INTERVIEW OF CHARLES GLASS, San Francisco, California

July 25, 1990

INTERVIEWER: BARBARA BARER

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Mr. Glass, I know nothing about you so we'll start at the beginning. How old are you now?

SURVIVOR: Sixty-seven. My birthday was last week.

INTERVIEWER: Mazel tov.

SURVIVOR: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you born?

SURVIVOR: I was born in a small town in western Poland, southwest Poland, near the German border. The name of the town is Chanuf. I know it's pretty hard to . . . .

INTERVIEWER: Chanuf.

SURVIVOR: Yes. Near Krakow.

INTERVIEWER: And what was your family like? Did you have brothers and sisters and . . . .

SURVIVOR: Ah, we were four in our family. Three sisters and myself. Ah, I was the oldest one.

INTERVIEWER: You were the oldest son with three daughters?

SURVIVOR: With three daughters.

INTERVIEWER: What did your father do?

SURVIVOR: My father a small store, small business. Ah, it was a yardage store. This was an occupation mostly of Eastern European Jews, you know, yardage and other things and he had that store and mostly he gave mostly it was like a credit business. There was a big factory in our town. They produced locomotives and those people there came and bought in our store, you know. But it was a very small store.

INTERVIEWER: What was your life like when you were a child, what was your family life like?

SURVIVOR: Well, we come actually from a very, down generations back, we come from a very orthodox Hasidic and a wealthy family at the time because I remember my father, grandfather used to tell me stories they were under Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary was once an empire, up 'til World War I

our, you know, Chanuf, our town and all the everything was belonged to Austria-Hungary. And the Jews had it pretty good. Say the business and say they were very wealthy. My grandfather, in fact my seven generations back grandfather was the first rabbi in Chanuf and he was a very famous rabbi and there was a book came now out about our town. Up til now it was in Yiddish but now it was translated in English and there is a story also about my great-great-grandfather which was seven generations back. He was a very famous individual, famous rabbi. So anyway, ah, so, down his, and then the whole family, he didn't want his children to be rabbis so everybody went into business. That was, I'm going back two hundred years.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: And, ah, and their business was mostly lumber, forests, they bought whole forests, cut down, you know, lumber and so on. And it is very very wealthy up til 1918 when Poland became independent and ah under the Polish government the Jewish fortunes started to change. Anti-Semitism and Jews were boycotted and the Polish government was no so friendly to Jews at that time. So, when I was born in 1923, already the fortunes of my, my

grandfather still had a lumber yard and so on, but it started to go down. So anyway, my family was not so rich, was not even middle class. We were kind of poor, I would say. We had to eat but we couldn't eat what we wanted to. You know, we had the bread and butter and stuff like that. Anyway. But we had a happy childhood. Ah, I was the oldest one and the three like I said before and with the three sisters. I had three, two. I was fortunate that two of the sisters survived and they are still here. One did not survive. And we had a very happy family. I was sent to Hebrew schools and Yeshivas up til I was, up til the war which was when I was sixteen years old and, ah, and this was my childhood, was a small town, was mostly were religious Jews in this town.

INTERVIEWER: And your grandparents lived there and you had. . .

SURVIVOR: My grandparents. . .

INTERVIEWER: Your uncle. . .

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, we had grandparents. . .

INTERVIEWER: All the family.

SURVIVOR: We had, we had, you know, the whole town practically, there was ten thousand Jews in this town of a population of twenty thousand. Fifty-fifty. And maybe fifty percent of the Jews were, we all were relatives, all connected to that first rabbi which was two hundred years back, you know. And it was, everybody was family, everybody knew practically the other people and it was very, we went you know, when it was a wedding, you know, there were hundreds of people there, the wedding or if it was any other celebration or if it was the other way around, a funeral of someone you know. And we were part, the family was part, as a child I remember I was taken by my family no matter what, even to funerals where here people don't take children to. We were, we were, we celebrated the joy part of the family and also the sad part of the family, we were party of everybody, part of everything. Unfortunately here it's a little different.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have friends who weren't Jewish?

SURVIVOR: We went to a non-Jewish school, to a public school.

INTERVIEWER: Like to a public school.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, to a public, in fact it was a Catholic school.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: And, ah, but not really friends. Oh yeah, we knew, we had neighbors, non-Jews and so on and you know we knew each other, we played maybe as children in their back yards and so on, but not real friends, friends.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't really mix.

SURVIVOR: No, not socially, no.

INTERVIEWER: So all your parents friends and everything, the community was a solid Jewish community.

SURVIVOR: Yeah that's right, usually. But my father had also a lot of non-Jewish friends because they were customers of his and they were neighbors, they like to come in because my father had a store. There were neighbors, non-Jewish, very nice Polish people they used to come in to talk politics, and I remember as a child I used to help my father and you know just and then they used to come in. I remember a few nice fellows.

INTERVIEWER: But just in the store, not in your home.

SURVIVOR: Just in the store, not. . .

INTERVIEWER: You didn't know (unintelligible).

SURVIVOR: No, not in the home, no.

INTERVIEWER: And what were you going to be when you grew up, what were you planning to do?

SURVIVOR: I really didn't know. You know, when you're sixteen, when you're sixteen and ah, I really didn't, I was very good in certain things. I thought maybe I will be an architect or something. I was good in drawing at that time. I loved to draw. I made plans I remember if the city every grow and how to put in a street car in that city and so on. I like this type of thing. I drew pictures of homes and beautiful buildings. So I figure probably I would be something like that. But. . .

INTERVIEWER: So when did life start to change. When you first aware of things starting to be different?

INTERVIEWER: But just in the store, not in your home.

SURVIVOR: Just in the store, not. . .

INTERVIEWER: You didn't know (unintelligible).

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INTERVIEWER: And what were you going to be when you grew up, what were you planning to do?

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INTERVIEWER: So when did life start to change. When you first aware of things starting to be different?

SURVIVOR: Ah, actually ah, as far, like I explained, hoe life and everything, family was fine. But as far as life on the outside was not so good. There was a lot of anti-Semitism. We couldn't move out of the, you know we couldn't walk outside of the city because we are always attacked by non-Jewish boys with stones and so on. And anti-Semitism you know everywhere you know.

INTERVIEWER: Apparently your grandparents had told you about the history of beginning to be anti-Semitic.

SURVIVOR: Ah, yeah, we always do, but ah. . .

INTERVIEWER: Your experiences, that's what I'm interested in.

SURVIVOR: I probably experienced more than they because like I said before, they were under Austria-Hungary anti-Semitism was not, I mean the Jews were very well treated under that regime. Only under the Polish regime which, you know, I started to grow up under the Polish regime, and because that started in 1918, 1919, I was born in 1923 and ah, and this is, and also, you know, we could feel the war, we could feel when start, when Germany, when Hitler came to power in 1932 this is probably at that time nine years old and this is when I started to really understand a little bit politics

and so on and I started read newspapers. And this is when we really started to worry. We had, the German Jews came to, ah, they started to run away from ah German. Since we were close to the border, we had a lot of German Jews. They started to tell stories about anti-Semitism there and the Poles, they learned from the Germans too, and they start to be even more anti-Semitic.

INTERVIEWER: So describe other than the words anti-Semitic what is it they did to you or how you. . .

SURVIVOR: Like I say, we couldn't move around you know. As soon as we went outside of the part where the Jews lived we were attacked by the Polish. So there were boycotts, different boycotts for Jewish. You could see signs, don't buy in the Jewish stores and that affected like my father's business and everybody else's and we were laughed at, humiliated by the non-Jews most of the time and ah, well different, it affects your daily life and you could see in the newspapers sometimes very anti-Semitic articles in the Polish newspapers and it affected us. But it really started. . .

INTERVIEWER: It affected your father's business.

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, it affected my father's business and so.

INTERVIEWER: It's good to get like really specific like when it affected your daily life if you give examples like you saying. . .

SURVIVOR: Yeah. We could not, yeah, we could not go like I say, we couldn't play where we wanted and we couldn't do what we wanted.

INTERVIEWER: Because you would be harassed.

SURVIVOR: Because we would be harassed, I would say that word, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. But called names.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, that's right. Oh yeah, and also in the school.

INTERVIEWER: What happened at school?

SURVIVOR: Ah, in the school we were beat, you know, we were maybe between the, say a class was maybe thirty students and maybe ten or twelve us were, the rest were Poles and so on. And some times I was beaten up. Some others were beaten up by the Poles. They always seemed to be stronger. They ganged up on us, you know.

INTERVIEWER: And you couldn't fight back.

SURVIVOR: We couldn't fight back, yeah. We couldn't fight back.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened, like you'd get beat up and you'd go home and what would. . .

SURVIVOR: No, I came home, you know, I was a little boy, you know, like a child cries, and my parents they went and complained to the teacher but it didn't help much. The teacher sympathized. We had a lot of good teachers, who really were sympathetic, but what could they do?

INTERVIEWER: So, what happened then?

SURVIVOR: We just continued. In fact, at one time I was moved from one school, there were two schools in our town, and it became so bad in one and my parents moved to me another school where there is more Jewish kids and it was a little bit better than the other school. It was farther away.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: Because the first one was near our house where I could walk only a few blocks. And the other one you know I had to walk a little longer and then I was a little happier there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take lunch to school?

SURVIVOR: Yeah, probably, yes. I don't remember, I must have taken lunch to school, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do remember like you were eating Kosher food and the other kids weren't.

SURVIVOR: Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Was this a problem?

SURVIVOR: This was not much of a problem. This is something which I don't really remember how it was but Kosher food was something which every Jew no matter how it was religious or not religious they all ate Kosher food. So that was not a big problem so much. And ah, I don't, I really don't remember was the food, that was a long time ago, did we take the food. But I know we didn't take any lunches in school. This is for sure.

INTERVIEWER: So when did things start to get worse and what happened?

SURVIVOR: When refugees started to come from Germany and we heard what's going in Germany and little by little the, it got worse, you know. We heard and we figured you know when we heard what the stories about how the Jews were treated in Germany, as bad as we were, at least we lived, we could still function, but they couldn't and we, you know, we were afraid who knows what is going to to happen. But we didn't have anywhere to go. What could we do? We just could wait and see what's going to happen. There was no where to run and wait. There was no Israel at that time and the other countries, few individuals got out who had family somewhere you know like in the United States, South America, Africa, South Africa, Australia. I remember in my time, you know, there was celebrations _____, that person is going to leave, let's say to South America, that person is going to the United States, and so on. Very few. The rest, we didn't have a chance. We didn't have money, we didn't have nothing, you know.

INTERVIEWER: And your sisters were experiencing similar things?

SURVIVOR: Ah, for girls it was a little better. For some reason girls were not as much harassed as boys because you know boys like to fight always but the girls, but also they experienced some anti-Semitism.

INTERVIEWER: But you continued going to school?

SURVIVOR: Ah, 'til ah, yeah, I continued going to school, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Unintelligible.

SURVIVOR: Until I was about fifteen years old, maybe a year before the war and then my father figured that I should maybe go to the Yeshiva for a couple of years and then started to look for some position or something. So this is the time I had about a year so . . .

INTERVIEWER: In the Yeshiva?

