Interview with Albert Kitmacher

April 8, 1994

RG-50.477.0564

This interview was transcribed in partnership with the National Court Reporters Foundation. 03.2022

Rick Levine: This is the Holocaust Memorial History Project in San Francisco on April 8, 1994, interviewing Mr. Albert Kitmacher. The producer is John Grant, and the interviewer, myself, Rick Levine.

Mr. Kitmacher, can you begin by telling us the place of your birth?

Albert Kitmacher: My place of my birth was in Lublin, Poland.

Rick Levine: And what year were you born?

Albert Kitmacher: 1920.

Rick Levine: I'd like to ask you to tell us something about the circumstances of your family at that time. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Albert Kitmacher: I had two sisters and a brother and my parents.

Rick Levine: And where did you fit into the family order?

Albert Kitmacher: I was second from the youngest one.

Rick Levine: Tell us a little bit about your mother and father. What kind of work was your father doing?

Albert Kitmacher: My father was a tailor. So was I. And he couldn't make a living in Poland -- it was hard to make a living -- so he went to Germany.

Rick Levine: What year did you go to Germany?

Albert Kitmacher: We didn't go. He went himself to work there.

He went about 1928.

Rick Levine: And did he do well there when he went there?

Albert Kitmacher: He did all right. He had plenty of work, and in Poland he didn't have any work.

Rick Levine: And your mother took care of the family?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, she stayed behind.

Rick Levine: Did your father send money to support the family?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: What sort of home did you live in?

Albert Kitmacher: Not a rich home. I'd say a very poor home.

Rick Levine: Did you live just the mother, father and then the four children?

Albert Kitmacher: And we had some other ones living with us. My mother's mother and a sister also.

Rick Levine: Your mother's mother and your mother's sister?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And your family was a Jewish family?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: And were you observant Jews?

Albert Kitmacher: Huh?

Rick Levine: Were you observant? Were you --

Albert Kitmacher: Not that much observant. We went -- for the holidays we went to the synagogue, you know, but otherwise we weren't as observant.

Rick Levine: You didn't go every Sabbath, for example?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: And so forth?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: When your father was away in 1928, how long did he go away?

Albert Kitmacher: He went away until he came back in 1933.

Rick Levine: And did he visit in the interim period or he stayed away the whole time?

Albert Kitmacher: He stayed away the whole time. And then he was -- he was given an order to move.

Rick Levine: In '33?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Rick Levine: Where was he -Albert Kitmacher: Berlin.

Rick Levine: In Berlin?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.) I still remember -- I can remember the address, Charlottenburg Klosstrausser (ph), No. 18.

Rick Levine: This was his place in Berlin?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: How do you remember so clearly? Did you visit?

Albert Kitmacher: Hmm?

Rick Levine: Did you visit?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: Just from writing letters and so on?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you ever hear the story concerning the circumstances whereby he was asked to leave Berlin?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know the story about it but all of a sudden when I was a youngster then he just came back. He had a shop there and everything. He just -- they told him to leave everything and to go home.

Rick Levine: Of course, that was the year the Nazis came into power?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Were they -- was it the Nazis that -Albert Kitmacher: I think so. I think so.

Rick Levine: In your own experience as a child do you remember your first exposure to anti-Semitism?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: Please tell us.

Albert Kitmacher: I was -- I was at an event at school, public school, with a friend of mine. We were coming home from school, all of a sudden a big fella in his thirties came over to me and he shook cedar ash like this (indicating) right into my eye for no reason at all.

Rick Levine: How old a boy were you at the time?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, about 12, 13.

Rick Levine: And so this was 1932?

Albert Kitmacher: Something like that.

Rick Levine: Was this a Polish -- Polish man?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you recall the mood of your family? Was it a happy family life or --

Albert Kitmacher: Our family was a happy family. We didn't have enough food most of the time but we were happy. Rick Levine: Even in the '20s before -Albert Kitmacher: That's right. Rick Levine: -- the war and so on -Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- food was pretty scarce?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right. Work was pretty scarce, too.

Rick Levine: Which -- Albert

Kitmacher: Work.

Rick Levine: Work was scarce as well?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: You say you also were a tailor.

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Were you trained by your father -Albert Kitmacher: Yes.

Rick Levine: -- from the time that you were quite young?

Albert Kitmacher: Yes.

Rick Levine: And did you have occasion to work as a tailor?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah. How about your brother and your two sisters?

Albert Kitmacher: My two sisters were working as seamstresses. My brother was too young to work, you know.

Rick Levine: So your two sisters were the oldest and then came you?

Albert Kitmacher: Yes. No, two sisters were older, then I came, ten months, my younger brother. Rick Levine: Did you have many relatives -Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, lots of them.

Rick Levine: -- in Berlin?

And give me some feeling, if you can, for what the holidays were like. Was there all the family came together?

Albert Kitmacher: Not necessarily. All the family came together but otherwise it weren't like -- (inaudible). As a youngster we moved to Warsaw.

Rick Levine: How old were you at that time?

Albert Kitmacher: Right when my father came back from Germany.

Rick Levine: So in about '33?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, we moved to Warsaw.

Rick Levine: Do you remember that move?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah. And was it a time of some concern in your family about the future?

Albert Kitmacher: No. We just -- just were concerned how to make a living. We weren't concerned about -- we didn't have anything in mind then.

Rick Levine: And the thought was that it would be easier to --

Albert Kitmacher: That's right. Rick Levine: -- get good work -Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- in Warsaw? Yeah.

Did you have bar mitzvah?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. I didn't have bar mitzvah like they have here. But my father invited some friends, we had a bottle of liquor and my mother made a choog (ph.). Do you know what a choog (ph.) is? And this was the bar mitzvah.

Rick Levine: And this was already in Warsaw?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Tell me, if you can, something about the years between 1933 and 1939. What was your family life like at this time?

Albert Kitmacher: It was pretty normal. We woke, we had work to work, you know. We had no problem. We were -- once in a while we found anti-Semitism, you know. It was very easy to find it. But we worked in a pretty Christian neighborhood and everything was all right until the Germans came in.

Rick Levine: Was your home and your working location different?

Albert Kitmacher: No, same place.

Rick Levine: Same place?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: You had a shop in the house?

Albert Kitmacher: In the house, yeah.

Rick Levine: And mostly in your neighborhood was Christian?

Albert Kitmacher: Christian, yeah.

Rick Levine: Not Jewish?

Albert Kitmacher: Some Jewish people, too, but mostly Christian.

Rick Levine: And also you continued to attend synagogue?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Mostly on the holidays?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: And your family was in good health?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, we had -- we had no problems.

Rick Levine: Enough food?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did it ever occur to you during this time or do you know if it ever came up in the family to consider leaving Poland altogether at that time?

Albert Kitmacher: When the war broke out, the Russians came into Bialystok and I had a friend who was driving a truck between Warsaw and Bialystok. He was smuggling things. And he asked me if I wanted to take my mother and father and family and get in the truck and come with me.

Rick Levine: Get in the truck?

Albert Kitmacher: In the truck.

Albert Kitmacher: Come with us, you know. And my father believed too much in the Germans, said the Germans are not that bad, you know. He didn't want to go.

Rick Levine: Did you have feelings yourself by this time or were you pretty well following your father's --

Albert Kitmacher: I had feelings myself, too, and I wanted to leave. I was only 18 years old or 19 years old, you know, but I hated to leave him behind.

Rick Levine: What were your own intentions at this point in your life in the mid '30s before the war started? Were you expecting to continue working as a tailor in Warsaw?

Albert Kitmacher: I would say so, yes. Yes.

Rick Levine: You mentioned public school. How far did your education go?

Albert Kitmacher: Not too far, sixth or seventh grade, something like that.

Rick Levine: And do you also have a Jewish education? Albert Kitmacher: Yes, yes.

Rick Levine: On, for example, Saturday you went to --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Yes. I had classes by a rabbi, you know.

Rick Levine: What language skills did you have, Mr. Kitmacher? I know you spoke Polish.

Albert Kitmacher: Spoke Polish and Yiddish.

Rick Levine: Yiddish at home?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah. Did -- your family did not use Polish?

Albert Kitmacher: Polish, no, no. Oh, no.

Rick Levine: Did you also have some Hebrew?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: And no other languages?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Russian or German, English?

Albert Kitmacher: No. German we used a little bit because of my father, you know, he -- otherwise we didn't use German in our house.

Rick Levine: Do you recall your father's feelings or any sense that he gave to you about how he felt about the German people during -- from his time there?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know. He didn't say too much. But the things he ever met -- I remember from him was the Germans weren't that bad, you know, except just a couple of them (inaudible).

Rick Levine: Did you have some experience in Warsaw or before of this so-called ethic Germans living in Poland? You described an experience of anti-Semitism from Poland.

Albert Kitmacher: Poland, yeah.

Rick Levine: But how about --

Albert Kitmacher: I didn't know any German people.

When they came -- Germans came into Warsaw, I was left from the street, you know, (inaudible) and I was put to work, you know, but I had to unload a truck full of cases of beer and they were pretty heavy. And I kept going on fifth and sixth floor and I couldn't make it anymore and I escaped. When I got home, I got sick for two weeks. I didn't wake up at all.

Rick Levine: Do you recall September 1st of 1939?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Rick Levine: This is before the Germans actually came into Warsaw?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: What do you remember about the first news that the Germans had marched in?

