

1 INTERVIEW WITH: SIGI ISAK
2 HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
3 DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 1991
4 PLACE: SAN FRANCISCO, CA
5 INTERVIEWER: ANNE FEIBELMAN
6 TRANSCRIBER: KATHY JACOBSEN MANTEL
7

8 Q IT'S FEBRUARY 19, 1990. AND TODAY WE ARE AT THE
9 HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT IN SAN FRANCISCO TALKING TO
10 SIGI ISAK. HEIDI NEIPRIS WEXLER WILL BE INTERVIEWING.
11 JOHNY ANGELL GRANT ON CAMERA. I'M ANNE FEIBELMAN. OKAY.

12 A YOU SAID 1990. WE HAVE 1991.

13 Q OH. 1991. THANK YOU. SIGI, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO BE
14 CAREFUL IN THIS ONE, I CAN TELL.

15 A THAT'S ALL RIGHT. NO PROBLEMS.

16 Q WHY DON'T WE START AT THE BEGINNING AND JUST GIVE ME
17 SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT THE FULL NAME YOU WERE BORN UNDER AND
18 WHAT DATE AND YEAR --

19 A I WAS BORN SIGFRIED ISAK. IN AMERICA WE PRONOUNCE IT
20 ISAK, "EYE-SAK." AND I WAS BORN IN BERLIN, GERMANY, IN
21 1914. MY FATHER'S NAME WAS IGNATZ ISAK. AND MY MOTHER'S
22 NAME WAS NETTI ISAK.

23 Q HOW DO YOU SPELL YOUR FATHER'S NAME?

24 A I-G-N-A-T-Z.

25 Q TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY. WERE THEY
26 RELIGIOUS? DID YOU HAVE LOTS OF COUSINS? WHAT WAS YOUR

1 LIFE LIKE?

2 A WE WERE CONSERVATIVE. WE WENT TO -- ON THE HOLIDAYS
3 WE WENT TO TEMPLE IN BERLIN. OTHERWISE I COULDN'T CALL
4 OURSELVES RELIGIOUS.

5 Q AND TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY. HOW MANY
6 PEOPLE WERE IN IT AND WHAT WERE YOUR SCHOOLS LIKE AND THAT
7 KIND OF THING.

8 A WE WERE MY MOTHER AND FATHER AND TWO SISTERS, WHICH
9 THEY RUN AWAY IN '35, I THINK, FROM GERMANY. THAT'S THE
10 REASON THEY WERE STILL ALIVE.

11 Q COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SISTERS. TELL ME WHAT
12 THEIR NAMES WERE, WHERE THEY WERE BORN, AND ALL THAT.

13 A YES. MY YOUNGEST SISTER NAME IS RUTH, R-U-T-H, SHE
14 WAS BORN IN 1919 IN BERLIN. AND MY OLDER SISTER ERNA,
15 E-R-N-A. SHE WAS BORN IN POLAND BECAUSE MY PARENTS CAME
16 FROM POLAND AND SHE DIED A FEW YEARS AGO IN GERMANY. SHE
17 CAME BACK AFTER THE WAR. SHE SPENT THE WAR IN ROMANIA.
18 SHE CAME BACK AFTER THE WAR TO GERMANY. NOW SHE DIED A FEW
19 YEARS AGO.

20 Q AND TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL LIFE.
21 DID YOU GO TO SECULAR SCHOOL?

22 A I WENT EIGHT YEARS REGULAR SCHOOL AND THEN I STARTED
23 COMMERCIAL SCHOOL WHICH I COULDN'T FINISH BECAUSE IN 1933
24 WHEN HITLER CAME TO POWER, THEY DIDN'T ALLOW JEWS TO GO TO
25 THIS KIND OF SCHOOL ANY MORE.

26 Q TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT FRIENDS AND JUDAISM AND

1 THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL. WHAT YOUR LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE
2 HITLER CAME TO POWER.

3 A I WAS A CRAZY SPORTSMAN. I WANTED TO BECOME A FAMOUS
4 SOCCER PLAYER. I PLAYED ALL MY LIFE IN GERMANY IN THE
5 GERMAN SOCCER CLUB. AND WE WERE CLOSE -- A CLOSE KNITTED
6 FAMILY IN BERLIN.

