

Almost there. And tap that once.

I think it's the third.

OK, any time, Peggy.

OK. We are interviewing Carl Stochlic for the Holocaust Oral History Project in San Francisco, California. Today is September 3, 1993. I'm Peggy Coster. And the camera person is--

Craig Brickman.

Craig Brickman. OK, why don't you just start by telling us where you lived in Poland and, like, who comprised your family, and when you were born?

I was born in Poland in-- it's a small town, Bedzin. It's near the German border, in March 1911.

So you were about how old when the Holocaust started?

The Holocaust started, or since the Holocaust started in, by us, really, in '39, Because the 1st of September, we got invaded already by the German troops.

So you were almost 30. Were you married?

No, I was single.

Living with your family?

Living with the family.

And how many people were in your family?

We were eight children and parents. Survived, we survived only four. I mean, one sister, she left for Israel in 1934. So she is living in Israel till now. And one brother, the older brother, went to Russia with the youngest brother during the beginning of the war.

Right away, they run away from-- he was living the, older brother, in Katowice. Was a town before, a German town. In 1920, it was back to Poland. This was Oberschlesien. They call it Oberschlesien. So this was a really German. So he's afraid. You ran away right away to Russia.

Do you want to just tell us your whole story?

Pardon me?

Do you want to just tell us your story?

The story? I was, after the war, we ran away also. But we came back. We had a-- my brother, the oldest brother, had a big wholesale place from pots and pans. We came back. We opened the store, the business again. But in a few weeks comes from the German government a Treuhander. He took over the whole business.

A what?

They call him a Treuhander. He was in charge of all, they took over all Jewish businesses, the Germans. And he took over the business. But he left two brothers working as-- three brothers, really. We were working in the same business.

Now, was this the beginning in 1930--

This was already in 1940-- no, not in the beginning, '40. This was already in 1940, 1940. So we work over there. And was, like, working. We get a salary from the Germans. And that's it.

We are-- this, the business was in Sosnowiec. And we lived in Bedzin. So we had to travel from Bedzin to Sosnowiec all the time. And that's how was it.

The Treuhander, was went from the nearest Katowice. It was a Volksdeutsche. So all those Volksdeutsche, they gave them opportunities to take over businesses, train the chef, and give him jobs. This was it. But they couldn't run their business without us in the beginning, because they didn't know nothing. They was no specialist in that.

And in 1942 came a order that cannot be three Jews occupied in the business. So I was the youngest. So I says, OK, I'll go to camp. They sent me out to work. The first, my first stop was in a place Sakrau, called it.

Why don't we go back, do little more pre-war?

What was it?

A little more at the beginning of the war.

Beginning of the war.

Yeah. Let me ask you a few questions.

Beginning the war, I say, we ran away to far out in middle, in middle the country. And after four or six weeks, we came back to the town. They let us somehow live. Was that time organized the Jewish committees. And we got some protection a little bit.

So we had our own supply from food, and so on, so on, the beginning. The beginning was thinking maybe we'll survive. Will be good, because is, everything goes not so bad. But things change, every time a little bit worse and worse and worse. So that's it. That's how was it.

Well, I still have a couple of questions.

What question you have?

Did you foresee the war coming? Did you-- like your brother who went to Russia and your sister, who--

No, this was after the war broke out. He didn't run away before the war. He ran away after they invaded.

Did you ever talk about what you would do if the Germans invaded before--

No, we didn't know nothing, this. First of all, we didn't know that they invade us. We're talking maybe, maybe Polish was a good army. And they were fighting. And maybe they're fighting back. But it's not happened like all over. They run over us very fast. That's it.

What do you recall about when you were invading? Because some-- while they were invading, they did quite a few atrocities. Do you recall any?

What was it?

While the Germans were invading, the atrocities began right away. Do you recall any?

You speak a little bit louder because--

Oh, I'm sorry. The atrocities began right away when the--

No, the atrocities didn't, no. Yeah. Yeah, they were in the city, they burned the synagogue right away the first day. And they killed there some people, too, a lot of people. From one house, they killed practically all men. 20 men, they took out and they killed them. In the beginning was a lot of killing. That's right.

I wasn't that time in the city, in our city. We were far out. I had still a car that time from work. So I took the whole family. We will run away deeper in the country. It was like 150 kilometers in the country. And we were staying over in a small town.

And later, we came back. We heard all those stories said, what was happened in the city, all the quarter, over there was the synagogue. And other things got wiped out and burned everything to the ground. And a lot of people, they got killed, too, from one house 20 men. So later, it was a little bit quieter and start to stir.

So when you were in the country, How Did the Polish people there treat you?

In our town was practically a Jewish town. 80% was Jews.

You mean your hometown or where you went in the country?

In the hometown. In the hometown. Bedzin was 30,000 population. Was practically 27,000, 26,000 Jews. And the rest was the Polish people. So it wasn't so bad because we-- they couldn't do now, the population, the Polish population, couldn't do not much to us. Because we were really a majority that time. So it was quiet. It was nothing.

And later, the committee was start working. Was regular get food from the stamps, like stamps, food stamps. We get our rations. And we were living. And everybody has to work.

In our city, they organized a lot of workshops like tailors, and some thing, a tailor and shoe makers. So all kind people were working. And they worked for the Germans. So they were protected, too. They got some cards they are people, working people. There were shops, specially shops, for the-- they worked for the Germans, in the town too in the beginning.

But later on, they start to take him out to Germany. Comes a time when they say, we need 100 people there or 200 people there. We had to come.

The-- the committee sent out to the people, to us, we should come to a certain point for thinking, they took us already. It was not exactly, we didn't know where were going. Well, they took us right away to a camp for work.

Well, when the Germans came into your town, did they sort of make it a ghetto? Did they bring in--

Not in the beginning, it was not. This was later on when-- it was like '40, '42.

Was that after you were going to camp?

That time was-- no, when I was already, they started to, we couldn't live in our house. They took, they took away our thing. Apartment, they took away from us. We live some, together with some other people. Because--

Well, how did they do this? If the whole town--

Pardon me?

--practically was Jewish, if 27,000 or 30,000 people were Jewish, how did how-- did they do this? Like, how big was the ghetto? How much of the town did they make the ghetto?

Now, this, they did it. So first of all, they put us together a lot of families. Let's say our family was living with two more families in a house, in their, their apartment. Later on, when I left probably, they tore them out from that apartment, too, but slowly. And they sent them to a certain place. Was a real ghetto. It was the really ghetto already.

And what did they do with--

Pardon me?

Like when they made you move out of your house somewhere else, did they put up a fence around where the Jewish people were living? Or how did they--

No, in the city at that time, there was no fence. Because there's no-- was no Polish Jews already. Yes. Yes, they put us together. They put us together in a lot of in buildings. I mean, in apartments together.

In one area of town?

That's right.

And were you allowed to leave that area of town?

We had only till 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, I don't remember, in the evening. After 7 o'clock, we couldn't go out on the street. We had to wear our Juden band. And if they saw someone out, the curfew, 6 o'clock, no Jews on the street there, or 7 o'clock. I don't remember now what time is right.

How did you get enough food to eat?

We got this from the committee. They had stores. In the beginning, we get the rations as much everybody, so much and so much.

You didn't black market?

We had to buy on black market, too. Because we couldn't survive on those portions. So you have to buy on the black market.

How did the black market work?

How did black market work? This, I'm no so-- [LAUGHS] know how the people got that. Maybe--

Oh, you didn't do it personally.

Pardon me?

You didn't personally do the trading?

No. I don't know. I was young at that time. I don't-- was not so much for me to go in deeper how they get this or something, get this. But as long you had still some money, you could sell your valuables, your gold, and your watches, everything which you have home.

They have always customers, the people they have the money, but not the Jews. Somebody else probably, this goes, goes, goes. So was some money. So you could buy something.

Let's say if you get allotment only one pound meat for the week, you couldn't survive on that. So you have to buy another pound on the black market. You know already who has it. That was not my job because I was a single man. So probably my mother just try to get food for us.

Did your family have a lot of jewels they held back when the Germans asked for valuables?

A lot of-- yeah.

Jewels and valuables.

Jewels, that's right. We had to give away. One day it was a collection all gold [INAUDIBLE] given up, everything. So we'll give up the gold. Because they had the-- the committee has becoming, the committee had said you have to give us 20 kilos or 40 kilos gold. So they, everybody has to come and give that gold till this was the 40 kilos. Or how many, I don't know how many they ask. But they ask for so much.

So, and later, they have to give up the furs, if somebody has fur. Or something else, they have to give it up.

And later they took what they wanted there. They came to our house. And they took everything out. If you have a piano, fortepiano, they took it.

Were you still there when they did this?

Pardon me?

Were you still there when they did that?

They take it. They had a little thing, anything we have to take, so they took it. We didn't say nothing because you couldn't say nothing, because--

Well, when they took the jewels and the furs, did you hold some back and hide them so you could trade on the black market? Your family?

My family's, or I don't know exactly what the family did because I was a youngster. And I didn't care for all those things. I didn't know what jewelry. I was not so interesting in jewelry that time and didn't know the value from jewelry. That's is, you know?

I was a more a sporty type or a skier there. So I was not interesting in much in that type things. Mm-hmm.

How did the Polish people treat-- once the Germans kind of gave them carte blanche to treat them how they wanted, how did they treat you?

The Polish people were against the Jews. It's positively. If, let's say, we could go in this, was a trolley car, right, the trolley cars?