SURVIVOR: Yeah, in the Yeshiva. And after that, the war broke out.

INTERVIEWER: So what happened to your family when the war broke out?

SURVIVOR: Ah, when the war broke out, you mean you want to know what happened economically or . . .

INTERVIEWER: From day to day, one day you were in Yeshiva the next day something was different, what happened?

SURVIVOR: Well, the last few days we, before September 1, 1939, we could feel in the air that it's going to be something is happening because Germany started to threaten Poland and ah that they wanted part of Poland you know, this part and this part and Poland said 'No, we're not going to give nothing away' and then England and France, they start, you know, we had it all in the paper 'cause we didn't have any televisions at that time. England and France warned Germany because they had already a lesson from Czechoslovakia about a year ago where they gave Hitler part of Czechoslovakia and Hitler promised that he was gong to leave the other part alone but then he turned around and he took even the other part so they had already a lesson here so they said they were going to go to war. But anyway, you know, we weren't part even when I was a teenager part in the politics and so on. But anyway September 1, 1939, that day I would never forget. That was a Friday and all of a sudden the morning we heard noises, airplanes and ah, you know, we get up and we hear, we didn't have a

radio in our house but some neighbors had some radios and we find out war broke out and we can see, we could see, we hear already, German airplanes passing, going over and ah we really didn't know what to do, you know, and Saturday came and we still went to the synagogue Saturday, but it was already people were all confused, some people started to go, run away. Some of my family, not my close family, my uncles started to run, they didn't know where they were running. Sunday is was such a artillery bombardment, Sunday, that we could not any more, we lived on the top floor on a four story building and we were afraid the building was going to be blown away so we went down into the cellar. We hid in the cellar. And we stayed there maybe I don't know how many hours Sunday, maybe four or five hours, and all of a sudden we heard it's quiet, we started to go out. When we went out, we see Germany tanks and German, Germans and right away they started, you know, they all went with their. . .

INTERVIEWER: Rifles. . .

SURVIVOR: Rifles ready and so on and I remember the first day one person he didn't know when they say stop and he couldn't understand or he couldn't hear and

he didn't stop right away and they shot him. It was, you know, it was already panic. . .

INTERVIEWER: You saw him shot before your very eyes?

SURVIVOR: I didn't see him, no, no, but it was in our neighborhood.

INTERVIEWER: Neighborhood.

SURVIVOR: And, ah, my, you know, my family didn't open the store any more for a time. But after a few days it quieted down a little bit, my father opened the store. But once he opened the store, the German soldiers came in and they say, you know, they wanted to buy some things, but after he wrapped up all the items, they said goodbye, they didn't pay. You know, I remember my father was upset because we didn't have very much and they practically emptied the store after, you know. But my father wanted to open the store, he thought maybe some customers would come in. But anyway, it was no use. We closed it completely. We had a few pieces of yardage we took up to the apartment and we just lived from day to day. But it started, it was really, really bad, we got, food was rationed and ah we were afraid to go out in the street because once we went out in the street we'd say

oh, if the Germans weren't around and used to catch the young people and older people also, used to catch them for work, all kinds of work. You know, sometimes they took us to their barracks, we had to clean their toilets and everything else and beaten up and humiliated. . .

INTERVIEWER: So that happened to you?

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, many times.

INTERVIEWER: So what, they would pick you up, take you from the street?

SURVIVOR: Yeah, take me from the street. . .

INTERVIEWER: Describe for me a time when that happened.

SURVIVOR: Ah. . .

INTERVIEWER: Like you're walking down the street. . .

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, walking down, well was a time we tried not to walk or not go on the street, but we had to go. . .

INTERVIEWER: Right, yes.

SURVIVOR: I mean, you couldn't be just sitting in the house. And once you walked out in the street it was not always but most of the time. They went around with big trucks and just took everybody on the truck, we didn't even know where. Sometimes they told us to dig ditches somewhere. At that time it was not ditches yet for killing people, but you know for other work, or maybe they didn't even it and the next day they took the same people, they told them just to cover it back up.

INTERVIEWER: They would take you back home?

SURVIVOR: No, they let us out in the square, there, in the town square, and then we had to find our way home.

INTERVIEWER: Did they feed you during the day or. . .?

SURVIVOR: No, no. They never fed us. No. Maybe like four or five o'clock in the afternoon, they let us back in. Well, we didn't even think about eating, we were glad, you know, we were sent back home. And that was a daily daily routine. The synagogues were already closed and the schools were closed. There was really nothing much to do.

INTERVIEWER: Did they just take the young men?

SURVIVOR: No, older too. Maybe not the very old but. . .

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum, but like your father. . .?

SURVIVOR: Many times I was taken to that type of work detail, no pay, no nothing. They were standing with the rifles ready and you couldn't even do anything. You had to work, you had to do it.

INTERVIEWER: So you like cleaned barracks. . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah. Mostly oh yeah, outside cleaned the streets, cleaned barracks, barracks was the worst because you were inside andy everybody, whoever any Gestapo men or SS men or soldier, he saw the Jews working there, he just tried to humiliate you as much as possible.

INTERVIEWER: Did they abuse you?

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, many times, many times. And you know sometimes, sometimes you could work, they had another thing, the Germans. You know, whenever a German soldier was on the street, a Jew had to bow, you know, had to bow for them. And they tried to humiliate you so much when, if you did bow, sometimes they say you pass by, you did, but he said 'come back, you did not' and you know he

slapped you and so on. Even you said you did he wouldn't let you even answer and so you either way, whatever you did it was wrong. They tried, there was no law, nothing. And they formed like a little _____ they call it, like a little city government just for the Jews and they picked some Jews, they have to say this little _____ had to say violation cards, had to say, that was a little later, but work detail, and so on. But the Germans didn't leave them alone. They cut but even if the _____ assigned every day they wanted like a few hundred people to work because the Germans wanted from them. So it was just pure harassment and this went on until I was only a year at home. We still lived in our, in the house, in our house, but many times went by days where, days where we had very little to eat. I remember I went around hungry, and my family too.

INTERVIEWER: What did you eat?

SURVIVOR: Ah, whatever we could get, whenever we could scrape some money because we didn't have any more store, we didn't make, we didn't have, we didn't have any savings. No. Ah, so my father was very proud. He wouldn't go and borrow or whatever it is. So we sold maybe a few things. I don't really remember exactly, but somehow, somehow,

there was enough, there was enough of bread, of milk, and just some basic, basic things. Ah, there was not enough for food or for other things, but just the basis, basic things. There was not enough of meat so we had to put something, make something else to look like meat or taste like meat and so on. And this went on like this for a year. And 19, I remember the day, it was about October 1940 which is a little over a year after the Germans came in and there was a big announcement that the Germans need a few hundred, you know, because they always had announcements, there is always some new rules and new things and so on and yeah, I forgot to mention also they took some, when they came in, they took some people as hostages, the Germans, in case if there is any sabotage or something these hostages, so they took all the wealthier people or the learned, most learned people of town, the most distinguished people, they took about twenty or twenty-five hostages.

INTERVIEWER: Where'd they take them?

SURVIVOR: In jail.

INTERVIEWER: Put them in jail.

SURVIVOR: Put them in jail. Ah, it was big problems, because you know without these people they were like you know the best people in town, and it happened one time, maybe a Pole or something did do some sabotage or he did shoot at some Germans so they took out I remember, took out two of those hostages and shot them. One was a friend of mine, a young man, because they couldn't find his father so they took his son. The father run away to another town because he knew they were going to take him. And it happened several other times where they shot. Now, one other incident which happened also which I forgot to mention. Right after the Germans came in and I said people started to run away, run away, you know, they though, the Germans were so fast that people couldn't run so far because there was no cars at that time. Either they walked or horse and wagon or so on but the Germans were faster. So once the Germans caught up with them, they started to come back because where are they going? They figured, well, what is going to happen to everybody is going to happen to them. And that was about a week or ten days after the war started, after the Germans came in and there was a group, maybe forty, fifty people walking, they were already about five kilometers from out town and all of a sudden the German soldiers, I don't know, or it

was SS, probably SS, they caught them, they saw them walking, and they caught them, they took them in there and they shot them all. And that was such a, that was the first big tragedy in our town. And it happened in other towns too.

INTERVIEWER: Were they walking to get away, running away?

SURVIVOR: No, they were walking to get back to the town.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

SURVIVOR: Yes. So they surrounded them.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

SURVIVOR: They were walking like on the highway or road and they were already about five kilometers. They surrounded them and said 'What are you doing?' They said 'Well, we're coming home' and they took them in and they took them to a to a school courtyard there and shot them one by one. It was such a big tragedy. The only thing is they let them be buried, they brought them to our town and be buried and I remember it was such a big funeral. The city, the whole city came out. The Germans for some reason they let us do it and it was such a tragedy, the women and children wailing

there, you know, the wives and the things, and between there were some children too. Between us. So we saw already what is going, we saw what's happening. So when the time came they look for about three hundred workers and I, say, I'm talking about myself, I was already so desperate, there was not enough to eat and was so humiliated, I figured I'm going to be a volunteer. Whatever, it couldn't be worse than it is now. It was not actually volunteer. I'm not going to resist or run away. If they take me. So they gather together, they had some names and so on. I was one of them. They took the strongest, the youngest people.

INTERVIEWER: Did you discuss it with your parents at all, what you were going to do?

SURVIVOR: Ah, I really did not discuss with them. No, I did not. But, I knew they were going to catch up with me. There was no use hiding. If you were hiding, you could hide for a few days and so on but then maybe it will be worse. They had my name on it, the list, three hundred young people, not only in our town. Later on I found out that together, all together. They took us and locked us up in a school, that same school where I used to go. They locked us up there. And they kept us lock up for

three days with very little food. So we didn't know where we were going, what we were going to do. It was just for three months, they told us for three months. So we figured, what can we lose for three months.

INTERVIEWER: All boys.

SURVIVOR: All boys.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

SURVIVOR: And we are going to have, it's going to be good, we're going to be fed, we are going to be clothed, we are going to work, we are going to get paid. You know, they promised this to us and they got us three hundred boys locked up and after three days they opened the doors and they started to march us through the town to the railroad station. We didn't know where we were going, nothing. But we knew when they started to march us, we had German soldiers every few feet on both sides. We had to, we had to march like soldiers you know four and four and one, you know, military style we had to march. We were not used to this kind of things but that's the way they want and if you moved they told us not to look right, not to look left, just go. And that was about maybe three-quarters of a

mile from that school to the railroad station and I remember there was you know there was houses on each side. We went through the main street and we lived towards our windows and going down to the _____ and I thought my parents will probably look out but they had the order all the windows had to be closed nobody should be near the window. But I took a side glance walking, I took a side glance, I saw. . . (crying)

INTERVIEWER: That's all right.

SURVIVOR: I saw my mother, I'm getting too emotional. . .

