

Today is Monday, October 27, and we are here interviewing Mr. Siegfried Wulkan--

A little louder.

--for the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project. The videographer is Dr. Anne Saldinger, and the interviewer is Hilde Gottmann. Mr. Wulkan--

Yeah.

What was your name at birth?

Siegfried.

Right. And the last name?

Wulkan.

And when were you born and where?

In Rajcza, Poland, by Zywiec.

And what was your father's name?

Itzhak-- Isaac.

Right. With the same-- Wulkan-- same last--

Yeah, Wulkan.

And mother's name?

Mother's name was Wulkan.

And what was her maiden name before she was married?

This was Wulkan. Maiden name, Wulkan.

Also. All right.

And did you have brothers or sisters?

Yeah, brothers and sisters.

And what were their names?

My sister, Chana, Hedwig, my brother, Marcus and Wilhelm, and Heinek-- Henry.

And were you married before or--

No, no.

OK. How did your family support itself? How did your family support itself?

My father was a tailor.

OK. And do you know anything about the Depression in the '30s? Did they have a Depression?

Yeah.

In Poland?

In Poland.

In 1930? Before 1930?

Before 1930, no, this was hard to make a living. And [POLISH]. We worked out how we could to survive.

Right.

Yeah.

OK. And what schools did you attend? Where did you go to school?

What store?

School. School. Schule. Welche Schule?

What?

School. Where you learn how to read and write?

Oh, school. Polish. I went in the Polish school.

OK. And how far did you go? What grade?

Till seventh grade. So I have to look for a job. Yeah. And I learned in Strumien by Bielitz that I get a job over there. Salesman, first three years I was studied. And after three years, so I get paid.

OK. What did you sell?

Till '39.

What did you sell?

Everything. This was a warehouse.

I see. OK. Now, did your father-- what was your father's education?

Father's education? No, it was a tailor. He was born in Oswiecim, Auschwitz.

Oh, he really was. OK. And what about Mother?

My mother was born in Rajcza, and we grew up all in Rajcza.

OK. Right. So it's a nice, small city.

Yes.

Village.

And did you have other family living nearby in Rajcza?

No, no. The nearest family was in Bielsko. Yeah, this was a close family--

Aunts and uncles.

--from my mother's side. My father's side in Auschwitz.

Can you tell us more about your town? Can you tell us about your town?

The town?

Yes.

Where I born?

Yes.

Yeah. This was a small village, maybe 35, 40 families. We had a nice living. This was quiet. This was nice. And this was more in the mountains. This was near Czechoslovakia. And so this was very nice. We had a nice, quiet living.

Yes. Were there many Jewish families? Were there many Jewish families?

Yeah, I tell you 35--

Oh, Jewish families.

Jewish family.

Were there non-Jewish families also?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

OK. And was there a synagogue?

Was in all nice, a nice synagogue.

OK.

Yeah.

And--

And they did, in 1939, in September, right away, the German, the Nazis, they shoot from outside, and they burned the whole synagogue. Yeah.

What was the name of the synagogue?

Of the synagogue? This was not the same, not a name. This was a very nice synagogue, but no name. No.

And it was destroyed in 1939?

Yeah.

It was destroyed.

Destroyed. Destroyed and burned down.

Burned.

Yeah.

Did you have a rebbe? Did you have a rebbe in the synagogue?

A rebbe, yeah. No, not a rebbe. Is what only-- a shochet.

A shochet.

Shochet, yeah. And he was the cantor too. Yeah.

He had a double--

He read the Torah and this. This was a small, small community. We lived very nice.

OK. Was your family religious? Was your family religious?

Religious, yeah. Yeah, we were religious.

So you had Shabbat and the holidays.

Right. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Can you tell us about Shabbat in your home?

Shabbat at home? It was nice. My mother, she kept that we have a Jewish home. And she make herself challah and the cake. And so this was a holiday. This was very nice. This was very, very, very nice life. Yeah. A home life, yeah.

She kept kosher.

Kosher, yeah. We had kosher, and the shochet, he every week. And it was also one butcher. His name was Goldman. Very nice. This was a nice living. Not so rich, but good.

Now, did you have any contact with goyim?

Oh, yeah the goyim were-- some were antisemitic, but some very-- because we lived from-- we make a living from the goyim.

