

So as I said, we were put on the side track of the Berlin station to allow other more important trains to pass. And suddenly it was the middle of the night, I think was 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning we began to hear bombs falling all over the place. And noises here and explosions there and noises here. And naturally we weren't sleeping anyway. We knew we were in Berlin, because we could see Berlin Station looking through the cracks of the wooden door of the railroad car. And we could see fires burning all around us. And we heard more bombs falling. And then we heard Germans running back and forth with fire equipment and all sorts of things.

And we said to ourselves, and my dad said to me, oh it's great, wonderful. And I said, great. Even if we were to get killed and burned we would be killed by Americans than taken to another crematorium or to be shot elsewhere and to be killed by the hand of the Nazis. No, we wanted to die because we knew we would, but we just didn't want to go by the hand of the Nazis. And I could actually feel the intense heat through the car, coming into our car from all the fires.

And for some another miracle, if you believe in miracles, our train was not hit. Our train was not hit. And even our locomotives were disconnected to move the other train. We were left without locomotives. We were just parked on a side track away from the main action, a completely insignificant part of the huge railroad station. Whole station burned. Took them a day and a half I think it was to get a locomotive back to us and to clear the tracks and to take us out.

And that's when they took us to Sachsenhausen. Before when I said they took us to-- I mean Oranienberg. They took us from Sachsenhausen to Oranienberg. But we went through Berlin. Oranienberg is another camp, another military installation. And I don't think that too many Jewish prisoners were there.

I found out later there was a Messerschmidt factory they were building with an army base. And they were building these Messerschmidt fighters. And they had big hangars, buildings where they put the prisoners in like us, and some straw, and that's where we slept. During the day we built bunkers, dug ditches and laid pipes and all kinds of manual labor. This is what we did.

I remember when we got there, this is a little detail, my dad said, sit right here and I'll go see if I can get us some extra straw. It was a hard concrete place. And a little while later, it was dark and we didn't have any light and there was maybe one light bulb in the entire hangar area. I saw a bunch of Germans kicking and beating somebody on the floor there. And then a little while later my dad returned and I was telling them about they were beating somebody up there, I wonder why. He didn't say nothing.

And then the next day I saw a lot of bruises on his body, my dad's body. And I said, where did they come from? He said, it was me they were beating last night. I said, why were they beating you? He said, because I was going out to get some straw. So luckily no major damage was done.

While it's fresh in my memory, I'd like to go back to Auschwitz for a moment. While in Auschwitz, I did get sick once. And I got typhoid fever. I guess it was a lot of people did. There was filth, there was lice all over everything, and of course I was burning up, burning up with fever. My dad at that time was a barber. He was a barber by profession, so they allowed him to be a barber in the camp. So he was allowed to stay in the barracks and just cut people's hair. And so he hid me under some blankets on the bleachers where we were supposed to be sleeping, like beds.

And once I remember he got a bottle of soda pop for cutting somebody, say a little orange or strawberry soda pop. And I remember I was burning up with fever, and he gave me that bottle and I just downed it so fast. And I think that might have saved my life. There was no medicine. And one day I stuck my head out to see what was happening in the barrack, and as I stuck my head out, one of the German SS people who happened to be walking and inspecting the barrack. And he saw me and he pulled me out and put me right in front of the barrack, asked me to bend down and took a big 2 by 4 and began hitting me across the back and across the behind,

My dad says, please, don't hit him. He's just a child. Hit me. So after he got through beating me, he put my dad and asked him to bend down and beat him with a 2 by 4 also. And he got beat up. Luckily, I had no broken bones. And I remember I developed a very severe boil under my arm. I hate to go into this detail, but I must tell you about it. It's just getting bigger and bigger, and it was, I guess, the result of the typhoid fever because the pus kind of settled in that part

of the body.

And there was one Jewish doctor in the camp with us, but he had nothing to practice with. My dad asked him what he could do for me. Said he needs an operation. It needs to open up. It needs to be removed. And my dad says, I'll pay anything you say. You know you have to remember my dad got some bread, an extra ration of bread to pay him. So I remember he took a razor blade, a regular like a Gillette razor blade, single-edge razor blade, and I think he sterilized it with a match or with a cigarette or something. And I remember he opened it up and was it painful. Was it painful.