INTERVIEWER: unintelligible

SURVIVOR: I saw my mother standing there, I know exactly where my mother is going to be and look out, I saw my mother standing there. She must recognize me in between all these people and I swear the window was closed but she was standing behind the glass and she was so crying, I guess she had a feeling that it was the last time she was going to see me. I can never forget that moment. So, anyway, they marched us to the railroad station, they had a train already waiting for us and they got us in a train with soldiers on the roof, soldiers everywhere, with their rifles ready. But in that

train, the train stopped at another station they took off other people from another town and people from another town and probably maybe by the time the train after a couple of hours must have been maybe a couple thousand young men there and the train went probably for about I don't know how long, many hours, 'til it stopped in a certain in the middle of the forest. No, I mean, they let us out at a station in Germany already, that was already in Germany and ah they marched us from the train maybe they marched us a few miles very strict military thing and when they brought us like in the middle of a forest somewhere, it was, there was a few barracks there, completely empty, nothing. They told us, 'here, here you're going to be.' Well, we didn't know and they gave everybody like some kind of a blanket and that's about it and ah the next day, and we settled down on the floor, everybody had the blankets was a couple barracks, a few barracks there, maybe like I don't know a hundred in a barrack or whatever it is or two hundred, I don't even remember.

INTERVIEWER: Were there already some people there?

SURVIVOR: Ah, no. We were the first ones. The next day they got us up early, they marched out everybody, they assigned a few people to the kitchen, a few

people here, a few people will be there. They assigned one will be the head of the whole thing and us, all the other young people, they marched us out to work in the morning. We started to build a highway, like an autobahn. I don't know if you ever heard the German expression. It's like a freeway here.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: Although we didn't know in the beginning what we were going to do, what we doing, but later on, after the produce was finished, we saw it was an autobahn. And the conditions were terrible. Terrible conditions. A few people committed suicide. A few people were killed during work, and the place was dirty, bugs, bedbugs and lice, and everything else. We had very little opportunity to wash, to clean ourselves. The work was from ah from morning when the sun rise. . .

INTERVIEWER: Sunrise. . .

SURVIVOR: From sunrise 'til sundown. No matter. And that was, that went on for about year and a half, there, in that particular place.

INTERVIEWER: Was it all Jews, or were there other. . .?

SURVIVOR: All Jews.

INTERVIEWER: All Jews.

SURVIVOR: All Jews.

INTERVIEWER: No other kind of people there.

SURVIVOR: No other kind of people.

INTERVIEWER: Is that what's known as a work camp?

SURVIVOR: A work camp, yeah, labor camp.

INTERVIEWER: Labor camp.

SURVIVOR: Work camp, labor camp. The place was called Sacrow. It's a small town in Germany, ah, it's probably still there now. Ah, it's in the eastern part of Germany and ah. . .

INTERVIEWER: You were isolated from the town, you didn't see any of the townspeople. You were out in the woods somewhere.

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, we were isolated, no, no. We had at work we had German overseers, German guards, German and

every so often, the overseers were bad enough, you have to, constantly you had to work, you couldn't even rest for a second. You cannot lift, you couldn't lift up your head. In the winter it was so cold there, the winters are severe there, and you had to work only in your shirt and pants. You couldn't work in your gloves, you couldn't use galoshes, you couldn't use your jacket because the Germans said it makes you lazy. That was their. . .

INTERVIEWER: They gave you a shirt and pants.

SURVIVOR: You had to take, you had a little jacket but you had to take it off, you couldn't work in no gloves. Forbidden. The hand froze, the feet froze, no matter.

INTERVIEWER: What were you doing, were you digging or lifting rocks?

SURVIVOR: Digging. All kinds. You know like you do a freeway first.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know.

SURVIVOR: Well, I know. First you dig, and then you know they bring in stones or things like that you know

and then you have to put a little railroad thing so to bring in material. Everybody had something else. Most it was digging, all kind of hard work from. . . and. . .

INTERVIEWER: What did that feed you?

SURVIVOR: Nil. They gave us in the morning we had ah coffee, but not real coffee, it was ersatz coffee or whatever they call it made out of grain something. You know it was just a little water, black water and there was a piece of bread, this had to last you for the whole day 'til you got home in the evening. So some people, most people were hungry they ate it in the morning so they didn't have nothing for lunch unless you just, if you could split it, if you had your willpower to hold it, it was fine, but most people ate in the morning. You came home, you had to stand in the line to be counted, I say 'home,' back to the barracks.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SURVIVOR: You had to be counted, took another hour probably and then you had to stand in the line for the food until they dished it out and so on. By the time you were finished, the food was soup, very thin

soup, you know, it was out practically no meat, just maybe some vegetables, rotten vegetables sometimes, something like that, with another small piece of bread and then you were already so tired and so, so you just went, you wanted to sleep of course.

INTERVIEWER: You had a blanket on the ground or what did you do?

SURVIVOR: A blanket, yeah, we had a blanket, well after a while they put in some, they started to build some you know these. . .

INTERVIEWER: Bunks?

SURVIVOR: Bunks, yeah. Maybe two or three. But it was very little, you know, small mattress, very thin, and one blanket to cover, winter, summer, you had one blanket.

INTERVIEWER: Did you talk at night amongst yourselves?

SURVIVOR: Oh, yeah, we talked. In fact, in the beginning. . .

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things did you talk about?

SURVIVOR: Well, we always talked about how long this is going to last, we talked about the family at home, see once we were in the barracks, we were not so much disturbed, you know, and since most of them we were in the barracks was our townspeople is the same as my friends and others most of them were the same age. Ah, so we had a lot to talk about. So we talked about our town, we talked about other peoples, other people in the other towns, how it was there. We even, in the beginning we even established a little theater there just to keep us, Sunday, most of the time Sundays they let us stay at home, not always, most of the time. And ah so Sunday was the day where we cleaned ourself up a little bit, whatever we could, you know, because there was no hot water, only cold.

INTERVIEWER: Were there showers, cold showers?

SURVIVOR: Cold showers, yeah. So whatever we could we ah we washed in whatever we had. We couldn't, we didn't have a, they didn't give us a change of clothes. Once in a while we had, they threw us in something to give the old clothes to somewhere to wash and give us ones . . .

INTERVIEWER: Was it the same underwear all the time?

SURVIVOR: Yeah. So Sunday we used to wash them by ourselves. So we ah . . .

INTERVIEWER: You started a little theater just. . .

SURVIVOR: A little theater, it was, this kept us a little bit at least, and in the beginning also we were allowed once a month to write a letter home and to receive once a month a letter or a small package, but the packages most of the time didn't arrive and when they arrived were half empty.

INTERVIEWER: So your family knew where you were.

SURVIVOR: They knew at that time.

INTERVIEWER: And your family was at home, the rest of the family.

SURVIVOR: Still at home, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Your father too?

SURVIVOR: My father and mother, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Others?

SURVIVOR: The sisters and grandparents and everybody. Ah, and then. . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you pray at all, you came from a religious background.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah, I took along my trellin, yeah, a lot of people prayed, yeah, most of them.

INTERVIEWER: So you had your trellin with you.

SURVIVOR: We did it just for a few seconds at least. In the beginning we did that but later on it was impossible. And ah, so we were there about a year and a half . . .

INTERVIEWER: So you had a routine already.

SURVIVOR: A routine already, we knew already what's going to happen and ah . . .

INTERVIEWER: You were seventeen years old?

SURVIVOR: Yeah. I had, we had, we were a group where we had a lot of friends and so on and at one time when the way, let's see, 1941 when the war broke out with Russia, between Germany and Russia, we didn't

know, we didn't have any newspapers, we didn't know anything what went on. There was no radios, no newspapers, we just had once in a while maybe a sympathetic guard, a Ukrainian or somebody.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you, did you ever talk to the guards or have any dialogue with them?

SURVIVOR: Very little. Very little. You know, once in a while, you know, somebody threw like a piece of bread or piece of sandwich somewhere just to make you, he turned around and we could pick up something. And once in a while somebody dropped a word of maybe the Ukrainians or some Poles who were the overseers of the work detail, they dropped a word or two. So we found out somehow that there is a war between Russia and Germany. And at that time a few weeks after the war broke out there came somebody, some big high German gestapo man or whatever to us, I don't know what he was, and he needed a few hundred people for the Russian front to work for work detail. And they had names already picked up. I was one of them and everybody knew it was winter that no it was already, you know, the news that if you go into Russia that's lost.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think they picked who went?

SURVIVOR: I don't know. They, you know, there was _____ system. Anyway, when it came at the last minute I was already standing in the line to march out, you know, you didn't have to pack there 'cause you didn't have nothing. They told you get, when they announce in twenty minutes this and this and this have to be there, you have to be there. But then they ah started to ah to read off the names again before marching out of the gate and I was standing in the line and I didn't hear my name and I started a little a little to get out, you know. And somebody must have taken my name out because I had a lot of friends and I think the head, the Jewish head of the camp, somebody must have went, gone to him and told him to get my name out because we, I was from a very distinguished family at home, my family was, and this saved my life, one of the miracles there that saved my life, I remained in the camp. As bad as the camp was, it was still better than to go back east.

INTERVIEWER: Your name obviously wasn't Glass at that time.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, it was.

INTERVIEWER: It was Glass?

SURVIVOR: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Really.

SURVIVOR: But my first name was different. I had a Hebrew name.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

SURVIVOR: And ah later about a year or two later we found out that of the hundreds of people who went there maybe four or five came back alive. Everybody perished. And of course we talked after the war was, I met one of the survivors from that detail. They took him there to work on the railroad, the Russian railroad line were wider than the other Europeans and since they went in, the Germans went in Russia, they needed the railroad, and they had to narrow the . . .

INTERVIEWER: Tracks.

SURVIVOR: The tracks, yeah. And this winter, it was terrible. The worst, worst condition. People froze there outside and so. Anyway that's one of the miracles. And after a year and a half, well it was really bad, bad, they took us to another camp, they needed some work, it was closer to our

home but still it was very bad, we had been there six months and then they transferred. There was only maybe

END OF SIDE THREE

about a hundred people, I was one of them. And then they transferred us to another big camp, the name was _____. This was already a big, and this was camp where we were maybe a year and half also and at that time when we came to _____ they started already to resettle the Jews from the, from our town and from all the uh near towns and a lot of people came, groups of young people came there, it was 1942 and ah they started to tell us the bad news that a lot of people were taken out and they don't know where they were taken and included my father and mother and . . .

INTERVIEWER: That's what resettlement meant.

SURVIVOR: Resettlement meant. But later on we found out they were taken to Auschwitz. Auschwitz was only ten kilometers away from our town. We were ten kilometers from Auschwitz.

INTERVIEWER: They took your parents, but you don't know. . .

SURVIVOR: I know the date when they were taken and that's and my sister, one of my sisters, they left, they still left maybe a few hundred people in that town. And they you know they had to work and you know. So one of my sisters still was left there but the other sister was taken to a camp and the, and two of my sisters were left, one was my sister which was right next to me, ah, you know next in line to me. She was left because she knew how to sew and she was about a year and a half than me and they left her because she was helping sew the German uniforms, repairing and so on. They needed this type of people. And also the younger sister, the youngest. . .

