1

Interview with JACOB "COBY" LUBLINER
Holocaust Oral History Project
Date: 8/27/91
Place: San Francisco, Ca
Interviewer: Jack Clark, John Peters
Transcriber: Barbara P. Goldsmith

Q. MY NAME IS JACK CLARK AND THIS IS AUGUST THE 27TH. I AM DOING HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TONIGHT. MY SECOND IS.

Q. ALAN PETERS.

Q. ALAN PETERS AND I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE OUR SUBJECT FOR TONIGHT, COBY LUBLINER.

WOULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF, GIVE YOUR DATE OF BIRTH, AND GIVE US SOME BACKGROUND ON YOURSELF, PLEASE?

A. I'd like to, first of all, my name is pronounced Lubliner traditionally although some members of the family do pronounce it Lubliner.

Q. WOULD YOU SPELL IT FOR ME?

A. It's spelled L-U-B-L-I-N-E-R. It means somebody from Lublin, and probably one of my ancestors either came from or had some dealings with the city of Lublin. My first name

is formerly Jacob, but I've been called Coby in one form or another most of my life. Coby is the Hebrew nickname of Jacob. It's common in Israel, and I was given that nickname because even before I was born, my parents were living in Poland. They were ardent Zionists and they had plans to emigrate to Palestine. And if everthing had gone right, I probably would have been native born Israeli, but things didn't work out quite right for family reasons because my grandmother took ill and by the time things settled down again it was getting more difficult to emigrate to Israel at the time, the British closed the immigration.

So I was born in Lowicz, second largest city in Poland, also the birthplace of Roman Polanski, Arthur Rubenstein and other famous people. May 5, 1935.

My parents were prosperous, reasonably prosperous middle-class Jews. My father was very highly educated.

Q. WHAT DID HE DO?

A. At the time that I was born he worked as an accountant in a bank, but he had

had academic training. He had been a student, a doctoral student of philosophy at the University of Berlin, and he was about a year away from his doctorate when Hitler started, didn't quite come to power, but things started getting really bad for Jewish students in Berlin. So he went back to Poland and without a job. He got married. So and he had a family to support. So he got this job in a cooperative bank as an accountant.

Q. YOUR MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME?

A. My mother's maiden name is Meisler. And there are about six different ways of spelling it. So I won't even bother because Polish Jews were never particularly consistent about how to spell their names. Every name had a potential Russian spelling and a Polish spelling, had a Hebrew spelling, a Yiddish spelling and so on. So unless they are very simple names like Goldberg, don't bother with spelling.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER OR RECALL WHERE YOUR MOTHER WAS FROM?

A. My mother was born in Lowicz, too. Her father was a very well-to-do man.

Q. HOW DID SHE MEET YOUR FATHER; DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. They were introduced by a matchmaker. It was traditional in those circles. And this was in the early thirties. My father at that time, I think he was still a student in Germany.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THE STREET THAT YOU WERE BORN ON?

A. Yes, yes. Well, I was born in a clinic, but the street that I grew up in which was a street called Sigenunna (phonetic) which at that time it means the brick factory street literally. It was just off the main street of Lowicz, just off the center of town.

Right across the street from our apartment was a public school named for Queen Yadwega, one of the early queens of Poland. That's how I learned to read. I learned to read at the age of four by making out the letters on the name of the school.

I was a rather spoiled little boy especially since when I was four I contracted diphtheria. This was just before the war.

Q. DID YOU HAVE A NANNY?

A. Yes, I did have a nanny. I had several nannies, but.

Q. DO YOU RECALL THEIR NAMES?

A. I think -- not at the moment. I loved her very much. I remember she was very young, a very beautiful young woman. She used to sing. She taught me the latest hits of the day. She taught me to sing songs, tangos and such.

Q. DID YOU HAVE SERVANTS OTHER THAN NANNY?

A. No, we didn't actually have servants.

Q. DO YOU RECALL ANY OF YOUR NEIGHBORS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

A. No, I was really too young for that. Well, we lived in an apartment house that was owned by my grandfather. He lived on what is Europe is called the first floor, but in this country is called the the second floor. We lived on the fourth. Also my uncle, that is my mother's brother, and his family also lived in that same apartment house. And in fact his two

daughters, my cousins, who were really my closest playmates, plus another cousin who was the son of my mother's brother. I didn't have -- since I was four at the time the war began, during the time before that I really didn't have any social exposures other than family, so that my playmates were my cousins.

Q. DO YOU FEEL THAT THAT WAS ON PURPOSE?

A. I think it was on purpose because I think that the -- I was not allowed to play with the kids who lived in the back of the house. In addition European society, the better off families live in the front of the apartment house and the poorer families live in the courtyard or over the courtyard; and the kids living in the courtyard were lower class and I was not allowed to play with them. They were Jewish, but I was not allowed to play with them because they were lower class. There was a definite snobbery.

Q. CLASS DISTINCTION?

A. There was a class distinction.

Q. EVEN AMONGST THE JEWS?

A. Very much so. Yes, there were a lot of -- something that people don't often realize -- there were a lot of poor Jews in Poland, very, very poor who would be selling hot bagels at night. Jews had a hard time getting work. Lowicz was the main industrial city in Poland, the center of textile industry, but the unions did not admit Jews. So my uncle owned a textile factory, but he was not allowed to employ Jews because the Polish workers would go on strike if he did. So there were very definite class distinctions, yes.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF CHILDHOOD PRIOR TO SCHOOL OR ANY INCIDENTS OF PREJUDICE?

A. I remember quite a few, yes. Prejudice as such, no. I simply wasn't exposed enough. I was carefully guarded; I was quite sheltered.

Q. DID YOU GO TO TEMPLE?

A. I went to synagogue on holidays, yes. My family was quite orthodox, very orthodox. And my, in fact, my maternal grandfather was the first one in his family, his

generation was the first one in his family not to be rabbis. Before that there were 10 generations of rabbis. I'm a descendent of some well-known rabbis going back to the 18th and 17th centuries.

Q. SO YOU BASICALLY FEEL THAT YOU WERE A PROTECTED CHILD?

A. Very much so.

Q. AND HEALTH?

A. Yes, I was considered delicate. I was skinny. I was, in fact, I had to drink cod liver oil regularly for whatever my condition was. I rather like cod liver oil. In fact, once my mother mixed it in with orange juice and I spat it out because I hated orange juice, but I loved the cod liver oil.

I also remember, you know, one of the, whatever it was, whatever illness it was that I had, I remember that one of the ways that I was treated was by getting cups. You know these very hot cups that was attached to skin. So that even though Poland did have medical schools and very advanced medicine, nevertheless they still used some rather old-fashioned

remedies. If I had a stomach ache, I would get camomile tea like Peter Rabbit.

But my diphtheria was quite a serious illness. Of course my grandfather saw to it that the finest pediatricians in Warsaw came to treat me. And by then, of course, the diphtheria serum had already been discovered, so that I got better. This was the summer just before the war began, the summer of 1939.

Q. WERE THERE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS LIVING WITH YOU OTHER THAN YOUR GRANDFATHER ON THE FIRST FLOOR?