Sure.

Yeah.

So they were customers.

Yeah, yeah, they were customers.

Did you have friends who were not Jewish?

Oh, yeah. No, yeah, this was friend from school. When we went together to school and so we kept friends. Yeah.

Very good. Was anybody in your family involved in politics?

In politic? [LAUGHS] Who had the time for the politics? Was no.

Yeah.

No.

This was before.

No. No, we had not politics at home. And the brothers and everything, this was very loyal.

Did you have any ideas of what you wanted to be when you grew up? What you wanted to be before all this happened?

When I [CROSS TALK]-- No, this was my profession, a salesman, so I thought that one day I will be a manager from in the store.

When was the first time that you noticed antisemitism?

When? We have no sign of antisemitism.

Until '39.

No, no, no. Over there, this was a small city. And sometimes the peasant, they came together, and they wanted to rob the house and so on. But the police was very kind, and they gave my brothers guns. And don't let the people in in the city.

So they went in another city. Yeah. The police was very nice. One they kept from the police-- he was sitting in our house and was very, very nice.

So what happened in 1939?

Oh, in-- well, 19-- 9-- for turn over, this was not the same. Some from the Jewish people left the small city. And my father, he didn't go nowhere. We stay home. I was in a small city, in Jedlicze. I had a job of over there. I was employed.

And from over there, I left to Krakow. But two months later, I get a telegram that my father died. So I went home. And we stay home. And it was praying, and this was the beginning from the end, Yeah.

And so we stay home. And in 1940, we have to work. This was a police station. And over there-- the Germans was over there. So they start to punish us and so on.

And later, we-- they put us in the other city, Sucha. We have to move. We have to move to-- in a ghetto. It's name is Sucha by Zywiec. And over there we start to work on the street to rebuild it. This was all the time for work.

Now we stayed together, all together. And later on came from the SS that we have to start to go in concentration camp. And also--

When the Germans came to your town--

Yeah?

Did they arrest you? Or did they just tell you you were--

When they came-- no, this was quiet. This--

So, they took over at first quietly.

Yeah. They took over. And that's it. Yeah.

And then what started to change? How did they treat the Jews?

How they treated-- this was so-- when we went-- we have to have the Magen David. And so when I went on the street, on the sidewalk, so came a policeman. The Jewish is not allowed to go on the sidewalk. We have to go in the street.

So I went on the street. Came another policemen but 2-mark fine because I go on the street. Whatever you do was bad and so on and so on.

How did your Gentile neighbors respond? The other people in the town?

The other people, they were quiet. They were quiet. They don't bother so much, no, because they saw that we are in danger, that the Jewish people are in danger.

And this was a town where it was very religious people, very religious. And over there was the ghetto. So some from the Polish.

Very religious Jews, you mean, in the other town? Very religious Jews? Who was very religious? The Jews?

Or the Gentiles?

From the ghetto.

Oh, in the ghetto.

Yeah.

OK. So--

Yeah, this was in the ghetto. This was all together, yeah. Some Poles, they talk Yiddish. They know. Because they live together. Because this was a city, very religious. And one day, we have to depart to go in one place and to go to work in-- now, this was a terrible thing, that time.

We went all together. And we didn't know what will be with us. So they select some people to work. Now and so I went with my brother. And the first camp was Maslovitz.

And from over there came Jewish people from Sosnowiec, Bedzin, from the old cities. This was a big place. So those later they select some people to go to work. And those start from one camp in another camp.

So you were how old? How old were you at the time?

29. I was 29.

You were 29.

Yeah.

And you were--

29, 30. Yeah, OK.

And you were strong and you were chosen to work?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I have a picture from when we-- a policeman, he make pictures. Yeah, but in the camp where we were.

You said. We'll look at that later.

Later. [LAUGHS]

When did you first hear about Adolf Hitler? When did you first hear about Adolf Hitler?

About?

Adolf Hitler.

About Hitler? We heard important-- we hear about [INAUDIBLE] because many, many Berliners from Germany, they came to our city. And so [INAUDIBLE] one girl came, so she married my brother.

Her name was [PERSONAL NAME], Lucy. And so from Hitler we had hear lots of time before the war.

And then you saw them come in in '39.

Yeah.

And you saw Brownshirts and Blackshirts.