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

SURVIVOR: She did not survive by the way. She was, let's see, she was born in 1932. She was about eleven years old at that time. For some reason either they hid there or something for some reason she survived. She helped also sew, just to survive. And but the other sister, the third sister, my, they took her to another camp and she survived. She went to a pretty good camp that was very seldom they had a girl camp somewhere in Czechoslovakia they took her there. They could

even ah, they could keep their own clothes there, they had it pretty good. Sure, they had to work and the food was scarce and so on but at least they didn't take nothing away, they, in fact she kept a few pictures from, she had a picture from me, a picture of my father they didn't take away, of course us, everything was taken away. Everything. We couldn't keep not a needle even. So going to back to Marchdad, to that camp Marchdad that was also a labor camp. . .

INTERVIEWER: And was that also all male and all Jews?

SURVIVOR: Ah, yeah. There were all Jews at that that in Marchdad. But it was a bigger camp. Was many more people from everywhere from the whole western part of Poland. They brought them over there. We built what we did there was we built a factory. A factory which produced arms, produced artillery shells or something like that and ah it was cold, let's see, what do you call, oh some kind of a German name. Anyway. So we built big complexes, big factories there, and this was our work. My particular. . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you understand German at that time?

SURVIVOR: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, I knew German.

INTERVIEWER: You learned it at school or how did you learn?

SURVIVOR: We learned at school since we were near the German border, we took in school, German, so I knew and Yiddish was, is a little close to German too, and by the time when I was in camp I knew already perfect German. After a few years being between the Germans, you know. So, it was also the conditions were bad but maybe not quite as bad as in the beginning but it was pretty bad. Also hunger and dirty and so on. But the news, the worst was the news. The news was always you know, this town was liquidated, this town was liquidated and this later I found out that they liquidated the whole town of my city and they and my youngest sister did not survive. She went with my aunt to Auschwitz,, the youngest one, but my, but my, the sister who was sewing, my second sister, she was taken to a camp, with some other young people.

INTERVIEWER: When did you stop hearing from your family? When did the letters stop?

SURVIVOR: Oh, that was, communication started a year after I was in camp. I would say maybe in 1941, sometime by the end of 1941.

INTERVIEWER: You lost contact.

SURVIVOR: I lost contact, yeah. Except the time when I found out when the people came to Marchdad and they told us what was going on. There was always transfers, people were transferred, people were moved, and so on so it's not always were the same people so in this way we could hear some news what went on somewhere else. That was the only source of news. So in Marchdad we were until the winter of '43-'44. Then we start to hear rumors that we are, this was still a labor camp, and we are still wearing civilian clothes, you know, not maybe our own, but whatever they gave us, and somehow we still looked like a human being a little bit. But then we heard rumors that they are going to transfer us to a concentration camp. That was in the winter. So when ah. . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you know what was going on there?

SURVIVOR: We knew more or less what a concentration camp is. We knew, but we didn't have much, very much an idea. So one winter, again some high gestapo

people come. They put up tables somewhere. Everybody, they took everybody from this camp. Everybody had to take all their clothes off and go before that commission, like a commission like, stand and they told you 'well, you will go there and you will go there and you will go there.'

INTERVIEWER: So you walked naked in front of them.

SURVIVOR: Naked, naked. And they looked at you, sometimes they poked at you, you know. And everybody looked bad, anyway, you know, we were all already ah you know, from hunger and so on, but some of them still looked a little better than the others. And the people who looked real bad, they sent them away somewhere, we never heard from them and I. . .

INTERVIEWER: You don't know where?

SURVIVOR: Probably to Auschwitz, I'm pretty sure, because they always came and took the sick people and so on. There was always transfers to Auschwitz. And ah the people who were still healthy like me and a few others, we still looked young and healthy, so they put us to another line and so we went, our group, I don't remember how big a group it was, it must have been maybe a thousand or so. Our group

went to a neighbor, they send us, not far from there, we walked, in fact, it was maybe a few miles, and there was already an established concentration camp. Now there were not only Jews, there were already Poles there and others and Germans and what else?

INTERVIEWER: German prisoners?

SURVIVOR: Not, well, German criminals. But the German criminals didn't have it bad. They, they, they were the heads, they were the cooks, they were the heads of the block, of the barracks, they had all the best positions and the criminals was, you know, because we talked to them many times and they were homosexuals or some maybe ah who were against the government you know or communist or so on. Those type of people.

INTERVIEWER: Now what kind of Poles were there.

SURVIVOR: Also criminals or something which had to do with politics maybe they were against maybe underground or so on. The people they didn't execute right away they send them in the concentration camps and there were Ukrainians and later on the Italians came when Italy surrendered and so. . .

INTERVIEWER: So where was that they marched you off.

SURVIVOR: They marched us off. It was not far. The place, the name of the place was Fenftiran that's like the translation would be Five Lakes, Fenftiran. And they took all our clothes away, they put on us a striped you know they gave us a striped uniform with a striped cap and the same thing, we went to work, we went to work back to the same factory but because it was not far we marched, it was only like I said maybe a few miles, kilometers, I don't even remember the time, the distance.

INTERVIEWER: You marched back and forth?

SURVIVOR: Marched back and forth and we worked in the same places but we had to march back to a concentration camp which was run a little different than the labor camp. It was very strict, strict, strict, everything is strict.

INTERVIEWER: What was different?

SURVIVOR: Ah, the regime was completely different. Whatever, how strict it was there we still could do a little bit, we could get together. Here you couldn't talk to nobody. It has to be it was at night you have to, as soon you got into barracks,

you know it took you longer to count it was more the regime was strict. When we came from the work detail sometimes we stood hours and hours because it was a lot more people to be counted. If one was missing or if he made a mistake he had to start all over again another hour. Sometimes it took us probably until the next morning. It was cold or hot or whatever it was and we had to stand there.

INTERVIEWER: So there was no 'leisure time.'

SURVIVOR: No, no, no leisure, oh, no, no, no. This is out. These things were out. No theater, no leisure and ah the ah the block _____ or the barrack _____ they were not Jews anymore and they were already either Germans or Poles or something and they could do with us whatever they wanted.

INTERVIEWER: Like what?

SURVIVOR: You know, for instance, o.k., I give you one example. In the morning when they woke us up in the morning they went with a stick and just beat everybody you know to get up and they didn't give us even time, one minute or so, if you were not out in one minute you were so beaten and trampled on and so on. That _____, the one who was the

head, he had a few helpers there too, he was not by himself. It was just very, very, it was like in the strictest I don't know how to, I don't if there is anything a jail or something like that here, there is nothing like that in the Western world.

INTERVIEWER: Just cruel.

SURVIVOR: Very cruel, very cruel. At work very cruel and ah people were dying it was way different you know people were dying people were killed on the courtyards and everywhere else. Whoever wanted to you know all these who had anything to say in that camp, it was not Germans, Germans very seldom came in but it was all the run by the, I mean German guards or soldiers very seldom came there outside but it was run by the German civilians and the Poles and the Ukrainians or whatever. . .

INTERVIEWER: And they were worse?

SURVIVOR: They were worse, sometimes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Why would they be worse than the Germans?

SURVIVOR: Well, it's many reasons because, one reason probably is because they were the worst of the

worst. When these Germans were put in there, there was the underworld, the biggest criminals. They were criminals, professional criminals. And that's what they did whatever they did at home they did here. Killing somebody or something like that didn't matter, it was, a human being was nothing for them. And there was nobody to penalize for them, there was nobody to tell them anything, so they didn't care. And when the Germans outside or whoever, they didn't care how many people were killed. So there would be a few less.

INTERVIEWER: When you said in the work camps that some people committed suicide, how did they commit suicide?

SURVIVOR: They hanged themselves. That was the only way, there was no, you couldn't get any, anything else, there was no arms or nothing like that, that was the simplest way at that time to (very softly) commit suicide.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: So this camp was very, very bad.

INTERVIEWER: No Sundays off? You worked every. . .

SURVIVOR: No, no Sundays off, we worked every day and even longer hours. And always new people came ah you know. I remember after the ah the uprising in Warsaw, not the Jewish uprising, the Jewish uprising was '43, but the Polish uprising of '44, the Poles uprising in Warsaw and ah they didn't succeed and thousands of them were killed but tens of thousands were taken to camps and a whole group came to our, they took a whole group of Poles and moved to our camp, and whatever you could out from them they told us that the Russians were pretty close you know to the Warsaw and so on and this is the only thing which gave us a little hope that some day that every time we had something that there is the Germans lost here or they lost there, we didn't hear much, but whatever we had we knew, this give us hope and that's why we survived. Otherwise we could have never survived.

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INTERVIEWER: Did you know about the Jewish uprising in Warsaw?

SURVIVOR: I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't until later.

SURVIVOR: No, no, I didn't know anything about that. No. Because there was no people there in our camp who would know about it, there was no survivors practically. . .

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: Where they would take them into our camp or something like that. You know it's not like from the Polish uprising where there were survivors _____. So we really didn't know. We were there in that camp until about ah November 1944. We went in ah in the winter, maybe January, we were were there until November which is about ten, eleven months.

INTERVIEWER: And these were all men, there were no women around.

SURVIVOR: Ah, they were all men, yeah, no women, no. In some previous camp in Marchdad, there were a few women in the kitchen, in the kitchen. They were Jewish women and they had pretty good, once you had to eat there, no matter how much you worked, at least you could survive. But the ones who didn't eat. . .

INTERVIEWER: Could you mix with the women?

SURVIVOR: Very, once in a great while, yeah, once in a great while. Ah, but here you were so hungry you were so, people were dying just like flies.

INTERVIEWER: What did they do with the bodies?

SURVIVOR: They were taken away, so who knows where they buried them, outside somewhere. Then there was another transfer then in November, maybe it was October, October, November, I don't remember exactly. You, you couldn't keep track of the time, you didn't even know what day it was, and was another transfer out of that camp and in a way, I was happy, I thought it couldn't be any worse than that, just like before, it couldn't be any worse, let's see what's happening in another camp. So they took us more to the central Germany to a place, it's a city, its a big city, Braunschweig, I don't know, maybe you heard about it, it's a city not far from Berlin. And, in the city there was a big factory ah also a munitions factory, also the artillery shells they made there. And we were, and that was another, it was even worse than that this one. It was a lot worse.

INTERVIEWER: How?

SURVIVOR: It was winter, we were very cold, we had very little, we had to work to our work a long ways, you know, march, not walk, but march, and you know, military style, a long ways. . .

INTERVIEWER: What kind of shoes did they give you?

SURVIVOR: Ah, wooden shoes, some kind, you know, very, very bad, it was.

INTERVIEWER: Like boots?

SURVIVOR: No, no, no boots. No, it was like ah like slippers, slippers, but it had wood on the bottom instead of leather or rubber and that broke and you know fell off your shoes, your foot, and everything. And so it was ah and then at that time they brought a lot of Hungarian Jews in there so we found out what happened to Hungary, Hungary was invaded by Germany just a few months before and there was a lot of Hungarians, they were dying faster even that us. We were already used to that after years and years little by little getting used to their diet and so on but when they came in they were still, and after a few days you know they just looked like sticks and they were just falling down, the Hungarian Jews. And ah there

was a lot of public hanging in that place, you know, the Germans wanted to show examples as they always said that was sabotaged, somebody sabotaged something, which was not true. I, we all had to witness it, you know, I witnessed several at that particular camp and but one good thing was we could see a lot of American planes over and in fact one time they even bombed the place where we worked. The Germans chased us into a little shelter there and we could hear bombs and when we came out of the shelter, our, the factor where worked was bombed out, all the windows were broken and so on, but all the equipment was intact and we had to go work, it was even worse, because it was in the winter and the windows were broken, it was so cold, it was so drafty, we don't know how we survived that place there. And, but, when, so we were there about six months til I would say about April 1, 1945.

