, no facilities, nothing. We were on an empty piece of land between two armies.

My cousin says to me, "Henry, I'm an invalid. I wear the Polish uniform with the crutch. You hang on to me. I'll hang on to you. We'll go across the border. The Russians are not going to shoot us." I was afraid. Who was I to take a chance to go to the armies with artillery and soldier, to go across the border? He went across the border. The Russians didn't

bother with that. He went straight through. Through to the Russian side, and that was the end of my cousin.

Three days later, came some Russian officers on some horses and whoever understood Russian, they told them, "You take women and children to the front, men in the back, and form one bunch of people, one mass of people. We're going to shoot in the air. We're not going to bother you." He said, "Only to show the officers we couldn't hold you back." And we went through.

They gave us trains. We went to the City of Belzec. There most of the refugees was living in the synagogues, churches, synagogues. The Russians used to give us some bread, oil, potatoes. I was lucky. I had my grandmother's sister was living in the City of Gulstok, which was a very nice Jewish community. One of the nicest Jewish communities in Poland.

My uncle owned a factory before the war. Used to make plywood with a brother-in-law. They kicked him out. He was called a capitalist. That was the system. He couldn't even be a night watchman. I went into the office and I say I'm 18 years old. I had to lie because 16, they wouldn't give me a job, and I had to eat. They gave me a job. I worked, and I used to come in the morning a little bit late and always asked for permission the Russian foreman, "I have to go early away." And he was anxious to know, "Why are you going?" And I say, "I have to go say after my mother." "What is?" I said, "Prayer for my mother." He say, "You Jewish?" I say, "Yes." He says, "I'm Jewish too." His name was He says, "From now on you can go to synagogue in the morning, in the evening. I'll punch your card."

I worked there for three months. I live with my relatives. We slept on the floor. It was nice and warm, at least.

And in February 1940, my sister wrote a letter with a smuggler. There was no regular mail. "Henry, come home. Father is sick, little 0788 my little brother, is hungry. Come home."

Then I went to a friend in 0795 and I exchanged the Russian rubles for Polish 0799. And I--we took another guy, a Jewish guy, and we went to the border. Go back to the Nazis, which was stupid. Not to me though. I had to take care of my family.

Going back and forth to the border town, I was taken three times to get shot, by the Germans. They played with us, you know. They send you back to the Russians and start shooting machine guns only to make fun of us. And they didn't kill none of us.

We came back to my hometown the end of February. The border was already closed tight between the Nazis and the Russians. And we came home.

I had holes in my hands, eaten out from the frostbite. And I came dirty. When I came to the station the Poles attacked my. "You so and so dirty Jew, you're a communist. Why don't you stay with your communists?"

What I'm going to tell them? I'm a communist? I was a Revisionist. 0843 You heard about? I was never a communist. I don't sympathize. I went, and I'm coming back to my family.

I came home. They didn't recognize me.

We settled down. It wasn't that bad. The summer of 1940 was not really that bad to live under the German.

We had to go send out people to work every day. Used to beat us up, once in awhile, our fellow Jew. That was part of our survival, to be beaten up.

In October of 1940 came an order, we have to leave town. We're going to go to the Jewish settlement. They didn't call it a ghetto. They call it an ~~0877~~, like a Jewish district. "You can take everything with you. You're going to live one family to a room. That's what we're going to allow."

We're used to living already to a room. All four of us in one room.

We sold a lot of stuff. We gave away to the Poles. This was our survival, to sell what you got to have a few Polish ~~0895~~ to buy something, even in the ghetto. Nothing was growing there.

A few blocks in the city, in the other half was like a summer resort. There was no ovens. There was nothing, only people used to come from Warsaw and live in the summer, and this was October 1940.

We came to the ghetto. The Jews got orders to put up barbed wire around the ghetto, 8 foot tall barbed wire..

They organized Jewish police with uniforms, hats, sticks and the Jews used to patrol inside. The Polish police patrolled outside. And once in a while we had visitors from the Gestapo, OSS, OSR, OSD, all kind of German different branches of their beautiful army.

We had to have somebody to go for the mail outside the ghetto to the Christian side. I had an uncle who worked for the ~~0939~~ the Jewish little city hall, and he says, "Henry, I'll make you an ~~0945~~ means a currier. You go out of town. You bring the mail to the ghetto and whatever mail we have, you bring to the outside." It sounds beautiful. "In the meantime, you

can always scrounge some food from the Poles you know. Bring a few slices of bread, some potatoes into the ghetto."

This didn't last for long. We had people go to drug stores, people go to post office, people to go here and people to go there. After awhile, they start killing us, the Gestapo. You didn't say good morning nice enough to them, he took his luger, shoot you, finish. You didn't go down off the sidewalk too fast-- we couldn't walk on the same sidewalk as the Germans. We had to walk on the street with the horses and wagons used to go. You didn't do this, you didn't wear clean enough you arm band--we used to wear white arm band and a Star of David. It was 10 centimeters and 8 centimeters, the Star of David.

My sister, what, she was 12 years old, she said, "Huh-uh." She took the paper, she tore it up. She says, "You're not going to go bring the mail. They'll shoot you. What good is it? Who's going to take care of us?" All right. She tore away the paper. My uncle says, "Why did she do that?" "He is not coming home one day. They're going to shoot him."

We came to the ghetto. It was getting tough. We used to bake a lot of bread for the Warsaw ghetto. Our ghetto used to buy corn and flour from the Christians. We used to have bakery in the other part of the ghetto in the summer resort. We built our own ovens, and the Poles used to come and buy bread and bring it to the Warsaw ghetto.

I have a friend who's living in Skokie by Chicago, and another cousin of his perished in Auschwitz. We used to buy 200 pounds of corn. With a little coffee grinder, you know, like they grind coffee. We used to grind 200 pounds of coffee during the night on the third floor under the roof. One of us used to guard outside in case Germans were coming, because you

heard a noise. And then after we finished the hundred kilos or 200 pounds, make flour, the baker gave us two loaves of bread. Four pound of bread for it, which was beautiful.

And this was going on for a short while, and there used to be a lot of atrocities, shooting and murdering, and things. I went through a few. I was standing by the gate of this barbed wire talking to a few Jewish boys. We grew up together, and there is going two German on horses, riding with the boots. You don't run, because if you run, he'll shoot you. You have to stay frozen. If a German passes through, you stay. And there was a little Jewish lady, her name was 1060 She was selling kosher chicken to the Jewish populace in my hometown of 1073 And the German spotted her. That was taboo, going out of the ghetto was taboo without a 1078 He called her. She start crying, he didn't worry about crying, a Jew crying was nothing to him. It was fun. He went down from his horse. He told the old lady, she was like 5 foot. Big hero. He told her to lay down on the floor. He pulled out his luger. He put his boot on her face, another one on her stomach, and gave her two bullets in the heart. And the blood went out like from a fountain. And we have to stay watch it, because if you run you next. He says to the policeman, "Open up the gate." He opened up the gate. He saw me standing there. He says, "Come. 1106" Take this piece of so and so into the ghetto, I have to get paid for it. I wasted two bullets on a dirty Jew." He says, "We need the bullets on the Russian front." They were already fighting on with the Russians. He took the lady for the legs, I took her for the arms, and he throws her on my shoulder, and the hot blood was running through my clothes. Bring her into the little city hall in the ghetto. And I'm still holding the body on my shoulder, and he doesn't say nothing.

He grabs the body, rips it on the floor, and he says, "Two thousand (113) for each bullet I wasted on this woman. In 10 minutes I want the money or else I'm picking up 10 Jews and you'll get shot." What can you do? You can't go complain. There nobody to complain to. He's the authority. You're nothing.

We used to have always, the money for those purposes. The Jews always kept money. They used to sell the flour on the black market. They keep 10, 20, 30, 50,000 (1148) for purposes like this, to stay alive. As soon as he finished the sentence, I went into some place, another room to pay the guy off. He walked away. We took the old lady, put her behind the building. The Jews came with a push cart. They took her out, buried her, finished. This was one incident.

There was one incident I'll never forget. Between one ghetto and the other ghetto was an empty place like a half a mile empty. They used to have a brick factory. Used to be lime pits. The little Jewish kids were playing in the dirt. There was going three German soldiers, not officers, not Gestapo, not SS, straight corporals, walking on the other side of the barbed wire. We were sitting like monkeys. Everybody looked at us like idiots, sitting behind barbed wire. He took out his luger, put his hand against the telephone pole, and he shot a little Jewish kid. This was entertainment for him. And they walked away laughing as though nothing happened.

This was going on for months, because the war was going on with the Russians. That is the reason they hate us even more, because we're all communists to them. Every Jew was labeled a communist.

In 1941, the situation was getting bad. It broke out--a very big epidemic of typhoid in the ghetto. People were dying by the hundreds. There was no medication. There was not even water to drink. We needed ice for high fever. You have to put in a little bit of ice for the forehead. There was no ice. All my family went sick. All of us. None of us died. I wish we would. None of us died

One night I went out from the ghetto, there was like three quarter mile. We had a friend who was the same business as my father was, and I went into him with a suit of clothes. I say, "I would like to buy me some bread, some potatoes, some 1239" He didn't want it he said. "You take this with you, and you keep the last suit of you father's. You take it back." "No," I said. "I need some ice." And Poland, they used to store it from the lime pits, they used to store it, and cover it with sawdust and everything, to preserve it for the summertime. And he gave me a slab, before I came to the ghetto, half of it was melted, you know. We could help some neighbors who had high fever. He didn't know about the typhoid because he wouldn't even talk about it--epidemic broke out in the ghetto. This was going on, maybe three months. It subsided. People died out, and it subsided. We were told we were isolated from the populace, out of town. Hitler's politics was to test the typhoid virus, and we were the lucky ones to be picked, because we were away from the German armed forces. And we were picked for it to be like a test tube. That's what I was told.

After awhile there came an order. The Germans need 100 guys every day for the railroad tracks to work on the railroad going from Warsaw to

1293

This was the end of '41, when Treblinka start coming into the picture. We were around 60, 70 kilometers, I don't exactly remember how far. It was not far from my hometown. They were going-- ~~1356~~ train loaded with people. We didn't know who the people were. Nobody knew. They were going some place. Now the Poles, they came out and told us they evacuated little villages and at night are playing loud military music. And we hear machine guns. That is what the Poles came to tell us the news in the ghetto. And this was the beginning of Treblinka. They didn't have no ovens. They used to kill, and bury in the pits, and cover it up with something in the next trip. We didn't know about it at the time.