A. There was my grandfather and his second wife and then there was my uncle and his wife and his two daughters. They were all living in the same apartment house.

Q. DO YOU RECALL YOUR UNCLE'S NAME?

A. His name was Isaac or Yitsack or Ichail, Ichail was his Polish nickname.

Q. DO YOU RECALL YOUR GRANDFATHER'S SECOND WIFE'S NAME?

A. Her name was Dora, the same as my mother's name.

Q. DO YOU RECALL HER MAIDEN NAME?

A. No, I don't.

Q. SO LET'S PROGRESS ALONG AND CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL?

A. No, I can't really because I really didn't have a first day at school. I didn't restart school until after the war when I was about almost 10. There were makeshift schools in the ghetto at various times. But I didn't really have any formal schooling.

Q. COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE MAKESHIFT SCHOOLS IN THE GHETTO?

A. Well, I'll get to that because that happened sort of later on.

Q. OKAY. I THINK THAT'S ENOUGH INTRODUCTIONS. LET ME ASK YOU JUST TO START YOUR STORY THEN.

A. Well, I can remember the beginning of the war. First of all, I'm supposed to be here as a Holocaust survivor. I don't consider myself a Holocaust survivor. I consider myself a survivor of World War II, a war in which one of the aspects of the war was the war of Hitler's Germany against the Jewish people. I don't like the word, Holocaust. It's a

pretentious literary word as far as I'm concerned and I'm not comfortable with it. I don't know, somebody must have dreamed it up sometime after the war. But I never thought of myself as being part of the Holocaust. I always refer to it as the war.

And I can remember once in August of 1939 I was riding in a streetcar with my grandfather. He was out, I think he was taking me out for dinner or snack or something like that; and he was saying to me very casually, you know there will be a war, there's going to be a war. I got very scared. I didn't know what a war meant exactly. I was four years old. He seemed to say it in a pretty matter of fact way. He certainly had the means to escape. He was a very wealthy man. He was the, I think the principal stockholder in a local streetcar company, for example, and he owned a lot of real estate and so on. He probably would have been able to leave Poland, but he didn't. So he probably didn't quite grasp the full significance of what the war would mean.

I remember the first day of the war

quite well. It was the 1st of September. It was a beautiful day and we were having lunch. I remember we were having fish for lunch, it was fried fish, my mother and my father and I; and we had as usual in the 1930s there was a big radio in the dining room. And on that radio we heard the news that German had invaded Poland and the air raids began almost immediately; and within a few days the Germans had marched in. The resistance didn't take very long and there was still a -- I remember having to go into air raid shelters a lot, but this was already under the German occupation.

And within a very short time the Germans organized what was one of the, to become one of the infamous ghettos in Europe, the ghetto of Lowicz. It was in a very -- it was in what had been a very poor Jewish neighborhood called Bawoodit (phonetic). The Lowicz ghetto has been very well documented in films and such, so I don't think I need to go into any details about that.

My father was from a different part of Poland and he was born in a small town. My

father's name was Michel, by the way, Michel spelled without an E, spelled M-I-C-H-E-L. And he was born in a very small town further east in Poland, more in central Poland, and most of his family had moved to a city called Piotrkow, spelled P-I-O-T-R-K-O-W, with an accent on the O, which is not very far from Lowicz. It was maybe 50, 60 miles and would take two hours by train normally. But in those days the distance was a lot more than that because of the peculiar position of Lowicz. Lowicz was developed as an industrial city by the Tsars back in the time of Napolean. And in order to build up the industry, the textile industry specifically, they needed uniforms for the Russian army fighting Napolean, they had to import weavers from Germany, Saxony specifically. So a very large ethnic German community settled in Lowicz, and because of that Lowicz was renamed Litzvanstat by the Germans and was annexed into Germany proper. Whereas Piotrkow was only -- had been in the same district, Piotrkow had actually been in the province of Lowicz remained in the protectorate of Poland which was governed

by a German governor. But when the time came to purify the German Empire of Jews, of course the first priority was applied to what was considered Germany proper.

Therefore, it was the conditions in Lowicz became harsh much sooner than they had in Piotrkow and my father managed to somehow keep up a correspondence with his brother and sister in Piotrkow. And that's when he decided to escape. I don't know exactly how he got the money to pay for the escape. I think that he managed to hide a diamond somewhere or other. Almost immediately when the Germans came in, the Gestapo started coming around confiscating anything of any value. But he managed to hide something, a diamond or a gold coin or something like that. And then he used that in order to pay for our escape. And this was done with the help of some Polish peasants. I don't know how the arrangements were made.

Let me just tell you as an aside that that information is available only I haven't got to it yet. My father who died a few years ago left a very, a complete set of

memoirs, in Yiddish, which I'm in the process of translating, but it's a very slow process; it's very time consuming. So I'm still working on his early childhood on the river of this little town, in this bucolic little town in Russia. It was Poland, Poland, it was part of Tsarist Russia. I'm sure he'll get around to the story of how he escaped, but I don't know the details of it yet.

Anyway, it took two or three nights. It was right around April 1st. I remember that it was April Fools Day when it happened. We had to spend the night in barns, and a lot of the time we were going on this hay cart. And we had to do some walking, and somehow or other we managed to get to Czuchow. And Czuchow at that time had a ghetto, but you'd never know it. Basically a certain section of the city, which included some of the best parts of the city, including the main square, were set aside as the area for the Jews to live, which is where the Jews had been living anyway.

Other than that, for a number of years we had complete freedom. We could go to

the beach on the river. We could take a train to go to the beach on the river. So it was tremendous change from Lowicz. And this must have been been from 1940 until perhaps '42. We had this relatively free life even though it was circumscribed by this definition of the ghetto. This is where some people who had been teachers before the war started these makeshift schools. It was sort of a kindergarten. I was just about kindergarten age then. I already knew how to read and write, but we learned some rudiments of Hebrew and arithmetic and such. It wasn't anything really extensive or regular, but people did it in their own homes.

Other than that, for those two years or so, I think it was about two years, it seemed like a normal life. And then gradually things started getting harsher as the Germans started clamping down. First of all, the ghetto was moved to much more run-down, much more restricted, smaller part of town where we had to leave in very tight quarters. Before that we had very nice apartment. We lived in -- we shared an apartment with my uncle, my father's

brother. My father's brother lived there. His name was Fishel. He lived there with his wife and his three sons; two of whom were teen-agers. The youngest was about my age. He was crippled; he was in a wheelchair. We never became playmates. He was very difficult kid to talk to or play with. I managed to make some friends outside of the family then. As I said, we were quite free to move around.

So then we were moved into much more cramped quarters, much more run-down, much more restricted, much harsher in other parts of town. People were still working. In fact, there was some industry there that was German owned. There was some glass industry and there was a plywood factory, and that's where people worked.

