BAY AREA HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH HERMAN SHINE
01/20/94

Interviewer: Judy Antelman
Transcriber: Tessa Botha

Q: TODAY IS JANUARY 20TH 1994. I'M JUDITH ANTELMAN WITH THE HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISCO, AND PRODUCING IS JOHN GRANT, AND TODAY I'M INTERVIEWING HERMAN SHINE. HERMAN, I'D LIKE TO START OFF WITH TELLING ME WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN.

A: Well, I was born in 1922 in Berlin, October 4th, 1922.

Q: OKAY, AND CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR FAMILY'S NAMES?

A: Yes. My original name was er, well, it has two different spellings. First of all we got the German spelling, but then the Polish spelling came in. My father actually came from Russia – the part that later became Poland. So the Polish spelling is actually s-z-a-g-n-g-e-z-i-c-h-t.

Q: AND HOW IS THAT PRONOUNCED?

A: [Shine-ger-zicht].

Q: AND DID YOU HAVE ANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

A: Yes. In fact, I have one brother who is here with me now. He – my mother sent him to Israel just in time, by the way, otherwise he would never have survived. His name is Seev – s-e-e-v, Sohar, s-o-h-a-r. Means in Israel Shine. If I had known how he changed his name, I would have called myself the same way.

Q: OKAY, CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD, WHAT IT WAS LIKE, YOUR FAMILY'S...?

A: Well, I guess say, I was born in Berlin in '22 and we, I came from a very, very poor household. We were all together nine children, but I only knew of six. Three of them, or two of them, passed on, way before I was born. The seventh one I remembered and he died just earlier, right after the ??? in Berlin. I went to school in a German school and actually, my brother and sister, most of them went there, until, almost at the end and I was forced to leave the school and went to a Jewish school.

Q: AND WHAT WAS THE GERMAN SCHOOL LIKE? DID YOU HAVE FRIENDS, MIXED, JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH?

A: Ja, we were all mixed. In fact this was of course, most of it was before the Nazi's came to power. And well, we had quite a few friends, Gentile friends. We were, I mean, we were, lived right in the center of Berlin. And, I would think, at least 80 percent of our friends were Gentile. And we all get along very, very well. And, like I said, until the Nazi's came and of course, earlier it started already when something was coming like, with the new elections and so forth. And then a lot of these so-called friends – the families instantly changed. They became Nazi's or the people who would go along with this new, if it comes to power, the new system. And they turned away from us. Once the Nazi's got the power, of course, then there were very, very few left who even would talk to us anymore.

And I actually worked, I always wanted to work and I had to work, because to make a little extra money for the family. So at first, I worked at the bicycle – as a bicycle mechanic and helper, and delivered bicycles and learnt the bicycle trade. And, of course, there were many Jewish businesses which we, which our customer was, I had to deliver the bicycles, and we made all kinds of money. And later, when this folded I went to work for a huge German bicycle shop, where I wrote first, this advertisement on a small bike – special made. And rode all around Berlin. And in fact, then I worked for a Jewish tailor – he was extremely famous. He made these special ride pants for officers – his name was [Lemer Chance?] – I never forget this. And then he, of course, he had patented these pants and before the Nazi came to power, and even after they were in power, many of the high running Nazi's would come in the rear and had their pants made and fitted and all this. And I had to deliver them. Among them were Goering and some of the generals and... of course, they couldn't care less. Then of course, everything changed. In fact, in Germany, it was in Berlin especially there was always a saying: "Every Nazi knew of a good Jew." If this only would have been true, then there would have been none – not one Jew would have died.

And of course, then, when the time came that I left school, I had to go to work and, being a so-called Polish citizen I had to have a passport, when I was thirteen. And I wouldn't get permission to work. And so, I could not learn a trade. But there were several companies who would still be willing to employ you – as helpers. I worked as a roofing company in Berlin, just as a helper. Well, I could make some money. It was very hard work, but I figured, it's better than nothing. So of course, in 19, in September 1939, when war broke out, I was arrested. Not with the first action, but with the second action, on September 20th. And my mother says: "You know, you have to report to the police – it's gonna be just like in the First World War

when your father had to register with the local police department. And then, I'll see you a little while later." And when I came to the police, they was just waiting for me. They had these so- called er, they call it in German, the [Grune Minne?], where they would move prisoners. It was like a wagon, like a van, like a, you know, like a jail in there. So there was many people in there and they were all pressed together and they just pressed me in there. And then the car took off, this van took off. We had no idea where it would go to.

When all of sudden it stopped on the outskirts of – most of them were older than I – I was sixteen, not quite seventeen, then. They aid "Oh God looks like this van goes to Sachsenhausen, this feared concentration camp, right on the outskirts of Berlin". And others said: "It's impossible, why would they take us to Sachsenhausen?" These were all like me, Polish, so-called Polish Jews, living and born in Berlin. And sure enough, it stopped on the outskirts and we all were, get out of that so-called van and as soon as we would form a formation and start walking, marching with the police, the people was lining up on the street. It was all, a new section built by the Nazi's, for the Nazi's so-called. And, before – this is several kilometers before you reach the concentration camp. And they asked who we were and they said: "We are the..." – the war already started for nineteen days – the war started on September 1st and now was 20th 1939. "These are the Polish soldiers, who cut our German soldiers, the tongue out." And we said, in German, this is not true, of course, and they hit us with whips and stones and you know, and many of them were so badly injured already, before we even reached the camp.

Now we reach the camp and then of course, prisoners came from all, you know this action came from all over Germany. Thousands and thousands and they were sitting on the outside, the SS, and typing information and I couldn't... he said – the name – just like you asked me - the spelling of my name. And at first, I spelt the name, and then, I must have made a mistake, somehow, and he hit me right with a whip over my face, you know. This is the first beating I got before I even reached the camp. And he said: "You sb – you don't even know how to spell your name. And we gonna teach you..." All kinds of talk, and he hit me and then – 'cause then I was completely unable to spell my name anymore. And in no time at all, we had a prison uniform and then we were attached to a camp within a camp. They built several barracks for the new prisoners - that was us.

The Nazi's did not know what to do with us. They had actually no – we did not belong into a concentration camp. All – we were not criminals or anything. We were just Polish Jews. And they thought, let's see if the world would react, what they will do if we imprison them. But the world couldn't

care less. So, we were put in isolation – it was a camp within a camp. And in the evening, the SS would come in and would torture and brutal all of us. And we, the young people, we were ordered to be, and they called it the cleaning service of the barrack. 'Cause the Nazi's were very scared – if any contagious disease would break out, that would affect them too. So they supplied all kinds of cleaning stuff and we, the young guys, had to clean the barracks, whatever was to be cleaned. And, so we were in there and cleaning and doing all kinds of different stuff and of course, when they come in, in the evening, after – you see, the difference is – this was a Nazi concentration camp. The difference between the all the concentration camps which Hitler built first, in Germany, they were the real concentration camps, like Sachsenhausen, Dachau, Buchenwald and many, many others. When he start building in the east, in around 1941, these were not concentration camps, these were extermination camps. And this is a huge difference. We had no gas. But they would torture the people to death. And there was no work or nothing. Like I said, the first three months we were in isolation.

And of course, many of our people were heavy, well off. They were doctors and all kinds professions. And they never worked physically, hard work. And of course, quite a few of them were old already. And they gave them the tight uniforms and they had to span it with a belt in between, and they said: "This uniform will fit you next in two days." And they said, and they talk back, they said: "How can it fit me? It's too tight for me now." And they never needed another one, the next morning, because... and we, not only had to clean the barracks, as soon as the Nazi's killed many of them, we had to bring them and pile them up in the bathroom – up to the ceiling. This was our job. And the next morning we had to bring them to the crematorium. And so it went on for months.

And then it was a heavy winter, in 19 – this was September – December now, 1939, one of the heaviest winters on record. Do I speak loud enough? Ja?. And it was snowing, and we had summer uniforms on. And the Nazi's asked that we be moved out and put us to work. But there was really, no work. So what – they give us coats, and we had to turn the coats, these, upside down, inside out and load 'em full of snow. And moving a whole mountain of snow from one end to the other. But the SS and those foremans and all these Gentiles, they would whip us, and when you fall down, they stamp you to death. I mean, once you fall down, you never get up anymore. So, this went on for approximately two months, two, three months. And then the order came from Berlin, from Himmler, who was of course, the chief of the SS: "Put the young guys to work, whoever has survived." Because, Sachsenhausen consisted of approximately twenty-five thousand Gentiles and at the most, we were between twenty-five hundred and three thousand Jewish

prisoners. But two thirds of them died already, because they could not take this kind of punishment and ...

So, we were put to work and as soon they ask: "What have you done?" I said – I figured, if I'm on the roof, I might be easier for me, that they will not punish me up there, as they do down here. I said: "I'm roofer." And they said: "Where did you work?" I said – I named one of the biggest companies in Berlin, which I never worked for. And they gave me a job as a roofer. And my first job was of course, they way it happened is – at the SS canteen. But in the camp the prisoners are assigned to all work and the prisoners are the ones who are assigning prisoners to work. Who gets the best job, of course, the Gentiles, the friends of them. And what is the best job in the camp? Of course, it's a cook, especially in a SS canteen. Even so, they are not permitted to eat the food, but there's enough to be stolen from and of course, you know. So my job was to repair a section of the SS canteen. And, but I had no idea of the whole thing, and then I was ordered and then the chief of the prisoner, who was in charge of all the work details – you see, the prominent of the prisoners – they would live, some of them, like kings. They were all Gentiles, they were block elders and they were head foremen and all these jobs.

And after all the prisoners would work during the day, they had nothing else to do. So they would play cards and they – but they needed good food. Food was available, but not officially. So here, I was ordered to work in the barrack, and all these barracks were transportable. And I would take over a section of the barrack, which I was ordered, and he said: "You make yourself a device and you hook up a package, and then deliver it to the barrack." Prominent would - I did exactly what I was told. I picked up one of the big packages, lift it up there, put it in a wheelbarrow, put some – and then he gave me some other stuff. I put it on there and then I put paper on top of it, roofing material, and put some liquid tar on top of it. And now I had to go into the camp. This was outside the camp, but always in the borders, of course, with the machine guns up on top and all this. And, so I delivered this and I got a big slice of – it was baked ham – I mean it tasted, I mean, because I was just in the camp, just maybe six months.

And everything went well, and of course, afterwards they went to one of the roofs – huge roofs, and they were airplane roofs, one connects with the other. So I'm up there and I was supposed to be lookout. And the ladder – you know they have all these devices in the camp by means – you probably heard about it – and the ladder is approximately five, six feet above the roof. And on top of the ladder, they put a little rag on there. So if it shakes, you know, somebody, who has no business is coming up there. You, I have to have warned them. So I'm on one end and somebody else is on the other end.

And I warned them. I don't know what they did – they played cards and all kinds... of course, they – these prominent people, they had all kinds of things to do.

And I see now, not one, but four SS come up. Come from both sides, and I hide. But there was also roofing commander working downstairs, inside work. And I had no choice, I had to get off the roof of course. I mean, they were looking for me, because they report how many working up there. And that was about a four-story building. And downstairs were some prisoners, and I guess, they knew already, what was going on. And they said: "Well – jump!" So I had no choice, so I jumped in the big pile of coal, and I just dug in there up to my throat, and nothing happened to me. Then I walked to the command but, unfortunately, the command downstairs, reported already. So one roofer was missing. And the SS were very scrupulous, very sharp, and they knew already the one was missing was the lookout, because they wanted to surprise, even those prominent, they wanted to catch them. And once they catch them, they put them in a special detail. And they get plenty too. And naturally, that's where they put the lookout. So they knew, somebody had to warn them. And who could warn them? The one who is missing. And now I was missing – and so I got about fifty on my ass, you know. And I didn't say nothing you know. I said I don't even like, I don't even need.

But this was not yet finished yet, you see – before this happened was - in between, the commander, the Kommandant, of the kitchen – he's in charge of the whole kitchen, the SS and prison kitchen. He came to the commandant and he says: "One of the highest of the SS is gonna make an inspection." And they all scared, because this was a general. It was ?? he was the highest. He was direct under Himmler. He controlled all the concentration camp and he was in charge of all this kind of stuff. And they make inspection periodically. And the SS is just as, is more scared than the prisoners, because if anything goes wrong, they sent them to the front, to the Eastern Frontier. So they want to be perfect. So they want to find out what is his pleasure of food. And so this general wants to have the best, leanest ham, you know, there is. And I don't remember the number anymore, but maybe it was forty-two, twenty, whatever it was. And unfortunately, I could have picked any package, but I had no idea which one not to take. And this is what was missing. They came and looked for every package and couldn't find it. So it had to be stolen. But the kitchen guys in there cannot steal a big package like this. It had to be somebody who worked in the barrack. Who worked in the barrack? The roofer. So I was called to the main gate, and of course, now I got hundred on my ass – fifty first. "What happened with this ham?" And I said: "Commander, I don't even eat ham – I'm Jewish," which of course, was a lie, but you tried anything. But it didn't help. They hit and hit and hit, and then I came to the special detail. I was fired from my job as a roofer. But of

course, I knew, if I would talk, I'm dead. If I don't talk, I might have a chance. And I was in such a bad shape, but the prisoners helped me. You see the big prisoners, the Gentiles, they all got special treatment. But nothing of course, helped, you know. I had a, you know, an ass like glass, you can imagine, to get handed over, you know. And then I was in the special detail. I was supposed to be killed.

And through the tremendous circumstances my life was saved. But not by the SS, by a civilian, who was a former prisoner. He was a Gentile who was released and became a headmaster of the same outfit. So he said he played cards with this SS guy, you know, and eventually, he said he's got to bring me as a dead body into the camp. So he came toward me, but he warned me, you know and then he hit me. But I went in the water - you see, I act like I was dead, and then he changed my numbers and brought with another, who died. And I – so, this way I was saved. So, later, I got back my job and worked in the camp. And I worked as a roofer, you know, constantly, you know. And of course the Gentiles, the one who taught me to be a roofer, they would be released. Most of the Gentiles, except if they were extreme politics, communists, dangerous communists or some other violent prisoners. But others would be released after a year, two years, three years. They were not subject like the Jews. Jews would never be released. These were Gentiles. And of course, we had to fill - the skilled workers – had to fill the gap. In other words, they were released and somebody else had to take over their jobs. So then, I was already an accomplished roofer and then they needed me back again. There were so many new barracks to be built. There were – you know, they had to take care of more of the SS and the prisoner barracks. And then, of course, some, from time to time, we were shipped to other camps.

So this was the first – this was what happened the first three years in the camp. Of course, things always were extremely brutal for all of us. You had to be – the slightest thing you would get punished, at different times. I mean, for no reason of course, at all, you had to take your hat off when you see an SS, and stand at heavy attention. And only be at ease after he gives you permission to be at ease. And our shoes, we had to have the soles in there so that the shoes, the soles would last a long time. If one was missing there was a penalty code. You get three over your ass. But there were shoemakers there, but the shoemakers wouldn't have nails for you, because you know, we're talking about thousands of nails. They just don't supply them. That was just for punishment. And so it went down the line – if a button was missing on your uniform, you get five over the ass, you know. But you can't get to the tailor to get a button. And, so this went on for three years.

And after three years, one morning, we were ordered not to go to work. It was very funny, because we could not understand this. This was still in Sachsenhausen. And we were all ordered into the main bathroom, take our clothes off, take the belts off, the handkerchief and anything, utensils we were allowed to have. Some had teeth, they had no teeth - they were allowed to have a little pocket knife to cut whatever they get to eat. We had to give it all up and put it on a separate table. And one of the other prisoners, and there were several communist prisoners, you know – Jewish prisoners who were young communists, who were already in jail several times, when we came to the camp. And one of them came to us and said: he says: "I tell you, they gonna kill us. They gonna execute us." And we all were more than three years in the camp. Some of them were already four years in the concentration camp. And the others, like the communists, they already came from jails.

He said: "We don't wanna die like animals. If we wanna die, we wanna die like human beings. And what we gonna do is, if you all with me..." And we said: "Yes, we with you." "We gonna start a mutiny." He said: "It's not gonna help us much, but maybe it bring to attention – we gonna do co-incidence when the twenty-five thousand other prisoners come in from work." Many of them were communists, political prisoners. He says: "When I give you the signal, we attack the Nazi's inside and run out into the main space, where we all gonna be counted." At the same time, when the door gonna open and these prisoners come in to be counted, back from work. Here we with them and here come several Nazi's, the smaller ones, the one of them was a Stormfuhrer, you know, with three stars and he was in charge. While the big guys would make the inspections. And we knocked them down and run all out. We did not hurt them in any way, but you know, they got, some of them got hit on the head, some of them lost their hats. Some of them lost their pistols – because they grabbed their pistols. They was all laying on the big space there. And of course, you know this camp is surrounded by heavy machine gun – now this is a real concentration camp, with heavy towers and this lieutenant – the so-called Stormfuhrer – ordered machine gun one: "Fire," you know. And, at the same time, the prisoners were supposed to come in. But the gate was ordered closed and the main commandant comes - at the same time – he always appears when there is an appel. Appel – you know what is - is when everybody is counted, you know. The main commandant comes in and he said: "What is going on?" And three or four of the SS were laying on the floor, you know. And it was just a big commotion there. But not hurt in any way, just, more insulted and harassed. Of course, they tried to shoot us with the pistol and it was knocked out of their hands. And he said: "What is going on here?" you know. And he says: "Commandant the Jews tried to, a mutiny and I ordered the machine gun to fire." He said: "What you telling me, those starving Jews can start a mutiny?