INTERVIEWER: Did you form close friendships?

SURVIVOR: Yeah, we had, yeah. I formed very, every I formed a very close friendship. In fact, in _____ I had a good Russian, not a Jew. He was, friends were the one who maybe sleeping next to you, or something like that and on the bunks. It was very, very good friendships. Sometimes we even

shared a little somebody with a little food or it was very, very cold at night, maybe you know we got together we used maybe two blankets to cover us together.

INTERVIEWER: To keep each other warm?

SURVIVOR: To keep each other warm, yeah, ah, everywhere I had some friends. We were very close and here also I had some friends, let me see, I had a quite a few friends. Sometimes, well, they're not even Jewish because we all shared the same lot.

INTERVIEWER: Was there ever conflict amongst . . .?

SURVIVOR: No. Very little, very little. What could there be, the only sometimes there were conflicts, maybe sometimes somebody stole somebody's ration, or something like that, you know, in a place like that.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SURVIVOR: You know, where somebody's hungry, they'd do anything you know. They'd probably steal from their mother in desperation you know. That was the only thing. Ah, so, we were there til April 1. They took us all again, the whole,

everybody from that barrack, from these barracks, they took us together and put us on a train. We knew, we had a feeling, or we knew something that the Americans or whoever there, somebody is pretty close by. They took us more into . . .

INTERVIEWER: That's April 1945?

SURVIVOR: April 1945, April 1.

INTERVIEWER: All right, 1945.

SURVIVOR: Yeah.

SURVIVOR: Ah, they took us more into the interior of Germany. So they took us into a train and gave everybody a small loaf of bread because we didn't know how long we are going to be in the train, you know, everybody got maybe something like that and I remember I kept my you know, otherwise you know, I had to sleep on my stomach because otherwise somebody would have stole it at night and I wanted to keep it because we didn't know what's going to happen and but on the train I had to eat it because we were already so hungry and it was cattle cars at that time, not a train, it was cattle cars, maybe a hundred or so on into the cattle car.

INTERVIEWER: That means it's just a box right.

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah yeah box. Oh yeah. Ah the same way we were taken in a cattle car also before when I said we were taken from Frumpfteichen into Braunschweig. We had to pass first, first they took us to another camp. I have to to backtrack a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: O.K.

SURVIVOR: When we left Frumpfteichen they put us in a cattle ah cattle cars few hundred people and they let us off in a big big camp, the name of it is Gross Rosen. Gross Rosen served like a central camp like ah for the whole district there. Everybody had to go through Gross Rosen, it was a central camp and from there they distributed here and there and there. So they took us there to that central camp. Now that Gross Rosen was a camp which undescribable, you know, it's so hard to describe it because it was so bad. It was clean there. You had, when you entered they cleaned you up and everything, give you a new uniform, and the lawns were real nice, you would think you were going into a paradise but once you got inside. So we stayed there short time luckily only three

weeks. There was a crematorium, that's the first time when I saw a crematorium, there was a crematorium there because the other camps, there were no crematoriums, they were strictly for work, and so on. And ah, the smell there, it was terrible and. . .

INTERVIEWER: You knew what they were doing then?

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, we knew at that time, because people were talking already, you know, some of them were there longer already. They knew and they told us. But they wouldn't let us even for one minute, once they cleaned up, they took us out to work. What we had to do there was ah ah a stone quarry right next to the camp. All we had to do was get stones, bring them up from the quarry, everybody had to take a big, big stone on their shoulders, hold it, and walk up and put it somewhere there. The next group had to take these stones and take it back down. And so that went on and on and I'll tell you people, they forced you take the biggest one, you know, and if you couldn't. . .

INTERVIEWER: (unintelligible)

SURVIVOR: For no purpose, you just have to do, they want to keep you busy, so you had to bring it up and bring it back and up and back, all day long.

INTERVIEWER: What happened if you got sick?

SURVIVOR: Ha! You didn't want to get sick, because if you got sick you didn't have no chance, you know, once you got in there there was like a little hospital or whatever they called it ah, primitive thing. But once you were in the hospital, you didn't have no chance because they didn't need you anymore. Once they didn't need you. . .

INTERVIEWER: If you couldn't get out of bed in the morning. . .

SURVIVOR: It was, you walked, even with fever. Many times I walked to work with fever because I didn't want to stay in the ah sick, many times. And ah somehow, I don't know how, but somehow we survived it. Here probably we couldn't survive something like that but it's hard. . .

INTERVIEWER: You carried stones up and you carried stones down.

SURVIVOR: Stones down. Three weeks. But finally after three weeks they ah they let us, they transferred us to the place Braunschweig. So anyway, so

anyway Braunschweig was another, everything was bad. One was worse than the other. From Braunschweig came April 1 like I started to say, they took us again in cattle cars there, took us all, I don't remember how many, maybe several hundreds people, and the train went back, we could see, back and forth, back and forth, it took three days and we went to a place called Selligleiton, we found out after the war that from Braunschweig to Sellig was maybe twenty-five miles, or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: They kept you on the train?

SURVIVOR: On the train, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Riding back and forth?

SURVIVOR: Riding back and forth, back and forth. Maybe they didn't know where to take us and maybe it was such a confusion already. And, so finally when we came to Sellig, all of a sudden, American planes showed up like, like swarms of American planes. They started to bomb because that town, Sellig, it was a little town, that was like main railroad ah station and there was a lot other beside our train, there was a lot of soldiers with all kinds of things other trains there and they started to

bomb and all our guards, we were standing, and each on top of each car were several guards, the guards started to run away, and they opened the door and they said 'Run out, run out.' They opened our doors, amazingly. And ah to go up to the field, to run to the field. So, I remember, see this is another of the miracles which I don't know if that's a miracle, something what happened, I befriended a man in my boxcar, you know, you're riding three days, you know, you talk. There was one which was from Krakow which was not far from our town. A very nice man, but he was older. He looked very old at the time, ah to me at the time he looked like sixty, but he was only maybe in his thirties, but, you know, when people are like this, they look much older. And he said to me, 'Look, I don't have' I was in the early, I was twenty, maybe, or something like that, maybe twenty-one or so. He says to me, he says 'I cannot run any more' he says. 'I cannot, I'm going to die. I still have my piece, my loaf of bread. You keep that loaf of bread and you, you will live. You young, you will live. I cannot.' And, you know, I didn't want to take it, I said 'Look, you have to, you know, fight.' And he says 'No.' And he just forced me to take the loaf of bread. And I run out with everybody else, I didn't see him and then we were in that field and

the bombing, we saw the bombing of that thing, and all of a sudden, maybe after half an hour, they ah, the planes went away. The guards surrounded us again. We didn't know where to run. Where were we going to run? Where would we go? They surrounded us they said 'Back, back to the wagon,' and they took us back to the wagon, and I couldn't see the old man. Somehow he was not there any more. And I couldn't find him. I looked for him in that wagon and I even motioned to another wagon there if he's there. And he was not there. Either he run out or maybe he was killed or something like that. But that loaf of bread saved my life. It was seven days, o.k. That was already by the time we went, that was already maybe April 6 or April 7. I took that loaf of bread, also, I put it here because I had the _____, I ate already, I put it behind my shirt, so nobody knew, nobody will know and ah after they gathered us there, they took us back from the wagon and we started to walk, they figured they couldn't go or I think the rail was bombed or something like that so we had to march. We marched another two days or so, and I kept, and maybe they gave us a little soup there on the way or something like that, I don't remember. We ah at night they let us rest in a field outside. It was cold there, it was beginning of April, is

still winter in Europe, beginning of April. It was very cold, I remember it was still snow there but we had to sleep outside and in the morning we saw several people dead from the cold and so on but they marched us, a few people couldn't march any more. They shot. . .

INTERVIEWER: They left them?

SURVIVOR: They left them or they shot them. I saw with my own eyes. The Germans just

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took the, just shot them. Couldn't walk, shot them. So they marched us, we marched maybe another day or so and they took us, we came in from far, I remember we walked also like a military style right before the camp they organized us and so on and ah there was next to me was a gypsy and he says, we were maybe a little distance away from the camp there. We didn't know where we go. And he says, you know, he says to me 'I smell something' he says, 'I smell like burned flesh.' And he was the first one to notice that there is a crematorium there. And ah once we walk into that camp we saw bodies and bodies piled up

like you go to a lumber yard you see lumber stacked up and. . .

INTERVIEWER: Naked, naked bodies.

SURVIVOR: Naked bodies, dead bodies. Piled up. Unburied bodies. Oh we saw it you know. Here, this is it. We figured, this is it. If we are not going to get liberated right away or the next day or two we are going to end up just like that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think you might get liberated?

SURVIVOR: Well, we knew, we saw already that they are so, so close. We, we figured it's going to take but every day for us was like a year, you know. Every hour was counted, counted. We had some kind of a inkling and now here where the story starts to get a little interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Now it starts to get interesting? (laughter)

SURVIVOR: (laughing) Well, no, maybe, maybe that's my side. So that camp was so unorganized the other camps where we were at least was organized. You knew you getting in the morning that little soup before you go to work, that little coffee, and at night that little soup before you go to. . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever talk to a German soldier during all that time? Was there ever any like eye contact or...?

SURVIVOR: We, every so often, we did with some of the Germans, not so much soldiers but some of the owners of the factory are maybe the ones. Some of them were not bad. Some of them gave us you know they gave us a little to eat every so often without anybody else seeing it. It had to be secret secret. And some of them also who hinted that they would be glad the war would be over and so on. You know a little anti where we could not say we were against the regime, especially by the end. But not too much. Not too much. So it's very seldom. But we came across some of them like that during those few years. So they march us into the camp and they said there was very much confusion. You just do whatever you want. . .

INTERVIEWER: What camp was that?

SURVIVOR: Bergen Belsen. That was one of the famous famous what they call it camps where people didn't survive there. That was I don't you might. . .

INTERVIEWER: Extermination.

SURVIVOR: Extermination camp, yeah. Bergen Belsen. And ah, they didn't even assign us to no barracks, nothing. You just sleep, you just stay here, stay there, but all the barracks are full of dead of people and half dead people and so there was no room. So we just just sat outside and ah I think there was no with the confusion was we didn't get any more to eat any more. Nothing. We didn't know what's going to happen. There was nothing there. So I still, I was lucky. At night, when everybody was laying there on the ground and so on I took out my loaf of bread and I said I'm going to eat it. I don't know if I'm going to survive. Somebody might kill me for that piece of bread if they ever find out and I ate it at night but nobody saw it. I ate that piece of bread which that man gave me there and that kept me for the next seven days. That loaf. I didn't have nothing. No water, no soup, no nothing. There was such a confusion there. Germans just went on either they were shooting people or and they and also they, they you they catch, they caught people there, if we were, we were already so weak, everybody was weak. And ah, you know, when you got up in the morning you saw many people already dead from overnight. They died at night, just died, because, but those few who were still, or

half weak, the Germans caught, we had to carry the bodies to a big pit. They had some people, big, big pits. And we had to, they assigned four people to each body, one at each hand and one by each leg and just drag him, either this or two people, and drag him, by the by the hands and drag him to the big pit and we filled up I remember we filled up a big pit with bodies but still there was so many there were so many new, fresh bodies we could never, we could never, there was no end to that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you just become immune to that or how . . .