Q. WAS YOUR FATHER ABLE TO WORK?

A. Yes, my father was able to work.

Q. AND HE WAS IN A BANK AT THAT TIME?

A. No, no. By then he was working in industry.

Q. DO YOU RECALL WHAT INDUSTRY?

A. I think it was the plywood factory.

Q. AS A LABORER OR AS A?

A. I'm not sure, I don't remember that.

Eventually, I mean I suppose around 1942 or so, the, what we'll call the actions began. Actions meant that people would get deported to death camps or work camps. We never quite knew where they went, for various reasons, various circumstances and the number of Jews in the ghetto kept dwindling. And until at one point we were all moved, well. I think the crucial event happened in November, I think it was November of 1943, where there was the main action took place. We were, it was a drizzly, cold day. We were all supposed to report on this big square, arranged in families. And the SS officers would simply go by, walk by these groups of people, and they would just, he had this sort of a riding crop and he would point it one way or the other. One way meant that the family was supposed to be taken away and the other way meant that the family would stay.

My parents and I were standing in one group. My uncle and aunt and their son,

their crippled son, their teen-aged sons had been sent off to some labor detail somewhere else. I'm not sure where, but they were not there at the time.

It was pretty obvious that people were being judged on the basis of their capacity for doing forced labor. So, and they were not breaking up families. They were not bothering with that. If one, any family with a baby, for example, would just be sent off immediately. My uncle and aunt tried to hold their son up between them so as to hide the fact that he was crippled. But right at the moment that the SS officer walked by, somehow he collapsed and his condition became pretty obvious. So immediately he was sent off.

And somehow we remained. I don't know exactly why. I was about eight at the time. I think I was rather, I may have been tall for my age so that they may have thought that I might be a potential laborer. There were very few kids my age who were left. So then we were sent to a work camp, a labor camp, which was attached to this plywood factory on the

outskirts of town. And then that was the beginning, another relatively stable period. Conditions were cramped. Most people just lived sort of in dorm like circumstances, but my parents happened to be friends, they had this friend who was a carpenter who built, out of some scrap plywood, he built a little shack that he and his wife and my parents and I lived in.

And this was a time that I remember with some fondness. We had musical performances, some talented musicians there. There was a violinist named Katchka who would give a concert for the rest of the camp. Sometimes even the Germans would come and listen. We were guarded by camp guards who were a lot more Lithuanian or Ukrainian. They were really mean. Once in a while there would be German guards. They were a little bit nicer.

In fact, I remember one time that my friends and I were playing soccer, I don't remember what we used for a ball, and the ball rolled over right to, right next to the guard post, and this particular guard had the reputation of being very tough. But I didn't

know that. So I ran over to get the ball and when I got there, he called me over to him. Then I realized I should be scared, but instead he just happened to be having his lunch. So he gave me a piece of his sausage.

You know, the Germans guards were actually nicer than some of the other eastern European ones, the Lithuanians and the Ukranians. There were some Mongolian, I think they were the Kolmick nationality from the Soviet Union who had volunteered to fight the Soviets. They had joined the German side. I think this is sort of relevant to remember right now with all these nationalities, when they split off from the Soviet Union, that a lot of them actually did that in World War II and they did it by joining the Nazis. The Ukranians certainly did, the Lithuanians did, many others.

I'd like to take a break.

(A break was taken.)

A. When I think back on it, of course things weren't really as stable as all that because there were purges and actions on a

relatively smaller action. They weren't as obvious as the one where we all gathered on that November, drizzly November night, November morning. And when all of a sudden I suppose that in one stroke the Jewish population of Piotrkow may have been reduced from maybe ten or twenty thousand to maybe two thousand or three thousand. But I don't know how many of us were actually living in that labor camp, probably a couple of thousand people.

There was one time when, for example, anybody with an academic degree was taken out and shipped off. And it was just a shear stroke of luck that my father never finished his doctorate because anybody who had a doctorate, any kind of a university degree, was just picked out and sent off. Things were pretty arbitrary.

Well, then the end came, the end of that part of existence came around November of 1944 when I think the Russians were already advancing, pretty much had fallen. Of course I didn't know that. There were rumors, people heard something from somebody. There were

rumors that people had escaped and would return every so often. We heard stories of partisan resistance fighters, but it was pretty vague. This is the kind of thing that to be found out about after the war.

It was time to have us shipped off into Germany. So I don't remember the details that led up to that. That is to remember that we were loaded into cattle cars, very tight, and started rolling westward. We didn't quite know what was happening. We didn't know where we were going. You know, I remember that at some point the men and the women were separated. Older kids were separated by sex. That is, the older boys went with their fathers and the older girls went with their mothers. Younger children remained with their mothers. I was borderline.

I was nine and my parents had to quickly decide who I was to go with. I ended up going with my father. And we ended up in Buchenwald. My mother, I found out later, was sent to Ravensbruck. In Buchenwald we were put in, not in the main camp, but a transit camp. Apparently when people first arrived in

Buchenwald, they first were put into this transit camp before their status was decided before they became regular Buchenwald inmates.

Buchenwald was one of the oldest concentration camps. It went all the way back to the beginning of the Nazi regime. There were all kinds of people there. There were people who were in prison there because they were Communists. They wore red triangles because they were homosexuals, because they were Jehovah's Witnesses; and you could tell their status by the color of their triangles. Of course Jews wore yellow triangles.

There were also some Danish policemen who had been sent to the concentration camp because they had helped the Jews escape from Denmark and they were caught doing so. I remember one, my father got friendly with one named Ebeanson, very, very nice man. We didn't even know why they were there. We found out later they were there because they helped the Jews escape from Denmark. They weren't bragging about it.

Well, we lived in a compound, a sort

of a huge bungalow with bunks. Each bungalow had its capo, a prisoner in charge of the other prisoners. Ours was named Karl. He was a veteran Communist who had been there since the beginning, since 1933. He was Jewish, but he was there as a Communist, not as a Jew. He knew Yiddish, but he was a German Jew and he was a very tough capo. He didn't tolerate any misbehavior. He was responsible to the Germans, and he lived up to his responsibility. He probably believed ultimately in the triumph of the revolution and all that, but he was doing his job.

About half of our barracks was occupied by some Russian prisoners of war. This was the first time I had met some Russians. I don't know why prisoners of war were kept in Buchenwald because it was not a POW camp. But that's where they were. They were always singing, constantly singing Russian songs, mostly songs, a lot of songs about Stalin, and they really worshipped Stalin. They were talking about going back to Russia and fighting for Stalin. They never had enough to eat. We

used to get some of -- the Russians seemed to need more, they were they would sometimes trade their food, they would often trade their food rations for cigarettes. They were very addictive smokers, more so than the Polish Jews perhaps. So that my father, for example, would trade his cigarette ration. My father had also been a smoker, but I think one of his life long sayings was a Jew must be able to control himself. So he simply, for the duration of the war, he dropped his smoking habit and he traded his cigarette rations for extra food. So the Russians had to smoke. So they never had enough to eat. They were always hungry.

One group of Russian prisoners was assigned to peel the potatoes. That is, we were getting the peeled potatoes, but the peels were going to be fed to the pigs on a nearby farm. Well, one of these Russian prisoners was caught eating one of these potato peels. Karl apparently caught him or somebody reported him and Karl got him.

Well, Karl's way of punishing people was to hit them with a special stick he had.

The stick was called dormanschier. It was a German ward meaning translator. In other words, he would say if you don't understand what I'm saying, here's my translator. It was a beautifully carved stick. And I remember that when he was sort of hitting this Russian prisoner on the head and the stick broke. I mean, it was very sad, realizing that this was a Communist, a veteran Communist beating up these Soviet soldiers, a very sad irony.