Albert Kitmacher: Warsaw was -- planes came in over Warsaw and they dropped cinder bombs, you know, on the roofs, later on (inaudible) bombs, you know, and was pretty bad.

Rick Levine: Was there loss of life?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, lots of loss of life, lots. Lots of buildings shook.

Rick Levine: How long elapsed, if you recall, between the onset of the war and the Germans actually occupying Warsaw?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know. I can't remember too good. But I remember marching in and everything was all hunky-dory with the Polaks, you know, and --

Rick Levine: You mean that they were pleased?

Albert Kitmacher: They were pleased.

Rick Levine: Yeah.

Albert Kitmacher: (Inaudible) they used to point out Jews, you know. At the beginning they -- Germans didn't do anything, you know. Afterwards, you know --

Rick Levine: Do you recall any friendships between your family and Polish people?

Albert Kitmacher: We had lots of neighbors. Back where we used to live, I remember lots of neighbors. There was no real friendship between us.

Rick Levine: There was cordiality anyway?

Albert Kitmacher: Something like that. They said hello, we said hello. That's all.

Rick Levine: And you with the other kids, did you make friendships? Did you -Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: Did you play with them?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Did you play with other Jewish kids?

Albert Kitmacher: Yes, we did.

Rick Levine: Was it physically separate? Did you play in the school yard at the synagogue or how did you find --

Albert Kitmacher: I used to go to public school. There were no Jewish kids there.

Rick Levine: Please explain. Then the Christian, Polish kids went to private schools?

Albert Kitmacher: No, they were in separate schools.

Rick Levine: Separate public schools?

Albert Kitmacher: Public school.

Rick Levine: After September 1st, after the bombing and the invasion --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- and even before the Germans actually walked into Warsaw, do you recall a feeling of how the outlook was in your family towards --

Albert Kitmacher: It was bad, you know. It was bad, yeah.

Rick Levine: -- invasion?

Albert Kitmacher: People didn't make any money, didn't make a living anymore and we just lived from day to day.

Rick Levine: Was there any contemplation at this point of leaving or --

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: -- already too late to leave?

Albert Kitmacher: It was -- it was already late. It was already late. I know lots of them left and they came back.

Rick Levine: They left after the onset of the war?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: And they found it was impossible to -Albert Kitmacher: Cross the borders.

Rick Levine: Do you recall any specific situations of friends or relatives who -Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: -- tried?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: So the Germans marched into Warsaw?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- some weeks after the -Albert Kitmacher:

That's right.

Rick Levine: -- invasion? And you remember being put to work. Was there brutality -Albert Kitmacher: Brutality?

Rick Levine: -- towards you or was it just --

Albert Kitmacher: In the beginning there was -- they could talk to us, the Germans, you know. I worked for a zokencha (ph.). It's a (inaudible) place where the Germans had an airport and I had to work every day.

Rick Levine: This is, of course, after the Germans -Albert Kitmacher:

Came in, yeah.

Rick Levine: Before that time you were working in the family --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- tailor shop?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: You remembered very specifically unloading the beer --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- and your illness for a couple of weeks?
What happens after that?

Albert Kitmacher: I came back to myself. I don't know. I don't remember anything when I was sick. But the (inaudible) captain, if we had any work, we had to work just to make for a piece of bread. It wasn't the same for us as it used to be.

Rick Levine: But still you're working in the day a job? Albert Kitmacher:

That's right.

Rick Levine: Did the other members of your family, your sisters, your brother, your mother, your father, have similar experiences when the Germans came in? Were they put to work?

Albert Kitmacher: No. They didn't even go out of the house. They stayed in the house.

Rick Levine: So you just had some bad luck that day?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: What's the next development that occurred? Your family tries to make a living?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: They stay at home. What do you remember changing?

Albert Kitmacher: When they opened up the ghetto in Warsaw. We think we (inaudible) our apartment and they gave us a little room and it was a ghetto.

Rick Levine: Do you remember how long after this was?

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.) Rick

Levine: This is into 1940 now?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah. And the ghetto was established in -Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: -- 1940?

When they made you leave your home, do you remember that day?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: Were there soldiers -Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: -- there?

Albert Kitmacher: There were just an order to leave and they gave us an order and said to move. That's all.

Rick Levine: How much time did you have to leave?

Albert Kitmacher: I cannot remember but not too much time.

Rick Levine: Do you recall actually the move from your house into the ghetto?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: What was it like? Was your whole family together?

Albert Kitmacher: My whole family was together and everybody was crying. We had a nice apartment, we had work, all of a sudden we have to move into a ghetto.

Rick Levine: Did you carry things with you from the apartment?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: How did you transport it, everybody carries something or --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- you had a push cart or -Albert Kitmacher:

Everybody carried something.

Rick Levine: But also you had to leave things behind?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: Did you try to take valuable things?

Albert Kitmacher: We didn't have any valuables.

Rick Levine: No candelabra?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no nothing (inaudible).

Rick Levine: How was it arranged that you had this one room to move to in the ghetto? Did you have a location that they told you, You go there?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: You find a place for yourself?

Albert Kitmacher: No. They told us to go there. They used nods, gave us a nod where to go.

Our apartment -- our room was on a street where the whole street was fenced off; the sides were fenced off, the middle street was not. The middle street was like (inaudible) and the other side was Jewish. And at night I could hear the German motorcycles running. And also they had the shotgun blasts, you know, some people trying to escape the fence and they just killed them right on the spot.

Rick Levine: At first were you able to move for work outside the ghetto?

Albert Kitmacher: I worked for the Germans.

Rick Levine: Outside?

Albert Kitmacher: Outside, yeah.

Rick Levine: At this (inaudible)?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: How long did that last?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, quite a bit. Until we escaped, which was about a year. Until we escaped from the Warsaw ghetto.

Rick Levine: And this entire time you worked outside?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And the rest of your family all stayed inside?

Albert Kitmacher: All stayed inside, yeah.

Rick Levine: Did everybody have work to do?

Albert Kitmacher: No. I worked with a group from the -- the Jewish mining (inaudible) formed a group to work every morning, meet every morning, you go to the German air base.

We worked all day and at night we came back.

Rick Levine: How many hours a day did you work, do you remember?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, about ten hours.

Rick Levine: And was it hard manual work?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah? What did you do?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, we had to clean and brush and carry things, you know. Whatever they told us to do. Rick Levine: And it's only German military -Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: -- supervisors?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you feel abusive treatment or was --

Albert Kitmacher: No. Not at that time, no, we didn't. It wasn't Budzyn yet.

Rick Levine: Do you remember -- does anything stick out in your memory, specifically interactions you had with the Germans during this period, some kindness, some --

Albert Kitmacher: No, there was no kindness or -- it was strength, you know. They went their way, we went our way, you know, but we did what we were told to do and that's about all.

Rick Levine: Were most of the other workers also young men like yourself?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: How did your family spend its time?

Albert Kitmacher: They didn't spend it, just sat in the house and just prayed for a loaf of bread, so. In the ghetto there was no bread, there was no food, nothing.

Rick Levine: Did you have access to extra food being outside?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Never?

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.)

Rick Levine: You never had an opportunity to bring something --

Albert Kitmacher: No. You were searched every time you came in.

Rick Levine: And your friends, your comrades, they similarly --

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: -- couldn't bring anything in?

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.)

Rick Levine: Do you remember any attempt?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, there were attempts to bring in and they were searched by the Jewish kapos and by the Germans. If anybody brought something in, they just threw it out, threw it aside.

Rick Levine: They do what?

Albert Kitmacher: Threw it aside, you know.

Rick Levine: They didn't harm the person, though?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: So you didn't witness anybody being punished -

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: -- for trying to bring --

Albert Kitmacher: They were punished enough. It's -- the life in the ghetto was terrible.

Rick Levine: Do you recall some specifics about what your food availability was? What was it like? Did you have something to eat in the morning?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know. It was just so many ounces of bread per person.

Rick Levine: Grams?

Albert Kitmacher: Grams. That's right, grams. And that's about all.

Rick Levine: Each day you had -Albert

Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Each person has a ration?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: Does somebody have to go to stand on line?

Albert Kitmacher: I would say so, yeah.

Rick Levine: How many times a day would the family eat?

Albert Kitmacher: Once.

Rick Levine: Morning time or -Albert

Kitmacher: Morning.

Rick Levine: Did the family eat together?

Albert Kitmacher: If there was anything to eat together, we ate together. If not, we just starved together.

Rick Levine: But for this year that you were in the ghetto, your family survived?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Everybody?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

Rick Levine: Your mother and your father were how old at this point?

Albert Kitmacher: I keep remind myself how -- I'm trying to remember how old we were but I can't. They weren't young people but they weren't old people. I would say in their fifties.

Rick Levine: And they weren't sickly?

Albert Kitmacher: No. No, nobody was sick in the house.

Rick Levine: And they managed the whole family together to be alive?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. We lived in a building, small building, and the neighbor got sick of typhus. He had typhus. We thought we must get out of Warsaw. I was the first one to leave.

Rick Levine: What were the circumstances of your leaving the ghetto?