You, first of all, the camp is closed instantly. You surrounded by five thousand power volt and machine guns spaced every twenty feet. And you and across, directly across from our camp is for an emergency – a division of SS stationed, just in case some trouble should come up. And he said: "You can call on them. And, you mean to tell me - those damn Jews can do any mutiny here." He said: "I'll talk to you later. Out!" He said: "I don't want to talk to the SS right now. Out!" You know, they had to go to their barracks.

And as soon as they, and then he ordered all the prisoners – the main gate opened. Generally, they didn't open the whole gate. They let the – the main gate allows twelve prisoners, sideways, to march through in formation. But most of the time, they have the gate only half open and they standing there with sticks and all kinds, to punish the prisoners, you see. So here he said: "Form a circle around me." And he said: Who is the so-called leader of this mutiny?" He said: "I give you sixty seconds. I want these prisoners responsible for starting this mutiny – come forward." And nobody came, and then this fellow, whose name was Horst Jonas, and he came and he says: "Commander, we all agreed to the same thing." He said: "What? You mean, agreed to what?" He said: "Well, you yourself, commander, allowed us to keep these utensils we need for daily life. A belt, a handkerchief and those, several things. And when these are taken away from us, we figured we gonna be shot like animals and if we die, we wanna die like men, because we have done nothing, except that we are Jews, although some of us are political Jews." He said, "I give you my word," he said, "I don't have to do this." I mean, I have never heard an SS, a higher SS, speak like this. He said: "Easily, I can have all of you instantly shot because you performed a mutiny. But," he said, "If you give me your word and this is as long as I am colonel, you know, so and so," he said: "I will forget it. And you have to promise me you go orderly at transport. I'm not permitted to tell you where you gonna go, but you are going to another camp. And I will provide for you food and everything ..." and he ordered all these back for us, and we went - but what he didn't tell us is we were all supposed to mount the cattle trains you see, in a cattle van and we were then on transport.

We were only left about six hundred and fifty, or something like this. And several of them were always sick and they medicine and all kinds of stuff and that was not giving. So we were pushed in two or three cattle cars, like herrings, with no toiletry or nothing. And normally, the trip, we didn't know where it would go to - and we had a hunch would go to the East. We heard of Auschwitz already and we heard the gas and everything. But we figured, we old prisoners, we already here for three years – they would never send us there. You always have hope, even though it's very, very little, but you do have sometimes, hope. That's how you try to survive. So we went to the train, one day, two days, three days. It was unheard of, because normally, it

takes at the maximum, eight to ten hours, even with the stoppages. Well, what they did is that they took the locomotive away and used it for other purposes. Like, for military trains, and pushed our train on a side track. But no food, barely little water, no toilet or nothing. And again, about twenty, thirty percent died. They were just dead among us, because some of them needed medicine, some needed whatever. And now we come to Auschwitz after about five and a half days. Auschwitz one.

And here is Auschwitz one, there is the famous Dr. Mengele. That Eichmann was there and they are picking - and Commandant, you know, Hesse. They are picking left and right. And we had no idea what's left and right, because for us it was new, because we were all skilled worker, old prisoners. We knew – you know. And I was ordered right. And my friend, Max Brimer, was ordered left, and then he saw all of us on the right hand side – he smuggled himself, I had no idea of it, but he smuggled himself. I heard that much later, at the risk of his life, to our side. He figured, if he dies, then let's all die together. At least with the friends he has.

So we were ordered to build a new camp. We marched, we built Auschwitz number three. This was before the IG Farm Industry – monowitz. And we worked there, and I, after a while, I became a roofer again, because there were all kinds of construction going on. And Max worked on the outside. He worked as a machinist. And, I explained to you before, the big difference between German concentration camp and Auschwitz. You see, there, if you are lucky enough, they put you to work. You have a chance to work as long as you last. While in Sachsenhausen, even if you work, they come just during working hours and torture you and kill you, so you never come back alive. Most of them never made it. Auschwitz was different. Auschwitz they wanted to work you, take everything they can out of you and, as long as you are capable of work, there was very little discipline. They couldn't kill us if you have half a hat on, if you have no shoe or what, as long as you did your job. Because they figured, they couldn't care less - they don't last long anyway. A month or two months, then they all gonna go. So I worked as a roofer.

And, from time to time, I was shipped to different barracks, building all kinds – I worked in the camp. All kinds, when there was not enough room, work, I worked on the outside. And, one day, well, there were all kinds of incidents in the camp of course, what happened.

I mean, when the prisoners came in, especially the Jewish prisoners, from all directions, and some of them came from Poland. They had all these boots on, these heavy riding boots. And they had figured, they don't know where they go. And some of them nailed diamonds in their heels. And of course, some

of them were able, but most of them were not. But soon, as soon as the SS found out, naturally, they opened, they tore off all of these boots and took out. But here and there a diamond got among the prison population, and of course, that was used for all kind of purposes.

And it happened that one of the roofers, I worked with – he worked with me. One day he showed me a diamond. I wish he would never have showed it to me. And I had never seen a diamond, maybe I had, but I never paid much attention, as a boy. And a few days later, I guess, obviously, this person who came in with this diamond, must have told somebody else about the diamond, in his boot. And he probably talked about it, especially a valuable diamond. So this guy, I don't know how he got it, but he got it. And now the SS wanted that diamond. And of course, I didn't know where the diamond was and I wish he would have never showed me the diamond. So I said: "I never seen a diamond in my life." Again, the same thing. And I got tremendously hit. But the other guy, they found this diamond - he was executed. So I can consider myself lucky. I only got badly beaten, and he was killed.

So now, now it comes 1943. I'm already a year, a little over a year in Auschwitz, Auschwitz three. And one day, another friend comes to me and he says: "We, there is a new, the second in command, has ordered to be the commandant temporarily in the new camp. And there's a lot of barracks to be built. And I have to go. Why don't you come with me?" He said: "It's gonna be a change, because it's you know, nothing for you to lose. And when the work is finished you come back into the main camp, like me." So I agreed to it. And this new camp is about a hundred kilometers from Auschwitz, in [Gleiwitz?].

And I work on the roof, and one day, I see three gorgeous women – young, you know, fifteen, sixteen years old. And, all three wore the Star of David, which I had never seen before. When I came in the camp, in '39, this was not compulsory yet, to wear this. And me, I'm always bravado, I mean, I wasn't scared for nothing, because being so long, I been on the camp now over four years. And the gate wasn't finished yet. And those three girls were standing close to the gate. And I say to another roofer: "Oscar, let's go there. Let's see what these girls are doing."

And we coming over there, and they were lifting a heavy barrow. So we went down one side, and I went down one side, and we lifted the barrow for them and I spoke to one of them, to all three of them, but one of them especially. I said: "You wearing the star of David. Are you Jewish?" She said: "Well, we are mixed marriages. My father is Jewish, and my mother is Gentile, and we are still allowed to live, but we have to do forced labor. And the forced labor consists of - we have to pick up the leftover from your camp

and from other camps in the surrounding area. We work in the pig farm. It's a very dirty job." I mean, you can imagine, the leftovers from a concentration camp. But you know, the pigs will eat everything. And I said: "When are you coming back?" And she said, for instance: "Next Wednesday." And even though this barrack was finished, but I make sure I was, as soon as they come, you know, I was just overwhelmed.

And I come back there and talk to her and I said: "What is your name?" And so she says: "Marion, Marion Schlessinger." And I said: "You know, we have absolutely no chance to survive this camp, because the SS and the old prisoners tell us all the time - the only way you gonna get out is though the chimney." And we knew it, never has a Jew been released. And I said: "You know, I like you to tell the out world what has happened here." And as an old prisoner, like I was, I knew all the information, most of it, anyway. We know about the gas, we know how many Jews got gassed already. I said: "They gassed already more than one million Jewish people, and I want you to be a witness to this."

And I said: "Tell me, where do you live in the city here?" So, she says: "Well, why do you ask me?" I said: "Well, sometimes, we don't have enough work." We have to work on the roofs, which was true, then they used us for some incidental work, like we have to go to the airport. You know, the Nazi's would steal everything and whatever is stolen, is for the SS. They were the cream of the German armed forces.

And wherever anything is of course, stolen, a friend, or another commander of the SS, would send it to them. And we were sent into the airport, to pick up special packages. They trusted us to pick them up. We couldn't do nothing anyway. We were under heavy guard. So I said: "Maybe then, I drive through your city and see your street." So she gave me the street number, the name and the number. Nederbergstrasse, 70 and, I don't know why, but I put this in my head, because I was so fascinated with her – ja. And I had all the night, all the time - so my work was not quite finished yet. But one day, you know, we – you probably have heard this – all the skilled workers and unskilled workers were paid, but we never got the money, of course. The money, the SS collected it. Like, we worked for a private concern, the I and G Farm Industry, or here, in this case, we were lent out, or were contracted out to the German Reichs Railroad. So, they paid big money for us, especially skilled workers. We were the roofers, others were machinists and skilled carpenter, whatever. So they paid, up to ten marques an hour, which was big money, but we didn't get anything of it. But the work was supervised by inspectors, and some of these inspectors, of course, were SS. So as soon as I came to this new camp, Gleiwitz, a tall fellow comes, you know, with a coat on and talked very nice to me, which, you not used to

– so I figured it's a civilian. And he says: "Well, I want you to – these and these barracks – and this, and in four weeks I come back. Give you more work. You tell me what materials you need. It will all be provided."

So he comes back after four, five weeks, and very little is done. Tall fellow – and he says, and he was very mad. He says: "How come these barracks are not done? Did I give you an order?" he says. "That has to be fulfilled." And he said: "Besides this," he said - and he pulls a little slip of paper out of his pocket, and he says: "The Reichsfuhrer has arranged for the skilled workers, like you, to get extra portions of special food." And he had on this list, he has there about six, eight items, which I have never even heard of. And of course, now I make a fatal mistake. I said: "I'm in this camp now. I'm in the concentration camp for over four and a half years. I have never even heard of this type of food." And he opens his coat, and under his coat, he has a gray uniform and he has three stars and four stripes. He says: "Hauptstormfuhrer of the SS." – attached to Berlin, to the headquarter, you know. He said: "What did you tell me?" I said: "I beg your pardon, sir. I made a big mistake." A Hauptstomfuhrer, and I stand at attention. And I thought it was a civilian. I shouldn't even have said – he was always nice, you know.

He said: "Are you telling me the truth?" I said, "I beg of you – please, forget... " you know, and I couldn't anymore because he said: "We will see about this." And boiling mad, he goes into the kitchen. Of course, I was working and I was shivering. I know what would happen now, because as an old prisoner you know you have done the most fatal of the fatal things you can do. You rising up directly against SS.

He goes to the kitchen and at the same time, this friend of mine, I came together with, to the new camp. You know, he was the valet to the assistant commander there. A valet is a big job for a prisoner to become a valet. And this friend of mine was a former Jew, and he became an Aryan, a Gentile, through a special action. Several years, this is so complicated. And that's why he became his valet. And he trusted him, this guy. And this guy was a high ranking SS, because he was the assistant commander now in this camp.

He was allowed to bring his food from the kitchen, clean his gun, everything. This guy had – he trusted him outrageous, I mean, completely. I'm working on the roof – of course, shivering, and at the same time, he, this, my friend, goes to the kitchen to pick up this special food for the commander. And there's a big argument. He had no idea what's going on. Big shouting match, and he couldn't get in there – now he had to stay outside till they are done – and he only heard: "You will hear more from me, before I get back from Berlin." And now, my friend comes in and the same, that guy leaves. Of course, this guy is much higher than the chief of the kitchen there. You

know, the kitchen is a sergeant, and this guy is a captain. He's a hauptstormfuhrer. But of course, this guy ask him to show him where the special food is held, which the prisoners supposed to get. He said: "You show." He said, "I stand at attention, because you outrank me." That's what my friend told me. "But you show me any authority you have, that you have to show anything here. You are not my commander." And this is when that guy got so upset. He couldn't show him nothing – it wasn't there. So my friend is in now, and the other guy leaves.

He goes on the telephone and calls Birkenau. And Birkenau was the real commandant of this camp, but he was so brutal. I even know him from Sachsenhausen. His name was Moll. A very brutal Nazi. But he was so brutal, that they used him now, for a certain time, to be the chief gas master. They had to exchange constantly, because none of these Nazi's, even, could have a job that – could take this job too long, because it was too horrible, even for them. So he calls this guy. But those two were in cahoots, while he was commandant there. They took all this extra food – you know when you divide ten gram of butter and further down, by fifteen, twenty, by one thousand prisoners who were all in this camp, all special worker – you coming up with hundreds of pounds of butter, and butter on the black market was like gold. So they would sell it, give it to their relative, or whatever. The prisoner didn't get it, and how would they figure that the prisoner gonna rise up to them, it took one like me. And, that was even by mistake. So they talked to him, and the guy on the other side, apparently, he gives him nice information.

And he's very happy, he visits. And so he hangs up and my friend comes in the barrack and he tells me: "Are you crazy, to talk to two SS like this?" I said: "I thought he was a civilian. I had no idea. I mean, the man was always nice to me." He talked what we had to eat and all this – once in a while, I don't know if he gave me something or what, whatever – maybe he give me a cigarette or something. Sometimes, I mean, he was very nice. How would I know that? Then he asked me, and of course, I told him the truth. He said: "You crazy," he said, "the only thing you, the only chance you have to survive is to be transferred back to the main camp as soon as possible. And I don't even know if that's going to help you any – because here you riding up SS against SS."

So what I gonna do? And, to my bad luck, two prisoners are missing. And when prisoners are most of the time, the prisoners - an escape is impossible. It is just impossible, because you can't go nowhere. You have nowhere. The only idea you have is your number here. [indicates to wrist/arm] and the, [indicastes to head] no hair, no nothing. So where you gonna go? And the Poles are just as unfriendly, even just as bad as the Nazi's. So, they don't

love the Jews. So, where you gonna go? That's why you have so little escape. So, when people are missing, most of the time - they hide in the corner, or they go – and then, they kill themselves. Suicide, or they run into the wire. They haven't been detected by some, but sometimes during the day, then the wire is not loaded. Then they hanging there and the power ?? - you see, they can't get out anymore. So they hanging there - half dead, until they can get out. So, to my luck, they find these two.

But, he has to go to the main camp, this assistant commandant, to report. And they always scared, because when prisoners are missing, the main commandant generally, he says: "If you guys, with all the power you have, all the SS guards you have, cannot control those starving Jews, then you are not worth to having such a gravy job." You go into the Eastern frontier. And the commandant has the power, instantly, to recommend, and boom – they go.

Who wants to go to the Eastern frontier? Not even the SS. They know what they do with them. So, but to my luck he comes back. To my luck – ja. And he's a tall fellow and then this is the SS. This is the assistant commandant now, but he is the commandant now. And we are counted in the morning. And as I – you getting tired hey?

I said: "Commander, I would like to talk to you, to speak to you please." I said: "Could I please be transferred back to the main camp?" He said: "Why? What's going on, your job is finished." I said: "My job is finished." But Heine was his valet. He said: "Heine didn't say anything, that you want to go back or anything like this." He said: "Why can't you wait another few weeks?" I said: "Commander, it is very urgent that I be transferred back." He said: "Why – you tell me a reason." And I knew he was basically, he was a - you know, I mean, I had a good rapport with him, 'cause I did my job right – I never had any disciplinary against me, or very, very little. I said: "Commander, and you are not supposed to know this. And if you know, you are dead." I said: "Commander, I'm supposed to be gassed." He said: "What?! What do you know about gas?" And he pulled out his gun. He said: "Do you know, I can pull my gun and shoot me, you?" I said: "Yes, sir." I said: "I rather be shot by you than being gassed." That's the way I told him. I said: "Who told you this?"

And Heine, you know, he trusted this guy, who was his valet. And now I had to hope that he is gonna back me up. And you know the only communication in that camp is the commander asks - and then the whole camp, they says: "Get the valet to the commander." And everybody says: "The valet to the commander," until he says: "Coming." You know, whatever – he comes. He says: "Heine, you tell me what happened?" And to my luck, he told him

exactly the way he told me this. And he takes us into the kitchen, but this – I – this is again, unheard of. You know, he is six feet, some tall, and we are short and he goes in the kitchen.