I was in Buchenwald for a total of a month while I guess my fate was being decided. There were about 15 of us boys in this particular group, including one very young boy, one boy who was only about two years old. I don't know how he ever got there. I think he got there because he didn't have any parents. He was an orphan, but he was with his older brothers and the brothers kept him. There was simply no choice. He had no mother to go with. He only had his older brothers. So that's how he ended up in Buchenwald. Otherwise, we were mostly mostly, you know, it was a group of maybe 15 boys. Most of them were in their teen, early

teens. I was one of the younger ones. I was nine at the time.

And then one day, it was a Saturday. It was decided that this group of boys would be sent away, that Buchenwald was not the place for us. And the time came to say good-bye to my father, too. I can't really recall how I felt at the time. That is what happens when you go through experiences like this is that your feelings gradually get numbed. The Germans were very clever about that. I think Bettelheim points that out in one of his books about this very gradual dehumanization. They didn't do their things quite so suddenly. They dehumanized people very gradually so that each step seemed like only a small step, and you sort of accepted it. Everything, we sort of accepted things as they came. Nothing was ever drastic enough to provoke immediate resistance.

Well, we were at first put in one as usual, these cattle cars. But at some point or other we were transferred into a passenger train. It was very strange being in a passenger

train.

I should mention among the experiences that I had in Buchenwald was that it was where I saw my first movie. There was a movie theatre which was mainly there for the Germans, but I think once a week they had showings for prisoners. So I remember seeing a newsreel with Hitler, of course, and a comedy in a Bavarian dialect which I didn't understand.

They were all so, I remember there were prostitutes for the Germans and I think prostitutes for the privileged prisoners, too.

Buchenwald was an elite camp and obviously a little snotnosed kid from Poland did not belong in an elite camp like Buchenwald. So I was sent away. And it was interesting going in this passenger train. I remember changing trains from a regular train. We were always in a special, in a separate compartment. Of course, we never mingled with German passengers. Of course, waiting for a train on a platform there was this group of kids standing around. And I remember that the German officer who was with us, I'm not sure if he was a Gestapo or SS

or even an army person. I don't remember exactly. I remember he was wearing a very dark uniform. A woman asked him where we were coming from, and he said from Weimar, not from Buchenwald, Weimar which was the nearest city to Buchenwald, and where were we going to. We were going to Bergen. Bergen was a German town that I had never heard of. And that's all. She shouldn't ask any more questions.

We didn't in fact get to Bergen. We got off the train in a little town called Bergen and then we got put in a truck and taken to a nearby place called Belsen. So the camp was actually called Bergen-Belsen. Bergen was a town nearby and Belsen was the village near this town. This was where the camp was. And that's where I spent the last few months of the war.

We were sent to the children's compound which was actually one-half of this bungalow. On one side were women with babies. On the other side were just children of various ages. There were three groups of children. They were all Jewish. The largest group came from Slovakia, from Bratislavia. Then there was

another group from Amsterdam and then there was the Polish group from Czuchow.

Why we were there I didn't know at the time until I found out later that every so often, every month or two, there would be a delegation of men in suits coming, very formal looking men in dark suits from the Red Cross in Geneva. And they were being shown around. They were being shown how well these women with children, how well these little kids were being treated. So I was very lucky to end up in this show place. It was all children under 16, I think that was the official age limit. In the Dutch group, there were, there was a boy and a girl who were over 16, but they had lied about their ages because they had younger siblings; and in order to stay with their younger siblings they probably lied about their ages and said they were 15 and they were sent to this compound also.

I have a theory about Anna Frank. She was sent to Bergen-Belsen with her older sister, and at the time that they were first admitted, they were probably asked their ages.

Anna was, I think, 15 when she was sent there. But she probably lied about her age in order to stay with her older sister. Because nobody in our group died. We were all fed very well. We even had a doctor on the premises taking care of us. So that if she had told the truth about her age, if they had lied the other way around; for example, if her sister had said she was under 16, she probably would have survived. Nobody really knows what happened to her at the end. But this is my speculation.

It was, anyway our life was not particularly difficult. We were reasonably well fed, we were not mistreated in any way, we were able to play in the snow. It was the winter of 1945, the beginning of 1945. But right across the street from the -- there was a dirt road, I couldn't really call it a street. From our compound was the crematorium for the camp where the corpses were being burned. As time went on corpses were piled up faster than they could be burned. So that every morning you would look out and there would be a huge pile of corpses. And of course we could see the regular camp

prisoners who were being starved. I think they were being deliberately starved. They could barely walk. They were like really walking skeletons practically. And towards the end of that period they started feeding on one another. As soon as one of them did, someone else would start to eat his flesh. They were called Musselmens for some reason. It's a German word meaning Moslem. I don't know why they were called that, but this was a nickname for them. This was a nickname for these almost dead walking corpses.

Anyway, one day my buddies and I were playing outside the compound and somebody -- we may have even have been playing soccer. European boys, as soon as they have something to kick around, start playing soccer. I don't know what we were kicking. Somebody called my name, and it just so happened that a group of women from one of the other parts of the camp walked by, and it turned out that it was Czuchow, from the town I had been living. In fact that she had been my kindergarten teacher; and she told me that my mother was in the same camp. She was

in a different section of the camp in a work detail and she couldn't, so she couldn't see me. But when my mother heard that I was in that particular area of the camp she decided that she was not going to ask permission. She just forced her way. She was beaten to within an inch of her life. But somehow she managed to get through.

At that time I had no idea where either my mother or my father were, of course. So there was my mother and we were reunited. And I managed to get permission from the woman who was directing our compound, who was a Ukranian woman, very strange. The Ukranians, I generally think of Ukranians of being anti-Semites, but this women named Luba was an absolutely maarvelous person. She came to the U.S. after the war. In fact, I remember something in the 1950s reading in Life magazine that she had just become a naturalized American. I think she got written up in the American press in 1945 because this was mentioned as something that had been known. She was known as the angel of Bergen-Belsen. She

really was. She did an absolutely marvelous job of taking care of us, getting food for us, always getting a little something extra for us.

So I got her permission to get my mother some extra food, some of our food. My friends thought that that was strange that I would ask permission. I mean, their philosophy was you don't ask permission for anything. You just do it behind somebody's back. That wasn't my way. I guess I was little and naive. So I just asked if it was okay if I gave my mother some of my food and she said okay. So it helped keep my mother alive.

But not only was my mother there, but my aunt, my father's sister, was there with her and a whole group of women from the same city. They had stuck together. They had been helping one another when they were in Ravensbruck. They were all sent to Ravensbruck, which was famous as a place where one of the places where the Germans were conducting medical experiments on women. And the crucial thing to avoid getting sent to this experimental lab was to keep working. If any one of them got sick,

the others would practically carry her to work. There was tremendous solidarity that had built up among these women; and they all survived. They all helped one another survive. There was tremendous spirit among them.