7 MY MOTHER HAD FOUR SISTERS WHICH ALL CAME OUT
8 FROM POLAND LIKE MY MOTHER CAME. AND THERE WAS NIECES AND
9 COUSINS AND -- VERY CLOSELY -- CLOSE FAMILY.

10 AND WE KEPT JEWISH HOLIDAYS, YOU KNOW. I HAD
11 BAR MITZVAH IN BERLIN.

12 Q AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS. WERE THEY JEWISH? DID
13 YOU --

14 A YEAH, I WOULD SAY I HAD HALF AND HALF. HALF JEWISH
15 FRIENDS AND HALF NON-JEWISH FRIENDS.

16 Q AND I HAD TWO QUESTIONS. ONE WAS: WHAT SECTION DID
17 YOU LIVE IN IN BERLIN?

18 A IT WAS A WORKING NEIGHBORHOOD BECAUSE MY PARENTS HAD
19 THE GROCERY STORE IN THAT SECTION.

20 Q WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE STORE?

21 A ISAK'S GROCERY.

22 Q AND WAS IT A JEWISH AREA OR NOT?

23 A NO, NO.

24 Q WHAT ABOUT HOME LIFE. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOM
25 AND KASHRUT AND --

26 A WE KEPT KOSHER AT HOME. WE ATE KOSHER MEAT AT

1 HOME. WE HAD TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF DISHES. BUT THAT WAS
2 NATURAL.

3 Q AND LET'S SEE. YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT VOCATIONAL
4 SCHOOL. WHAT --

5 A I WANTED TO BECOME AN ACCOUNTANT. IT WAS IN THE
6 COMMERCIAL SCHOOL WHICH I COULDN'T FINISH BECAUSE OF
7 HITLER'S LAWS THAT JEWS COULD NOT ATTEND THIS KIND OF
8 SCHOOLS ANY MORE. AND THEN I STARTED TO WORK IN A GERMAN
9 WHOLESALE HOUSE. I WORKED IN AN OFFICE FOR A COUPLE OF
10 YEARS AND THEN THE GERMANS TOOK AWAY THAT BUSINESS AND GAVE
11 IT TO THE GERMANS, AND I LOST MY JOB AGAIN.

12 THEN I WAS -- PEOPLE WERE ALREADY TALKING ABOUT
13 LEAVING GERMANY, SO I TRIED TO LEARN A PROFESSION. I WENT
14 TO A JEWISH PRINTING SHOP. I WANTED TO BECOME A
15 PRINTER. AND THAT COME TO AN END, TOO, IN OCTOBER '38.
16 FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING THEY KNOCKED ON THE DOOR, THE
17 POLICE, AND PICKED ME UP.

18 Q AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

19 A THEN THEY SENT ME TO A BORDER, TO POLAND, BUT THE
20 POLES DIDN'T LET US IN. THE POLISH ARMY WAS STANDING AT THE
21 BORDER. THEY WOULDN'T LET US IN. SO WE WERE THERE FOR TWO
22 DAYS AND TWO NIGHTS AT NO MAN'S LAND. IT WAS BITTER COLD.
23 IT WAS IN OCTOBER. IT WAS COLD LIKE HELL.

24 BUT THEN AFTER TWO DAYS OR THREE DAYS, THEY
25 ALLOWED US TO GO IN, BUT WE HAVE TO BE IN THAT BORDER TOWN
26 FOR SEVEN MONTHS.

1 AND THEN THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT SAID I CAN GO
2 BACK FOR SEVEN DAYS BECAUSE I LEFT BERLIN WITHOUT
3 ANYTHING. I CAN PICK UP A LITTLE SUITCASE WITH THE CLOTHES
4 AND I HAVE TO GO AGAIN BACK TO POLAND. WHEN I CAME BACK TO
5 BERLIN, MY FATHER AND MOTHER -- IT'S THE FUNNIEST THING
6 BECAUSE WHEN THEY PICKED ME UP THEY DIDN'T TAKE MY FATHER
7 AND MOTHER, THEY JUST TOOK ME. I WAS BORN IN BERLIN AND
8 THEY PICKED ME UP. BUT MY PARENTS, WHO WERE NOT BORN IN
9 BERLIN, THEY LEFT THEM THERE. I STILL CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW
10 DID IT HAPPEN.