Trolley cars.

Trolley cars. We could go, but with the band. But if you want to go after an hour, you took it off, you know. If, let's say, you came back from Sosnowiec, was too late already. You're afraid. If they'll see you, you are a Jew, they might take you right away. And I don't know what they'll do to you. So you took off that.

So the Polish will say, hey, you are Jew. So was not pleasant. There, that didn't help much. They just up and said.

Were there any that did help?

Pardon me?

Were there any that did help?

Yeah, it was some.

I mean--

I personally, I didn't in our town. I don't know much, but I know from a lot of people. There's a Jew-- first of all, for money. And my case was some people in Kraków.

My first wife was from Kraków. So her family, her brother and two cousins were by the Polish family. And they were all the time. But they got a lot of money for them before. They paid them a lot of money they should have it them. And he survived. And they survived.

When I got liberated in Bergen-Belsen, she went home. And she brought all of them to Bergen-Belsen. And they sent-- the brother was young at that time. He lost a leg. He lost a leg in Kraków.

How come? He was also as a Polish boy. He was selling. He was selling cigarettes on the street and candies on the street. And he went into the trolley cart, too. So on the trolley car, the same story-- a Polish boy tell, oh, you're Jewish.

So he got afraid. He jumped down from the trolley car, under the trolley car. And he cut off his leg.

And it was a story, too. He went to the-- they took him to the hospital. And he had false papers on the name Jan Kubiczek. All right. All of a sudden, the radio or things, they say Jan Kubiczek, a boy who was so and so and is in hospital.

The father came. He goes over there and runs to him. He looks on him. Where's Jan Kubiczek? Him, here. So he goes. So he say, so he told him, look, I'm a Jewish boy. Oh, thanks God. That is not my son. OK, I won't tell nothing. I tell him it's everything fine.

And the nurses was also right. They say will protect you. You will not give you out. So he survived, but without a leg. He was that time 14 years old.

He came after the war, he came to Bergen-Belsen, where she brought him. And they sent out the kids to England, the youth up to 16 years. And he went to England. And later, he came to the United States, too.

You mean people just saw him on the trolley, said you're Jewish?

Pardon me?

Who were these people who just-- were they civilians? Were they soldiers?

Which one?

The ones you just saw and said, you're Jewish, and he cut his leg off.

Well, he cut his leg off, that was a trolley car. He, because she told me he is a Jew. He got, he want to jump out from the trolley car. He fell under the trolley car.

Oh, so it was an accident.

It was a accident, he fell down after this. That's it. So later on, he was not afraid at all. Because without a leg, a boy cannot be Jewish. They sent right away all to death camps. So he was free already. So he was going around all places.

He was not afraid as a Jew.

Of course, without a leg, this was a good sign that he is not Jewish. Because Jews with-- without the legs, they will not keep it here. He's not productive. We don't need him. So that's it.

When did you meet your first wife?

Louder, louder. I don't hear.

When did you meet your first wife?

My first wife, I met, I met her in Bergen-Belsen after, after we got liberated. That time, I was, I had a good position. I was also the head from the camp. Why?

When you got-- I had a friend in-- before, I had a friend. He spoke English. Friend was a young boy from Sosnowiec who, a matter of fact, he was now a big professor of mathematics in Canada in university, Shenitzer.

And this boy, Shenitzer, I was in camp. I was already had a sign here, I am a writer, a office worker because I knew German. So they need a man for German. The [GERMAN], German [GERMAN], needed to organize all those groups and everything. He says, who knows German?

I didn't know what to say because I was afraid of him. He was such a terrible. But somebody says, he knows. So he took me out. And he was not too bad, because he was also-- well, they took him in camp in 1937.

So he went through a lot of troubles, too, he says. So he told us, you don't have to work now. But when I pass by, everyone has to work. Tell the boys. The hell with them. And we got plenty troubles with them, too.

He probably was-- well, there was a green corner, you know, in, during the-- they had green and red. Red was communist. Green was like underworld, you know?

Crook?

Crooks, pimps, this and that-- so he is one of them. But he was a good soul. He didn't hit nobody, nothing. He says, the hell with them. But he was in charge. He was the [GERMAN], means the head of the kapos.

So he says, if I pass by, let them make a little commotion. But so, the hell with them. So he was very nice.

That Abek Shenitzer was sleeping with me in one room. And we're friends, good friends. And he worked, too. And this kapo hit him every times because he was a weakling, a little bit not so strong, you know, small.

And this kapo hit him every day with a little stick in the head. So I told him not to hit him. You'll not get your good food. Because the kapos got good food.

And I had over there a little bit power. Because I was a writer, too, so it was something. So he got his, he didn't get his food. So he says, why I got to get my food? Because you don't have to hit boys. So he stopped hitting them.

A matter of fact, after the war, the boys put him in jail in Katowice. And he got 10 years.

Now, this was-- I'm not clear. Who was this?

Pardon me?

I'm not clear. Who was this person?

This person?

Yeah, that was hitting boys.

He hit the boys? He was a Jewish boy, but he got charge for all workers. He was like--

Like a kapo?

Like a kapo? But he, that time was, a kapo was in vorarbeiter like this, yeah, like a kapo. So he was, he had to tell the boys, work, work, work, work. This was his job. He is to-- yeah.

So that time, the [GERMAN] was saying, you don't have to hit. But he was still hitting. So that time, I told him, you come down. If not you go to work, I could do it.

So the [GERMAN] to send him to work. So he send him to work, too. So I was working with the [GERMAN] in the office. We had a little shack. And we had our office for the groups. We made groups. We were exchanges. They work too over there, so with a little bit thing to do. So it was very good. After the war--

Which camp was this?

This was a camp Bunzlau. This was Bunzlau. I was in a lot of camps, a lot of camps. Till Bunzlau was a lot of camps. Bunzlau was really the last one. Bunzlau was really the last one.

From Bunzlau, we were away already. In December, the Russian approached us already, so Bunzlau.

So this Abek Shenitzer, when the war in Bergen-Belsen, the English came in. They ask who knows English. So we told them, Abek, who really knew English like an Oxford graduate. Yeah. He speak beautiful English, all languages.

And he was that time 21 years old. That's all. Was something, a boy, he has a mind like a-- [LAUGHS] if you ask him how far is to the moon, buh-buh-buh-buh. How far is to the sun, buh-buh-buh-buh, so a encyclopedia. [LAUGHS]

So Abek Shenitzer, they took him. We are still not in-- we are located in a movie house when he came into that camp, Bergen-Belsen after the war. No, this was the liberate. The same day we came in, we got liberated to Bergen-Belsen. We walked six weeks from Bunzlau to Bergen-Belsen. Took us six weeks to come over there.

And how did the people treat you when they saw you walking?

Walking?

Yeah, when you were walking from Bunzlau to Bergen-Belsen? The German people, when they saw you walking, how did they treat you? Did they-- anybody want to help or give you bread? Or like, what did they do?

No. They couldn't show them up there a little. They were afraid, too, to show something. If they wanted to do something, they couldn't do it. Because SS or the people were walking in the side and this and that, they couldn't show they want to help the Jews. This was [LAUGHS] taboo.

How many, how many people, how many prisoners traveled from Bunzlau to Bergen-Belsen?

Oh, there were at that time 600 people.

And if somebody couldn't keep up?

Oh, yeah, a lot of them, they got shot. We are hiding. And we are walking. We were on farms. In the farms, we were hiding every time. So we were hiding. One day, we were hiding in a big farm.



And it was a lot of things. We hide under the straw, under this and that. So the man came in in the morning. He says, everybody come out. If I count to six, he says, one, two, three, four, six. If doesn't come out, I'm start them shooting.

So he killed 16 people. They didn't come out. And 16 people got killed in that, in that place. Yeah. That was it.

How did you manage to keep going?

How I manage to keep going? A few things-- in the beginning, I took with me everything what I got. Somebody told me from the committee, take everything. Because he will be no nothing.

So the beginning, I was walking with a lot of Polish people. They went home for Saturday, Sunday. And they came back Monday.

So I tell him, Janek, you need a tie. You need a sock. You need a this, that. Give it to me. So I'll bring you something.

So he brought me kielbasa. You know is kielbasa? He brought me bread. And I sold every time something what I had. I had a lot of things. Had four valises with goods. So I sold. I had a watch.

I was sick one time on typhus in one camp. So I had a [? Doxa. ?] Somebody told me, give me the [? Doxa, ?] and I'll bring you a half a kilo of sugar. I couldn't eat, but sugar I could lick. So he brought me sugar. And that's-- that's how I survived the beginning.

And I was a good worker, too. I was a very good worker. I worked every job I could. I was building. I was a good builder. And I was a good plumber and mechanic, because I knew some mechanism. So they send me every work.

Is a ladder, weld that. Always, I say I work. And I was a really good worker. So I didn't get hit, no one the ones, really not. Because they are surprised.

You've come to unload, to unload cement. I took two sacks instead of one. I could because I was very strong. So I had respect.

And one time, was a story. We are loading our trolley with earth. So after you finish it, you're standing with your shovel like this here and rest. So the main boss came over. He says to them, to that thing, for that, I pay, for standing with the shovel?

So this guy got a German. It was a meister, German meister. He got flush red. He tell me, you is afraid? They'll send him right away to the front, too, to Russia. So he says, they work good.

So I say, OK, if they work good, I like to see it. I like to see it. So there comes a new row of trolleys. It was like 40 trolleys, you know, what they keep. You know kind is this?