I think it was an abscess or something like that. I don't know what to call it, a boil or an abscess. And remember he put some rags in there and then wrapped it around and put it around my neck. And I just fell asleep that night. I remember I woke up in the morning and everything was just soaked with pus. Then he told me to just keep a rag in there as the hole gets smaller but always keep a rag with a tip hanging out. And eventually it got better. No infection. And that too is a miracle. So I survived that part. So I just had to tell you about that part of Auschwitz.

Before you leave Auschwitz, can you tell me about what kind of food were you given when you were there?

I remember watery soup where you could just search for a potato peeling. Search for a potato peeling and hope there would be a little potato on it. A portion of bread. An 1/8 of a loaf. We built a little scale out of two twigs of wood with two little strings and two little toothpick things to stick into the bread and hold it up and weigh it to make sure that nobody got more bread than the other. And my dad, being a barber, was able to get a little quarter of bread from somebody for cutting their hair, or able to get a little piece of cigarette. Although he didn't smoke, but he usually brought to the table a cigarette and traded to someone else for a little piece of bread. And I would get a little bit more that way than the actual portion designated to us.

So this was your ration for the day?

Yeah.

And you said you talked about the activities, your work activities during the day. When you were through working, were you able to walk around with some freedom of movement?

There was a little time in the late evening, if you had the strength, to walk around. But most of us were tired. All you want to do is just take a drink what you can drink, the little soup that you had. They used to bring pots of soup, one pot for each barrack, and somehow one person would distribute it. We each had a little metal aluminum cup. And everything served was in that cup, so you always wore the cup on you. And that was it.

I'll go back again to a previous camp when we were taken from Buchenwald going to Auschwitz. There was the portions of bread, and I put down my piece of bread for a moment while I was getting ready, putting on my pants, and somebody stole my piece of bread. And when we got on the train, my dad said to me, where's your piece of bread? And I said, I don't have it. I must have laid it down. My dad got so angry that. He got so angry. He called me stupid. He called me dumb. He said how could I do such a thing? And with good reason, because he had to share his portion with me, which he did.

But I was stupid. I mean, it was life and death and I shouldn't have laid it aside. And there was no excuse for being young and a child, a mistake. You couldn't afford to make a mistake. And that was a serious mistake. And I shouldn't have allowed it to happen. I wasn't angry at my dad, I was angry at myself how I could allow this to happen to me. I mean, I was smart-- I thought I was-- and I was careful, I was calculating. I saved myself and I did everything I could right. How I got to do this, let this happen? Well, I learned my lesson and never let that happen again.

Also, when you were at Auschwitz, when you had any time that you were able to socialize or talk with other people that were there in the camp, do you recall the things that you talked about or the ways that you were able to be social?

Yes, sometimes we used to sit on the bleachers, I remember. And I remember these two men that were at the railroad station when we arrived. They were from our town. We happened to be the same camp with them. And they were

Canada and they were well to do. They got extra bread, an extra piece of meat sometimes or whatever. Just a little extra things. A little extra sugar. I remember once they liked me, they really liked me because I guess I was the smallest, I was a little child. And anyway I was the youngest survivor of a town of 20,000 people. And I really don't know of any younger survivors than me from really anywhere really. I really don't know. I mean that were actually in the camps.

And they wanted to help me. I remember one of them once gave me a piece of bread, black bread, and took a little bit of sugar and sprinkled some sugar on it like that and says, here, eat this. And I remember tasting that bread and sugar and I cannot describe the taste to you. I've had good dinners here, but never anything as good as that was at the time. So yes, they liked me. They were good to me.

The people in the camp never mistreated me because I was under the protection of my father. And my father was likable, too, because he used to do a lot of things for everybody that he could, And we were able to get by with just a little bit more than most. Not always, but in enough time to get a little extra.

Do you remember things that people talked about? You mentioned a few times that you and your father seemed to be resigned that you were not going to--

Well, we wondered if our family was still alive, any of our members, where they might be. If they would survive the war, if we would survive the war, how we would get together. And we made plans like that. Some of the things, we watched the animals outside the camp. We'd see a dog or bird. And I used to think how free a dog is. It can just run anywhere it wants to. And we are restricted in this camp with barbed wire, electric wire. I saw people committing suicide. I don't know why, but this is everyone in Auschwitz saw that so that's nothing unique. We saw people give up.

