

Interview with Henry Libiki
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Q: HENRY, WHAT I'D LIKE TO DO IS TAKE YOU FROM THE EARLIEST MEMORIES YOU HAVE OF YOUR CHILDHOOD, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR GRANDPARENTS, AND YOUR LIFE, WHERE YOU WERE BORN, WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE FOR YOU, JUST KIND OF GO ALONG AND HELP YOU TELL ME THE STORY OF WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU.

A: If you don't get enough information, do you want to ask questions?

Q: SURE, SO WHERE DO WE BEGIN HERE?

A: Well, I was born in Poland in a place named (Cluboosk or Clubooska) depending on how you pronounce it, Jewish or Polish. To describe the town, is the best to see Fiddler on the Roof, that kind of a little town. To the best of my recollection, there were about 30% Jewish people; the total town might have had 5,000 people. 30% of the people were Jewish people.

I very vividly remember the ^{shul} (shoo) or the temple, I very vividly remember on high holidays or on any holidays there were festive things because the predominance of the Jews congregated together, not necessarily in a ghetto, but they were close to each other in certain areas. And I remember such things as taking the chicken to the slaughter or the () as they called him in Poland.

I was attending a ^{heder} (faber) or Jewish school when I was

four and a half. By the time I was nine years old I left (Geshtadel) for a larger city which is (Chancetehaba) and you might have heard about the town because that's where the pope goes to visit, that's the Polish shrine, it's the (Gasnagura) as they call it. And from nine years old I stayed in that little town to the war.

Q: OKAY, LET'S GO BACK TO YOUR CHILDHOOD. HOW MANY BROTHERS AND SISTERS DID YOU HAVE?

A: I had one brother and two sisters.

Q: AND WHAT WERE THEIR AGES?

A: I was the youngest. My oldest brother was 3 years older, my sister was 5 and the other sister 7 years older, so I was the baby of the family. And I was called 'baby' until I was about 20.

Q: YOU WERE CALLED 'BABY'!? THAT WAS YOUR NAME?

A: No, no, when you look for, in the model, it's not the baby, it's 'kind', kind in Yiddish, you speak Yiddish?

Q: NO.

A: Okay, 'kind' in Yiddish means the same as baby, it means child. Because I was the youngest.

Q: WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DO?

A: My father was in the wholesale wheat and flour, in other words he would contract for wheat with some landowners and get it to the mills and grind it up and sell it to bakers.

Sometimes he went to the mills and bought wholesale, you know wagons of flour and then distribution was by 220 pound sacks, which he sold to the bakers, because they couldn't afford a

large amount of flour, so this was basically his business, wholesale of wheat and flour.

Q: AND WERE MOST OF THE JEWS IN THE (SHETTL) OCCUPIED IN THESE KIND OF MIDDLEMEN POSITIONS?

A: No, I would say my father was probably among the richer people in town. I probably would not exaggerate if I would say he might have been, maybe 30 or 40 people were about as well off as we were, most people were not as well off as we were. At that time, Jewish people I'm talking about.

Q: WHAT DID MOST OF THE OTHER JEWS DO?

A: Everything from having a horse and a buggy and ferrying people around, to one of them was a lathe operator, wood lathe, made things out of wood on a lathe. Some people were shoemakers, tailors, a rabbi, rabbee, which means a teacher, others a baker, practically everything. But I remember also there was a lot of people that were quite poor and did nothing, in other words they did whatever they could to make a living, they had no profession. Whatever they could, buy something, sell something, work for somebody for awhile. There were other people in not the happiest situations.

Q: HOW DID ALL THESE JEWS, WAS IT NORMAL FOR THE SHETTL TO BE THE VILLAGE TO BE 30%, SO HIGH?

A: Well the Polish population was pre-war. That might not have been when I was still in the small town. It was pre-war about 33 million. Out of that a little bit over 3 million were Jewish people. So obviously some places would have had more and some would have had less people. There were places

where there were very few people, there were many places where they were large concentrations of Jews.

Q: DO YOU KNOW HOW THE JEWS GOT TO YOUR LITTLE VILLAGE?

A: I read some account of these, they trace them back as far as, and again this is so questionable that they were tracing this exact, but it could be several hundred years ago that they first came. You know somebody came in there because of a reason, either he dealt with somebody or had some special profession. But the town had already had Jews, a good community established for over a hundred years, when I was there. So the Jews must have been coming there in the early 1800s.

Q: AND YOUR FATHER WAS ONE OF THE MORE SUCCESSFUL ONES. WAS THAT BECAUSE HE WAS DEALING WITH THE POLES AND NOT JUST IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY?

A: No, the success was probably his own entrepreneurialship. This was the success, my father, let me maybe recall a little history of my father. His mother died when he was nine. His father remarried. He never did get along with his stepmother. So around nine years of age he left home already, on his own.

Q: WHERE WAS HE BORN?

A: In (Ranchitsa), that's a town about 4 miles from (Clubotsk.) You're talking 4 miles, in Poland in those days, 4 miles was a different world. I remember going walking to this little town when my grandfather was still alive, and it would take me about an hour and a half to get there. We would walk because then we stayed with our grandfather, he had a

bakery, was a baker. As a matter of fact after the war I was there on business and I asked to be taken to () and the bakery was gone.

But getting back to my father, when he was 9 years old, he had to find his own way in life. So first he joined as an apprentice to a shoemaker, in the hope he could make a living as a shoemaker, but when you are apprentice, you are 9 years old, first thing you do is help the lady of the house with the babies and everything, this did not appeal to him, even as a 9 year old child. And a year or so later he changed into, he went to be a tailor. And hours were very long as I can hear him explain, he always used to tell us the stories. And he worked from 14 to 16 hours a day, he worked with a needle. And he, to my knowledge he was always high strung, and no one could ... take advantage of him, he wouldn't let anyone take advantage of him, so he liked it better, but then the war broke out in 1914, he was 14 years old, he was born in 1900. So when the war broke out he started looking for some other means of income. He didn't like the idea of being cooped up all day in a little room, it wasn't like the conditions we are used to today, it was very stuffy in a small little room, he could hardly move.

Q: YOU MEAN HE WAS A TAILOR AT THIS TIME?

A: That's right, until he was 14. And when he was 14, he started looking to get into some kind of business. Now this might sound very odd, and my daughter still tells us it's some sort of oddity or pride, I hardly know what to say about it,

but her father was a smart little, because the borders re-established themselves during the war, and so you could carry things from one place to another and make money, but you have to do it in darkness of the night, so he became a smuggler, basically, he smuggled cigarettes, carrying them on his back from one place, which was the German side, to the Russian side. So this was what he was doing, and different things that were not really legal in those days, but they were morally legal to the people. Moral legality and immoral legality became more understandable to me when the war broke out, when I was involved in concentration camp.

Q: SO WHEN HE WAS 14 HE WAS SMUGGLING CIGARETTES FROM THE RUSSIAN BORDER TO THE GERMAN BORDER?

A: That's right.

Q: SO WHERE WAS POLAND HERE?

A: Well Poland didn't exist anymore for 150 years, because Poland was split up between the Russians, Austro-Hungary and Germany. Under Catherine the Great.

Q: SO WHICH SIDE WAS YOUR..

A: My father lived on the Russian side. All in Poland, ancient Poland, was the Russian side, and he was a few miles from the border, so all you had to do was find a way to get across and you got ...the same thing, these things exist always in abnormal times. When there's a normal economy like we enjoy in the United States, even here you might have heard that certain states have cigarette taxes, and certain states don't have, and there's smuggling going on even in the United

States, also illegal. But this was a completely different situation. And then when the war ended he was 18, and within a year or so he married my mother.

Q: WAS HE STILL IN THE SAME VILLAGE WHERE HE WAS BORN?

A: No, he left that village coming to Cluboosk, which is where I was born. That's where he was actually as a child when he ran away, there wasn't an awful lot in that small village, I don't think there was a dozen Jewish people in that other village where my grandfather had a bakery.

And he then settled, at first, in my mother's little village, which was (Vonsachir) which you wouldn't even be able to pronounce, but it's a small town, and within about a year, moved to Cluboosk, where I was born later on. So my oldest sister was born in that small town where my mother comes from, because when you got married you didn't go out and look for a house, you stayed with your in-laws, that's the best you could hope for, and eventually he wanted to go and get on his own. So by the time he was 20 he was very much on his own already, in business, married, had a daughter. And then the other 3 children were born in Cluboosk.

Q: AND IS THAT WHERE HE STARTED HIS BUSINESS? WHEN HE WAS AROUND 20?

A: Yes, the legal business, the legitimate business.

Q: SO HE HAD MADE MONEY SO HE COULD SET HIMSELF UP?

A: He could set himself up and it was always a struggle, like any business that you have, but all I'm trying to say my father was always very well dressed, he had new suits always,

2 or 3, for Poland that was rich to have new suits. He needed it for business number one, because when he went to visit, mostly people that he made deals for buying more than selling. Selling he didn't need to be, he always was well dressed, as far as I can recall, I remember mostly in a tie and suit.

We were comfortable. I never knew what it means not to have food on the table. I never knew not to have meat on the table except on the 9 days where we don't eat meat, and dairy, you're familiar with the 9 days, it's before (tishoba) as a matter of fact, it's five now. We did not lack food on the table, but I don't think that we just had money to throw out, but that was our way of life, and the children got a normal education. I remember that when the 9 days would come around I just moped around because there was no meat, so I felt the day way lost. I don't know why, but I remember that would be the situation.

So it was the small town, then in 1936, the time I was 9 years old, we moved to the large town.

Q: OKAY, NOW TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOTHER.

A: My mother comes from the (Vonsasher) which is a little village, and she was one of I think 6 children. She had 2 brothers and 3 sisters, yes, 6 children. She was 4 years older than my father. By the way she's still alive and she's at Silver Street old age home, I just came from there, I visit her several times a week.

Q: REALLY! HOW OLD IS SHE?

A: She's going to be 94 in December. She went to

concentration ... She was the one in the family who from a very early age took care of cooking, cleaning because my grandmother was involved always in the business. Because the grandfather was not a businessman, he was other kind of guy, whatever he had he would give away.

Q: THIS IS YOUR MOTHER'S FATHER?

A: My mother's father, my grandfather. He was a very charitable individual, very good, very handsome as far as I know, but he liked different things in life. Business absolutely didn't interest him, he was a (glazier) and even that he didn't call to do much business, so really to raise a living for everybody it was my grandmother's job. And my mother was the second oldest and she took a liking to take care of, since she was 7, 8 years old she took care of the cooking, cleaning and taking care of the younger group. (SO SHE WAS A REAL MOTHER) She was a real mother and continued to be a real mother until late age.

Q: SO WHAT DID YOUR GRANDMOTHER DO?

A: My grandmother had a little grocery store. That was the way they made a living. And then eventually when my mother and father moved to (shettl) that I'm talking about, kibbutz where I was born, a year or two later she also moved to the town. Opened up the same grocery store.

Q: SO YOU HAD YOUR MOTHER'S PARENTS RIGHT THERE?

A: Yeah. Most of the family was in that little town. My mother's sister and my father's brother eventually got to know each other and they married each other, they were 10 years

junior to my folks. And they lived in the same building, not house because it was an apartment building, they lived next to us. So my cousin was more like a brother/sister to me.

Q: SO YOU HAD A BIG FAMILY THEN?

A: We had a big family in Clubootsk. And then we were the first one again to move out. There was also family in neighboring areas. And we used to visit them as kids.

Q: SO YOU WENT TO A HEBREW OR JEWISH SCHOOL?

A: I went to a Jewish school, or a (heder) as you call it, you know what a (heder) is I presume, when I was 4-1/2.

Q: AND WHAT WAS THE ATTITUDE ABOUT PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE ABOUT JEWS? DO YOU REMEMBER?

A: There was a lot of anti-Semitism. I remember very vividly I can give you scenes that I still see, I must have been about 5 or 6. Whenever there was a Polish wedding, there were fights, they got drunk, that might sound prejudicial, but I'm talking this is what happened. I'm not saying every wedding, because there were fancy, intelligentsia, or there were the peasants or whatever, but I remember mostly when there was a Polish wedding our parents would keep us inside the house, because there were fights and the fights you don't know who got lost, they were bloody, stabbing and so forth. But whenever there was some anxiety among the Poles the Jews were the first ones to take note of it.

I remember when I would go to school, when I was already 7 years old, I remember running to school, I rarely walked, because I had to outrun the people that would try to beat me

up, my age kids, they would beat me up, they would recognize me as a Jew. And when there was a break in school, I would not go out in the yard to play unless a teacher was near. Plus there was always fear they'd beat you. By the Polish kids. (WHO WERE NOT AT YOUR SCHOOL?) They were, they were. Let me explain. The (heder), the Jewish school, was independent, you still had to attend an official Polish school. That was in the small town. In the big town, there was a sort of segregation. The government still supported the regular school, but only Jewish people were going to it. Now we had a curriculum, a regular Polish-assigned curriculum. We did not learn Hebrew or anything of that sort. But it was separated, because there were enough Jewish people to have a full school of Jewish kids.

Q: BUT IN THE SMALL VILLAGE, HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DID YOU GO TO HEBREW SCHOOL, AND HOW MANY HOURS REGULAR SCHOOL?

A: Well, before I started going to school, which was at the age of 7, I would go from 6 to 8 hours to school. I remember when I was 5, or 5-1/2 I couldn't tell you exactly, I remember and everybody remembers in the family, my father was praying, you know what (minaja) is and (mari) that is the evening prayers. And he would say, he would pray 3 times a day, he was not Hassid, but he was orthodox. And I stood once next to him, I was 5 years old and I was continuously movement, as you do in Jewish prayer, you must have seen this, and after he got done praying you couldn't interrupt because it's highly devotional, you don't interrupt for any reason, he took me on

his knee and said I shouldn't do things, there is no laughter there is no joke, I said I wasn't joking, I was praying the prayer. He said but you didn't even have a book. I said I know it by heart. He says I want to see this, he put me in a chair, I wasn't tall enough to listen to, he put me on a chair and I said the whole service, I knew it by heart when I was 5 years old. Because it was a continuous repetition, if you remember there are songs about, sing it or not sing it, (erf interpret branch afile) have you ever heard this? But anyhow it says about the little room where the children was the rabbee are learning ABC, I was learning it repetitiously until I had it all in my head. And then when school started, and I was going to school from like 1 to 4, I don't exactly remember the hours, but I would go in the morning to (heder), the afternoon to the regular school. And that continued more or less even in the bigger town, where I was in a Jewish surrounded school but officially sanctioned by the Poles, Polish government. And I would either in the afternoon or the morning, whichever was free I would go to (heder) until I was 13.

Q: LOT OF SCHOOL FOR A YOUNG KID. BUT THAT WAS WHAT

A: That's why, if you look at a lot of Jewish people and I keep hearing this, "the Jews are smarter". I don't believe the Jews are smarter any more than any other nationality. The Jews, however, did put always an emphasis on learning.

Whether it was learning the Bible or learning the laws, you have to remember if I took some of the Talmud when I was about

7 or 8 years old, picture a little child starting the philosophy of the Talmud, but I did. So it's not that the Jewish people are necessarily smarter, it's that the Jewish people emphasize learning. And whatever any group of people will emphasize, that will succeed. If it's beauty you will have more beautiful people. Genetic followup.

Q: SO IT WAS DIFFICULT THOUGH, IN A RELIGION, BEING AFRAID IN TERMS OF THERE WAS NO CONTACT BETWEEN YOU AND THE POLES.

A: Very little, very little. If you're asking did I have a Polish friend, the answer is no. There was only contact enough, this was not a ghetto, there were 2 or 3 Polish families living in a corridor with all Jewish people. So there was a predominance in certain areas of Jews, predominance in certain areas of Poles, and people tried to congregate where they felt safe. So yes I had contact, but not like you would see in the United States, where I have a lot of Gentile friends since I came here United States.

Q: WHAT MADE YOUR FATHER MOVE?

A: The kids were starting to get older. He felt a strain by having some of the children sent to the big city for education. My oldest sister was studying bookkeeping, my other sister, in order to get some sort of a job she had to be in the big city. Just worked out that he said may as well go to the big city because the children are getting older, not getting younger, and he wanted to see if we get a break we like, whatever we could achieve. So that was his reason for moving to the big city.