You mean like storage boxes?

No, no, no, no, no. We throw in in like a, it's like what they call them, those thing, to keep trolleys with earth, with junk, we put it in. If you build something, the earth, you have to put it in in some kind.

Like one of those cars that you cart away the earth in?

What do call them, this?

Well, yeah, trolley, car that you take away earth with?

Yeah, earth with, they take away the whole.

Like in the coal mines and stuff.

Yeah, like coal miners, that's right, the same thing. That's it. That's those trolleys. So he came in the new empty trolleys. He says-- so he took out his watch. He says, in five minutes, if this trolley will not be full, you know where you're going-- Auschwitz. This that's the send this, Auschwitz. It was something. It's not wrong, you go to Auschwitz.

So this boy, this partner of mine, was a boy also my town. He was also a toughie guy, a sportsman. He was playing football. Was all right. His name was Itzik. So I say, Itzik, let's save our boss being there, the big boss, what he cares the whole work. Let's save him.

So we start to work. We shovel that, one, two, like a Bagger. 2 and 1/2 minutes, stop. So he says, so [GERMAN]. You don't understand this.

No.

[GERMAN] means our people cannot do it. It means the German there. That's the top people. The German, [GERMAN], in 2 and 1/2 minutes and load it to load, you see?

So he says to the meister, meister give him [GERMAN]. [GERMAN] means a double, a double, a double soup.

Double soap?

Soup. Soup. We getting--

Oh, double soup.

Yeah, [GERMAN] means double. Because, so we make a note to the kitchen that we get double soups because we did it.

So the meister, this was Easter time. The next day, he called me, boys, come here. So go over there. You go over there. What do you want us over there? And over there is a little package.

I opened it. Was a orange. I say, it's crazy. They get for the holidays one orange. So he brought it orange to us for saving him, I mean. Because he was afraid. Because that meister, the [GERMAN], that was a, was the owner from the whole factory. It was a big, big man.

Now which camp was this?

This was in camp Bunzlau, too.

Bunzlau also. So let me clarify here a little.

Yeah.

The guy who told you this, that he would send you to Auschwitz--

Yeah.

--since he didn't load it in five minutes.

Yeah.

He was-- he did it because the person above him?

He was the owner from the whole factory.

He was the owner of the factory?

Factory. He paid, he paid to the camp for each one five marks daily. We didn't get it, the, money. But they paid to the camp.

Is this the same man who gave you the orange for saving him?

No, the meister is there he works. He works, was that work. He was a, he was a worker by him.

So who threatened you?

Who threatened me?

Yeah, with going to Auschwitz if you didn't finish.

Oh, the owner. He says, the owner. He says, if I will not make it in time in five minutes, they'll send us to Auschwitz.

So the meister was under the same threat?

The meister, no, the meister was a German. He could lose his job. They could send him to the army. And the army goes to Russia. And so they are afraid, too.

I'm sorry. I'm-- oh. I'm sorry, I'm just confused as to how you saved him, this guy.

Oh, I saved him, the meister because--

You saved him from--

From sending him, to get him back, to send him out to the army.

OK. So he was under the same--

You see, he was also needed for the, for the army, too. Because everything what they, we make, they needed it, right? We make some, a lot of thing for the planes, for other things, right? So they needed him, too.

But as soon they don't needed him, he goes to the army. And they were afraid to go to the army. They stay a sonder. It's like a special thing, work.

So if this owner says he is not doing good, a good job, he says, you be fired. If he is fired, they take him right away to the army. So, and they don't wanted to go to the army too, so--

So basically, the owner could just demand the total impossibility. And if you didn't give it to him, punish you.

He can punish everyone. He can punish everyone.

Including this German.

Include for German-- he cannot-- they cannot send him to Auschwitz. He just can send him, he's fired from work. If he's fired from work, so the army takes him.

Now this German meister who threatened you, told you that you'd go to Auschwitz if you weren't going to--

No, the meister didn't threaten me.

That was the owner.

The owner. The meister didn't threaten me. He cannot threaten me there. But the owner could threaten me, yes.

So did the meister, did you get along? I mean, was the meister-- were there good or bad bosses?

He was not bad and not good. He did his job. You know, he was working. He was a worker. He was a technical engineer or something, you know how is it. We had to make a big, big hole for saving water, to put in the water in that hole.

Like a tank?

A basin, like a tank, a basin. It was like 50 by 40. And for me, for me it is deep. So they needed that water in case everything got something wrong. So this we build it. And he was the meister from it. He know how to do it. So they needed him, too.

But if he say that they don't need him, they take another one. So he was afraid. They can fire him, too. He was afraid.

Now when they threatened you with Auschwitz, at this point in time in the war, did you know what Auschwitz was or how bad it was?

We heard about Auschwitz. We heard about Auschwitz is bad. That's we heard. But what's going on, we didn't know it. But we know that it is Auschwitz is very bad.

What did you know besides--

They-- we really that something is going on over there. If they threaten us all Auschwitz, there must be something wrong.

Oh, so you knew because of the way they threatened you, not from something you heard.

That's right. That's right. That's right.

So where was your first camp?

My first camp was Sakrau. Sakrau was a working camp. From Sakrau, they needed people to unload bombs. So send us 40 people to Langenbielau. I was over there at a factory. And they had a room, big, big garages or big thing.

And we-- and from-- and came in a lot of bombs. We had to drag the bombs and stop all them in the garages, high, high, high, up to was 50 meter high. So this was our work there, was bombs the work.

We worked over there 30 days. And they sent us back. From then, they send us to another camp where they needed us. There's Neukirch. So all kind camps, we got. I was glad they send me in camps. Because one day is free. Because you don't have to work one day.

They lose it one day on me. So they travel till they come over there. It's OK. So I say it's OK, very good to go.

So you got a day off?

So I always offer, I want to go. I want to go. They say, you need. What you need? What kind people? A carpenter, I'm a carpenter.

Could you really do all these things you said?

Pardon me?

Could you really do all these things you offered?

You didn't have to do it. You come over there, you do something. So you're not doing so good, but you're doing it. You could say it. You know, it's OK. Something, you have to know. You have to know how to do it, something a little bit. You know it. I knew everything a little bit.

So-- but building, I was building good. I learned to build really good. Yeah. We built. We built houses. We built houses for the Italian, Italian people, Italian soldiers. They were free already.

They took him in, you know, before. Before they took the soldiers, the Italian soldier didn't fight. They fight against later there with Germans. They were together. But they still were in Germany. So we had to build for them homes. So we built homes for Italian soldiers. At that time, I was building a lot. And we built maybe 20 blocks so.

Like in a camp or in a town?

No, it was for them to-- we went back to camp, to Neukirch.

No, but the Italian soldiers, where--

They took us. They took us with a truck to the place of work. We worked there all day long. And we took us back, back with the truck to the camp.

Let me just write down the different camps you were in.

Yeah, camp I was so, Sakrau Annenberg, Masselwitz, Neukirch, Graditz, Bunzlau, and another, another little-- I can't recall this one camp. Was a tough camp. And I run away very fast from it, so.

But I was twice in Graditz and twice in Masselwitz. They sent me back and forth. Oh. Yeah?

I'm sorry. How did you manage to not end up, like, in Auschwitz and you were always in these little camps?

How I manage?

How did you manage to do that?

What?

Always end up in these little camps.

In the little camps, how I manage?

Yeah. Well, you said that you always volunteered. But where were you when you would volunteer?

So, what do we--

I mean, like, were you in the ghetto? Or were you--

Where, in camp?

Yeah. How did you volunteer for these little camps?

This is in camp from camp to camp. You see, in camp from camp, they needed people. Was a man, he came to the camp. He said, I need 40 people. He was-- they call him the horse trader, a German. He, oh, the horse trade is here. He needs people.

So you know, he needs for some place. So right away was appell, people. He looks over the people. Who is a carpenter? Who is a insulator? Who is electrician? Everybody says, yes, yes, yes. Come out. Come out. Come out. He looks them over and say, OK. That's good for the people.

So what--

They send. They send us to different camp where he need it.

So what you mean was that whenever you were in a camp and they asked for volunteers, you volunteered, but not--

That's right, to go out. So I know one day I will not work because takes us trouble with the buses or trucks or the train. Because they needed far out, not just the next camp here.

Did you ever work with German or Polish civilians?

Polish people in the beginning I worked, that's right, yeah. Polish people, the beginning I work.

And were you treated the same as the Polish people at the worksite?

No, they were free. They were free.

Well, I--

They got for money. They worked for money.

But I mean at the worksite, did they, like, beat you up or--

No, the Polish, no, that time, no, they were friendly. They were friendly. The workers were friendly. They say, if you can help you or something. So they were business like. You have something to sell, give it to me. I'll bring you something. I trust him. He brought me. That's right.

And like for food--

For food.

How was your food?

Oh.

Your lunch time?

I tell you something. I got, when I left for camp, our Treuhand, the German, wasn't in our business. He was kind of already with us friendly a little bit, you know. Because he had a of, a lot from us.

He was before a poor guy, poor schnook. Now he was a big shot. So he had a lot from us, this, that. Before I left here, went, look, I don't have nothing to buy for you. You know, it's nothing now to get. But I can bring you something.

I bring you two pencils, colored pencils. If you turn, is red, green, blue, this, yeah. And say, OK, I'll took them.