When we were working on the railroad tracks, 100 of us, everyday under guard, we saw trains going back empty. The same boxcars empty and the train used to stay. We used to find pictures, letters, notes, and we saw it was Jewish, and where are the Jews going? They start taking them out from Warsaw. One train, two trains a day, sometimes every second day, and the people used to go run and list themselves to go to this "good" Treblinka. It was like a summer resort, we're going to work, we're going to build, and Hitler is going to let us survive. We saw empty trains going back during the day. They used to go during the night in the beginning. A few of us say, let's go out from the ghetto. Beneath the railroad tracks was a big pipe with water going through. We went in underneath the train. We pay the Poles not to raise the signal green, only stay red. And the train was stopped, because our ghetto was three kilometers along the railroad tracks. And then we heard talk in Jewish and praying, and crying, and the kids were hungry, and things like that. We came back to the ghetto. We say, "Those were Jewish trains going some place."

After awhile, it was getting already day, and night the trains were going. One incident we worked on the railroad tracks. There comes a private train like pulman, with Jews from the West: Norwegians, Danish, French, dressed up with fur coats, eating French bread. And they ask us-- they saw we're Jews, "Where is that good Treblinka?" They're going to the nice place, Treblinka. And the guys who guarded the trains, were Ukrainians--Russian Ukrainians with Russian uniform, only they wore a red arm band with a swastika on it. And the title they have in the German army was the 1414 the gang who finishes it off. They call them the 1417

And those guys sitting on the roofs, in between the pulman, told us, "If you tell them where you're going, before you close your mouth, you'll be dead." We turn away our backs to the people. We were afraid to stay. Afraid to even look at them. And this was going on 'til the whole summer of '42. They were only going day and night. Most from the West and a lot of them used to come even from the East to Treblinka.

They build the ovens, some time in the end of '41, beginning of '42. Hitler was scared--that's what I was told--the epidemic from the camps will spread to the outside world and his troops are going to fight the Russians. He was afraid of it. He probably got from some place, an order to build ovens to burn the bodies. To get rid of them fast. And they start building, the Jewish boys, start building 24 hours around the clock, building ovens. And then the Jews used to bring out the bodies to the ovens and after they got broken down, weak, they used to throw them into it.

We used to get dressed. Every day we used to take out with us some few valuables: a few candles, silver candles; a little bit silverware; a couple

extra shirts; some underwear, and carried our bags because we were afraid come back from work. There would be no ghetto left anymore. We have no place to go.

This was going on for 7 months. We knew what was going on because we heard that the Jews used to run away from the train and come to our ghetto. Jump from the train, head up the floor and fall down between the boxcars and come running to the Jews in ¹⁴⁹⁶ because it was still 1% safe. We were there. We were still living. We were still baking bread, and still being treated a little bit different, because the Nazis needed us. We had a factory, which was Jewish owned. The owner was taken out in 1941 to Warsaw and shot in prison ¹⁵⁴⁰ All the well-to-do Jews, doctors, lawyer, were taken out during a couple nights, taken out to the Warsaw prison, and shot, and this guy left a factory. His name was ¹⁵²⁰

In this factory most of us worked. We worked for the--we made knots, plates for the tanks and for the guns, and everything else. And everybody, "Thought they're not going to touch us. We're safe because the German machine needs us." It was silly. They didn't. When the orders came from up there, nothing helps us.

We worked for 7 months on the railroad tracks. We used to get a lunch. It used to be on a piece of bread, and some soup made from some kind of a test tube food, or new potatoes they were trying to raise, the Germans. And we used to be the test people. To eat it and see the reaction. And every day they used to shoot one or two of us for fun. Every day instead of a 100 come back, 99, 97 used to come back, and the rest used to be carried into the ghetto. They used to come down to the railroad station take a high-powered rifle and take a few shots.

They used us. They needed to kill a couple Jews to make the day.

We lived in a ghetto. Was maybe 5000 of us from the Jews from the city, and from the little villages, they brought in some Jews, like gather us together and ship us out in the near future. That's what was on their minds.

Used to come home, my little sister used to stay by the gate, cry her eyes out, "Are you glad you're back? I'm glad you're back. They didn't shoot you." After awhile there was no more Jews left in Used to be a part of central Poland around Warsaw. We were the last outpost they didn't touch. Everything was clear. Warsaw was still there. No little towns. No little villages. Everything was free of Jews. 1609 1942 you know, Jews are religious. They went to dance with the torah, to have a nice little holiday behind the double door. Nice and quiet, where the German come into town or to the ghetto. They used to come in quite often, you know, make themselves a little theater, shoot a couple, hang a couple, and then go out. It relieved the pressure. They killed some Jews.

I'm working around the railroad tracks by the barbed wire, comes toward me a Polish policeman, who used to be my neighbor around the corner. I played with his kids. He says, "Henry, I have some news for you." "What is it Mr. 1632 He says, "The whole town is crawling with Gestapo, with SR, with the whole kit and caboodle." He says, " Police were brought in from Warsaw. Looks like tonight they're going to evacuate you." I took the news back to the little town, the Jews dancing with the torah, and praying to God for survival. When I told them the news, it was like the whole little town was like a mortuary. "You sure"? I say, "I'm sure. He told me. He knows what he knows."

Papa came home. From the left over money, he spread the money between the kids. I took my money, gave it to my little brother, with a string I tie it up. He was 7 years old. My sister was 11 or 12.

I made passports in the ghetto from the Polish underground. My father knew somebody, a guy who was in the railroad station. The director. He used to come to the ghetto during the night, and make a living. Used to buy bread and bring it to Warsaw. He says, "Henry, why don't you get in touch with some Jews with money. I can make passports--legal passports from Warsaw, for so and so much money." I start asking some people. Say, "No problem. We have a few Polish 1694. My kids will take it. We'll run away from the ghetto. We'll survive."

I made 17 passports from this Polish underground. I didn't have enough money to buy one. The church was good to me for bring in so much money, and they gave me a birth certificate with the name 1703. That was a typical Polish name. A 1705 is a guy who drives horses, whatever you call it in English language. It was a name I picked because a fellow worked for my father, his name was 1711. My mother's name was the same. My father was 1714. We called him Pole. My mother was Helena. I was christened in Warsaw 1718. This was a present. He gave me a gift for nothing, which was very nice.

I say to my sister, "This is the night we're going to be evacuated." The Jews were running around with the 1725, with the holy shawl, with the 1726 on their forehead, and screaming to God, and praying. The whole ghetto was like on fire. Nobody knew where to go. Where can you go? No place to go.

I say to sister, I say to ¹⁷³⁵, "I'll take little ¹⁷³⁶ with me and I'll place him on a farm. I'll make him a little sheperd. I'll give him all the money. Maybe the kid will survive." He was 7 years old. He spoke beautiful Polish. A blond little boy with blue eyes. She said, "No. You're not going to take him." She was like mother to us. She cooked and washed and was like a regular woman. Not like 12, 13 years old. Like a regular mother. She says, "If you take him, you'll both perish. They'll kill you both. You go. Let him stay with us." That's the kid which I came from the Russians. And here I have to leave him for the dogs, to go to the gas chamber. She says, "No. You're not going to take him. You go yourself." And he asked me, he says, "Are you coming with me to the train?" I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to tell the kid. I promised him I'll join him.

And we separated. It's still in the one room in the building. And I took with me two boys, Rubinstein, which is in Chicago, and another fellow, he perished in Auschwitz.

And when we went out from the back side of the ghetto, out from the ghetto, there was a girl which went to school with me for 7 years. And she says, "Henry, can I go with you guys?" "As far as I know, no. Not because I'm mean, I don't want you to live. Only I left my sister and brother. How can I take you? Wouldn't be fair to my family." And she was left in the ghetto.

We went out, was around 10:00 at night in September 1942, wanted to go to a village and we met one of the guys. And he says, "Come with us to the village. We'll stay overnight and then we'll go on next couple days." That was maybe 3 kilometers away from the ghetto. Went out to the farm.

"You can't stay here because the patrol are coming by day and night."

Says, "I'll bring you to the barn, behind a wall, behind hay. Then you can stay a few days."

We came into the barn. He brought us milk, hot milk. He brought us dark bread and a piece of ¹⁸²³ And we didn't eat it. None of us ate the ¹⁸²⁵ We gave it to the dog. We ate the bread and the milk. We were still orthodox, you know. We were afraid to eat nothing to but kosher.

We sat down there and around 5:00 in the morning, we heard shooting. Machine guns. I said, "That's the ghetto." No. Before we came from the ghetto, went out from the farmer, this was the first time. This was the second time we left the ghetto on the same night. A Pole caught us outside the ghetto. His name was Wilhelm. Used to be a Polish German they call it ¹⁸⁴⁶. He says, "What are you doing here, Henry?" "You know Wilhelm, I want to go away from the ghetto." "Huh-uh," he says. "You go to the ghetto. I'll shoot you." I said, "Why don't you let us go?" He says, "Because you Jew." He says, "And I'm German. You go back to the ghetto. I'll give the guys an order to kill you on the spot." I said, "All right, Wilhelm. We'll go back to the ghetto." "I don't want to see you out here any more." He says, "Because we'll shoot you on the spot." He used to work for my father for \$3 a day. He would support his family. Suddenly, I was a dog to him, to get shot because I'm a Jew.

We went back to the ghetto. I didn't see none of my family. I don't know where they went. How they went. Where they were hiding, under the floor? I have no idea. I say to the 2 guys, "What are we going to see here? We have no families. We don't even know where they are. Let's go out again." That's where we met the lady, around 5:00 in the morning.

We heard shooting and screaming and everything else that was encircle the ghetto. And everybody was taken from out of the ghetto. They didn't load them on the train in 1885 They drove them by foot 9 kilometers to a little town named 1888. It was like Sacramento in California. This was to be by Warsaw, a little town, and I spoke to a Pole after the war. He says, "The whole highway was littered with dead bodies from 1896 to . They couldn't walk. They were shot on the spot and kicked aside. A couple hundred were killed. Women, children, and men. Then they loaded them with other people and they send them to Treblinka a day later.

In the meantime, we are laying in the barn. The same night, the farmer comes, says to us, "Kids get out because the Gestapo is searching the whole village for Jews." We were that close to the ghetto. They knew we ran away, and they wanted to find us.

He took us out some place in the swamp. There used to be a Polish military base before the war. Now, the Germans occupied the base. It was hiding behind bushes.

It was a beautiful, sunny day. Nice and warm in the sunshine. There were 3 of us laying, thinking what's happened to our families? Around 8:00 in the morning, we heard vicious screaming in the bushes. "Jews. 1932 Jews!" With pitchforks, with two by two, with knives they came after us. Those guys took off the shoes to lay in the warm sun and took off their jackets. And I, for some reason, had a good pair of shoes, practically new. And that was my talisman. I have a good pair of shoes.

That's winter in eastern Poland. September, October is winter. Freeze. Frost. Snow. We start running. We left the silver. We left everything we got. We escaped. They took what we got. They were happy, the Poles.

What do we do now? We have nothing to wear. We're barefooted. Any time any patrol spots us, they'll ask us, "Where are your shoes? Who are you?" They'll shoot us. Then we decided I'll go to the railroad station and buy tickets to go to ¹⁹⁴⁴ because other side of the ¹⁹⁴⁴ river, Jews were still living in peace. It was only 60 kilometers on the other side that they call it ¹⁹⁷⁰ new east Prussia. They wore yellow star only they didn't bother them too much.