In '39, right away, because we were not so far from the German border.

Yes. Right.

Yeah.

When did you first hear about the Gestapo?

The Gestapo? When we were in ghetto, so came this-- so that time started the whole Holocaust. Was bad.

So they put you to work, even in the ghetto already?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

And what did you have to do?

We have to take on the street to make from the stones to make a new street in the city. Or we went to work to regulate the water, the [POLISH], Wisla. This was all kind fun work.

Did you work long hours? Did you work long hours?

Long hours, yeah, sure. Yeah.

From--

From night to night.

And did they give you food? Did they give you food, food to eat?

To eat? In the ghetto, this was the Poles. They help us. And so it wasn't so bad. But later on this was very danger.

Very little.

Yeah.

Did you hear about Kristallnacht in Poland? Did you hear about Kristallnacht?

Sada?

No, Kristallnacht, Crystal Night.

Crystal Night?

Did you hear about that in Poland?

We hear that. We read in the newspapers and so. Was actually [INAUDIBLE]. Oh, yeah. We hear about that.

So what happened to your parents' property, your house?

The house-- we left everything. And--

You weren't able to sell it then? No.

No, no, no, not able. One family from Czechoslovakia, they said-- they were religious people. They had a nice house. And he start-- he want to sell. So the German, they ask how much he was. No, he make a price.

So right away, they took them, the whole family, to Auschwitz. This was. To sell and that, this was not allowed. No. They were there right away in Auschwitz. The name for the owner was Hertz-- very nice, very nice people. And disappeared right away. It wasn't so far away, the Auschwitz from our city.

What could you bring with you? What could you bring with you to the ghetto?

What I bring?

From home.

Nothing. Nothing.

Just the clothes on your back?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We have to leave everything.

Right. Then after the first ghetto in the religious town--

Yeah.

--from there, where did you go?



To camp, right away.

The first camp was-- oh, right away.

This was not KZ. This was a Arbeitslager.

Work camp.

Arbeitslager.

Forced labor.

And also start from one place in another one. And--

Klettendorf?

One camp in another.

Klettendorf? Klettendorf?

Klettendorf, yeah. Klettendorf, though this was a Eisenlager.

That was an iron works.

[NON-ENGLISH] it was with the-- we are working by buildings. Yeah. And this was very hard work. We have to build, not from wood, only concrete. Only concrete that this was so heavy.

Heavy work.

This was the very bad camp because this was not KZ. This was a Arbeitslager.

Work camp.

And the Judenalteste-- you know what-- he was--

The oldest of the Jews. The one responsible for them.

The Judenalteste, he was from Sosnowiec. What was his name? [LAUGHS] This is 60 years. Yeah, he's dead. No.

That's all right.

Sometimes this go, is gone that time.

It may come to you.

No, he was very rude to Jewish--

And very, very-- Yeah. And over there was also a doctor. He was a German. And he-- the Jewish-- the Judenalteste, he select you have to live. You have to die. You have to dead, some dead. So you will die.

And so every day, five, six-- this wasn't the big camp, but people were dying because the Jewish doctor, he took the washroom the people for select to die. And then he took a blanket in the washroom and it's covered. And so the people died.

He killed them.

And one day we had a shoemaker-- he was a German-- in the camp. So we went to work, but he went with that people to-- this was in Breslau. And over there in the cemetery was working half Jewish people.

So he said, if you don't do nothing, so we all die in the camp. So they came there, helped the policeman, and he closed the camp.

[CROSS TALK] those people.

But we went to another camp.

But you weren't at the mercy of that one brutal man?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And that was close to Breslau?

Yeah. Close to the-- yeah, Hundsfeld, this was by Breslau.

And then where did you go?

And then to Hirschberg, to KZ. And in the KZ, this was-- they had when the German-- this was for a German and they took him-- when the war start, so they took the old criminals, German criminals in the concentration camp. And they were very brutal there.

They had a sign, a red, a green-- the sign was what the German did, yeah. He was beating the people. It was bad.

Did you get beaten up? Did you get beaten?

And how. One day-- you know what is Reitpeitsche?

It's a whip.

A whip, here over the-- over that. Yeah. And when I came to work the foreman asked me what happened to you? And let him, if he say something, is worse. And you can say nothing to be quiet. Yeah.