When I came to one camp, it was a Polish cook. You're sick. And I was hungry. And I told him, how much I get meals for this? I show him this. He opened his eyes. He never was-- he never knew what this is. He didn't see it at all.

So he says, I'll give you 25. I say, OK. And I gave him the pencil. When I came for the soup, was too big thing, he gave me all the meat from the bottom-- not the top but everything, too. He was so happy, go buh-buh-buh-buh. OK. And I went to the two soups, are full of meat. So I had good food, good eat. And that's it's go on.

But it's a story. In the same camp, came in one day. This was September the first year. September was a little bit raining. We came for work. It was 12 o'clock. Came in a bus, a big truck. And people start to jump out from the back and say, what is it, something like Purim? You know what's Purim?

A Jewish holiday?

A Jewish holiday, Purim-- spoke why Purim, they make like a Purim, the people put on some masks. They make all kind things, like Halloween. So they come with a melonik, lak shoes, beautiful suits. What is this? So--

Oh, it's OK.

Was different. No, OK. We had our soups. We ate, for an hour free, you know, right away, [GERMAN]. We have to go out and stay in line, appell, to work. And I see the people also going to work right away in that suits.

We didn't have yet those [NON-ENGLISH] means the striped suits. No, we had all our private suits still.

You brought your--

Yeah.

You were able to bring a lot of clothes?

We have my-- we brought, my jackets, and everything, ski jackets, ski pants, ski shoes, everything good for work. And the raining, good rain jacket, pops in a good jacket. So you're staying and working, the raining.

It rains. And I see it's like water goes down from him. I say, don't make pee-pee, but they'll hit you. I say, I don't make pee-pee. He had probably a suit, a silk suit. It's like the water doesn't go in, but goes down. I say, the hell with this. How he can work in a silk suit, in lak shoes, in a melonik?

We came home. They gave us cheese. You know what kind cheese? With worms, with those little worms-- that's good. That's good.

He push it away. He doesn't want it. I won't take this. I say, look, don't give it away nothing. And I still get from home a half a kilo cake. They could send me still. Honey cakes, they send me half kilos. And I got it.

So I cut them a piece of honey cake. Take the honey cake, and you give me that, the cheese. Because in the camp, you don't give away nothing. [LAUGHS] So he ate it.

Afterwards, he takes out some a little thing. And he takes a pill. He says, this one what I'm taking now is everything better than what you ate. I say, yeah? That's that? Give me one, too. Let me see how is it. I'll give you another piece of cake and let me taste it.

I take it my mouth. And I swallow it. I say, I don't feel nothing. So what was it? Probably we didn't in Poland, didn't have vitamins that those days. In Belgium, he was from Belgium. He came from Antwerpen. You know Antwerpen, Belgium? You heard about it?

No.

Belgium, Antwerpen?

Antwerp? It's

Antwerp. It's a big, a big, was the biggest town in Belgium. So, OK, I tell you, the next day I borrow him a jacket. Take the jacket, because it's no good for this here. Shoes, I didn't have it for him. But the jacket, I gave him. And I gave him a little hat, too, work in them. He is working.

He saw that I'm getting that food from that Polish cook that gives me a lot of food. Well, the first day, he wasn't so hungry but starts to be very, very hungry. He doesn't give away nothing. He eats everything already, this and that, the worms and everything, he has.

So after maybe two weeks, he comes in the night time to my bed. He says, I want to show you something. I want to show something. Say, OK.

I come to his bed. He opens little, little tissue papers, and shows me diamonds, loose diamonds. I knew that time what a diamond is. I didn't know it, because I was not interested in something like that. You, boy, what I knew it.

So he starts to telling me, I was the biggest dealer in diamonds in Antwerpen. This is the biggest place. Those stones what you see here, I collected 25 years.

What was something nice, the best blue white is this here now. Is nothing nice in the world, only this year. I was the biggest. And I didn't sell this. This was something, something I collected. I didn't sell it.

But the smallest is four carats, up to 13. You don't know what this is. This is something valuable today. I know already. A four carat stone like blue and white is worth \$150,000, like that.

So take one and give that cook, too. Let him give you also a soup. So, say OK. I took this little glass, so what a little glass. And you stay in the line behind me. And I tell him, Jozek, how many soups you give him for this?

So I gave him that stone. He says, Carl, what? He talked to me Polish. [POLISH]? A glass, a glass you give me? A piece of glass you give me? You understand, you know?

Yeah.

He took the thing and [VOCALIZING], he throw it away. This guy almost fell down. He is a billionaire. He has here billions. And here he cannot get a soup for it.

So I was sorry for him. I gave him my soup one, where I have that soup. He eat it. I gave him the soup.

And the next day, this guy was looking in the garbage already for hunger, you know, this and that and that.

The next day, I saw him. His face was full of pimples, this and that, not nice. And a few days later, I didn't see him at all.

I go there to the infirmary to ask if he is something there. Show the boy, he was working with me. But after hours, he was working over there. Ask him, is he over there? Yeah, but don't go there. He has diarrhea. Nobody goes to him anymore. He's finish.

He died. And all those diamonds, they burned was his mattress. There was a sack of straw. They burned it. So the all diamonds, burned them, too.

How he got those diamonds in his pocket, was a saying in Antwerpen that they take all safes over, the Germans. They'll



take over the safes from all people. So he ran that day and took out everything from the safe. He had in his pocket.

And going on the street, they caught everyone right away on that truck. That was everybody was walking that time. They took him on the truck, and they brought him right away to camp with that truck. That's the story. This was a nice story, but a good story.

From then on, I know money's not worth nothing. You can be a billionaire. You can die for a piece of bread. And that's it. That's true. That's the story. Sure, was a lot of stories. Yeah.

Well, what else happened? What are some more of the stories?

Pardon me?

What are some of the stories?

More of stories? It was bad stories, bad stories. I saw a story like a boy who was stealing something. So they took him to the sauna room, to the washroom. And they spray on him with cold water here. And he was running around and spraying till he fell dead.

That's I saw it, too. And everybody has to look on it there. Was a cold water. They splash him around here, around here, so many times, so many times. He fell dead because he stole something.

I saw something else, too. A father was stealing bread from his son. That's I was thinking, it's end of this world. If a father steals bread from his son, it's end of the world.

But I was always optimistic. I'm still optimistic type. Everybody knows me. I'm very optimistic. I say, we'll survive. We'll survive. Don't be afraid. We'll survive. And that's it. I survived. Always in mind, I will survive. I'm not afraid.

Did you always think you would survive?

Pardon me?

Did you always believe you would survive?

Yeah, I think I will survive. I said, I will survive. I was thinking so.

Do you want to take a short break? [? Paolo? ?]

I'm fine.

Why don't we take a short break.

Sure.

Is not much to say. If somebody was-- you asked me how I met my first wife. I didn't tell you the story.

Right.

So I was lucky. In a way, I was very lucky. Yeah, I can tell you story?

Yeah, go ahead.

Yeah? When we came to Bergen-Belsen, so the Germans, we came in to the old camp where it was the death camp. But we came to the air force camp for the German army. They ran out. The last one we saw yet, and the English come in.

And we come in.

That was the 14th of, the 14th of May, 1945. That was 14th May. That's right.

And-- but they were still crossing the Messerschmitts. And they start shooting. And they killed the one guy in our room. He got hit in the head, like this here. He was up, and I was down. He got hit in the head.

OK. We're, the first night, we were in a movie house, laying on the floors there. And that Abek Shenitzir say was already was the army, was the English army. They took him over in a Jeep. And he was the [NON-ENGLISH].

11 o'clock in the night, he came in. It was dark. He looks over us. He brought us the first chocolate. He says, here have a chocolate. How he get chocolate? Where he got the chocolate? No, had to have a chocolate, the good ones. And we ate it.

OK, the next day, he says, Carl, you have to go to the headquarters with me. Why? Come on, I'll tell you why. So they took me to the headquarters. And they asked me if I can run the camp, just sort out the camp, everything.

Now, which camp is this?

This was not the camp. This was a free camp already. This was--

Oh, a free camp.

This was a DP camp already. Was after the war. There was the first-- the second day after the war. But the next day, I saw people. This was a sad story. People was taking out from the garbage cans some food. He bent down. He was hanging like this here and dead.

A few people, like they say, they couldn't-- they were so weak. They want to take something out. They couldn't reach it. And they fell dead. And they saw him. So that's the story.

It was a bad story also. In the camp, in the death camp, the English throw cans of food, like meat, meat. And they start to eat them. And they eat them so fast, they all got sick, diarrhea. And they starved to death.

So the camp ask me if I can run the camp. Was 30,000 people now. I say, yes, but they have another friend, Friedman. He's a-- he was from Hungary, a professor. He spoke a little bit English, too. I say, we both, we can do it.

OK, so started to organize. So we start to make like each block, how many people can go in this block, in this block, in this one, this block. And we have a magazine of food. We have to make a cook.

The cook from our camp was over there, too. He took over the cook, the kitchen, and start to give out portions. We made it. It was working really good. Food was enough, because had a whole magazine of food.

OK, the next day, we had to send out all men from this camp. And they want to bring in all women from the death camp to this camp, our camp. So they brought in, I don't know how many, maybe 400 girls, ladies, in all camps.

So I walked around to see. Maybe I find somebody from my town. You know, you're looking. You're looking. So I jumped in, you know, And it was open a window. I jumped in through the window. I was a sport guy, and say, from where are you girls? They say, from Krak<sup>3</sup>w.