11 SO AFTER SEVEN DAYS I HAD TO LEAVE BERLIN AGAIN
12 AND HAD TO GO BACK TO POLAND. I DIDN'T WANT TO GO TO
13 POLAND BUT I HAD TO GO BACK TO POLAND. MY FATHER TOLD ME HE
14 HAS A SISTER IN BOCHNIA, B-O-C-H-N-I-A, SO I WENT
15 THERE. AND SHORTLY AFTER THIS, THE WAR STARTED.

16 THE GERMANS INVADED POLAND AND THEY MADE A
17 GHETTO OUT OF THAT BOCHNIA. IN THE BEGINNING OF THE GHETTO
18 WE WERE ABOUT TEN THOUSAND JEWS LIVING IN THAT SMALL, SMALL
19 PLACE.

20 AGAIN, YOU HAD TO DO ALL KIND OF HARD WORK,
21 KIND OF DIFFERENT WORKS. I WORKED IN ROAD WORK AND I WORKED
22 IN AN AMMUNITION FACTORY CLEARING ROADS FOR THE GERMAN
23 ARMY, DIGGING OUT TREES. IN WINTER TIME IT WAS MISERABLE.
24 THE EARTH WAS FROZEN LIKE A ROCK. WE HAD ONLY NOT -- NOT
25 REAL TOOLS TO DO THAT KIND OF JOB BUT WE HAD TO DO IT. WE
26 HAD TO DO IT AND WE GOT A LITTLE QUARTER BREAD FOR THAT.

1 SO, LITTLE BY LITTLE, THAT GHETTO WENT SMALLER
2 AND SMALLER BECAUSE EVERY FEW MONTHS, THEY -- WE CALL IT
3 "AKTION" -- WHEN THEY PICKED UP SAY FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND
4 JEWS, PUT THEM IN CATTLE CARS, AND THEY DEPORTED THEM INTO
5 THE DEATH CAMPS. AND IN ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF '43, THERE
6 WERE A HUNDRED JEWS LEFT.

7 I MEAN, THAT GHETTO WAS A REAL, REAL, REAL BAD
8 THING BECAUSE NOT ONLY THAT THEY DEPORTED THEM, BUT THERE
9 WAS ALL KIND OF SHOOTING GOING ON. I REMEMBER ONE DAY IT
10 WAS IN '42, THEY KILLED A FEW HUNDRED JEWS THERE. AND THEY
11 STUCK THEM UP IN THE STREET. WE HAD TO POUR GASOLINE OVER
12 THEM AND THEY PUT THEM ON FIRE AND THAT STENCH WAS GOING ON
13 FOR WEEKS FROM THE DEAD PEOPLE, FROM THE CORPSES. IT WAS
14 AN AWFUL STENCH IN THE CITY FOR A LONG TIME.

15 SO ANYHOW, IN '43 WE WERE A HUNDRED JEWS
16 LEFT. END OF '43. YEAH, IN '43 I MARRIED MY WIFE.

17 SO OUR JOB WAS THEN IN '43, END OF '43, THE
18 HUNDRED JEWS THERE, TO CLEAR OUT ALL THE JEWISH HOMES AND
19 ALL THE JEWISH BUSINESSES. EVERYTHING IN SIGHT WE HAD TO
20 LOAD ON TRUCKS WHICH WAS THEN SENT TO GERMANY. EVERYTHING
21 WHAT WE FOUND IN THE -- HOMES AND THE STORES FROM THE JEWS
22 HAD TO BE LOADED ON TRUCKS.

23 IT TOOK US ABOUT A HALF A YEAR, AND THEN WE
24 SAID, NOW THEY ARE GOING TO SHOOT US. BUT THEY SENT US TO A
25 CONCENTRATION CAMP. THE NAME IS PLASZOW, P-L-A-S-Z-O-W. IT
26 WAS A BIG CONCENTRATION CAMP BY KRACOW. THERE WERE BETWEEN

1 SIXTY AND EIGHTY THOUSAND JEWS AT THAT CAMP. AGAIN, ALL
2 KINDS OF DIFFERENT KIND OF WORK WE HAD TO DO. TEN HOURS OR
3 EIGHT HOURS OR TWELVE HOURS A DAY.