Q: SO HOW DID YOUR MOTHER FEEL ABOUT THAT? DO YOU REMEMBER?
OR HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

A: I don't know how my mother felt about it, she might have felt hesitations, but it's strictly speculation. To me it was exciting, just going places.

Q: BUT SHE WAS LEAVING HER PARENTS

A: Yeah, but this was again 10, 10-1/2 miles. And while it was only 10-1/2 miles, I assure you she didn't go as often as I go to Ohio right now. Because if you took a horse and buggy, it was a 4 hour ride. If you took a bus for the 10-1/2 miles, it was even full half-hour, you didn't chug along like you should, it wasn't a good road. The bus was going, but if you ever seen some of the South American movies, you know those buses going, that's what this bus was. But, you just didn't go on buses back and forth. I do remember for the summer my mother would send me to a little town, me with my cousins and I would spend 2, 3 weeks there, and I always liked that. Life in the big city changed for me. In the small city I would never go around without a covering of my head, keep a hat, mostly a hat. To show my orthodoxy. When I came to the large city, well this disappeared very quick. But then when I went back to visit, I remember vividly a situation where I didn't have a covering for my head, and I was going to cross the house where my previous Hebrew teacher, rabbi or rabbee, was living, and I felt very naked. And I'm not sure but I still today have dreams of being naked, that might have been from that, might not. But I didn't feel good in the small

town being without it, in the big city it was no problem.

Q: HOW ELSE DID LIFE CHANGE FOR YOU IN THE BIG CITY?

A: Not much more. Anti-Semitism was still there. There were sections in the town where I felt quite safe because there were very few Polish people living. Even so there were problems that we lived through, and then all houses were locked up and then nothing was safe, in 1937 there was a case where a Jewish person in defense killed somebody, a Pole, and for 3 days were riots, killings and looting, and so everybody locked themselves, barricaded themselves in their houses. For 3 days no one would go out. Then when they caught some Jewish people who had arrived in the city by train or something, in the big city I'm talking about, they were beaten up very badly, some of them had to go to the hospital, some of them were crippled. So life was not that pleasant for me as far as social situations, it was, the economic life was fine, no problem.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE LIVING IN THIS LARGE TOWN?

A: The large town was 100,000 people before the war. I am not sure how many were before the war Jews, I could guess about 20,000. In the middle of the war when the selection started and the auctions, you know what are auctions? Auction is (actzia) this is Polish, but I'm translating, but that's where they were selecting, you go here, you go here. We called it (actzia), and there were 30,000 Jewish people. So before the war I would estimate, I'm not 100% sure, it must have been 20,000 out of the 100,000.

Q: AND WHAT YEAR WAS THIS THAT YOU MOVED?

A: We moved 1936, September.

Q: AND YOU FATHER DID THE SAME WORK?

A: He did the same, dealings, only thing he had to do was rent different facilities. But he had the same dealings with the same bakers and the same, it wasn't that far to move, the same people that he bought, mostly the purchases where you bought things, what contracts you made on wheat, you very often had to pay for money but it was still in the field, taking risks, it's like

Q: FUTURES

A: same thing as futures except not sophisticated, the futures were his own futures, he would bid on it and he would lose or gain. But he was an entrepreneur, he wasn't afraid to take risks.

Q: AND DID YOU HAVE A NICE HOUSE?

A: We never had a house, we always lived in an apartment. It was rare to have a house and my father probably wouldn't have bought a house because of all the money he could, he would rather invest in the business. But we had a very nice apartment. And as a matter of fact I went back after the war in '79 and I looked at the place.

Q: STILL NICE?

A: No. By standards of Poland pre-war, we had a very nice place. By standards of what we expect today, number one is not so nice, number two, the houses and the places deteriorated badly during the war. We had a court which was a

first court, and a second court. It's hard to imagine if you know European way where you have a main entrance to an apartment house and then it's one court and second court. In the first court we had concrete roadway to turn around in a car, inside the yard. It was all broken up, chipped out, no one took care of it, we used to have nice garden there, but no one took care of it. So it was depressing to go back and see it. I still wanted to see it.

Q: HOW LONG DID YOU LIVE THERE?

A: We lived there until the selection took place, which was in '42.

Q: NOW TELL ME WHEN WAS THAT, YOU MOVED THERE IN '36, WHEN WAS THE FIRST INKLING THAT THINGS WERE GETTING BAD FOR THE JEWS?

A: Well they were not, my recollection they were never good, and this might be my own memory, but that's what I think, they were never good for Jews. Again, not economically, some economics were very good and some were poor, but it's the social standing, the envy, why couldn't I be free, why do I always have to run away? I like to go to...I loved cowboy movies, but the cowboy movies were in a section where Jewish kids usually wouldn't go, but I would go there in daytime, as soon as I saw the ending was coming I would run out so that no one catches up with me, run home, I would never walk home, anywhere.

Q: AND WERE YOU WEARING A SKULL HAT SO THEY COULD IDENTIFY YOU?

A: No. They identify, identified very easy the Jewish people, I didn't have any particular Jewish look or Polish look, but they identified, it wasn't a question...

Q: WAS IT THE CLOTHES MAYBE?

A: I was dressed in all the clothes that my neighbors, the Gentiles would wear. I don't know why, it's the same thing if you would take some of the black people, what we call the black people in the United States, and place them in Poland, no one would recognize, they would say 'he's tanned'. We recognize them. You take some of the black people, they really don't look any different than white people, but it's hard to tell, but I know I was recognized.

Q: SO YOU ALWAYS HAD A FEELING OF NOT BEING FREE?

A: That's right. I never was free. And the question how long I stayed, '42 was the point

Q: THE QUESTION WAS WHEN DID YOU FIRST FEEL THINGS WERE GETTING WORSE THERE, AND WHEN DID YOUR PARENTS FEEL IT?

A: Well that's a curious situation, because when the Germans came in, the Germans had come in on, well Friday the war broke out, my mother woke me up, there's a war. We knew, Friday the 1st of September, 1939. That was the first day of the war, it was about 6:30, 7:00, there was machine gun fire outside. She woke me up to lie on the floor, still remembering World War I, war situations, what you're supposed to do. And then it quieted down, then more machine guns, airplanes, different things

Q: THE GERMANS WERE IN YOUR TOWN?

A: No, a plane was in our town, German planes were already in our town the first thing in the morning. The national defense was non-existent, but policeman with rifles would try to shoot down an airplane, it was almost ridiculous, but they finally shot down, as I remember, they shot down a small bi-plane, you know the two wings, a very old plane. They wouldn't be able to shoot down a German (stucka) or any of the other planes.

Q: SO YOUR MOTHER WOKE YOU UP AT 6:30 IN THE MORNING AND SAID THERE WAS A WAR

A: There's a war, and I lie down on the floor and we wait until the shooting stops. Then Saturday of course the rumors back and forth, the Germans are here, they are there, some Polish people started coming back, Polish soldiers, could have been also Jews, but Polish military people were coming back and telling horror stories, how they're being overran, I remember one story they were saying that the tanks that the Germans were bringing in were facing a cavalry, can you imagine? This isn't a joke, there was lances too. They were slaughtered. Slaughtered. And then Sunday around 11:00 o'clock, Germans came to our town. Very friendly, they didn't fight in, they just marched in. Very coordinated. And they came in, they were dirty, they asked for water and people in (Pauci) they're not monsters, they're wonderful people, they gave them water and they were, they were better educated than the Poles, there's no question about it, they were smiles, and, it's not gonna be so bad. Well Monday, mid-morning, there was all of a sudden some shooting, some chasing,

running, and at that time I was 12 years old but I recall the incidence without recalling every exact little detail, but what happened is that the Germans accused the Poles, or Polish people or Jewish people or whoever, that they killed one of theirs, a soldier. And they started shooting people, a lot of people fell in the middle of the square, killed, and they rounded up a whole number of prominent Jewish and Polish people, but predominantly Jewish people, and then jailed them and then they released the rest of the people the next day or so, they kept the other ones for ransom.

Q: KEPT WHO, THE JEWS?

A: The Jewish people, the prominent Jewish people, and they knew whom to get and they knew where to get them and so forth.

Q: THEY KEPT THEM FOR RANSOM?

A: For ransom, it wasn't even ransom, it was the first indication where they showed that they want the money from the people. So they go some money that was collected, and they released the people after a few weeks. And then they started putting laws into effect, thou shall not this, and you cannot bake, you cannot use white flour, you can only use dark flour for baking. I don't exactly remember whether it was first, second or third but the laws kept changing, every day you added...I happened to be outside and I was reading these things how Hitler right away started initiating laws when he took over. Well the same thing he did in Poland, only a much faster pace. You cannot slaughter, you cannot do this...and pretty soon it was so that you didn't question anything,

whatever was against you was against. So the question of a lot of people that were not there was how could 6 million people let themselves slaughter like sheep, that's the word they use, but first of all, through these psychological efforts, they brought the people down to become animals, you know whether it's sheep, or dogs or whatever it is, he killed the resistance to fight, little by little. If this would have happened all of a sudden, everything would have changed, you take out people, people would have fought. But the morale was so low that people were depressed, all they could think is some survival but not fight. The fight was out of the people by the time it came time to kill them.

Q: AND THE FIGHT STARTED GOING OUT WHEN ALL THESE LAWS WOULD COME IN AND ONE DAY YOU COULD DO ONE THING

A: And next day you couldn't, and it was more restrictive all the time.

Q: SO YOU BECAME REAL USED TO THE AUTHORITARIAN

A: Absolutely. But this started on the second day after they came to our town.

Q: SO YOU BECAME USED TO THERE BEING RULES, IT SOUNDS LIKE

A: It wasn't obeying rules, it was no choice. Not obeying meant beating or arresting or both or so forth. There were a lot of incidences of things, if they needed for instance a hundred people to do some odd job, they would simply go in the street and stop everyone and pick out the first hundred people, you're going with us. There was no excuse, you just went, whether it was to unload a train of coal, or shovel snow

when the winter came around, or whatever--they just arbitrary took anybody that was in the street. That was a way of life, it's just like if you would see, have you ever seen the rounding up of sheep, you're gonna picture, chase out the dog and just round up the sheep, they rounded up, we were rounded up.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY DISCUSSION ABOUT THIS AMONG YOUR FAMILY OR BETWEEN YOUR PARENTS?

A: Not an awful lot. The discussions mostly centered on survival--what we should do to survive. We again were lucky, as a family. One of the people that owed my father money, a baker, went bankrupt. And whether it was a bankruptcy like here I don't know, anyhow he went out of business and he owed us money and he gave us a choice to take over his bakery, so the 2 ovens, it was a good sized bakery, and it was before the war it was 1938, there was already a lot of talk the war would come out, break out, and I remember discussing, this was before the war, my father and mother discussing, and my mother told my father if you have a bakery and a war breaks out, you always survive with a bakery. No one was thinking of extermination, we're just talking economic survival, a baker prospers during the war. And that was really the truth because by the time the war broke out you couldn't deal any more in wheat and flour because my father couldn't do the contract, he was restricted in travel.

Q: JEWS WERE RESTRICTED?

A: Right away, yeah, you couldn't travel beyond the ghetto.

Q: WHEN WERE YOU PUT INTO THE GHETTO?

A: We're put in the ghetto, either 1940 early or late '40, I don't recall exactly but it wasn't too long later we were in the ghetto. That ghetto, still you could go out of the ghetto, provided you came back before the evening. A curfew was always existent. And later on they closed off the ghetto and you couldn't go out at all, except by special permit. If you wanted to go out of the ghetto you had to get a special permit, you could only go where the permit would allow you and go back. But when we were put in that, you were living where the ghetto was created because usually they closed up the area where most of the Jews were. And so in that particular ghetto you had to stay, restrictions where you could travel, my father, the business was not something the Germans would have allowed him to continue. So our preoccupation and occupation for my father was the bakery. And we prospered, by prospering means we ate. I still ate normally like before the war because we could afford the food where others could not. People were starving. And that bakery also saved us, our lives, the whole family. It is a very, little involved story, but let me just try to describe as best you can understand it.

When the Germans started selection they went section by section by section, it took three weeks to make the selection because they had so many trains only they could take to get the Jews

Q: YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE SELECTION? (YES) WELL COME BACK TO THAT THEN

A: Well I'm just saying how, I can go back to it later, but basically we were saved because of the bakery, that's the basic, I can go back to that

Q: OKAY, BECAUSE I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE SELECTION PROCESS AND HOW THAT WORKED, BUT WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN THERE YET, HAVE WE?

YOUR FATHER COULDN'T CONTINUE HIS BUSINESS..... AND WAS THERE ANYTHING ELSE HAPPENED BEFORE THE SELECTION THAT

A: Well there were other things, first of all the school stopped for all children, there was no school, no official school. The school that was official Polish school for the Jewish people just completely closed down. So people, if they wanted to have schools at all, if they could afford to get a private teacher, they were tutored, in their homes. So I was going to school with other kids, I was 12 at that time, and we had supposedly regular schools but everyday in another home. There were 5, anywhere from 5-15 kids, depending how many you could accommodate in a private home. And the school took also place in our home.

Q: AND YOU GOT A TEACHER FROM

A: We got several teachers that got together and they organized the school. It used to be the teachers from the private Jewish school, in our town. These teachers got together and organized sort of a school of different grades, and I was in one of them, I was learning to actually to the 8th grade. I finished the 5th grade before the war until the 8th grade, I was still part of the 8th grade. What I also

recall is that most of the kids never got an opportunity to go to school during the war. There were several kids in our court, when I refer to a court picture like a big apartment project, that never got to go to school, they were 7 years old that's the time you're supposed to go to school, and they never got a chance. This just came back to me recently, that I got kids together at that age and I was teaching ABC and adding and subtracting. I don't remember how long I did it, how long a period, but I know I started this. I wouldn't be surprised other things probably took preference and I stopped it after a few weeks or months I don't know.

So there was restriction and 90% of the kids never got any more education than they got before the war. So there was a real gap in education, formal education. I was one of the lucky ones, that got education.

Q: WHAT ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

A: Economic situation for most people was very bad. But the Germans, and don't ask me how this happened, still allowed for instance, for us to bake matzos. So the bakers were baking matzos, but everybody couldn't get a permit. Not every baker, but they allowed so many bakers to bake matzos. So during the war we had practically a factory for matzos in our bakery. And needless to say whatever business you did, if you did business you made money on it. So money was not money as a value as much as -- you ate. So we baked matzos, we, and I'm not sure this was legal but I remember for awhile we even baked bagels. Then things got so bad that you couldn't get an

allowance for bread and the way you baked bread for people is people would bring in their flour and you traded so much flour for so much bread. In other words people had to find their own flour.

Q: SO YOU WEREN'T ALLOWED

A: Not allowed, but that was a period of time and I couldn't you know exactly remember, but I remember that this was a way of doing things and sometimes you got some flour from people, but people were cheating because they were buying from some sources or other flour. And I remember one time we had gypsum in the flour. We baked a whole load of bread and everything was spoiled because they mixed up gypsum in the flour to sell it for more weight.

Q: AND SAWDUST TOO, I UNDERSTAND.

A: Well, sawdust you could detect. Gypsum you couldn't detect, you could also detect, but how much testing can you do? Somehow a few pounds of gypsum got into the flour, and by the time you got 150 pounds of flour to make a load of bread, you had gypsum in it. And the whole bread had to be thrown out, which was very difficult, we knew it could poison people, but there was starvation, people would love to get their hands on the bread, but we had a tough time, I remember my father discussing with my mother, how do you get rid of it not to poison anybody, because you couldn't sell it, it was a crime to sell it.

Q: SO WHAT DID HE DO?

A: We finally arranged to get somebody with a wagon and dump

it into the river. We just dumped it in the river. It had to be watched so no one would steal some of it, because sure enough they would get sick from it. At least that's what my father tried to do. Those were the sort of things... The war broke out, I was 12. The following summer I was going to be Bar Mitzvahed. I remember training for the Bar Mitzvah. I don't remember my Bar Mitzvah, because it wasn't much of a, it wasn't like a party and so forth, you're called up to the Torah, you have your half-Torah, and that was the Bar Mitzvah, so it wasn't a big, nothing followed, no social event whatsoever

Q: WHY, BECAUSE NOBODY HAD THE MONEY?