And this guy now, in the kitchen, it is a different story. While that other guy was higher in rank than both of them, but had nothing to do directly with the operation of the camp. This is the commander now. And this kitchen chef stands at attention, he said: "Commander, we are cooking sauerkraut and this for the troops and this and this garbage for the prisoners." He said to him in German: "Hau Die schnau." You know – you understand a little German, you know. He said: "You shut up! I'm not interested what you cooking. I tell you one thing, if I – you know I'm going back to the main camp, right now." This was before he left, after the prisoners were missing. He says: "If anything happen to these prisoners while I am away, if it's the last thing I do – is, I take your friend Moll and you, with me, to the Eastern Frontier. But, you and I - we are not finished yet," he says. "Remember this." And then he takes off, but I mean, now, you have the real SS, you know, and all this.

And, you know, this camp wasn't finished yet. You know, so when they call you out of your barrack and you make – only open the door, make one step outside, you machine gunned – because the guards are standing just two feet away or three feet away from the barrack. And until the, everything, the wires are finished... At nights, of course, I couldn't sleep. Figured if they call me, I wouldn't go. They have to drag me out. All things go through your head, but nothing happened. So then, he comes back and everything was – he ordered me then transferred. But he didn't want to transfer me then, either, but the commander came, who is even above him from the main camp.

They all make the inspections and I was close to him there. At one time, a year before, they stole horses for him. I mean, the SS, anything they wanted, was stolen for them. And one night, this was before, a long time ago, the horses needed a quarter where they are safe. You know, I mean, no rain or nothing and that. So, he wanted special roofing material, which we didn't have. So, on the outside, was a train. This is a year before. It was stuck there from the air force. And it says – Roofing and Construction Material – whatever what was on there. And in the evening, he sent me out with some guards to inspect if the material is in there. And I go in and see it's in there. And I go back to him – I report this, and he takes two more guards – four guards altogether. And in the night, we go with the truck to there. But he – this is now one year before.

But the Luftwaffe – the air force, is guarding this train. An he has no – the SS has no business there. But you know, I mean, you had that problem with

these doors. And then the Luft air force says: "Halt. Who there?" And he said: "We are from the - you know."
"So, what are you doing?"
He said: "We need some material, and you guys better patrol..." and one of them was a captain from the air force. He said: "You guys better patrol on the other side, and you don't know what's going on here."
"Oh, we cant do that."
He said: "You can. When you see the uniform these guys have on, you can have the same uniform in no time at all. Now, you have two choices..."

So, they took off – he took the pistol, he shot off the seal, you know, and we loaded up the whole truck. This was a year before. So now, I put the roof on the, you know, for his horses. So, big storm came – and nothing happened. So I got the – the commander said I helped, I saved his horses.

So now, the commander is there and I said: "Commander, could I please be transferred back to the camp?" He wouldn't transfer me back and I felt so very unease. I thought - safer there. So, he ordered him to transfer me back. And I'm back in the main camp. And, I'm going back to work. And one day, Max comes to me and says: "What do you think about escaping?" I said: "What!?" I said: "What do you mean, escaping? How are you gonna escape?" He said: "I met a guy, who works as a civilian in the factory, together with me. I know him only for several months. Sometimes he slips me a piece of bread, sometimes he gives me a cigarette. His name is Joseph."
He said: "He has a plan which is almost fool proof."
I said: "I like to talk to Joseph." So he said: "I will arrange this."

But on the next morning, you know, in the morning, after everybody is counted, the big shots of the SS, the VIP's, the commander and the assistant commander – they all make their inspections because, each camp, Auschwitz one, two and three, they all have satellite camps. Some of them, thirty camps, which are under their control. So they inspect all these, some of them smaller and sometimes a little bigger.

And this one morning, I am called on the main gate. When you are called to the main gate, it is trouble. Lots of trouble - because there is no reason for it. I'm going to the main gate, and who is there? Moll. The gas master in his [galler?] uniform – he just got another star, now he's an officer. He's got three stars now, with a ?? you know, apparently, it's his day off, you know, and with an iron cross. You know, for gassing the one millionth Jew, or whatever – one million and a half. And, all the smaller brass - in charge of the camp now, admiring him.

And I come to the main gate, and he steps forward, he says: "Don't I know you already, from Sachsenhausen?" And like you, they never forget a face. Like I remembered him, he remembered me. I said: "Yes, sir." And whatever he says, you have to say yes. If you say no, you are dead. If you say yes, you might be dead, anyway. But you surely don't dispute an SS. He said: "Didn't you lie to the chief inspector from Berlin, about the food? Didn't you get all this extra food?" "Yes."
"So, you just wanted to make me look bad?" "Yes." What else you gonna say? So he takes the report leader, who is now in charge of the camp, while the big guys are all away. And he nicks, and nicks and nicks [nods head] – in a few minutes, there's a small truck, with three guards.

And I am myself, going on a trip. And of course, I put already two and two together - you know, because this is exactly what I was fearing all the time. They would not forgive and forget so easy. Because I had done that to the SS, was unforgivable.

Driving, and here I come in. Auschwitz, Birkenau. You know how close the two together - a kilometer and a half apart, across the street, practically. Birkenau, and Birkenau, the gate opens. And in Birkenau, you have barracks where men, women - men here, women there live, and where everything is done there - barracks, where you have tailors, jewelers – everything is fabricated there, for the SS. Because the prisoners, the Jews especially, who come to the camp, bring all their valuables with them. And the Nazi's are supposed to turn everything in, but lots of it goes on the side. Who knows? I mean – ooh, they all in cahoots with each other. And the commandant of Auschwitz is a big, big, macher.

So, the women, the wives and the daughters, whoever, of the SS, especially of the VIP's, have access to all these different barracks. And I am standing already in line, by the gas. There was several hundred people there, already, waiting. And I am standing, and behind me is a guard. But the main gate is closed and the guards and the machine gun, you know, big [stiegel?] and so on. And I know already, my time has come – that, because everything goes before me – 'cause I have really have no chance to survive now. Where would I go from here, you know. I was maybe pray, and maybe commandant from other camp. But what, and why would he mix in – why would he come here? You know, all things go through your head. How stupid could I be? – you know, I dragged myself so long, you know, close to five years. And through that mistake, ja, now I gotta pay for it, with my life.

And all of a sudden, the door of the main gate opens and a woman on the bicycle, bicycles. And maybe, thirty feet I'm standing, guards stand right next to me, you know, but I see, and I don't know why I turned around. I

don't know what I – somehow, I don't know what went through me. Her skirt get caught in the chain of the bike, and she fells over. And I run, I don't know what made me run, but I run as fast as I can. I run, I bend down - and I unhook the skirt, because I was expert with the bikes. And I got her skirt loose and she got my hand down [pats shoulder] and, in no time at all, I have a machine gun in my ribs. The guard came over with a submachine gun and he... and she says: "You bastard." She said: "I don't give a hoot what you do with this prisoner, but do you know if you shoot this prisoner, this bullet will penetrate from him right into me. Do you know who I am?"
He said: "No."

I mean, these are guards, they don't have never even seen her. I mean, I didn't even know who she was. I only knew she was a well-dressed woman - surely not a prisoner - in civilian clothes. And in the meantime, another higher sergeant comes over there, he said: "You know who I am?" "No." He said: "I want to talk instantly to your officer in charge here." And then a guy comes up, and I was still in a bent down position. And he wouldn't let that gun away, you know. And here comes a guy and he's already, this guy is a hauptstormfuhrer – three, you know, he's a big macher already for this. Hauptstormfuhrer, and he stands at attention. "Jawol, [Vorhess?]" And I know this is the chief commandant of all Auschwitz, you know. What a bear. I don't remember anymore the name, you know. Anyway, "I want talk to my husband." And here comes the husband, you know, and of course, he is the big guy, you know. He is a big, big macher, you know. And he said: "Who did..." He said: "What kind of dirty guards you have here?" – you know. "This prisoner, so decent, helped me. I could have been badly injured. I was caught in here and he tried to help me." She said: "What is the necessity – even to draw a gun? The gates are closed, the towers are mounted by machine guns and the guards are up there. What can he do? He didn't attack me, or anything like this. He's harmless, he's not armed or anything like this."

Up – commandant. He said: "What barrack you belong to?" I said: "Commandant, commandant, I don't even belong to this camp."
"What!?" he said. "Where do you belong?"
I said: "I belong to Auschwitz number three." "Who sent this prisoner here?" And of course, in the meantime, it got already later and later. And his liaison goes on the telephone and he calls and nobody knows who sent me there. You know, this Moll had no business there. And this other guy, you know, and of course, everybody was now scared. You know, the Nazi's are scared, because when they misuse authority, they go after the Nazi's, just like they go after the prisoners. Nobody – and in no time, I got back to the main camp. I mean, they did not have any intent to save me. But just because they misused the authority, this was wrong.

So I got back to my camp and now Max comes, the next day. But, what I forgot to tell you is -before I left the old camp, where I met these Jewish girls, Marion is one, I said: "You know, I would appreciate, I gonna be transferred back to the main camp tomorrow, if you write me a little note. I don't get any mail." And so, I shouldn't have said that either, but I did not want to lose touch. But I could not get near her anymore, because the gate was finished and now, the prisoners had their loading work on the truck – they had to do it. The girls had to stay outside the gate. So I took a piece of note and put it in a rug and threw it. And she picked it up and I said: "Let me know, so I don't have any false pretenses, if you gonna write me." And she said she would write me.

But then, I got back to the camp and months and months went by and I practically forgot about her already, 'cause I figured, didn't write, you know, and just as good. But she told me one thing that, before I went back, there is a good friend on there, and they have a hunch she came to our camp. I should find out. I mean, I don't know why she told me, because I wouldn't have known way to get back to her anyway. So anyway, as soon as I got back into the camp, I said right away, his name was [Werner Piek?]. "What happened with Werner [Piek?]" And he got diarrhea, and when you got any contagious diseases, diarrhea – you instantly transferred, you know where. So that's what my friends told me.

So now, Max tells me about the escape. But I never told Max what happened before, because I don't think then he would even have pick me then, you know. He knew that I was in another camp – commanded there. But I didn't tell him about what happened just shortly after this, you know. Maybe I did, but I don't remember anymore. So when Max told me about the escape, I said: "I'm all for it, but I like to talk to this Joseph." And I had permission from the commander, after all the prisoners go to work in the morning, then, this new camp – Auschwitz three – which we built, was established for one purpose only, that the prisoners don't have to walk anymore, fifteen kilometers. There was too mush loss of time and manpower with guards, and so. So, now the factory is directly - about one kilometer from the camp, practically across the street. And as soon as you cross the street, there is, right into an enclosed wire mesh you go in there. Like, everything is enclosed with wire and everything and, of course, machine gun, towers.

So I had permission, because the chief inspector – this was that other guy, not the one from... well, it was another town, where I met Marion before – is there. And I had to talk to him – I was in charge, now, of all the roofing. And so I had to talk about material and different things and so I had to go out. So here I come and talked – I wanna talk to Joseph. And Joseph is make, set up a date and Joseph tells me – now Joseph is the underground fighter – who

worked in Auschwitz as a civilian. I don't know if you remember the name, but maybe when you read the paper there – you know, it'll probably come back to you. So here Joseph tells me basically what Max told me. I said: "Now Joseph, how's it gonna be?" I mean, so he said: "I gonna hide you within the factory for thirty-six hours. And we have to hope nobody else tries to escape. I have a hiding place. I gonna build you six feet below in glass, and all that. If nobody else escapes, then..." he said, "I've already picked a spot – I picked a moonless night," and all this. "We gonna do it very fast. And I think we gonna walk about one kilometer once you are out of the direct vicinity of the factory and on the camp's area. We walk about one kilometer and a car gonna pick us up and take you direct to the Partisan, where Tito is." It sound good enough for me.

We set a date, but the next evening, I come home, er, I come home, I come back to the barrack. I have an order to appear the next morning, to the camp Gestapo. Very ruthless guys. They were responsible for internal and external security. And you also shiver when you go to them, because, there's basically no reason. You know, unless you have done something.

And I come in there and there's an officer in charge and he asks me right away: "Who is Werner [Piek?]"
"Oh," I said, you know, I remembered that. I said: "Werner [Piek?] is an old comrade of mine, and we were in the same barrack but I think he was transferred to another camp." This you can know. He was transferred to another camp, but you know, you never know – you not supposed to know, and you never know anything about gas. This is taboo. And so he sent one of and.... So he reads from a card – so apparently Marion wrote a card into the camp. And, smartly, she wrote: Through Werner P. She found out where I am. This was very smart written.

So he sent one of his clerks, prison clerks, you know there were lawyers all kinds –they were formerly lawyers. But, they worked in the administration. They had to do all these work. Sent to the main security gate, and they found out it's true what I said. Of course, my luck was – if I would be under the least suspicion of escape, he has to order, then, I get dots. A dot in front, a dot here, a dot on here, a dot on here [indicates to various body parts] - huge, big dots on your uniform. Then you cannot go in the – you have to stay in a certain vicinity. I was very, very lucky now, with this.

So now, our escape was planned. The date and everything, but we needed two things. Max took most of it out. He went to work in the morning with thousands and thousands – with about twenty thousand prisoners – into the factory, you know. And when he go to work the chances were very slight that any of them would be searched, unless there's a special suspicion for it.

But when I go alone, there's – can be lots of trouble. But, what we needed most was the first aid kit in case we get injured, or we get shot at, or whatever – we cannot go to a doctor.

And, I had a friend, a good friend, you know, old prisoners, you have friends you trust with everything. And this guy, his name is Stefan Heimann, I said - he was in charge of the prison hospital. I said: "Stefan, I need a first aid kit." And he said: "Oh, you looking for a change of air." I said: "Yes." He said: "I don't have to..." He said: "I gonna give you the first aid kit, but not until the day you wanna leave." And he said: "I don't have to tell you that I don't want to see you back alive." I said: "You will never see us back alive, because we know what's waiting for us."

You know, I mean, we have seen in our time, many, many, many who tried to escape. It is not so bad that they hang you – that's bad enough, but before they hang you they torture you. And this torturing is murder. Because they torture – they want to know who helped you. And the longer you are away from the camp, the more people had to be involved in helping you, because you had to eat. You had to drink, you know. I said: "You will never see, unless we have absolutely no choice." You know, like you overpowered, or whatever, you know. But normally, you will not see us alive – never. So he kissed me goodbye and all this. I mean, you know, we were old friends for five years. And this is – this build such a friendship.

And many of them came back that tried to escape. Even good friends of ours – they were hung. And that was horrible, you know. In fact, the last one who was hung even, I was the only one who had access to the jail, to this special prison. They were, they were suffocating and I opened the window. If I would have been caught there, you know, I would have been executed - you know. But I opened a window at a risk, you know, 'cause I was a roofer and I had access to the buildings, you know. And I went from the other side and I just hoped nobody seen me. So anyway, here I am now and....

Can we take intermission, please? Be back. You will remember where we were? [break]

Q: OKAY.

A: So, Stefan gave me the first aid kit and of course, we said goodbye. And there I got a couple of other utensils we needed, like a pocketknife and so forth. And now I come. And everything, of course, is hidden in the front of your pants. And I come to the main gate. And at the main gate, there are sitting about two or three SS – so-called [blokfuhrer?]. They are all in ranks between one and two stars. And I come to the gate, and I said: "Prisoner

70196 with your permission, to go to the factory." He cannot grant me the permission, because, my permission is granted by the work detail leader – the commandant. And he has a big list where he just looks up the numbers. Everything is on there. But, sometimes, in order to make them feel better, you will promote them. In other words, if he has two stars, you give him two or three stripes. Make him feel a bit better. So I'm standing away from him, approximately three feet. Ready, at attention. And he looks and he says to me: "Are you coming back?" Like he knew that I would not intent to come back. Of course, he didn't know. And I said: "Herr [Aubershaufuhrer?]," I promoted him already. "Why wouldn't I come back? You are so nice to us here and we have good food and all this and they treat us very nice."

So, he comes toward me and you know, in a camp, a lot of times they tap you – and if he would have tapped me, he would have felt the different tap. So, without his permission, and luckily, he did not see it, because – unless he orders me to be at ease – I have to stand at strict attention. So I made a step back, because I was afraid he's gonna tap me. But at the same time, he ordered me to leave. And then he said: "But you guys better be back in time. You supposed to be back at least a half and hour before the out commanders come in." Because we are counted in the camp. I said: "Yes sir." And I walked and I, somewhere I seemed – I still remember like it was yesterday – I couldn't get my feet apart. Like they weigh a ton a piece. And lot of times, they make you believe they believe you, but they still don't believe you. Then they call you back and they drop your pants, you know, and everything comes out, you know. Luckily, it didn't happen.

But up on top, the guys were bored – you know, those guards – and they played around with the machine gun and said: "How about put a little bullet in you," and so, you know, just joking around like this, you know. But of course, when you an old prisoner you know all kinds of different things. And then, you joke them back, because these were guards. They were not the real SS. Just guards.