So it certainly made life easier to know that my mother was alive and in the same camp. And this was already, I guess, March of 1945. And then in around the beginning of April, a typhus epidemic spread through the camp. I got a rather mild case. But what it meant was that on April 15th, the day that the British army came in, I was sick in bed. I couldn't be out there and celebrate.

When I think, the story of Bergen-Belsen and all the number of people who died there, the number of corpses that were found by the British is pretty well known and it's pretty well documented.

My mother and I, my mother got quite seriously ill after the liberation. And there was a period of several weeks when it was not certain if she was going to be alive or if she was going to be alive, whether she would have

her sanity because she was both physically ill and she was hallucinating, whether her mind was going to be all there.

But she made it all right. And we were moved to what had been a German army base, a place called Honna, just a couple of miles away, and that became the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp which eventually became the main one, in fact, the only one in the whole British zone of Germany. In the American zone there were quite a few of them, but in northern Germany, in the British zone this was the only one. It became a whole center of Jewish life for Germany. And this was where my mother -- this is where I really began school. I was almost 10 when I first started going to school.

And my mother and my aunt and I were living in what had been probably some officers quarters in this army base. We had no idea about my father until one day in May, it was a Sunday morning, it was a very warm, sunny day, I slept late. And when I woke up, my father was there. There was no way that he could have let us know that he was coming because the phones

weren't working, hardly anything was working at that time in Europe. What had happened with my father was that he had been after Buchenwald, he had been sent on this forced march. Typically in these marches one out of 10 survived. My father was definitely a survivor.

He, somehow he got taken to Czechoslovakia, and that's where he was liberated. Then he made his way to Poland to see if he could reestablish some contacts. And the Red Cross was preparing lists of survivors which were being posted all over Europe. But I have a feeling that they didn't bother taking down people who were sick because they figured they wouldn't survive anyway. So my mother and I didn't get on the list. So my father didn't find our names on the list. So he assumed that we were dead until he ran into some acquaintances of his who said, you know, Michel, your wife and son and your sister are in Germany. They're in Bergen-Belsen and my father couldn't believe that. He just thought no, you must be mistaken. But somebody else managed to make his way from Germany to Poland. It was

quite an undertaking to go from Poland to Germany or vice versa. You sometimes had to wait three days for a train to come by.

Well, so he decided that he would take a chance and try to make his way to Germany. And sure enough he came to the right place at the right time. So I think that our family was one of the rather rare ones where a whole nuclear family, actually we all survived separately, but we managed to survive.

As I said, my father had a really -- I mean he had been -- my father was a scholar, not really a man of the world in the usual sense, but he had a tremendous instinct for survival. Like for example, like getting us out of Lowicz ghetto before things became impossible because all the rest of my family except for one uncle, my mother's brother, died of starvation in the Lowicz ghetto. My father would have been one of the wealthier men in Lowicz, died of starvation as well as her brother and his wife and three daughters and my other cousins and aunts and so on. Everybody died. So my father knew at the right time that it was time to get

out.

Then there was another time, one of the actions that took place, it was not quite clear who was going to be taken out. But there was a Jewish police within the ghetto. They wore these special hats. Policemen like hats. Other than that, they didn't have uniforms, but they had these hats. They were universally hated by the Jews of course because they were working for the Nazis. But when there was a danger that we might get sent off, my father somehow, I don't know how he did it, managed to get himself a policeman's hat, and for an hour or so he pretended to be a Jewish policeman. So I don't know if we would have survived that particular action without that.

Well, after the war, we spent another almost six years in Germany for various reasons. One reason was that my parents, of course, as I told you at the beginning, had been ardent Zionists before I was even born. And of course the natural thing to do right after the war, of course we would all go to Palestine. Their Zionism wasn't really diminished any by

the war. In fact, if anything, it was strengthened it was the feeling was that Jews had to be in their own country to be sure of survival.

But when the time came for, to get the certificate, which is what those visas were called, for getting there, my mother had to undergo a medical checkup; and it turned out that she had contracted TB. And the Israeli climate is not the best one in the world for someone with TB. So that this happened around 1946, '47. So we had to give up, for the time being, going to Palestine.

It is said my mother went to the Magic Mountain. She went to a sanitorium in Switzerland which is where people with TB went back then. And my father, my father somehow became a teacher. He hadn't been a teacher before the war, but he was known as a scholar. One of the first things he did, once we got ourselves sort of established after the war in this refugee camp, was to find, he found out that one of his old professors in Berlin was teaching at a university in Marbrook, which is a

small town near Frankfurt, a very old university town. So he contacted him and this professor, whether out of guilt or whatever, got him admitted to the university just to write his thesis. So my father finally got his Ph.D.

And once he did that, he wanted to go back to a scholarly kind of life; and since it became apparent that because the Jews who had gathered in this refugee camp, there were not only Jews who had survived the war. A lot of Jews who had escaped to Russia during the course of the war were coming back from Russia. They also came to Bergen-Belsen. It became a big center for Jews who would somehow come from different parts of Europe. Of course the western European Jews went right back home. The Belgian and French Jews naturally went back to France or Belgium or wherever they were from. There was no question about it. But the eastern European Jews didn't particularly want to go home. They knew about the anti-Semitism that was there. The eastern European Jews really for the most part no longer felt that Poland or Hungary or whatever was no longer their home.

So while they were deciding where to go next, whether to Israel or to the United States or Canada or Austraila, this Bergen-Belsen DP camp became like a miniature Israel. It was organized in a -- the political organization was even similar to Israel. The same political parties as in Israel, the same kind of political influence pedaling as in Israel. Yiddish, not Hebrew, was the official language of the camp.

So one of the things that my father became was the editor of the camp newspaper and he also became the principal of the high school even though he had never been a teacher before. So he had created this new career for himself as a result of the war.

And then for awhile we lived on the -- we moved to a suburb of Hamburg, the Warbrook family, a very famous, wealthy Jewish banking and merchant family originally from Hamburg, but they moved to New York, but kept this estate on the outskirts of Hamburg, had, I don't know if donated or loaned the estate for use as a boarding school for Jewish kids. So my

father became the director of that, too; at least he became the academic director of that. So I lived there for awhile. It was a very pleasant life. This is while my mother was in Switzerland. So it wasn't exactly a stable life, but it was sort of an enjoyable life for those five or six years of my early teens that I spent in Germany after the war.

It was obvious that it had to end somewhere and my thought was that it would end in Israel. But somehow, for economic reasons or whatever, my parents decided that they better come to the United States rather than Israel. I think that after the establishment of the State of Israel the economic conditions in Israel were not that easy; and my mother had to take it easy for awhile and they felt that they could make a better future for themselves in the United States and they needed someplace with a dry climate for my mother. So I don't know on what basis they settled on Los Angeles. They hadn't heard of smog. They could have gone to Denver, I suppose, but maybe they hadn't heard of Denver.

So that's how in 1950, when I was 15 years old, we, in November, we took a ship from Bremen that took us to New Orleans, and then we took the Southern Pacific across to Los Angeles.

And my father almost immediately got work as a Hebrew teacher for the Jewish school system there. And that was a career, he had a long successful career as a Hebrew teacher in Los Angeles. And I've been in California ever since except for a few years in New York and Paris.

(BY NEW VOICE).