A: There was a war, and Bar Mitzvah even before the war wasn't really that big of a thing. But you would have had a small party. I don't remember any party. I know that I was Bar Mitzvahed, but if you ask me what do you remember about your Bar Mitzvah day, nothing. But I remember very vividly being prepared. And the reason for that was because I was learning Sephardic, I'm sorry, Ashkenazi, and for the Bar Mitzvah, the rabbi that taught me, taught me Sephardic, and I remember the switch.

Q: WELL, WHAT ELSE ABOUT LIFE IN THE GHETTO DO YOU REMEMBER?
HOW ABOUT YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, HOW DID THEY SURVIVE?

A: Well, they were all at home, let me back off. In 1940, in December 25th, my oldest sister got married. My youngest sister was supposed to have gotten married on the 31st of December of the same year, within a week. On the Saturday

between the two weddings, my father had a stroke. I don't know what to classify, but eventually it showed up years later in the United States as a brain tumor. And so weddings were not made in a hotel, weddings were made at home, you cooked with women helping and neighbors helping, and I remember for my older sister there were about 150 people, guests, all in our few rooms that we had. You squeezed in everybody that you could. And they did the cooking for days. It was a very exciting time for me, I was a youngster looking all the things that were going on. Soon as they stopped with one wedding, they started preparing for the next wedding. Both of them were getting married close to each other. And when father had the stroke, we just scaled everything down. And I remember that the wedding took place next to where my father was in the room, sick in bed and I'm not sure was quite with it. And he recovered enough where he carried on a relatively normal life, but he never was the same anymore, because he kept getting ... another seizure, it sort of was like a seizure. And those are the things that I memorized from that period.

Q: SO YOUR TWO SISTERS GOT MARRIED?

A: Yeah, and my oldest brother was, he learned before the war in a trade school, which was here like social engineer or licensed mechanic, I don't know how to compare it. And he tried to do something in that area and he couldn't, because he was only 15 years old, so he did some sort of dealings on the outside, mostly illegal. That's what I would say, they're illegal, morally legal things. Everything during the war that

the Germans forbade was morally legal.

Q: WHAT DID HE DO?

A: Well for instance he would go with a few friends and sneak out of the ghetto illegally, and buy from peasants, potatoes. And rent a wagon and horses and bring it in clandestinely to the ghetto and resell it. Little things like this that I remember. But you see this is the thing that's so difficult, my daughter likes to talk to her friends about it and says 'gee whiz, my grandfather was a smuggler' like it was some big thing, and it wasn't anything, it was a way of making a living. And the morality, the best I can describe it, you're not supposed to drive 70 miles an hour in a 55 mile zone, it's illegal. Is it morally illegal? It's not. They tried to make a moral issue out of it when the gas situation was a problem, and it worked better. Once it's a moral legality, people react to it differently. The same during the war -- you would never think of stealing from your fellow citizen, but you could steal from the Germans, there was nothing wrong with that if you could.

So, everybody was busy. In the ghetto I also remember trying to, since there was no movie, movies were forbidden to Jewish people, people were trying to entertain themselves regardless of the conditions.

They had little theaters. My younger sister was more inclined for theater, she loved movies and she liked to act, she was a beautiful woman, and she was also rehearsing for some of these things, the show never came off because she

became pregnant (laughs), and that's another story if you want to hear it. She had a baby during the war and the baby survived as a Gentile. So that's the sort of things I remember, I remember with my friends when there was an imminence of something would happen, we didn't know what, we would talk that we'll meet on a certain day, someplace, the date that we all forgot, like in Paris, you know some dream of kids walking around, and if we don't come the first year, we will go the second year, but sooner or later we'll make it and we'll see each other. We never did, because I knew some of the guys got killed. I was one of the few survivors of my age.

Q: SO ALL OF THIS WAS BEFORE THE SELECTION, THE KIND OF TURNING POINT HERE. WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

A: We already knew that they were taking people from different towns and sending them away. That was all we knew. There was a lot of rumors that they were taken to some eastern places and settled under bad conditions, there were a lot of rumors they sent them into labor camps. People wanted to believe it more than, as a child I was just going around, it was whatever they were saying, I was at that time 14, 15. But the way it was happening, the SS, the Stormtroopers, the black uniforms, would come to town, hundreds of them. And when they came to our town, this was Yom Kippur. And they came to town, as best as I recall it was Yom Kippur, I know it was during the high holidays. And they started surrounding the ghetto with military people, and the black, the SS in the black

uniforms you know, were the people that carried out all the work, but they used also military, and surrounded the whole ghetto. No one could get in or out, except for a while they let the Polish people go in and out, the Polish Christian people. In and out of the ghetto for a few hours, this was in the evening.

At that time, a friend, a Polish friend, a rare thing as it was, my brother-in-law, the husband of my younger sister was, had a friend, he was Christian. They were childless, he and his wife were childless, and they knew that my sister had a baby two weeks before, and they came and said 'look Yanek, I could take your daughter with us, and if the whole things blows over you will take her back, but meantimes, let's save the child.' And they came in that evening with a stroller, and she just walked out with the child from the ghetto, to keep the child, because we knew if there will be a selection, we already knew there was going to be a selection the following day or two, and they took out the child, the next day it was completely (), they went in and out and they started right away selection.

Q: HOW DID YOU KNOW THERE WAS GOING TO BE A SELECTION?

A: Well there was a lot of things going on. There was, the Germans did, there was Jewish administration in the ghetto, Jews administered everything. And ... held those people, they were under continuous pressure from the Germans, 'we need more money, we need more this, we need more that, we need 50 people to send them over here', they had to make decisions, it was a

terrible thing to put on these people. But they took it, and somebody had to do it. And they must have found out because they gave them some information, they're going to close it off, and do this and this, and rumors spread very quickly, people watched, people knew that the black uniforms came to town, so they knew there was going to be a selection. Because this was going on in other towns already, ours was a little late, so.

Q: AND WHAT YEAR WAS THIS?

A: 1942, September.

Q: AND HOW LONG DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THE SELECTION?

A: It would be hard to reconstruct, but I would say could have been as much as a year because some of the little towns they eliminated by, they didn't have all the facilities to burn people yet, in the beginning, so what they did, they eliminated some towns and sent the people to the bigger towns to have them more concentrated. So when they get ready, this is my speculation now, with the ovens, they called the (nikdunslager) or places where they destroyed the people, eliminated the people, by the time that happened they had easier ways to load them up on trains, a lot of people came () at that time.

Q: IS THAT HOW THE JEWS IN THE GHETTO EXPANDED FROM 20,000?

A: Oh sure, we got, after the war broke out, I don't recall whether it was the 2nd or first year, we got two families to take into our apartment. We had to give up rooms, and they moved in, because they were chased out from other places.

One, a husband, wife and their mother, came from (Lodge) if you heard the name, it's the second biggest town in Poland, industrial town, and one family came from outside the ghetto area, and this was two sons, a daughter and the couple, they had one room, and in that room, they cooked, they ate, they sat, and everything. Conditions started getting very bad, but what is bad by comparison of death?

Q: NOW YOU KNEW A YEAR BEFORE THIS THAT THE SELECTION PROCESS ... AT WHAT POINT COULD PEOPLE LEAVE?

A: Leave what? Where to?

Q: WELL THAT'S WHAT I'M ASKING.

A: There is no, unless you were very young and you were willing to endure risk, danger, cold, whatever. And some people did, some people went to Romania, through Romania got out to Israel, very few. Families could do nothing. I mean, let me change this also. A lot of people left in the first days of the war, the first year of the war. '39-'40, to the Russian side, because the way things were in Poland, and again I'll give you my best description, the Germans occupied swiftly Poland, the Russians had an agreement with them that they'll occupy part of Poland. But the Germans advanced much further. So where my wife was, which is in (Volv) or near (Volv), the Germans came in first, there were there for a while and the Russians said okay let's go on our agreement, let's move back, and they moved back and the Germans moved out from (Revolv.) People from the German side, fearing that they were not safe under the Germans, went to the Russian side.

They had to be very daring, or it was a single person, or a husband would leave and then call the wife later or whatever, but a number of people left that way, to the Russian side.

My wife, because I was explaining to you, was already on the Russian side. But these people, after a while, starved there, they were very disenchanted. Life was little better on this side as far as economically, it wasn't better from freedom, there was no freedom there either, but freedom over there was bad for Poles, Christian Poles or Jewish people, okay? On this side, the Polish people had more freedom, but the total economic situation of their ability of food was better than on the Russian side, so after awhile people didn't know what to do, they came back. Some of them stayed behind. Some of them were taken by the Russians into depth of Russia. My wife, her mother, cousins, her sister and her aunt, were taken in the middle of the night by the Russians because they were very well off, they had lumber mills. And her father found out that the Russians would be looking for him, he escaped, but they didn't look only for him, they wanted to take the whole family, take them all to Siberia. And so they took out all of them to somewhere in Russia, beyond Europe. And they were there, and the husband, my wife's father was sending some packages to them, from the good Russian side. He was in hiding, but he had money and he could still do things. And then he died, I don't remember when, and they stayed in Russia and starved, in very bad

situations, very little food. But they survived, in Russia.

While other people, if they escaped, they went for a short while, they went from, how do you say, from the frying pan into the fire. And from what my wife tells me, she starved more in Russia than I did here. Especially before I got to camp.

Q: IN CAMP?

A: Even in the camp, I was one of the very few lucky ones, because we survived from the bakery and other stuff which I didn't get to, we survived there, and we had an ability as a family to help each other, at one point or another somebody would help the other person. We were in a labor camp.

Q: WE'RE NOT THERE YET, I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE DAY OF THE SELECTION.

A: To answer your question, there wasn't any place to run. You could run to the woods, that the park was on, and some did, but mostly young people, 18, 19, 20. Families didn't do that. You could hide, that had plenty of dangers because the Poles, some people got out, but more people than not, they sold them to the Germans. They didn't sell them, they took all their money, and then they told the Germans that they're hiding out. I'm sure you heard about these stories. And there were some that hide out from the whole world. So basically, we, as a family, didn't go anyplace.

Q: NOW, YOU KNEW ABOUT HITLER, OF COURSE. (Of course.) WAS THERE ANY FEAR BEFORE '39? (Sure.) DID PEOPLE START LEAVING FROM THE TOWN WHEN HITLER CAME TO POWER, AND WAS THERE AN

OPPORTUNITY THEN? AND IF SO, WAS THERE ANY DISCUSSION?

A: There was an opportunity, and one has to remember, you couldn't go to the United States because the quotas were always overloaded; you couldn't go to Israel, because the English didn't let you. You went to, some people might have gone to France, well France fell prey to the same thing. Some people went anyplace, maybe to Australia, but the numbers were relatively small, I don't think you could say that there were 2% of the people that ran away.

Q: BECAUSE PEOPLE JUST DIDN'T BELIEVE?

A: No. No one believed it's going to be -- that. People believed it would be bad, there would be discrimination, no one did move, when I say no one I mean the majority just stayed where they were. Yes we knew. I remember I was a little child, and I would put some soot on my face, and put my hair down, look like Hitler, and imitated Hitler, as a child, I must have been 6 or 7. Yes we knew about all of this. My uncle came in 1938 from Germany, during World War I he came to Germany as a prisoner of war, from the Russian side. And he, the Germans put him on a farm, World War I Germans were a different breed of Germans, or the government was. They put him to work on a farm, and he and the daughter of the farmer fell in love and they married eventually. And she inherited the farm and he became German, called German, acted German and other things. But in 1938, because he was Jewish, he was chased out of Poland. So he stayed with us. So when you talk during the war how many people we had in our apartment,

plenty. Because I'm sure nerves were being rattled quite often, but as a child, I'm not sure I paid that much attention to it.

So, rather than escaping, you got more people from Germany. There were hundreds of thousands of Germans, Polish but considered themselves German Jews right now. And they came back to Poland.

Q: THEY WERE KICKED OUT OF GERMANY?

A: They were kicked out of Germany. They had some rules you know, if you didn't have a father a generation, you couldn't, and later on everybody went of course, and so there was no difference.

Q: OKAY, SO WE'RE AT YOUR NIECE GOT OUT, THE LITTLE BABY GOT OUT BEFORE THE SELECTION AND THE GATES WERE CLOSED. WELL, DID YOUR SISTER SURVIVE? I MEAN, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER -- HOW OLD WERE YOU AT THE TIME?

A: I was 15.

Q: WAS THERE JOY ABOUT THIS? I MEAN, WHAT WAS THE FEELING?

A: Was great fear, great apprehension.

Q: NO, I MEAN ABOUT THE CHILD?

A: Oh, the child, yeah, that was joy, but this only lasted 2 weeks. And 2 weeks later, after the birth of that baby, the selection started.

Q: YES, I MEAN WHEN SHE HAD TO GIVE THE BABY UP.

A: That was the best choice under the circumstances, we knew that children were not surviving, children were not surviving. We knew that the best chance of survival of our people were

between 18-25 if they looked healthy. Because the selection was very, very selective.

Q: DID THAT CHILD SURVIVE?

A: That child is right now living in Walnut Creek, but that is another long story.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR SISTER?

A: My sister is living in San Francisco. The oldest sister passed away of cancer a few, a year and a half ago. But the mother of that baby is living in San Francisco.

Q: WHERE DID THEY MEET AGAIN? I WON'T TAKE YOU INTO THE WHOLE STORY, BUT I'M JUST CURIOUS...

A: I'll give you a quick sketch, without going into it. The child was never returned after the war, because as the war was raging we went into concentration camp, we went different places. After the war ended, my sister went back to the people to 'give me back the baby.' Says, 'well, we cannot give you back the baby because you lost your husband, we took it from your husband' and her husband was in another incident which also is a different story, and he was executed, with other 25, in a group of 25 people, for avenging for some other situation at that. And so they didn't want to give her back the baby, but she was fighting them, and she started to look into what means she could take to get back the baby, and the baby would disappear with them, wouldn't find it. Then, when things cleared up again they came back, and we, so it was a cat and mouse situation, and meantime we couldn't stay in Poland, if you remember there were very bad situations for

Jews even after the war in Poland. People were killed in Poland by the Poles. Remember escape from Sobibor...

Q: WE'LL HAVE TO GET TO THAT

A: Anyway, so we finally had to leave Poland in 1946, because we wasn't going to stay in Poland, so the baby stayed with them. When we tried to make contact with them, it wasn't easy. Then when she was 14 years old, the child, we made contact with her telling her 'you have a Jewish mother.' That obviously didn't do an awful lot good for the feeling of the child, but the fact happened we let her know that she's Jewish. She was being brought up, and then when she was about 21 maybe 22, we again made contact and started sending her things from the United States, by that time we were already in the United States, and then my sister met her in Hungary and her husband in Hungary, I don't remember, could have been in the early 70's. She was already a woman, wasn't a child anymore. Then in 1978, in Spring, her husband came over for a visit to San Francisco, we sent him money. He came over and he was overwhelmed by the difference between living in San Francisco and their life in Poland, it is like day and night. And after a few months being here visiting me, and also in Ohio where I used to live, he went back home and told her, his wife, you should go to visit, he said 'it's a different life.' And finally she want, she didn't want to hear anything about anybody she knew, 'how could a mother leave me?' and all that sort of thing, besides those are my parents, the Polish people, the Christian people. She was Catholic. And she

finally got talked into it and came to San Francisco for a few months visit, and after a month she left with the idea, 'the way I see it there's no reason for me to postpone things, I'm going to come as soon as I can' went home to get prepared. And then they left, within about a month, on the pretext of going to Yugoslavia on vacation, they packed up everything in their car, and they left through the Czechoslovakian border, instead of going back to Yugoslavia, they turned right to Vienna, she came into Vienna, looked up (Hiyers) and said my mother is Jewish woman, and I would like you to help me get to United States. A little bit later I went to visit her in Vienna, there was also a complication because she was now a Communist, she was a passive Communist, you know when you want to go to college you become a Communist or you don't go. And so that complicated things. We wrote letters to President Carter and all sorts of things, and I was there and she had the Rabbi find some people that would look after them also, it was a coworker of ours that had his in-laws in Vienna... Anyhow through all the letters and writing and clearances, in April, I think it was in April of '79 they came to the United States, with two children. It might have taken six months. I would have to reconstruct, but it was longer than it should have, because having a mother here she could have been here in a month, but the fact that she was a Communist caused problems. She was united and now, why she's still Catholic and the kids are Catholic and so forth, you know, they are on very good terms, and we all talk to each other and we all see

each other, and as a matter of fact my grandson's going to have a Bar Mitzvah and they're going to be on the Bar Mitzvah with all their children. The relationship is close, but it's still, it's a different faith and a different religion, and it causes, not friction, it's just delicate situations.