And why did he whip you then?

Why? Why? This is hard to say because the police they were met with the management from the job. And we were in the middle. They were met to each other. They were jealous.

And we were in the middle. So they beat us. Was OK. No. No, this was [INAUDIBLE].

So they took it out on you, whatever problems they had.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So no reason.

For no reason. No reasons. It was hard working, by building centers. Yeah. And in Hirschberg, this is the concentration camp, none of this was near the war. So they took us in a shack, in a place. You get a little soup and go-- you get the soup.

When you get the soap, they beat us out and throws out from Buchenwald. We have to go to the dead march till Terezin.

To Terezin.

Yeah. This was a few days we went without food, without water, and too many people died right away on the march. And when we came to Terezin, to the Russian camp, and they said, you have to eat. You have to eat. Because not so many people are left. All died.

So and they start, you have to eat. And when I saw a little bread, I was strange. I was looking. I couldn't eat. I couldn't eat because us was strange. And I was a Muselmann. Yeah.

And that was at the end of the war? That was at the end of the war?

Yeah, this was the end of the war. But we-- I went to many the concentration camps.

So many camps. So you were very often moved from one camp to another.

Yeah. Whenever you get in a new job, new work, you have another job to do, yeah.

So were you also at Buchenwald, actually? Were you also at Buchenwald or one of the sub camps in Buchenwald? Were you in Buchenwald in the camp?

Yeah.

At Buchenwald?

Podi--

Buchenwald?

Podi--

Buchenwald.

Hmm?

Buchenwald. The camp you were in.

Buchenwald, yeah.

Buchenwald.

Oh, yeah, we work in Steinbruch.

Steinbruch.

And that's a sub-camp.

Yeah. Yeah. This was the camp from Buchenwald. Every day when you come back for work, you saw hanging people. This was--

And what work did you do there?

No, Steinbruch.

In stone--

Stoneworks.

Stoneworks.

Yeah. Over there. Yeah, they said that this will be a hiding place for Hitler, so we have to deep, deep in the mountains.

Dig.

Yeah. To work.

Now, at a place like that, where did you sleep?

Sleep?

Yeah.

[LAUGHS]

Not much.

Five people in such place at the a bed without--

Sheets.

Without mattress.

Without no mattress. We had no, nothing. Five people. When you have to turn, so everybody have to turn. In such a place, five people. And we get black coffee. To get a little coffee in Buchenwald, we have to get up 3 o'clock in morning to bring some coffee.

But this was coffee. This was black. No. Yeah.

And what do you remember eating there? What did you eat?

When you came back from the job, a small piece bread and a little soup. And this was for the whole day, for next day. Yeah.

Were you together with any of your family?

Where?

In the camps, did you stay with any family?

Oh, no.

No.

Oh, this was not allowed. No, this was not allowed. We couldn't talk to nobody and so. Because right away, the SS with the dogs, they throw away.

Did anyone else in your family survive?

No, no one. Yeah, my sister.

Your sister?

Yeah. And one sister. She came back. She was in a factory. But she didn't move. The Russian came on, and she went home, and that's it. And I was in the death march. This was the worst thing. Was the worst thing for the four years that I was in camp.

So how many people were you with on the death march?

On, the death march, hundreds of people.

Hundreds of them.

Oh, very much. We march, 8 in one row, eight. And so we went on and on. And then for the sides it was the SS with the dogs and the-- this was terrible. No.

And that was from close to Buchenwald--

Yeah.

--to Theresienstadt.

To Theresienstadt. It wasn't so close. We went a few days.

And no rest? Were you ever able to rest?

To rest? No.

No sleep.

No rest. We you had one place rest. So we you came near the Czechoslovakia, so everybody started to eat grass. And came the German. What you eating grass? We have to feed our cows. Yeah. We ate the grass.

And that helped.

Now, the Germans were making you march, right? Germans went with you? The SS went with you on the march?

Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. Yeah. We came to Theresienstadt. One day-- this was one day only because we were all dead. So there came the Russian. And the Germans disappeared. They run away.

And then you ended up in the hospital?

Oh, sure.

Yeah.

Yeah. I has typhus.

Oh, that's when you had typhus.