Q. WHERE DID YOU LIVE IN LOS ANGELES; DO YOU REMEMBER?

A. Yes, first we lived in Boyle Heights.

Q. REALLY?

A. Yes.

Q. THAT'S WHERE MY MOTHER GREW UP ORIGINALLY.

A. Really.

Q. SHE'S FROM L.A. ORIGINALLY. THAT'S WHY I HAD TO ASK.

A. Did she go to Roosevelt High?

Q. NO. SHE LIVED THERE FOR A SHORT TIME.

A. I see.

Q. AND THEN SHE MOVED BUT SHE WENT TO DORCEY HIGH, BUT SHE FIRST GREW UP THERE. I HAD TO ASK.

BY MR. CLARK:

Q. WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET UP AND WALK AROUND /STREUBG YOU DISCUSSED EARLIER IN YOUR INTERVIEW ABOUT AN UNCLE WITH A CRIPPLED CHILD. DID YOU LEARN AS TO WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM OR WHERE THEY ENDED UP OR DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THEM AFTER THE INCIDENT OF BEING SEPARATED ON THE SQUARE?

A. Well, I assume they were sent to Treblinka or Majdanek, one of the extermination camps.

Q. NO WORD EVER FILTERED BACK?

A. No.

Q. TO YOUR FAMILY FROM THEM AGAIN?

A. No, of course not.

Q. AND I'M JUST AMAZED AT THE EXPLANATION OF THE CAMP THAT YOU WERE IN, THAT

YOU WERE ABLE TO LIVE IN A SHACK THAT WAS BUILT FOR YOU. WAS THERE NOT SOME TYPE OF SUPERVISION OR PEOPLE, THE GUARDS HAD TO KNOW WHERE YOU WERE. WHY WERE YOU ALLOWED TO BE IN THE SHACK AND NOT CONFINED WITH THE REST OF THE PEOPLE?

A. Well, it was within the same, within the camp grounds. It was a very small area. It was really just a yard with a couple of dorms and then some shacks that happened to be there, and I don't remember that being a problem. As long as we were within the camp area I don't think that was a problem.

Q. I KEEP GETTING THE FEELING THAT YOU WERE A PRIVILEGED GROUP OR THAT THERE WAS SOME REASON THAT YOU WERE PERMITTED TO BE UNSUPERVISED.

A. No, we were definitely supervised. There was no question about our being supervised.

Q. WERE YOU REQUIRED TO WEAR A PATCH, WERE YOU TATTOOED?

A. No, no, not within the labor camp. Since we were confined, there was no need for that. We were not allowed outside the camp

except to go to work in the factory.

Q. WERE THERE NOT RECORDS OF YOU KEPT? FOR INSTANCE, YOU DISCUSSED BEING ABLE TO LIE ABOUT YOUR AGE AND SO FORTH.

A. Right. I'm not sure about that. I don't know how it was with the Dutch kids. I don't know about that. I do know that there were those two Dutch kids who had lied about their age in order to get into the children's compound. Whether they had records with them I don't know.

Q. ARE YOU AWARE OF RECORDS, OF YOUR RECORDS BEING SENT FROM CAMP TO CAMP OR WITH YOU OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A. I don't think so. I don't remember any paper being carried by the guard who took us from one camp to another. I think we were just bodies.

Q. AND YOU HAD NO PASSPORTS?

A. No.

Q. SO YOU COULD EVEN LIE ABOUT YOUR NAME?

A. I suppose. I'm not sure about that. Those are details that I didn't

particularly focus on.

Q. ANOTHER QUESTION I HAVE IS ABOUT THE CIGARETTES. I AM JUST AMAZED THAT THERE WERE CIGARETTE RATIONS. IS THIS BECAUSE IT WAS A CAMP THAT WAS INSPECTED BY THE RED CROSS THAT YOU HAD THESE VARIOUS RATIONS?

A. I think cigarettes were acknowledged as a human need.

Q. WHAT TYPE OF FOOD DID YOU EAT?

A. Very simple, black bread, potatoes, occasionally some kind of processed meat, very small amounts.

Q. DO YOU RECALL EVER BEING HUNGRY?

A. I don't think so. No, I don't personally don't ever recall being hungry.

Q. WITHIN THE CAMP --

A. When you say "the camp," you know there were a lot of different camps and different types of camps that I was in. So when you say "the camp," which camp are you referring to?

Q. ANY OF THEM.

A. Sure.

Q. BASICALLY IT'S A GENERAL TERM. I'M

TRYING TO EX PLAIN, ON YOUR INTERVIEW, CONDITIONS. APPARENTLY CONDITIONS WERE MUCH BETTER AT SOME OF THE CAMPS THAN OTHERS. AT THE SAME TIME, I AM JUST AMAZED AT ALL OF THE VARIOUS AND SUNDRY, I MEAN CONCERTS AND THINGS. OF COURSE I KNOW THAT WERE SPECIAL CAMPS SET UP, THAT WERE SET UP TO MAKE LOOK.

A. Yes.

Q. GOOD FOR VISITING DIGNITARIES?

A. That's right.

Q. AND THAT USUALLY PRISONERS WERE HAND CHOSEN TO BE IN THOSE CAMPS BECAUSE YOU LOOKED HEALTHY, YOU WERE HEALTHY, YOU WERE AN ATTRACTIVE CROWD, YOU WERE ABLE TO BE THE ROLE MODELS FOR THE CAMPS THAT WERE BEING SET UP BY THE GERMANS. EVEN THE PROSTITUTION FOR THE GERMANS, AS WELL AS THE PRISONERS, THAT JUST ASTOUNDS ME, THE VARIOUS AND SUNDRY THINGS THAT HAD HAPPENED.

A. These were for capos and other privileged prisoners.

Q. RIGHT. THERE WAS NO COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR FATHER UNTIL AFTER?

A. That's right.

Q. SO THAT YOU ABSOLUTELY HAD NO INFORMATION AS TO HIS WHEREABOUTS OR ANYTHING. AND THEN WHEN YOUR MOTHER WENT TO SWITZERLAND, DID SHE VISIT YOU OR DID YOU VISIT HER?

A. No, no. I think she may have come back, she came back once. Yes, she did visit once. She was there for about two years, I think, and I think she visited once after about a year. I never got to visit her, no.

Q. I TAKE IT YOU ARE THE ONLY CHILD?

A. Yes.

Q. ARE YOUR PARENTS STILL LIVING?

A. My mother is. My father died three years ago. I think I mentioned that.

Q. WHAT DID YOUR FATHER DIE OF?

A. He died of cancerous condition, tumor.

Q. AND THEN AFTER YOU CAME TO LOS ANGELES, WHAT PROFESSION DID YOU GO INTO?

A. Well, I went to high school. And then when the time came to choose college, it turned out that I was good in math and science. I was also good in languages, but I didn't think that as having any practical value. And there

was one thing I was definitely interested in was going into something that had a practical value. It didn't occur to me to become anything like a writer or artist. I had a very definite need for security. So I thought that being good in math I'd become an engineer. So I went to Cal Tech. I was admitted to Cal Tech, which was a matter of great prestige for my parents. But then I went to graduate school and somehow I decided I liked the academic racket. So that's where I've been ever since. I teach engineering at UC Berkley.