Albert Kitmacher: I took my sister along and I bribed a Jewish kapo and he bribed a German and he let us through. As soon as I got out, a Polak run over to me, Give me all your money, give me everything you have. And I got an idea. I said to him, If you come to me here tomorrow morning at 5:00 and take me to the train station without any problem, I'll give you everything that I have. I didn't have anything. And stupid Polak, you know, Okay, I'll be here at 5:00 tomorrow morning. But 4:00 the next morning I was out with my sister. We went to the train station. I never saw him and he never saw me again.

Rick Levine: How were you dressed when you left the ghetto?

Albert Kitmacher: My clothes was all right. Of course, everything I made myself, you know.

Rick Levine: So it was nice clothes?

Albert Kitmacher: Halfway decent, you know.

Rick Levine: Clean?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Well tailored, anyway?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you have a Jewish star?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Both you and your sister?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, we had a star, but they rolled up the sleeves and star was underneath. We didn't show the star. If I would have shown the star, I would have -- they would have killed me right on the spot.

Rick Levine: So you left the ghetto in the evening?

Albert Kitmacher: In the morning I left the ghetto.

Rick Levine: Did you find yourself outside?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And you describe a polish person coming up to you. How do you spend the next day?

Albert Kitmacher: Walking around the same building where we used to live before and I ask neighbors, How about letting me stay overnight? No. Nobody. Finally, there's one fella, I told him, I'll pay you for it. I'll sleep on the floor. I'll be out first thing in the morning. As soon as it gets light, we will be out. I paid for it and --

Rick Levine: How were you able to pay him? What did you pay him?

Albert Kitmacher: Zloties.

Rick Levine: How much did you have?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, I had about 30 zloties.

Rick Levine: So almost nothing?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And your sister also stayed?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: The next morning what happened?

Albert Kitmacher: Next morning, we woke up very early. It was dark yet. We walk to the train station and we wait for a train. We didn't have any ticket or anything, just wait for the train. All of a sudden, a polish girl recognized my sister as Jewish woman and started screaming, There's a Jew, there's a Jew, there's a Jew. It didn't take time and the inspector from the train came over to us and told us to go with him. His office was underneath in the tunnel. We walked with him. Finally I stopped him. I had $15 in my pocket. I took out $15 and I said, Here is 15 zloties -- not dollars, zloties -- said, Let us go. He took the 15, let us go. When the train came, we came on the train and we just hid as much as we could. Finally wound up in -- my mother's (inaudible) in Chelmno. We went to Chelmno.

Rick Levine: Chelmno?

Albert Kitmacher: Chelmno, that's right. And we wound up there. We couldn't go out until it's light, bright. We just sat at a table with our heads down, just made believe we were sleeping. And I saw guards, he says -- Gestapo were coming in and some -- a Jewish woman that recognized us, she saw our band, you

know, (inaudible). What she do, she told them she had papers. Finally daylight came and we went out. We went to --

Rick Levine: This was in the train station that you were lying with your head on the table?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: In the train you said you hid as good as you could. How do you hide in the train? Do you have a seat?

Albert Kitmacher: We had seats but I didn't have tickets. And the conductor -- train conductor came by pushing at somebody about, You got tickets, and the fella said, No. Then he came to us, you know, Have you got any tickets? And I said, No. He was also quite young. How do you travel here, he says to me? Just took a chance, that's all. He let us go. He didn't say anything.

Rick Levine: Polish guy?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Why do you think he would let you go?

Albert Kitmacher: He's an older man. He probably didn't want to have any problems. Makes problem of ours, he's got to call the German authority, you know.

Rick Levine: So you don't suspect any kindness?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no, no. There was never any kindness from anybody.

Rick Levine: So then you spend the night in the train station?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And the next morning what happens?

Albert Kitmacher: We went to my uncle.

Rick Levine: This is the --

Albert Kitmacher: He lives in -- my mother's youngest brother. He's now in Toronto, Canada.

Rick Levine: What were the circumstances here? He had a home?

Albert Kitmacher: He had a home, yeah.

Rick Levine: Was he more prosperous?

Albert Kitmacher: He worked for the Germans. He was also a tailor. He worked for the Germans, clothing, you know, uniforms, fixed them a lot, but he had work.

Rick Levine: Everybody knew he was Jewish, though?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you recall, Mr. Kitmacher, what month and year this is now?

Albert Kitmacher: When it comes to dates I'm --

Rick Levine: But you spent exactly one year in the ghetto or a little more, a little less?

Albert Kitmacher: Maybe a little more, little less. But we had a tough time. It was just plain terrible.

Rick Levine: So it's now '41?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Late '41?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

We went -- from there I had to take my -- bring my parents out of Warsaw. And so anyway I had a cousin of mine was a very well known person in a small

town, Kareshnik (ph.) We went down there. I told him, I said, You make out the paper for my mother and father and my sister to come out of there. He did.

Rick Levine: This is a cousin who's the -- is the son of one of your parents' brothers or sister?

Albert Kitmacher: No, he and my mother were cousins.

And he made me out just a slip of paper, didn't say anything, just they need my father to work here. Finally my father and mother came but my sister they took off the train.

I never knew what happened to her.

Rick Levine: The other sister? You were with one sister?

Albert Kitmacher: One sister.

Rick Levine: And the other sister they took off the train?

Albert Kitmacher: The train. And my brother came with my parents.

Rick Levine: How did this note get from your hands to -Albert Kitmacher: By mail.

Rick Levine: Just mailed it?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: To whom, to your father?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: At this point these towns, you mentioned Kareshnik (ph.), they have not evacuated the Jewish -Albert Kitmacher: No.

No, not there.

Rick Levine: Not (inaudible)?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: Your cousin, what sort of work did he do?

Albert Kitmacher: He was also a tailor.

Rick Levine: And he was working also for the Germans?

Albert Kitmacher: For the Germans, yeah.

Rick Levine: So his note saying that we need this man -Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- to work for us carried some authority?

Albert Kitmacher: Weight. But I don't think -- I don't think anybody questioned it, you know. I told my mother -- my mother and father what to do (inaudible), to roll up the sleeve with arm bands hiding (inaudible).

Rick Levine: Did you hear later the actual circumstances of your father showing this note to the -Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: -- authorities?

Albert Kitmacher: No. (Shakes head.)

I was with my mother and father. I never found out what happened.

Rick Levine: But one way or another they got out from Poland?

Albert Kitmacher: They got out, yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: What happened? You're reunited. How did the reuniting happen?

Albert Kitmacher: I went out -- when I was in Kareshnik, I went out looking for a place to live for us. We had some -- we moved on a farm and there was a Jewish family living there and I rented a room from them. And we stayed in the house, you know, until they -- they -- we had got an order to move to -to come to the city, to the train station.

Rick Levine: How did your father and mother and brother find you here?

Albert Kitmacher: Find me?

Rick Levine: On the farm.

Albert Kitmacher: They found me all right. My cousin -- my cousin knew where I am and my father and mother just came out and they found me there.

Rick Levine: Do you remember being reunited with your family? Was it a joyous occasion?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Just getting out of the Warsaw ghetto was a joyous occasion.

Rick Levine: You're very relieved that you're all together?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you ever hear how your sister got --

Albert Kitmacher: We never saw our sister at all.

Rick Levine: And you had no news about her after?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: Before we proceed is there anything else that you remember that you can say -- I know you said already several times that the Warsaw ghetto was a terrible place.

Albert Kitmacher: It was --

Rick Levine: Can you remember any circumstances? Of course, there wasn't enough food, there wasn't work for your family. What do you remember else about the --

Albert Kitmacher: People were going around grabbing packages. Somebody was carrying a package. People were grabbing it, you know, they thought maybe there was food. I saw one Jewish girl, you know, run out to a woman, another woman, she grabbed the package and she bit into it. She thought

if she bit into it, no one would want to eat it. It was a -- a light, you know, light bulb.

Rick Levine: You saw this?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. But people were lying on the street, dying on the street. See, somebody died in a family, they wouldn't bury them, see. They put them on the street and they could collect the bread for them, you know.

Rick Levine: Did you or your family have any friends or relations with other people in the ghetto?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: You kept to yourself?

Albert Kitmacher: To ourself. Nobody had any relations or life in the ghetto. The ghetto was all horrible.

Rick Levine: Tell me about sanitary facilities. Was there a toilet in with your room?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Used only by your own family or you had to share?

Albert Kitmacher: Share with three other families.

Rick Levine: But you had a toilet?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: Is there a shower?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: So how did people keep clean?

Albert Kitmacher: We had a big -- you know what a shitzel (ph.) is? A pot, you know. And we used to warm up water in and wash ourself. Who was thinking about cleanliness or --

Rick Levine: No book for reading or observance of the holiday?

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.)

Rick Levine: Do you remember -- if you were there for one year, you were there for Hanukkah or Passover?

Albert Kitmacher: Nobody thought of any holidays. They were glad just to get through the day.

Rick Levine: Let me bring you back now to Kareshnik. You were at the farm, you're reunited with your mother, father and sister. You're both -- no, I'm sorry, your brother. So you have one brother, one sister?

Albert Kitmacher: One sister, yeah.

Rick Levine: And what happened at that time?

Albert Kitmacher: We used to go from farm to farm to work, you know. Farm needs some work done, we had to go to it and do the work. Instead of money, he gave us food. It was pretty good, you know. We had enough food to live on. We didn't have any meat or anything but regular food we had.