Getting back to the Selection. The Selection simply took place where house by house, court by court they would close it off and the (hauptman) which translates into a Captain of SS would stand and say "Left, Right" and there were a whole bunch of soldiers and people had to, single groups you know, file by. And he would show you go to the left, you go to the right. I don't know whether left was this, right was this but to make them whatever this would be, it would be you either live or die. And children were sent with their mothers unless for some other reason they wanted the mother, then they would take the child, give it to somebody else take the child, the mother goes here. And there were tragedies of all sorts. I was not witness to this because I was the bakery, where I survived. But the things that heard were from sufficient people, my brother who went to the Selection, because he was at this time 18 years old, very well built, and he had at that time almost 90% chance of survival. Because we couldn't keep everybody in the bakery either, you know how many bakers do you need to bake the bread? So we took the people that would not survive. One of them was my sister, we took after the baby was given up because she was breastfeeding, and then she had problems with the breasts, which is if you stop abruptly

feeding, were all sorts of small things that took place.

Q: SO WHO WAS IN THE BAKERY, DURING THE SELECTION PROCESS?

A: Well, from our family, there were a few families, ours was my father, my mother, my oldest sister, my brother-in-law who would not have passed because he wasn't tall, my younger sister, myself, that's about from our family.

Q: AND WHO WAS IN, YOUR OLDER BROTHER WAS OUT THERE?

A: Our older brother went facing the Selection, he survived the Selection, and he was taken to camp. Some people were taken to camp, some were taken to the small ghetto, because from the big ghetto they shrunk into a small ghetto, for those that survived. Cause they had need for all of those people to do work. And some of the work was emptying the houses where people left, selling off the furniture, selling whatever was there. So they gathered into a small part of the ghetto.

Q: AND THE OTHER PEOPLE WERE SENT OFF IN TRAINS ALREADY?

A: The trains sent, they went to trains, went to Treblinka. To the best of my knowledge, all of these people that went, went to Treblinka. The reason I say, I know they went to Treblinka, barely a 100% went ultimately but probably I couldn't tell you right now, but the people that have survived Treblinka were sent out, were telling us that all of the people went to Treblinka. And one of my, from the court there was a guy was about two years older, he escaped from Treblinka, came back with all the horror stories. A lot of people did not believe him, they refused to believe it! You know, how could you kill off thousands and thousands and

thousands of people? And he, (small detail told us)... When people came to Treblinka, they selected some of them again out from there, the strongest ones, to work on the things it takes to take care of disposal of clothing and jewelry and you name it. Because people packed up the best things and took them, because they went to a new place, were going to go to another labor camp, or another something like this. And so he, after awhile, managed to escape.

Q: HOW?

A: I wouldn't even dare to tell you how, because again I listened to stories, but he did escape. People did escape from a lot of these camps, but they were very daring and the percentage was very small, but he made it, and he came back to the town, because that's all he knew, that's all the people he knew, he came back he was telling the story, at the beginning he had a tough time, people were about ready to kill him, how can he spread such rumors, you know, that everybody got killed. 'Are you trying to tell me all those thousands of people are dead?'

Q: THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE OFF TO LABOR CAMPS?

A: You just, that's right, you just refused to believe it. It's hard to tell but that you refused to believe it. They refused to believe it mostly because you know what's waiting, expecting you. Just like we refuse to believe that we'll ever die. And this is, as a child I knew I'm gonna die, but just couldn't imagine myself dead. I couldn't be dead. The same time, when the bombardments took place, when I was in the

camp, and the Russians came in with airplanes, bombarding, we were praying for being bombed instead of killed by the Germans. I'm not sure whether the wish was sincere or not, but it was the thought that was going on. So the Selection was a

Q: WELL WHERE DID YOUR BROTHER GO?

A: My brother was taken to a camp, the same camp where I was later on, too.

Q: HOW FAR AWAY WAS THIS?

A: We could walk there, it might have been two miles, two and a half miles, we walked every day to the ghetto and to the camp, to the ghetto, until they cut off the ghetto completely, we stayed in the camp in barracks. See that camp didn't have sufficient places for to house people, so it took awhile to build up barracks. And then they closed the ... ghetto, and everybody went to the camp.

Q: YOUR BROTHER WENT OFF TO THE CAMP, AND THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY SURVIVED IN THE BAKERY. AND HOW DID THE GERMANS LET YOU BE IN THE BAKERY?

A: That was the question that my brother-in-law questioned. He is about 12 years older than I am. And he was sitting there and he said, why would they leave all the bakers here? How long is that going to last? And he was afraid sooner or later they'd take the bakers after we baked enough bread for every, you know, keep the things rolling. They'll take us out. And I told you there were groups of people, Jewish people that walked through the houses to clear out, sort out

these things and Germans were selling it. When they were doing that work in our yard, one of the lead men of the Jewish group people, cause they were always SS people, saw my brother-in-law in the bakery, and he came down and he asked him, 'is there any way we could get to the small ghetto? I have gold, I'll give whatever is necessary.' That guy talked to the SS man, he said, 'he has gold. Would you take him?'

Q: TAKE HIM TO WHERE?

A: To the ghetto, the whole family.

Q: YOUR FAMILY? TO THE GHETTO?

A: To the little ghetto, that's the survival area. See the big ghetto was shrunk, the little ghetto, the people that survived went to the little ghetto. So he talked to the SS man, they negotiated, he says, 'Okay, I'll take him along, you give me the gold and we'll take out this group to the ghetto.' The way they did it, we pretended to be workers, you know cleaning up the houses, and they had a truck, and they put some stuff on the truck, and they put us on the truck, they took us to the ghetto, and how cheap life was, they could have killed my brother-in-law after they took the gold, there was no guarantee. But they didn't. The reason I figured they didn't, because they were looking for other such deals. You know, the Jewish person that made the deal with him wouldn't have made any more deals if he knew that they would shoot him. So, they simply stood by their word, because they needed more deals, and my brother-in-law had buried either 7 or 9, there was a controversy, of 20 gold dollar pieces. They dug it up

and they gave it to the SS man, and he took him also to the ghetto, so we survived. The following day, or second day, I don't recall, it couldn't have been more than 3 days, the news came out that they took all the bakers, shot them on the spot they didn't even bother to take them to Treblinka.

Q: THEY DIDN'T NEED THEM ANYMORE, HUH?

A: No. So you're talking of luck, you're talking of, a lot of people can brag how I did it all myself, I can see everything that happened to me was luck. Nothing else. How close can you get? Obviously you had to be thinking of ways to be passive, and my brother-in-law wasn't one of those guys, a passive individual. But that's how we survived. So we went to the little ghetto, from the little ghetto about half a year later.

Q: WHAT WERE THE PEOPLE, THESE WERE WORKERS, THE PEOPLE IN THE LITTLE GHETTO?

A: Everyone had to do something.

Q: SO THESE WERE THE YOUNG MEN, I GUESS

A: The young men and a few older people that snuck in by one just like we did, and young woman, yes.

Q: BUT NO OLD PEOPLE OR KIDS.

A: No. But they were some kids, I was a kid, considered a kid, you know scrawny little 15 year-old. I wasn't too, I was always thin, and there were also some older people, older we don't mean 70, we mean 45, 40, you know. So there were some people, but 90% were young people. And a few would sneak in. And then, in that little ghetto, a lot of young people went to

the partisans, in the woods, and to fight the Germans. They just snuck out and () the Germans, they wanted to fight the Germans. Those were usually guys, 18, 19, 20, 21, not older people. And one particular day a few of them came back to the ghetto to replenish money or something, the little ghetto, they snuck in. That was also guarded, but you know, you can get in anyplace. The Germans must have been notified about it. Somebody squealed. Cause they surrounded the little ghetto, they took everybody out on the square, in the little ghetto. Those 2 people, or 3 people, whatever they were, I saw only 2 later, pulled guns to shoot the Germans in the middle of the square, and they gathered them up, the guns never went off and they were shot. One of them was shot next to my feet, and the first time in my life I saw a quivering body, dying. A young man. And they loaded the pistol until, if you have never seen it, it is nothing too pleasant, at the time I was very impressionable, I remember it for the rest of my life.

And after that they pulled out the best-looking 25 men, and they executed them on the spot in view of the few thousand people, I don't know maybe a thousand, but there was a whole square full of people. Among them was my brother-in-law, the one that survived, the one that went because he was well-built and he also had a good chance of going to, that's the father of the baby was shot. This was the 3rd or 4th of January, 1943.

Then they took out a few, 150 or 200 people, I don't

remember, and they took us to send out to Treblinka. Was as a punishment. My father, I, my mother, were picked to go. So we were sent out to go to, from (Transferhadateradams con radams) they would get together a train and send to Treblinka. My sisters, my brother-in-law, the one that remained, the one that raised the gold and so forth, started hitting every place they could to get some help to get us out, to save us. And somehow they succeeded, cause they took out like 20, 25 people from that people to bring them back to the ghetto. Like this guy was making very good boots for the soldiers, you know there were such, why, what they explained about my father, mother, I don't know, but I wasn't on the list. But when they called my father and mother I just said I'm also Libiki. I don't know why, but they let me go through, and I was saved. And that was all it takes between life and death. So again I was saved from there, went back to the small ghetto.

Q: YOU NEVER FOUND OUT WHAT IT WAS?

A: All I know, that I wasn't on the list and my parents were called out, and I just went with them. They said 'who are you?' cause they counted that, I said 'I'm a Libiki'. You know the guy could have been confused a little bit, but I wasn't on the list I know. Because I was a kid, they couldn't even come up with a silly excuse why they want me out, but I got out. And then when I came back to the little ghetto I started going to the camp where my brother, where he was. And I would go in the morning, come back in the evening, to the ghetto.

Q: YOU WERE GOING WHERE? AND FOR WHAT?

A: To work there, in the camp.

Q: OH, THEY SENT YOU THERE.

A: Yeah, but they didn't have buildings yet. So that took another half a year before they closed the ghetto and took all the people back to the camp. Which was Hassag.

Q: SO FOR THE YEAR YOU LIVED IN THE SMALL GHETTO.

A: No, I lived there from about beginning of October, because we were as bakers for about 2 weeks or so, and in June actually we went back to the camp.

Q: AND YOU WERE WORKING IN THE CAMP. WHAT WERE YOUR PARENTS DOING DURING THAT TIME? WHERE WERE YOU LIVING?

A: They, everyone had to be employed for something. For instance, when I was in the ghetto, between time they took me back to the small ghetto and the time when they executed my brother-in-law, was a period from October to first part of January. I did all sorts of jobs, whatever I was assigned to do by the Jewish administration. I was emptying latrines, collecting garbage, I remember, anything they told me to do I did.

Q: OKAY, AND WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS DO?

A: Same thing. They had to be assigned to something, and do something, either they worked in the kitchen, or -- whatever job. The idea was the Germans insisted absolutely everybody has to have a job. Maybe some jobs were made to look like jobs, but there was no one without a job.

Q: WHERE DID YOU LIVE?

A: In the ghetto, we had a small 2-room apartment for the whole extended family at that time. My brother-in-law, 2 brother-in-laws, you lived with everybody. Then the brother-in-law's sister survived also, and she was with us, so we had 12, 15 people in very small, the 2 rooms were smaller than this room. And then things went from bad to worse when we went to the camp. It was all you had there, it was like a drawer, you slid in a drawer.

Q: TELL ME ABOUT WHEN THEY SENT YOU TO THE CAMP, I MEAN WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY?

A: They simply announced that we are not going to be home. They took us to the camp and said 'you're staying here.' I remember very vividly, one of the vice-presidents, a German, said that you gonna live as long as you work, not work as long as you live, you're going to live as long as you work. It was sort of a catchy word, or whatever but you know you make fun of it after awhile, otherwise you may as well kill yourself. And he says, you're here, you're not going to go back to the ghetto as soon as we came in in the morning. You're going to live here as long as you work.

Q: AND THIS WAS YOUR WHOLE FAMILY?

A: The whole family was in the ghetto. It was a rare thing, because most people were one or two out of the family. And ours was one of the, there might have been two or three more families that survived intact, in that camp.

Q: AND HAD YOU LEFT YOUR FURNITURE?

A: Sure, you take whatever you can. In the big ghetto we

left the furniture but we took with us things that we can take. From the small ghetto, I came with nothing, cause I went to work!

Q: AND YOU HAD NOTHING. WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?

A: Same, the same thing.

Q: SO YOU HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

A: No. But you always kept valuables with you. You carried them around. Valuables means gold, a golden watch or something, and those are things that helped us to survive.

Q: WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS HAVE WITH THEM?

A: Well, my parents might have had pieces of gold, it was again either Russian gold piece or something. Because that's all, you had to cash things in that has a very real value, very real terms. Couldn't have Duetschmarks as wealth cause they don't mean anything. Had to be of real value, gold always had a value. As a matter of fact gold, is the only thing that's worth anything when everything collapses. And I had nothing, I never had anything and I never took anything, so I came, whatever I had on me, that's all I was, lucky it was winter so I had more clothing on me. It was January the 4th or the 5th. But then I left some of it here and then when they finally close it was around June. Whatever I had on me, that's all I had. The parents had some gold with them, always well hidden

Q: WHERE?

A: You'd be surprised. Basically they had a belt, underneath the clothing. This is where you hid. And they didn't have

searches continuously, sometimes they did. I remember that going home was boring, it was you know about three and a half to four miles, as I remember, and the first time I learned the Stars Stripes Forever by Souza, we were whistling, what do you do? You walk. So the young people would whistle, and if you saw Bridge on the River Kwai? That's not unnatural, that's what you do, I mean life has to go on. Or you try to make the best of it. So that's why we learned the Stars and Stripes Forever.

How did it help us to survive in the ghetto? Because we were a family. If one could do something, one did it., the other one could do, the other one did it. I came in, I was lucky enough to become a mechanic. At the camp. And my brother and I, he was a mechanic naturally, because he learned the profession, I didn't, but some friend of his noticed me, took me in with him, said you're better off to be here rather than working outside, on some other job. And I was working as a mechanic. My brother was the mechanic already from before the war, so for instance he would steal brass tubing, from the German supply, and make carbide lamps, I'll explain to you, this is a stone that you put in water, and when it hits water it gives out air that is like methane, and you heat it, this used to be a lamp. So he was making those lamps, selling to the Poles that were coming in, going home everyday to the same work camp. They were employees there. They would buy it for very little money, bring bread for it, so for this he could trade something, so he had money at that point. At times we

sold a piece of gold and then we had again, supplemental food besides what the Germans gave.

Q: IN THE CAMP? WHO DID YOU SELL IT TO?

A: In the camp. The Poles, I keep using the wrong word, the Christians -- see when I said, keep in mind whenever I say Poles it isn't Jewish. Here in America you're American whether you're Jewish, something else. Over there I don't consider myself a Pole. Jews never could consider themselves Poles.

Q: SO, YOU COULD SELL IT TO THE CHRISTIANS? YOU COULD SELL THE GOLD?

A: Yes, at reduced prices, but for the gold they'll bring in bread or whatever, you know, and that was our supplement to survive. So we could get away without starving for quite a while. My brother was making those carbide lamps, that helped. We even opened up a restaurant, which is a little very fancy word for saying that we could buy potatoes, peel them, put something in, whatever, to make a soup, I would cook it on the stove where there was a blacksmith, and I would sneak in with a packet of that potato and water and onion, whatever we could get, and then we would sell this to other people that also had some money, so they had supplemental hot soup... The thing you have to picture, it was all clandestine, but you did it.

Q: WHAT KIND OF QUARTERS DID YOU LIVE IN AT THE CAMP?