"Let's go to the other Jews on the other side." "How?" I had some money in the pocket. "You go. You speak Polish. You look Polish. You still have your shoes and your jacket. You can go buy ticket." "And how are you going to go to the train without shoes? They'll think you're crazy. Something is wrong with you guys!" "Then why don't you go to the farmer and get us some shoes?" We grew up together, the 3 of us. We're making the money the attic to make a living. Our fathers used to go to ¹⁹⁹¹ together. We were very close kids. I said, "All right. I'll go buy ticket and you wait here. I'll get a hold of the shoes first."

I ran into a farmer and I told him, "I'm a Jew. I ran away from the ghetto." He says, "We know what happened. They're all gone. Nobody there in the ghetto." "Give me or sell me a pair of shoes, two pair, I mean. Wooden pair. Any kind of shoes." He gave me some old, dilapidated, worn out wooden shoes. I said, "I only have 20 marks. You want it? It's yours. That's all what I can do." He says, "Come on. You're Kruger son." He says, "I know your mother got killed. Your aunts got killed." He knew my

father. He says, "You can have it. Go. Get out. I don't want you to hang around too long, because in case a patrol comes around." He is finished too. He kept a Jew.

I come back to the guys. I give them the old shoes. "How are you going to go to the train? You can't go to the train." They have dark hair. They are typical Jewish boys with a ²⁰²⁶ in the pocket.

No. The Poles know you're Jewish. You didn't fool the Poles because the Jews in Poland spoke with an accent, with a strong Jewish accent. I was lucky, I grew up on the outskirts of town with the Catholic kids. I used to went to church. I played with them and I was good in the language of Polish. I had good grammar, and everything else. They didn't know I'm a Jew.

When I go up and I am going to buy the tickets, I meet some Poles and they spotted something. They were not sure I'm a Jew. "Where you going"? I say, "I'm going to buy a ticket. I want to go to ²⁰⁴⁴ to the border." "Why"? I said, "I want to go buy some butter, eggs, salami, and ²⁰⁴⁹

and bring it back to Warsaw to make a living." He said, "You don't have to go with us like this." He says, "Let's hunt down some Jews." He says, "Their train is coming down to the station. We'll have dozens of Jews from the ghetto, from ²⁰⁵⁵. He says, "We'll take away everything they got. We'll take them to the Gestapo headquarters. They'll give us a bottle of vodka, two kilos sugar and the rest what they got on them. Why should we go work?" And I say to myself, "Beautiful. You worse than a rat."

I go back to the boys. I say, "This is going to happen to us. What are we going to do?" They're waiting for us, you know, like you go hunting

wild stuff. They're hunting for Jews. I said, "I'll go to the station, buy 3 tickets, and you wait, and when the train starts going, you jump up, you know, trains had those like a step you take your life in your hands, and jump on the train when the train is moving out from the station." All right.

They jumped. They come into the same cabin. Both didn't say nothing, like we don't know each other.

The train stops in one town. It stops in the second town. The second town is our hometown. The train had to go past the ghetto and before we hit the station, we looked out the windows. It was dead. Nobody there. It was two days later, all was cleaned out. No more life. Finished. The ghetto was gone.

The train stops on the station. Come in Polish students from the Warsaw University with the white hats, with the Gestapo, with the police hunting Jews on the train. They knew they were going to find Jews.

Now, I want to bring up one point. The Polish students, if they wouldn't be there, the German wouldn't know if I'm a Jew or not. The Poles helped. They helped 95%. They were the helpers for the Nazis.

They came out. They took maybe 30 people from the train out, Jews from my hometown. I knew them all.

With me was sitting a girl who went to school with me. Her father was a cantor, and he was a guy who used to make kosher meat. His name was Z124. She was sitting next to me, and the Polish student comes with the flashlight, and the German from the railroad train comes next to him. And he says, "Jew," to the girl, and she starts crying. "No, I'm not Jew." He knew she is. And as long as he was busy with her, forgot to look at us. And she didn't want to get out from the train cabin, because it used to be

every cabin had a door to get out, and two little windows. She didn't want to get out. He took off his bayonet, and he chopped off her hand. And she fell out, half dying. This was not the end of it.

There were all 30, 40 Jews, men, women, and children, standing on the railroad station. Which I grew up. My father used to do business there. I used to go to school.

The train stayed. Nobody moved. They were going to make a spectacle of the Jews. What it was, we didn't know. Before the train was ordered to leave, those 30, 40 people had to stay on one knee. Stay on one knee. Come out from the office, two guys with machine guns, and mowed them all down. Is in front of the train. This girl was laying dead already. She was in the package and the train can go. We looked at each other. This poor girl paid for us. We were saved on account of her.

The train goes through stations, after stations, after stations. Go through the City of ~~Z~~¹²² around 4:00 in the morning. You have to give away your ticket, you know, your ticket. Polish students with a white university had, you know, the round hat, Gestapo, whatever armed forces were there, was to hunt for Jews for fun. You give them the ticket "Out you go, Jew." You cannot argue. You are what you are. "Out,out!"

Maybe 50 people from the same train was loaded with my people from my ghetto. "Out, out, out." He didn't pay attention. We give him back the ticket. He doesn't say nothing. You go through. Finished. All three of us.

We go out from the station. There is curfew. You can't go. There's police. If the German say 7:00 curfew, you can't get out yet. What are we doing? We can't stay here. We're going to get caught. We have to get out.

We go out. I said, "Let's go to the border." There was the old border between the German and Russian. And this is still considered the border. They didn't want to mix us with the general people. This was separate. Two different states under the German.

We meet some Poles. They say it's still curfew, they'll shoot you on the spot, whoever you are. We went back to the station. That is the safest place, supposedly the safest.

We come back to the station. Those 50 people, Jews, Dr. Friedman, and ^{22 30} the barber. I still remember, it's 50 odd years ago. They were all put in one spot on the station, next to a few trees. They took barbed wire, and they encircled all those people with barbed wire. They were alive, staying on their feet. Encircle them with barbed wire and let them stay 'til the next train comes to Treblinka. They're going to throw them in the boxcar. Those people were staying for hours on their bodies. Not on the trees, not to the trees. The whole bunch of Jews were put in the barbed wire for hours to stay, and they're stuck with the barbed wire.

We come back to the station. It's a theater. Everyone's happy. The Poles, the Germans, they're out of their minds. They're so happy. They're staying a bunch of Jews down there. Caught from the train. Big heroes.

We were afraid to go past those people in case somebody recognized me, you know, I knew them all. They knew me. We had to go around not to be seen by those Jews from my ghetto.

Went to the station, there is a train, a small train goes some place. "Let's buy a ticket. Let's go." We had a few marks in our pocket. I said, "Let's buy a ticket and let's get away from here."

We got back. The train was going along the border. We jumped the train, and we asked Pole how can we go down the other side of the border? He said that's bad. He says, "It's getting daylight. The German patrols are going back and forth. They have towers with machine guns. You pay me 20 marks, I'll get you through. Give me the 20 marks." I don't trust Poles. I never will, and I tell them to their face. I don't trust them. I say, "Know what? If you bring us across the border, I'll take the 20 marks with a string with a stone, and I'll throw it back to you. I'll not give you the 20 marks." He says, I'm going to the Gestapo. I'll tell them you're Jews." I said, "What are you going to gain?" He said, "Your clothes." "They're not worth nothing." "Go." He brought us, and when we start going across the border, the tower--from the tower, they start shooting machine guns. The Germans, the didn't know we're Jews. They were shooting somebody crossing the border in twilight.

For some reason we survived. We gave them the 20 marks. We survived. Where do we go? We don't know where.

They had a 2308 in 2309. You heard about 2310? It's a north east part of Prussia on the border. A nice Jewish community, with a lot of Jews. A very nice community. Well educated. The best in Poland.

"Let's go to 2317," I say. To be honest with you, I don't want to go to 2318. I had enough ghettos. I don't want to go t a ghetto any more. "Oh, we have family. You'll stay with us. Whatever we have, we'll share." We have to go to a little ghetto, 2326, first. A little town in the far away from the border. We come down around 8:00 in the morning. We come in. There was like a military barracks. And Jews used to be housed there. They used to work on the autoban with the Star of David, the yellow Star of David. And we say to them, "We're Jews from near Warsaw." "What are

you doing here"? And we told them that this was happening to us--this gas chamber. There's crematorium, there's shooting. They're crazy!. They say, "Don't want to make a panic here." I say, "All right don't believe me. Fine. Fine. How can we get to 2345?" "You have to stay in a camp," he says, "with us. You have no papers, the Germans will pick you up on the autoban. Tomorrow you will go."

There was nice Jewish girl, as usual. They gave us food and they didn't let us sleep with them in the barracks. They gave us a barrack without broken windows, no blankets, no straw sacks, nothing because they're afraid in case the Germans come in, they were hiding other Jews. They're going to shoot them, too. I didn't blame them.

We were sleeping in the barrack separate. It was freezing that night. In the morning comes in a guy from the Jewish workers. He says, "You going to 2365 in case some guy left for . We have to fill their places. You tell them you're this name. You're this name, and you're this name." We said fine, he gave us name, we want a name.

They bring us to the autoban. What did they want us to do? You know those machines which brakes the concrete and asphalt? Never worked with it. It was tearing out our guts!. It was dirty, and filthy.

Lunchtime they gave us to eat, and I say to the two guys, I said, "let's take off, because there's going to be--nothing's straight, because we're not Jews from here. They're going to kill us. They're going to find out we're not Jews from here. We're phonies. That we want to incite some trouble, They're going to shoot us, and get rid of us." I say, "Let's take off."

Lunchtime we disappear. We're going sidewise. We came to the little ghetto. Was a ghetto. Was not closed. Like a separate--they used to call it a 2388. Like a section of the city. They found family there. They took us

in. We washed off. We gave to eat. Tomorrow we're going to go to ²³⁹⁴ to see other relatives. I say, "I'm still against a big ghetto. It's closed in with barbed wire. We had enough of it." They have to go. They have already a brother on the way there a few months before.

Around 1:00, 2:00 in the morning there comes in a relative from this fellow, and he says, "Kids, disappear." "Why"? "Because they're going to catch people for hard labor, and you're the first on the list. The Jews want to fill the quota." We're the best, the cleanest, we have no family. Put us in, ship us out. Whatever's going to happen, is going to happen.

I said, "No. We're going. We're not going to get caught again. We're going to go." We can't walk the highways. It's curfew time. I said, "First, get out of the little ghetto, away from the Jews. We'll go away a quarter of a mile, 500 yards on a different street. We'll hide. We'll survive."

At light we got out of the ghetto. We start going on little highway. During the early hours of the morning we met a little farmer with a half-dead horse. We say, "How do we get from here to the city of ²⁴²⁸? "Oh," he says, "I'm going there." I said, "Could you take us?" He says, "The horse has no strength to carry three guys. One at a time." I said, "Fine. One at a time."