Finally, they opened up a place in Jenoshov, not far from Kareshnik, and the work was irrigation. It was a lake but we had to irrigate the lake. And the youthnot (ph.) -- you know what the youthnot -- one of the youthnots came to me with a policeman with a little horse and a buggy, You got to get on, we got to take you to Jenoshov.

Rick Levine: Which youthnot would this be now, from what city?

Albert Kitmacher: This wasn't a city. This place was Strither (ph.). It's before -- like the outskirts of Kareshnik. Rick Levine: So even a small town has its own -Albert Kitmacher: Youthnot, yeah.

Rick Levine: So he comes with a horse and buggy and --

Albert Kitmacher: Policeman, you know, (inaudible), and they took me.

Rick Levine: So it's a Jewish man and Polish policeman?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And where did they take you?

Albert Kitmacher: To Jenoshov. There we worked day and night outside in the irrigation ditch. We had to dig out, you know, the ground from the lakes to make it deeper. It was also terrible.

We had a German commandant, a (inaudible), but we had several Jewish people, kapos, you know, foremans. After about six months, I realized I couldn't stand anymore. My face was all burned, my forehead was all burned. Then my mother and father decided to send my brother in my place in for awhile. They did. He came and told him to go home.

Rick Levine: Did he switch identity with you, he said, My name is --

Albert Kitmacher: No. We went to the youthnot and they took him down there. They took me out.

Rick Levine: What had he been doing before this time for six months?

Albert Kitmacher: Well, there was nothing to do. There was nothing to do.

Rick Levine: But for these --

Albert Kitmacher: I mean, the farm, he did some tailoring, you know.

Rick Levine: While working on the farm?

Albert Kitmacher: On the farm, yeah.

Rick Levine: So your family is still intact -Albert Kitmacher: Yes, that's right.

Rick Levine: -- in this one room that you rented?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: How do you rent a room? How much money do they charge?

Albert Kitmacher: Very little. Very little. If you didn't have any money to pay, they took out, you know, in flour or milk or butter.

Rick Levine: This is a Polish farm?

Albert Kitmacher: Farm, yeah.

Rick Levine: Were they decent people?

Albert Kitmacher: This -- we lived with a Jewish family but most of them around are Polaks, you know.

Rick Levine: So the Jewish family, you mean it was their farm?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: It was a Jewish farm?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And they still were living on the farm?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right. It was a husband and wife and a daughter that were still living on the farm.

Rick Levine: They were simply better to you?

Albert Kitmacher: As much as they could.

Rick Levine: But things were tough also for them?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: So now after six months working hard labor you mentioned your face was burned. You mean sunburned?

Albert Kitmacher: Sunburned.

Rick Levine: So now your brother works in your place?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: What happens then?

Albert Kitmacher: My brother works in the place -- in my place. All of a sudden I don't know why but they needed somebody to do some work outside the camp. They picked him out and several other people. They told him he was going to be the foreman of this group. And I don't know, they tried to get in some food into the camp. They caught it on them, you know, they found it on them, and he was beaten up on his behind, you know, that he couldn't stand anymore or sit anymore and they sent him away. I don't know where they sent him or what they did with him.

Rick Levine: It was the Germans or the Polish?

Albert Kitmacher: No, Jewish. Jewish people did it.

I'll tell you, for weeks we were on the farm, my father got acquainted, you know, with a policeman, Polish policeman. They always wanted something. All of a sudden he comes down to our house, he found a Jewish fella wandering in the woods, you know. He told my dad, policeman told my father, You can get him, you know, if you make him a long coat, policeman's coat. So to save a Jew, my father said, I'll do it for you, just leave him go, and the cop let him go. The same fella that my father saved beat -- beat my brother up. When they liquidate that camp, they killed -- underground killed that foot soldier that held up the camp (inaudible) in Budzyn.

Rick Levine: I'm sorry. Say this again. They brought them all and --

Albert Kitmacher: In the camp where I was.

See from then, you know, all of a sudden got an order to get into the train and this time they came to the train and they picked through from us, you know. They took me out, left my mother and father and sister. All the young people they

picked out and they put them in a camp. My mother and father and sister they put in the train. I don't know where they took them.

Rick Levine: Before we discuss this again, please let's go back a little bit.

Albert Kitmacher: Sure.

Rick Levine: When you spent your six months at this work, is this a camp that you have to live there?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: Separate from your family?

Albert Kitmacher: Separate from my family.

Rick Levine: Were you given enough food to survive?

Albert Kitmacher: Not -- not to survive but we ate -- let's say we ate more than we ate in the Warsaw ghetto.

Rick Levine: But at the farm it was a little better?

Albert Kitmacher: Little better, yeah.

Rick Levine: How many people were working in the camp?

Albert Kitmacher: Several hundred.

Rick Levine: Can you remind me the name of the camp again?

Albert Kitmacher: Jenoshov.

Rick Levine: Can you spell that for me?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, man. J-E-N-O-S-H-O-V.

Rick Levine: Jenoshov?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: It's only men there or -Albert Kitmacher:

Only men.

Rick Levine: Several hundred?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: All day, every day -Albert Kitmacher:

Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- working?

Is there one day a week that you don't work or -Albert Kitmacher: No, every day we had to work.

Rick Levine: What are the sleeping arrangements like?

Albert Kitmacher: We had bunks with straw on them and that's where we slept.

Rick Levine: Each one separate?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Not separate. We had three -- three men in -- on a bunk.

Rick Levine: On one?

Albert Kitmacher: Three stacked up, you know.

Rick Levine: Stacked up?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

Rick Levine: I see. And did you have some space beside you or there's another man right beside?

Albert Kitmacher: Another man. Another two men beside me.

Rick Levine: I see. So three men across?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Then three stacked up?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

Rick Levine: Was there routine beatings also?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah. It was going on continuously.

Rick Levine: And were there punishments for --

Albert Kitmacher: It was just like I told you, my brother was punished for something that he brought in a -- some food into the camp.

Rick Levine: But the immediate administration of the camp is Jewish?

Albert Kitmacher: Jewish, yeah.

Rick Levine: And above them is --

Albert Kitmacher: Is the Germans (inaudible), yeah.

Rick Levine: So after your six months your brother takes over. How long did he work at the camp?

Albert Kitmacher: Let's say in the meanwhile they liquidated -not liquidated. They told us to come in from the farms into the city to the train. They picked me out and other young guys and they took us into a camp, a bigger camp, Budzyn.

Rick Levine: Could you spell that for me?

Albert Kitmacher: B-U-D-Z-Y-N.

Rick Levine: Budzyn?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. I think this was not too far from Chablinka (ph.), you know, something like that.

Rick Levine: And at that point you were separated from your -- from your parents?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, I never saw my parents again.

Rick Levine: Do you remember when the farm -- when you were removed from the farm, what were the circumstances?

Albert Kitmacher: They didn't remove us. They just gave us an order and some people from the (inaudible) came out and said, You got to be there this day and this time.

Rick Levine: And you went and there was a kind of a selection?

Albert Kitmacher: Selection, yeah.

Rick Levine: You were there with your -- not with your brother. Your brother is --

Albert Kitmacher: He's is in the camp, yeah.

Rick Levine: But you're with --

Albert Kitmacher: My mother and father and sister, yeah.

Rick Levine: And your mother and father and sister are told to go on the train?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you remember your separation from them?

Albert Kitmacher: No. My father tried to go with me. They saw the head man, you know, the German Gestapo told me to go, and my father tried to follow me and he just gave him one hit in his face with his elbow, the German, and this was it.

Rick Levine: How was your mother coping with all this, these terrible circumstances?

Albert Kitmacher: Not too good.

Rick Levine: And your sister?

Albert Kitmacher: I thought they would let at least my sister go but they didn't. They took -- they took away most of the Jews from that region.

Rick Levine: Did you or your family have any idea where the train would be going?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: None at this time?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Did you hear from your mother or father or sister ever again?

Albert Kitmacher: Not again.

Rick Levine: Do you -- in retrospect do you know where they went to?

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.)

Rick Levine: You mentioned you were pretty close to Tralimbe (ph.).

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you think that's a possibility?

Albert Kitmacher: It was a possibility.

Rick Levine: What were the circumstances on the train? Was it --

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know. I was not on the train. They just -- they took me away by then and they took me to the camp. But the rest of them they just probably -- I saw the train there but I didn't see anybody going in there yet.

Rick Levine: Let's go back just a little again. Your brother at Jenoshov was told he would be the foreman of another camp outside --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah. Not a camp. They just have to do some farm work, yeah.

Rick Levine: And he tried to -- from this farm work he tried to bring --

Albert Kitmacher: Bring in some food.

Rick Levine: Into the camp, so he was beaten?

Albert Kitmacher: Beaten, yeah.

Rick Levine: What became of him after that point?

Albert Kitmacher: They took him away and he couldn't walk anymore. He couldn't work anymore. He couldn't sit down, he couldn't sleep. They took him away and I never heard from him again.

Rick Levine: How do you know all this happened, because you at this point were you living in the farm?

Albert Kitmacher: Because the same fella who did it to him and the other Jewish people, they brought him into the camp,
Budzyn, already, because they killed the supervisor. The German, they killed him. And the rest of them they put on a truck and brought them over to us.

Rick Levine: So you did see him again at Budzyn?

Albert Kitmacher: No, not my brother. The guy who beat him up, you know.