I saw them. So they looked so miserable. I said, no, tomorrow I'll bring you a cake. They say, cake? Crazy. I say, yeah, I'll bring you a cake. And I look in all those things, didn't find nobody. So the more I promise, so I promise.

So I told that cook. He was a good friend of ours, because there was a whole story. He saved my life, too. In Bunzlau, when I came to Bunzlau, this man, his name is Mondschein. He was from Katowice.

And he heard I was sick. I was, had typhus, right away the sick. The third day, we got all typhus, the whole 40 people. We came from them. It was typhus. So we're laying in the hospital.

He came in to ask me, who is Leika Strochlic? I say, Leika Strochlic is my sister-in-law. Oh, OK. He brought me right away in a soup.

So what was the story? In Katowice, they send out a Jew. She was a social worker.

Katowice?

In Katowice. This was before the war.

This is your sister?

My sister-in-law. She was a social worker in Katowice in the committee, the Jewish committee, in their very rich-- there was a very rich committee. They send out, Germans send out all Polish, I think, people from Germany back to Poland.

And this was, the place was Zbaszyn, was a place where all coming. And I from Zbaszyn, they came to Katowice. Katowice made for them a kitchen. They got food and lodging and everything for the people.

And that my sister-in-law, she was very, very smart girl. She had a PhD. And she start to send out people to England as butlers, a butler and a butler. And she made for them papers. And they sent out hundred and hundred of people there quiet who can use it from London to this. And they send them out. So they saved them really, those all people.

And that Mondschein was a butcher. He had a butcher store in Katowice. And they bought the meat, everything from him. And he had-- and she was the whole organizer from that. So she paid him. She had to order for him the meat and everything.

He said he know her so well. And he says a person like this, you don't find. She's a angel. She saved hundred of people. So this time, he heard Strochlic, he right away come to me. He brought me every day a soup when I was sick.

That was a lot, because I couldn't eat. All my portions bread what I got was laying around. As a sick man, I get-- sick boy, I got my portion, too, that quarter bread. But the bread I couldn't touch. I couldn't even take it my mouth. But the soup, I could take it. So he brought my good soup every day.

And we got very, very friendly. So he helped me a lot out when I was a little-- a big shot already. I was a Schreiber, pisarz. You know what a Schreiber? You know what mean a Schreiber?

A writer?

I was-- a Schreiber is a secretary. I got write already all, everything what I have to in the office, you know. So they make me a pass Schreiber that I can go to the bureau, the office with the papers and everything. Because they paid the camp. And the camp as to send them bills, how much they own us, the main, the factory, like that [GERMAN], that big shot, what they want to send me. So I went over there to that office. And I give him all details. So--

Now, was this when you were in the German camps or in DP camps?

In German, this was a German camp. Yeah, it's back, back in the first camps, the first time is. I'm telling you the first time how was it. So that Mondschein was now in the kitchen, too.

In the DP camp.

In the DP camp, he was the main cook already. Because I know him very well. And he was a man, is a nice man. So I

told him Mondschein, you know, the girls came here. Make him a cake. They never saw what cake is already so many years.

We have so much food here. So make a good cake, and I'll give the girls that cake because I promised them. He says, OK I'll make a big cake. [LAUGHS] They made me a big cake.

Food, I have plenty. I could give a lot food to everybody because I had the key from the food, from everything. A matter of fact, so the next day, I brought him that cake. So they didn't believe it.

The next day, I told them, you have got no clothes. We had already clothes from HIAS. So they should a lot of clothes. I had the key from the clothes come in. I say, 5 o'clock, I'm finish. You can go up. Everybody can take what they like, new clothes. It was a whole bunch of clothes was over there.

So this I got started with that girl. And she later, she knew English, too. And she start to work also as a [NON-ENGLISH]. But she went back home to Poland to bring the children. And she brought the children.

Which children?

Her cousins, her brother-- I told you he lost a leg. And she went to Kraków. And she brought them. When the Polish people came to Bergen-Belsen, I gave him three valises of food. I could do it because the main, the captain, the English captain, tell, Carl, give everything, which you know. I gave them because there belongs to them. I mean, that thing.

So they took those three valises home. And they wrote later, I think, they could buy a house for this. That's right.

Like in where, Poland?

In Poland, Kraków.

Did they go back to Poland?

They went back. They're Polish people. They were Polish people there. They're hiding the kids. They were the kids who were hiding. They kept the Jewish kids, those people.

I'm sorry. I thought you were talking--

I told you already that Poland was good Jewish, a good Polish people, too. A matter of fact, there was two girls and one boy. They were hiding on them all the time. The boy lost his leg. And the two girls over there were in their house all the time.

After the war, my first wife, when she was not yet a wife, she was just a friend, she went back to Poland to bring them. Because her aunt was in camp with us. So the mother says, go. Maybe you find them.

And she went there. Took her six weeks to go there. Was no communication. But she brought them all back. And afterwards, she told the people, if you come, come also to Bergen-Belsen. Will be nice for you something. They came, the Polish people.

The people who had been hiding the children.

Holding the kids, the thing. So I'll give him a lot of food. Was no food at all in Poland that time. So they had the three valises, chocolate, cacao, or things what-- coffee and this and that. So they, later, they told they could buy a little house for that thing what we got them.

So they stayed in Poland?

They stay in Poland. They Polish people. They were Jews, what they Pollux but they saved the kids so it's good we gave them a lot more afterwards Polacks. That's right.

Let's take a short break here.

OK.

These words we're going to spell at the end.

OK. Then we're all set.

Pardon me?

These words I'm writing, you don't need to--

We're all set.

--hesitate when I'm writing. I'm just writing--

Sure.

--down the words that we want to spell later.

OK. OK.

OK.

But you have to ask me a little bit louder. So my hearing is no good lately.

Oh.

I have to buy something, a hearing aid.

Oh, dear.

But I don't like it.

Oh, yeah. It's kind of an annoyance, huh?

Huh?

Probably an annoyance, huh?

I don't know. I didn't try it yet. But I hear that some people were, yeah, it helped. But by end, Ronnie says if you don't have a hearing aid, I won't talk to you.

Oh, no!

Yeah. That's it. Because I have twice to talk to you, so it's no good. That's true.

Well, I think when we start, I think what I'd like to do is just start at the first camp you were in and have you, you know, talk to me about that camp, you know, tell me stories about what that camp was like and then go to the next camp.

In the first camp, I was very short really, maybe a month. That's all.

Oh, that's OK. But you know, just talk about it what it was like, and then move on to the next camp and--

Yeah.

So are you ready?

Mm-hmm.

Any time?

It's all rolling now.

Oh, OK. So why don't you just start talking about the first camp and what it was like and who ran it and were, you know, were they-- in terms of what camps could be quote "good" or quote "bad" and what made them good or bad or-- you know?

The first camp?

Yeah, in general.

In the first camp, I told you it was Sakrau. We are really, the first time was for us strange everything. First of all, the little cots, the little, the beds was full of roaches. Couldn't sleep the night. That's right. Well, in the morning, we got up. It was the first feeling something like this here. It's climbing around, all kind things.

Then we get start to work. We work also the shovel. And everybody got the first [GERMAN], they call them like. You couldn't get up in the morning. So the meister was saying, come on. I'll hit you out [GERMAN]. He took the shovel and gave me a good smack here and came out. That's true.

Yeah, I couldn't-- you couldn't work the first days. Because we aren't used to that type of work, you get something like [GERMAN]. You know what is called [GERMAN]?

No.

[GERMAN] is like you get disabled. You cannot even move. The whole your back is so tight, you can't do nothing. In the morning, I couldn't get up. I had to go-- they had to push me down from the bed. I couldn't make no moves.

So I came to work. And I say to the meister, I have a [GERMAN]. So he says, OK, come here. He took the shovel and gives me a good spank in the back. And this has helped get--

Sort of sounds--

--a little better.

Sounds like a chiropractor.

Pardon me? That's a chiropractor. That's it. He was a good chiropractor. He know where to hit, really. He says, that's OK. We know it. Everybody can get this for the first time. You are not used to that type work, right? Sure, I'm not used to that type of work. So this was it.

Then the first camp was so, like every day work, shoveled, and this and that. We came home and lay down. Was a little, at the beginning was everybody was strange. But we get used to that rigor and everything in that.

Who guarded the camp?

Guarded the camp was the SS. Was not a real SS. Was-- this was some special, special guards for the camps. Was there a lagerfuhrer they call it, the head from the lager. And he had the, first of all, to work. There we work, we didn't work alone by ourselves. They just was under the thing, and the guard from the police. Was like a police was guarding us. Not the SS in the beginning, but the regular police was guarding us.

And how did they treat you? Were they-- did they hit people? Or did they give you your work, just leave you alone?

As I say, the people, the meister, he had always something to hit. If somebody maybe didn't work right or didn't walk right, he gives them a smack. That was it, like this usually. That was a usual thing.

And later, the kapos get used to it, too. Even they were Jewish kapos, but they also told him, hit him so he'll do it. And that's, probably they weren't, they were afraid for themselves. So they hit it, too. And that's how goes.

Were people killed in this camp?

Pardon me? No, it was no killing. In that camp was nothing, as I recall, nothing killing. But from that camp, I told you right away, we went-- they sent us out to load bombs to a different camp. Is not a camp. It was a really in a factory.

We got only just one little house to lodge over there. And we worked very hard. I mean, come in every, every hour, two hours, came in a load of those bombs. And we had to put them all in those big, and big hangars like you see here. And it was work.