A: We had barracks, and the barracks had three levels, three rows. And you put in as many people as you could squeeze in

in a row. It wasn't individual beds, it was three levels, you went in from the end, it was like drawers, except they didn't close. And you slept, and your neighbor was in there.

Q: HOW MANY WERE IN THERE?

A: In our barrack this was the barrack of the mechanics, it was a privileged barrack with 120 people. Small barrack. The others had more like five or six hundred people in them. There was a total of about seven to eight thousand Jewish people in this camp.

Q: WAS IT GUARDED BY BARBED WIRE?

A: Barbed wire.

Q: WERE YOU ALLOWED TO GO OUT?

A: Yeah, but you could have relatively free access in and out from the barracks to the plant, relatively, there were always soldiers standing around, but they didn't check you, could mill in and out. Except during the working hours they probably checked you, where are you going when you're supposed to be working, can't go back in unless you had some excuse, you couldn't get in to the barracks. Unless you were like I was for awhile, an orderly in the barrack, just to keep clean, sweep up, and I had free access in and out. Because of that, we tried to take advantage to see what we can do to survive again. And that's how I could come in and take packets of cooked soup, and in the barracks people would come, they would buy it, so we replenished some money. And you literally did, if you had some ingenuity to do something, you did it. My mother and my sisters worked in a part where they were making

bullets, anti-aircraft bullets. Those bullets had to be coated with a paint and then they were baked, going through an oven. Well they opened up a panel in that oven that was a baking oven, so they would bake their things. Goods, if you could buy flour, and you could get an egg, and you bake something and you sell it, a cookie or something, whatever you made. Cause no one saw a cookie, so whatever you made was valued for your next day of living. I once was taking those cookies to the barracks from the factory area to the barracks, and one of the guards stopped me, it was (Ukranian), and he asked me what I have there, and I was always prepared with a sort of a cockeyed explanation, to lie, because if I would tell we bake it, my mother would be implicated, and my sisters. So soon as he stopped me, I says, 'here is the man, what did you do, where is he?' Like somebody gave me, says 'he promised me a few cookies if I take it over from here to there, and I was willing to do it, I'm hungry.' And he beat me with a club, until he took me to the guard house, I don't know it was maybe 5 minutes where he kept hitting me with the club of the rifle. By the time I came to the guard I was insensitive to hitting on me, because you didn't feel it, for awhile you don't. And they got me in and started hitting me in the face, to tell him where I got those cookies, and I kept repeating the same story, there's no way I could have changed my story. And I remember this very vividly, that I wondered why they don't hit me from the other side to balance it, because I was bleeding and they kept hitting the same side.

And again, my sisters and my brother start to intervening, who knows the guards people? There was always somebody who knows somebody could intervene. And someone intervened on my behalf, and since they couldn't get anything out of me, they wouldn't have, killed me or not I wouldn't have talked, and they took me into a bathroom to wash myself up, I was bleeding all over, and washed up and couldn't stop bleeding, my nose and other places. I was released! Back to the camp. So there are a lot of such things.

I don't remember what for but my brother got 50 lashes once. He couldn't stand for 2, 3 days, I mean there were cuts. Have you ever seen on film where they have those -- he couldn't move, terrible. I don't know what for, could have overslept, you don't know, you don't remember. So those are, this was life. Life over there was not secure at all, any guard could have shot any prisoner, without having to make any explanation. One incident I remember, one guard was taking practice shooting in a men's room, the heads were sticking out you know, he just shot somebody sitting on the bathroom. It was a big joke. You could distance. He just lined up his rifle, he thought it's fun.

A little story: that guy that took me, his name was Yusek, Ukranian, we'll call him Joe for the sake of what happened. In 17th of January we were freed by the Russians. The first few days the Russians could do anything they want with the Germans, like the first few days killing and all of that. Then the Russians put a stop on it, the Russians

couldn't do anything to the Germans, they had to take them as prisoners. (THIS IS IN ?) 1945. January 17, 1945. But the prisoners from camp that they released, they could do anything they wanted. They caught that time, that Joe, that hit me at that time, and people knew about that beating I got from him, he took me with the club and hit me over the head and drag up to the guard house, that's about the cookies. And some people got hold of me and said they found Joe. And all I could think of, my, this is my chance to kill the guy. And I was already prepared. And the closer I went I said, 'how can I kill that guy? I cannot kill that guy.' But they expected me to, you know, everyone was egging me on to kill him, and I came in the place where he was standing, this was about 3-4 days after the liberation, he was, had a heavy beard, he looked like hell, was dirty, already beaten up by other people, and I approached him, the closer I came the worse I felt, and I felt very sick, and I told them, I pushed him out of the way. And for years, I felt that I am weak that I couldn't have killed him. I understood later on -- I was not a murderer, I couldn't murder a person, no matter what. But it took me years before I overcame the thought, that I am not weak, I'm just maybe stronger than somebody else. Not a murderer.

Q: WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE WATCHING YOU WHEN YOU JUST PUSHED HIM AWAY?

A: I don't remember, I ran away. I don't remember. I know I didn't feel good, here I have people watching me. I couldn't do it, I felt sick to my stomach, and I ran away, just gave

him a push and I ran away. That's all, everybody's not a murderer, that's all.

Q: THAT'S RIGHT. WHAT ABOUT THE GUY WHO WHIPPED YOUR BROTHER?

A: This was in a guardhouse, they simply took him to a guardhouse and he wouldn't even know who it - you stripped the person and then 2 guys line up and he wouldn't know. But this guy arrested me, this guy did directly something to me, he didn't give me a chance, you know I wanted to show him where the guy is and he started in with the club. And you know, keep hitting a guy like this, by the time I got to the guardhouse I didn't feel anything. Only thing I remember, when they started hitting me on the face in the guardhouse, I couldn't understand why they didn't do it on the other side. Not that it would help, but at that time I thought it would help if they hit me from the other side. Those are little things that you never forget.

Q: WAS THERE VERY MANY GUARDS WHO WERE KILLED AT THAT TIME?

A: I don't think so, because most of them ran away. The reason this camp survived, the reason as many people survived in this camp, as they did, is because the offensive started on the other side of Old Warsaw they call it, on the River Vistula, where they stopped the Russians. They started offensive on the 15th of January, and this was on a Monday, and by noon some tanks, and this was by design, the Russians did it they broke through with some tanks inside the territory where the Germans were still to create a some sort of scare

for the Germans that the Russians were already here. They came into our town, and this must have been a hundred or better miles inwards, but they broke through a street, tanks, they were killed, the Russians in the tanks were disabled and burned, but they created enough of an uproar for the Germans, they started packing and leaving. They were trying to get us to go on trains, they said, we'll kill everybody who doesn't go on the trains, we'll stay here and we'll explode, we'll shoot them and so forth, well they didn't have a chance to do anything. But among the people that they took out was my oldest brother. And he never returned. He was gone. Pushed from camp to camp, and eventually he died, walking between the camps. He was starving, and he couldn't take it anymore, he walked out and they shoot him. I talked to a man that was walking with him, after the war.

But the rest of the family decided we're not going to go anyplace. And the reason he went, because his department, that was the group of mechanics, they wanted to get out, so they forced them to go. I snuck out, whether I snuck out by consciously, my sister tells me that I went to get myself to another cabinet, where you had the cubbyholes where you could hide things, and I went to get a pair of socks, she says, but I never went back, cause she says, don't go back, they'll take you out. He left. He never came back. And the rest of the family survived, because the following evening around midnight, Tuesday evening, the night of the 16th and 17th, the Germans left already, the guardhouse, and a few young people got in and got the rifles, came back to the places where people were

congregating, you know hiding or worrying what's going to happen, () in Polish, say 'Jews, we are free. The Germans have left.' They start shooting the rifles up in the air. That was a, that's another moment which you remember always.

Q: BUT THIS WAS JUST A DAY AND A HALF AFTER YOUR BROTHER WAS?

A: That's right. That's right, he left at noon Monday, and Tuesday midnight, Tuesday they were ready, we were free. And we didn't know, (France) have a way of going back and forth, but we were lucky they didn't come back, the Germans. And the next thing I remember, all of us walking out from the camp. That was my exodus, I always associated this with an exodus. I mean like from Egypt. We were marching, I don't know how many people, not in any organized way abreast, walking through the gate. This is January, cold, cold Polish winter, I remember the snow squeaking under our feet, but I don't think I knew what coldness was, we were just so elated to leave that nothing mattered.

From there, if I can...

Q: NOW WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE CAMP. WHEN DID YOU GO INTO THE CAMP?

A: I started working there the first part of January the 3rd or the 4th or the 5th, something like this, of 1943. I was locked up in the camp in the summer, the best of my recollection June of '43. And that means locked up, not going back anymore to the small ghetto.

Q: JUNE OF '43. AND THEN YOU WERE FREED

A: The 17th of January, 1945. Actually about the 16th or the 17th, it was about midnight. Right at the midnight we walked out of the camp.

Q: SO IT'S ABOUT 18 MONTHS.

A: Locked up, yes. But I was working in this camp for all practical purposes like 2 years.

Q: I JUST, I FEEL SO, I FEEL IT'S SO IRONIC THAT YOU LOST YOUR BROTHER JUST A DAY AND A HALF BEFORE EVERYONE WAS FREE. AND ALSO, I'M WONDERING, YOUR SISTER, WHOSE HUSBAND WAS SHOT, WHAT, TELL ME HOW PEOPLE REACTED TO THOSE THINGS AT THAT TIME? I KNOW THAT YOUR FEELINGS MUST DEADEN.

A: Feelings do deaden, you don't have the same reaction. I've often thought about it, you know that we live in a period when something strange happens to us, strange we mean catastrophic of any sort, we fall apart. I think people 200 years ago, when the loss of a child was an everyday sort of situation, because you had 10 children, because you lost 5 of them before they grew up. People were more hardened, and I think we were hardened also in the camp. You took a different view, you cried, you were sad, you were upset, everything ended for you, but you go on. I believe that today, because we expect everything to fall in a certain pattern, everything is normal, and when something big happens to us unpleasant, we tend to fall apart.

I remember a poem in Poland as a child, happened to be a Jewish poet, but he wrote in Polish, he was assimilated, I'll try to translate this, "if you ever were once made out of steel, you never break again." What he meant, you know, if you were

hardened, you don't break that easy. But I'm not sure this is necessary to the farther you go away from those bad happenings, you never get used to certain sort of problems, a situation where you say, 'well, it's okay.' Only thing is, I probably try to rationalize that randomness exists in life, we have to accept things as they are. But you never accept when it happens to you. It's easier to explain to somebody else than accept yourself. The death of my sister hit me very hard, when she died of cancer.

Q: THAT WAS JUST RECENTLY

A: That was a year and a half ago. We were very close

Q: THIS IS YOUR OLDEST SISTER (Yes) ... AND YOU HAD SURVIVED

A: She was really almost like a mother to the family, to the whole family, she always was. A very unusual person.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER? WHY WAS YOUR SISTER THE MOTHER?

A: She was more of a person, my mother was more in a feminine way, and I don't mean to discriminate but the feminine way as we understand, you know more taking care of kitchens, things like this. This sister was an entrepreneur also, ever since she was 7 years old she helped my father in the business, she always continued and she was more of the person to take charge.

Q: YOUR SISTER WAS LIKE YOUR GRANDMOTHER THEN, YOUR MOTHER'S MOTHER.

A: Yeah, that's right. Exactly. And just like my son would be more like my grandfather, one of my sons.

Q: REALLY? KIND OF LAID BACK

A: Laid back, awfully dear person, an awfully good person, he'll literally give away the shirt off his back and think nothing of

it. But he's not into () doesn't pretend to be. Material things don't mean that much to him. At the same time, he is willing to give anything away if somebody needs it. The result, to his own detriment at times.

Q: SO HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF, YOU THINK?

A: He knows how to take care of himself, he just, it's the nature of the individual, I don't want to criticize it because you read about people like this in books of heroes, but ... he's to a great extent like my grandfather. He also used to be the same way; anything anybody wanted from him, he could get.

Q: SAME NAME ?

A: No.

Q: SO YOUR SISTER WAS THE ENTREPRENEUR OF THE FAMILY?

A: She also was the Godmother of the whole family, the extended family.

Q: I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU, IN THE CAMP, WHO WAS THE STRONGEST PERSON OF THE FAMILY? WOULD IT HAVE BEEN YOUR SISTER?

A: Would have been my sister. One incident: Every so often they would take a number of people, take them out either shoot them or take them some other place, and there was an incident where they pushed some people, a bunch of women into a special room, cause they were going to take them out, then she all of a sudden felt, this was happening to her, and there was a guard at the door and she knocked him over, hit him knocked him over, she got bruised, from hitting, and the family, my part of, my mother, my sister, a few others of the family broke through and they run away, and they saved themselves. She did a lot of these.

Q: WHEN WAS THIS?

A: In the camp.

Q: IN THE CAMP? SHE KNOCKED THE GUARD DOWN? AND GOT AWAY WITH IT?

A: She knocked the guard down, and there was a lot of commotion there, and you wouldn't have known who did it, but she felt something happening, and they did, they took out some people, and they had them executed. So she did a lot of those things. Her husband was the one that got the gold, to get us out. So she was always looking out for the family

Q: AND SHE SURVIVED, DID HER HUSBAND?

A: He's the one that survived, that's the one that was in the bakery with us. The one that did get killed went through the Selection process and survived...

Q: SO TELL ME ABOUT THE ROLES IN, YOUR SISTER WAS THE KIND OF MATRIARCH

A: She was a matriarch.

Q: SHE WAS THE STRONG ONE, AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER, HOW DID HE SURVIVE IN THE CAMP?

A: My father you remember as I told you in 1940 took ill, with the seizures. He never was the same person he was before the war. He was entrepreneurial, very strong willed individual. While he still might have been strong-willed, he wasn't well anymore. He survived the war, and after the war he was still doing a lot of things, cause we got back a bakery after the war from some other debts, and he was still an entrepreneur, until we came to Germany in 1946, '47 he started declining. '48 he hardly

could see, from the pressure of the tumor and some cells in the eyes got (). And so he became aged at the age of 48, 49.

Q: BUT IN THE CAMPS, WAS HE A STRONG PERSON IN THE CAMPS?

A: No, no, it wasn't his environment, the amount of work that he had to put in, he was never a well person, he was always, he had some bronchitic condition, so we always had to look out that he doesn't get abused. Even then he was once taken out to be shot and we got him out again, my older sister did it.

Q: HOW?

A: You pull so many strings, again, I was a child, and I was more passive with a lot of things. My sister she went to this foreman and she promised this and she ran around with that and they finally pulled him out, from the group that got killed the following day. A mother of mine, what they did, they pulled out some of the older people, they took another mini-selection, they pulled out all the old people. My father looked old. My mother was older, but she didn't look old. My father, after he got ill, just started aging. And he was pulled out, the mother of my best friend was also pulled out, she was shot, my father was taken out. And we survived the war, except for my brother.

Q: HOW DID, TELL ME ABOUT THE FEELINGS MORE. THIS IS DIFFICULT BUT I'M INTERESTED IN KNOWING, AFTER FIRST OF ALL YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW, AFTER HE WAS SHOT

A: It was a big tragedy, we all were very broken without any question. I started explaining that you know how feelings dull, doesn't mean that we were dull, but if feeling dulls more, you're not touched, but you still have the same traumatic experience,

you still feel depressed, and it was difficult, but the pressure of survival starts taking precedent much quicker. You know, you're familiar, are you in Psychology or familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs? That's probably as good a place to start as any. I, in my own mind I had a lower level to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Before the food is instant, immediate, imminent life danger is below that. You're not hungry, you're not cold, when there is an imminent danger of survival, other things will get blotted out. So the food is one level higher. But I know for normal life in American industry the deal was that things you're dealing with are like shelter and all the other things of hierarchy of needs. So the best I can describe to you what I'm saying, what's happening when something terrible happens to you is that you deal with it, it is no less painful, but it's just like one pain blocks out another. And the need for continuous alertness, to watch out for your life, for continuous vigilance of how you survive the next day erases some of the pain. And that's basically how life is. You know it's much easier to commit suicide when everything goes well -- yes it is. We didn't have many suicides in concentration camp, this was the amazing and alarming thing, because survival doesn't let you go and commit suicide. When everything goes well and you have nothing to look forwards to, then you commit suicide. We had a lot to look forward to survival! That takes such a precedent. That's the mystery of life, that's the mystery of the human being more than any other animal, but even an animal, they're saying that some animals will bite off their own foot if they're trapped in a

trap, to survive. That's what life is. Can we just hope that most of us are built in a way that we wouldn't sacrifice somebody's foot for our survival. And that's maybe what civilization is supposed to bring to us, it's questionable, but that's what we hope for. So the feelings aren't completely different. To my own way of thinking, I've several things which call them hangups, call them lessons, whatever you want to, I will not throw out food. And even so it's not a question of us having food right now, financially or materially. We'll get guests and we try to prepare just enough to eat, and I'll very often explain, like for instance, we buy bagels and we freeze them, we take out bagels and we warm them up. I'll usually ask people, how many will you eat? Sounds a little funny to people who've never experienced it, and I'll take out exactly so we don't throw anything out. That's one hangup.