Took off around 7:00 in the morning. Around 11:30, 12:00 I saw some Jews in a little village. You mentioned villages an old fashion village. A poor Polish village, like ²⁴⁴⁰. You remember ²⁴⁴² Something that. I say, "Boys, I'm not going with you. I'm staying with those Jews. "Why? Are you crazy"? He says, "Why don't you go to our family? We'll live together." "I'm going to live with those guys. They're free. There's no police. There's no Jewish police. There's no barbed wire. I'm going to stay here." "All right. Stay here."

Two days later they send out a younger brother. "Henry, to come to ²⁴⁵²
. We're going to live together." They didn't dream about being evacuated.
To be finished. No. They thought the Russians come because the Russian
was already playing around, you know. There was already the front going
back for the German. I say, "I'm not going. I don't want to go any more to
big city. I want to stay here in the village."

And I got friendly. I met some people, relatives from my hometown.
Was a little shoemaker. He says, "You can stay with me, Henry. Whatever
we have, we'll share." They didn't have nothing. They had a little cripple
boy, who used to--the legs were like grown up like this. He couldn't walk.
He had to slide on his little behind. It was breaking my heart. I saw my
little brother instead of this kid. I say, "No. I'm going to go to the ²³⁷⁴
the little city hall. They're going to place me some place. I'm a refugee.
Between Jews, I'll survive."

I went in. I told them for a few minutes my story. They didn't
believe it. They thought I'm crazy. I'm making up a story. Work camp,
shooting, hanging, they couldn't believe it.

I went down to a family of Jews. There used to be a summer resort,
and they used to have like a little coffee house. Was a family maybe of 6,
7 with the kids together. I came in. I told them who I was. I say I have
no money. I have no clothes. I say you see me as I am. Could you give me
some place to sleep?

No problem. "Food," she says, we'll share a piece of bread, a little
potato--I said, "Don't worry about it. I'll survive."

I came in. They had two sons my age, and the daughter around 16, 17
years old. They gave me a nice blanket, a couple straw pillows--you know,

straw not down or foam rubber, it was not existing. It was beautiful. I didn't complain. No. I have to eat something. I can't sponge off those poor people here. I'll go back to the ²⁵¹⁴. All elders of the village of the Jews.

"Oh," they say, "yes, we have a job for you. Could you unload 10 tons black coal a day"? I said, "No problem. That was my father's business." My father would have killed me if he saw me doing it, but I had to live. I had no choice. I said, "I'll unload 10 tons of coal a day." He said, "We're going to pay you so much and so much." I said, "fine, could I have a few marks now to pay where I sleep." "We have no money in the kity. You have to wait a few days." I said fine, they'll trust me.

I unloaded for one week, everyday a boxcar of coal. I was dirty and filthy every day.

No, come back to the Jewish girl, the used to feed me, give me double portions, because they knew I had no place to go. I was one like a little doll, you know, in the little village. A poor little Jewish boy without a family.

The stone coals went out. They didn't pay me anything. They didn't have any money. They say, "No, we have to go, we need people to work on the autoban from ²⁵⁴⁵. That was the name of the company. That was the name of the company from the city we had called in German ²⁵⁴⁶ ²⁵⁴⁷ .

"You're going to work for them. They're going to pay you." I said, "How about the week of the 7 boxcars?" "We'll pay you something. We'll go down to the ²⁵⁵¹." They gave me one of those pushcarts and you go and the machine crushes the stone and you pile it up on a big mound.

I worked. I ate. I ate lunch. A beautiful lunch. I used to get a beautiful lunch there. Double portions and a little bit of friendship, which we needed in those days.

A few days later I spotted one of my neighbors. I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I escaped." "Where have you been"? He says, "In the woods. Come on, the girl will give you food." I told them who he is and I knew his sister. We used to go to school together. They start feeding another Jewish kid. Suddenly, he disappears. I don't know if he went some place. He was from the territory. He went to 2575

We came down. We worked 6 days a week. Never got paid a penny. Never one German mark. Nothing. They collected the money from 2583 for autoban, but the Jewish elders they kept the money. Never gave me anything.

This was three weeks since I came to the village. One of the guys had a beautiful Jewish girl, a blond Jewish girl. She looked like a 1000% gentile. She spoke beautiful Polish. One evening I come in. I said, "You know what, fellows, you want to have a daughter survive, Hitlerism, let her leave. You let this little girl go to 2583. You let her be caught and shipped to Germany and she's going to live, because with you, and all of us, we're not going--" "How can you talk so silly," they say. "You work on the autoban, the main highway for the German army. They are not going to touch us." I say, "I have to tell you a story. They're going to touch you when the orders come 'evacuate' they'll touch you." I talked the little girl, then I was the villian, and I told her, "You go get dressed, nice, not rich. Go to 2613 and the German's will catch you, and ship you to Germany, or Prussia not Germany."

And she listened to me. She took off and then to the girl I said, "Don't write to your folks to the village, because they'll trace it. Forget about it. You have to write them off if you want to live. And she took the ²⁶³³ and she was shipped to Germany, and I bet the little girl is still alive. I hope.

Three weeks, four weeks, I keep working on autoban. No money. Eat double lunches. It was enough for me. They give me a few slices of bread.

One Sunday afternoon, I walked to the little village without the Star of David. I didn't want to tell them I'm a Jew, the gentile. I walk the street and I see a policeman. I says, "What are you doing here?" I say, "You belong in. ²⁶⁴⁰ You Polish police from Warsaw district." They say, "How do you know?" I say, "Because I used to live near Warsaw. What are you doing here?" He says, "We're going to evacuate the village tonight." I say, "You going to by yourselves?" "No," he says, "We are parked. We're all in the woods, staying in the woods to surprise them. You know, a good, a bad, a dumb," he told me.

I go back to the village and I say to the older lady, I say, "Mama, you have two shirts of mine to wash. Give me one clean one for you son." "Why? Where're you going"? And I start telling her. She didn't believe. I said, "Tonight you're going to be evacuated where you don't want to go. This is the end of the road." I say, "Don't give me--please don't argue with me. I'm not going to do it. It's going to be done to you tonight."

She gave me two shirts. She gave me half a loaf of bread. I put it in the lining. Around 7:00 it got dark, Henry's on the move again to the woods. The best thing was the woods to hide for a while, 'til the patrol spread.

Around 11:00 machine guns are playing already in the village. Already encircling the village.

Around 2:00, 3:00 at night in the early morning hours, the woods are full of Jewish girls and boys. We knew each other. There was 200 Jews, 175 Jews. Everybody knew everybody. No those were kids from 2688. They worked on the autoban.

He says, "You spread the news early in the evening and they didn't believe you." I said, "No. And I didn't know how to convince them." That's the end of the story.

They're gone. There were 22 of us, boys and girls in the woods. I took one of those, you know, they keep the needles from pine tree, from fire wood to put in for fertilizer. I dug a hole. I slid myself in. It was nice and warm. Covered myself with my jacket 'til the morning comes.

Early morning hours we met those Jews after the noises in the woods. I said, "Why don't you send out a patrol." I didn't know the territory. I only by mistake fell into here, those woods. "Why don't you send out a patrol. They know how to get out of here."

They send out two boys. "Yes," he says, "they were going, old people, little kids in the horses and buggies. The farmers had to load them on the trucks, and the healthy guys were driven by foot. The whole village is gone."

I said, "I told you, you strong situation. You build the autoban. The end is done. Finished. Your time is up."

I spent with those guys, two days with the boys and girls. There was a lot of arguments: he was a communist; he was a Zionist; he was 2725. I say, "Let me out of it. You know each other. You can argue. No. I have nothing to do with you. I am taking off." "Where you going to stay by yourself in the woods.?" "By myself I'll manage. With you guys, I'm not going to manage. We're all going to get caught, and all going to get shot."

My heart was bleeding again. I had to leave my own, and go on my own. I had a birth certificate in my pocket. I advised the little girl to go to Germany, and I had to advise myself to do the same thing, because this was the way out. Nothing else to do. Absolutely nothing. You were doomed to be shot, gassed, murdered, anything else.

Took me about two days when I broke away from this little pack of kids. I have to eat. I'm hungry. It's snowing. It's winter. The ground is frozen. You don't know what it is, frozen ground, the lice, they start eating you. You take them by your hand and throw them out. The end is near. From either way, you're finished.

This was '42, sometime in October, end of October in eastern Poland. It's wintertime. I used to hide--they keep potatoes in the ground to freeze in the wintertime. You used to up the hole, slide myself in, with little mice, feed myself, used to run around and I tell you, those mice had more right to live than I did. I'm a Jew. I have no right to live, and here I'm sharing with them a hole in the ground.

It's getting bad--hungry, filthy, full with insects, the foot was swollen. I don't take off the shoes. I was afraid I couldn't put them back on again. It came to my mind--I'll go to the German headquarters and tell them to shoot me. At least they'll bury me some place. If I die in the woods, the dogs will tear me a part. I say no. I'm going to fight. I made it that far, I'm not going to give up.

I went into a village named ²⁷⁸⁸Went into the village and came into a farmer. They saw I'm hungry, cold. They gave me something to eat. They didn't know I'm a Jew. I didn't say. They didn't ask, and I didn't have to advertise, "I'm a Jew."

I came into them, and I say, "Do you know somebody who wants to subsidize a guy in Germany or east Prussia? I'll take his place." They say, "I have a daughter in north Prussia. How do you want to go?" I say, "Legal, I have a birth certificate. Your daughter--you'll do something here and we'll do some business together." They say, "Not yet. She was just caught. Come back in a few months. Well, I'll come back in a few months. Wasn't going to argue with that.

I took off and I wandered from one village to another one. I came into a village named ²⁸¹⁸ The name still sticks to me. I went into a farmer, I didn't want to go in the day, because people would see me. I looked like a wandering Jew, dirty, filthy, scared, a beard. I liked to visit those farmers at night. They won't be afraid for the neighbors. You made up your own feelings. "Oh, hey you little Jew boy from where are you?" I say, "I'm not a Jew. I'm an ex-smuggler. I was caught and taken away everything. And I would like to go if you have somebody in Germany for subsidizing him, and I'll gladly do it for a few hundred marks." They say, "Yes, I have a son in Germany, only you are a Jew." I'm not going to fight with him. I said, "All right. I'm a Jew." He says to me, "You cannot go for my son." "Why not?" "Because you're circumcised." I say, "Yes, I am." "How are you going to go to the doctor and to take a bath and go to the ²⁸⁵⁰ and not being spotted you're a Jew?" I said, "You're right. No deal. I'll do it for nothing." He says, "No. If you get caught, I'll be shipped to Germany, and my farm is going to be burned down, because I held a Jew." I said, "You're right." Once rejected, second rejected.