Yeah. Oh, you know, when you go in the washroom over there, you see dead people all over, all over dead people. Terrible. People what we were together in camp, and laying down.

After you recovered from the typhus--

After?

Yeah. Where did you go?

Where I go? Not to Rajcza. Not to home. I was scared because one family came back, and they came, the Poles, for the fountain and shot. Yeah. So I didn't go over there. And to Bielsko, this was a bigger city. And my sister was over there.

So my sister, she started to feed me because I had family, a cousin, a woman, she married a German in Bielsko, but for many years. So he was in a coal mine, the executive, who was very well-off.

So when the German came, they took him, everything away. He had a car. They took him away. But my cousin, she get-  
- and she alive. And she was OK during the war. Left after the war.

So my sister was over there. And I was also, by the cousin. And she takes me. She takes care of me. Very nice people.

How did you find your sister after the war?

How?

How did you find her?

How? Is not so far because when I came from Terezin to this station, right away one told me, your sister is alive. She is over there. And he gave me the address.

How much later did you go to Israel? How much later did you decide to go to Israel?

The first year I married in Bielsko.

Oh, you did, in Bielsko.

And this was a girlfriend what I know her before the war. Yeah. But she was in Russia. And so we married. And we were till 1950 in Poland. And later we came to Israel. So it was for six years in Israel.

Netanya, was it? In Netanya?

In Netanya, yeah. She is born in Netanya.

You were born in--

No.

In Hadera.

Ira. Ira. I was born in Bielsko.

Were in Bielsko? Oh, I forgot. [LAUGHS] Yeah, you born in Poland.

Now, what did you do right after the war? You were able--

Right after the war, I want to work in a factory. In the factory, what they do material.

And did you ever go back to your hometown?

No.

No.

Oh, yeah. A little bit, but one day or so. I didn't stay over there.

And you didn't try to go to your home?

No, no.

No.

No.

Were there Polish people--

No, I was scared. No. I tell you, one family came back from the concentration camp after so many years, there came a gunman, and shot. And he was begging. But his wife, they thought that his wife is dead. So they left. She was on the floor.

But she left later to France. And he died. And one son-- they had one son. Two days before the end, somebody asked him go have some bread. And they shot him also, this son. This was all-- everything was wild after the war.

But you were able to settle down quite quickly, then--

Yes.

--afterwards. Yes, you were able to find a place to live?

To live? Well, no, no. Where, in Poland?

Yeah, in--

No, no in Poland. We lived in Poland, but in a bigger city.

In Bialystok.

Yeah.

Bielsko.

Now, when was the last time that you saw your mother?

The last time? When we were all together, when they took us to take out in the camps. So my mother came. She said goodbye. And my sister-- yeah, this was the last time. Yeah.

So then you decided to go to Israel with your wife? You decided to go to Israel with the family?

Oh, sure. Yeah.

And what did you do in that time?

This was a hard life. It wasn't so easy.

Not in those days.

Israel was-- in 1950 this was very hard to make a living. And the work was-- I wouldn't say it was like in the concentration camp, but it was very hard. It was very hard to make a living. If somebody started to merchandise and so-- I wasn't so-- we had the one daughter, so I have to look for or [INAUDIBLE] or something else.

[INAUDIBLE]

I had a job in [INAUDIBLE] in Netanya. And this was-- [INAUDIBLE], you couldn't be a [NON-ENGLISH], a steady worker. After six months, they said you have to go. This also does so-- wasn't so easy.

How did you make the decision to go to Israel?

Oh, I have to go out from Poland. Yeah.

They didn't want to stay in Poland.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. This was one point that we couldn't stay in Poland too. It was antisemitic. Was bad.

Still after the war?

Yeah. After the war.

And when did you find out what happened to your other brothers and sisters?

One was in Russia. One was in Tarnow, Poland. When I-- nobody came back, so we saw this is bad. They didn't come back.

And then what made you decide to come to America?

Yeah. My wife, she had a brother. Yeah. Dr. Tannenbaum-- maybe know Tannenbaum? Dr. Tannenbaum, this was a cousin for my wife. They sent papers. And also we couldn't go together.

First, my wife said. And then here is one war after another in Israel. And I was over there. And this was also not pres-- Yeah.

What year did-- so your wife came first?

Yeah. Yeah.

When was that?