Anyway, we had got our meeting set up at noontime, at a certain place out there. And we had to make sure from noon that nobody can see us, or should not see us, because if they know the vicinity they saw us last, that can easily give us away. So we had to be ready for several hours before noon. Not be seen – and that makes it very, very hard, because lots of prisoners know you. And a lot of areas where you have absolutely no business to be in it – in case you are checked, because the SS makes all kinds of rounds there. And if you are off limit, you are in lots of trouble, because you have no excuse why you are there. Because I cannot be on the other side and talk to the roofing inspector. But what I'm doing here? Everything went well.

About noon time we went in to our so-called hiding place. Six feet deep and they covered us with glassware. But my friend, the one I originally went to Gleiwitz with – I remember – Heine was his name. You remember when I talked about him. He said, my nickname is Manny – he said: "Manny, one day you gonna witness something which has never been witnessed before." And when we had our escape planned, I said: "Max, I hope, for God's sake, that he's not gonna try to escape at the same day we do." This would be the worst that can happen to us, we thought. We are now in our hiding place – we hidden, the only air we had was the brick wall, the brick was spaced. And we could practically see little to the outside, but outside could not look inside. And Max was extremely heavy smoker, and I was afraid that smoke gonna go on the outside, you know. He covered it up [cups hands] and he said: "I'm so nervous, I can't..."

So what happened is – first they knew about me. I did not report back at the main gate in time. So I am now listed as missing, escapee. I'm already way past. And round about four o'clock we march back in the camp – it is already after five. So I am way overdue. Now comes Max. Max is the next one that's missing. And, smarter, Max put his form in, in the hospital - they were good friends. You're in the hospital – because then nobody knows anything about it, you see. So Max was not a temporary foreman, but if the foreman is missing, whom they arrest? Nobody. But now the SS comes out with bicycle, and with dogs – and with everything. And we see how they patrol the whole area, everything and shouting – they are mad that they have to stand so long.

And all of a sudden, we hear: "And the valet to the commander and the valet to the assistant commander is missing." These two – you know, these are the last who are missing, because they are generally privileged to go in the camp. But they also have to be counted. But now it is already two hours passed, that they are missing. And we think – "God" – I mean, of course, for us, maybe it was luck. And look, and now we have to hope that Joseph comes the next morning - this guy, he's supposed to be here at ten o'clock in the morning and it is – well, we know, we have a watch – nine, nine-thirty. Is he going to be early here?
Still not here. All of a sudden he comes and he drops down one of the Polish [kilbasse?] you know, the sausages, you know. And he said: "Everything is set for tonight. I hope nobody escapes." So we're in there, but it was just, I mean... You have to be out of steel, you have to be forced in there.

The evening has finally has arrived, nothing happened. They prisoners, walked back to their barracks and in the evening, the air force takes over. The SS is still there, but a different SS. The Gestapo takes care of security. But, in the evening, mainly the air force is in charge of the whole factory.

While the SS is completely in charge during the day. During the day, you only have a few prisoners working – I mean, a few hundred. I wouldn't say a few hundred, but nothing compared to at night. Night – there are very few – no prisoners is working, you know.

So now, we are walking and all of a sudden, somebody comes – a civilian. And we down, we crawling, and the guy lights, and through a miracle, he must have seen us. Any way, we were not detected. You know, maybe I don't know, maybe it was just somebody watched us from above. It is unusual – it is unbelievable. But maybe, I don't know, maybe it was a guy from the air force. And the air force was not the SS. They couldn't care less. We don't know. But anyway, we were not detected. Now we come to the spot he picked. He had the pliers. He cut the wire, 'cause the wire is not loaded. He cut the wire and he goes out, and Max goes out and I go out last. And we walk. We walk half a kilometer; we walk a kilometer. Nothing happens, so we walk little more.

All of a sudden a car comes on the main – and you know we have to cross the main freeway. And we hide behind a tree and we thought, maybe, this is the car. And here in the car is the commandant, with his guards. You know, he's... luckily he didn't see us. I mean, if he would have seen us, he would have stopped, with the machine gun and you dead. There's no question. And we walk another kilometer, another - we say: "Joseph, something has gone wrong." And we stopped at every milestone. You know, we have to go through the forest, the side of the forest. We said: "Joseph, you told us one kilometer. We gonna get picked up." He said: "Things changed, we cannot be picked up, we cannot go to the underground yet. We have to walk about eighteen kilometers to my home."
"You must be crazy. Impossible, how can we? We have no papers, no nothing."
"Well," he said, "you can go back to the camp." Now, how can you go back to the camp? You know, once you escape, it is the same. I mean, maybe they torture you less, but still, we are finished.

So we walk and walk and walk and then, he got scared a couple of times. All of a sudden, he is stopped by an air force patrol. He shows his paper. He always walked with his hand in his pocket and we suspected, he's got pistols, you see. If anything goes wrong, he's gonna shoot us. That's what we figure. I mean, you look out for anything. And he stays behind the tree farther down and now we come. And we knew we saw two guards when they checked him – air force. And we said: "What we gonna say, Max." Well, we tell them that we coming down from the factory and we tell them the Poles maybe, stole our clothes, or whatever. If they don't believe them, then we try to fight them until they shoot us. That's all we can do, you know.

And now we are coming. "Halt" – stay. "Where you coming from?" And, number one, to our luck, when they checked Joseph there were two guards – maybe one had to go to the restroom, or something. There's only one guard now there. And he ask us: "Where do you come from?" And without us even saying, muttering one word, he said: "Oh, you coming from down – from the factory, yeah, take off." He put all his rods in his mouth. Now maybe, he would have said to himself – here comes one guy, here comes two guys – maybe, they are partisans. Why should I risk my life? If I don't do nothing, why should they do me something – right. So let them go. Maybe, I don't know – whatever. Anyway, the guy put the rod in the mouth and we went on. And we close, we had three more very, very close calls.

At one time the police gendarme comes down, and we were along the – walked along the forest. And there's a little waterfall there and he lights and we threw ourselves in the water. And he got us almost, but to the miracle he didn't find us. So anyway, by the time we get – it must have been almost early morning by the time we arrived there. He wanted, Joseph got so scared then, and find out, we almost missed him. He said he got scared, because first he said he wants to go fifty feet ahead, then he says, he wants to go a hundred feet ahead. And Max says: "You know, we can hardly even see you at fifty. How we gonna?..." I put my, I hit Max in the ribs – I said: "Let him say what he wants, we follow closely anyway." And sure enough, one time, you know how it is in the forest. You go here, and then it sounds like left, right or straight ahead – so where do you go? You know, so he all – through a miracle, we didn't see him anymore. But we found him again. I mean, it was just a miracle... so, anyway, we walk some more and then he got so scared.

He says: "There's an airport, an air shelter here. I think you should stay there for the rest of the night." We said: "Are you crazy? If we stay in the air shelter, and ring the alarm, then we can go direct to the Gestapo." I said: "We can't do that, we gotta walk, I mean... whatever it takes, we gotta walk and we just, we hope we make it." So we forced him to walk, you know. So, we walked, and finally, here we come and all the dogs were barking in the village. But, luckily, we got up there and then, that's a hay barn, and he said: "This is where we gonna stay here for the next few weeks."

Q: HIS HOUSE?

A: His house. They lived in front in the small quarters. This is right – eighteen kilometers from Auschwitz. This is [Nova-wees?]. In fact, you know, I guess you read the paper. We were there in '89, you know. Went there, ja... So now, we up there – the next morning, me, being a roofer, I put the ladder

up, which meant – it meant that I figured, you know – you very conscious of everything. Even the smallest suspicion, you try to, because, you become so streetwise and all this, in the camp. So I put the ladder up and then, he said: "Tomorrow, or the next day, I gonna put some plywood in front." I said: "You not gonna do such a thing." I said: "If you nail it shut, then it is suspicious – if you leave it open, it is not suspicious." He said: "You gonna freeze to death." I said: "We rather freeze to death, than being shut, you know... We gonna warm ourselves, or whatever, you know." So we slept with clothes on – constantly, always ready to move, you know.

And so we went there, one week went by, two weeks went by and all kinds of shootout. And he told us we gonna be picked up in a couple of weeks by the partisans. And, nothing happened. Shootouts were, and all kinds. And he tells us all kinds of stories you know, and we couldn't – we almost didn't trust him, anymore, now.

So, one day, we told Joseph: "You know, in emergency, where are we really gonna go?" You know, he provided us with German papers. You know, we wanted him that he teach us Polish. But he was not much interested in that – he thought – nothing gonna happen, you safe and all this, you know. And so we figured, okay, what can we do? So we said: "But we need some papers." He said: "I gonna get you false papers. But, you need a photo." Now, how we gonna get a photo? We need civilian clothes. His clothes wouldn't fit us.

So we made contact at Berlin. Another friend of ours, who escaped four weeks before us - a fighter. And we had his address. So we wrote to them – he was with the underground. So they arranged that the underground, one man from the underground brought us one suit. It fitted both, then; and some other stuff. He came to visit us and he brought us the suit. So Joseph gave us the direction – the next village, where there's a photographer. This is now – we up there in September – September '44, everything was just like peace. You couldn't believe that the war, that Russia might come four months later. There was nothing – nothing, four or five months later. Nothing to show.

In the evening, we were always permitted to go down about ten o'clock. And they provided us a warm meal and sometimes, a little water, where we could wash ourselves. But never took a bath – there was no bath facilities. And then, we went up again, you know. And sometimes, we made plans for Joseph – he wanted – he said the underground wanted this and this, you know, for possible free in the camp, you know. Whatever was located, we provided them with this. And one day – so, okay, now we got the photos, not the photos yet. We got the civilian suit, and Joseph got a bicycle for us, and told where the photographer - in the next village. Max puts the clothes on and goes to the photographer – has his pictures taken, comes back. Tells me

everything, where it is. And now, I go. And Joseph had a smaller sister, they are still living there. She was then about fourteen – and a brother, who was younger, was then about sixteen, sixteen, seventeen.

Now I go. Picture taken – you know, tell him all kinds of stories. But now, looked very nice, wearing civilian clothes. And on the way back, a German sergeant comes with the bike next to me and he started speak. You know they speak Polish and all that. He said to me: "[polish]"... but I could not get in a big conversation with him, because I didn't speak enough Polish, you know. And so, he said to me – so I said: "[foreign]." He said: "How come you speak German, how come you not in the army?" So I tell him, because he provided us with papers, you know, with German papers, you know. I said: "I am a lieutenant from the Eastern Front, and then, I am on a furlough. But, I live in the next village." I didn't give him the village where I lived – the next one, you know. And I tell him because, in the paper it always shows a guy there, a guy there, you know. And you saw the regiments, some died and some... So I was with this regiment, you know. I am on a furlough. "Oh," he said, "Oh wonderful, you know, kammerade, and the best 'Heil Hitler.'"

And this guy ties me up. I lose my direction. I, maybe, bicycle two, three times. But I was well dressed – two, three times around. And the Germans brought in. I don't know if you ever heard this, the White Russians, especially the Ukrainians, to spy on the population, especially in the vicinity of Auschwitz. Because they could not have enough SS and Gestapo, to watch every movement. So, they brought these guys as spies. And they were very ruthless bunch. They hated the Jews anyway. They carried on arm, a pistol. They head an armband, you know, the assistant police, you know, like an id's. And when I circled around two, three times, this guy comes out and says: "Halt." But, you know, he spoke broken German. "Halt, aus-weiss." You know what 'au-wiess' means, identification. Now if I had a gun, I would have shot him. But I didn't have a gun. And, I didn't have any papers either. But what I had is, I had an extreme wit, which saved me, probably, all my life. And I am standing between the bike, but, you know, he had the pistol, but he did not draw his pistol. He didn't even touch his pistol, you know. You could see his pistol, only, you know. And I am standing between the bike, and put my hand in the pocket and I said: "You son of a bitch, Russian pig," I said – "You dare, a German officer from the Eastern Front, to ask for papers," in high German, which, of course, he didn't expect, which I only speak, this language. And he said: "I am sorry, I made mistake. [Nie schniezen?]" – you know, don't shoot me, you know. He thought that I, somewhere, I had a gun. He takes off, you know, and I didn't even see where he went.

I was in such a shock; I couldn't even watch him. And now, it happened, direct in front of our hay barn. You know, the hay barn, the little village in front, you know, the house where they living there, and the hay barn is right in the rear. You can hear a needle fall down. Max heard the whole conversation. So now I had to see – I saw now it happened right in front. So, I didn't dare to get in there, now. So I waited a little bit and I didn't see no place of him. If that guy would have seen me going in that village, where an officer from the Eastern Front cannot belong, he would have called the Gestapo. But luckily, luckily... Anyway, we provided Joseph and the photographs, we said that our brother and sister would pick them up. So they picked up the pictures. We saw them, but Joseph apparently, stalled further. So Max says: "We have to do something with – it is impossible that we can - Berlin, Berlin has to help us more. We cannot trust him anymore, that they have to provide us with papers. Photograph papers, we have no photographs, you know. So we were in the process of doing this.

And Max always wrote, he had a former girlfriend, in Berlin. He also mixed marriage, and he wrote to her. And we got every, I would think, every six, eight days, you know, that was still German occupation territories, so the mail worked perfectly. Every six to eight days we have some kind of a letter, or a postcard, from Berlin, under his address, because he was a legit citizen there.

We didn't hear nothing for two weeks. And in the evening we would go down – now we were worried now already, because it has never happened before. And one evening, we go down, and I see under the couch something sticks out like a postcard. I lift it up – "don't write anymore - Funny." Funny was the sister of a friend of ours, who escaped. We know something happened, but what? And in the next morning, we didn't tell Joseph of course, about it, because we couldn't trust him either. The next morning, it knocks on the door. And I have such a light sleep, Max always snores, but I have a light, light sleep, and in the front door, this is the Gestapo. And I look through the board.

There were five officers from the Gestapo, three uniformed ones and three or four big German Shepherds. And in civilian, a woman too, there. And they speak Polish, you know – "Where is Joseph Runner, who got these prisoners out of Auschwitz?" And the brother and sister were home. "Ja ????" they don't speak German, you know. They only speak Polish, and then they brought an interpreter. They spoke Polish to them. They don't know anything, and they pulled a gun on them, but luckily, I mean, they could have easily said we upstairs. But I guess, the Poles were so smart, and were not trained too. They know if they would have gave us away, the Nazi's would have blown off the whole village. They were all responsible. So now, we

know something happened. They ask if there are others, another one that lives here – and they sent them away – to another village. So then the daughter comes up, the little, you know, she was thirteen or fourteen. "Max, manne, you must leave." They spoke German, they went to a German school, you know. But enough for us to understand. "The Germans will shoot all of us, they gonna come back. You must go." And we asked Joseph, before, in case of a real emergency – he said, at the end of the village is his future father-in-law. Does he know about us. She said: "Yes." So now we are to go – deep snow – this was now the end of December '44. The end of the village – there's a name on there. I mean, I went before there. He told me already, to see if these people live there, and then, I know they live there.

So we go there now, and inside a small room like this, there was about, in the kitchen, six, eight people sitting around on the stove. And so we come in here, of course, we didn't speak their language. And we just tell enough, you know. They said "Hello," and all this and few words, but, it's not enough for a conversation. "What are you doing here?" he said. "We are supposed to wait for Joseph here." He didn't know anything about us. Nothing. So we are sitting there an hour, two hours – he sends his daughter over there. Joseph is not there. Then, he sends his little son – Joseph is not there, and then, the daughter, one more time. "Joseph is home – he is in bed." He said: "What!" He said to us: "How can you lie to me?" – that guy, you know. He goes alone. He comes back, he hugs us and he says "Now he tells me." You know, he spoke German too, but he wouldn't speak German to us. "Now he tells me," he says, "I was a locomotive leader, I could have gotten you a long, long time to the partisan. I had all the connections, but now," he said, "the offensive is shortly, in a few weeks the Russian offensive gonna come. And they all scared now. They want to save their lives. So, all activities has ceased. I cannot help you." And we never told Joseph about this card from Berlin. And he said: "We must talk to Joseph." So Joseph comes over, and now we tell him about the card. He said: "If it's like this, I have to go with you." So, his father-in-law says: "Let me see if I can take care of them first."

So, the next morning, we walk through the deepest of the snow. That must have had the snow in there, ten feet. We almost sunk in the snow, you know, in the deep in. And I got such a cold, you know. And shivering, and we finally reach one village. He talks to the owner there. He said: "You know, I have two guys here. They need to stay overnight." He didn't tell him what. He said: "I don't mind if they stay here, but I can tell you one thing – if my men find them, they better be gone in the morning. They gonna directly turn them over to the Gestapo, because there's several of them who collaborate with the Nazi's. And I cannot control them anyway, and, for most of us, it's

too late, because now, we don't want to risk our lives, anymore. So, they are on their own. I don't mind if they stay here."