4 AT PLASZOW WE HAD TWO CONCENTRATION CAMPS, ONE
5 FOR MEN AND ONE FOR WOMEN. SO MY WIFE WAS IN THE WOMEN
6 CAMP.

7 SO ONE DAY THEY EMPTIED OUR BARRACK AND THEY
8 SENT TO US GROSSROSEN, G-R-O-S-S-R-O-S-E-N. THAT'S IN
9 GERMANY. THAT WAS HELL. THAT WAS THE WORST I EVER
10 EXPERIENCED IN ALL THE YEARS. IT WAS REALLY UNBEARABLE. I
11 THINK I WAS THERE ABOUT FOUR TO FIVE WEEKS. ANOTHER TWO
12 DAYS PROBABLY I WOULD DROP DEAD. THERE THEY WORKED YOU TO
13 DEATH.

14 I WORKED IN THE QUARRY. OUR JOB WAS JUST TO
15 CARRY ROCKS BACK AND FORTH. JUST PILE ONE HEAP AND PUT IN
16 ANOTHER HEAP FOR TWELVE HOURS A DAY. IF YOU FALL DOWN, YOU
17 COULDN'T DO IT ANY MORE, WE HAD A FEW GUARDS, THEY SHOT
18 YOU. IF YOU WORK SLOW -- EVERY GUARD HAD A DOG. THEY SENT
19 THE DOG AT YOU WHO WAS BITING THE HECK OUT OF YOU. SO,
20 LIKE I SAID, I WAS LUCKY AFTER FOUR OR FIVE WEEKS
21 AGAIN, THEY EMPTIED OUR BARRACK AND SENT ME AWAY. IT WAS
22 ALL THE TIME IN THE CAMPS. ALWAYS SENDING YOU BACK AND
23 FORTH, BACK AND FORTH. BUT THAT WAS MY LUCK BECAUSE I KNOW
24 I COULDN'T -- I COULDN'T DO THAT ANY MORE -- TWELVE HOURS
25 A DAY CARRYING ROCKS FOR HAVING A LITTLE PIECE OF BREAD IN
26 THE MORNING, 5:00 IN THE MORNING.

1 SO THEY SENT ME TO LANGENBIELAU. THAT'S
2 L-A-N-G-E-N-B-I-E-L-A-U. THIS IS IN GERMANY. IT IS
3 GERMANY. YES. HERE WE WERE DIGGING TRENCHES BECAUSE THEY
4 WERE ALREADY TALKING ABOUT THE RUSSIAN ARMIES COMING. AND
5 I WORKED IN A MUNITION FACTORY. CARRYING THIS MUNITION
6 CASES, LOADING IT ON GERMAN TRUCKS. I WAS THERE FOR FIVE
7 MONTHS. THAT WAS A SMALL CAMP. THERE WERE A THOUSAND JEWS
8 THERE.

9 SO IN MAY '45 I WAS LIBERATED THERE BY THE
10 RUSSIAN ARMY. SO IT WAS TWELVE YEARS' HELL.

11 Q I'D LIKE TO GO BACK IF I COULD AND ASK YOU SOME
12 SPECIFIC QUESTIONS BECAUSE I'D LIKE TO GET A FEEL FOR WHAT
13 LIFE WAS LIKE IN THE DIFFERENT CAMPS.

14 A UH-HUH.

15 Q AND IF YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT DAILY LIFE WAS LIKE IN
16 THE GHETTO. YOU KNOW, ABOUT WHAT CONDITIONS WERE LIKE,
17 WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE TO DESCRIBE TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW.

18 A THE GHETTO LIFE WAS VERY, VERY, VERY BAD BECAUSE THE
19 LITTLE TOWN OF BOCHNIA WAS A VERY SMALL TOWN, AND IF YOU
20 PULL IN THEN TEN THOUSAND JEWS -- WE HAD A LITTLE -- I
21 DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW BIG IT WAS. WE HAD A LITTLE PLACE WHERE
22 WE WERE LIVING -- ABOUT TEN PEOPLE. AND WE HAD NO RUNNING
23 WATER. WE HAD TO GO OUTSIDE TO GET SOME WATER.