Q. AND ARE YOU MARRIED?

A. Yes.

Q. DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

A. Yes, one girl, grown.

Q. MAY I HAVE THEIR NAMES?

A. I have a son named Eric who is 28; I have a daughter named Anna who is 22, almost 23; and a daughter named Rachel who is 21.

Q. HOW DID YOU MEET YOUR WIFE?

A. I met my wife when I was a graduate student in New York. One of my main modes of recreation was folk dancing, and I met her at a

folk dance event.

Q. IS SHE JEWISH?

A. Yes.

Q. I THINK THAT BASICALLY SUMS UP MY QUESTIONS. I'M SURE THAT YOU HAVE A FEW

BY MR. PETERS:

Q. I HAVE A FEW. GOING BACK TO LOWICZ AND YOUR EARLY DAYS, WHAT WAS YOUR LANGUAGE AT HOME?

A. That's a good question. We --

Q. POLISH, YIDDISH?

A. Both. In fact, my parents' generation was sort of a transitional generation. In the usual situation, my parents generation was that the men spoke Yiddish and the women spoke Polish. So and that's how my parents communicated with each other because they both understood both languages, but my father would generally speak to my mother in Yiddish and she would answer in Polish. My grandfather spoke hardly any Polish at all. His Polish was very broken. Partly because he had grown up under Tsarist rule where the practical language was Russian, not Polish. So he had

enough of a command of Russian at that time to do his business dealings.

Q. YOU GREW UP BILINGUAL?

A. I grew up really speaking just Polish. I didn't learn Yiddish until I was in the DP camp in Bergen-Belsen where Yiddish was the official language. Since there were Jews from so many people from different countries there Yiddish was the common language. That's how I became fluent in Yiddish. Although Hebrew was the language of schools, but other than that Yiddish was the common spoken language.

Q. AND YOU WERE A VERY OBSERVANT JEWISH FAMILY I GATHER?

A. My parents, yes.

Q. YOUR PARENTS?

A. That's right.

Q. AND YOU OBSERVED ALL THE HOLIDAYS?

A. Yes.

Q. YOU SAID YOUR FATHER WAS ORTHODOX?

A. Yes.

Q. HE HAD A BEARD?

A. No, he didn't have a beard. He had his own version of orthodoxy. In fact, he was

a, when he was a young man he had a beard, but somehow after he went to Berlin he decided that that wasn't necessary. So he was orthodox in his own way.

Q. BUT YOU KEPT A KOSHER KITCHEN?

A. Yes, definitely.

Q. AND ALL?

A. Kept the Sabbath very strictly, yes.

Q. I WANT TO GO BACK TO --

A. Let me just indicate something very interesting. There were some aspects in which life in this, the DP camp in Bergen-Belsen recreated shtetl life even though the shtetl was no longer in existence. For example, I remember that we would, I don't know if you know what a chullant is. A chullant is sort of a traditional Jewish dish that's in one pot of potatoes and beans and some kind of meat, which is the traditional way of cooking it is to take it to a bakery and have it just stay overnight in the oven. The oven had already been banked for the night. That is, you're not allowed to keep the fire going on the Sabbath. There was enough retained heat that this dish would just

bake overnight and it was traditional to wrap the pot in paper and put string around it. I remember doing that.

I remember that my mother would have to buy a chicken. She would buy a live chicken. It would be my job to take the chicken to have it slaughtered by a kosher butcher, not a butcher, but a slaughterer. So there were some experiences that brought back shtetl life after it had already died out in Poland.

Q. I WANT TO MOVE TO BUCHENWALD.

A. Yes.

Q. AND BUCHENWALD, I'D LIKE YOU TO DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY IN BUCHENWALD. I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT CLOTHES YOU WORE, HOW YOU WERE FED, HOW DID YOU SPEND THE DAY.

A. That's a good question.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

A. It's hard for me to remember that.

Q. THINK ABOUT IT.

A. I didn't work. There was no work to be done. My father, in fact, my father didn't work either yet during that period because we were in this transit camp. It was a very, I

think we were just sort of adjusting to being in the new situation. You know, I had my -- the other boys in my group and we didn't, did we play in Buchenwald. I don't remember ever actually playing there. I remember observing a lot, talking to people. I remember talking with people who had been prisoners in the main camp, whether we went out to the main camp or they came into the transit camp, I don't remember exactly.

Q. DID YOU WEAR A PRISON UNIFORM?

A. Yes.

Q. STRIPES?

A. Stripes, yes.

Q. AND A YELLOW?

A. The yellow triangle, yes.

Q. AND DO YOU REMEMBER BEING COUNTED, THAT FAMOUS SAYLORFELD. DOES THAT MEAN ANYTHING?

A. Yes, I do remember that.

Q. DID IT TAKE A LONG TIME?

A. See, I remember it now that you mention it, but I have no memories floating around on their own of that.

Q. THAT WAS ONE OF THOSE TYPICAL EVENTS IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP?

A. I'm not sure we actually were, that we participated. I remember observing it from the transit camp. That took place in the main camp. I remember seeing it from a transit camp through the barbed wire. There was a barbed wire between the transit camp and the main camp. I also remember the camp song that the people on the work details used to sing.

Q. GERMAN?

A. German, yes.

BY MR. CALRK:

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW IT GOES?

A. Yes, I think, let's see. The way I remember (in German, can't translate), something like that. Beautiful song, very moving, very poetically written; when the day wakes and the sun laughs.

Q. WERE YOU ABLE TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE WOMEN ON THE OTHER SIDE?

A. There were no women. Buchenwald was a men's camp.

Q. WHAT CAMP WAS IT THAT THE MOTHERS

AND THE CHILDREN?

A. That was Bergen-Belsen. Yes, we had contact with them; sure, we talked with them. That was a very free situation

BY MR. PETERS:

Q. LET ME REPEAT MY QUESTION.

A. I'm sorry.

Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE A DAY IN BERGEN-BELSEN BETTER THAN BUCHENWALD?

A. Yes, definitely. Well, it was winter. Building a snow man. One of the things that -- I can't really describe a day, but I can describe some of the things that we did. I don't think I can go through a whole day. This may sound very funny, but it was almost like being in camp. Because we didn't have to do anything really except just be there and eat. We were able to take some walks at first, not later. We were able to take walks and see what some of the rest of the camp was like.

But one thing that I remember was that a group of the Polish boys, that is, my group, at one point decided to do a project and that is to compile sort of a glossary of all the

Hebrew words that we knew. Somehow we managed to get hold of a stub of a receipt book which was the only thing we could write on; and we made that into our own Hebrew dictionary. That was a project that took up quite a bit of time. There was a very definite Jewish Zionist consciousness on the part of for most of us even during that period.

Q. DID YOU HAVE BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND DINNER, FOR EXAMPLE?

A. We had meals, yes, we ate. The main staple for the camp as a whole was turnip soup, but our turnip soup also had some meat in it, whereas the rest of the camp didn't. Whether we ate that three times a day I don't remember, but it was certainly a staple. We had black bread. It was good black bread. Of course on the days when the Red Cross came we also had cheese and meat. Once in a while we'd get some sweets. How we got them I'm not sure. Somehow Luba managed to get them for us.