Rick Levine: And he told you about --

Albert Kitmacher: He told me that he was forced to do it and what happened.

Rick Levine: And you didn't hear any more?

Albert Kitmacher: Not any more.

Rick Levine: This was not the same man, the man who beat him up, then. Was this the same man who was in the forest who your father made the long coat for?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: So he expressed regret?

Albert Kitmacher: He did not -- he expressed regret but I didn't believe him. He was a low -- because how could he -my father was good to him. He bribed the policeman to let him go and he goes out and kills my brother.

Rick Levine: Do you know what became of him in Budzyn?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: So at this point you find yourself in another camp, bigger camp, Budzyn?

Albert Kitmacher: A bigger camp, yeah.

Rick Levine: How many people are there?

Albert Kitmacher: I can't remember how many people. It was pretty big, you know.

Rick Levine: And again you're doing hard labor?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. They took us to -- every day to a factory. It was supposed to be an airplane factory but they never made airplanes there, just dig ditches and I don't know what they did in there. And we had Ukrainian -- or Ukrainian guards at the camp. We had (inaudible) -Rick Levine: German?

Albert Kitmacher: A German. He was killing people, Jewish people for no reason.

Rick Levine: What were the -- again, the sleeping quarters are similar?

Albert Kitmacher: Similar.

Rick Levine: Out of planks with straw?

Albert Kitmacher: Plank, yeah.

Rick Levine: Very crowded?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: And you have just enough food, a small ration --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- every day to survive?

You describe the over (inaudible) killing people for no reason. Do you have some specific recollection of --

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. There was a father and son, a young boy, came back to the camp from work and something must have happened between this man and a woman there, a German. He used to work at the seidel (ph.), German seidel. It's like several houses of German people. They send him out to work and he hid some diamonds and he offered some woman some diamonds for food. She must have called the (inaudible). And there was a -- that night he came home, there was an alarm. Everybody had to go out, sit in line. He took four of those people out, the father and son, had them lay down on the ground in front, took a gun and just killed them both. This was one incident.

Then I had a dream which saved my life. One night I was dreaming I was in my father's tailor shop working, all the sudden the door opens up and there's a big bird, you know, flying in. It starts fighting me. Finally I overpower the bird, you know, and I threw him out. And I woke up and I realized I was sick. There was (inaudible) going on in the camp. I couldn't see straight. I couldn't move. And I asked my friend there, I said, Help me get down off from the bunk, you know. He helped me get to work. I don't like to stay here for the day.

Rick Levine: You don't like to --

Albert Kitmacher: To stay in the camp today.

And the (inaudible) gave an order. They took out all the people, all the sick people, didn't make any difference they're sick or they just stay home, they took them all out in a big ditch and they shot them. It was over a hundred people.

Rick Levine: You heard this or you saw this?

Albert Kitmacher: On (inaudible) we had about 2 miles of walk to work. We heard guns going off. Every few minutes the guns went off and you realize what's happening. When we came back to the barracks, they told us. This was not the first time, it was not the last time. He was just, he was known.

Rick Levine: Do you recall his name?

Albert Kitmacher: Fickes.

Rick Levine: Fickes. F-I-C-K-E-S?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. (inaudible) Fickes, yeah.

Rick Levine: Why do you say the dream saved you, because it --

Albert Kitmacher: I had a feeling of I shouldn't stay in the barracks. And at that time I was sick, I knew I was sick, I had fever. And I went over to the (inadible) -- and I said, I cannot work outside. I'm too sick. And he sat me down and I had to pick potatoes. There was another very religious man, you know, in the basement, he was an older man, and he was working there picking potatoes and I told him about my dream. You know any Hebrew? He said to me (inaudible). You fought the devil and you won, you know. That's what that was, my dream.

Rick Levine: How long did you stay at Budzyn?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know but they shipped us out. I don't know if they closed the camp, must have closed the camp, but they shipped us out. I wound up in Wieliczka.

Rick Levine: Roughly two months? Six months?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, longer. Longer. I spent the winter and the summer but I don't know exactly how much time I spent there.

Rick Levine: You mentioned also you're in the bunk and you tell a friend, Help me, I need -- I want to go?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

Rick Levine: You use the word friend. Do you have friends?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. We used to be friends before we went to camp. That's why we -- we stayed on the same bunk, you know, him and I and his father who died -- in sleep he died.

Rick Levine: When you say before, do you mean all the way in Warsaw?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: So this is people that you knew -Albert Kitmacher:

That's right.

Rick Levine: -- way back?

And you were already friends?

Albert Kitmacher: I visited him a few years ago. He lives in Tel Aviv.

Rick Levine: So he survived?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Same age?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: So they closed Budzyn after -Albert Kitmacher:

Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: And what were the circumstances that you remember about the camp being closed?

Albert Kitmacher: They took out different groups. They send me to Wieliczka. That's a salt mine. We did work in the mines but we had a tough time being there. It was run by Polacks. They were the worst. There wasn't a day they

didn't kill somebody there. Finally they asked everybody their trade, you know. I don't know what I got in my head, you know, but I told them, I'm a klemperer (ph.). You know what a klemperer is? A sheet and metal worker. I never knew what a sheet and metal worker is but I thought maybe if they don't need a tailor, they need a sheet and metal worker. They send me

to -- that day they send me to Litzmertz. This was in Germany already.

Rick Levine: Tell me first, if you know, know to spell Wieliczka.

Albert Kitmacher: Wieliczka. W-I-L-I-C-Z-K-A.

Rick Levine: Wieliczka?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: When they closed Budzyn, how far away is Wieliczka from there?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know.

Rick Levine: You go by train?

Albert Kitmacher: By bus. By truck. Rick

Levine: With many men together -- Albert

Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- in the back of the truck?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Open truck or closed?

Albert Kitmacher: Open truck.

Rick Levine: They give you food for the journey?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no food for journey.

Rick Levine: Do you remember how long? It's a drive of one hour or --

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, no, it's quite a few hours.

Rick Levine: And this is you're going west into Germany?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, into Germany.

Rick Levine: Did you have any idea what you were going to find there?

Albert Kitmacher: Nothing. I didn't know if they were going to kill me or -- I couldn't even remember how (inaudible) I was in Wieliczka. Finally I wound up in Litzmertz.

Rick Levine: Was it (inaudible) or German military who guards you as you're going?

Albert Kitmacher: German military.

Rick Levine: And at Wieliczka is there a separation, a selection? Everybody goes to the salt mine?

Albert Kitmacher: Everybody goes.

Rick Levine: Okay. And the name of the salt mine was?

Albert Kitmacher: Wieliczka.

Rick Levine: I'm sorry. Litzmertz?

Albert Kitmacher: Litzmertz.

Rick Levine: And how do you spell this?

Albert Kitmacher: German, I -- L-I-T-Z-M-E-R-T-Z.

Rick Levine: So Wieliczka is the salt mine and Litzmertz nearby?

Albert Kitmacher: Not too far, yeah.

Rick Levine: And what goes on there?

Albert Kitmacher: The same thing, you know. See, (inaudible) is near Krakow and Litzmertz was not too far from there. All day marching and picking and marching. I don't know what we did. I can't think of anything we did. Finally they made a (inaudible) that made an alarm. We all had to go out, stand in

line and they called my name and several other names and they took me out. I didn't know where they were taking me and
I found out to Flossenburg. It's (inaudible). I know Messerschmidt, airplane manufacturer there. We wound up there.

Rick Levine: Do you recall at all how long you spent either at Wieliczka -- Wieliczka was just a --

Albert Kitmacher: In between, yeah. In between, yeah.

Rick Levine: -- to go to Litzmertz. And Litzmertz you stayed maybe weeks?

Albert Kitmacher: Months.

Rick Levine: Some months?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And, again, it's the same routine of working all day, every day?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: The bunks and barracks are similar?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: Do you recall the -- the kapo or the commandant of the camp?

Albert Kitmacher: No, I don't remember him at all. I don't know why. I --

Rick Levine: And your friend from Budzyn, he also was with you at this time?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: What became of him at this point?

Albert Kitmacher: He -- they took him someplace else.

Rick Levine: So when Budzyn was liquidated, people went --

Albert Kitmacher: At different places, yeah. I found him afterwards when we -- after we marched from Flossenburg. We were --

Rick Levine: You found him again?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, I found him again.

Rick Levine: But back at Litzmertz you mentioned your -the kind of work up there was what?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't remember what we were doing but it was hard work, I know that.

Rick Levine: But it wasn't in the salt mines?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: And when you told them you were a klemperer, was that at Litzmertz? Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did this help you at all?

Albert Kitmacher: They took me out from Litzmertz, they took me to Flossenburg.

Rick Levine: Presumably you thought they're going to use me to do -- to do this work?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Why did you say klemperer rather than tailor?
Did you think they have no use for a tailor?

Albert Kitmacher: That's what I thought, you know. And another thing, when I sit and work, my mind doesn't rest, you know. I was thinking about sit and rest, I'm going to go bananas. That's why I thought I'll tell them klempeper, they'll

take me, somebody put me to work maybe with a hammer or a chisel or a screwdriver.

Rick Levine: You thought you're better off -Albert Kitmacher:

Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- working?

Albert Kitmacher: Working.

Rick Levine: So they selected you to go to Flossenburg?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

Rick Levine: How did you get from Litzmertz to Flossenburg?