But the food was good because we ate from the food from the factory. Because was not a kitchen there for us. It was nothing. We just 40 people, like a group 40 people workers. So it wasn't too bad for us.

So you worked with civilians?

Yeah, was civilians, civilians there. We didn't have nothing contact with civilians, really. Because we just came a train with open wagon. We open it. We took them out. We walk them and put them down and up and up and up and walking higher, higher, higher. And that's till we emptied the whole wagon.

And this was our work. Was hard work. But wasn't much-- it was not a big meister on it. Because there's nothing to tell us, you know, just to put it nicely down everything, one, one, one. And that's how goes. So-- but the food was not bad because we got something from the same food from the factory food.

And did the guards and the kapos beat people up there, too?

Pardon me?

Did the guards and the kapos tend to beat people up in this camp?

This camp, but that work was very good. It was like a work to do. Was nothing especially, not kapos and not this. Was a man sent out with us from the camp, from the first camp. He was a vorarbeiter, they call them, like a little, not a kapo, but a little, a head from the group. So he was helping also. He was working with us to--

So at this place, you didn't have to worry about being beaten in this camp?

No, no, this first camp was not so bad, was not so bad. We went to another camp already. Masselwitz was a big camp. It was very not nice. Was on the, we had to go two floors up. Was a big, big hole. Was, the floor was from plain stone, wet, not nice. And we had the cots.

Was little rats and mice running around. And it was not comfortable. It was pleasant.

And the lagerfuhrer was not so nice either, where it was, think was a rushing us, even Sunday appells. We had to run back and forth. Were always something was a little there, was for this, somebody steal something. So we get punished. Everyone get punished. We had to run back and forth, back and forth, this here. It was something like that, that camp.

But your work was very bad, too. Because we had to get up 5 o'clock in the morning and then took, they took us to a train. And the train was an hour ride. And we came 7 o'clock maybe to the work over there in factory, too. Was very dirty work, too.

And they took us back again, walking. So we walked. We walked to the train. Everybody was sleeping, going and sleeping. That's right. Everyone holds the other one. Hold me, because they can fall in there.

And this was nighttime, mostly night. Because it was wintertime. 5 o'clock in the morning is still dark. That was, this was the other camp, Masselwitz.

Did you still have your own clothes in Masselwitz?

Yeah, I had my own clothes still. In Bunzlau, we got taken over by Gross Rosen. This was the big-- Gross Rosen was a big KZ, concentration camp. That time, we got taken away everything what you belongings, everything. We had to give everything away. And we get the new pasiak, those striped suits.

And we had the middle, they cut us off here a sign in the middle, like a row. And we're prisoners, a number here. And that's it. That was, that time was also in Bunzlau when the Gross Rosen took us over. The camp, KZ camp, took us over.

When you were at "Messovitz"--

I mean--

When you were at "Massovitz." "Massovitz."

Mass?

The last camp you were-- is the camp?

What?

The camp you were just talking about, "Massovitz" or--

Oh, Masselwitz, you know?

Masselwitz.

What was it?

No. What was the factory job that they took you to?

They said that also the factory was over there, I think is make bricks, bricks. A lot of bricks we had to have that mixture, this and that. Brick, bricks we made.

And did you work with civilians there?

Always some, a few civilians were working there from the German people, supervisors or something like that, and what to do. That's right.

But are you workers doing the same thing you were at the other camp?



No, no, no, nothing there-- mix with us, never. In no camp was there something like this. We work all by ourself. The Jews is Jews. Was nothing.

And the same thing what I told you in the first camp, we had the Polish people. They didn't work with us. He just came over for a minute to talk to me. And then I'm back right away to his group. We work in a different group. So I would never mix up with the other.

So in this brick factory, how did they treat you?

Where?

How did they treat you at this brick factory? Did they give you-- like, what was the food like and--

The brick factory, we didn't ate over there, nothing. We just came to our camp home. We ate. We got to our portions in the nighttime. In daytime, we had to eat our what we have in the morning, the piece of bread. The piece of bread we got, we had to divide it for the whole day till come back home.

And come back home, we got our soup, our water soup. That's right. This was everything. Food was no good because you didn't eat nothing there. They didn't give us nothing.

And how did the guards behave?

The guards? The guards, they were mostly elderly people. They walked with us. They walked with us. And especially, they couldn't do nothing. Because I say, the SS people, they came only later, a few SS people later on.

But in the beginning, in the thing, it was only just the guards, like old people there. Took him to the army, from the army probably. Or they used to be in the army once before. They took him in to be guards.

So were they-- did they tend to beat people up? Or were they mean at will? Or how did they behave?

They didn't do nothing this. And they do nothing-- they're screaming sometime if somebody goes out on the line, the this. They were screaming, but nothing especially. Because they're mostly not SS people. They were mostly elderly people.

They probably didn't like the job either. Because they had to walk with us 6 kilometers. And that's for them not so nice either, to walk. So they were glad they let them-- we behave nice. Why not?

Because mostly, really people, they were thinking from the house, what they have over there, his wife and children doing. That's right. I can understand them, too.

They really walked very-- some of them there were really bad walkers. He couldn't walk so good. We could walk better than him. Yeah, it was old people that it was, the elderly people for guards. The young people, they sent to the front.

Well, who were the guards then that made you--

Pardon me?

Who were the guards then that made you do the running at the appell? You said that at this camp, they would make you run.

Oh, this, was the lagerfuhrer. It's not guards. This was in camp, in camp. If somebody happened in camp, one says they stole his bread. So they ask him who did it? Nobody was answer he did it or somebody did it. So they punished the whole camp.

Is an appell, come down. And on the, on that appell place, where we're standing, order to stand for two hours, or they let us run, running back and forth. And they caught, they caught, the caught, every time we run, they caught one. And they had to get 10, 10, you know, 10 good smacks on his behind.

And so we are afraid to run. And they caught always one, one. So you have to fight not to get caught. That was their gimmick, was three kapos. And they took three, always three. And they gave each one with 10. So that was the punishing.

So the people responsible for this were the lagerfuhrer and the three kapos?

Oh, it was more kapos. But they put in-- he won't say three kapos. Was three chairs. They caught one. He has to lay down. He get that beat up, smacks, 10 smacks, but good ones. They get that.

Everything was something. They beat you up was laying down. And they hit you, a special big-- I don't know what was it, from-- it was painful, very painful. Was--

But it was the kapos and not the guards who were so cruel?

The kapos doing it. The guards telling him to do it. The kapos had to do it.

What's the most outstanding thing remember from this camp?

Pardon me?

What's the most outstanding incident you remember from this camp?

Outstanding things?

Incident, yeah?

Want good things or bad things?

Good or bad.

Pardon me? Good or bad?

Good or bad.

Good or bad. One camp, we had a good camp. They sent us out to a place, [NON-ENGLISH] in the [NON-ENGLISH]. So this was in the mountains. They send out 20 people. All they have to be, we had to make over there central heating. So who was a insulator, a good lumber went over there.

In that camp, this was a camp for people, they got vacation from the railway, railway people. They got vacation for a week. So this was that place, where a nice place in the mountains. We came over there to work the thing.

So what's nice about it, they gave us a long table. And Hitler was in the front of-- in the back of us. And the food, what they gave the food to everybody, they gave us also the same food.

So it was nice about. This camp was very good for us. It was a, was like a spa for us, like a good place to live there. We're working hard in the woods, too. Because we had to cut the trees. We needed some trees and this and that, who work hard.

But we are fresh, healthy, and good food. And the girls, the waitresses, by the end, they ask us, you want [GERMAN]?

You know what means [GERMAN]? Another portion, I mean, what's ever.

So the pots, they were steel pots like for 40 liters, 50 liters. And the bottom was a little bit thick. But the bottom little bit was still enough for us to take another portion for all of us, or maybe two portions for all of us more. So we had good food.

We came back to the camp, to Neukirch. So we looked like we came from fresh for vacation. And so the people there, we start to get jittery and crying. They had no food and dirty and everything. And it was a terrible time, terrible over there. So it was from nice to back.

How long were you in that nice camp?

Pardon me? Huh?

How long were you in the nice camp?

How long we had been there? We've been there over there maybe 25 days. And that the guard, he wants to make it prolong it. He looked, he liked it, too. We had, you had, he says, you behave good.

Our, we, our place to live was in the woods in a shack. He told us alone to go home. And he was staying over there, because he likes to be over there. It was the waitresses. Was everybody.

So he says, no, we cannot run away in [NON-ENGLISH], you know? [LAUGHS] So he says, behave nice. So go home. And you have a nice warm place and lay down. And that's OK. And that's what he did.

In the morning, we got up. We took a jump in the water. Over there was a little lake. We jumped in in the water. Was wintertime. And we take a swim. Was so good and refreshing, and went to work. It was really vacation.

There was a nice part for it. This I remember. The name was Kasperbauden.

Was he able to prolong your working in Kasperbauden? You said the guard tried to prolong it. Was he was able to?

He pull on another three days. He says, you didn't finish. But they called up already from the main camp, what's happened over there so long. So those people, they didn't care. They didn't care if we stay longer. Because we were working. And we didn't finish, we didn't finish. So, and he was very good in it, too. He worked with us together.

The guard?

The guard-- if not, he couldn't do it. He was a real good mechanic and good, good plumber. So we finished the job. We made it good.

You said Hitler was there?

What?