Q. DID YOU HAVE HEAT IN THE BARRACKS?

A. I think so. I don't remember it being particularly cold.

Q. SO THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A STOVE OF SOME KIND?

A. Yes, I think so, I think there was a wood burning stove, yes.

It's interesting that you're focusing on these details, which I haven't thought about, but they're very important.

Q. THEY'RE VERY IMPORTANT.

A. Yes.

Q. AND YOU WEREN'T AFRAID?

A. I think that my feelings in general were numbed.

Q. YOU MENTIONED THAT EARLIER.

A. Yes. I mean very, very early on, almost the very beginning of the war, when we were first, the first time we were in an air raid shelter, and I was very, very afraid, and I was all ready to cry and scream. And I was told you have to be quiet, you musn't express your feelings. And that became, that really became the lesson. Keep your feelings in, suppress them. That really was the survival key. I think the more emotional people were the ones who didn't survive, the ones who couldn't take

it.

Q. I HAVE ONE LAST QUESTION. I KNOW YOU WERE VERY YOUNG, BUT WAS THERE A FEELING THAT THE GERMANS WERE LOSING THE WAR BY THE TIME YOU GOT TO BERGEN-BELSEN?

A. Well, by the time I got to Bergen-Belsen I think there was just the beginning of that feeling, yes, yes. In fact, that feeling came from some of the German officers who were accompanying us. They were already saying they felt they were losing the war; some of them. This was the end of '44, yes. So it was really just a matter of time. In fact, I think the thing that really kept us alive was hope, we simply hoped that this thing would end, and it was a matter of staying alive, surviving until. I don't think we felt otherwise. Those of us who survived never felt that the Germans would end up winning the war.

Q. THANK YOU.

A. Okay

(BY NEW VOICE).

Q. I HAVE A COUPLE OF QUICK ONES.

A. Sure.

Q. AFTER THE WAR AND AFTER YOU IMMIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES, DID YOUR FAMILY'S JEWISHNESS CHANGE; DID THEY BECOME MORE ORTHODOX OR LESS ORTHODOX, DID THEY CONTINUE THE WAY THEY WERE, DID YOU FEEL ANY SORT OF SHIFT IN THE SPIRITAL NATURE OF YOUR RELIGION?

A. Not when it came to my parents. No, they maintained more or less the same degree of orthodoxy.

Q. HAVE YOU FELT ANY SHIFT IN YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT GOD AND THE WAY THINGS WORK OUT? I MEAN, WE HEAR A LOT OF STORIES FROM SURVIVORS ABOUT THE NATURE OF THEIR SPIRITUALITY, THAT IT SHIFTS BECAUSE OF THE WAY THEY FEEL ABOUT HOW THEY SURVIVED OR I HEAR A LOT OF PEOPLE SAYING I WAS JUST INCREDIBLY LUCKY. SOME OF THEM QUESTION THAT. WHY WERE THEY ABLE TO SURVIVE AND OTHERS NOT, THINGS LIKE THAT. I WAS WONDERING IF YOU EVER PONDERED THOSE GREAT QUESTIONS.

A. I did when I was very young and I think I simply came up with the idea that the universe works by chance, and I don't really feel that God is necessary to the scheme of

things; that it's much easier to explain things without any reference to God. You get in trouble when you try to explain God.

My father remained a religious Jew and therefore he somehow had to justify. He had to justify the fact, for example, that I survived and that he survived and others didn't. And he became sort of obsessed with my accomplishments; that is, the idea was since I was one of the few children of my age who survived, therefore I was destined for something great. I had to win the Nobel prize at least.

I didn't have that problem. For me it was quite easy to accept that I survived by sheer chance.

Q. HAVE YOU TALKED ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A. Yes.

Q. YOU HAVE TOLD THEM PRETTY MUCH?

A. Yes, I think so. Not that I said, come on children, I'm going to tell you my story, but over the years in bits and pieces, sure.

Q. HAVE THEY, SOME CHILDREN OF

SURVIVORS BECOME A LITTLE OBSESSED ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST OR ABOUT THE WAR AND THEY GET VERY MUCH INTO LEARNING THE HISTORY AND DETAILS AND FACTS AND WHAT NOT. HAVE YOUR KIDS SORT OF FALLEN INTO THAT?

A. No.

Q. OR THEY JUST SORT OF ACCEPTED IT AND GONE ON?

A. Yes.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR FATHER'S PRESSURE ON YOU HAS AFFECTED YOUR DEALINGS WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A. Yes, I think it has.

Q. IN WHAT WAY?

A. In the way that I put as little pressure on them as possible

BY MR. PETERS:

Q. THAT'S UNUSUAL, ISN'T IT, YOU REPEAT YOUR FATHER'S MISTAKES. ONE DOES.

(NEW VOICE).

Q. THAT'S ALL THE QUESTIONS I HAVE PRETTY MUCH

BY MR. CLARK:

Q. I THINK THAT YOU SAID AN ANECDOTE TO

ME IN THE HALLWAY. COULD I MENTION THE FACT THAT I FIND ANY BITTERNESS IN YOUR VOICE OR ANY HATRED AS IF THIS WERE JUST CIRCUMSTANCES THAT YOU HAD TO GO THROUGH AND YOU RELATED AN ANECDOTE TO ME. WHY DON'T WE END WITH THAT LITTLE STORY?

A. I should say what hatred that I had felt was focused almost entirely on the person of Hitler rather than on, say, the German people. And I remember that the anecdote that you are referring to is something that happened when I was reading a book in the library of the Bergen-Belsen refugee camp. And apparently the librarian there didn't have the philosophy of having to be a place of absolute quiet. He played music on the radio. And I just remember one time the reading something while Bach's G minor Fantasy in Fugue was being played. When I realized that the Germans could create such beautiful art, just, I felt they couldn't be all bad. I can't hate the German people because of what happened.

I also feel that it so happens it was the Germans acted the way they did because

of the circumstances. They were very ably aided by Ukranian, Lithuanians, Croatians and so on. Certainly in my experience the Lithuanians and Ukranians were by far harsher on us than the Germans were. I feel that any people with the right kind of provocation could sink to those levels, including Jews.

BY MR. CLARK:

Q. ONE FINAL QUESTION. HAVE YOU RETURNED TO THE VARIOUS PLACES THAT YOU HAVE --

A. I've never returned to Poland. About, around 1961, I did drive through, drive by Bergen-Belsen just to see the memorial there. But it's interesting, the memory that I have, it was sort of taken aback from being there because it's a very stark monument, very strange from how it was when there was a refugee camp right next to it. I also remember going to the nearest German city which is called Tsla and being struck by what a beautiful city that was. Absolute a jewel of the Renaissance, not known to tourists at all. I carry that memory more strongly than I do of my visit to Bergen-Belsen, whatever that means.

Q. WE WANT TO THANK YOU VERY, VERY MUCH FOR A VERY ENLIGHTENING INTERVIEW AND YOUR TIME.

A. It was a very good experience for me. Thank you for inviting me to do this.

* * *