24 IT WAS ROUGH, YOU KNOW. TO GET SOME FOOD -- IN
25 THE GHETTO WE STILL HAD THE CHANCE TO TRADE SOME CLOTHES
26 WHAT WE HAD TO THE POLES. THE GHETTO WAS SURROUNDED BY A

1 FENCE. SO WHEN WE KNEW AT CERTAIN TIME THE GUARDS WEREN'T
2 IN THAT SPOT, WE WENT TO THE FENCE. THE POLES ARE WAITING
3 THERE. SO WE GIVE THEM MAYBE CLOTHES OR SOMETIMES GAVE
4 THEM A GOLD RING FOR SOME FOOD. WE WERE TRADING WHATEVER
5 WE HAD FOR FOOD, TO BE ABLE TO SURVIVE BECAUSE IN THE
6 GHETTO, I MEAN, THERE WAS NOTHING THERE. NOTHING THERE.

7 AND AGAIN, IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP IN
8 PLASZOW, WE GOT OUR PIECE OF BREAD AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE
9 MORNING AND AT NOON TIME WE GOT SOME SOUP. A LITTLE BIT OF
10 POTATO PIECE AND LITTLE PIECE OF POTATOES WERE FLOATING IN
11 IT. WE WERE TRYING TO STAND AT THE END SO YOU GET THE
12 LAST SPOON OUT OF THAT BIG CAN. MAYBE IT'S A LITTLE BIT
13 MORE -- ANOTHER PIECE OF POTATO IN IT.

14 ANYHOW, IT WAS ALWAYS A FIGHT, A FIGHT FOR
15 SURVIVING. ALWAYS A FIGHT OF SURVIVING. ALWAYS A FIGHT OF
16 SURVIVING.

17 I REMEMBER IN THE LAST CAMP, LANGENBIELAU, I
18 WORKED TOGETHER WITH A POLISH GUY, A JEW. HE SAID TO
19 ME, "YOU KNOW, I KNOW I CAN'T SURVIVE ANY MUCH LONGER." HE
20 SAYS, "I HAVE A DIAMOND HERE IN MY TOOTH." HE SAID, "SINCE
21 YOU SPEAK GERMAN, WHY DON'T YOU WALK UP TO ONE OF THE
22 GUARDS AND ASK HIM IF HE CAN GIVE ME BREAD FOR IT." SO I
23 ARRANGED A DEAL. I PULLED OUT THE DIAMOND WITH A
24 SCREWDRIVER FROM HIS TOOTH. IT WAS A BIG DIAMOND. AND I
25 GAVE THE GERMAN THAT AND HE GAVE ME A LOAF OF BREAD. FOUR
26 DAYS LATER THE WAR WAS OVER.

1 BUT WE NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. WE NEVER
2 KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON BECAUSE WE DIDN'T HAVE A NEWSPAPER, WE
3 HAD NO RADIO, WE HAD NOTHING. I DIDN'T EVEN -- I ALMOST
4 FORGOT MY NAME BECAUSE MY NAME WAS NO. 11360. DIDN'T CALL
5 YOU SIGI OR -- THEY CALLED ME 11360. SO --

6 Q CAN YOU TELL ME ANY -- I KNOW YOU HAVE LOTS OF
7 STORIES AND I THINK PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR SPECIFIC
8 STORIES, MEMORIES THAT YOU HAVE OF, YOU KNOW, HELLISH
9 THINGS; MEMORIES THAT YOU HAVE OF PEOPLE BEING KIND TO EACH
10 OTHER, OTHER PRISONERS, OR WHATEVER.

11 WHAT ARE YOUR SPECIFIC STORIES THAT YOU
12 REMEMBER?

13 A I HAD A VERY BAD EXPERIENCE IN LANGENBIELAU, THE
14 LAST CAMP. THERE WAS THE -- THE GUY WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF
15 OUR ROOM, WAS CALLED THE STUBIN ALTESTER. EVERY ROOM HAD
16 SOMEBODY WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF IT. THAT GUY WAS A
17 MURDERER.