SURVIVOR: Yeah well it looks like we got, well, we were not really immune, but what could you do, what could you do, you know, when you, the next day probably it's going to be us and so on and so that goes, that going on like that for the seven days. Now, . . .

INTERVIEWER: No food, . . .

SURVIVOR: No food, nothing, there was no, there was such a confusion there, there was nobody told you anything like you have to stay in this barrack or you have to stand in a line for this or you have. . .

INTERVIEWER: Just carry the bodies.

SURVIVOR: Just carry the bodies. They came and just grabbed people, carry the bodies, carry the bodies. And then it came one morning we was sitting and you know already so weak and I was sitting there with a few friends which I you know which I met there and we were already thinking you know I don't know what's, we saw airplanes flying overhead but could you do, you couldn't, you couldn't do nothing, we knew it was American planes but we talked to ourselves 'Oh, when is it going to be, when is it going to be the end. When it is going to happen.' So and that morning, that particular morning, everybody, you know, those few friends of ours there were thousands of people there. I think in that particular time maybe there were twenty or thirty thousand people in that camp, women too, but they had a different part there and but we had our group there and we were witting on that ground there was no grass anymore because we ate already, everybody ate the grass already so we were just sitting on the ground, we didn't know. . .

INTERVIEWER: At the same time was the crematorium going?

SURVIVOR: Oh yeah, the crematorium was still going, yeah. And all of a sudden we hear some rumbling outside.

We were not far like from the fence there, you know, electrified fence, and we hear some rumbling. So somebody, you know, one of us when he was, we were weak, laying, you know, with our eyes closed, and he says, ah, and he just gets up so halfway, one of my, and he looks and he says you know 'I see something, some tanks there but they don't look like German tanks,' he says. So everybody says well 'You're foolish, what do yo mean, what, there's only German tanks here' and so on. 'No,' he says, 'I see some different symbol on the tank.' We still didn't believe him. Maybe ten minutes later one tank burst in in the middle of the camp we, right in front of our eyes, you know, maybe and there some people in strange uniforms on it, British uniforms, well, we later found out. We didn't know at that time, I mean, you know, we are, we confused, and weak, and so on, we didn't know what's happening and the commandant of the tank I remember, this I remember distinctly, well this is something you will never forget. He stands up, he took one of those loud speakers. 'You are, we are from the British Army. We cam in to liberate you and you are free.' That word 'you are free' you know, this was something like we getting a new life and you know we could see those people we thought they dead they kind of we could see a smile on their faces when they

heard the word 'free.' You don't have no idea, nobody, nobody ever went through that type of a moment and we later found out when the British, that's the first camp they came into was that type of that cruel, that type of camp with so many dead, was what's going on in this camp, they couldn't understand it and I tell you, the people who still could walk, they went to that camp. They didn't know what to do. They kissed they kissed you know. . .

INTERVIEWER: The tanks.

SURVIVOR: The tanks. They tried to do, they didn't know, they marked, you it was marked, you could see even those people who, you know, people who couldn't walk any more, they tried to walk, they tried but unfortunately maybe a few hours later those same people died, they couldn't survive any more and once they came in, well it was a complete something, you know, they first they gave, started to gave rations, rations to the people, because we were so hungry but that was the biggest mistake. They had I remember the rations where they had bacon and _____ and others ah some cookies chocolate and our stomachs were not used to this type of food and if they would give us just piece of bread, plain bread, maybe we would, but

everybody started to grab and eat that and people became later they got diarrhea, dysentery and so on and many people died from that later on. Many, many people. I myself had maybe for two or three weeks after that diarrhea. So ah the first I don't remember more because I was so weak at that time. I really don't remember what happened after that. This moment. But I remember that a whole bunch, hundreds of people went to their German warehouses and we tried to get at the food whatever there was. I remember grabbing at a little jar of jam or jelly and sticking my hands in there and eating you know. We didn't know, we needed something to eat so bad and that's all I could get at that time. But later on I must have gotten so sick, later on, the only thing I remember is ah people were still there the next day, people were still laying outside. Dead people and half-dead and so on. And the Red Cross went around, people from the Red Cross, and they marked on those people who were very bad, they marked like a little cross on their and I was marked ah a cross. It means those people need to go immediately taken away to the hospital or something and and that was probably hundreds or thousands of them like that. And I remember I was taken into an ambulance that was the next day and ah I was taken in somewhere this I remember. And

there were some nurses you know over me, washing me and you know on something, a table or something like that and but I still remember that I asked the nurses who they are because they didn't speak, they didn't speak German, they speak something else. I always had that curiosity. They told me they from Finland. They from the Red Cross from Finland. This I remember. So I was taken there to a makeshift hospital and there were hundreds and hundreds of people there and I must have been in the hospital for maybe six weeks or so, dysentery and all kind of sick. People died there every day. I was in a room there, maybe it was twenty people. It was a big room there, and every day people were dying. I remember one French young man, he was crying all night 'Mama, mama, mama.' Young, he must have been maybe nineteen or twenty and in the morning when we got up he as dead. But this word 'mama' that's got into me at that time no matter how sick I was, you know, how he was crying for his mother.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there was anything about you or in you that sustained you?

SURVIVOR: I, I always, people asked me about it and I, I always said to myself or to answer people what sustained me is I think a little, it had to do

with a few factors. My religion. Never to give up hope.

INTERVIEWER: Never give up hope.

SURVIVOR: Never give up hope. My religion always said, you know, you believe, and I remember I always ah I always did some, prayed, and and and sang a few songs I mean in myself, like you know, (humming) I always said to myself, 'I'm going to survive.' The second thing was maybe I was a little healthy, I was healthy as a young boy, you know, from very healthy stock and so on. That made me survive. And the third, the main thing probably was that I always kept myself low. I never liked to look a German or somebody in his eye. But once you made contact, he might have called you 'come on here, why you looking at me' or 'get there' or 'do this' or 'do this.' So I always you know I was kind of always kept myself inconspicuous you know. I think this is the right word.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum, it is.

SURVIVOR: To use it. So I stayed away from trouble, I stayed away from all kinds of things where I could get into trouble and maybe this is part of it. I didn't want to be no overseer of a group or

something like that because then you had more responsibilities and so on. So, after that. . .

INTERVIEWER: You were in a makeshift hospital. . .

SURVIVOR: Makeshift hospital and ah well I remembered we were, it was ah we were, we had nurses there, male nurses and so on. I started to, little by little I got better. Little by little. I was very weak. I remember they gave us some newspapers. At that time I found out there was a war with Japan. They gave something. Because at that time there was still a war with Japan going on until August, I think, 1945, and we were there in April, April, May. We didn't have no idea that there was a war. This was when I found out a lot of things which I missed and I didn't know them in the world. And little by little I got on my feet and I remember the first steps I made it must have been six weeks after I was in the hospital, I made, I must have walked a block, but that block looked to me like I walked maybe a hundred miles, you know, I was so weak. But little by little, I remember I walked out a block, I met a German, not a German, I said a German, a British soldier, and he greeted me, he gave me, he says, he gave me a cigarette, I know, at the time, you know, because he was so sorry for me the way I looked and so on. And it took a

little while and so on and we got on our feet. But getting a little bit back, when the British came in there, the next day they took all, some German guards run away, but some of them still were left from the German guard, so they them all, and they had to do, they made them do the work which we did there to take all the dead people and bury them. And I remember we, we gathered, at that time we were still, before I took to the hospital I was completely weak yet and I saw the scenes people gathered around them and spat at them and so on, you know, at the Germans for you know just a little at least a little bit revenge and ah but later on there was a trial and I think two or three of these were executed, I think the head of that camp and so on were executed. Ah have at home a book written after the war about that particular camp because we stayed later on, after the war we stayed there four or five years, in different barracks.

INTERVIEWER: And what happened after you got out of the hospital.

SURVIVOR: Well, after I got out of the hospital, ah, we were transferred to a different, it was like a displaced person camp. That was that part where the German soldiers were there, they had their own

barracks there, the German soldiers and they had like a camp, an army camp there and we were transferred there, there was already clean, clean places, like homes already and we were stationed there and we were fed probably and taken care of by ah by the organizations from the United States you know like UNRA and Joint Distribution Company and so on.

INTERVIEWER: And where was this?

SURVIVOR: Bergen Belsen.

INTERVIEWER: Bergen Belsen.

SURVIVOR: Yeah. And there I met my wife. We waited there about four or five years we waited there to get somewhere, you know, either to Israel or to United States.

INTERVIEWER: What was life like in those four or five years?

SURVIVOR: (chuckles) It was bad. It was not ideal, you know, it was not a paradise but in comparison to before it's you know. . .

INTERVIEWER: How's, what did you do?

SURVIVOR: Oh we went you know we travelled around. We didn't have cars, but you know we travelled around Germany. I went back to Poland, looked for my family, maybe a few months after, you know, when I got back on my feet. Ah. . .

INTERVIEWER: How did you get back on your feet?

SURVIVOR: Ah, little by little, you know, eating, that's all it took, you know, every day you get a little stronger. It took about three months until I got really, you know, til I got back. And then so I decided to get back to look for my Poland but at that time I don't know if you were it was such, there was no trains running, there was no, well airplanes I'm talking about, no trains, no, no automobiles, everything was confused, Germany was in a chaos and ah to it took me to go back to Poland probably two weeks travelling either by hitchhiking or get on . . .

INTERVIEWER: You went by yourself?

SURVIVOR: Ah, a few other people went.

INTERVIEWER: From the same town?

SURVIVOR: From ah well not from, from the same district there. And we went together. We slept in the fields at night. But that was already you know.

INTERVIEWER: You were free.

SURVIVOR: Free. We were free. And ah we had already a little bit money, not much, a little bit money, what we got from the ah you know from the people who took care of us in the camp where we could buy at least a little food and ah we I remember whatever trains were running through always were full because there were so many thousands of people who had transferred from one place to the other you know people came from the east to the west or the west to the east ah, you know, everybody was looking, you know, millions of people were displaced, you have to know, during the war. Millions. And those people like Russians and Poles and Hungarians all started to go home and ah some people started to go this way which were chased out of Russia and so on and so and I remember traveling most of the time on top of a train you know on the roof of a train. It was very dangerous. But there was no room, you couldn't, people were hanging up with one hand and holding onto the train. Anyway, finally, I came, maybe it took us two weeks and that was about

September, 1945, and I came in, it was, I remember it was the day before Rosh Hashanah and I came into Chanuf and ah going in the street, I met the first person I met there, I remember she was a neighbor of ours, a small girl and I asked her first question did you see anybody from my family, my sisters. 'Oh yeah,' she says. 'Yeah your sisters survived.' I didn't even know. I always thought, I had a feeling that maybe my two sisters survived, but up until then I didn't have no idea. There was no communication. There was nothing. There was no way where you can find out where somebody is. But they were here up til a week ago but then they went, they went about a hundred miles back east because there's ah because here they didn't have nothing to do, they didn't have to eat, they didn't have nothing and there is a lot of Jews from out of town at that particular place and I said to myself oh, I passed maybe two days ago, three days ago I passed the town. If I would have known look how many days, how long it took me. So luckily, I met another person there and he says oh he is going to that place where, it is called Dreichenbach. It's a German town. He has a truck. He met another person, he hired a truck and his family is also there and he has to get back there before sundown, before Rosh Hashanah, and the cost in money for the truck if I

pay him so much. I said 'sure,' all my money, whatever I had and I gave it to him and we traveled in the truck, it took us many hours I remember, when we arrived there, to his place in that town, it was already like dark, starting to get dark. And when I came in to the place where he stayed already and there was already an established family. I saw ah a table with a tablecloth, candles. I was, I'm not used to that for years. Candles on the table. . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever know when it was Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur through those years?