The other one is not as much a hangup, but every so often when things go bad I say, "I've had worse, and I survived it, and I'm not going to worry." I don't mean loss of life, I'm talking things that happen to you, whether I lost this, or didn't make this

Q: THAT MUST BRING YOU BACK TO SOME KIND OF PERSPECTIVE

A: That's exactly what it is. The perspective is a lot different for me than it is for people who have never experienced this. Appreciation of things, I think I do appreciate more things than normal people do. I don't take things for granted. Those are the different ways by which life has taught me. I think, and this can go both ways, I think I understand the

Holocaust has made animals of people, and built others into closer to angelic stage. I did not become an animal

TAPE TWO

A: So I really felt that I want to retire early, not because the job was terrible, because the job was really good. And the later you retire, the tougher time of retirement, I did not have a tough time of retirement. And I had a good pension with the company, so I had an easy way to retire. I always wanted to move to the west, where my family is, I missed my family all those years, so at 58 I called it quits. I still continued for a year and a half, I couldn't get out, another year and a half, but eventually I did. And I got involved in a lot of local things, everything from Holocaust, which I'm not that deeply involved now, Jewish Federation, Jewish Family Children's services. It's a Jewish Federation in the city here for allocations, temple. I did not go into secular different organizations, where I used to be in Ohio, be involved in mental health quite deeply, but it's different if you're in a community and other people know you, you get involved more, in other than Jewish things. I'm here mostly involved in Jewish things.

Q: I'LL GET TO THAT. I WANT TO GET BACK TO WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT IN THE CAMP, AND THE FEELINGS THERE, WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE. WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER? HOW, WHAT KIND OF PRESENCE OR FORCE WAS SHE IN THE FAMILY?

A: She was a uniting force, but not a leadership force.

Q: SHE'S THE ONE WHO TOOK CARE OF THINGS, I GUESS, PHYSICAL THINGS?

A: That's right, but she was not the leadership at all. She, a mother is the same thing, a mother suffers whatever little fingernail that breaks on a child's finger, she suffers from it. My brother was taken away, that's not concentration camp, but when he was taken away in the concentration camp, when he was beaten up, how would any mother feel about her son? At that time, he was 19, 20 years old. She nursed his bruises, so forth; there are a lot of, I'm sure she looked at me and she didn't like what she saw, and she suffered with it. I was at that time 16 years old. I remember vividly I had rubber boots I got hold of some rubber boots, this was the best I could get, and I stepped on a nail that was in a board or something, sticking up and I got it very deep in my foot. Well obviously I had a mother, I had to at least go and complain to her, and later I thought, what was this, what good was this, what can she do? But you know the first impulse you go to your mother, which I did.

Q: WERE YOU ABLE TO GET A SHOT FOR THAT, OR YOU JUST WERE LUCKY AND SURVIVED?

A: No, the tetanus shot is only a prevention. Everybody doesn't need a tetanus shot whenever you scratch yourself. But here everything is all prevention, we are insured and over-insured, and doubly insured and we think this will make everything straight, and it doesn't always. But over there, you didn't worry about it. I was lucky in one respect there was a lot of typhoid in the camp, about 90% of the people took ill, some died but most of them survived. I was lucky never to get the typhoid even. I looked back and I said I was lucky with so many things

in my life, who but myself should do something for others as we go on in life. I was always involved in doing things.

Q: WHAT ABOUT YOUR BROTHER? WHAT KIND OF FORCE WAS HE IN THE FAMILY?

A: I think my brother was sort of the rebellious individual, not rebellious up, rebellious resenting, resisting the Germans. He was the prime of his life, 18 years, 19 years, when a young man wants to do something, he wants to show himself. He was restrained by my family, not to be too daring.

Q: NOT TO JOIN THE RESISTANCE?

A: Not to join the resistance, not to do things that he would have wanted to do, whether it was peer pressure or his own desire, it's difficult for me to identify, I just know that he was always restrained and he suffered from it. And the biggest restraint was my sister, my mother. My father also, but more sister and mother. And I think he resented the idea that he couldn't do what his friends were doing. And one of his friends got killed in the partisans, one of his closest friends. So I think he suffered from seeing me suffer, but he resented the idea I guess to suffer in silence. You know how you feel, you would like to get out screaming, tearing, fighting, and he couldn't. This was his biggest problem as I can recall right now. Now this is 45 plus years, but this is what I remember about him.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT WAS YOUR PRESENCE LIKE?

A: I was really sliding along with things. I must have felt somewhat secure that the family was always around, cause they saved me here, they saved me there. I helped myself, in other

words I didn't depend on them helping me. If I wasn't entrepreneurial, I was at least somebody that, I always was sharp what's going on and I could find my way. But I was passive in a way that I always depend the family's there with me. The big decisions I didn't have to make. I might have to make the decision there's a long line, and I'm hungry, how do I get closer to the line? Cause the family wouldn't help me survive in the line. So the immediate things I took care of myself. The long range I sort of depended on being swept along, and I didn't resent it. It was a good feeling to me.

Q: IT'S WONDERFUL THAT YOU HAD YOUR FAMILY THERE, THAT WAS SO RARE.

A: This is very rare, as I said I remember very few families. There might be 4 families, and my friend that I told you also had the whole family with him, the mother was taken out in 1943 to be shot, and she was shot at the cemetery. So that family went by the wayside, as a whole family. Our family was til the last day and a half, a whole family. And then, there were others like cousins that sort of stayed with us also, because we were the family, we were the center and they were always with us. So I'm sure there were different feelings different people had. I remember as I said my feeling, I tried to make the best of the day, not worry about more. That's not the same thing I'm doing right now, because right now I'm probably planning until after I die and then a few hundred years more, you know? I'm exaggerating, but I'm saying I am continuously planning, I've always done it. But that's when I became independent. When I

married I felt it was up to me and I don't rely on the family. Even so I did rely on the family in case of emergency there is a family. For instance when my kids were born, I didn't worry much what would happen because I knew my sister would take care of them. So I did rely on the family, we were close-knit as a family. But then, I'm also an individual that likes to be his own person. Whether one is a reflection of the other is difficult to isolate, but I know that I do plan constantly ahead. It was no big surprise I'm going to retire early, I planned it for many years. And again, for the same reason, not to retire early because afraid of work, but to be able to change so I don't have a problem retiring. A lot of people I see, a lot of people have a tremendous problem when they have to retire. Can't find themselves, they are bored -- I'm anything but bored, I have more things to do. But you have to enjoy these things. Some of them will be bored and they won't do anything to help themselves. It's difficult.

Q: WELL CERTAINLY AS A SURVIVOR YOU LEARNED SKILLS HOW TO BE ALL RIGHT. AND I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE DAY THAT YOU WERE FREED. TELL ME, DESCRIBE TO ME THAT DAY.

A: Well the night, as I told you we left at night the camp, marching, thousands of people marching through the gate that we never could go through

Q: AND THE GUARDS HAD ALL GONE?

A: No, there was no German, no Ukrainians. We were guarded by Ukrainians and we went out what they called 'the colony.' The colony annexed to the camp and the Germans, the management, lived

there. So there were many many houses well equipped with food and everything, and the first thing we did is go to one of those houses, this was past midnight

Q: TO GET SOME FOOD

A: To get anything. Clothing, food, bedding, whatever. And all I remember, I kept eating stuff, and I couldn't open a can of sardines that I found. First of all we cleaned up whatever was left over on the plates. Some of them left the dinner in the middle of the dinner and ran away.

Q: WAIT, THIS WAS THE DAY BEFORE?

A: No. The day before they ran away but at night after we left they were still

Q: I KNOW, BUT THEY HAD RUN AWAY JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE?

A: A few hours before, right. At the dinner time, because they said the Russians were at the outskirts, so they ran. And at one place that we went in there was still the table set up and parts of the food was on the plates, I remember I found a can of sardines, couldn't open, but with a knife I jammed it, I still remember with my fingers I pulled out whatever I could to eat. Then I found sugar, stuffed myself with sugar. And that I didn't get sick is just a miracle, I just ate, ate, ate, ate. Then we started packing up things because we knew we were not going to stay there, would have to leave. So we stayed there and rested, talked and were watchful and hoping the Germans don't come back. If they come back right now, good bye they would just kill us. There was no reason to worry about it they would kill everybody. And then by the time first light, which was about 8 o'clock in

the morning, we packed up for everyone, took a sheet, bedsheet and put in whatever we could put in and carry on our backs and went to town.

Q: WHAT DID YOU PUT IN?

A: Bedding, clothing, everything--we had nothing, so whatever fit, hit your fancy, and some of them were probably stupid things, we put them in, you just grabbed because there were many people grabbing different things, so whatever you grabbed is yours. And we walked out to town. Where do you go? You don't have a place to go. Our place where we lived is occupied by Poles.

Q: IN THE SMALL GHETTO

A: No no, big ghetto. The small ghetto was a small place, in the big ghetto we had a spacious apartment. We knew that we cannot go back. The person that lives there, you cannot chase him out, you're not going to start another war. But then we thought that there were enough Germans living in town, and just went from place to place finding out where Germans are, and then we found the Germans left this apartment, so we went in. That's the way we lived.

Q: IN WHICH TOWN?

A: In (Chostohorva). (IN YOUR OLD TOWN?) In, not the shettl, not the small town.. and when we came there, we slept that night in our clothing, because one ear watching out if they are coming back and maybe we have to run with the Russians. We knew if they come back we'll go with the Russians, regardless what they do, we're not going to stay there. And the night went by and the

Germans didn't come back, so one good day. And we watched the next day, and meantime we went out of town to see what we could get. It wasn't a question of buying, no money was available, it's just go, what can you open up? And we went to different stores, and different stores were the German stores, and we raided them and took whatever we could. That was the beginning. My father, on the 3rd or 4th day when we knew that the Russians are here to stay and the Germans are out, went to some of the bakers that owed us money from before the war and said, I know you cannot pay me back right now, my money, remember? Give me bread. So we all of a sudden had breads from this baker and this baker, and all of a sudden what we had is a commodity -- bread! So this was the beginning of my father could trade that for something else. And somebody had meat and somebody had butter and so focus on life started to come back to, not normal, but some different way of living than concentration camp waiting for the soup in the morning, coffee or whatever, coffee wasn't coffee, coffee was, you know what 'ersatz' is? Substitute, that's the German word for substitute. Everything was ersatz, everything was a substitute. Coffee was made out of grain, burned grain, that was coffee. Tasted like ink, that was the best you had. When they served the soup in the evening it was some little bit of sunflower thrown into water, not even salt, but it was better than nothing. But here we started getting back, and I remember, even so, we never ate a rabbit in our life, some one of us, my brother-in-law or somebody got hold of a rabbit. And we cooked it, and it was sweet! First time we ate

meat after a long long while. Life started coming back, started living a life where you depend on yourself and try to do for yourself. And then problems started for Jews in Poland again, because the Poles did kill the Jewish people.

Q: AFTER THE WAR?

A: Yeah, that's why I was starting to say, the escape from Zabodor, was it Zabodor? it was a film, did you ever see that? (NO) Well this is a, like a Treblinka, was a Zabodor. And there was an escape, there was a massive escape. A lot of people got killed, but some people survived. One of the survivors eventually got killed by a Pole that came to the door and shot him straight in the head. So there was a lot of that.

Q: IS THAT THE ONE WHERE THEY WALKED OUT?

A: No, they didn't walk out, they escaped. They killed a few Germans and they took their rifles and started (YEAH) that was the escape from Zabodor. One of those escapees was killed later, by a, after the, it wasn't one, there were hundreds of such things, incidents, and we knew we cannot stay in Poland.

Q: SO DID YOU SEE THIS? WAS IT YOUR EXPERIENCE THAT YOU SAW THIS? WHY WERE YOU SO AFRAID?

A: Because we knew that the Poles hated us. My brother-in-law, present brother-in-law went to Russia, like some of those people did go to Russia, he is 4 years older than I am. He became a Polish soldier under the Russians, they had a Polish army that was fighting the Germans. And he went to Berlin and he was part of the taking Berlin and so on. Then he returned to his town,

and a guy that had a horse and a buggy, this is like a taxi, took him, he wanted to go to place where his house was, to see it, and he's an officer in the Polish army, the guy looks at him says don't I know you, Oh, you're Gortman, aren't you? The Germans didn't kill you did they? I mean that's the kind of attitude! Now how come they didn't kill you? It's hard to imagine, we came back to Poland, there was, it wasn't rejoicing by the Poles, it was, 'Gee whiz, they didn't kill them all after all!' So there were a lot of very unpleasant things in Poland, so we knew we were going to have to leave. And eventually my father bought passports for us, which made us German Jews, and we went back to Germany.

Q: HOW LONG WERE YOU OUT OF THE CAMP BEFORE YOU WENT BACK TO GERMANY?

A: I was out, we went out January 17th, we left Poland the end of April, more or less. Because we first went to (Breslaw) a German town, which is under the Poles. There we waited until so called German people would leave for West Germany... To make a point about the Poles, we arrived in the English zone in West Germany with a transfer of train. Polish soldiers from the national army, national army was the right wing group that was in England, fighting the Polish military unit was under the English, was taking care of that camp, bringing in the German people. And somebody got a whiff of it that there are Polish people, not German people, and they arrested us, those lousy Poles! And kept us 24 hours without food, without any information, until word got to the (chief) of our English zone and he made a protest to the

military, and they immediately released us. They were going to send us back to Poland!

Q: WHAT WAS THE LOGIC BEHIND THIS?

A: We cheated! There's no logic. They were Jews, lousy Jews, they are escaping from Poland. So those are the conditions under which we lived. I'm not trying to make excuses for Germans, but the base of Poles were not the best base either.

Q: WELL, YOU'RE BEING VERY KIND HERE. I MEAN YOU MUST HATE POLES.

A: I'm not sure I hate them, I don't want to have much to do with them. The closest I have something to do with a Pole right now is my nephew by marriage, he's the Catholic one. I have a very good relationship with him.

Q: THIS IS THE WOMAN WHO WAS

A: Yeah, she was brought up Catholic, there's nothing to do, no comment to make, that's what she is, she's Catholic.

Q: WELL SHE'S JEWISH.

A: She's Jewish by birth. But no, as far as treatment and relationship, it's just like any member of the family. We cannot be right, or we won't be right (), but she's quite often taken part in Passover celebrations and different things. So it's our probably reluctance to start getting into Christianity.

Q: SO YOU WENT TO GERMANY? THERE WAS NO OTHER PLACE TO GO, BESIDES GERMANY:

A: From Poland? No. You had to go to West Germany cause it was the easiest place to go. From West Germany there were embassies,

you could go to Australia, that was before the Jewish state was founded in 1948, after '48 people went to Israel. But before then, going to Israel was again, smuggling on ship, you've seen Exodus I assume, the film? So this was the kind of thing that was going on, you could go and someplace you wound up in Cypress. I have friends that wound up on Cypress, because they wouldn't let them in. So here again from camp to camp. But people went to Australia, Canada, United States.

Q: SO YOU WENT TO WEST GERMANY. WHERE DID YOU GO? WAS THERE A CAMP THERE?