18 THE LAST FEW WEEKS, HE CAME TO MY -- YOU KNOW,
19 WHAT WE HAD -- I MEAN, WE HAD A SACK WITH STRAW WHICH WAS
20 FLAT. THERE WAS NOTHING IN IT ANY MORE. AND WE WERE
21 SLEEPING IN IT. AND THEN IN THE MORNING YOU HAD TO MAKE IT
22 NICE AND STRAIGHT, BUT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE IT
23 STRAIGHT BECAUSE THERE WAS NOTHING IN IT ANYMORE. SO
24 ANYHOW, HE KICKED ME OUT AND THIS WAS IN THE WINTER. HE
25 KICKED ME OUT IN THE SNOW. I HAD TO LAY IN THE SNOW. AND
26 HE SAID, "YOU LAY THERE UNTIL YOU DIE," HE SAYS. BUT I

1 DIDN'T CARE ANY MORE SO I JUST GOT UP AND I WENT BACK
2 IN. HE DID IT TO ME MAYBE EIGHT OR TEN TIMES, YOU
3 KNOW. TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE THING.

4 (AFTER A SIGNIFICANT PAUSE DURING WHICH HE'S
5 REFLECTING:)

6 GOOD EXPERIENCE? I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T KNOW.
7 IT WAS VERY HARD, VERY, VERY HARD NOT TO BE ROUGH, NOT TO
8 LOSE YOUR PATIENCE BECAUSE YOU FIGHTING EVERY DAY FOR A
9 LITTLE PIECE OF BREAD, I MEAN. IT'S -- THE HUNGER WAS
10 UNBEARABLE. ABSOLUTELY UNBEARABLE.

11 I HAD ONE -- ACTUALLY UNUSUAL STORY IN
12 PLASZOW. I WAS WORKING AND SUDDENLY, AN S.S. MAN STANDS
13 ACROSS FROM ME AND LOOKS AT ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG, I
14 HAVE NO IDEA. AND HE WALKS UP TO ME. HE SAYS, "LET'S GO."
15 SO I FIGURED THAT'S IT NOW. SO HE GOES TO ME, "YOU KNOW,"
16 AND HE SAYS, "WHY DON'T YOU LOOK AT ME?" WE HAD LIVED IN
17 THE SAME HOUSE IN BERLIN. WE WENT TOGETHER TO
18 SCHOOL. "WHAT CAN I DO?" HE SAYS. I SAY, "I'M HERE WITH
19 MY WIFE. TAKE US OUT." HE SAYS, "THEY ARE GOING TO SHOOT
20 ME. THEY ARE GOING TO SHOOT YOU." HE SAID, "COME BACK THE
21 NEXT DAY. WE WILL MEET AGAIN IN THE LATRINA." SO I CAME
22 IN THE NEXT DAY AT TWELVE O'CLOCK. HE WAS ALREADY THERE.
23 AND HE GAVE ME A HANDKERCHIEF. I SAID, "MY GOD. WHAT DO I
24 NEED A HANDKERCHIEF IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP?" THEN HE
25 SAID, "THAT'S ALL I CAN DO FOR YOU." AND HE LEFT. SO I
26 SEE SOME HARD PIECES THERE. I OPEN UP THE HANDKERCHIEF AND

1 THERE WERE A FEW PIECES OF GOLD. LIKE MY WIFE SAID, HE
2 PROBABLY TOOK IT AWAY FROM ANOTHER JEW AND GAVE IT TO ME.
3 I 'COULD BUY SOME BREAD FOR GOLD. FOR GOLD AND DIAMONDS YOU
4 COULD BUY BREAD. SO WE HAD -- WE HAD COUPLE OF WEEKS OF
5 -- FEW WEEKS WE -- WE HAD ENOUGH TO BUY BREAD FOR GOLD. I
6 NEVER MET HIM AGAIN BECAUSE I LOOKED FOR HIM AFTER THE WAR
7 IN BERLIN BUT HIS MOTHER TOLD ME HE NEVER CAME BACK. ONE
8 OF THOSE STRANGE STORIES.