This was in '56. Yeah. After eight months, I came with two children.

Did you join the army in Israel? Did you join the army?

Yeah, HAGA.

So '56 you came here. Did you come to San Francisco on your way?

Yeah, to San Francisco.



OK. And then were you able to find a job?

Yeah, I found a job.

What did you do there?

It was very nice to me. This was a construction. But they didn't send me out to construction. They said, you stay here in the rail yard. This was one manager. He was a German. He's [POLISH]. I forgot. No.

It's all right.

All names went out. So he was very nice to me. Very nice. And the boss was OK. Yeah. They treat me very nice. Yeah.

Did you stay with them for a long time?

Yeah.

Did you stay with them for a long time?

Oh, yeah. Eight years.

Eight years.

Yeah.

OK. Then children went to school here?

Yeah, oh, yeah.

Did your wife work?

Yeah. She was sewing. She was at home to work.

Did you speak English?

No.

So you had to learn when you--

Not here. Yeah.

Otherwise.

I went to school. Yeah.

Of course, your English is very good. Your English is very good.

Not so good.

It's all right. Good.

Because Polish-- we talk Polish at home. And in Israel the mailman, the man what-- you have to buy ice, they come. This was all Polish people. So you talk Polish.

Did you learn Hebrew in Israel? Did you learn Hebrew in Israel?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And at home did you speak Yiddish when you were young?

At home, at our home, Yiddish. But here Polish.

So you spoke Polish with your children, with your wife and children?

Yeah, yeah. This is I know Polish.

I heard that. And did you work somewhere else when you worked there for eight years?

Yeah.

And then what did you do?

Yeah, in wholesale liquor, Sobel. Wholesale liquor, a very big, big company. I was over there. And from over there, I retired.

So you were there a long time.

Yeah. 12 years.

And what did you do there?

Yeah.

What did you do there?

Then I retired.

I mean, what kind of work did you do?

Oh, in a warehouse. Yeah. Was not so bad.

Now, how do you think your wartime experiences affected you?

How affect? This was a-- this is all-- there are memories that are coming back. Yeah. And the worst thing when you don't sleep at night. You get stuck. You get stuck with the concentration camp.

And then how do you deal with that? Then you have to stay awake, or can you try and think of something else?

Yeah. And we are very--

Can you try and think of something else when they come?

No.

So you can sleep?

Very bad.

So that's many, many years of dreams like that, huh?

Yeah, yeah. The years are coming back.

Did you ever tell anybody, any of your friends, your story? Did you ever tell what happened to you to other people?

What?

Did you ever tell to friends?

Oh, yeah, sure.

You talked about your wartime experiences?

Yeah, yeah, right.

Did you talk to your children about it?

The children, not so.

Not so.

Grandchildren?

Not so much.

Why do you think?

What they can help me.

Is there a group of people that you meet here, Polish people, maybe? Is there a group of--

No, no.

--that you meet here? No?

No.

Or other survivors--

No.

--of the Holocaust.

I tell you, after the survivor-- when I was in Israel, so I was in a hotel, and I met one man. We were together in the camp. So he was so happy to see me, but not so many people are alive. And he gave me the pictures. Yeah.

I see. That was nice.

Yeah.

Did you make friends with anyone when you were in the camps?

No friends. No. No. No. Nobody did. I tell you what, we were in Tiberias. So over there I met one what we were

together in the camp. And then he was so happy to see me. And was very nice.

But otherwise, did you have people that you helped each other while you were in the camps?

It was a Czechoslovakia woman. She was helping out. She brought bread whenever she came because we were working in a mill factory. Yeah. So she came. And how much she could, she brought bread. And she was helping, a Czechoslovakian. Very nice. This was [PLACE NAME], Czechoslovakia, Ternivka. She was very nice.

Did you ever go back to Poland?

Oh, no. No. No more.

You wanted to get out then?

No Poland. Yeah. Out.

What do you think kept you going? What do you think kept you going through all of this? What were you thinking or praying or what?

The Poles are not so good. I left Poland, and that's it. No.

What helped you to survive your time in the camp?

What I make? What I make to survive? This was a hard job to think one day and after, one day or another. Yeah. This is very hard. This was hard.

Some people did escape to go in another camp. Some people they were looking for another because they thought this in another camp will be better. And this is worse what the people thought.