In the meantime, I have nothing to eat. Another day of life is better than another day dead.

On the way out the mother says to the son, Joseph, "Keep this Jewish boy. He looks like an honest boy. Keep him in here. Put him back in the barn under the hay, under the roof. You keep him for a while." And the guy comes behind me, "You go behind the barn, I'll open up the door, and I'll let you stay for a while." The mother felt sorry for me.

I was there for two weeks. One night Joseph comes to me, he says, "I want to go dancing, Jewish boy. It's Saturday night. Do you have some money?" I said, "Yes, I have 20 marks. It's all yours." And I say to myself he is worth it for weeks living as a half human being. I said, "Take the 20 marks, and go have a good time." And I have a new pair of shoes. This was my holy talisman. Without shoes you're lost as I saw from my other two boys. I thought once he was hinting, "Take off your shoes, why are you sleeping with your shoes?" And I was afraid he'll take away my shoes and go to the Gestapo, and they'll shoot me, he'll have his shoes already. No. It wasn't like this. He was a different human being.

I was there, more or less, two weeks. One day, the father heard me talking to the son, Joseph, the same age what I was, 17 years old. He says, "Kick out, the Jewish boy, I don't want him anymore. I get enough of him." "I know your father is right. How about letting me stay until dark, in the daytime I'll get caught." He persuaded Papa, and I was staying until night.

The mother gave me food. She opened up the back gate, and she made a cross. And I went to another farmer in the colony.

I came in around 7:00, and I told him, "I'm a smuggler. The German took away everything from me, and I want to buy some stuff and to go back across the border." I was there for four days.

The same kid, Joseph, came in there, one evening. He says, "What are you doing here?" I say, "I got lost, and I came here to a farm." "They know

you're Jewish"? I said, "No." He says, "I won't tell him." He never told them, and I was there for four days.

Sunday morning, she says, the lady says, "Let's go to church." I say, "How can I go the church? I have no passport. The Germans will pick me up. They'll think I'm a Jew or a Russian prisoner." "Oh, yes. You're right. Don't go to church."

Monday morning, I wander again, In the meantime, I lived for four days. Monday morning I go back to this old man who kicked me out. She was nice, the mother was, a real human being, and I kept begging him, "I'll go to Germany for nothing. I'll give you the 20 marks even on top. Let me go to Germany." She says, "I will do anything for you, Jewish boy." He won't let me." I say, "He is right. He has too much at stake to do it for me. Maybe you know somebody." She says, "Go back to the barn and be quiet. Don't talk."

Before I went to the barn, she invited me to the house to have something to eat, a piece of bread, a glass of milk, which was paradise. Better than cake.

"Do you want to go next door? There is a nice Jewish woman relaxing there." She was a good human being, and I go. We start talking Yiddish. I say, "We don't know each other. I'm from Warsaw. You from this territory." We start talking. The little girl comes running in, "Mother, Mother, Gestapo is on horses. German police is on the street." She heard us. She wanted to throw us out. She was right. The old lady walked out--I don't know how old she was, maybe younger than my mother was--she walked out in front of me, and the two guys on horses pass by the gate. She runs towards them, and she start kissing the boots. I said to myself, "She is stupid. Now they know she's Jew. Who else can be so polite, so

decent to go start crying to stay alive? He starts screaming, "Go, go!" He goes, he takes out his luger and shoots her. And I walk slow. I don't run. I know the situation and I pass by. I didn't pay no matter of what I make believe I didn't see nothing. You don't put in your three cents no place. And I took off, and I never came back to this farmer.

I went to another farmer. They had a daughter too. They didn't know about Jewish, or circumcision. They took a bike. In the meantime, I saw signs on the electric poles and on the buildings "Poles born in 1922 and 1923 have to go dig fox holes on the Russian front". Instead of taking them to the army, they'll take them on the front to dig fox holes, and I say to myself, "Go with the Poles to dig fox holes against the Russians with Poles and be caught and be shot, because they're going to spill the beans right away, "he's a Jew." No good. I say I have to settle down here in a hurry to get a passport.

Went into this fellow and get away from here. Went into this fellow, and the burgermeister like me very much, after a couple weeks. I was already living with those people.

One evening, somebody's knocking on the window you know, eastern Poland, cold, freezing, snowing. The lady says to the son, "That must be a Jew. Must be a Jew." What's she going to do with them? I make believe I didn't hear nothing about it. The kid goes out. He says, "Yes, the hat maker Jew, the son from the hatter, maybe from the city of ³⁰⁵⁵ He's hungry." They brought him some bread, some milk, for some reason I had like my heart telling me "go look". He doesn't know me from the territory. And I walked out because they didn't have no toilets. We had to go in the outhouses behind the barn.

There was a Jewish boy with rags on the feet, rags on the head, rags on the hands. There was no glove, there was no boot. I saw how a Jew looks in the woods. He comes every night and begs for food. I say at least I'm lucky. I sleep on a floor, covered up with a fur or something, with a few blankets. I eat decent. Take a look how. He lives. I was lucky. I was blessed. And the kid disappeared.

In the meantime, I go into the burgermeister, that was sometime in the beginning, the middle of December, shortly before Christmas '42 two. I tell them, "We have to go to the city to make a passport, because you saw those signs on the wall and on the poles. You'll be recognized as a Jew or as a Russian prisoner of war run away from the camp. You'll be shot on the spot." Mr. ³⁰⁹³ That was his name. I say, "I'm here, more or less, three months will you write me a piece of paper. I'm here 6 months, let's say, look better for the Gestapo for the Germans." He says, "No problem. You write yourself." He doesn't know how to write. "You write it. Make it one year, and I'll sign it for you. And you take it the Germans. They'll give you a passport. You're a good worker, and honest man. They'll give you a passport."

One year! There was no situation with Jews going on, and maybe I'll be lucky and get a passport. I go to my farmer and I say, "Listen, we have to go to the city of to make me a passport." "Why do you need a passport?" He says, "You don't need a anything." I said, "Yes, I do in case they catch me, they'll say I'm a Jew, or a Russian prisoner." I have now have another thing with me that works for me. Not a Jew and a Russian prisoner. We have already two guys working for us, our future. He says, "No problem. We'll take the two horses, go to town tomorrow. I have to do some shopping and you do whatever you have to do."

We take the two horses with the wagon, and we go to town. And there was an auction. They were auctioning off Jewish belongings, and arm bands with the swastika, with everything. He was auctioning off Jewish belongings. The ghetto was already clean. They were auctioning off--no, I make believed I didn't know what it is, ghetto. What ghetto? What is a ghetto?

We go up to the office. Everything is German. "Heil Hitler, heil Hitler," and I'm a nobody, a Jew. Can you imagine! We go up they, start talking German. I don't speak German. I spoke beautiful, I was afraid in case I say something in Yiddish. We need an interpreter. All right look for My farmer didn't talk, and I didn't talk German. So, we need someone to ³¹⁴³ interpret what I wanted.

I said this and this. I lived on a farm in a village a year or more, and I have no passport. I have only one piece of paper from the Catholic Church in Warsaw, where I was christened. And I would like to make any piece of document. I wanted to go to Germany on my own free will. "To Germany, a Pole"? This started ringing a bell. It was something unusual. "No," he said, "today we have no time, because the ³¹⁶⁰ come has some work to do. You come back after new year." And I say, "I have no passport in case a patrol comes in, they'll consider me a Jew or a Russian prisoner." "How do you know about it"? I say, "I see signs written in Polish, and German. I read Polish. I need something in my pocket." He says, "You're going to Germany? We'll give you something." He went into the office. Type up something, whatever, the paper says, and put in a big swastika with an eagle. And this paper was worth my life.

He gave me the piece of paper. I go back to the village. I go into the burgermeister. I said Mr. ³¹⁷⁸ here is the paper, what I got today. You keep

it. I don't need it." He says, "You need it, because you are a worker here. Here, you keep it."

Then it starts going to my mind, maybe I'll take off some place else. Maybe I'll go. I said, "No. I'm going to sit here. The people know me. They know who I am."

I said January 5th or 6th, I said to my farmer, "Let's go back and make a legitimate passport with the whole schmeal." He said, "All right. You want to go, we'll take off a half a day. We'll go to town."

I come into town into the same office. "What do you want"? I say, "I was here three weeks ago, and I wanted to make a passport, and the was not in. He was busy. And here I am. I would like to get a passport." He says, "No problem. The ³²⁰³ is here."

I give him the piece of paper. He goes into the office. He comes back. He says, "Take your shoes off." "Oh, no," I say. "They're going to look for something." I got my heart in my hand. They're going to look for something, and I'll be shot next 5 minutes outside.

No. They wanted to measure me. They measured my height, my weight, and come out the ³²¹⁴ in his brown uniform with swastikas, "heil Hitler", and the whole schmeal. He says, "Are you that fellow who wants to go to Germany on your own free will?" I say, "Yes." "Why"? "Because that's the best place to go. Go work for Germans, to support the armed forces." "Oh," he says, "you sound beautiful." Everything through an interpreter. I didn't speak German. He comes out, the papers are ready. He didn't put in a stamp. He signs it himself. I have to pay a mark and a half. He says, "He doesn't have to pay. He doesn't have no money." He paid it, the Nazi paid. I had a passport with the best signature original signature, and this was like a piece of cake for me. In case I'm caught, I'm

shot. No, he'll get shot too for helping a Jew. That was my revenge. I'm going, and he'll go with me.

Then he says to me, "Don't go. I'm coming out pretty soon." I was waiting 10 minutes, 20 minutes. He come out with a letter in a envelope. He says, "By any chance, if you don't like where you're going to, take this letter. Put it in the mail, and my wife will send you a ticket to come to work on my farm." He gave me the passport. I thanked him in Polish, and I had two ways out if this doesn't work, by any chance, she'll give me a ticket to life, maybe.

We came back to the little village. I got back to the burgermeister. I want to give him my passport. He says, "With a swastika like this, with a German eagle like this, you can go any place!" I say who I am, I am. I can not go too many places.

I was sitting there 'til May '43. I worked. I learned a trade as a farmer. I did my work good. Everybody liked me. The whole village liked me. I used to write letters, reports for them. And I used to read papers to them. I was educated Pole in the village.

May comes a paper. The guy near Hanover--you know Hanover? And in the ³²⁸¹ even there is a Polish sergeant who is ill. And they are ready to release him home, if they are able to get a young Pole to subsidize him. This is my ticket to life, maybe. I don't know.

I stayed there 'til May something, I don't remember the date. We have to go to the city of ³²⁵¹ which I tried to avoid a few--4 months, 5 months ago. We take the horses. We go to ³²⁵⁶, his wife and me.

First I say to her fix 3 packages. "What do we need packages"? I said, "Fix 3 packages if you want your husband home, do it. One you put up ³³⁰²

means bacon, raw bacon, a couple dozen eggs, some cheese. Make 3 packages. You'll see. It's going to work."