A: We, once we came in, Jewish agencies would take over and help you. They placed us in a hotel, it was called (Balthaspel) which is a resort place. Hotels were not occupied at that time, still, so they got a bunch of hotel rooms and put us in, and provided us some food, with the idea that we were going to go down to Munich, which was the American zone. There were better situations existing in the American zone as far as getting out, to the United States from Germany. And then a few weeks later we went down to Munich, and in Munich they placed us in D.P. camps, displaced peoples' camps. And a few months later, I met my wife there, in a few weeks, present wife. She was just a young girl. And I started training myself as an auto mechanic, through (ORT), you're familiar with (ORT)? That's the Jewish agency that throughout the world continues to help people get into the professions and teaching and so forth. And they were starting setting up schools, different schools for young people, so they get prepared for you when they leave. Start to become a

mechanic, and remember at that time, that girlfriend, my present wife, kept telling me that I should do better things, that I could, you know, study and so forth. I said 'Look I never finished high school.' This goes on for days and days, discussion, finally she talked me into going to Munich, and trying to get into a school, high school or no high school. So they send me for a test. Don't ask me how I passed the test, because it wasn't much of a test, and I get a certificate that I'm qualified to go to college. And I went to college and became an engineer. With great difficulty, but I did it.

Q: WELL WHERE DID YOU GO TO COLLEGE?

A: In Munich. I was in a camp outside Munich, 80 miles outside Munich, it's called (Baldreichma) and now there's other place, and she, my wife, girlfriend at that time, talked me into going.

Q: SO YOU WERE IN THIS CAMP FOR FOUR YEARS?

A: No, I was not. I was a few months in that camp. When I came to Munich, I stayed in Munich, my folks were in that camp, this was 1946, so in September or October of 1946 I was already in school. And then I finished in 1950.

Q: AND WHEN DID YOUR PARENTS LEAVE THE CAMP?

A: The parents left the camp in 1950 also.

Q: SO THEY WERE IN THE CAMP FOR FOUR YEARS?

A: Yeah. And they moved to the city, in the same town, the city, they rented a place, they already had a means of making a living, and so. And I kept traveling back and forth to see them every weekend or second weekend from school. Eventually I graduated, and came to the United States. My friend who

Q: I JUST WANT TO GO BACK. YOU MET AT THE CAMP. DID YOU SPEAK GERMAN?

A: I spoke a little German, but not technically. When I went to school I sat there like you would sit on a Greek mass. Have you ever witnessed a Greek mass? They use Greek and you don't understand Greek. That's what it was for me for the first few days.

Q: HOW COULD YOU PASS THIS TEST?

A: I didn't. A young man, from Germany, a German, who was a POW in Texas, noticed that I'm struggling. My wife was with me too, by the way. Not at that time my wife, my girlfriend. She also decided to go and take. And she passed some other test too without high school. She had a little more than I had. Besides she was self taught, she taught herself quite a bit. So, we were there and we just struggled very badly, and he came over to us and he said 'Look, I was a POW in Texas, and I went, Americans just treated me wonderfully, I think America's a wonderful place to be. I promised myself I want to help somebody, I know you're Jewish people and so forth, I want to help you get through the tough one.' And he was teaching us, tutoring us, took us home, and his mother fed us food, it was very scarce. He would serve us some food, coffee, which was almost unavailable, but they had some. So he was the one that pulled us through.

Q: A GERMAN GUY?

A: A German guy, yes.

Q: HOW OLD WAS HE?

A: He must have been 3 years older than I was.

Q: SO THIS IS ONE OF THE JUST CHRISTIANS?

A: He just, he was very open. He says 'Look, I was..' he was a German and he felt German, but when he came to Texas, when he saw how the American people treated him...you know they took POWs to help here in war when our men were in Europe. They had German people go on farms and different places and do the work that needed to be done. Mostly farms. And he said 'I had the best time of my life there, they were so nice, the Americans. I was an enemy and they treated me like a human being.' He says 'I want to give this back somehow. I have an opportunity here to help you.' So he helped. And the first year I didn't make it. I went back to give me one more chance, and they did. From there on it was no problem, when I graduated I was on top of the class. But it was difficult because the language, also lack of preparation. I had about seven and half grades, that's not enough to go to college.

Q: YOU KNOW I DON'T SEE HOW YOU PASSED THE TEST.

A: I didn't. The first year I didn't. I asked them for another chance.

Q: I MEAN EVEN TO GET ADMITTED.

A: That was a silly thing. They sent us to a Jewish agency, and the guy would ask us, 'do you know Latin?' and 'yes, I know Latin.' And I happened to know Latin, because I took 2 years or 3 years of Latin. 'Do you know algebra?' 'I know algebra.' If he had asked me do I know trigonometry, I wouldn't know what he's talking about. So, it was just, you want to go to college? Go

ahead. That's all. And the Germans honored it because they were a very tenuous relationship.

Q: AND YOUR WIFE? SHE ALSO

A: Same test. Same thing. She did not finish because she left for the United States in November of '47. So she went to school for a little while and she quit, and went to United States.

Q: AND WHERE DID SHE GO IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: She went to New York, Bronx.

Q: AND YOUR PARENTS LEFT IN '50?

A: '51, I left with them together.

Q: THEY WAITED FOR YOU TO GET THROUGH SCHOOL.

A: Well, it wasn't easy to get into the United States. In 1950, Truman got the Congress to a law, at his request, to admit I don't know how many, let's say a quarter of a million displaced people to the United States. And at that time they often got the requirements. The requirements being if you, the first requirement if you were not in '45 in Germany, you couldn't get out. I came in in '46. So the second requirement was let's say the people after '47 can still go to the United States. So I qualified and I applied, and a year later, in April of '51, I came over to the United States.

Q: SO YOU LEFT WITH YOUR FAMILY.

A: I left with my father and mother.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR SISTER? WHERE WAS SHE?

A: They went on their own. Eventually we got all together, but that's the way, I could only work out enough to keep my parents together with me, because they needed me to () them, my

mother would not been able to go through these things, these papers, my father was already half blind. So I took care of them, getting them over here to the United States.

Q: SO WHERE DID YOU LAND IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: I landed in New York, with a destination of Toledo. And in Toledo they

Q: WHY TOLEDO?

A: You know, the Jewish agencies went out all places where Jewish people were and said, I need from you a contract, for a displaced person. And so they could get it wherever they could get it. Mine was Toledo. It was a mechanic. He told me Don't be an engineer, say you're a mechanic. Which I was too, I was an engineer but I was a mechanic in camp. And so all I could do was qualify my mother and father and myself for the same town. So we left together. I wanted them to be together. I worked on that and this worked out. So, but I didn't stay in Toledo, because I already had a promised job in (Amherst) Ohio which is about 80 miles from Toledo. My friend, very close friend, came to Munich when I was going to college, 'Hi, how're you doing?'

Q: THIS IS YOUR CLOSE FRIEND FROM THE CAMP? (Yeah) HIS MOTHER DIED?

A: Yeah. And he says, 'what are you doing here?' I said I'm going to school. He says, 'How can you go to school?' I told him, if you do the test, then you go. He went, he had more school, he was older by 3 years, he passed the test and joined me in school. So we're going all through school together, til we finished. And he went to the United States sooner, and after a

lot of struggle he found a job, they liked him very much, and the German tells me, the one that retired, I told you outside, you know one of the sons? they liked him very much, he says, 'you know I have a friend in Germany' and they asked him is he as good as you are? 'Oh, he's better.' So he says, 'tell him to come over' and so I came, and I didn't have to have a job. Luck. Like I'm saying, I've had a lot of good things happen to me in my life. And I didn't have to look for a job, I came in and I had a job ready in Amherst. And I stayed with the company.

Q: SO WHEN DID YOU MEET UP WITH YOUR WIFE AGAIN?

A: In New York, we corresponded for three and a half years, and we got engaged by letter, when I knew I'm going to come over we got engaged. And then we got married shortly after I came over.

Q: THAT WAS YOUR FIRST ROMANCE, WASN'T IT?

A: No. (laughing)

Q: WELL THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN TOO MANY BEFORE.

A: There were, she's aware of it, it's long ago. I had different girlfriends before, and then when I met her

Q: IN THE CAMP?

A: Sure. And when, but somehow I always corresponded with her. Like we were not engaged, nothing serious, we were very good friends, and I had other girlfriends, and then when the time came I felt, my folks really liked her too, which was important to me, that they approved. They liked her very much, and I knew I'm going to come over, I wrote a letter, 'I'd like to get engaged to you', and then we got married.

Q: SO SHE MOVED TO TOLEDO, OR AMHERST? (Amherst, right.) SO YOUR PARENTS WERE IN TOLEDO? YOU WERE IN AMHERST?

A: They were in Toledo, my sister joined them in Toledo, my younger sister and then my older sister came over with her husband later. Then they all came from Toledo to Petaluma.

Q: HOW DID THEY COME TO PETALUMA?

A: My brother-in-law had some money in Germany, made some money, and he came over

Q: MADE MONEY IN GERMANY -- YOU'VE GOT A FANTASTIC FAMILY, THEY MAKE MONEY EVERYWHERE!

A: No, he was an entrepreneur, I mean some money, it's not big money, he didn't make millions, but he had enough money where he really didn't want to go to work not speaking the language. What jobs can you get, you know. So he said before I learn the language, there's something I can do. Somehow he got into egg business, chicken business, you know, which didn't last very long here as he's not a farmer. And he's an entrepreneur, so he left a little bit later Petaluma in '57....

Q: SO OF COURSE IF YOU'RE AN EGG PERSON YOU GO TO PETALUMA

A: He wasn't an egg person, but that was one way he didn't need the language, he said I can raise chickens, because they understand Polish too...chickens, so that's the way he went about it. And later on they left us.

Q: BUT THEY STAYED IN PETALUMA?

A: No, they came to the city. They also had a daughter, something similar to what I told you about my father. They couldn't see raising their daughter in Petaluma, or better yet

they were in Sebastopol, I'm not sure, you know the area? (SURE) You know Hessler Road? Between Sebastopol and Petaluma. And she was going to a one-room school there, and they decided, you know as a young girl, she was at that time about 12, they said we should be raising her in the city. So they moved to the city, they sold it and established themselves in the city.

Q: IN SAN FRANCISCO? (Yes) AND BROUGHT YOUR PARENTS TOO?

A: No, the parents were always with them. My parents were always with my eldest sister.

Q: SO YOUR WHOLE FAMILY WAS HERE AND YOU WERE IN OHIO. THAT MUST HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT.

A: Well, I visited quite often, as often as I could, but eventually I wanted to be with the family.

Q: AND YOU HAD HOW MANY CHILDREN?

A: Three children, two boys and a girl.

Q: NOW I KNOW ABOUT ONE OF THE BOYS, HE'S LIKE YOUR GRANDFATHER. WHAT'S HE DOING?

A: He is a PhD. in Civil Engineering, in Hydrology. So what is Hydrology? Well, it's a very esoteric job. So he worked for the college in Ohio State, for the University of Ohio. And he also does consulting in computers with some small firm. Right now he's in the process of possibly switching over to little firm completely, maybe in partnership. My oldest son is a PhD. in economics, he works for the National Defense University, he's a policy maker, deals with industrial planning in case of warfare. Something that we all hope will never be used.

Q: HE GETS HIS PLANNING FROM YOU, FROM HIS FATHER.

A: They have more on the ball than I had, all of them. And my daughter lives in San Francisco. She has a PhD. in Chemical Engineering, presently working for an environmental consulting firm. So, they're on their own, they are doing okay.

Q: SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE DOING FINE. SO IF I WERE TO ASK YOUR CHILDREN HOW THEY THINK THAT, BECAUSE THERE ARE THESE GROUPS FOR CHILDREN OF SURVIVORS, BECAUSE THEY HAVE PROBLEMS OFTENTIMES, IF I ASKED YOUR CHILDREN WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE RAISED BY TWO SURVIVORS, BOTH YOU AND YOUR WIFE ARE SURVIVORS, WHAT WOULD THEY TELL ME SOME OF THE PROBLEMS HAD BEEN?

A: They would probably tell you about different hangups, like not throwing out food, they were very conscious of it, and they don't, either. They don't throw out food. We have not hidden or expounded on the concentration camp or the war either. When they wanted to know about it we talked about it freely, but we didn't say 'you have to remember I was in concentration camp' or anything like this. They know our history thoroughly. My wife and I both had to be very conscious to let them lead a normal life.

Q: YOU MEAN TO LET THEM GO, TRUST THAT THEY'D BE OKAY IN THE WORLD? AND NOT TO BE SO POSSESSIVE OF THEM?

A: I hope so, I hope so. I think they would probably admit to that, yes. My daughter was once asked as a survivor's child to give a speech at the Holocaust memorial. And the thing that I remember is the things that she sees, that we are conscious of things, that we carry the memories but we have never tried to implant on them. They don't belong to any Children of Survivors

groups. I think my biggest complaint from my children that I heard about us is the fact that we were not born here. When we were in Lorraine, the little town, the other kids might have given them a bad time, that their parents are not Americans. That was more than concentration camp or anything like this. This is what I heard mostly about. So later on it was not much big of a difference to the other kids, because they all excelled, they always did excel. But as children, children you know can be very vicious. So I know stories that they would tell me, how they hated the fact that the kids were making fun of them that their parents aren't Americans.

Q: YES, THIS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU AS A SURVIVOR.

A: No, just that I wasn't American born.

Q: WELL LET ME ASK YOU, HOW DO YOU THINK BEING A SURVIVOR HAS AFFECTED YOUR WIFE?

A: The same thing, we don't throw out food. It's not all my decision, it's our decision. I think she likes more security than she would have liked, than she would have had if she led a normal life the way she was brought up. As I told you they were quite well off. The lumber mills, they're a big operation. She never knew any hint of poverty. I think she right now likes security a lot more than she would have if she did not go through, she had the Russian experience, she was not with the Germans. She starved for quite a while. And you have such little hangups, like certain food you wouldn't eat if they kill you, not exactly, but because you had so much of it you don't want to look at it. Like I don't like any substitute, any

ersatz. If I cannot have sugar I'll leave it bitter, I'm not going to use anything artificial. None. I'm not sure if the doctor tells me you have to do this to survive, that's something else, but for the taste, I can do without anything. If it isn't real I don't want it. Maybe I'm lucky I'm not getting fat, I might have changed my mind, I don't know.

Q: SO HOW DO YOU THINK, IF I ASKED YOUR WIFE THAT QUESTION, HOW YOUR EXPERIENCE AFFECTED YOU, WHAT WOULD SHE SAY?

A: I think she would say number one you know the preservation of food. I'm not as security conscious, but I think I'm enough security conscious, but I'm more risk-taking.

Q: IT WOULD BE HARD TO TAKE RISKS AFTER THAT KIND OF AN EXPERIENCE.

A: You do it. You do it. As I said you can go either way, be very conservative or very risky. I've talked to a physician that survived the war, he's younger than I am, and he says for a long time he had sort of a death wish attitude in life. Race everything that's dangerous appealed to him. So it can go either way. I don't think things that dangerous appeal to me. I think I take sufficiently precautions in things. I think I plan, I'm not sure but I think I plan because I enjoy the fact that I can plan. So nothing is 100% but you live on the edge so long, then finally say, wouldn't it be wonderful to think that I can prepare a meal for next day or something. I remember the wish sitting in camp, remember our little hill overlooking the barb-wire, see lives going on in private houses, and thinking what a wonderful thing it must be to be able to put a tablecloth on the table, you

sit down and eat a hot soup. I mean this was ultimate wish of desire. But after you have the soup, you still want other things. I think it affected me, not the war maybe but because of things that happened to me, the good things, that I feel a need, it's not an obsession, I feel a need that I should help out. I do, and have done, but it could be my own personality, it's hard to differentiate.

Q: IT'S REALLY INTERESTING THE WAY YOU SEE YOUR LIFE AS LOOKING AT ALL THE LUCKY THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU, MORE THAN THE UNLUCKY THINGS. I MEAN IT'S REALLY A VERY...

A: Well the only unlucky thing that happened to me, I went to a concentration camp. And I lost my brother. There are unlucky things, but I'm talking while I'm alive and I'm here, a lot of good things did happen to me. Bringing up three children that turned out to be normal is quite a lucky thing too.