Could you tell us about the people committing suicide?

Well there was times that we were in Auschwitz, and there was a wire on the ground, one wire, and there was the wire that you might not go beyond. Past that wire there was like a 20 feet or maybe more kind of a death zone. And then there was the barbed wire, electrified barbed-wire fence. And then there was a walk space for the German guards and the dogs to patrol. And there was towers all around also. And then there was the outside.

Well, you can see all the way through the outside through all those wires. So if somebody wanted to commit suicide, they'd run over the single-stranded wire, because between that wire and the fence was a shooting zone for the guards. And many of the guards were not German. They were Ukrainians, Russian Ukrainians that hated the Jews as much as the Germans. Unfortunately, they were very good to shoot Jewish people. So they were manning the towers. I guess they used many of the Germans to fight in Russia and they used Ukrainian Russians to guard the Jews.

And some that made it across the wire without getting shot, they'd run over and grab hold of the barbed wire and become electrocuted. And you could see them electrocuted. And later on they'd shut the power off and pull them off. And I had to see that, too. So I saw a lot of death in my time.

I'd like to go back now to the railway station and then arriving in Oranienberg. Arrived in Oranienberg and we were in those barracks that I told you during the day with did manual labor work. Neat thing happened there. Every day around noontime we'd hear the approaching of bombers, heavy bombers. And we were used already, especially being a young child my hearing was very keen, and I was one of the first ones to hear them approach. I'd say, here come bombers again, Dad. And a few minutes later he'd say, yeah, here they are. And [IMITATING AIRPLANE ENGINES].

You know it's a very distant, heavy sound. And there was the sound of loaded bombers, the B-20, B-17s, I don't know what they had then. B-9s maybe. Loaded with bombs. Immediately, the sirens would sound and the Germans used to get us all together and made us go into those barracks. Looked like hangars, like Moffett Field hangars, big hangars. I wondered why they kept up in barracks with such big hangars.

And a few minutes later bombers would pass, all clear siren would sound. Go back to our work. About half an hour, an hour later, I don't know the time, we'd hear again the planes return from Berlin empty. And it sounds a lot different. It was [HIGHER-PITCHED IMITATING AIRPLANE ENGINE]. It wasn't like the bombing [IMITATING AIRPLANE

ENGINES], like the engines laboring. And again siren would sound. Everybody in the hangar. We all get in the hangars and they would pass. All clear sound, back to work. This went on, on a daily basis.

One Sunday afternoon, I remember it was a Sunday afternoon, here the very same thing happened. Planes approach with a heavy sound. All in the barracks. All siren. Back to work, About 45 minutes later here again the planes come. I remember saying to my dad, sounds to me that they couldn't drop their bombs. They're still heavy. They sound the same heavy sound. I wonder what's wrong. You couldn't even see the planes, they were so high in the sky. And they flew in formation. And besides, even if we could see them, we weren't allowed outside.

And we're waiting for the all clear signal to sound, and suddenly we heard bombs falling, explosions all around us, fires all around us. We didn't know what was happening. We couldn't believe it. How stupid could they be. They're bombing us. They're going to hit us. We're going to get killed. And it was already 19 I think it was 44, getting near the latter part of the war. And soon they passed, and the all clear was sounded. And then a couple of days later we were moved out of there. And we didn't know what was happening.

And when we stopped, we were taken to a place-- We were taken to Dachau. We were taken to Dachau then. And I remember we asked, why were we moved? I mean, what was happening? And we found out there was a Messerschmidt factory, as I mentioned earlier, and it was underneath the ground. There was a pine forest growing over it. It was hidden. And our intelligence was accurate for once. They dropped all the bombs on the factory, destroyed the factory and the planes. Didn't drop a single bomb on any of those hangars where we were in. None of us got hurt. There was no use for us anymore, so they moved us out. Put of Oranienberg.

Now I have to tell you about Dachau. Dachau was a very similar camp to Auschwitz, but much smaller. They had a gas chamber/crematorium there. Was there for a short while. And they put us out into a camp called Kaufering 11. I guess Dachau had many camps around it, and Kaufering 11 was near a town called the Landsberg. I don't know if you heard the name. It was a very beautiful little town. It reminds me of Carmel, California, the hills. Very pretty little town.