We come to ³³⁰⁶. We sit down on a brick wall. Go by a few Poles. They say, "You know where you're sitting?" I say, "No. We're sitting on bricks." "No. This used to be a Jewish ghetto." I look past. I said to myself, "It was a Jewish ghetto." The windows torn out, the floors ripped out, broken windows, garbage. That was what the Jews--they just took them out a while ago, some place. I say, "I never saw Jews before, what's happened to them?" "Oh," he said, "The Germans took them away some place a couple months ago. I said, "Let's go where we have to go."

Went to ³³²⁴ It's like unemployment agency. We took the papers, went in, they was all sealed up. They opened up to read it. We have to go and see what they tell us what to do.

They say, "Yes, tomorrow morning at 9:00 you go take a bath. 10:00 you go to the ³³³³ You know the spray stuff to kill the lice and everything else. "And 11:00 you go to the doctor." I said no. This I'll never make. I said if I going through this, I'll live to about a 1000 years old. This will never happen.

The whole night, we were sleeping in some lady's home, there I didn't close an eye. I said how can I get out of those 3 things? I said, "We're going to play dumb uncle. Instead of being there 9:00, I'll be there 9:30. Maybe time will work for me." She says, "We have to be there." I said, "No, don't worry. We'll be there in exactly the time we have to be."

It's 9:30, 9:45, we come in. He says, "Where you been? We just shipped 22 Poles to Germany to go to take bath. You should have gone with them." She spoke Polish. I said, "Listen, I am going on my own free

will. I'm not caught. I don't want to be carted off with the rest of them under guard. I'm going free to Germany." She start thinking. She was a Polish maybe³³⁵⁰ I said to my lady, "Take one of the packages, put it on the chair." She put in on the chair. She looks at it. She says, "What do you want me to do?" I said, "Put a stamp on it. That's all. We're not going to do some harm to nobody. I have to go to Germany." She stamps it. One place.

Now we have to go--and³³⁶⁰ wasn't that bad. You know, you take your--raise you clothes and they shoot in a green powder like you kill cockroaches, something like that.

I say I don't even want to go there. At least I don't want to I don't know if it's going to happen. We come in there. She tells me the same story. The 22 Poles just left. I said, "I have no watch. I didn't know what time it was." She says, "You're 45 minutes late." "What can I do?" Leave the package on the desk. She says, "All right. It's all right. It's all Poles." She stamps it.

I said to the doctor I have to take very late time. Go after noon, because before noon maybe he'll be busy with the 22 Poles. I'll go deep in the lunch hour. We come out, there sits a Polish fellow. Says, "You're late. The doctor is gone for the day." I say, "The doctor's gone for the day? I have a train to catch to go to Germany." "Oh,?" "Yes. I'm going to Germany. I'm going to release a Polish officer who has TB. He's going to come home to his family, and I'm going to take his place." He says, "We can manage. You look like a healthy kid." And I left them the third package.

Now, we have to go buy ticket, go from eastern Poland to the west Germany, cross the French border. How we going to make something like

this? She buys a ticket. I have to go to Warsaw. I say to myself I cannot go to Warsaw because I have to go back to my hometown during the day. And 90% of the Poles know me, because I used to be in the railroad station, watching my father's business. I said, "I'll get shot." I surviving for 8 months now to get killed? I can't do it. I say, "I'm going in to the devil's ass."

I say to the lady, "Can you give me a ticket not going to Warsaw?" She says, "That's the shortcut." I say, "I don't care. You know what's going on in Warsaw? There was the ghetto uprising. That was the real McCoy east of ³⁴²⁰ '43, I saw it in the papers. I don't want to go to Warsaw and get caught, and be shipped as a ³⁴²³ as slave labor. I want to go release the Polish officer to come home. I can't go to Warsaw." "It's going to cost you more money." I say to myself, "Who cares?" I say to the lady Mrs. ³⁴²⁶ I say, "Do you have a few extra marks?" "How much do you need"? I say, "Let's ask the cashier." She says 8, 9 marks. "I have that much."

Now, I have to go to ³⁴³² and then go to cross Poland, then go across Germany. I don't care, I said to myself I'll go. I'll get away from Poland.

We bought a ticket to ³⁴³⁷ we said good bye to the lady.

I wore a black, three-quarter jacket with a fur coat in May. They gave me a present, the farmers. Nice, clean with my old clothes underneath, with my old shoes from the ghetto. No, the fur coat looked suspicious in May in central Poland. At least it's mine. If I get shot, I'll get shot in my own clothes.

We take the train. We come to a little town where my mother was born ³⁴⁵² The Poles come in on the train, and they looked at me. They say, "Where you going." I say, "I'm going to release a Polish officer to come

home, and I'm going to take his place in Germany." "Where"? I say, "By Hanover. I don't know where it is." "How much money you getting for it"? I say 500 marks. He says, "500 marks? You going to do something like that? You can get 10,000 marks." I said, "No. I'm doing it because the family is nice to me, and I'm going to go." He says, "You're not going to go for them. You get off the train. We'll get somebody for 5000 marks, and we'll make 5000 marks." I said, "I'll do it different. Let me go there, release what I promised. Then I'll come back and start making money with you guys." That took it. They liked the idea being a good Pole, coming back to them, sharing 10,000 marks. And I'll work, and they'll keep a half, and I'll keep a half. Beautiful. Got away.

We couldn't take a D train. We had to take a train which goes through little towns, only because foreigners couldn't take luxury train. We had to take the cheap trains from town to town. I had enough bread. I had a loaf of bread, maybe 6,7 pounds. Water to drink on the train. I'll survive.

Took the train. We come to the city of ³⁴⁹² a day and a half later. Walked by the railroad station, there was still a ³⁴⁹⁴ a Jewish street. Was still there, no Jews, only a Jewish street. Took the train, came to Berlin. Down below were Jews working with yellow stars. There were still Jews. I don't know what kind of Jews wore yellow stars, and I was afraid to go near them in case somebody recognized me. And this was a far away story but what I just went through to go get caught now. I ignore them with pain. Took the train, came to Hanover. Came to Hanover. I don't speak German. How I show them the letter with the seal everything else?

We have to go to ³⁵¹ the little town I was destine. He brought me to another track, he says--small train. Another track, you go there. At least I was treated as a human being. I was not kicked, and pushed, and

called dirty names. We come down in the little town around 7:30 at night. It was summertime, late in the afternoon. First I go to a German policeman, as much as I hated their guts. No. I couldn't go ask people on the street. I go to the policeman, ask him to read the paper. He starts hollering a little bit, you know, curfew times, things like that.

I don't understand nothing. He needs an interpreter. He comes up, young Yugoslavian kid. "Heil Hilter, heil Hitler". Start talking. I understand everything. He speaks German, and then he talks broken Polish to me.

"You have to go to the village ³⁵³⁹ That's what your destination is." I said, "Fine. I'll go How do I get there?" He said, "It's curfew time, you're a foreigner. You can't walk the streets." "What do you want me to do?" The guy says, "I'll give you a ³⁵⁴⁵ a piece of paper, and you want to walk, you come back to the city whenever you can come." He was part of Nazi machine. He could go at night. He wore a belt with a swastika on it. He said "heil Hitler". He was a part of the pack.

I come to the village and around 9:30, 10:00 at night. The Poles were sleeping. And they heard Henry came from Poland, was a whole zoo. And the farmer was happy, release the Pole, and was a young lad, 19 years old. And I was there on the farm for 3 months.

Now, the ground was getting hard. I got 100 marks from Poland. They promised. They're supposed to send me 400. No, they send me 100, and I was happy they didn't send me no more, because the Russians was already there and nobody could think I'm a Jew, and tell the Nazis about it. It was safe.

I worked with the Poles after my Pole left for Poland. I worked with a Pole. Was a Polish corporal, spoke beautiful German, and he had something going with a German woman.

The Pole who slept with me on the top of the horse stall had something going to do with beautiful German woman. Her husband was a high ranking officer in Norway, in the artillery. She was beautiful, and I knew what's going on for the whole 3 months. I heard where they're meeting, what they're doing, how it was, everything I knew. This was poison for me. I wished I would not know about it. No. I had to, because we worked on the fields together, all 3 of us.

He was a handsome guy too, a Polish corporal or sergeant. And the Poles start asking me--the Yugoslavians, the Czecks. "What's going on between Joseph and Mrs. ³⁵⁹³ or whatever her name was. I said, 'I don't know.' "You sleep with them together, on the top on the horse stall, don't you hear the noise of the horses when he comes in sometime in the morning?" I said, "I'm dead tired, and I don't know what's going on. I'm not interested." No, I was afraid somebody was going to squeal on him, not on me, on him. Some jealous guy or something, and I'll be schlepped into the Gestapo headquarters. And I'll be beaten half dead. I have to tell them, because I know something, and they'll get it out of me.

Then I start manipulating. The guy says, "Go plow here or put fertilizer here. I used to mix it up and do the wrong thing, and this you can call a saboteur. You messing up, plowing and seeds and fertilizer, then you have something in your mind. You a spy or you something, and the Germans don't fool around with you.

The farmer ³⁶¹⁷ got fed up with me. I let the horses run away once from the wagon. They couldn't catch them. And he tells his wife. He

screams at his wife, "I cannot keep this guy no more. He's not fit to work for me." And he was not kosher himself, because he put in the hand in the dress machine which dresses corn, and tore off all his finger, because he didn't want to go to the Russian front. And I know about it. I saw it. He didn't have to chop off his finger. No, he did it. He put in his hand to chop off his finger. And he was saved from going on the Russian front. He didn't tell me about it. No. I knew what was going--was a young guy, 27, 28, 30 years old. He didn't go too hard. I told my Pole, I say I would like to go to another farm. I can't want to go to ³⁶³⁹ to the munition factory. He says, "I don't care where you go, you're no good for me." He had a nice wife. A nice German lady. And Joseph said, "Would you tell your husband not to send him to the factory ammunition dump. He wants to go on another farm." And she persuaded him not to say anything really wrong on me.

I went to ³⁶⁴⁸ which was like the working headquarter. And they had in mind to send me not munitions dump. They needed somebody to fill the gap there. Then I said the story, I came of free will to Germany. I was not caught in a ³⁶⁵⁵ I said, "I came on my own free will to Germany, and I would like to go back on the farm." "Oh, you don't know what you mixing up. You cost these guys money and time." "No," I said, "I'll be all right." I didn't want to give them no reason because it was none of their business. She said, "All right. Go on the village ³⁶⁶³ You go to the burgermeister. And he'll place you in the village." I came back to the burgermeister.

Was a nice fellow with a little beard, chubby, in the 60s, like I am now. He says to the other guy, the Polish guy, (the taped stopped here. Next he is showing a picture): This P is a Pole. I lived as a Pole. This was made in 19--I didn't tell the story about it. No, this I'll come to.