Albert Kitmacher: By train.

Rick Levine: By train?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: With many other people?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: Is it packed, crowded or comfortable?

Albert Kitmacher: No, it wasn't packed crowd but it wasn't comfortable. It was an open train, open cars.

Rick Levine: But there's space to sit?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Sit down, yeah.

Rick Levine: How long a journey is it, do you remember? Albert

Kitmacher: Not too long.

Rick Levine: At this point you had been sick and you're not able to nourish yourself properly. Were you quite thin? Albert Kitmacher: I didn't hear -Rick Levine: Quite thin?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Rick Levine: But you don't have -- you didn't have typhus at this point?

Albert Kitmacher: No. All of a sudden I got better. I don't know what happened, but I just didn't think about it anymore and I wasn't sick anymore.

Rick Levine: So when you arrived at Flossenburg, you're feeling relatively healthy?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you know how many people arrived with you at Flossenburg?

Albert Kitmacher: No, but it was a big, big camp, you know. I would say about 15,000 people there, Germans and (inaudible) and Jews, too. We got better food, you know. We got -- in the morning we got a piece of bread and margarine or a piece of wurst, you know. That time we got soup.

Rick Levine: On arrival at Flossenburg did you pass before some selection or did you -Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: You're wearing the same clothing?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: They just direct you to a barracks?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right. We wore a striped suit, you know, blue/gray striped suit.

Rick Levine: When did you start wearing this?

Albert Kitmacher: In Budzyn.

Rick Levine: And you had one suit of -Albert Kitmacher:

That's right.

Rick Levine: -- clothes that you wore throughout this period?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you have any other possessions?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: A bowl, a spoon or something?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: When you eat soup, they serve you in a bowl and then you give the bowl back?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. You had to wash the bowl and give them back the dish.

Rick Levine: At this point did you have any comrades, any friends, people you knew, people you were --

Albert Kitmacher: No. You mean in Flossenburg?

Rick Levine: Yeah.

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.)

Rick Levine: So you're very much alone?

Albert Kitmacher: I had a very bad experience in Flossenburg. I was working outside, you know, moving trail sacks. It was cold, freezing, and I froze up both my hands right here, knuckles, because (inaudible) the tracks, you know, if somebody dropped it, it's up to my hands and the hands stuck to the metal. All of a sudden a Jewish fella comes over to me, he says, Fritz wants your breakfast for a week. You understand? He wanted my breakfast. I should give him my breakfast for a week.

Rick Levine: A Jewish man was telling you some other person --

Albert Kitmacher: A German kapo wants my breakfast. He told me this other guy gave them already for a week. I said, Anybody can give what he wants. I don't have to eat anything, you know, but if I get a breakfast, I'm not going to

give it away. He says to me, He's going to kill you. I said, If he's going to kill me, he's going to kill me, you know, what can I do?

And I was working, afterwards it just stuck in my mind and I heard this guy, this Fritz was a murderer, just terrible. And I went around the barrack asking certain people they should help me, nobody could help me.

Finally, one morning I came out that day he was supposed to kill me, I didn't see him, I didn't see this Fritz, and I asked around what happened. They told me he and another kapo were making moonshine and it must have been poisonous or something but several -- several people died from that moonshine. They took him away, took Fritz away and the other kapo and we never saw them again.

I had miracles right along.

Rick Levine: You mentioned metal hitting your hand.

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Were you doing work that was specialized for metal work?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: No?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: This business of the klemperer, that never happened?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: You were just given hard labor and -Albert Kitmacher:

Hard labor, yeah.

We had to move -- I don't know why we have to move them but there was no -- you move them from one place to the other. We had to go every morning to

move sacks from one place to the other. When the sacks were frozen, well, they stuck to my hand, my -- both my hands were bleeding.

Rick Levine: So if you can eat it, if nobody's taking your breakfast away, the food is more nourishing than you were previously --

Albert Kitmacher: It was not -- it was not good but it was better than I had before.

Rick Levine: A little margarine -Albert Kitmacher:

Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- or soup, a little bread? And twice a day?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: How long did you spend at Flossenburg?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, pretty long, but dates, I cannot come up with dates. I don't remember. But I knew it was close to when the Russians came in and the (inaudible) came in from (inaudible). We knew something was happening.

Rick Levine: So by this time this is '44, '45?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: So this was really -- if I'm following you correctly, this is the fourth camp you were in?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. I was in six camps, six or seven camps altogether (inaudible) working for the (inaudible).

Rick Levine: Remind me about this again.

Albert Kitmacher: This was my first -- it wasn't a camp. I had to work there every day from the city of Barstow (ph.). We went to work there (inaudible).

Rick Levine: What was the name of that place?

Albert Kitmacher: Okncze.

Rick Levine: Can you spell that for me?

Albert Kitmacher: O-K-N-C-Z-E.

Rick Levine: Okncze?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And this is outside of Barstow?

Albert Kitmacher: Barstow, yeah.

Rick Levine: You walked there every day?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, every day.

Rick Levine: Okay. So now in Flossenburg, again, this is at least several months?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah, quite a few months.

Rick Levine: Was it the same kind of severity that you described earlier in Budzyn where you had a brutal over
(inaudible)? Is there again this kind of murderous --

Albert Kitmacher: No, we didn't see any German. We knew the Germans were watching the camp but we didn't see them. And they didn't single out the Jews there because there were German prisoners, there were Polish prisoners, Russian prisoners in there, quite a lot of them.

Rick Levine: So these are some political prisoners -Albert Kitmacher:
Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- and undesirable people -Albert Kitmacher:
That's right.

Rick Levine: -- from the German point of view? So Budzyn was the most cruel, the most brutal -Albert Kitmacher: -- camp, yeah. Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you make friends or acquaintances at Flossenburg?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: But you were able to maintain your health?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. If I made any friends, I couldn't remember anymore.

Rick Levine: You did mention that your friend that you knew from Warsaw again you saw at Flossenburg.

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Afterwards?

Albert Kitmacher: Afterwards.

Rick Levine: During this time did you have any indications of what was going on in the wider world?

Albert Kitmacher: We had an idea what was going on.

Rick Levine: How did you know?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, the Germans would talk about it to themselves -- you know, by themselves and we found out how they were murdering the Jewish people.

Rick Levine: And throughout this time you had no further word --

Albert Kitmacher: From my family.

Rick Levine: -- from your family?

Albert Kitmacher: No, not a word.

Yeah, the Germans used to have shortwave radios, too, and the word was going around so and so, you know.

Rick Levine: You never worked as a tailor during any of this --

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: -- time?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Do you have some recollection about the last days that you spent at Flossenburg?

Albert Kitmacher: We knew we were going out, we were leaving Flossenburg. And at first they tried to take us by train and we got into the train. I was in a closed-in train with a top and there were lots of (inaudible), people, prisoners were in the open trains, and the English planes came down and started blasting the train with machine guns.

Rick Levine: You could see them with your eyes?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah. And lots of people got killed.

Rick Levine: In the train?

Albert Kitmacher: In the train, yeah. Especially the ones that was on top, you know. They had shelves in the trains.

Then they started -- they didn't let the trains move. They took us out on a march and we were sleeping on the road, you know. They gave us each blankets. And the stronger people, the Russians, Polaks took the blankets away from us and we were without anything to sleep in the --. Then in the morning we didn't get any food anyway. Each day we got a (inaudible). Do you know what a (inaudible) is? A turnip.

We got a turnip to eat, little bitty thing.

It was just plain terrible the march. We marched I think for several weeks.

Rick Levine: What indication did you have towards the end at Flossenburg that you were going to be taken on a train?

Albert Kitmacher: Everybody knew, you know, they were going to evacuate the train.

Rick Levine: And you knew also that it's because the allies were --

Albert Kitmacher: That's right, allies coming in and the Russians came in. They were more afraid more for the Russians than the allies.

Rick Levine: The Germans were afraid?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: So the march lasts for weeks -Albert Kitmacher:

Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- as you recall?

And food is --

Albert Kitmacher: There's no food.

Rick Levine: -- almost nothing?

Albert Kitmacher: Nothing.

Rick Levine: And the weather is --

Albert Kitmacher: It's pouring. Continuously raining.

Rick Levine: Do you recall in retrospect when this must have been?

Albert Kitmacher: (Shakes head.)

Rick Levine: It's not important.

Are there any other specific memories you have of this march?

Albert Kitmacher: March?

Rick Levine: The march, yeah.

Albert Kitmacher: We saw every few minutes if somebody got tired, couldn't walk anymore, the (inaudible) just pulled them out, throw them into a ditch alongside the road, throw them into the ditch and just gunned them down and killed them.

It happened to me, not that I got killed. All of a sudden my legs wouldn't move. They just stopped, you know. I don't know what the reason but they just stopped. And I decided to hold back and I heard a voice in the back -- I don't remember who it was, what it was, Kitmacher, don't stop here. We had an idea that we were going to be safe pretty soon, and all of a sudden I got enough strength and I kept going. And they took us to a town in Germany, Stumstre (ph.). It's in Byron (ph.). Over there Ukrainians are already afraid, too. They put us on the marketplace and they called out the burgermeister and they didn't know what to do with us. Ukrainians wanted to kill us. They had the order to kill us before. But all of a sudden we saw -- up in the hills we saw American tanks coming in.