So, we stay in there, in, was shivering and I felt awful. And Max says, the best thing is when are they going to hang us, because there's – we are at the end of the line. We have no other way to go. He said: "Why don't we go up, climb up the façade and hang ourselves?" I said: "Max," and I always was full of hope, even if there wasn't maybe, no hope, to have anymore. I said: "You know Max, first of all, we don't even have a rope. Second," I said, I don't thin you know what [khoioch?] means. [Khoioch?] means strength, Yiddish. I said: "We don't even have the strength to go up there. And then, by the time," I said, "We get up there, we are so tired," I said, "But, I got another idea. Listen to me. You remember I told you about this girl I met in Gleiwitz, you know, the ?? I still got knocked in my head. It's Nederbergstrasse – I've forgot the number." He said: "How can we get to this girl? It's impossible." He said: "You crazy, all the railroads are guarded by the SS and everything." I said: "Well, what choice," I said "Do you know, we gonna, I tell you, we gonna close off with our lives here. We know that we are never gonna go back alive into the camp. But we gonna try, if we can, to reach that place. Maybe, we are lucky. If not, we kill ourselves on the way. If we see some SS, we attack them. If they want to attack...."
End of Parts 1. {Parts 1 and 2 of 4}

BAY AREA HOLOCAUST PROJECT
HERMAN SHINE INTERVIEW – PARTS 3 and 4 [PART 2 0F 2]
1/20/94

A: Like the worst of the worst. Our jackets, we have on, were eaten up by rats. And of course, even though we didn't take a shower, but we didn't even wash ourselves, for days. And we looked, just horrible. So we come to a station, there was a blonde German sitting there. And she said – she spoke our dialect. And I said: "Those Pollocks stole all our clothes. You have to give us two tickets to Berlin." She said: "How can I give you tickets to Berlin. You have no identification – nothing." I said: "Those bastards stole everything." She said: "You know, I can give you two tickets to Gleiwitz." That's exactly where we wanted to go. But she said: "Don't tell anybody I gonna give it to you. I only give it to you because you are from my home." You know, home-town. So she gave us the two tickets – I mean, we paid for it, ja. And this was now 4:30 in the morning. Winter time, you know this is end of December. We thought that the train, this is only – less than a hundred kilometer. With the first train, we should be easy there by seven o'clock. We wanted to make sure we get there during a darkness. We don't want to be there in daylight – if we ever get there.

So here we got the train – big train, and the train is loaded with SS. But these were most of them - Ukrainian, you know – Hitler – I don't know if you heard about it. But, Hitler drafted a whole army of Russians into his army. They were the Russian army, you know, they were all fighting against Stalin. And lots of - were these. But they were all led by German officers, the German SS.

So Max was sitting right between them. I said: "Are you crazy, you know, sitting right there?" I was standing at the door. And they talked to him, and Max never spoke. He always said: "Hmmm." [nods head] You know, like he couldn't. He nicked and... Anyway, you know, in two and a half hours we have only traveled twenty-five kilometers. It was daylight now. Out of the train – station – and now we are coming Krakowitz, to Katowitz, one of the big stations for the Eastern Frontier. And there were two trains coming in, and we – one train to Berlin. And I said: "Max, why don't we take this train to Berlin?" He said: "You crazy, we never make it to Berlin, with it." You know, and this was a children's evacuation train and the two teachers, asked, the women, if we would be so kind in helping them with their luggage. And we lift all their luggage, you know. We said: "Maybe we can find a space to hide." He said: "You crazy," he said. And then came the conductor, and he said "Ticket." We showed him our ticket. He said: "Out!" And he saw how we looked, you know. And the teachers saw: "Talk nice to these guys. They helped with the children's luggage," you know, and ... So we had to, had to go out. And now we are out. Those two trains left. And I don't know if you ever experienced it, but sometimes there is such a lull at the train station.

There is no train and you wish a train would come. But here, there was nothing and there was the SS. The SS with the metal caps, I don't know if you heard of them, they're the special SD. [ZeGesicheitz?] Special Security service. These are the top, these are even more than the Gestapo, you know. And they were stopping any and everyone. If it was a General from the army – papers. Any – even SS was stopped, except if it was an officer. And civilian, everybody had to – and there were dozens of these guys here. Big guys, you know, heavily armed. And then we would go left; and they go right, we would left. And we evaded them for quite some time. And now, it was nothing. And there were two come toward us. And there was nobody else around anymore. And we couldn't run, we couldn't walk, we couldn't do nothing anymore. And no train. And all of a sudden – they must have reached us within two, three feet – a civilian almost stepped on their feet. They grabbed him, asked for id. They were busy with him, and then the train comes. We in the train, and off we went. And now we come to Gleiwitz – daylight!

It is now about ten o'clock in the morning. And we walk down the main street, and we asked somebody, you know, and we always knew – we tried at least, to ask, an old mother, you know, a grandmother, something like that. You know, we wouldn't ask any young people, or anything like that. Old grandmother – where this and this street is – she said: "A few streets down."

And all of a sudden, two prisoners, in prison uniform, come toward us. One of them – and behind them, two SS. Because it was still peacetime. Even so, it was December. It was still peacetime. And one of them was a roofer, his name was Oscar Heim. I taught him to be a roofer. We together met Marion – met the girls, the first time. And he, he came back again, because there was more work to be done. And he told Marion - he said I have escaped. But he said, even as a joke: "Don't be surprised if he's gonna visit you one of these days." I mean, just as a joke. But maybe, maybe, you know. And we walked, and I said to Max: "Oscar is coming toward us," and you know, he would never give us away. But our luck was he wore such a thick, first of all, he was six feet, some, tall. And he wore such a thick glasses, he could only see you once you hit him. But, you know, he would have never wanted to give us away. But just to see you, at the moment, and the SS knew me too. You know, when you are known, and you've been there before, and they know you escaped. And, there was a big premium on our heads, twenty thousand marks on each head. You know, by Himmler. You know, 'cause this is one thing the Nazi's never wanted. The Jews were for them, the cowards. A Jew would never be a hero, escape or anything. Out - taboo. But here, Jews escape out of Auschwitz, this was unheard of.

So we find the street – like I told you, I got it in my neck, er, in my [dings?]? [indicates head.] Nederbergstrasse, we go down, we walk down there. And here, I forgot the number, like I said, but I found, that there's a [meetz?] must have put a ?? over it, you know. A star of David outside. I figured, Jews live here. So we went inside – so Max told me: "You must be very diplomatic." I said: "How can I be diplomatic? First, I must know if they are still alive. Because, you remember, the last time, I got this letter." And, anything could've happened – they could've picked them up. Because, we escaped, a day later.

One floor, two floors, and here I see - Schlesinger. Ring the bell. And here comes a girl I have never met before, her older sister, Erika. I said: "Is Marion Schlesinger home?" She said: "No, my sister is at work." So then, already, a stone fall off the chest, you know. She's okay. She said: "You wanna talk to my mother?" I said, "Yes, please." She goes in and the mother learned, during the war, to be a secretary, to help support the family, you know. And, she said: "Mother, there must be – there are two men who wanna talk to you." The mother said: "Oh, Augustine," – it's the guy the

mother worked for, you know, very nice German. In fact, he helped them too. And he probably sent two mechanics to find out how she is. You know, she wasn't feeling good, she was home for a day or two. We come inside, and the mother lies on the couch, and she said: "Who? You don't work for Augustine – who are you?" And I couldn't tell her. I mean, how can I tell her we escape from Auschwitz, you know. I don't know what was wrong – she might have a heart condition. I said, and I had told her, I said: "Mrs. Schlesinger, I met your daughter in Auschwitz." She said: "You are lying – if you don't tell us the truth, you leave my house right away. My daughter had never been in Auschwitz, or near Auschwitz." Because, they are not permitted to travel that far, you know. I said: "Mrs. Schlesinger, I don't really know what is wrong, you know, you laying there." So she said: "Nothing wrong, I have something wrong with my foot." I said, "Well then, I can tell you the truth." I said: "We escaped from Auschwitz." She said: "Is the police after you?" I said: "No." I mean, the police was after us, thirty hours before, but not now.

I said, "I was commanded from Auschwitz to Gleiwitz, and built all the roofs." "Oh," she said, "You are the roofer who was singing so nice on the roof, all the time. Ja, Marion told me about you." And you know, then I send the scarf, you know I had on the scarf there and made a sort of, remembrance. "You are the one," she said, "when did you escape?" You know, I told her, and she said then of course she said right away: "Erik, we must help them." The father, you know. My father was a lawyer who couldn't practice under the Nazi's anymore. And then, but he defended some communists before. And they owed him something, you know. And, so the girls cleaned us up. So we staying with them eight or ten days, and took baths and everything, you know, we started to become... They sewed up our jackets and everything.

And, the boss, where the mother worked, was a, also an anti-Nazi. And he was ready to help us, but we needed papers. Without papers you can't... everything, same thing. So the father approached this former communist, who he helped – whom he defended earlier. His name was Sauer. And he said: "Mr. Sauer," – he could talk to him, because, after all, this guy, was a extreme trusted guy. He said: "I have, in my house, two Jews who escaped from Auschwitz." So he said: "What?" He said: "Schlesinger, say no more. You know that I'm hiding already twenty-one of your people, since the beginning of the war. And for two heroes like this, I have room anytime. Anytime. But let me make the arrangements, first. I get back to you – right away." So he got back to the father – he found, this communist, found a German industrialist, a multi-millionaire, who gave a hundred thousand mark to the Nazi's, so they gave him a plaque – the Nazi's left him alone. And he gave a hundred thousand mark to the communist underground, so they would

leave him alone. He bought insurance policies both ways. At least, that's what he thought. Unfortunately, he didn't.

And he had a villa, which was only lived in by the housekeeper. A huge estate - right at the outskirts of the city. Well, probably about thirty kilometer from, you know. And the father gave us stamps, food stamps, he said: "I cannot give you much, but I will split with you. And we will send you, from time to time, you will not starve." I said: "Mr. Schlesinger, you don't have to worry, we didn't starve in the camp. We should not starve free." And he said, "But, we will help you, whatever we can." And here we come – in the morning, we were supposed to meet at this special place, early in the morning, but now we were clean. And each one had a box, it looked like mechanic tools in it. And her is, in front of us – the people, talking there. Woman, well dressed, and this man, introduced to us, Mr. Sauer. And this is Mrs. [Maaslick?]. He said: "You don't talk. We do all the talking. You will sit directly behind us." He said: "Understood?" "Yes."
"You will board the same bus we board. No questions asked."

There were several buses come, and here, all kinds of Nazi's, in uniform. High Nazi's, boarding this bus. We think, this isn't the bus, how can it be the bus. But they go in. We go in. Sit direct behind them. And that bus picks up all the VIP Nazi's. And this woman was also VIP, like I told you. Hundred thousand mark to Hitler, you know, and he probably was in the party, so they would leave him alone. And the party, you know. So here, the bus stops – a big guy comes, you know, he's a general of the SS. "Heil Hitler, kammerade." The whole bus goes up, including us, "Heil Hitler." You have to do the same thing these people do. And then we sit down. And all of a sudden, we see the woman gives the bus driver a handful of cigars, you know, a handful of cigars in the war is like, er, you know. So the bus driver stops, you know, we drive through beautiful scenery. It was so peaceful, you couldn't believe that within, a week, or ten days, this thing gonna be transformed into a most horrible war. It is unbelievable. So she gives, and then the driver: "Yes. Jawol." You know, smartly. And we were already say, "Oh, this is warm at least, we saw a hay barn up there. Ooh, this is closed, that's gonna be warmer than ours, you know." 'Cause now it was deep snow, all over. And the guy stopped, but she didn't let him stop where she lives. Little bit before, you know. So then, we walk in there. I mean, like a ??[german], you know what I mean. It is like a fairy tale. Wunderland.

We walk in the kitchen and there's the housekeeper, Josephka. Speaks mainly Polish, or German too. Broken German. "Josephka," and she knew him too. "This is Mr. Sauer, he is the plumbing meister, and these two are mechanics. Two plumbers. They gonna do all kinds repairs to the villa. But don't say anything in the city, because you know, under the law, we are not

permitted to do any illegal work." "Nein, no, I will not tell anybody," you know. So we are in there and they take us around.

We can stay in the master bedroom, any bedroom, and then they take us downstairs. You know, they had a basement – I have never seen anything like this – it is even up to date, the modernest one. They had such a huge basement with ceilings – they were about eight feet tall. Built - as a storage. There must have been ten tons of potatoes in there, where they were on a platform. It's constantly circulating under a special heat. They would last forever. With x-ray lamps, you know, like, rolling constantly, constantly, rolling around. They would, you know, just made so they would last for a long, long time. And then they had thousands of, hundreds of glasses made with chicken you know, all preserved. What they had! And she said we can eat anything, everything. And we already thought of ways – how can we get to the Schlesinger food. Of course, it wasn't possible.

So we sit there and help her and of course, nothing has arrived yet, you know. And one day, you hear all kinds of rumblings and mumbling and they - one big dog they had. A huge, big German Shepherd they had. These were the only occupants. So the dog was barking and Josephka, the housekeeper, goes to the next gate there, and she comes back and she says: "Gestapo secretaire, hauptstormfuhrer [Zolter?] is outside. He says, he claims to be a friend of the owner. He wants to stay overnight. He's on his way of the evacuation and his motorcycle broke down." Max says: "Don't let him in." I said: "Wait a minute – how old is he?"
She said: "He's probably in his middle sixties, you know." I said: "Let him in – how can you keep him out? You know, he'll shoot his way in. We are not scared of him, I mean we are two, especially, he claims to be a friend," you know. I mean, nobody knows that we are here. And we slept in the house all the time, the villa. I said: "Josephka, we gonna sleep in the chauffeur's quarters." Even though, the chauffeurs they were let go during the war. She said: "I bring you food later." I said: "We don't want no food, you know. Right now our bed..." I said: "But in the morning, we gonna circle around and come in from the rear." And we have not been here before. This she did not like, you know. But anyway, she said – agreed.

So we come in the morning, and you know, I mean, we are trained in the camp to watch every move, everything. And here he sits on the table, you know, older man, I mean, we were kids then, so he had a pistol left and a pistol right. So we walk – Max walked toward the one pistol, I walked toward the other pistol, you know. So close that if anything goes wrong, we are in charge of the pistols. And so we tell him: "Zu dobra," morning in Polish greetings because it's Polish territory. And the guy speaks Polish to us. And then we tell him, couldn't speak anymore, then we speak German.

He said: "How come German? You not in the army and all this." And we said: "Well, you know, and all this. We couldn't tell you who we are. We said: "Well, we have some defects," you know – Max said this – and his foot wrong, and I didn't hear good - something. And we are working for Sauer. "Oh, Adolf Sauer, he's also a friend." I couldn't figure. This guy is a communist – he's a friend of this guy and of this guy, but he said: "Don't get me wrong," he said. "I have nothing to do with the SS. I am a secretary in an office. You know, I don't – just..." I don't know. That's not our business, but we figured right now, he vouches for us. We might need him. We have no papers or nothing, you know. And then he says, he said: "And I have to give a notice to my wife and family – doesn't even know..." – they were in the village, that he cannot fulfill his evacuation. His motor broke down, he had a heart condition and all kinds of stuff. He wants to go back and see – and notify his wife. And he said: "I have to also go and get papers." And she said right away – you know, he promised to bring our papers. Josephka said get our papers. "Without papers you cannot be here," she said. She also got scared now, and he says: "You don't worry, I vouch for those guys. You know, I am still Gestapo, you know. Nobody touches these guys. They are working for my friend."

Well, that's just what we wanted to hear. So we said, in the morning, there are two bicycles, I go with him, Max stays behind. And we go a few hundred feet and here come tanks. Tanks are covered up already. And he asks the first guy with the tank there, you know, it's evacuation - he wants to go to Hinburg, you know, the next city. He said: "You go there, Ivan is waiting for you." You know who Ivan is? The Russian – Ivan. And then we go a little farther – he wants to find out for sure. And here we see thousands of prisoners marching. And left of right, they shooting them. You know, the one falls down, the one's can't anymore – shoot them. These from our camps, because, you know, this is not far from Auschwitz. You know, it's all vicinity - they been walk and walking. And I got, of course, I start weeping. You know, and he turns around and he says: "Why are you weeping?" you know. "What's going on?" I said: "The wind is so strong," you know. But I felt awful because in the next few minutes we could be just like them. I mean, we are by no means free. I mean, we are even worst off, in many ways than they are. Because we can, now we can be traitors. We can be saboteurs, we can be anything, called right. And now we have a Gestapo on top of us, you know.

So we going back, and he is so worried, this guy. And he says if the Nazi's come, they gonna arrest him and shoot him, you know. And he said if the Russians come, they gonna shoot him. And we said if the Russians come, we can help you. "How can you help me?" We said: "We speak a little Russian," you know. This guy spoke perfect Polish and Russian, you know.