And I don't know what we're doing, but I remember I used to get up in the morning and-- Well first of all, let me go back. My dad was a barber, so naturally I was able to, even though I was maybe 12 years old at the time, and we had his hand clippers-- and this is something I really don't like to talk about-- but we got to Dachau. Dad and I were in the barbers of our block. He had a barrack and I had a barrack. And we had to cut off all the hair from all the men, including all the pubic hair. And there was a lot of lice all over. It was very dirty.

And I used to use the clipper until I couldn't squeeze it anymore. And this is a terrible thing to say, but in the process to squash the lice with the shearing of the clippers. Such a horrible thing to have to talk about. And then they would spray with DDT, which was terrible pesticides. And of course there was never any bath. There was no bath. You just washed yourself in snow whenever you could. And so after a while I couldn't take this anymore. And my dad used to help me do my barrack because I couldn't finish mine all the time. I got tired. I couldn't do it anymore. We used to have hand clippers. It wasn't electric clippers.

So they put me on a detail to go outside the camp. So what we did, get up in the morning, go in formation, left the gate, walked eight miles to an area, and I don't know where we were going but it could have been the Siegfried Line. What we're doing is building bunkers and carrying cement and building obstacles. And my job was to carry cement on my back, 50-pound cement sacks, from the train that brought the cement to the working site. There was no truck.

Human labor was cheap. I mean, there was thousands of Jewish people that they could use that didn't cost them a cent. It was cheaper than a one single truck and didn't have to feed them much, so they just use the labor. And then it was all done after about eight or 10 hours of work we'd have to walk again 10 miles or eight miles back to camp. And from the powder of the cement, the cement I remember it used to harden in my hair and became like a concrete helmet kind of like.

I used to kind of break it up at night and pull the hair with it because you couldn't separate it between the sweat, the moisture, and the cement with cement on my face, all over my body, and I just couldn't wash up. If there was snow, I could use snow to wash it a little off, especially around my eyes and mouth and nose. And this went on for quite a while.

There was a German guardhouse right outside the gate, and they had their quarters there. Quarters and guardhouse. And there was a pit of garbage right near the gate. So I thought when it was time to go home if I could get in the first part of the column, run fast and fall in, the beginning of the column, and if I was on the right side, not in front, maybe three rows back as I passed the garbage pit it could slip into the garbage pit and find something edible and put it in my pockets and climb out before the column marched all the way in and be somewhere near the end. And that's what I did.

So I tried a few times. I jumped in the pit. And I used to try it also where a German was just in front of me. And we were walking so close to the pit that as we were near the gate the Germans kind of lost interest in really guarding you because we were practically there and they were ready to go into the guardhouse. I mean, it was just so routine that I filled my pockets with rotten potatoes and tomatoes and some vegetables and some moldy bread. And then jump back in and made it through the gate and I got back in.

In the evening there was this one little bulb and the whole barrack, over a little tiny stove, and we burn whatever we could. And I'd empty my pockets, and sometimes take a little water and take some of the bread that is covered and mold pry it away from it, and potato and pull away the rotten part, and put it in and make a thick soup. And my dad and I ate it, and also shared it with others. So people used to guide me and protect me as I slipped into the pit with our heavy coats and the heavy clothes and hashmata sort of hanging from us. And that provided nourishment and that helped during that period,

I want to talk now about an incident happened much later in America but relates to that place in Dachau. At the Dachau camp at the guardhouse there was a German battalion flag flying there. And that's what we saluted every day with the swastika. I was scared and didn't even want to look at it two years ago, there was a convention, I think it was the 42nd Armored Division, I'm not sure exactly what it was, at Long Beach at the Queen Mary. And I met a couple of men a year before in my service station in Salinas that were a part of the organization.

And they usually have them all over the country. And this time it was going to be the Queen Mary. So they called me and said, if we send you an invitation would you and your wife honor us and please come to the convention because it was our battalion that liberated camp and also that vicinity. I'll come to the liberation part in a little while. So I replied in writing that my wife and I would be honored.

Well, we arrived there and we were the guests. And at one time there were several thousand people in this organization, and due to age many had died and now maybe 700 remained. So there were 700 people and their wives attending the convention. And they had pictures and autographs and souvenirs and everything of that period of the war. And I gave a short little speech. And I was very honored. It was very moving.

And then one soldier gets up and he says to the president, may I say something? And--