Wherever they send me, I went. And that's it. I didn't look for another camp because you don't know the camp. So sometimes the whole camp disappears.

But somehow you kept going. Somehow you kept on.

I can.

You kept going.

Yeah.

What do you think about that? Did you pray?

Oh, yeah. I brought a tallis. You know what tallis is? Yeah. In Terezin, I was praying. There came one woman. Her name was [PERSONAL NAME].

And she saw the people was throwing the tallis all over. And so she hide one tallis, and she gave me the tallis. Yeah.

Nice.

So you found it there in Theresienstadt. You found it in Theresienstadt.

Theresienstadt, yeah. Yeah.

And what did you do when she gave it to you?

What?

What did you do when she gave it to you?

I was very thankful. Yeah. No, I was looking-- I'm Jew again. [LAUGHS]

How many people survived the death march that you were on?

Not too many.

Not many.

Not too many.

Were there a hundred or-- do you know a number?

No, no. No.

Very few were--

Very few. Very few. I was laying down. And the lice eat me, my body. So I was laying down, and so they took me in the hospital right away. This was lucky that the Russian came right away.

You think you would have lived if they hadn't? Do you think you would have lived if they hadn't come very soon?

Yeah. If?

If they had not come.

Do you think you would have lived--

Yeah, yeah.

--if the Russians hadn't come?

Yeah. Oh, no. If they didn't come, I was dead.

So do you remember liberation or actually you were in the hospital? You were so sick.

Yeah. No.

So could you even be grateful that it was over?

Yeah. Not so grateful because what to do now? What to do? Yeah. If many friends were alive from the-- but the whole liberation, this was nothing. No.

Did you think that you would see your family again?

No. I was glad that I met my sister. So this was all.

How did you keep hope? How did you still have hope?

A home?

Hope.

Hope? I hope one day this will be over. Yeah. Because some people in the camp, they thought this will be always the same. Yeah.

And some people gave up.

Yeah. Yeah.

Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

What?

Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

Yeah. What I will say-- I am happy to be alive after such years of suffering. This was, I hope, this wouldn't again the same, but what we went through. Yeah. I hope this will be the last days from suffering. Yeah. I remember, Piekarsky was his name, you see.

Oh, the cruel--

Piekarsky. Yeah.

Oh, that cruel man.

This is a cruel. I don't know. He said he thought that always, always the same. He had the Stiefel.

Boots.

Yeah.

He had the shiny boots.

He had the special-- and he was the head from the camp. Yeah. And the German, they like it. They like it this way that a Jew is against a Jew. Yeah.

Do you know if he was killed in the end?

Yeah.

Do you know if he was killed in the end?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I know.

Yes, he was?

Sure.

So it didn't help him.

He was killed?

Who?

Piekarsky.

No, he didn't-- no. The police, they took him to Auschwitz. But the time they start, they stop to kill the people in Auschwitz. So he went home to Sosnowiec. But he died at home because now his memory came back.

He thought that it will be always the same. So he died. The friend, he told me because he's from Sosnowiec. He gave me the pictures. He know him. So he said he died.

So the friend knew what happened.

Yeah, yeah.

Did he kill himself? Did he kill himself?

Maybe. Nobody knows. Yeah. Yeah.

Do you think there are things that because of your experiences that you lived your life a certain way?

Yeah.

Are there things in your life that you did because of--

I always hope, thought that one day this will be end. This can't be forever that time.

And are there lessons that you've learned that you would like to pass on to the next generation? What would you like to say to those in the future?

What I-- I hope that our generation will be not so suffered like I was suffering. So I thought that they would have a better life than we have, that what we went through.

OK. Well, we want to thank you very much. Maybe we'll take a break and then get that photo on. OK?

I'll take a break.

This is my mother.

What was her name?

Her name is Ida. Ida.

And last name?

Ida Wulkan. This my mother. This is my mother. His name is Ida Wulkan. And I saw her in 1941 the last time. The last time I saw her there. And because we came to say goodbye when I went to concentration camp.

We went right away to Myslovitz in Germany.

And do you know where she was taken?

She was taken in '42. '42 she was taken with my sister and son-in-law and with their daughter to Auschwitz.

To Auschwitz?

Yeah.

And in this picture she's wearing the star.