But we didn't know that – you know. And, but we figured we can help him, you know, who we are – show him the number. And how would we know – we don't know, we have never seen the Russians before. Are they the guys who are supposed to free us? We don't know what to expect. Our heaven was supposed to come. So I said to Max, Max plays a little piano. I said: "Why don't you play the internation - you know the song is the communist, you've probably heard about it, ja. It is a song, it is sung, when we were kids in Germany, they played the – the German Communists played the [internation?], a hymn, it is - wherever there is a communist, they play this hymn. You know, this song. And it is listened to all over. I said, "Why don't you learn it, then we can greet the Russians with this?" So he started it a little bit, you know.

So here, one day, we got along pretty good and we tell the guy – I said: "Do you know what we can do, Mr. Zoltar, in any case, destroy all your papers. If the Russians come, they are not gonna like your papers. I can tell you. And, not only this, you will jeopardize all of us. All of us." "But," he said, "what I gonna do if the Germans come?" "If the Germans come, they know you. Then you don't need papers. You can have lost your papers." And he start burning, but we, of course, don't watch him, you know. He burns and burns and burns.

So, now, Josephka has birthday and bakes a cake and we eat very, I mean, I don't have to tell you how good we ate. We ate excellent. Better than we ate, even years before I came in the camp. So here, she has birthday and put this pound cake upside down, and somehow it fell out of her hand, on the floor. And she's all upset and cries. And of course, we, and I go on the – I pick up the cake, you know, in pieces, you know. And I didn't think of it anything. I said: "Josephka, don't be upset, I hope we will still be able to eat that cake," even though I didn't think anything of it, you know. To us, to eat from the floor, from such a clean floor and even if it was a dirty floor, would have meant nothing, for such a cake. Anyway, a few minutes later we hear rubbing and rubbing, and close by a heavy barrage, very close by. And I go out and I see tanks, but they look different than the ones from before. I go out again, and I see funny figures. Such a tall guys, they look so awful, you know. And I said: "I think the Russians are here." And before I even finished, they come inside.

And they knocked on the door, and nobody opened the door and they just pushed the door in, you know. And here stand a big guy from the Ural you know, with the knife, with the machine pistol. He said: "???? [Russian]" You know, now I understand Russian, then I didn't, you see. He said: "Why didn't you open this door?" I said:...

So the Russian guy comes in, the soldaat, big fellow. And he said why didn't we open the door? Of course, we didn't understand Russian, you know. And he says: "You got any watches," and in German, pickle means "[gerki?]" and we just had lunch, and there were, a pickle, a glass of pickles were on the table. And of course, not understanding the language, Max says he wants pickles – he wants gerkis. I said: "Max he doesn't want gerki's" and we almost got shot when we had our discussion among each other. And he saw Max's watch, and he took Max's watch. And I didn't want to give him my watch. So I slip my watch back in my pocket. He said: "Do you have a watch?" I said: "No," [shakes head]. Luckily, he didn't find it. I mean, just figure, why should I give him my watch, you know.

And then, they came in and we tried to explain to more and more Russians, the one looked like an officer, Lieutenant and we showed them our number. Of course, the number was better to read than it is now. And then we explained, you know, [largo?] and all this, you know. But without knowing the language, it's very hard to explain. And they were, the one, the one Russian says, " ??? SS." We are SS, because the SS has a blood group tattooed under the left underarm, which is the only service, elite service, who has it in Germany. And the reason for this is, if they get injured, or shot at the front, any place, for them, blood is instantly accessible. For none of the other armed services.

And the Russians, of course knew the gas was built, and the gas was first tried on the Russians themselves. There would be no Jew survivors from any of the camps. And that's why they were ordered, if they find anyone with a tattooed number – he has to be SS. Shoot him right away. We didn't know that. So anyway, they threw knives at us and we were just lucky that we thought this - our freer, our liberators, and finally, there came in an officer, he looked like a Jewish officer and we told him that we are Jews. Oh, he said: "[Russian]" and that sounded good to us. And we nicked, "yes", he said: "[Russian]". That means, Jews are [jah-vry?], you know. He is also Jewish.

And then he told these guys to leave us alone. And, all of a sudden, there were hundreds of Russians. They parked their tanks right against the villa. And it shook left and right. And this villa was loaded with hundreds and hundreds of soldiers. And I told Max: "Play the piano." And of course, they also brought women soldiers in there, and Max just started to play when one of the heavy dressed, and armed soldiers kicked Max with the foot right off the floor, you know. And they overtook this piano, themselves. And it wasn't much left of the piano when they get through anymore.

And maybe, half an hour later, the door opens and one of them said: "[Russian]" and all of a sudden, a big guy comes in with a leather coat, looks

like from Hollywood, an actor. And we went to this Russian officer and he tells us "[Russian]" – this is a Jewish General. How we gonna get to him? And he opened headquarter upstairs, and of course, every two steps were two Russians with a machine guns and he had all his radar and everything up there, you know, his headquarter. And after a while, finally, there came a lull, the door was half open, and instead of so many soldiers - there were only two up on top. And when the door was open, you know, we both shouted in unison, "Mezen Jeden." You know in Jewish. We are Jewish.

And the general already had took his heavy uniform off and he took his head out there, and he spoke in Yiddish to us. He said: "Is das Jeden?" And then we have a discussion in Jewish with him, you know. And he said: "??[Russian]" – we should come upstairs. And we came upstairs, and we told this general everything what has been going on, and we told him that he will find many with the number, you know. And he changed instantly – he telegraphed Moscow, you know, that they going to find many prisoners with a tattooed number, with a tattooed number on the left arm. They are not to be confused with the SS, who have it under the underarm, you see – to save them. And so, we ask him to take – you know, we hoped, we thought he is gonna stay here for a while. And we can help fight with him. We ready to fight the Germans. He said he cannot do that because we are, he hasn't got the authority for this, and we are not trained.

And all of sudden, they called up with this Zoltar, this former Gestapo who was hidden with us, there. And apparently, they found, he did not destroy all his pictures. He left some and they found, of him in uniform. And the general called us upstairs, and he almost did not believe us. We almost were shot. He said to us: "How can you dare to hide with the worst of Hitler's people here?" You know, and we told him the circumstances. They was abnormal, unusual, you know. And we had a very, very hard time, but at the end, he believed us. And so he gave us a document, a paper with his stamp on there, which saved our lives, and after a few days, we went back to the city, to Gleiwitz. And then helped the family who helped us, the Schlesingers. And of course, it was very, very hard with the Russians. They were very, very brutal, even to the Jewish survivors – they were brutal. It is hard to believe. Many of our friends, who survived the camp, whom we met there again, whom we helped, were shipped eventually to Siberia. Because they needed all kinds of people there, and they couldn't care less whom they shipped. It was just horrible. This was right at the beginning, right after they occupied the city.

And so we stayed in the city for several more months, as soon as we were allowed to travel. And then we traveled on a freight train, back to Berlin. And in Berlin of course, we got an apartment from the former Nazi's. This

was taken away from them – which was actually bombed out, but, it was better than nothing. And we stayed in Berlin, I think, for a little over a year. And then we came, were allowed to come to America under the displaced persons Act. And we came to New York and went to San Francisco. But, before we came, of course, I guess you must know now, I married Marion Schlesinger in 1946.

Q: CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SCHLESINGER'S WHEN YOU WENT BACK?

A: Well, when we went back to Gleiwitz, first I went to Berlin with Max alone - because we don't know what we find there. And I promised her I gonna bring her back, because she wanted to leave, of course. It became all Polish. There was very hard to live there. It was hard to live all over, even in Germany. The situation was very, very bad, which is understandable, right after the war, for everyone. But we, the survivors, were given preferred treatment, as far as it was available. We got special food stamps, and we had permission not to stand in line, which, of course, the German population tremendously resented – which created anti-Semitism, but we couldn't care less. I mean, it was our turn now. And I went then, after a few weeks, I went back to Gleiwitz again and got Marion, her sister and some other friends to Berlin. And, in Berlin, of course, we in – when was it? – in February '46, we got married. Together with the Drimers. Max also married his former girlfriend. Yeah, we had a double wedding – we had the most unusual, a most interesting wedding we probably can think of. Berlin was occupied by four powers. And, when we came to Berlin, all Berlin was still occupied by Russians only. But through the Treaty of – the Potsdam Treaty – they were supposed to relinquish the three sections to the French, American and British. And I met several Russians, of course, we were ?? with the Russians, and several of them became very good friends obviously.

And now we plan our wedding and very few things were available. Of course, the Joint Distribution Committee helped us in many ways. But of course, there were things we couldn't get in. And of everything, of course, the most thing we didn't have was a band, of course. And after the ceremony, I met a American captain – he also was at our wedding. And I said: "You know, I mean, it is awful, a wedding without a band. There must be a band playing someplace here – you know of." And of course, it was the curfew and everything. And then he said: "Yeah, the only band I know playing is in Darlem for the commanding General. He was general and he entertains VIP's."
I said: "Couldn't we get that band?" He said: "You must be crazy." I said: "Why don't you take me to him?" And this captain, this Jewish captain, already knew our story. And then I said: "Well, why don't you take me to

him?" And that was right after we went under the [huppe?] you know. First Max and then, we, and then – so, I wouldn't let up. So he took me to them, and, of course, he had the jeep with a couple of armed guards in there, you know. But very dangerous, there was shooting all over Berlin yet until... so we come there to the head quarter and he didn't even have permission to get in there, himself. But, you know how it is. One Jewish officer meets another Jewish officer – so he talked with the real ?? with the general, another Jew. He said: "You know this is such a unique story and this has to be brought to his attention." And, "Nah," he said, "no it's not possible." And he said: "Try it – what, he can only say no." So the guy goes to the general. And the general goes on the mike, and of course, I couldn't speak enough English then, but I heard – I know of the action what took place then. He said: "Ladies and gentlemen, please make this your last dance. This whole band and some other things will be complimented by the United States and by me, to a very special occasion." So, he told a little, he said this fellow you see here, you know, he escaped from Auschwitz, you know and all this. And he's gonna marry with another friend and you know, they are waiting. And they all clapped, and they brought whiskey and they loaded up and they thought already, I was kidnapped. It took three or four hours till we got back. But we had a band, and we had that celebration going up to the wee hours. And then, of course, I worked in Berlin for the Joint Distribution Committee and for the [highers?]. And when we were eligible to come to America, we emigrated to America.

And first, we were in New York – the first six months. But we didn't like it, even so, I had lots of relatives there, who also went through the Holocaust, but we just didn't care for the, for New York. They gave us buildings, provided an apartment in a building, which, it was already condemned. Closed off, next to a garbage pile – a big garbage pile. And, I don't know if you know New York, or not. Willard Street, you know Willard, right, well of course way before – there was the 'A' train going up there. Right around there, that's where we lived, Willard crossing, and 'aagh' – horrible. So this was one of the things which drove us away from New York. And of course, California was the place. Max was already out here, and so then the so-called committee wouldn't send us here. They said: "We can send you to Auckland." I said "I don't want to Auckland. I wanna go to San Francisco." They said: "Auckland is across the bridge." But I mean, I still wanted to, but, you know, if they want to send you to Auckland, then, you responsible to Auckland, not here. So we went on our own. But we only got to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Then Marion had a miscarriage, you know. And I had sent all the clothes and everything already to San Francisco. And, so we had ten dollars left.

So then I went myself, in a bus, to San Francisco and I got a work. I got a job right away as a roofer, which, my trade - I learned in the camp. So this trade actually helped me to become pretty successful, in America. Also, cost me also my life, in America. I had a heavy accident in 1961. I came down three stories. And I broke several ribs, my wrists and all. This was horrible. That was on my wife's birthday. You gotta be tough. So the toughness I got in there, yeah, yeah.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN CALIFORNIA BEFORE YOUR WIFE WAS ABLE TO COME OVER?

A: Oh, just a few months. Oh, two, three months. I stayed with Max. Then I sent her ticket. And we lived in areas, you know, I mean. Areas, people don't dream today, walking through. That's then.

Q: I'D LIKE TO GO BACK A LITTLE.

A: Sure.

Q: AND TALK ABOUT THE EARLIER DAYS. ACTUALLY BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE ARRESTED – SEPTEMBER 20TH 1939. SO YOU WERE SENT TO SACHSENHAUSEN AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY?

A: Well, my mother – I have, actually like I said, we were still six living children then. But four of them were older than me. Quite a bit older. One brother had left for Israel. My mother almost pushed him out. And then, he served in the armed forced there and all this. And then, and by the way, I got him – we went over to Israel in '61 and I my brother came over here – emigrated in '63. I have to come to America. And then, I had an older sister. She lived, during the war, in Shanghai, with a small daughter, a niece. My sister passed away in the seventies, I think, yeah. Seventy, late seventies. And I have another sister – I had another sister in England. She also passed away. Unfortunately, earlier, in the fifties. I have two nieces left – one in England and one in Berlin.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS - HAPPENED?

A: My mother perished also in Birkenau. She came to [Terrazine?] to [Taurazianstad?] first, ja. I never knew what became of my father, because he left much earlier. My brother went to my father in, I guess, I don't know, I guess, maybe in '39. And I don't know what became of him. Sometimes, people talk – they saw him, but you know – it's...

Q: DID YOU HAVE A RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING? DID YOU GO TO HEBREW SCHOOL?

A; Yes, I went to Hebrew School, but I never was too religious.

Q: RIGHT. GOOD. AND IN YOUR FAMILY, WERE YOU KOSHER, WERE YOU...?

A: Well, as long as my father was home, we were kosher, ja.

Q: AND WHAT WERE THE FIRST EVIDENCES OF CHANGE IN BERLIN?

A: Well, the first evidences were actually, you mean, with the Nazi's, ja, the Nazi's – this was already when they started the pre-election campaign. In, I guess, around '32. Probably previously already, because then it started – you see, when things get tough. And they especially got tough in Germany. And when you live in a big city like Berlin, so many degrees, you feel even more. Many more people are out of work, and so, even so, we did not feel too much anti-Semitism, because we lived practically with the Germans together in the city. In the same houses, the same, and like I said previously, until it really became that the Nazi's came to power and then many of them thought that they gonna better themselves, if they distance themselves from the Jews and so forth.

Q: SO WHAT WERE SOME OF THE PHYSICAL CHANGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT IN BERLIN?

A: Well, the physical, were number one that the – you could not learn a trade any more. I mean, we were even much more restricted than the German Jews, because we'd never been a German Jew. I was always considered a Polish Jew, even so, I never spoke the language and never saw Poland. The only time I saw Poland was when I was deported in 1938, when I was, in November '38, I think there was the action against the Polish Jews living in Germany, especially in Berlin. I was shipped to the Polish border and was in a train. Then I was just sixteen. And I was in train for thirty-six hours, then they opened the train. The police came in and then they asked for your passport and they gave you a red stamp, a registered stamp in your pass and said, "Now, you can travel throughout Poland." But I hated the Poles and I hated Poland. So I saw the same train turning around, and then changing the address – putting down the Berlinstadd, in other words, had a big railroad station in Berlin. So I probably was the only one who noticed this – it got already dark, so I backed down a little bit and when the train went past, I went into the train. In the train compartment there were maybe thirty, forty Jews from Vienna. They were all older. And when they saw that the train

goes down the other direction, back toward Germany, they were all scared. And they said you know, and the one guy said – he said: "Yu know, if we ending up in Germany, we are, first of all, we signed we never come back alive to Germany. We'll be shot." Maybe in Austria, they were more strict than this. "And then, second," he said, "we are not supposed to have any more than twenty-five dollars on us."

So they throw all your money away. And when I saw all the money in a pile, I picked up most of the money. I didn't have twenty-five cents on me. I figured, if they search me – well, then I give it back to them. So I took the money and then, when I came home, they brought me back to jail anyway, for another ten days. But my mother got all this money. The police sergeant asked me: "Where did you get this money from?" I said: "My mother gave me all the money she could scrape together, because she wouldn't know how long I would have to live in Poland, without any support from anyone."

Q: WHY DID THEY SHIP YOU TO POLAND?

A: Well, it was – this was an action, actually, the Poles provoked. We had that later, much later. Poland says, the Polish government, every citizen who lives outside of Poland who has not reported in such a time, like, for instance, five years or whatever, is the last cutoff date, is this and this date. If you are not within the borders, you will, we will renounce citizenship. So the Nazi's said not only are thy gonna have all these Jews here, all these Polish Jews, but once they lose citizenship, then they become stateless - they can't ship them any place anymore. So then they shipped us off there, forcible, but actually, it was challenge, you know, it was brought on by the Poles.

Q: SO THEN WHEN YOU WENT BACK, WHEN YOU GOT BACK ON THE TRAIN AND YOU WENT BACK TO BERLIN, THEY PUT YOU IN JAIL?