SURVIVOR: Through those years, yes. Some people kept track. We knew. But we could not do anything because we had to go to work. . .

INTERVIEWER: Unintelligible.

SURVIVOR: We knew, we knew, yeah, we knew. There was people who still kept track. There some people who even kept kosher for years and they didn't eat their meat. How they survived I have no idea. They switched a soup for bread and so on. Yeah, some people they didn't want to eat and ah so, so I came in and he had two sisters there, he had a boarder there, in a, in a British uniform. In

fact a brother of his was a friend of mine back home and I said, and I said, do I see things here? How, so anyway, he told me the story that he run away to Russia right in the beginning of the war. He run east. In fact he wanted to take me too but my parents wouldn't let me at that time. He ran east and he came finally, he went to Russia and when the, in Russia, from Russia he smuggled over to Palestine. At that time it was Palestine and he became a soldier in the British army fighting against the Germans and they let him and he came there in his full uniform and so I said at that time, as soon as I arrived I said "I want to see, where are my sisters, where are my sisters?" So, one of the, his sister there was too. She survived and she was there. She said "Listen, you eat here. It's far to walk. You eat here, you sleep here, and in the morning I will take you over there." And ah, but I couldn't I said "I cannot," but she said "Now, look it's dark and it's really," it was a big town "It's really to walk" and so on so I didn't have no choice. They fed me and that was the first time I had a real holiday there because they were already a few months, they already got themselves a little bit established and ah and you know the white tablecloths and the white bed, I was not used to that any more, you know, and it was to me like

something out of this world. You know, for five years. Because even at the d.p. camp where we stayed there, we had just blankets and so on but nothing like that like that _____, and they had already challah for dinner.

INTERVIEWER: unintelligible.

SURVIVOR: Ohh, it's ah, and they put me at night in a bed with down cover so, which five years I didn't you know since I went. . . . But anyway, I couldn't sleep all night anyway because of the apprehension of the excitement. and in the morning the first thing I got up before everybody else, I was ready. I didn't have no luggage, nothing. You know, at that time you go, I didn't accumulate anything. Everything was taken away just the way it was. And finally his sister, she lives now in Israel, Sallah is her name, and my friend's sister, and she starts to walk with me. We walk, we walk. But she tells me on the way "Look, if I will come" they didn't know about me, if I survived. "If you just come like this, it might be such a shock to them, they might, you know. . . . Let me work out something." So when we came to that house where they lived, she says to me "You wait behind the door here, you know. When they open it, I will knock on the door, when they open the door I will

try to prepare." And this was also something. After so many years and ah so I was hiding behind the behind the door there. She knocks at the door and ah I could hear my sister's voice comes out "Oh Sallah, what you do," in Polish, you know, "what you doing here?" So she says "I have a guest for you." And all of a sudden she says my name. No, she didn't know anything, nothing. My name was, Hebrew name, was Haskel. As soon as she says, "I have a guest for you," "Haskel" (whispered) so I came from behind and they didn't have no idea the scene. I didn't know about them being alive only the last few days, the last two-three days and they didn't know at all about me being alive. So that scene was something and so, anyway, I, they, they had very little there, they were, my sisters, you know, they were not the type to do anything and so on so they lived from the kitchen whichever was there.

INTERVIEWER: Unintelligible. All through the war they were together?

SURVIVOR: No, they were not. No they were in different camps. They met after the war. Because they were liberated by the Russians. And so, and then they knew, they came to our hometown back, and somehow they met. But about me, I was farther away, they

didn't know exactly where I was the last two-three years. They didn't know at all. So they didn't know even if I was alive. But they always told me later that they had a feeling that I, I'm going, I am a survivor, I'm going to survive.

INTERVIEWER: Where are your sisters now?

SURVIVOR: One lives in New York and my sister in New York sh ah married after the war, and she married to a very Hasidic person. She has five children and forty-some grandchildren. Forty-some. She has already, in fact she has about three or four already great-grandchildren. And another sister, she is not so well off but another sister in Toronto, she is a little better off. And she has three children, let's see, ah she has four children also. Four children. And she has about seventeen grandchildren and so on in Toronto. We were very in contact you know we always go there. _____. So at that time I saw they were staying then in a German's apartment somebody gave them an apartment, somebody from former Germans, they didn't have to pay any rent. But they didn't have nothing to eat so they had to go to the kitchen there and ah they told me a story about ah a neighbor of ours who was a young man my age who was a neighbor and he was there in the same town

also and he was he survived, he was in the same town, and he saw my sister standing in the line for soup kitchen. He was so ashamed for them that he and he knew that he had already some money there, maybe he did a little dealing, wheeling there and he knew that they wouldn't accept any money from him ah so he went, he passed by, he threw money in their pocket and run away. That man. Because he was, he knew what kind of sister, what kind of girls they were at that time when he went from home. You know, better type of girls. And they said they could never forget, they couldn't find him to give him back the money. They didn't want to use that money of his and they couldn't find him. So all these years, later on my sister said she would like to find out where that many is because later on I took them, at that time, I took them, I stay there maybe one week, and I said "Listen, there is no place here to stay, I don't want to stay in Poland" or whatever, it was part of Poland, it used to be Germany. "I don't want to stay here. We're going back to, I'm going to take both, I'm going back to Germany to the displaced camp, and from there we are going to see if we go to Israel or to America, wherever it is we are going. We are going to stay together, we are not going to part." And I took them also, we smuggled two ah two borders, we had to go, in

order to go to Germany, we had to go through Czechoslovakia. We walked part way and we hitchhiked part way. In Czechoslovakia we were arrested because we were going through the border. _____. But anyway, finally, after a few weeks we cam to to, back to that camp near Bergen Belsen, near the old camp there and ah we stayed there, my sisters after, we stayed about four-five years.

INTERVIEWER: What was that, a barracks or cottages, or what was. . .?

SURVIVOR: I was like, you see those Presidio houses here where the Army is, that type of, exactly that type. It was nice.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: Yeah. And ah. . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you work?

SURVIVOR: No, we didn't work. But we took time, since we waited, we applied for a visa, since we waited, so we traveled around a little Germany there, and my sisters met their husbands, I met my wife there. You know it was a real, we established a real

social life, like at home, in this barracks there about ten thousand people there.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do from morning til night?

SURVIVOR: Oh we learned, we had schools there. . . .

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: We had schools, we even had the Yeshivas there and we had synagogues, we had, ah, we had all kind of social activities, you know.

INTERVIEWER: And who was supporting this whole thing?

SURVIVOR: It was, we were, fed by the American organizations. Yeah. By the Joint, Joint Distribution, Joint Distribution, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: And ah, so, we were, we're just waiting, we were waiting tile we get a chance to leave.

INTERVIEWER: So were you married in that place?

SURVIVOR: Oh, I married, I met my wife there, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You had a wedding?

SURVIVOR: In fact I met my wife not exactly there. I went for a visit to Berlin. I just, you know, we just liked to travel around. I went and travelled down there and in Berlin I met my wife. She is also from, she is not from my hometown, but not far, also from Poland, and there I met her and I brought her over also to Bergen Belsen, and we got married there.

INTERVIEWER: So you were married in Bergen Belsen.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, yeah. But you know, the weddings were not the style like here. We were, they were, you know, all that survived were young people. Ah, the people who survived were like everybody was age between twenty and thirty. There was practically nobody older and nobody younger so we were there in that camp like maybe ten thousand people, all the same age and you know there were people met people and they got married. So there must have been every day tens or thousands of weddings every day you know, because. . . .

INTERVIEWER: Were children born there?

SURVIVOR: Children were born there. Yeah. My, my daughter was born there. The one who I told you she is a friend of Lani. Yeah. And ah, we, we tried to lead a normal life there. The only not normal thing was that we didn't have our jobs or whatever it is we didn't go to work. But otherwise everything else was normal. This is something we were waiting to whenever we got the chance.

INTERVIEWER: Were you studying or . . . ?

SURVIVOR: Yeah. Yeah. Studying. Some people went in the became professionals, even ah you know they went to all kind of schools, trade schools there, you know, there were trade schools established there.

INTERVIEWER: And what did you do?

SURVIVOR: Ah, I went to no, I learned English and I don't remember, a few other things, but anyway. You know when you're busy with a family and so on, a little bit travelling, and so on and so.

INTERVIEWER: Did you _____

SURVIVOR: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And did you have a choice where you were going to go when you left or . . . .

SURVIVOR: We wanted actually to go to Israel. But ah then my wife had a younger sister. She went to Israel with a group of youngsters at that time and she wrote us back from Israel that it's so bad there, if we could go to the United States, go to the United States. That was at the time when the war of 1948, _____. So we applied to a visa to the United States and see what, either we go here or go there. So in 1950 the visa came, so we went to the United States.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you come to in the States?

SURVIVOR: Ah, since we didn't have any relatives, we were sent by the Joint, we were sent to Stockton, California. And, but our experience in Stockton was not so good. It . . . .

INTERVIEWER: Was it, were you a group of people sent to Stockton, or just you?

SURVIVOR: Maybe, it was me and my wife, and my wife had a another sister, so after my wife had three sisters survived from her family. So another sister, she

was single, she wasn't married yet. She was in there. And maybe a few other people.

INTERVIEWER: And what about your sisters?

SURVIVOR: My sisters ah my sisters were already married there so they, they went their own, they, one of them was left, one of them stayed still in Germany and ah the other one was already in the United States but she was in New York and New York or Philadelphia in the beginning. So because they had their own families already.

INTERVIEWER: So they brought you to Stockton.

SURVIVOR: They brought me to Stockton. We stayed year in Stockton. I got a job somewhere right away. But I didn't like the climate, we didn't like the climate, we didn't like that was that life, the Jewish life and everything else. It was a little strange for us. and ah so one day I ah I took somebody took me to San Francisco and I saw it's a big city. Then well this is something where I think I could live. And I, I went home and I took whatever possessions we had. We didn't have much. I said to my wife and the kids, and my daughter, we didn't have only the daughter at that time. And I said "We're moving." The next day I took a

truck and we moved and we found a little apartment, I found a job, even a much better. . . .

INTERVIEWER: What kind of job?