You said Hitler was there in a train car behind you or something?

Pardon me?

You mentioned Hitler?

I don't hear you good.

You mentioned Hitler?

Hitler, yeah, Hitler the-- his picture was in the front of our table, the whole length. They put us in the honor place near Hitler. [LAUGHS] We are laughing. If Hitler knew what they're sitting near him here, it went the people, the Jews, he wouldn't like it.

So the camp, was the camp operating? Or were you just preparing it for operation?

This camp, our?

Yeah. Yeah, when you were working at--

In Kasperbauden, you mean? This was not our camp at all. We just came over, just--

It was the railroad camp.

What?

It was the railroad.

Oh, this was a vacation place for the railroad people, for the railroad workers. They got a vacation, so everybody every week, I mean, other people.

So were there people there while you were working?

Yeah, sure, was a lot of-- full, was full of workers. That's right, railroad workers. And--

And they treat you?

We don't have nothing happen with them. We couldn't talk to them. And they won't talk to us. We are prisoners. If you went to the city, through the city too, we heard all that time, [NON-ENGLISH]. So the people came out to look what is this, what kind people this is. They didn't know it at all, what kind of people we are, what's going on.

And I jumped in to one store and take a postcard. And I was writing and sending. And I think maybe they got it, or maybe not.

Who did you mail it to?

Also down the road, we're walking through the city to work to the other camp. We to go through the city.

Was over there another thing in Germany that I remember in that city. The houses was deep in. In the front was like a little table. And every morning was a bottle of milk and bread. And we passed by this once. They said, look, we can take a bottle and bread. They say, don't take it because it's for the people there. We're thinking, what is it? How come?

Bottles milk all over in the road, and nobody takes it. They came out later on to take it, the delivery. We couldn't understand it. How is it and nobody takes it? Milk and bread, nobody takes it. Anyway, but don't take it. If not, you go to Auschwitz there, take you away if they catch you. So this was it.

Now, which camp was that at?

This was the time in that [? Kasperbauden. ?] I mean, on the road. We're walking there through the city. We saw the all milk and bread, milk, and bread, milk and bread. We say, look at this, how the people live here, milk and bread on their tables.

We didn't understand it, what is it. They came out to take it, the morning. We came early in the morning, whether it was

6 o'clock, 6:30, 7 o'clock. We came from our place to the hotel. This was like a hotel over there.

Well, so you were working during the day when the people were visiting. Didn't anybody, like-- was anybody embarrassed or anything when they saw you or--

I know if they embarrassed, the people. You mean the German people, they embarrassed?

Yeah.

Do you know what they think inside? We didn't know it. You cannot know. They can smile and they can be hateful. You don't, you don't know.

So they didn't show?

Pardon me?

They didn't show how they--

They didn't show. They didn't look on us. But they are wondering what's going on here, what kind of people they are. Jude, they didn't know what this is. Because over there was no Jews at all. So they didn't know what it means a Jude. Probably they were wondering.

They are telling maybe in the nighttime when they saw people walking through. It was a little thing, Jude. What kind of people is this? I think so, they're wondering.

What else stands out in your mind about the camps? And what other people or incidents or camps?

Well, was a lot of incidents. Every day was a incident. Is no such thing, no incidents. It was every day incidents, by work, by this, by that. Sure, was incident, hitting or [INAUDIBLE]. Was incidents.

But general, in work camps, was a little bit less dangerous than in the other camps, you know. Because they need us, too. They need for work every day. He paid money. Let's say we worked for companies. We work for factories. They paid to the camp money. That's right.

Say they want work to be done. So we had to give a lot of work for that money. So they're chasing us to work harder and harder and harder, to take out anything they can from us.

And the kapos, what for they got the thing to smack somebody who doesn't work or to hit him, , to throw him, work, work, work. Do it. Do it, work. That's the way it was in camps. And all camps is the same way. They're chasing you to work.

If somebody was healthier, so was not so good-- so bad for him. But it was thing like that. The people were wearing shoes, no shoes, but those wooden clogs, wooden [INAUDIBLE], like the wooden. Terrible. They couldn't walk good in them, and they fell.

Let's say if you have to drag something, big things, we work together. Eight people have to drag it. But one fell because his shoes wasn't working right. So the rest of us fell, too. And one got hit very bad because we're dragging big stones or something else, or stairs from the big stairs.

So you had the people, eight people have to take it on the iron bars, you know, and go with it. But if you walk with this, with those shoes, you trip sometimes because they don't hold you. So a lot of things happened.

And a leg got broken. This got broken. This-- that's-- this was all the time, or something like that.

And was weak. One was weak. I work in one camp. We made the railroads. So we have to hit the stones under the things. And they counted 1, 2, 1, 2, you know how this goes. You couldn't keep it up with that. Because he says you didn't do it. So you got, you got hit in the head.

You can do it. You have to do it. And this was it, that type of work. It wasn't easy.

What else stands out in your mind? What else do you remember? In general, what did you think of the guards? Were they-- in general, like some people have described them as being very, very cruel, and other people as cold, and other-- you know like, how, would you describe them?

Was one guard, when we walked from-- we walked six weeks on the way. I told you was one guard, an SS man, Shubert. He was the toughest. Because the other guards were elderly people. And they didn't bother us so much, because they were glad we let them go. And they let us go.

But he was a SS man and young. So he has to show what he knows. He shot a lot of people here. As I say, he shot us when we were hiding. He shot 16 people. He shot two people, they couldn't walk. He shot them on the road.

He says-- this was the tough guard, that Shubert. I remember him. I like to catch him if I could. [LAUGHS] So--

Do you know if he was prosecuted?

Pardon me?

Do you know if he was prosecuted after the war?

Where he was after the war, who knows where he is after the war.

Well, when he would shoot these people along this march, what would they do with the bodies? Would they bury them? Would they collect them? What did they do with the bodies?

With the bodies?

When they shot.

They let them on the road, on the road. On the road, if somebody fell, he goes in and gives him another shot. OK, he go over there, over. They left all bodies. They didn't bother nothing.

Was that time when he shot 16, was four, four wounded people, too. They got wounds. Only they not got killed, by wounds. So he put them on the wagon, what he push those wagons, those drags. So he wasn't happy. He want to kill them.

But the main lagerfuhrer came. One called him up, what's happened here? He was not a SS man. He was, he was a elderly man. He was a businessman, but it was in the army now. And he was the lagerfuhrer, the main lagerfuhrer.

He was-- they called him up. What's going on here? He came with a motorcycle to run. And he had a little talk with that SS man. He was not afraid anymore so much for the SS man because was the war, the war was near to the end. This was already at the end of the year, you know, before the war.

We run away. The Russian were on one side, the English on the other side, the American. So he was a little bit, told him, it's time to stop. Why you kill them? That's right. So he says, we call them, we call them really the zayde, the saba. That's the grandpa.

And that lagerfuhrer, we called him grandpa because he was good for us. But he was not a SS man. He was a businessman. He know what's going on, so he was a little bit lenient with us. That's happened, too.

What else do you recall about the camps?

What is to say about the camps? Every night, we pray, tomorrow we get up, we'll be at the end of the war. That's what-- that was our pray, it will finish.

Did you believe in God throughout the war?

Sometimes we say, how could God let us do it to us? You get a little skeptical. How can this be done? And you get a little bit skeptical.

And what did you do? Did you--

I believe that something will survive this. This was my belief, no God or real God. We'll survive it. I hope to survive. And I will survive. This was my feeling. I took it for granted that will survive.

So before the war, were you an observant Jew?

Pardon me?

Before the war, were you observant?

Observant? Not so much, no, no, no, I was not observant.

And after the war?

After the war, that the same thing.

Do you believe in God?

I believe in God, but I am not so religious. I'm not observant. I'm not observant, never been. And I didn't change. The same way I was, the same way I am now. I'm tolerant and everything. I can do this and that and everything.

How did you reconcile what happened in the Holocaust with your belief that there is a God?

With my belief? That's a philosophical question. I don't want to go into it. This, I don't, I don't. I take it, that's it. We survived. And it's-- if I have to believe in God, I say why he didn't do it before? Why he let my father die, my mother die, and everybody related, my brother's three kids die, the whole family.

So I get a little bit skeptical. I say, why this happened? How could this happened? So I didn't ask questions. I didn't want to go into it, what I think. Let's say, that's it. Happened. Happened.

Which DP camp were you in after the war?

Pardon me?

Which DP camp were you in, displaced persons camp?

No.

Which one were you in?

Which one I went?

Were you in?

In which camp I went in?

Yeah, which DP camp were you in after the war?

After the war, only in Bergen-Belsen. That's what--

You know, I had understood the British just burned it down.

The British ship bringing down Bergen-Belsen, what?

Well, yeah, the British liberated it and then--

The British liberated us in Bergen-Belsen. We came in. We came in to Bergen-Belsen, not to that camp but the camp I told you, that air force camp. There was a beautiful camp. Even was four camps. One camp was for the officers. And everything was very nice there.

Would you like some water?

Pardon me? Yeah. It was a little-- it was very nice there. So was really good. We had good days over there. We could go to the sauna to take baths and get a good massage even. Was a one man who was also a prisoner from Holland. He was serving the Germans.

Now he says, I'll do you people everything what we need. Because I'm a prisoner, too. He give us really massages, help in that camp. So it was after the liberation. That's it.

Were you-- but this camp was after Bergen-Belsen, right?

This camp, the Bergen-Belsen?