9 THE RUSSIANS, WHEN THEY CAME IN THEY CAME IN
10 WITH A WHIP. THE AMERICANS CAME IN WITH CHOCOLATES IN THE
11 PLACES WHICH THEY LIBERATED. BUT THE RUSSIANS CAME IN WITH
12 A WHIP. THE FIRST THING WHAT THEY DID IS THEY PRINTED --
13 HOW YOU CALL THIS ON THE STREETS, THE SIGNS, THEY'RE IN
14 RUSSIANS AND GERMAN. EVERY TIME, A HAFTLING, YOU KNOW. WE
15 WERE HAFTLINGS. A KZNIK IS A HAFTLING IN GERMAN. WHEN THE
16 GERMANS SEES A HAFTLING IN THE STREET, HAVE TO GO OFF THE
17 STREET AND TAKE OFF HIS HAT. IF HE DON'T DO IT, IT SAID,
18 "KICK HIM," HE SAYS. "BEAT HIM UP," IT SAYS. SO THEY HAD TO
19 DO IT FOR I DON'T KNOW FOR HOW LONG.

20 THE FIRST THING I REMEMBER WHEN THE RUSSIANS
21 CAME IN THEY CAME IN TO THE CAMP WITH FOOD. BUT HE SAYS,
22 "WE HAVE PLENTY OF FOOD," HE SAYS. "DON'T." HOT FOOD THEY
23 CAME IN. "DON'T. DON'T," HE SAID. "IT WILL KILL YOU."
24 BUT SOME OF THEM THEY COULDN'T HOLD THEMSELVES BACK. THERE
25 WERE LOTS AND LOTS OF PEOPLE, LOTS OF JEWS WHO DIED BECAUSE
26 THEY -- WE WERE LIKE WILD ANIMALS. WE SAW THAT FOOD AND

1 WE ATE WITH OUT HANDS. WE DIDN'T EVEN WAIT FOR A
2 SPOON. WE WERE GOING WITH THE HANDS. AND THAT'S WHAT
3 KILLED, BECAUSE OUR STOMACH WASN'T A STOMACH ANY MORE.
4 IT WAS VERY HARD NOT TO DO IT, BELIEVE ME, BUT -- PROBABLY
5 THAT SAVED MY LIFE. I CAME OUT FROM THE LAST CAMP, I WAS
6 WEIGHING NINETY-FIVE POUNDS.

7 SO AFTER THIS I WENT BACK TO POLAND TO LOOK FOR
8 MY WIFE, WHICH TOOK ME HALF A YEAR. I FOUND HER. SHE WAS
9 IN AUSCHWITZ. AND WHEN THE RUSSIANS CAME CLOSE TO
10 AUSCHWITZ THEY PUT ALL THE JEWS THERE ON THE TORDES
11 MARSCH, THE MARCH TO DEATH, THEY CALL IT. THEY HAD TO
12 MARCH DAY AND NIGHT, DAY AND NIGHT. MY WIFE WAS THERE WITH
13 ANOTHER FRIEND THERE, A GIRLFRIEND. MY WIFE SAID, "I CAN'T
14 ANY MORE." SHE HAD NO SHOES. JUST SOME RAGS AROUND HER LEG.
15 IT WAS WINTER TIME, DECEMBER. SHE SAID, "I'M GOING TO SIT
16 DOWN. THEY ARE GOING TO KILL ME. THAT'S IT."

17 THE GIRLFRIEND SAID, "DON'T, DON'T, DON'T."
18 SHE SAYS, "I CAN SEE A FOREST STRAIGHT AHEAD OF US.
19 THERE'S A FOREST AND IT IS GETTING DARK. WHEN I SAY RUN WE
20 ARE GOING TO RUN." SO THEY WERE RUNNING. THEY WERE
21 SHOOTING AFTER THEM BUT IT WAS ALREADY A LITTLE DARK. THEY
22 DIDN'T CATCH THEM. THEY WERE SITTING IN THAT FOREST FOR
23 MANY MONTHS, LIVING FROM ICE. THEY WERE HIDING WHERE THE
24 FARMERS HAD KEPT THEIR HAY THERE. THEY WERE HIDING IN THE
25 HAY THERE FOR MANY MONTHS. JUST ONCE IN A WHILE THEY CAME
26 DOWN. THEY HAD SOME SNOW. ATE SOME SNOW. YEAH. THIS IS

1 THE JEWISH LIFE.

2 Q TELL ME YOUR WIFE'S NAME AND TELL ME ABOUT THE
3 WEDDING THEN IN THE GHETTO.

4 A RACHEL. SHE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN THAT TOWN WHERE
5 I -- WHERE I WENT, FROM BERLIN TO BOCHNIA. SHE WAS FROM
6 THAT TOWN. SO WE MARRIED AND THERE WAS STILL A RABBI AT
7 THAT TIME WHO DID THE MARRIAGE. THEY STILL HAD A HOUSE
8 THERE. THEY LIVED STILL IN THE HOUSE. MY WIFE AND HER
9 PARENTS. BIG FAMILY. THERE WERE TWELVE KIDS.