End of 1943 I was--this had even the date (on back of picture) 1944.³⁶⁹⁵
That's me. That was 20 years old in Germany in 1944. English uniform
and the Polish P means Pole. It was made in 1944 in the village of³⁷⁰⁴ I
worked for burgermeister. This is my mother when she was going to
school in Warsaw (showing picture).

Q: HOW OLD WAS SHE THEN?

A: Mama was 39 years old when she was killed.

Q: AND THIS PICTURE?

A: I found it in Israel. My relatives had it in Israel.

Q: OKAY.

A: And this is my little sister (showing picture). She was killed
when she was 12 or 13 years old, in³⁷²⁰ gas chamber.

Q: AND HOW OLD IS SHE IN THAT PICTURE?

A: She's here around 9 or 10 years old. Luba.

Q: LUBA KRUGER?

A: Yes.

Q: AND YOU MOTHER'S NAME WAS ELENA?

A: Yes.

Q: WHAT WAS HER MAIDEN NAME?

A: ³⁷²⁶

Q: ³⁷²⁶

A: I don't want to forget. (Referring to pictures.)

Q: DO YOU WANT TO PUT THEM IN YOUR WALLET?

A: No, it will take too much time.

Q: OH, GO HEAD.

A: No, you are hungry. It's all right. I'll put it over there. Now,
where do we finish?

Q: LET'S SEE. YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT GOING TO ANOTHER FARM.

A: Yeah. I came to ³³³⁷¹ have a tape here too, you know. They just send me 72 pages. A transcript.

Q: OF?

A: Of my story, just like this.

Q: OH, REALLY?

A: Four years ago, I gave a picture some place too.

Q: YEAH?

A: Yeah. I was interviewed. I made a tape, 2 tapes.

Q: IN SAN FRANCISCO?

A: Yeah, in holocaust library. Also, a book from my hometown on the shelf, which I have a story written there, Israel.

Q: OH, YEAH?

A: Yeah. They put up a little monument in Israel for my hometown and the survivors.

Q: WHERE IS IT?

A: 3756

Q: 3756 MY SISTER WAS THERE.

A: There is something to be, a little monument from my hometown.

Q: YEAH.

A: We got together and made a little book and sold it. And we made some money, and they put up a monument.

Q: WOW.

A: There was 5500 of us. There may be 30 left.

Q: YES. HENRY, LET'S GO BACK TO LOOKING FOR THE SECOND FARM.
YOU WANTED A JOB?

A: Yeah, yeah. All right. When we came to the village of ³⁷⁷²
which is in Germany in ³³⁷⁴ which is not far from Hanover. We came back
to my second farm. There was a nice Pole working, and they decided with
the burgermeister, they're going to keep me with them. When some other
farmers need help, they're going to give me away for a day or so. They
wanted to keep me there with them. And I spent there 'til the war was
over, for two years or so.

The guy was very nice to us. He was a prisoner of war in World War
I, and any time they used to look for what the foreigners are doing, he
used to tell us ahead of time to be in the barracks, to be in the room, not to
be caught by the German police.

I had one incident: He came in to shoot me once, because I did
something, it was not fitable for a Pole to do during the Nazi era. It was
Friday afternoon. We went out with the Polish ³⁷⁹⁹ with a guy who works
for the family. He was a German. I worked with him, he was a
hunchback. A short little guy, maybe 4 foot 7. Vicious Nazi. Vicious Nazi.
His name was Carl. He says to me, "Load up the car with potatoes." And he
gave me a machete to kill mice, you know, the little mice, which were my
companions, a couple years before. He said, "Catch them by the tail and kill
them." And I said, "I'm not going to kill them. I am here to load potatoes
on the truck, and that's what I am going to do." And I was sitting on the
ground and he was on the top, and he had knuckles like this. And he gave
me a smack in the face and my face went out of joint. It hurting like--very
painful. And I couldn't take the pain. Then I took my face and put it

against the concrete wall, and gave it a few smacks. And my jaw came back to normal. Under big pain.

I got very mad at a time when he was watching me in my agony. I was ready to take the pitchfork from the potatoes, and go through his body, and chop him to pieces. No, too late. I said, "Henry, behave yourself. It's not worth it. It's '44, the allies are already in France. It's not worth getting shot now." And I gave up the idea of hitting him.

It was around 2:00. I went back to the farm and everybody was watching. "What are you doing home now? You're supposed to work." I didn't answer nothing. My pain was hurting. I did my work. I had 17 calves, maybe 50 pigs. 4 horses. I had fed everybody. I clean up everybody. I went into my barrack, and they were calling for dinner around 7:00 at night. I was on a hunger strike. You don't do hunger strike by the German. In 1944 was a little bit permissible. They were already afraid of us. And I did my work. Saturday, Sunday, you cannot start to be a saboteur. This you get shot, whoever you are. And I did everything. I was supposed to--I didn't eat in the kitchen with everybody. When the Poles heard the story Henry, from the burgermeister is striking. This was a tremendous task to take on, to strike during the war, not to want to eat.

No. I had a reason not to eat, and Monday morning the guy usually comes around 4:30 knocks on the window. Everybody get up. I get up too, with my Polish friend. We take care of our chores, and they're ringing the bell for lunch. I don't go to lunch. I had enough food. The Poles brought enough food during the weekend. They knew there was going to be something going on with Henrik and the burgermeister. After finish my work, I wanted to change my few pieces of clothes, and I want to go to town to the ³⁸⁷⁵ to the unemployment agency. He comes in with a luger, and

he says, "If you don't go to work, I'll shoot you." I didn't argue with him. I didn't say nothing. I was changing my clothes, and his daughter was standing outside. The younger daughter, she was afraid I'm going to punch out the old guy and harm him. No. I kept myself cool. I say I'm going to do something like that. It's not worth it. He says, "I'm going to send you to munition factory. I'm going to send you here."

And I only listened. I didn't talk back. First, I didn't speak German, and I didn't understand, supposedly, what he says. No. I knew what he meant. And I start dressed, and start walking towards town. It was around 4 kilometers, and the Poles working in the fields with the horses, with the oxen, screamed, "Where are you going?" I told them I'm going to the ³⁸⁹⁵ I cannot work there no more for the burgermeister." I came into the ³⁸⁹⁷ first they start screaming, "Oh, you don't work, you know you are slave labor. You go back to work." I say, "I need an interpreter. Brings in someone who spoke a little bit Polish, and I say I'm not a ³⁹⁰³ I'm a free come on my own free will to Germany to work for you. Now, you're ³⁹⁰⁴ treating me like this." And this girl changed her tone immediately. After she saw my files, I came 2 1/2 years ago to Germany, and everything's fine. And here I claim I'm beaten and things like that. And I show them the whole face was black and blue. And they say to me, "You go back to your farm, we're going to get a substitute, which was impossible. They couldn't catch no more Russians and Poles to work because they were occupied by the Russians already, there was nobody to catch.

I went back to the farm, nobody said nothing. My lunch was was waiting for me. I never got paired up with the German guy. I did my work. They liked me. I was different than the rest of the Poles. I was never drunk, I never had venereal disease, and they respected me for it.

And everytime there was an air attack for something, I was always on guard to let my cows, my calves out not to get burned, and they respected me for it. This was this episode.

Then came another episode: every farmer had to give one foreigner to go dig fox holes against the allies. That was 1944, sometime late summer, and I went into the burgermeister, and I say, "I'm going to dig fox holes against the allies, with something else on my mind, to skeedoodle over to the Americans, to the British. To the Russians, I didn't want to go, I had another reason here, wanted to go to the French border, and dig a hole and skeedoodled during the night to the allies. And he probably knew about it, because he saw I'm a stubborn polack. He says, "Huh-Uh. You're not going to go. The other guy will go.

And I didn't go to the fox holes.

And '45, and sometime in April, we saw the defeat of Germany in front of our eyes. The Germans were hiding--the soldiers. They were begging us to sell them our clothes. They want to give anything they got to us in the villages, and none of us did it. None of the 4 of us helped them out at all.

And one Sunday, noon, April 15, 1945, it was quiet on the front around us. The burgermeister comes in to us, "You see. We pushed back your friends. It's no more artillery, no, it's quiet, way back to France. friends." I said, "Well, what can we do? They'll come back again." They gave us food for like prince, pudding, wine, cigar and I say to my friends, there were 4 of us, one girl and 3 Poles, I say, "If they're doing so fine, to they're pushing back our allies, why are they so good to us?" We never had it in 2 1/2 years like this. And we didn't say, we didn't argue politically, because we didn't know nothing. We knew some news what's

going on. The Frenchmen used to tell us from the underground. The French prisoners of war used to come to the village, and throw some pieces of paper and tell us where the front was, and something like that.

And we come in and finish lunch, and everything was fine and dandy. We went down in the bunker, there used to be a bunker to be protecting the farmers from the allies strifing with the planes. Me and Joseph went into the bunker, lay down on the floor, wanted to catch a nap, and suddenly the earth was like shaking. The whole ground was boiling under us. I wake up. I say, "Joseph! What's going on? The Germans have new tanks or something? What's going on? It's something unusual." He says, "Go to sleep." He was a little bit drunk, as usual. I went up on the top of the bunker, and behind the barn, between the barns, I saw a tank, a green tank. With a white star. I go back to him. I said, "Joseph, do the Germans change the camouflage tank to salad green, no swastika, only a white star? What kind of an army do they have now?" We were so brainwashed we couldn't believe we had the allies already.

He was still sleeping. I went across the street to ⁴⁰¹⁹ another Pole. I say, "Wake up. We have something of a different army. The Germans joined somebody else." Because we never saw armies like this. And he said, "Let me get dressed. Let's go look where the armies are." And I went back, put on this uniform. And we went out in the village like you see those guys, Yankee doodle dandy, those 3. We were 3, too. And we walked straight to the tanks, the tanks were stopping in the village. And we walked forward to them, and they start directing the machine guns to us. And we start screaming Polish. They called each other on the intercom and some Polish guys came out of the tank. It was the first day of freedom! April 15, 10 minutes to 4:00. We were free!

After a while, some Germans from the soldier came out behind the barn, and they took a shot at the English tank. Was English army. And they didn't hurt nobody, only the Englishmen withdraw. And we followed them.

We don't want to go back to the Germans, and he said, "Let's go find the Germans, the Nazis." I said, "I'm not going to find them. I am glad I'm survived. I'm going to get killed now with you here?" They sent out a patrol. They picked up 2 Germans, and they brought them, and the Polish English officer gives me a pistol, says, "Shoot them." I said, "I'm not going to do it. I don't want to be like they did." What can we do with them? I said, "Put them on the front of the tank with 2 strings, the feet and the hands stretched, then on the front of the tank. No German's going to shoot at you any more." They said, "Why didn't we think of that?" I said, "Because you didn't see what the Germans did to us. Now, do to them what they did to us." And they marched out to the tank.

And we got a little bit scared, you know, no Englishmen in the village. The Germans will kill us. An hour later, came infantry, English infantry, and then we feel safe. They gave us 2 machine guns, 2 tommy guns. One of them I had under my pillow, you know. I don't know if you ever saw those iron tommy guns, with magazines. We felt safe a little bit. There was an episode a little bit later.