The star, yeah.

Do you know what year that was?

This was in '39.

In '39 already.

Yeah.

Right away.

Right away. Yeah. Right away we have to wear this Star of David.

Yeah. This is my wife and my sister-in-law. And this Gus, Greta, William, and this is Ignatz, my mother-in-law. And Gusti and Greta.

Erna?

Greta.

Erna?

Greta.

So that is your wife and her siblings?

Yeah, these are my wife's family.

And her mother.

Yeah, yeah.

And who of them survived?

Who survive? My wife, Ignatz, and-- no, William and Erna. [POLISH].

Erna.

Erna. Erna survived. Ignatz survived. And William and my wife. This is from the whole family survived.

And the others were all killed in camps? The others were all killed in camps?

Yeah, they were all killed.

What are we looking at now?

Yeah. So now we're looking-- this is my-- this is William Steiner and myself. And then you see [PERSONAL NAME] and William, Tiras, [POLISH].



That's OK. Where are you? Where are you? Where is the picture taken?

I don't know where I am.

Oh, that's OK.

I think you're--

[PERSONAL NAME] and her husband, a lawyer. And he didn't survive. And Tiras, William. That's it.

And the picture was taken where?

Taken--

Looks like in the hillside.

In Strumen by Bielsko. The picture is taken by Strumen by Bielsko.

And that was 1936?

1936. Yeah.

Yeah, this is my mother, Martek Wulkan, William Wulkan, and Henry Wulkan, and myself. I survived from the whole family.

You're the only one?

I'm the only one what survived.

And these were your three brothers?

My mother.

And your brothers.

This is my mother. And Marcus Wulkan, my brother, and William my brother, and Henry my brother. And I am survived from the family.

We hope in some small way this is a memorial for them. We hope in some small way this is a memorial for your family who was killed.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

This is a picture in the hospital in Poland when I returned to Poland. This is the only one.

So this is immediately after the war, after liberation.

After, yeah. This is immediately after I came back from the concentration camp.

Yes. And you see a nurse in the background. Do you know how you got this picture? Do you know how you got this photograph?

How the photograph? This was by Dr. Tannenbaum. He took the picture.

This is my picture taken in 1936. It survived by Dr. Tannenbaum, my cousin.

He had the picture.

He took the picture.

This is a picture taken by a policeman in 1941 at the concentration camp in [PLACE NAME], Ternivka.

So this was close to the beginning.

Close to beginning, yeah. This is the-- it's close for the beginning from the camp, concentration camps. And this was a lager for a mill, [NON-ENGLISH].

Oh--

[NON-ENGLISH]

Yeah, it has to do with wood.

A mill.

A mill, yeah.

A mill.

Oh, a mill.

Yeah.

And you're in the back row there with the hat on?

I am back, yeah, with the hat.

Isn't that quite unusual that a picture would have been taken at that time?

Yeah. Yeah. This is a picture taken in the lager in Czechoslovakia, Ternivka. This was the beginning in a larger.

And you got this photo many years later.

Yes. Yeah. I met a friend what we went together in the lager, and he saw me. This was in Tiberias. And he had the picture at home. He survived the picture.

OK.

This is a picture taken in 1946, my wife, Frances, and me, Siegfried.

Is that soon after you got married?

Yeah. OK.

OK.

This is Fanny and my daughter Irena and myself taken in Poland in 1949.

And the next photo?

And the next photo is--

Wait just a moment.

This photo is Fanny, my wife, Itzhak, and myself and Irina, taken in Israel in--

'54 maybe?

No.

'53, '54?

When was your son born?

Oh, in '53.

'53.

1953.

OK.

Yeah. This is my wife, Fanny, and myself, taken in--

'91?

'91.

So the last picture was a long time before that in Israel, right? And this is here in San Francisco. [INAUDIBLE] to the end. That was a lot.

This is the whole-- my family. This is Pavlos Ferenc, Fanny, myself, Ira, my son, and Barbara, my daughter-in-law. And Rogit, my granddaughter. And this is Pablo, my son-in-law. And Yael and Irena, my daughter.

Yes.

Irena.

Right.

OK. On that note with all the family, we want to thank you very much for sharing your experiences with us.

You're welcome.

It's very important--

You're welcome.

--for the future to know. Thank you.