A; They put me in jail, because now, I was already accepted by Poland. You see, I had on my stamp in my passport, already a registered stamp that I was accepted by Poland. And if I had known it, I would have thrown my pass away because I was sixteen. And then, so they arrested me and I was ten days in jail, until they were ready to bring me back to Poland. But this time, they brought me back with a police inspector again. This was in '38. But when we came now back, he said: "When I tell you to run, you run." You know, there's a no man's land and then there's a Polish side. And when we went, deported at first, several weeks previously, I saw a couple of guards there. They had them pistol up, they had the guns upside down, you know, like the bayonet was facing the floor. Now I saw hundreds of soldiers there. The tanks and artillery and machine pistols, they were all ready to shoot. So,

of course, they figured, one time is enough, when they deported all these, you know, they didn't want to go any farther. So when he tells me now to run, I said: "Inspector, if you take me there, I go with you. Why don't you come with me?" He said: "I have no business there." I said, "I have no business there either." I said: "These guys with the guns..." He said: "They are not gonna shoot you." I said: "Well then, you can bring me there." So he couldn't get rid of me. Sure, they would have shot me, as soon as I crossed that line. You know, there are so many feet – no man's land – where you can pass, and once you've passed the demarcation line, you get shot. You don't have to be – you know, this you know as a boy, already. So I figured, if you come with me, I go. So he wouldn't come.

Then, well, there was so much problems there – the Germans figured he's gonna get rid of me there in Poland. So he only had a one way ticket for me. So he hadn't enough money for me, to bring me back. So he had to borrow money from a German Association there. And in turn, I had to leave my passport there. So when I came back to Berlin, they caught me right away to the Gestapo. And they wanted me to emigrate, and he says; "Do you see the smoke over there?" I said: "Yes, I see smoke – what is that?" He says: "This is concentration camp, Sachsenhausen. If you don't leave Germany, if you are not out of Germany by this and this time, your smoke will go up the chimney too." This is when I knew what it meant. So then, finally, my passport came, but then it was too late. You see, and even so, I couldn't leave – we were very poor. And I couldn't go no place. Where could I go? My sister went to Shanghai, with the last, with my little niece. She was then five, six months or four months old. But just absolutely the last train. I think they went over Siberia. And as soon as I came in the camp then, in September my mother wrote right away – I'm in a concentration camp, and she should go right away. And, at first they would release prisoners, if she had a work permit for another country, especially Shanghai, and several got released. But then, as soon as my sister heard it, she got me a job offer, and all this stuff and as soon as it got to the Germans and the order came to release me. And I was in Sachsenhausen just about six, eight weeks, in November – it was now November '39. And in the morning I am called to the, they call it the [efektenkamp?], where the civilian clothes is kept, and I come in there and I look at my clothes and I have to wait outside, until all the formalities, and then we processed. And God, I was so happy. In half an hour, I gonna be out. God, you know, I just had a bad, bad taste of it, you know. It was horrible, two months, two, two and a half months, but – and all of a sudden the door, the gate, goes open. The prisoners have to get in line, all the Jews have to... and the guy, the commander, rides in with a white horse, into the camp and the radio beams out, "You sons of bitches tried to assassinate our beloved fuhrer." That was the first time they tried to kill him.

November 1939, in Munich. We didn't know that, but we were responsible for killing him.

And they had to – and the Jews had to count, and we counted. I counted several times, eleven, nine, eleven and twelve. You know, every tenth got shot. We tried to assassinate Hitler. So then, only ?? were to be released. You see, instead of me being released, I was ordered back to the barrack, and almost got shot. You know, and then, only very, very few would be released - if they were to England, special passage, or something like this, you know. But at first, they released several of them, you know. Many more, then it was out.

Q: NOW I KNOW YOU DESCRIBED THE DIFFERENCE, THE VERY IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AUSCHWITZ AND SACHSENHAUSEN. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN SACHSENHAUSEN. WHAT IT WAS LIKE – WHAT YOU SAW AT THE BARRACKS.

A: When you came, at first, when you came to Sachsenhausen, you don't think much. You a boy, I was sixteen, I was two weeks before my seventeenth birthday. I figured that this has to be a mistake. My mother, we still received mail in Sachsenhausen – all the time, we received mail. My mother wrote letters very hopefully and says: "You gonna be out in no time," and everything... But nobody, unfortunately, intervened. Even so, we were supposed to be, I can understand, war start with Poland – they intern us in concentration camps. But for the Jews, detested the concentration camps. And they figured, "who the hell, let's see if the world cares." If anybody would have cared, they would have let us out, maybe. But nobody cared, so then, they got rid of them. Who cared? They killed all the Jews over there, and tortured them – life was horrible, it was so much more horrible because this is what I said from the beginning. A concentration camp – they drilled us, like soldiers.

We had to march, we had to lay down, we had to run, we had to roll, we had to sit in bend knees- there's nothing we didn't have to do there. Ja, and they drilled from morning till night, sometime. You had to run and run and run and then, we had to go, at least, once, every two months, we had to go to the de-lousation. I don't know if you heard about this, they were scared of any sicknesses breaking out, so all your clothes, you had to go, you know, where they kill the lice. Specially, then you had to take all your clothes out. You stay all day outside in the winter – many of them even couldn't stand - they get heart attacks, everything. You know, I was lucky, I was young and strong. We stay out there in the cold, in the freezing cold.

Q: AND WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE, PHYSICALLY, SACHSENHAUSEN?

A: You know, I been in Sachsenhausen last year. My niece still lives there, and they made a memorial of this. And there's two barracks standing. One of them is where I was in. Barrack 39. Those bastards burnt it down, you know, the Nazi skinheads. You know, I mean, I guess you heard it in the papers. Once you were in, and after the extremely bad shock of the first few weeks, we had so many people in the camp, Jewish people. Some of them were very, very prominent, politically, literally. They talked about all kinds and, some of them were communists too. And they tried to keep them together. They talked and talked. They said: "This cannot last. It will not last." And then, they of course, they said, "The world will not look to it and the Nazi's is gonna be defeated in no time," you know, and all this. And so, this is what gave you always a little more hope.

Of course, once they put you to work, it was better – to productive work, you know. Because here and there, you had a chance to steal a little something, you know. And of course, this was rife, you know. A lot prisoners stole some bread there when they unloaded bread and they got caught and instantly, were executed. I mean, you risk your life for many, many things. Then you were executed for much less than this. And tortured. I mean, the Nazi's would dream up so many different torture. We had such a – you know, I have books at home, that thick, and the unfortunate thing is – friends of mine, after the war, when the Russians occupied Germany, they imprisoned the Nazi's by the thousands, in the same concentration camps.

The Nazi's – and now the prisoners. In fact, they asked me while I was still in Germany, if I wanna be – join the Eastern part – become an official in the camp, you know. And many prisoners liked it, you know. They wanted to get revenge, which you can't blame them either for, but I didn't want this, you know. Because, we did a little after the war, when we caught some Nazi's and so, but I had wanted to get away as far as possible. But, in the camps itself, in the morning – there's an appel – you know what an appel is? When they are counted, ja. They call down, ja. What do you call this appel in English – when they are called? The roll call. Roll call. After the appel, the SS, now, these are the barbaric SS, you know, these are the block fuhrers, you know, they in charge of different barracks, you know. And then, they in charge of different areas to work and all this. And they are dreaming up so many horrible things. They are so greedy, they don't know what to do with themselves. And they are looking for tortures.

One time, it was heavy raining – it was early in the forties. And I worked there, and all of sudden, I am called by one SS, they were in the work detail barracks. And I am called in there, and it was raining. They were from

Saxony, very brutal. And they had an electric device they made up and I was supposed to hold it, and they saw I couldn't let go anymore, so I thought I gonna be electrocuted. You know, I mean, it was just horrible. They turned it on more and more, you know, and it was highly voltage, you know and I mean, it was just so like, many times, I got hit, you know and – for really nothing. I mean...

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE SLEPT IN ONE BARRACK AND WHAT WERE THE BEDS LIKE AND...?

A: Well, in Sachsenhausen, there were – the main barracks consisted of two different sections of [fluegel?] they called them – A and B. And A was the eldest of the block, he was the chief. And B was the eldest of, they call it, one rank below. He was in charge of this. Normally what was enough, the normal occupancy was three hundred. Hundred and fifty of each. We were in there with six hundred. Three hundred each, twice the capacity. So we were laying like herrings. When you lay on the right hand side, you couldn't turn around, unless everybody goes to the other side. And it has to be arranged. And many times, of course, through the night, you sleep next to a dead comrade. He died during the night. And you couldn't move him during the night. He has to lay there until the morning. Then you move him, you know.

Q: WAS THERE A SEPARATE BARRACK FOR WOMEN?

A; No, in Sachsenhausen were no women - no. And none of them, none of the German concentration camps were women with men together, except Ravensbruck. But there were women only, mainly women. There were lots of prominent women.

Q: AND COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PHYSICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SACHSENHAUSEN AND AUSCHWITZ, AS FAR AS WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE AND...?

A: Well, after all, the physically different of the camp, was number one, like this – Sachsenhausen was a solidly built concrete bastion with steel, concrete and steel. It gate was solid steel. All the posts, the surrounding, everything was concrete. The voltage was 5 000 volt power. Heavy machine guns. Auschwitz was taken over by an old military barracks, this is what they originally were. They were brick built barracks. Ours in Sachsenhausen, were all wooden barracks. In the winter time, you froze, horribly, you froze. Of course, if you have no heat or nothing. Once in a while, they allowed us to get some wood and heat them up a little bit. But very, very rarely.

And, but the food was so minimal, they give you just enough to live. I think the calories were, I don't know, I don't remember anymore what it was. But in the morning, you basically get - sometimes you get two three times a week, you get a soup, it's supposed to be a soup, made out of ??, some kind of stock. But, it is just swimming in there. And everybody wants to go, be the last, you know why, because the thick stuff is on the bottom. But then, when it comes to the thick at the bottom, the eldest of the block takes that kettle away and keeps it for the VIP's, you see. So there's nothing left anyway, in there. They save it themselves. And then, at lunch, then you get black coffee. And that is your breakfast. At lunch you get, generally a quart of soup, which is supposed to be a little bit thicker, and a piece of bread. That's it – dry bread. And in the evening the same. Once in a while, you get a little piece of margarine, and a little marmalade.

Q: THIS WAS IN AUSCHWITZ?

A: This was Sachsenhausen. But then, of course, when the Nazi's overrun Europe like when the war looked like it would be over in no time at all, then they occupied France and Holland and Belgium. They got so much excessive food and they stole all this champagne and cognacs and we had to go nights, to the trains, and unload it. From Holland came those cheeses, like big wheels, they were taller than me. So all this was stolen for the Nazi's so naturally, the Nazi's couldn't eat their food. So we got their food and the prisoner food. And at the same time, Berlin allowed a canteen to be stacked with food, and for buying purposes. So the Germans, this was right at the beginning, and early forties, or middle forties. The German bread factories, load, day and night, they brought bread in there. There was so much to eat there, and you could buy, and the prisoners all of sudden, get fat. And as fast as it that went, as fast as the goods went by, as fast as it was disappearing again. Because then, soon, you know, six months, it was six months and three months later, they got setbacks, whatever was... it changed. And you came home, you come to your barrack again, and instead of finding extra bread and all this in there, loaded, zero, but all this we could buy and everything - empty. The Nazi's took it out during the day, and then, gave it to some privileged prisoners who were mostly, you know, Gentiles, of course, their own.

And instead of being, letting down the discipline, they greeted you already, instead of the gate being opened for twelve, it was opened for six or for four. And then, you know you pile up. Then they hit you, you know. How can you walk with a twelve man formation into a gate that's open only for four. You piling up. Then they hit you with [sturer?], with canes, whatever they get a hold of.

Q: CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DEPORTATION TO AUSCHWITZ? WHAT THAT TRIP WAS LIKE, I KNOW YOU SAID IT WAS MANY DAYS?

A: Oh, that trip was horrible. I mean, after, you see, first of all, we were lucky that we were not executed by this commander. But it guess he himself, was scared too. 'Cause, like he told his under lieutenant, he said, you know, "It has to be kept quiet." He knew himself it has to be kept quiet, because if he was reported to Berlin, that the Jews got a mutiny, he ends up on the Eastern Frontier, just like the others. So that's why he kept it quiet. Now who's gonna talk? The SS want to keep their jobs. The prisoners are not gonna talk. So, that's the way it goes. So when we went on transport, but what he didn't tell us is that half of them might die anyway, on the transport already, because you go in a animal car, you know, and then, like I said, a trip normally should take eight, ten hours, and we ending, I don't remember. I think it took at least four, five days.

Q: WHAT DID YOU DO IN THOSE FOUR OR FIVE DAYS?

A: Nothing. You can do talking – you talking and then dreaming and then and thinking and hoping.

Q: WERE YOU STANDING UP THE WHOLE TIME?

A: Oh, ja, you can't sit down, you know. There was no room to sit.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT BATHROOMS?

A: Nothing. There was no bathroom there. I think they had a place there where you know – like a barrel, you know. You have to take the bowel movement. That's all we had. I think sometimes at the stations, they brought in a barrel of water – I don't even remember. Maybe they didn't even bring water. That's why several died in there, in each one.

Q: WHEN YOU ARRIVED IN AUSCHWITZ, DID YOU KNOW WHERE YOU WERE?

A: No – Auschwitz, we know, sure. As soon as we got in there, we know it was Auschwitz.

Q: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION?

A: Well, the first impression, you see, we didn't... we knew about gas, but we could not figure that we gonna go in the gas, because we were supposed to be

the prisoners they needed. That's why we couldn't understand. And we were all able-bodied. We were not sick or anything like this. So we figured, we made it that long so they surely gonna put us back to work. But it was different then, because they didn't need all of us. And many of my friends ended up in the gas, instantly. 'Cause they just didn't need us, regardless of how qualified they were.

Q: DID YOU ARRIVE THERE AT NIGHT, OR DURING THE DAY?

A: During the day, I think.

Q: AND WHAT HAPPENS...

A: I think late in the afternoon.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY WHEN YOU...?

A: First, first we were registered and then we were sent to barracks, you know. And in the barracks, we were not long in Auschwitz one, I think we were no more than two or three days there.

Q: AND THEN, WHAT HAPPENED?

A: And then, we had to get in line, all of us. And then we were screened. Left and right. And whoever went right, would go building up Auschwitz number three, this was [monowitz?] [buhler?] IG Farm. And whoever ended up on the left, some of them – it's hard to tell. But, most of - we didn't see anymore.

Q: COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT – YOU SAID YOU WERE JUST RECENTLY IN SACHSENHAUSEN?

A: Last year, last June.

Q: DID YOU VISIT AUSCHWITZ AS WELL?

A: Yes.

Q: CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THAT TRIP? ABOUT SEEING SACHSENHAUSEN AND AUSCHWITZ, FIFTY YEARS LATER.

A: The memories, for me, were much harder in Auschwitz. Not so much in Auschwitz, but until I came to Birkenau. You see, when I came to Birkenau originally, as I told you, I was standing in line to be gassed. I was still strong

young guy, you know. And as horrible as it was, but I figured it's gonna be over fast and you know, I mean... but then, when we walked around, it was explained to us, where the gas chambers were, where the cremates were. Where you still see all the bricks and everything laying down. Where, it is announced that you walking on bones, and that bone – then, to think, you know, of my mother, of my brothers, the whole family, you know, who had to go through all this. Because then you are much older. This hit me very, very hard, you know.

And Auschwitz hit you hard, when they brought you around the black wall where they used to shoot all the prisoners. You see, these are the prisoners who were privileged to die by gunshot, rather than by gas. Or, they used this because it is faster. You see, the gas has to be going when more... this, they can do anyone. Like most of the time, escapees would be shot. Why would they be shot? Because the whole camp has to watch them. The camp cannot watch the gas. You see, they want a deterrent. For the Nazi's, the biggest offence, as anybody will tell you, is an escape. And for Jews to escape, was extremely rare, because first of all, you could not escape. I mean, what is an escape? You know, regardless... that's why when Max approached me with this scheme, I said, you know, "We have little chance to survive." But just throwing your life away completely, even if the hope is only a thread, you wanna hang onto it. But when you see – I saw good friends of mine, very good friends of mine, we'd been in the camp for almost five years together, and they wanted me to take with them. They wanted me to go along with them. They figured, this is the one we want, you know. And when they told me their plan, you remember when I told you, I opened the window for them – they were sentenced to death by hanging. And they were hung – and this is all testimonied. And, it is horrible, it is just, I mean, just horrible. Because, you know, you wanna escape. You wanna feel there must be some chance of it. And when Joseph explained to us what it's gonna be, but nothing turned out this way. And that's why we were so extremely lucky. We were extremely lucky. There were not one – there were dozens and dozens incidents, and any one of them was more than fatal.

Q: WHO MET JOSEPH FIRST – DID YOU...?

A: Max. Well, like I explained - Max worked in Auschwitz, at the factory. Max worked in the insulation department. And Joseph also worked as a civilian in the insulation part. But Joseph was an officer in the underground. And Joseph, and there were many civilians, worked there, during the day and during night. But, especially during the day. There were Polish, some of them were half civilian, half civilian we call them, when they were still under the guardsmanship of the Nazi's, not under the SS, but maybe under the air

force, or the army. And then the other ones were full civilians, like Joseph, was, even so, he had to do labor. He was, you know, he was assigned to this job. But he could go home to their home, to his own home.