There was some Pole came, Polish army came in. They're like national guard, and they want to take the bikes away for their boys, and I had an episode I had to stand up with my machine gun against theirs. They want to take my bike away. I said, "You not taking my bike away. You go take the German bike. This is my bike. I'm a Pole, and don't you touch my bike." And I set up the tommy gun to wipe them up too. I didn't like them

even then, believe me. And this was April 15, 1945. 10 minutes to 4:00.
The same day the camp was freed. ⁴⁰⁹⁴ That was not far away from my camp,
from my village, around 18, 20 kilometers.

And then we were in the village for around 6 weeks. We didn't do
anything. Ate, drank, and had a good time with the British boys. And we
were shipped to a DP camp to the city ⁴¹⁰⁵ And the burgermeister's
daughter came to me crying, begging me. She heard the white Russians or
the Russians going to kill her father. I'm supposed to be the protector of
her father. I said, "Don't worry. They are not going to shoot him. He's too
old." He was around 63, 64 years old at the time. I said, "Don't worry.
They're not going to kill your father." They didn't. No. It was a good
feeling, they come to me to protect from the Germans.

And we stayed in the camp around 3, 4 weeks. Big, beautiful Russian
military barracks. The best. And after a few weeks came to me my fellow
Pole and he says, "You want to see Jews?" "I don't think you're going to
see any Jews. Hitler killed all the Jews." He says, "No, we have Jews just
came to our camp. Go look at them." I did. I went that evening and met
my first Jew.

And I spent around 2, 3, 4 days in the camp, and I decided to leave
the camp and go to a big city. I went to Hanover. In Hanover I met some
Jewish boys and girls, lived in a house without windows, it was July,
August, and there was not too many Jews in Hanover at the time.

After awhile, we organized a DP camp. I didn't live in a DP camp.
Never saw a camp, anyhow. ⁴¹⁴⁵ I only lived in that ghetto, not camp, and I
lived private with a German Jewish lady, and a fine German gentile
gentleman. One of the best people I ever met in my life.

I met them by coincidence waiting for a street car in Hanover. I wore a British uniform, navy blue with a pair of German military shoes and a little star of David. And she came up and she touched it, and I got very unruly. I insulted the old lady, which I apologized a thousand times. She was Jewish, and I used to go to the cookie factory was ⁴¹⁷⁰ in Hanover, and I used to get the damaged, broken cookies for nothing for them. I was supposed to bring it in to the camp, to the sick Jewish boys and girls in ⁴¹⁷⁵ there. Used to be a camp after the war. And I was carrying 2 suitcases, maybe 45 pounds, and I went up to him and I say, "I'm sorry. Why is the lady crying?" He says, "She's Jewish." Then we got friendly. She forgave me. She said she knows the feeling why I did it to her. Then she invited me to her apartment. Was on the second floor, without the roof, without walls. She was sleeping under sun umbrellas. I said, "This, you lived through your Hitler, and you lived like this day and night. You sleeping under sun umbrellas on the second floor in Hanover? I'm not proud of Jews like this. I'll give you an apartment, it cost my life. I'll give you an apartment." She was a native lady. She was born in Hanover, German Jews. Very fine people. And he used to be director of the police academy in Hanover. Which is as big as San Francisco before the war. He spoke English better than I'll ever speak. He was a highly, fine gentleman.

And I went down to a friend of mine who sent me to another friend of mine, who had an electrical supply store. He was a German Jew. His name was ⁴²⁰⁸ And I came to him. I said, "Do you know here are some Germans, some Nazis, some ⁴²⁰⁹ who live here in the neighborhood? Let's say here on this street." It's a nice street, kept up very nicely. He said, "Yes, I know somebody." I said, "Give me his address." He says, "Go up on the third

floor. Living there a well-known high from the German days. He says he'll be happy if I get rid of him. He was Jewish too.

I went down in the cityhall. I got a hold of an interpreter, and it was a Hungarian Jewish boy. And I told him the story. He said, "That's where she lives, under an umbrella? Six, 7 months arter the war?" I said, "Yes, I was there yesterday." He went up to the control commission. He gave me 2 MPs with the jeep. He drove up to ⁴²³¹ we knocked on the door. I say, "Fellow, you this and this." He say, "Yes." I say, I know you were a Nazi, still a Nazi." He says, "No." I said, "Don't give me this garbage. You are a Nazi. I'll give you 3 hours to move out. You take everything you got, buster. Everything soft, you take. You leave furniture." "Oh," he says, "I'll go here." "You can go to hell. You see those other 2 guys, you out, you leave the key downstairs by the manager." I didn't come back. The next morning, he was gone. I took the keys. I went up to Mr. and Mrs. ⁴²⁴⁵ I said, "There's an apartment. You're moving in." She says, "No. I'm afraid." I say, "You're moving in. If you don't move, I'll move you." She moved out there, and I still lived with a German family. ⁴²⁵¹ was like mission district. This was like ⁴²⁵³ house or something. It was a nice neighborhood. Mrs. ⁴²⁵⁵ says, "Would you like to move with us? We'll give you one room." I really didn't want to, you know, because an elderly couple, I was 22, 23 years old, and I had my freedom already. Why am I going to tie up with old people, I'm sorry to say. Only it worked out. I lived with them until I came to America. They were good to me. He was not very well. He was fine gentleman. Passed away right after I left for America. She passed away, maybe 12 years ago. She was 93 years old. She had angina. She was a fine woman. I used to send them packages coffee, and chocolate, and I called them ⁴²⁸¹ She was good to me. She was a fine, fine lady.

And I came to America 1949. A day before Memorial Day.
America was good to me. I'm grateful they let me into this country.
America is good to me. And I love it.

Q: HENRY, HOW DID YOU END UP IN AMERICA? DID YOU HAVE
RELATIVES HERE? HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

A: I have an uncle here, 93 years old. My mother's brother,
youngest brother. And we used to correspond in the ghetto. He used to
send me letters, postcards and I survive, because-- you call those guys
radicals ⁴³⁰⁹boys. When I grow up in Poland I was told you can never
have something if you don't fight for it. There is no handout. ⁴³⁰⁵When I was
a kid, 10,12 years old, we had a group of Jews in Europe and in America.
Like people in the ⁴³¹⁹laborers and hard working kid, and honest kids,
and he says, "You'll never buy a country. Even you have billions and
trillions of any kind of money. You have to fight, you have to bleed for it.
And this kept me alive. Because my father was a good father. The best. I
wish I had him today. I wish I had him today. He was a good hearted guy.
Like the rest of the Jews, he didn't want to become a Communist. That was
his fear. In 1939 we could have maybe all survived, not all of us maybe,
my little brother or my sister. No, he was old world. Don't do this, and
don't do this. And be good. And be honest. And don't talk back, and don't
fight. My survival was thanks to ⁴³³¹

And I still say the world would be much better, and the Jew would be
much better off, if he would be a little more aggressive. Not the Israeli
army, only as a whole, the Jews should put foot down sometime and say,
"That's enough. 2000 years, that's enough. Handouts, mercy. We should
have our rights like the rest of the people in the whole world always have.
Not to be pushed and kicked and gassed and hanged and murdered.

Q: WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT YOUR RELATIVES IN ISRAEL, AND THE WRITING OF THE BOOK, AND IN^{43 48} WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE WAR? HOW DID YOU FIND THEM?

A: They used to live in Montevideo in Uruguay, my mother and her mother. the cousins was sister. And right after the war she wanted me to come to Montevideo. I say no. I'm going to America. I didn't want to go to Israel. I want to go to America. And I'm glad I came. I have something to show for it. I have something to show in America for 40 years.

Q: IS THERE SOMETHING THAT WE HAVEN'T TALKED ABOUT THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO GO BACK AND TALK ABOUT? OR SOMETHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SAY?

A: Today's situation.

Q: FINE.

A: Would you like a touch of my point of view of today?

Q: CERTAINLY.

A: We talked about America. It's the best. Nothing can match with America. Israel is another matter. Israel is being pushed around, and they don't know how to take it. They're afraid of the whole world, including my beautiful America. They should put their foot down and say, "That's enough world. It's plenty." It's 2000 years, we have paid enough to the world with our blood and what do we have to show? A sliver of land, which they want take away from us with all means. The whole world, the United Nations including my Polish Pope, who doesn't do nothing for it.

I spoke to the gentleman before we start taping. We talked about the Christian word is forgive. How do we come to talk about forgiving? I was on a cruise and 2 ladies told me they're going to Mass every day on the

ship. I said, "Beautiful." Good people, nice religion. Then we start touching on the Pope, my Polish Pope. I said, "Why did he shake hands with Arafat?" I say his hands are still dripping with Christian blood in Lebanon." Over 100,000 Christians were being murdered every day Up to today, close to 200,000 Christian people were running toward the Israel zone, because they can live with the Jews.

He embraced Waldheim, who sent Serbs, Yugoslavians, and Jews to the gas chamber. Embraced him. I said, "How are you forgiving?" I say, "Why don't you forgive the Jews?" It's time to forgive us. It's not 45 years, it's 2000 years. It's time the Polish Pope forgive us, so called for being a part of killing Jesus Christ, which is still lingering in the Christian world, in some parts of the world. And recognize Israel, and to tell the free world, even the communist world, we don't need a 23d Arab state. We have already 22. The Jewish have nothing. The Jewish have a little sliver of nothing.

That's what I want to bring up. Yesterday we know more or less, went through yesterday of my beautiful youth. What I went through. What I lost. Without guilt. Without being guilty of nothing. No murder, no thief, no hooligan, no disease carrier. We're killed. Why are we killed? Because you're a Jew. Why? The world doesn't know why. They have no explanation why they're killing us for thousands of years. Spanish Inquisition, Russian progams, and little progams here and there. You saw on the television that's what Poland was. That's why we lived in Poland, and the rest of the world can say the Jews are rich, well-to-do, well off. Well, the Polish Jews was the most beaten, most defeated human being in Europe. The Polish Jew was the lowest on the totem pole. There was

maybe 5% well-to-do Jews. The rest of them were fighting for a day's living.

In my hometown where I lived with 25,000 people, 5500 Jews. There was maybe 200 families who were well-off, not rich, only well-off. And the rest of them didn't have the next day to live through. They had to go find something, begging from other Jews or go to work.

Q: YEAH. SO ANYTHING ELSE?

A: We talked about yesterday, we talked about today. We hope tomorrow will be better for Jews. We are entitled to it. The world is supposed to allow us to live in peace. It's enough. 2000 years of misery. And I think American Government should be a part of it. Not to listen to politics and propaganda, oil. And it's time to say to the world, "Leave those Jews alone."

Q: THANK YOU VERY MUCH, HENRY. THANK YOU FOR SHARING IT ALL.

A: Let's go for lunch.