SURVIVOR: Sheet metal, sheet metal job. You know, sheet metal shop. And ah, the pay was twice as much as I got in Stockton and that was already something. I said to myself, "Well, I'm getting rich here. I made $1.60 an hour. In Stockton maybe I made 75 or 80. And ah so we said "Och, now here this going to. . . . ." But later on I, me and ah and another man, we opened a little business, we opened a little grocery store, grocery and delicatessen store. And we had the store for about many years you know. But I want to get back also a little bit. When I told you the story when that the person from my hometown, a neighbor of ours, he put the money into my sisters' . . . .

INTERVIEWER: Uh-hum.

SURVIVOR: And my sister always said she would like to meet that many sometimes. She didn't know where he was and at least to say thank you or something like that you know because she just couldn't forget a person, you don't find too many people, you know.

To put money in your pocket, standing when they saw standing in line, putting, run away because he didn't was a thank you or he didn't want to be the money thrown back at him or something like that. So one time in 1968 we went to Israel for a visit to Israel and my sister from Toronto went at the same time too. With her husband. And ah made, so we went there so a laundsman of ours a person of ours invited us, should I say they making a little celebration there and they invited us and we came there and ah we were sitting there, you know, and talking, all of a sudden somebody came in, he was not even invited there, but he just he was in that town he figured he was going to stop and it turned out that's the same person my sister whispered "It's the same person." His name was Hamach Yetzler. And you don't have no idea when my sister saw him there what happened at that time, you know, tears of both of them were flowing. After all these years and they they didn't know, she didn't know where he was. She didn't even know he was living in Israel and just in the same time when we are in this particular house he just walks in all of a sudden. He never had even mind, he wasn't invited, he never had the mind, he just came in, just because, stopped for some complete different reason and here and this is when she

really thanked him and ah that was imagine twenty some years later.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever gone to like a Holocaust survivors' reunion (unintelligible).

SURVIVOR: I did not, ah no, I didn't go to these meetings. I just away. I was going to go but something always happened where I couldn't go. but we went back to Poland in 1978. Just to look at the hometown. Me, my wife, and my sister, the one from Toronto. And her husband, and her two sons. At that time the sons, twelve years ago, they were in their early twenties. So ah we went back, not only to see what happened to our town and for reminiscing and so on but we also wanted to go and see to the cemetery and see the graves of our grandfathers and great grandfathers at least make pictures or something like that to have some kind of a memory of who we are and so on. So we came to the town. There were no Jews any more left in this town. We found a few Poles. One Pole we met in the street. Because say you know everybody, they say, "What's this, tourists" you know they knew right away Americans, everybody comes talking, and one says, he introduced himself and my sister recognized that he, his sister went to school with her together. Anyway, we went up to

the building where we lived and ah but we couldn't get in, there was nobody in the apartment. We wanted at least to see the apartment but there was nobody. And a whole group of people gathered around us and found out the building where we lived. But another lady ah, in another apartment over, she would show us a different apartment which is similar to ours. So we went in and it looked just a little bit, we, we, we ah ah we cried, the place. I'll tell you there's something, you know, your memory from when you were young thrown away if somebody moves at least you know, like voluntarily, it's a different story. But when you're thrown out of somewhere you were born and raised and played and laughed and cried and so on, you know, it's different. And then we visited . . . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you find the grave? I found, yeah, I found the grave of my, my grandfather, my father's father, he died a few years before the war and I knew exactly where the the grave was because I was at the time and ah and I made some, I found the grave of my great grandfather and his wife, and my great grandmother I found graves of his father, his grandfather and his great grandfather, which the one I mentioned to you was the first Rabbi. In fact there's a book came out, oh yeah, I

mentioned to you the book which describes about my great grandfather the book came out. I might donate one book here to the Holocaust Library.

INTERVIEWER: That would be nice.

SURVIVOR: In English. It has pictures there and everything else. In fact it has a picture of me when I was young before the war.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think your life has been affected?

SURVIVOR: Very much. Very much. No matter how comfortable you are here and no matter how want you you you don't feel since you lost all your family and so you are without, sure we built a new family which is fine, it's very good.

INTERVIEWER: How many children do you have?

SURVIVOR: Two children? And four grandchildren. Ah, you build a new family. Everything's fine but you still go back what, you know, what you lost. You lost cousins, you lost uncles and aunts and grandfathers, grandmothers, and even I had even my great grandfather was alive and you cannot you can never forget something like this.

INTERVIEWER: What I have not asked you that would be important for me to know?

SURVIVOR: Ah regarding?

INTERVIEWER: Your experiences during the war and after the war.

SURVIVOR: The important thing nowadays is not to forget. We have to tell, we have tell our children and the children have to tell their children in the future generations should know what happened and we should see to it that we shouldn't let things like that happen any more.

INTERVIEWER: Were you always able to talk about it? Did you tell your children . . . .?

SURVIVOR: Like everybody else, we didn't talk to our children when they were young because they were not interested. But when they got older, and when it was more publicized when the first films came out and books about the Holocaust ah that's when they started to ask questions. And once you start ask questions is the time when we told them. And now they are very interested. In fact my daughter lives in Los Angeles. She belongs to one of the second generation clubs. They getting together once a month. My son here is also, he lives here,

and he is also a part of a second generation group. And they are very interested. Ah I gave and bought ah just recently when the book came out, I gave my son a book, I gave my daughter one of these books from our town. They were fascinated.

INTERVIEWER: Who wrote the book. I mean, what kind of person researched it and put. . . .

SURVIVOR: The book was written in Yiddish in 1946, right after. It was more or, it was not a very literary book, but he is a person, he survived, but he remembered a lot. He remembered not only about the people in town and who their family was, but he remembered the humor and you know, the things which went on behind ah you know behind the things, you know, things which we didn't know. It's a very interesting book and he put some pictures in their too. And ah, but now, I always was talking about somebody should translate it in English so the future generations, but he came, in fact he's a friend of mine too. He lives back East and he's a pretty wealth person now and he undertook to have that book translated in English and it just came out a few weeks ago. I bought a few books from him and ah it cost money.

Everything costs money. But he bought a he put the money in.

INTERVIEWER: unintelligible.

SURVIVOR: It cost a lot more and ah there's the book that's part Yiddish. That, the first part, he left it original, but it's nice, it's a nice book in Yiddish. But ah, and then the other part is in English. And part of the English and Yiddish too. The first part is from before the war. Starts about two hundred years before the war about all these people.

INTERVIEWER: What's the book called?

SURVIVOR: Book of Chanuf. Chanuf is the name of our town. Ah, part of the ah you know the life til the war. The other part is during the war, during the Nazi. There is a lot of information about what happened in our town. It tells you about all these settlements and about all these things. With pictures, photographs and everything else. Very interesting book. Very. My, my kids are very fascinated when they haven't read yet the Holocaust part. They started to read only the part from the . . .

INTERVIEWER:

SURVIVOR: Background, yeah. For all the families, not only ours.

INTERVIEWER: What, what you ask?

SECOND INTERVIEWER: I don't know, I had several questions in my mind but they were mostly answered. Uh, it sounds like you made a lot of friends in the camps.

SURVIVOR: Yes.

SECOND INTERVIEWER: Did you ever reunite with any of the people?

SURVIVOR: Ah, some of them, yes. Some of who survived. Every so often I meet them either in Israel, we go often to Israel, I meet them in Israel, or when we go to New York to some celebration.

INTERVIEWER: _____ family _____. You have your wife.

SURVIVOR: My wife's family. Yeah. I personally don't have any family in Israel. But my wife's family. And so we meet them. Every time we meet, we always

talk about it. You know, it's a funny thing. Even here. Whenever we get together with people survivors, which is here quite a few, here, no matter what you start talking, you might talk about different subjects. But you always come on the, back to the subject of during the war, what happened, always, it never fails. And it goes on and on and on again. Everybody has some stories to tell. Everybody's talking about it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have friends now who aren't Jewish.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, oh yeah. Many. My wife has many friends also. She goes for lunch, friends where the kids went to school together, they still get together, now the parents get together, they have lunches sometimes. Oh yeah, I have many non-Jewish friends.

INTERVIEWER: John is there something else?

JOHN: It looks very _____ to me.

INTERVIEWER: You've done a wonderful job of the chronology and the dates and, and very systematically telling . . . .

SURVIVOR: Yeah, you know, sometimes you know it's it's fifty, forty-some years. You know, it's hard to remember but a lot of things. . .

INTERVIEWER: Come back.

SURVIVOR: Not only come back but they stick in your mind, you'll never forget.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SURVIVOR: Some things you never forget.

INTERVIEWER: And then maybe after, an hour from now you'll think oh why didn't I . . . .

SURVIVOR: Yeah, that's right, that's right. That's probably a lot more things which I forgot. But it comes back you know. You start, maybe if you read a certain book again about oh yeah I forgot to tell this, I forgot to say about this.

INTERVIEWER: And I'll think I forgot to ask.

SURVIVOR: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, because I'll tell you the truth. Ah from one day, you could write from one day in the camp you could write probably a book, just from one day. Imagine if you were

there for almost five years what subjects you could write about.

INTERVIEWER: You were there a long time.

SURVIVOR: Four and a half years. Almost five years, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: A long time.

SURVIVOR: From October 1940 til April 15, 1945.

SURVIVOR: Very formative years of your life.

SURVIVOR: Yeah. The best years of my life I lost. See this is also something which you always reflect and go back that sometimes we think maybe our lives are not normal or something like that because we lost our youth. We don't, we, our lives are not fulfilled.

INTERVIEWER: And your opportunity for education . . .

SURVIVOR: That's right, that's right. I got out without education. So.

INTERVIEWER: And you're retired now?

SURVIVOR: Semi-retired.

INTERVIEWER: But not a grocery store business.

SURVIVOR: Oh no, no, no. We been out of the grocery store business. From the grocery store business, later on we established we got into the coin laundromat, coin laundry business. It was a little easier. The grocery was very hard. You know, so we, a little, we got a established. So now a little semi-retired. I, I don't want to retire completely. I want to keep on working. Because if you don't do anything, if you don't do nothing, it's trouble.

INTERVIEWER: And did you raise your children to be observant?

SURVIVOR: I tried. (laughs) But I tell you. Ah, my daughter, she was not, but now she's getting back to it, little by little. She sends her children to ah to a Hebrew school in Los Angeles and it's a Hebrew day school. They don't go to public school even. And she's very, very interested. She says all her friends are Jewish, practically, all her friends are Jewish. She belongs to a temple and ah she is in fact you know usually when it comes like a holiday like Passover, ah, we all invite the whole family here. We have maybe always twenty, twenty-five people and not only our kids

and the grandchildren and like my wife's sister comes with her family and so on. Since last year, my wife said well it's getting a little bit too hard for her. After all, we're not getting any younger. So my, our daughter in Los Angeles volunteered why cannot she make sometimes a Passover. She wants to learn too. She wants to take over later on. But the problem is you know. We are very kosher at home and with her it's not so. What do we do. She says I have a solution, Dad, Mom, she says. Believe me I'm going to make you kosher just like at home. She bought dishes, she bought everything new. She went to the, she prepared everything just like cleaned up everything. Prepared. We came the day before Passover. We had a beautiful, beautiful