Q: HE WAS A NON-JEW?

A: Non-Jew. Catholic.

Q: AND WHY DO YOU THINK HE WANTED TO HELP YOU ESCAPE? WHAT WAS IN IT FOR HIM?

A: Well, when they – I guess you know most of the story, when we went there, I don't know if I said what or not. We went, Max told me we should go to Auschwitz one more time, in '89. We have friends in Berlin, who arranged this trip. One of them is a writer, and he had been in Auschwitz several times - he takes groups there, he's also a survivor from [Terrascene?]. We went with two cars to Auschwitz. In fact, yesterday, I saw a tape, the story of one of the friends we went there with. He's a musician, he played in Birkenau. Coco Schumann. I don't know if you ever heard about that. That was very interesting. Yesterday, I had the tape was given to me. So, anyway, he came along, and we traveled – it was a very rough trip. It was still, the old Germany was still in power. And so, we had to drive through East Berlin, through East Germany, into Poland. It was a long, long trip. And now, and we stayed at the hotel in Krakow – it's an international hotel. The hotel wasn't bad at all, in fact, it was very nice. There was music – a band played at night, it was actually for the foreigners. They wanted to the – er – the dollars, you know. And the next morning, we traveled to Auschwitz. Auschwitz from Krakow is approximately sixty, seventy kilometers, something like that. Very close, about an hour, three quarter of an hour, something like that, drive. So then, we traveled to Auschwitz. But, you wanted to know about Joseph more, I guess - no.

Q: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW EVERYTHING. TELL ME ABOUT THE TRIP TO AUSCHWITZ.

A: So, we traveled – we also traveled with a producer, a reporter from KQED. He was obsessed with our story. He also heard about the underground. And he also heard that the Catholic Church tries to rehabilitate some underground members. Because they were not good spoken of. So now, this fellow, his name was Baumann, ja. So we arrived in Auschwitz. First, before we came to Auschwitz, we came through Gleiwitz, which of course, we thought we gonna hit that later. But he drove so that we hit it. And coming through Gleiwitz, it was such a funny feeling – after all, it was forty-six, forty-seven

years ago. And so, now we ask some people about this particular street, and house. And everything looked so different. It looked so different because, number one, under the Germans, even during the war, it was an extremely clean city. Everything was orderly. The Poles put, I think, two or three times as many population in there. So it became so decaying. Every door was hanging off the hinges. And it looked so completely dilapidated. So here we come to this house, this street, and I mistakenly, thought it was in the rear. I thought it was in front, but it actually was in the rear. You know, third flight, and then, so basically we found everything, practically the way it was – except very dilapidated. In fact, there was even a woman still living there – very old, she remembered my wife's family. She even remembered some of us too. Some of our stories, because...

So, going back to Joseph. So we went then, and looked when we came through the areas there, we thought we pass through this little village – [Nova-wees?], in Germany. Today it is Polish name. But the communication – even so, some of our party spoke much better Polish than we did. But even, maybe the Polish didn't want to give themselves away, because it was still, like I said, the old regime in power. Even so, you saw change coming. But it wasn't coming yet. So they didn't tell us. They didn't even know of the family. Even though it's an old family – they lived there for fifty, sixty years, or longer. The Runners. So, we came back to Krakow, and Max wanted to give up already, and not finding them. Maybe, just as well, because maybe, if we find them, or maybe he got shot. Because, we were told right when it happened, and we had to go away, said – Joseph tried to come to us and he was shot fatally by the SS. And Joseph also heard that we were shot. Because, for us, really, was no way. He had a chance, because he spoke the language, he had connects with the underground. He knew the vicinity, he know everything. We had really, no chance. For us to survive was less than one tenth of a percent. That's what he figured. Nobody can survive.

So anyway, we come back to Krakow, but this reporter would not give up. He said: "Let's try one more time." I said: "I go with you." So we walked to the marketplace in Krakow, and two priests coming toward us – younger priests. So I said: "Do you speak English, a little, or do you speak German?" because both languages I speak fluently. And, but I approached them in Polish. But this was about what my Polish went, you know. And he said: "I speak a little German and my comrade, my colleague, speaks a little English." I said: "You must help me," and I show him the number. And in Poland, there is nobody that does not know what the number means. And so I tell him the story. I said: "We are looking for a special person here. He saved our lives," you know. And "Oh," he said, "I help you." We don't have

mush time. He goes to a big church – they allow him to use the telephone. And he makes - they make several telephone calls.

And he contacts us with a former high officer of the underground. And the guy, he wants to see us. His name is Kubick. We are still in contact with him, by the way. Kubick, and we come to Kubick, and Kubick is already, for this time, even for Poland, a VIP – he has an apartment where you are buzzed in. He has his car and he has a telephone – so he is a [macher?]. This is a [macher?], a big macher in Poland. So here, we come up there and we tell him. But first, he didn't trust us because, like I say, it's an unheard story. First of all, Jews don't escape from Auschwitz. You know, there is testimony that thick – there's not a Jew in there. Not one ever escaped from Auschwitz, except us. And Poles don't help Jews. So we tell him we are looking for Joseph Runner. He said: "I don't know him. But," he said, "I will promise you – when you are back in America, within three, four weeks, you will have a letter from me, one way or the other. If this man is still alive, I find him for you."

We are back in America; we get a letter – he went down to the village, you see, he didn't trust us. The younger sister and younger brother are still alive and they corroborated our story. Joseph is also alive, he's a sick man, and he is just delirious that you are still living. And he wants to get in touch with you, and we want to get in touch with you. So we arranged here, telephone, so Joseph will have to drive, travel almost a hundred kilometer to get to the phone. So finally, we arrange, after hundreds of telephone calls, that - finally talking to Joseph. And he still speaks German – broken, but still pretty good. Then they only speak very good German, you know. Anyway, we are making contact with him and we contact ??? and prepare everything – get all the witnesses together and all this you know, and now we all sit. We send Joseph a ticket to come to America. And Joseph comes, I don't know if you have the rest of the papers, you know, you must have – in 1990. He came, we got him over here in April / May 1990. He comes, and this evening, I guess, no big news happened. So what can I tell you – every news caster, every television station in the entire Bay area, every paper available – reporter, was at the airport. Hundreds and hundreds of people. And then, here comes Joseph. Joseph comes with a little packet – I mean, we still remember him and all that. He comes, you know, with an old worn out suit and I said to one reporter: "He's going back, he's not gonna go back like this anymore." And, of course, he was our guest and the press wouldn't leave us alone and of course, we were highly honored at the [Wiesenweiss?] Center. I don't know if you heard it or not.

Q: TELL US.

A: But, in the [Wiesenweiss?] Center, they give a tremendous affair for him, and for us. There were seven ambassadors there and then, and Joseph got a big plaque and then we were invited to the legislature, the State Center. And I was the speaker there. We all got plaques like this, you know. And I spoke at the sixth army. Joseph was a guest and all the – you know. And it was just tremendous. And then, of course, Joseph left and then, he was here five or six weeks. We would love to keep him, but of course, he was a sick man, which we knew. He had several heart attacks already, and so on. Heavy smoker, still drinker and eating the wrong stuff. And unfortunately, Poland is very much behind America and all this. So he went back – it happened that a friend of ours went on the same plane to Europe. And of course, it was wide known and all this story, when he was a hero, television, as he is. But his plane was supposed to go to Warsaw, then he has to take back a railroad, which takes another day and a half, going to Krakow, again. You know, it's very primitive. So I don't know, but this pilot must have got permission, asking that permission to make a special landing in Krakow, for Joseph. Because, you know....

So unfortunately, in the same year, in November 1990 – he passed away. But we were so glad to still have been able to see him, meet him again. And – but we are still in contact with the brother and sister, of course, the only thing what makes it so hard is – they don't speak no English, I mean, no English and no German. So Polish is – they write a letter – you got to have a translator. It's not the same, you know.

Q: DID YOU EVER ASK JOSEPH WHEN YOU MET HIM WHY HE SAVED YOU?

A: We did.

Q: AND WHAT WAS HIS ANSWER?

A: We had different opinions then. We ask him and he said, first of all he had a Jewish girlfriend and he saw them all transported, you know, to Auschwitz. His father had a grocery store, and he helped a lot of Jews. And one day, the Nazi's found out, and they put him in a camp, but they let him out again. But then, he died shortly afterward of pneumonia. And this gave him – this alone gave him the incentive. But I think it is more than this. It is more than this.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A: Ja, he was connected with an underground group, which were not much in favor of the Jews either, you see. But we, the details we could never found out. But the point is, if, if and it came very close to it, we would ever be

found, close to Joseph, regardless of where we were found – not only him and his family, his, the entire village would have been wiped off the map, because the nazi's wouldn't have used, need much of an excuse. You know, because it was always for them – one for all, all for one. They wiped them all of the map, because they figured, you know, he has to be involved with the village. That's what I think, you know.

Q: WOULD YOU MIND GOING BACK WHEN YOU WERE IN GERMANY IN '89, AND YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY TO AUSCHWITZ, AND CAN YOU TELL ABOUT THAT?

A: Well, the trip was arranged in, ja, '89, that's right. We went to, like I say, there were three or four survivors from Berlin, who arranged the trip. And Max came along, his wife came along, the reporter and myself. And the fellow who arranged this, was a, what was his name? He was a writer. And he had in mind to get us on German television – unfortunately, he passed away too. He also had a heart, he already had a bypass, but that – he was not in good shape. And, so he taped a big part of our story going to Auschwitz. He was also fascinated with this and he wrote – actually he wrote in detail, but in German. You know, he sent us the book. And so, the way to Auschwitz was – the trip was – I would think, not really a pleasant trip, because you don't know what you gonna find. All the memories, and all this stuff. I actually was against going there. I, first of all, due to the Poles and all this, you know. And, but when we came there, you know, the barracks in Auschwitz are standing like they were standing there fifty years ago. Nothing has changed. Birkenau is almost complete, except for the crematorium and the gas. This the Nazi's blew up. And several barracks, which I guess, they couldn't sustain. But most of the barracks are still there, in Birkenau.

Q: IT STILL LOOKS SIMILAR?

A: Original. Original. But of course, it's decaying more and more and more, and as years go by, and – when you walk down there, I mean, it is hard to believe. You can – even so everything comes back like it was yesteryear. Like it, you know, this is the trouble with memory – when you don't see it, you more protected and shielded by it. But when you see it – it comes back like it was yesterday. Like it all happened so close by, just like when I came to Sachsenhausen. It was horrible, I mean, I walked, my niece, didn't want to take me there. And I said: "But I like to go, because first of all, there is a memorial statue for the ones who revolted." You know, which, I was one of them, you know. And it is written, and so I wanted to see, you know. But of course, when I got the brochure, and what I heard already, before, that many of the most brutal Nazi's who spent the time in Sachsenhausen were released.

Which I could never understand. And they were released by friends of us, who were in charge – like this guy who started the mutiny. He was a chief of police of Saxony, you know. He was the biggest macher there. Another one was interior minister. So these guys had a say-so, believe it, so it shows you what communism is. Just as bad, or maybe, worse than Nazism, you know. Hitler didn't leave a communist alive. He killed all these big ones. You know, those powerful ones.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU SPEND IN AUSCHWITZ?

A: Two years. I spent two years in Auschwitz, and three years in Sachsenhausen. And, about six months with the underground. Gotta be out of steel. Yeah.

Q: AND WHAT YEAR DID YOU ARRIVE IN AMERICA?

A: '47, February. Next month, next month it'll be forty-eight years.

Q: THEN YOU STARTED YOUR FAMILY IN CALIFORNIA, IN SAN FRANCISCO? [nods head]
DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

A: Unfortunately, we have no children. Have lots of nephews and nieces.

Q: DOES MAX LIVE NEAR?

A: Max lives very close by. Ja, we always lived close by. We live five minutes apart. You know the Bay area? He lives in Burlingham.

Q: ANY LAST COMMENTS, OR - YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU TALKED TO SCHOOLS AND YOU GO AROUND...

A: I speak, I speak a lot to schools, ja.

Q: WHAT AGE GROUP?

A: Well, Most of the time, seniors, older, seniors. I mean, they are taking in. I am especially taken in by the results. Because I got – I must have a pile like this, in letter, which they wrote to me. How appreciating they are, and how I mean, really, I mean, it is tremendous. I spoke just months ago at the Mills High school. There, in fact, there were three of us, you know, for the first time. I speak to a lot of young people and I tell them that it is - You see, these things which happened, can happen again. The only difference is, there are not that many Jews there. But, of course, who knows? Who knows what

history brings. You might have a time – if you see today, you know, only a few Jews living after the war in Berlin.
I think you got today 60 000 living already there, mostly Russians. They are living there, making business, they don't care. I had to stay - I could have been very wealthy man if I'd stayed in Berlin. We didn't want any part of it. We had enough of it, I mean, you know. And they all go back, and all these Russians – they have people which were killed. Grandmothers, mothers, or whatever. Grandfathers be killed, even not directly, but indirectly by the, in the war. We met so many wonderful Russian officers and soldiers during the war. Many, like this general, I told you. His name was Jenikowsky. A very famous panzer general. Unfortunately he died – shot for Berlin. I still have the comment, you know, with the stamp and all this in there. I think one of these days I gonna donate it to the Center, you know.

Q: WHAT IS THE MESSAGE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO LEAVE THE STUDENTS WITH?

A: Well, I like to make the students – I think if anybody discriminated, that doesn't mean - it doesn't need to be the Jews. Discrimination is bad for anyone. I mean, that is shown. When there is discrimination, or when there is anti-Semitism, it is first, it's the Jews, then it's the Negroes, then it's... I mean, if people allow this to happen, then it goes out of hand in no time at all. Then these things can easily be repeated. And we are living today, in times – they are just awful. Just thinking of, I mean. It was less than fifty years ago that this whole thing happened, when you see all these nazi's crawling out – especially in East Germany, in Bosnia Herzagovina, and all over you have so much hate, where they killing. I mean, when you see all around. And then, look in our own country. You know, look at this graffiti, and all this stuff going on. There is not a country. Today when you go to Germany – I mean, when I was there it was sickening. All these walls, and you know – Jews out – and all this story, and by comparison, there's still only very few Jews are there. And still, they discriminating against the Jews, against the Turks.

You see, after the war, they wanted the Turks. None of the Germans had such a prosperity. They lived so high on the war. They didn't want to do the work, the manual work. So who would do it? The Turks and the Arabs, so they brought them from all over. Promised them citizenship and everything. But then, thirty, forty years later, they have little short things – they don't want them anymore. Then they want to discard them. And they all speak German, you know, like they are Germans. And this is what is so awful about - and this goes, unfortunately, I mean. It is very, very hard and when, you see – I mean, look what happened in Israel. Israel is a land - they made something of the land and they want it back. This has been going on forever

and ever. Now they try to make peace. What peace? They killing more now in Israel, than ever before. So they may as well be in a war path. Then, at least, they know what to fight. I mean, these are awful. Nobody, I mean, it is just - it is bad, I mean. Sometimes you think we are living in better times, but sometimes you think ... And then, people forget - because we are all human, we are only small thread on this earth. There are so many things without our control, like take these big earthquakes, these floods and everything. So, this is where, in many ways, people get a lesson. But do they get the lesson? Maybe not.

Look at the black, when they turned on, you know, fired up, you know, LA twice. This was nothing compared with what's now, you see. But maybe, sometimes, people will learn. Maybe we never learn. See now there's no crime in LA. Why? Number one, they all scared of the earthquake. Number two, the armed guard patrolling the city. They should have done it before. But they don't, you see.

Q: DO YOU HAVE HOPE FOR PEOPLE, AFTER ALL YOUR EXPERIENCES AND DO YOU HAVE HOPE FOR CHANGE?

A: Oh, well, you have to have hope – without hope there is nothing. You see, for me, it is gratifying to see that young people, like you are so interested. If it wasn't for people like you – then, these stories would very rarely be told, you know. You see, you need, you need co-ordination, you need people really who are interested in it. You see, we, the survivors, I consider myself, we are almost the last of the line. And let's face, we are lucky if we have another fifteen or twenty years, then we are lucky, you know. Who lives that long, you know? Then we have to be extremely lucky. But, after that, it has to be read through books. This is what I tell the students. There are so many denials out already. It's constantly, but as long as we alive, we can prove it, you know. But this is what is up to the young people. They have to listen, and they have to say: "Listen, I listened to this young guy, this fellow, to this person, and this is a survivor. He cannot, he didn't come up here with that number. He didn't put it in himself. He didn't tell these stories. So, he is a witness." And if theses things haven't happened, you know, I don't think anyone would go around and say: "They killed my whole family." These are not pleasure things to talk about. But hope there is. There must be hope, without hope there is nothing. Really.

END OF TAPE 2 OF 2. [PART 4 OF 4]

Statistics:

No of Lines Typed: 4121