Rick Levine: Burgermeister means like mayor?

Albert Kitmacher: Mayor, yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you remember some feeling seeing the American tanks?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, it was the best thing I ever saw in my life. All of a sudden the Ukrainians disappeared. We didn't see them anymore, in one minute. To this day I just feel bad I didn't grab a gun out of somewhere and just start shooting them, but they disappeared.

Rick Levine: How many of you were left at this point after --

Albert Kitmacher: Not too many. Not too many. In our group maybe 50 people.

Rick Levine: Many had died along the way?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah, many got killed.

Rick Levine: Killed mostly by the Ukrainians?

Albert Kitmacher: By the Ukrainians, yeah. And lots of them got killed by the English planes, you know, machine guns, the trains.

Rick Levine: What happened after this?

Albert Kitmacher: We were liberated and they told us to go wherever we want. I wound up in a farm and I -- I looked in the mirror and I didn't recognize myself. My cheekbones are out here (indicating), you go so many weeks without food except for a turnip for the morning. And finally we -- I got sick. I -- some Polak gave me a piece of meat and I cooked it and I ate it and I got sick. I wound up in the hospital only for people -- prisoners. I wound up in the hospital.

Rick Levine: You said a Polak gave you meat. Is that unusual?

Albert Kitmacher: They -- they caught a pig, you know. They killed the pig and just -- and I was there and they just gave me a piece of meat. It must have been very fattening; it just made a mess out of my stomach.

Rick Levine: You said after the liberation that these events happened. Do you recall the actual moment, as it were, of the liberation, of the Americans being present before you?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And did you have some exchange with them?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: You weren't able to shake hands or --

Albert Kitmacher: No. We went down to the -- I wound up in the hospital in a different town. I remember they were coming in, they -- they wanted to know

how everybody is, you know, because they were all sick, and then started to bring in candy and other stuff, you know. But, I don't know, took me a long time to get to myself.

Rick Levine: The liberation you say was the best thing that ever happened. Did you have a particular sense of gratitude to the Americans at this point?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: So you experienced also some sympathy from them, some kindness from these American soldiers?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you remember any specifics? Did you see a Jewish American?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, we saw quite a few of them.

Rick Levine: Do you remember any conversation that happened?

Albert Kitmacher: We had conversations, sure, with them, but it was unreal just to go from hell to something like that, you know.

Rick Levine: Let me suggest we take a little break.

Albert Kitmacher: All right.

Rick Levine: Have something to drink and then we talk a little longer and --

Albert Kitmacher: Boy, it's -- it was just an hour and a half, I think.

Rick Levine: Yeah.

Albert Kitmacher: It wasn't that much.

Rick Levine: It's plenty. Yeah, it's a lot.

Albert Kitmacher: No, nobody realizes what we went through.

See, I had -- me, I had KL.

Rick Levine: You had what?

Albert Kitmacher: A KL tattooed.

Rick Levine: Oh, yeah? By who?

Albert Kitmacher: The Germans.

Rick Levine: At what point?

Albert Kitmacher: Before they took us out of Budzyn, everybody was tattooed. And I thought I'd wait until one of the last, maybe if they liberate the camp, I wouldn't have to have the tattoo. And they realized that I wanted not to do it and they gave me the biggest tattoo they could.

Rick Levine: KL for (inaudible)?

Albert Kitmacher: No. Konzentrationslager.

Rick Levine: Same tattoo for everybody?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Some got numbers. Not there, but some other places they got numbers. We got KL.

Rick Levine: Let's take a break. I'm going to ask John to stop the film for a minute. Please, have a sip to drink.

Interview with Albert Kitmacher

April 8, 1994

RG-50.477.0564.02.02

Rick Levine: You mentioned that it took a long time, you say, to return to yourself -Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: -- after all this.

What were the days and weeks like after the liberation for you?

Albert Kitmacher: I'd say they were -- they were very short and a lot of people came into our town and one of them told me that my cousin's alive. You know, my cousin? And he told me where she was, you know. She was in Munich in a group home.

Rick Levine: You say other people came into our town. What town are you referring to it?

Albert Kitmacher: Stamsried. That's where we were liberated.

Rick Levine: Yeah. Would you mind, let me interrupt you long enough to ask if you can spell that for me?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, S-T-A-M-S-R-I-D.

Rick Levine: Stamsried?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And this is in -Rick Levine:

Germany, yeah.

Albert Kitmacher: -- Germany.

Rick Levine: So other refugees --

Albert Kitmacher: Refugees came in. Rick Levine: -- from labor camps -Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- were coming in and told you about your --

Albert Kitmacher: My cousin. One of my cousins is alive. And I was waiting for somebody to come and tell me, you know, so my parents and my brother, my sister. Nobody did.

Rick Levine: How did you eat for those days and weeks right after the liberation? Did the -- was it the Americans?

Albert Kitmacher: The Americans. I wound up in a hospital for the first few weeks and the food wasn't bad. We didn't get any meat or steak but we got plenty of food.

Rick Levine: Can you describe to me a little bit when you say it took me a while to get back -- get myself back together, it's -- it's easy to understand that these experiences over many years would have a profound impact on you. Can you explain a little bit, though, what that means?
In what sense do you need to come back to yourself?

Albert Kitmacher: At first, you know, I was very much hurt, you know. I just couldn't believe that my parents were gone; my family's gone. And when I saw everything, you know, and we wrote to -- we wrote to New York and they told me, no, none -nobody by that name is around except you. I came to myself, you know, I -- I started doing a little tailoring work, you know, started to make a few dollars, or German mark, and I stayed in Germany -- how long did I stay in Germany? About four or five years.

Rick Levine: Where did you go from Stamsried? Did you stay there for --

Albert Kitmacher: No, I went to Munich.

Rick Levine: Were you looking for your cousin?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And did you have some luck?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. I found her in -- there's a village -that's not a village, a (inaudible) where the Germans used to live there, Frimon (ph.). And I

was going from one house to the other little small one-family houses asking if this person is there and finally she came out.

Rick Levine: And you recognized her?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And she also had lost her family?

Albert Kitmacher: Her whole family too.

Rick Levine: When you say your cousin, how were you related?

Albert Kitmacher: She was my mother's sister's daughter.

Rick Levine: Earlier you told me that your home in Ludlum you lived with your family and your mother's mother -Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- and your mother's sister. Is it this sister or another sister?

Albert Kitmacher: No, mother's sister. It's not this sister.

Rick Levine: A different sister?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.) A younger sister.

Rick Levine: But you knew each other growing up?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, yeah.

Rick Levine: Mr. Kitmacher, also you told me about this friend who you originally knew in Warsaw and then remind me, which camp was it that you were with him? Was it in Budzyn?

Albert Kitmacher: Budzyn, that's right.

Rick Levine: And you said then again you were reunited with him?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: What were the circumstances about that?

Albert Kitmacher: Afterwards, you mean?

Rick Levine: Yeah, when you saw him again.

Albert Kitmacher: I was reunited in Stamsried. We formed a Jewish community. We made a club. We cooked for ourself. We stayed there. Finally we made an agreement we both were going to go to Israel together. It was 1948.

Rick Levine: But he also stayed in Germany?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. Then I wrote to my -- I had another cousin in Israel who went there after the war and I told her about me wanting to go to Israel. She wrote me back some day to come here, she said. Her brother just got off the ship and they gave him a gun and (inaudible) and he got killed the first hour he was spent fighting.

Then my -- I made an agreement with that friend of mine from Budzyn, you know, I'll meet him in Gdynia. It's a port city -- port city of Poland. From there we go together to Israel. I didn't go to Israel anymore. He went.

Rick Levine: After you heard the story?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: This man who was killed was your cousin?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Did you know him?

Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: So you decided this was a bad omen?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah.

Say a little bit, if you would, about what it's like to live in Munich for five years right after the war in the midst of a community of Germans who had just -

Albert Kitmacher: Murdered.

Rick Levine: -- been responsible for all this --

Albert Kitmacher: See, we did -- in the place where I used to live were all Jewish people.

Rick Levine: In Munich?

Albert Kitmacher: In Munich. All liberated from the camps, from different camps. And they lived there and I lived with my cousin. I didn't have any -- anything to do with Germans.

And I did some tailoring for some other people and I still didn't have anything to do with Germans.

Rick Levine: You were able to make a little money, put some money -

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And your clientele was mostly Jewish?

Albert Kitmacher: Jewish, yeah.

Rick Levine: But in this five years no doubt you had to have some contact with the Germans, some contact, no?

Albert Kitmacher: Some. As little as possible. This was a closed -- let's say a closed ghetto but it was after the war and for the most people I worked for they were going to Israel and they needed to have clothes, you know.

Rick Levine: When you look back on these events, is your feeling towards the Germans, the Poles, the Ukrainians, the various groups, do you feel the same towards all of them or is there some special feeling you reserve for one over the other?

Albert Kitmacher: I think the Ukrainians and the Polaks were the worst.

Rick Levine: Worse than the Germans?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: So after these five years did you emigrate to --

Albert Kitmacher: The United States. I got papers and I immigrated.

Rick Levine: Were you still on your own at this time, traveling alone?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: And your cousin, the woman?

Albert Kitmacher: She went to Canada.

Rick Levine: So you arrived all alone?

Albert Kitmacher: All by myself.