Q: YES, BUT SOME PEOPLE CAN SEE THE CONCENTRATION CAMP AS THE HORRIBLE THING IN YOUR LIFE AND NOT SEE THE LUCKY THINGS.

A: I still see the concentration camp as a terrible thing

Q: YES, BUT STILL YOU TALK ABOUT HOW IN TERMS OF SURVIVAL, YOU WERE LUCKY, RIGHT? (Yes) SO IT'S THIS ATTITUDE WHICH IS SO POSITIVE AND I THINK IT'S

A: I wouldn't know what to attribute it, maybe personality, I don't know. I'm not a negative person.

Q: NO, OBVIOUSLY NOT. EVEN AFTER ALL THE EXPERIENCE

A: Well I wish anybody to lived through the kind of life I had in my early years, absolutely not, it's terrible! It's beyond any discussion. But out of this, when you come out, it reminds

me (Tarzan's relation of Pauline) you remember, was there such a cartoon? Where the woman comes and he goes through all those, it's one of those serials where he constantly is in bigger danger and she comes out of it, or some of the modern films that they made with, where you go, you know Jewels of the Nile

Q: PERILS OF PAULINE?

A: Yeah, Perils of Pauline, and you know, when you go through these things and you survive, how can you not say it's a good thing. How can you not say it's a good thing that 95% of people come to the United States and for the first few months it's nothing but misery trying to find a job; I go in and select a job as a professional, without speaking the language. And I can tell you many many other things. I worked for people that are the most wonderful people. When I retired there was a party given by the officers and the board of directors, I was an officer of the company, for a Jewish person coming from those countries, not all too bad, you know. And making a speech that one of the things that occurred to me as the most worthwhile thing about my total career is that in all my career I did not have to jeopardize my integrity once, because I worked for such nice people. You're in business, you're a vice-president, you more than often have to sacrifice your integrity, and people do. But I didn't have to do it. That's not life, that's not like what is. Going for a career without, you know, I had retained my self-respect. That's luck.

Q: WELL IT'S JUST INTERESTING TO THINK ABOUT THE QUESTION THAT THIS EXPERIENCE YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, YOU'VE STILL COME OUT OF IT

A POSITIVE PERSON, AND SO YOU WONDER WHETHER SOMEBODY, YOU WONDER SOMETIMES WHETHER YOU CAN TAKE A POSITIVE PERSON AND YOU GIVE THEM A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE AND THEY BECOME NEGATIVE -- MAYBE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN THAT WAY. POSITIVE PEOPLE STAY POSITIVE AND MAYBE NEGATIVE PEOPLE STAY NEGATIVE. YOU KNOW GOOD THINGS CAN HAPPEN TO NEGATIVE PEOPLE AND THEY'LL STILL BE NEGATIVE, RIGHT?

A: I am wondering, whether this might not have something to do, how, at what point are you broken? I don't think I was broken at any one point. You know what I'm talking, breaking? Where you say, 'that's it, I don't want it anymore.' Even then when I was being hit over the head I was saying 'when is he going to hit me from the other side?' ... I'm not a negative person by nature, but I don't think that...I'll tell you another little story, when I was taken out with my mother and father and put away to send away, remember I told you the story they first pulled out 150 people to send away to the execution, and I was staying in that police station, in two little rooms where people had to find themselves, had to lie down, it was cramped and so forth, I didn't want to die hungry. The father of my niece, the Gentile, the new father, came to the window because he had a lot of pull all over, and says

'can I help you with something?' He was the Christian, that's the new father to my niece, okay? And my folks asked would you like to get something, I said I would like to get some bread. And he brought the bread for me. I took the bread, and I had a long coat which was very oversized you know, and I have the bread under my coat and I kept eating little pieces and my parents

never forgot it. You know, I just didn't want to die hungry. What does this mean? I don't know. I'm not sure I don't think I was beaten, I knew I'm going to die, I wanted to make the best of it. The best of it is not, you know you can die a different death.

Q: YES I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL, YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT, GREAT.

A: And I don't think I look back an awful lot. Not for fear, but this is even today, if something happens, once it's happened it's no use to go into it, it's done. If you can learn something, you learn, if you don't, go on! You know if you look back, some of it will catch up with you. Look ahead. That's an attitude. I'm not sure whether it was born out of experience or it's individual, it's hard to say. Take a psychiatrist to analyze me, I don't know.

Q: WELL WHAT ABOUT YOUR SISTER? DID YOU SEE HER CHANGE AT ALL, YOUR OLDER SISTER, OR YOUR YOUNGER SISTER?

A: My older sister was a worrier all her life, worrying about the family but looking positive at things. And she stayed that way, even until she was dying. She came home and she said 'I know I have (it right on my head) and I don't want to live with that. Life isn't worth living' but she, she was, under the circumstances, the way people with cancer go through, she was excellent. She worried more about me than herself. So she is positive. The other sister, less positive person. But everyone is different in that respect. Just because you're brother/sister

you're not the same way. My brother would have been a completely different individual than I am.

Q: AND HOW IS YOUR MOTHER NOW?

A: She has, you know what dementia is? Aging dementia? She has aging dementia, and she's getting worse and worse at communicating, she's in good physical health. I go in several times a week, my sister goes every day to visit with her in the home. A funny incident: I always go dressed up when I go to see my mother. The other day I was going to Ohio and I had a regular shirt, a sport shirt and pair of slacks, and gym shoes. And she was a little confused that day and she kept asking about me without saying my name, and I couldn't know who she was asking for, I named every relative I could think of, 'no, not him.' Finally asked her, 'do you mean me because I don't wear a tie', she says yes.. Because I wasn't dressed the same way, she was missing me. Little things like this so whenever I go visit her, if it's at all possible I wear a tie and a suit.\

Q: WHY IS THAT?

A: She gets upset, she gets upset if I'm not properly dressed.

Q: IS THAT BECAUSE YOUR FATHER

A: No, I was also. I would come quite often to visit California. I would come in a tie and a suit, because I would go on business part time

Q: BUT YOUR FATHER WAS ALWAYS DRESSED

A: My father was always dressed, always. And so if she looks at this and she was missing me, she couldn't express it. 'He's not here, why isn't he here?' Today I came in, this was after I came

back and I said, because when I got off the plane I stopped in this week, and she still wasn't, because I had a sweatshirt on, you know plane I travel very casual. Today I come in I say that's the way I like now, she says no, she wants me to wear a tie. So I go in and wear a tie. But she misses ...

Q: I THINK EVERYBODY DOES

A: Well, even so, her mind is not what it used to be. She still complains wearing the others.

Q; DID I MISS ANYTHING?

A: There are a lot of little stories, but it's hard to tell what's an interest.

Q: EVERYTHING IS OF INTEREST, REALLY.

A: You talk of luck, I again say luck. I was lucky where we were men and women the same camp. Very few camps had men and women. So there was a sort of social life going on, whatever it was. Hunger, starvation, but there was social life. You get together, you walk together. You have to sleep in your own barracks, you couldn't mix but even under the worst of conditions, people want entertainment. I remember somebody got hold of a violin, and he was a good violinist, and we had people watching so the guard wouldn't approach, and he gave a concert! To a number of people, as quiet as you could keep it. And people enjoyed it, it was something sweet, listening to a violin. And people always look to better their lives, no matter how bad they are.

I remember the first time I ate non-Kosher. It was when I was in the bakery, and while we had food, all we had was bread

and flour, and bread and flour, and bread and flour. A soup from flour, and eat bread.

Q: WAS THIS BEFORE?

A: In the camp, after the selection when we were locked up for a few weeks in the bakery, there was no other food, just flour, and salt and flour, the diet was so ... after awhile, you have enough bread, you cannot stomach any more, those soups out of pure flour and salt. And somebody came by, one of those cleaning up men, and they brought a piece of pork sausage. If you would have told me to eat pork sausage before the war I would have choked at the thought of eating pork sausage. I ate it the first time, I remember it was sweet, it was very tasty, and I didn't choke on it. A surprising thing.

I had a friend that during the selection, he was from another street so they were selected like 10 days before we were, he ran away, hid himself out in a patch of tomatoes, that's all he had to eat for about 4 or 5 days. All he could sustain himself is eating tomatoes, and then somehow he made his way in, came to our yard and we weren't selected yet. By doing that, that guy survived and lives in England. But I remember how he was telling me that he'll never touch a tomato in his life. Those are the little things.

The horrors, there were plenty of horrors. Not trying to cover them up. I remember them all, I remember the beating, I remember the abuses, I remember the humiliations were worse to me than anything. I never could get used to the humiliation, the humiliation that we went through as a people.

Q: YOU MEAN BEING BOSSED AROUND ALL THE TIME?

A: Abused. Abused terribly abused. This to me was the thing that, I mean physical pain is physical pain, you kill people. You know, you kill, they're dead. But the living abuse, bringing us down to the level of an animal. Some of us were sheep and some of us were tigers, but animal-like. This was terrible. Even as a youngster, I remember this as a very bad situation. And this was going on constantly. We were less than an animal, you feed a dog better than, and the beating wasn't as much the physical thing as again, the humiliation. And that, that affected me. That's why I, maybe have a lot of respect for people, because when I was in the corporation, even though I wasn't management, I was very respected by the union people, because I would never treat them anything less than I would want to be treated like. Lucky I never had to lie to them. And this meant to me quite a bit. So those might be fallouts from what I see as a terrible thing that can happen to people. I firmly believe physical abuse is easier to take than humiliation. But when you grow to the point where you accept the humiliation and go on with it, that's a terrible thing. No people should have to take these things.

Q: THERE'S A POINT, YOU FEEL, THAT YOU REACH... NO I MEAN, WHEN YOU WERE BEING ABUSED, THERE'S A POINT THAT YOU FEEL THAT YOU REACH WHERE IT'S NO LONGER, IT BECOMES INTOLERANT

A: When you're not a human being, where you're not treated like a human being, I don't care who it is. It's a terrible thing to a human being, because all we have that differentiates us from

animals is the ability to understand ourself and have the self-respect, and want the self-respect. When you take it away, what left, what's the difference between us and an animal?

Q: IT'S INTERESTING WHAT YOU'VE SAID BEFORE, THAT IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN YOU COULDN'T KILL THAT GUARD THAT YOU WERE JUST NOT A MURDERER.

A: I was ashamed.

Q: FOR MANY YEARS YOU WERE ASHAMED. (That's right.) AT WHAT TIME OR WHAT POINT OR HOW DID YOU RESOLVE THAT?

A: I think I must have been about 30, and the reason I resolved that is because I started thinking more than a child would think, I started seeing things in life that have more importance than being a he-man. When you're a youngster, you think if you're not brave that's all that counts in life. And I started to understand that's not what makes us human beings. What makes us human beings is the ability to feel, and not the impulse, kill or be killed. To feel. And that time I started understanding myself better. That was a very mature approach, attitude I had for those years. That's when I started telling the story of what happened, and I didn't feel ashamed of it, that I was weak.

Q: BUT YOU CAME TO THAT REALIZATION YOURSELF?

A: Yeah, simply by maturing. It takes a maturing period for a person to realize what life is all about. You know, what makes a man, let's us proverbially assume, I'm talking man vs. woman, what's the big deal about a man? Is a woman not a man? I don't mean (I UNDERSTAND) the gender, I'm talking as a person.

Q: AS A MAN MEANING HUMAN ALMOST

A: I think I will take the attitude what's important in life is not masculinity as it's proverbially accepted, it's what is a human being. Human being part is worth more than the masculinity.

Q: THIS IS WHAT IMPRESSES ME SO MUCH TALKING TO YOU IS THAT YOU HAVE SO MUCH SENSITIVITY AND EMPATHY FOR OTHER PEOPLE, AND I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT DIED SOMEWHERE, BUT IT NEVER DID FOR YOU!

A: I'm not sure all you're attributing to it, I think it's individual, maybe not. You know you asked me why I called my wife. How would she feel if she sits there and doesn't know what happened to me? I told her I would be an hour and a half here...

Q: THIS IS WHAT IMPRESSES ME SO, YOU

A: I think this is normal, should be normal with people.

Q: YES BUT I THINK A LOT OF US, IT'S NOT. AND I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT SOMEBODY WHO HAD BEEN TREATED SO CALLOUSLY AND LESS THAN HUMAN AS YOU SAY, WOULD HAVE FORGOTTEN THOSE THINGS. YOU KNOW SOMEHOW THAT WOULD HAVE

A: Well I was thinking about it quite, many many times. And I think I opened it up with the statement, it's like hardening steel, some of these things. You're familiar with the process of hardening steel? You heat it and you quench it. If you do it successfully, it comes out a very hard, useful tool. If you don't do it the right way, it cracks. Maybe some of us crack and some of us harden. Not harden, harden meaning the best comes out of it, you become like a good treated steel. I'm not sure. I'm not sure, this is speculation. I'm not a naive person, I don't think I'm a naive person, but I'm not sure this has anything to

do with the war experience or not, I'm sure it does in fact, but it could have been positive or negative. It did not affect me negatively, that I know of.

Q: NOW WHAT ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE YOU KNOW AS SURVIVORS? DO YOU THINK THAT THEY GENERALLY ARE NEGATIVE, CYNICAL PEOPLE, OR THEY ARE AS VARIED AS THE ORDINARY POPULATION?

A: They vary. They vary. I think it's the same thing, it starts with the raw material, and you build on that or you deteriorate that part. So some people have no different attitude than I have, towards life. I'm not unique in that respect, there are a lot of people with that. Some people feel bitter about things. As I said, and I keep repeating almost to the point of ridicule, I was lucky in many ways. Others were not. You know when you lose the whole family, you're left one by yourself, all of a sudden you have a different attitude. In my case I was lucky enough to have most of the family, sure I missed my brother, I dreamed about him for years, but it's an individual thing, with every one of us.

I was engaged a few weeks ago in overhauling our temple in Petaluma, I undertook it, to raise the money and do the work, and physically worked many hours on it -- a lot of people helped, I didn't do it myself, a lot of people helped. And when it got all done, I was wondering whether I would have had as much fun, going on a nice vacation as I had doing it. Naive? Ridiculous? I don't know...

Q: YES, BUT THE THING IS YOU HAD FUN DOING IT

A: Yes, I enjoyed the achievement

Q: BUT YOU ALLOWED YOURSELF TO ENJOY IT, OR WHATEVER. I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING THERE ABOUT GIVING YOURSELF PERMISSION TO SEEING, MAKING THE BEST OUT OF THINGS.

A: Yes, I'm trying to make the best out of things, but also you have to be able to understand the importance, what's important to you in life. You know. I can take one more trip, and go to Timbuktu, and come back and say, 'what was that all about?' Well, I can tell people that I was in Timbuktu. That's fine, if that's your value in life to brag to other people, but telling people of all your things that you have done, like going on trips, I know a lot of people, their biggest joy is telling others. What do you do it for, jealousy, for impression, for? What's in it? Well, I've been many places in the world, a lot of business related travel, and the point I was making about the (shoe) the temple that I worked on, when I was done with it, I was thinking to myself would I have enjoyed a vacation as much as I enjoyed this? And I seriously questioned whether I would have. I 've been on vacations... So it's a question of values, what are values, where do you have your values?

Have you ever heard the story, the guy, we are talking of being religious, okay? The guy that on Yom Kippur wanted to play golf, and God punished him, he made a hole-in-one? (laughs) You get the gist of it?

Q: NO, EXPLAIN THIS. HOW IS THAT FUNNY?

A: The whole idea of making a hole-in-one is being able to brag to others. But on Yom Kippur he didn't have any friends with him! He went to the golf course on Yom Kippur and God punished

him, he made a hole-in-one! How did he live with it? No one saw it! And this is an indication of very often what's important, it's not the hole-in-one, it's telling about it! Not the hole-in-one. Well that's fine, we need a little bit of this, because we need self-esteem that isn't there, that somebody can build up by bragging. But there's a limit to that. And you wonder, how secure are we ourselves when we constantly need the praise of others, or the admiration of others. Not that we don't all want to be admired, but there's a limitation to that. So, who is right? Who is wrong? What is good and what is bad? Those are attitudes that you build up yourself over your lifetime and you live by.

Q: WELL, I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THIS

A: My pleasure.

Q: IT'S FOUR O'CLOCK NOW

A: I'd better get back and tell my wife I'm still alive....