Was after Bergen-Belsen.

After Bergen-Belsen, no-- this was Bergen-Belsen after the liberation. There was, was not a death camp. The death camp still was there. But after a couple days, after a week, they brought the woman first into this camp from the death camp, after a week.

So were you ever actually in Bergen-Belsen?

No, in death camp, we didn't go in at all.

The Germans just brought you to this other former air force camp?

We got in right away to that camp, because it was over no place. And this was empty already.

Who brought you to this camp?

This camp, they brought us still the Germans. The Germans brought us to that camp, the guards, what they already gone there.

The camp had been abandoned.

The camp has been abandoned. And we went into that camp right away. And the next day was already the English people in that camp.



So did the guards--

The same day, really, it was already the English people. The guards, they left us. They ran away. So we come into that camp. And the English people start to put us in there.

At the first night, we're in the-- was in a basement, a big basement. It was out light and everything. We were laying. And the next day, they called me, I should organize already that camp to make the people in blocks, to settle in blocks, everybody.

And from the death camp, they came in a week later. All men, they sent to another camp, Celle. Also was a free camp, but Celle for men. And the women came into this camp, Bergen-Belsen.

So they had better already. They were sick and not well. So they went to the hospital, even, some of them. Was a hospital already, too.

The Germans, the Germans took care on us. It was German staff what they there. They took care of the sick people.

How did the German soldiers, the British soldiers, react when they saw your condition?

The British soldiers were all right. They did everything for us. They were-- did what you can. I mean, what they could do, anything. We couldn't do nothing.

They had, each one has a different job. I mean, when we opened the magazines, they helped us, everything. With trucks, they took the trucks to bring food and this and that. This was leisurely jobs already for the British.

What happened to your family?

My family, when I went to camp the 10th of May in 1942, two weeks later, they came the men to the camp, to another camp where I was. They tell me, your, father died. But he died already regular died. And was a funeral. All the city went to his funeral. Was everything all right.

But three days later, they sent people already out from the town. They took three-- how many thousands, they sent them out already. So the town is empty, nobody there. So it was nothing.

So my father died. But my mother survived yet. So she got also sent out to some camp. I don't know where, to Auschwitz or some other place. And my older brother was hiding in the city where they caught him with his wife and the two children.

The older daughter, the older daughter, they named Paula. She was in the underground working. When the German was in the city still, before, before the-- before they send people all out from the city, she was working the underground. And they caught her. And they brought her into Auschwitz.

So she was so tough. The German, a German soldier or some officer, told her to do something. So she spit in his face. That's what everybody is telling the story. Paula got shot for him, but she spit in his face. And he shot there. That's was it.

She was smuggling people from, to Czechoslovakia, from Czechoslovakia to Hungary, to Budapest. In Budapest has a lot of people survived on the Jews. They were smuggling. And she was a smuggler. The underground, she was working.

She was that time 19 years, or 18, 19 years old, a beautiful girl. But she had the courage to spit in his face. That's right. And he shot her right away.

What happened to the other people in your family?

All dead. All dead. They don't survive, none of them. They told me, every, the whole, that transport went right way to the gas oven. Those people, they took from this to the city. This was in May 27 or May 28. I mean, a couple of weeks later when I left for camp, they made clean the city. They took them all to, right away to the gas chambers.

I thought you said it earlier that four of your brothers and sisters died and four--

Pardon me?

I thought you said earlier four of your brothers and sisters died and four-- three survived. I thought you said earlier that some of your brothers and sisters survived.

I told you. Two brothers, they went to Russia. They ran to Russia right away. They were in Siberia. And later, they come back.

So the only ones who survived were the ones who left and you.

In camp, only me. Because they send me out to camp. And when they send me out to camp, my sister-in-law was working in the committee, in the committee that time in this. And she had a access also to that lager where they're holding us till they send it out to the camp.

Was a place where they kept us five, six days over there. So everybody was saying, she can take you out because she is from the committee. If she goes in, she can take you out.

But she came in. She told me, I wish I could tell everybody and your mother and my mother and everybody to camp. In the camp, maybe somebody survived. What will be now, nobody will survive. She knew already.

And so she told me, take everything. She told me, take everything what you had, all belongings. You will not come back anymore here. Will be nothing. She knew already till what was coming. That's it.

And she-- and so even with a child. All those they working for in the committee, they took him one day all of them. And they send them to Auschwitz.

How did you find out what happened there? How did you find out what happened to your family?

How I find out? After the war, we are looking for anybody to find somebody. So everybody told me that this happened, what this happened. They find my brother and the wife hiding in a bunker. And they took him and right away to Auschwitz.

And the whole town was the day where they took all of them to a sport place. And all the people, they kept them over three days. And they send them out right away to Auschwitz. And Auschwitz was gas chamber, on the everything.

Maybe they left some people they could work, young people. Maybe they left a few to work. This Mengele probably select. How they select, but like my mother, they couldn't select. She was already a lady. So I'm sure she died the gas chambers. And that's it.

Is there anything else you want to say?

What is to say, is that we went through a lot and survived. So we keep forgetting. But we don't can't forget. Try to forget, but you can't forget what's happened, trying hard to forget, but doesn't go.

Do you get nightmares?

You see, this another problem. I don't get nightmares. I sleep good. I'm a different kind person. I don't know what kind.

In me is I don't give a damn thing for nothing. I don't care much.

About anything?

About anything-- I mean, I see. I was saw a psychiatrist. And I told him, I don't get nightmares or anything. But I can see a little child cries, I cry too. I'm very sentimental. That's true.

I can see a movie, a stupid movie, I cry. And say, why I'm crying? It's nothing to cry. But I get tears. That he says, no, that's something what you have, this cannot have.

I told him, I can see thousand people dying, because I was carrying dead people, hundred of dead peoples from the crematorium. I was working in Bergen-Belsen-- not in Bergen-Belsen, in the last Gross Rosen.

So they took us for their work. I say, I want to see the crematorium. Then they put me nice, load the people, dead people on the trucks and this and that. I throw them like nothing. And see, didn't bother me. You know, didn't bother me. That's true. I saw it.

It was something so-- in the morning, we get up in the morning. So was a faucet the length of the thing, you know, faucets. And we wash ourselves. And here were laying dead people.

You mean, where were you laying them, in ditches?

They were laying, was like from tin, a tin, a tin cover. You know, was a long length with faucets. Everybody could stay by the faucet and wash himself in the morning. But the people die in the nighttime, they put them on that thing, on the bottom, like we say. He was dead, and I was washing myself.

This now doesn't do nothing anymore, something dead people, you know. You could see it. It's common, common, common.

And now, it's still, I'm so I can see something is falling down in the house, I'll not get excited. But if somebody has a little thing, so little thing, a little girl, they talk something, I get tears my eyes. That's I have it. There's one thing.

Can I please clarify a little here? When you were at Gross-- when did you get to Gross Rosen?

To Gross Rosen? No, Gross Rosen was at camp. But I didn't go to Gross Rosen to the camp. Because this was under Gross Rosen, all those camps, not in the Gross Rosen.

It was a Gross Rosen subcamp?

In Gross Rosen, I never been, no.

It was a subcamp of Gross Rosen?

That's a subcamp from Gross Rosen.

And what was your-- I'm-- what was your job there?

When, when this was, that time was Bunzlau.

You were at the time--

Bunzlau that time.

Oh, Bunzlau was.

Bunzlau was the, on they, a subcamp from Gross Rosen. They took it over. Before was a Jewish camp, you know. The camp was under Jewish organization. Was a Judenalteste. Means a Jewish alteste, the head, and kapos, Jewish kapos.

When they took over us, there was everything German. The [GERMAN] was a German. The lagerfuhrer was a German. They came from Gross Rosen. And they took over that camp. And this was a camp already, Gross Rosen.

OK. Now, how did you-- what did-- you said you asked to see the crematorium?

The last camp what we came in was Nordhausen. The last camp was Nordhausen. Nordhausen, it was the last camp when you came in, when you came from Bunzlau, the six weeks was marching. Was Nordhausen. And from Nordhausen, we went to Bergen-Belsen. Nordhausen was also a very big camp.

But you said that Gross Rosen, you ask to see the crematorium. Or you talked about-- how did you get in contact with these bodies lying on this tin--

Oh, this was in our camps, too. That was in our--

If somebody died during the night, they would just put them in--

Yeah, in the night, he died. In the morning, in the nighttime, they put the meantime here. Later, they took him away. So in the morning, we get up. You had a few deaths.

So Nordhausen was a very bad camp already by the last days. We came in the last days to Nordhausen. Was a big camp. The next to Nordhausen was, what they call it? They're making the V-1-- V-2, V-2.

V-2 missile.

V-2, right. It was the next camp. They was send-- they wanted to send us to the next camp, too. But there was no time anymore for work over there. But there was no time anymore. So they sent us to Belsen.

OK. What do you remember about Nordhausen?

We were only a week there, only one week. Was very bad. It was so bad that people were afraid to lay down, because was a lot of Russian prisoners, too. They cut somebody a piece of meat from his hand or from his behind and ate it.

It was so hunger, the hunger was so big, the terrible, terrible. We had something like this here, cannibals, cannibals. Yeah, was cannibals in camp. And they couldn't do nothing. Because was a lot of Russian, a lot of Polacks, a lot of French. It was mixed, oh, for a camp or a--

OK. Now you said that--

Peggy, we need to make a tape change here on the master. Why don't you pause those tapes, Craig?