Rick Levine: In New York?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. I was given a paper and I had to go on a ship, LeRoy Eltinge.

Rick Levine: And you arrived in about 1950?

Albert Kitmacher: 1949.

Rick Levine: '49.

Albert Kitmacher: And they didn't have any crew on the LeRoy Eltinge. They put us out to -- out to work on the ship. I wound up in -- in the engine rooms, to clean the engine rooms. And I got down there and all of a sudden I lost conscious and my blood started. It got in my mouth and my nose, all over. And they told me afterwards, the people who were with me, they didn't expect me to live anymore. My blood pressure must have skyrocketed so much because the engine room was about 150 degrees heat.

Rick Levine: You made blood from the nose?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah, the nose and the mouth and all over.

Then I came to Erie, Pennsylvania, and the head of the (inaudible) -- not (inaudible), the one who sponsored me, I told him about the trip. He said, We paid for your trip. You weren't supposed to work.

Rick Levine: Who was the shipping company? It's German?

Albert Kitmacher: No, American.

Rick Levine: American?

Albert Kitmacher: LeRoy Eltinge.

Rick Levine: After these years you married?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. I've been married 1951.

Rick Levine: And you have -- your wife is not a survivor?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no.

Rick Levine: And you had how many children?

Albert Kitmacher: Four; two boys and two girls.

Rick Levine: Clearly these events have a profound impact on your life. Are there ways that you see even today that you behave or react or relate to your family and friends and so forth that you think comes directly from all these experiences?

Albert Kitmacher: (Nods head.)

Rick Levine: What -- how has it changed you as a person from the person you would have been if this never happened?

Albert Kitmacher: My nerves are not the same. I get very excited, very nervous for any little thing. With my wife, I don't have any fights with her or the kids, but I know I'm not the same.

Rick Levine: Sometimes people feel that they had such a difficult time, life was so --

Albert Kitmacher: Miserable, yeah.

Rick Levine: -- unspeakably difficult, that their kids growing up in America in the '50s and '60s, they have it pretty easy and almost people have some -Albert Kitmacher: Resentment, yeah.

Rick Levine: -- some resentment about it. Did you ever experience such a thing?

Albert Kitmacher: No, no. I gave my kids everything I could.

Rick Levine: And you're very happy about that?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah. And then some people when you lived through near starvation for many years, one tends to have attitudes about eating and about food that are a little different.

Albert Kitmacher: Sure.

Rick Levine: And you, do you find that you have some -some people say, you know, for example, they can't leave a grain of rice on the plate after dinner, that everything needs to be eaten.

Albert Kitmacher: Sure, I keep -- explain to them, you know, that food is a -- a good thing if you have it. If you don't have it, it's terrible. And you got to have -- respect food.

Rick Levine: Did those years change your attitudes towards religion?

Albert Kitmacher: No.

Rick Levine: Towards Judaism?

Albert Kitmacher: No. Sometimes I think, you know, I should -I say I should hate God, but I could ask question, you know, Why? For what reason? Because my parents and my whole family was -- were nice people. Why should it happen to them?

Rick Levine: For some people this makes them turn away from --

Albert Kitmacher: I know.

Rick Levine: -- religion; other people, they become more religious because they find --

Albert Kitmacher: I didn't --

Rick Levine: -- there's some meaning in this.

Albert Kitmacher: I didn't turn away from religion, I didn't become more religion. I just say it's not fair.

Rick Levine: You mentioned earlier a -- a remarkable dream that you had.

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Do you find that these matters that you have dreams about about those days?

Albert Kitmacher: I lay down every night. Until I lay down in the bed, I'm all right, but the minute I lay down, everything comes to my head, the whole -- the whole history of mine comes back to me. And I take medication for it. I take anti- what do you call it -- anti-depressant pills I take. I've been taking them for all those years.

Rick Levine: For all these years?

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah. But yet still it's -- you lay down at night and you lay awake, you know, it just comes back and comes back, you know. Sometimes I lay at night and I cannot sleep.

Rick Levine: And that's been the case all the way -- Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- since 1945?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: When did you start taking anti-depressant medicine?

Albert Kitmacher: After I left the camp, you know, when I saw the first doctor.

Rick Levine: So you tried over the years -Albert Kitmacher:

Yeah.

Rick Levine: -- many different medicines?

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: So you've tried various ones?

Have you ever tried no medicine for a while?

Albert Kitmacher: I'm afraid. I feel if I -- I suffer with medicine. If I won't take any medicine, it's going to be worse yet. My doctor, you know, keeps telling me I should stop taking it, says, Why don't you go see a psychiatrist? He said -- I belong to Kaiser Permenete -- you can go to a psychiatrist any time you want.

A few years back, you know, I took sleeping pills and I couldn't sleep. You know Halcion?

Rick Levine: Halcion, yeah.

Albert Kitmacher: I used to take that. After one pill, it didn't work. I took 2 pills or three pills and it didn't work. I just stayed awake all night. I feel like my mind is going out of my head already, you know, just -- and nobody can help me.

Rick Levine: Some people talk about the experience of ambivalence about surviving; it was so terrible, I shouldn't have survived. I don't want to live after these experiences.

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: And some people talk about feeling guilty for surviving.

Albert Kitmacher: I do.

Rick Levine: Why did I survive?

Albert Kitmacher: I do feel. Why would I be the only one of my whole family to survive? I cannot find an answer in it.

I had a family. We were very close. We might not have, you know, the money or the things, you know, to be the happiest people in the world but we were happy. Yet they took us away and they didn't survive and I was the only one from my whole family to survive.

Rick Levine: There are those who say one survives in order to tell the story for everybody. If you didn't survive, the story of your parents and your brother and sisters would be gone, but now here it is. So some people find some satisfaction in -- in having the opportunity to see to it that their story is well preserved.

Albert Kitmacher: See, I couldn't -- I could never open up and tell my story because the minute I start talking, you know, I feel a choking in my throat, you know. The same what happened last night. My son, the youngest son, he says, You got to tell the story. He wanted me to tell him the story and put it on a tape, you know. I said -- but I go through, I talked to several people who were here before.

Rick Levine: People who --

Albert Kitmacher: Who were here to be interviewed. Finally, I said to myself, maybe I should.

Rick Levine: What do you think has changed or developed in your life that lets you sit here with great composure today for two or three hours to be able to talk about these events?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know. I see it's -- it's the twilight of my life, you know, and I got to tell the story to somebody. If I won't tell it, nobody will know about it.

Rick Levine: Have you ever in all these years talked about these events in such detail as you did today?

Albert Kitmacher: No. I couldn't. I just -- the minute I start talking about it, I choked up, you know. Just didn't want to come out.

Rick Levine: Are there other things on your mind that you would like to -- to discuss or comment about? If you have some other memories that come to mind or if you have some reflections about your perspective on these matters after all these years, I would be most interested to hear.

Albert Kitmacher: I don't know. I tell you we've been through -- I told you everything I've been through, you know. Maybe there are some things, you know, I didn't go through with you because I don't remember it. My memory, just gone.

When it comes to dates (shakes head) --

Rick Levine: The dates aren't important.

You mentioned at one point that there was a series of miracles, really, that kept you alive.

Albert Kitmacher: That's right.

Rick Levine: And I can think of several, particularly your escaping from the ghetto and the -- in the train, not being turned in for not having a ticket, for managing to spend the night in the train station, and later for not staying in bed in -- in Budzyn. Are there others that you can think of that you think it's incredible how I survived these -- these moments?

Albert Kitmacher: I think that's -- those are all miracles. To me they were miracles. Let's say -- let's say in the train, I have -- other people just jumped on the top shelf, you know. Today it's -- all of a sudden the English plane came down and they got killed and I'm alive. And the time in Flossenburg with the German kapo. He wanted to kill me but I didn't want to give him a -- a piece of my breakfast. This -- he made moonshine with another kapo and they were both taken away. If not, I know he would have killed me.

Rick Levine: What do you feel towards German people today or Polish people today?

Albert Kitmacher: I don't -- I was never brought up to hate, but I'll never forgive them. That's something, you know, I saw that -- it was unreal.

A few -- a few months after I was liberated, if somebody would give me a -- would give me a gun, I would go out and kill the bastards, but today I'm too old and too tired to do anything. I still read the paper about pros- -- you know, the Germans being tried and they cannot convict them of anything. Because otherwise it's not (inaudible). If I wouldn't have my wife or my four kids, I would have been long gone, you know.

They kept me alive.

Rick Levine: And you kept them alive.

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah. You have very healthy attitude towards family because you had a very healthy family as a young man.

Albert Kitmacher: Yeah.

Rick Levine: Yeah.

I would like to say that sometimes when somebody discusses these things for the first time in years and years that there's more dreams and more aggravation -Albert Kitmacher: Oh, yeah.

Rick Levine: -- and more bad memories for a while. And if you find that you have, over the next days or weeks, more thoughts, things that you begin to remember that we haven't talked about, that we'd be very happy if you would come back and we could talk again. But for now I would just like to thank you very sincerely for having the great courage -Albert Kitmacher: Thank you, too.

Rick Levine: Yeah, the great courage to come and share these dreadful events with us.

So if you have some final comment, or we could just ask John to close the tape.

Albert Kitmacher: All right.

Rick Levine: Yeah. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Kitmacher.

Albert Kitmacher: You're very welcome.