10 Q SIGI, WHAT IS HER -- WHAT WAS HER MAIDEN NAME, HER
11 FAMILY NAME?

12 A STRUM, S-T-R-U-M.

13 Q AND TELL ME ABOUT THE WEDDING IN THE
14 GHETTO. WHERE, WHAT?

15 A NOT VERY MUCH OF A WEDDING. JUST I REMEMBER THE
16 PARENTS. THEY HAD SOME -- THEY MADE SOMETHING. NO. THE
17 MOTHER WASN'T ALIVE ANYMORE. THERE WERE ONLY THE SISTERS
18 BECAUSE THE MOTHER -- THE MOTHER DIED. THE FATHER GOT
19 SHOT. RIGHT WHEN THE GERMANS CAME IN, THEY SHOT HER
20 MOTHER, HER FATHER, AND HER SISTER. RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE
21 HOUSE. SO SOME OTHER SISTERS AND BROTHERS, WHO WERE LEFT,
22 THEY PREPARED A LITTLE BIT OF FOOD. WE HAD A LITTLE BIT
23 MADE SOME LITTLE WINE, I THINK FROM SOME RAISINS. SO WE
24 MADE THE KIDDUSH AND A WEDDING, THAT WAS THE WEDDING.

25 Q ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL US DESCRIBING THE MISTREATMENT
26 OF THE JEWS; ANY SPECIFIC STORIES YOU REMEMBER? I KNOW IT

1 IS HORRIBLE TO TALK ABOUT IT, BUT I THINK PEOPLE NEED TO
2 KNOW ABOUT IT. IN THE GHETTO AND THEN IN THE CAMPS. WHAT
3 YOU SAW.

4 A THERE WAS ALWAYS MISTREATMENT. IT WAS IN BERLIN, IT
5 WAS IN THE GHETTO. IT WAS ALWAYS MISTREATMENT.

6 WE HAD SUCH TERRIBLE GUARDS IN THE GHETTO,
7 TERRIBLE GUARDS FROM LATVIA. OH, THEY WERE PLAIN
8 MURDERERS. PLAIN MURDERERS, THOSE GUYS, THOSE GUARDS. MY
9 GOSH. IT'S UNBELIEVABLE. UNBELIEVABLE.

10 WE HAD ONE GUY WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF US IN THAT
11 GHETTO IN BOCHNIA, A GERMAN GUY. HE WAS ANOTHER
12 MURDERER. THEY CAUGHT HIM. THEY GAVE HIM SEVEN YEARS AND
13 PROBABLY TODAY HE LIVES LIKE A KING FROM ALL THE MONEY AND
14 THE GOLD AND THE -- WHAT HE TOOK AWAY FROM THE JEWS.

15 Q ANY SPECIFIC STORIES YOU REMEMBER THAT JUST WERE
16 UGLY?

17 A UGLY. THERE WERE SO MANY UGLY THINGS. I CAN'T
18 REMEMBER ONLY ONE ANYMORE.

19 WE HAD IN PLASZOW, ALWAYS IN CHARGE OF THE JEWS
20 WERE ALWAYS SOME -- THERE WERE SOME JEWS IN CHARGE OF THE
21 JEWS. THERE WAS A MR. AND MRS. CHILOWITZ. HE WAS IN
22 CHARGE OF THE JEWS.. BUT HE DIDN'T BEHAVE TOO GOOD. YEAH.
23 ESPECIALLY HIS WIFE. SHE WAS PRETTY BAD. SHE WAS BEATING
24 THE JEWISH WOMEN, YOU KNOW. CALL THEM WHORES AND -- BUT
25 ONE OF THOSE DAYS, THE GERMAN HAD ENOUGH OF THEM SO THEY
26 SHOT THEM BOTH AND WE HAD TO WALK AROUND AND LOOK AT THEM.

1 IT WAS THE END OF THE TWO BIG SHOTS.

2 Q WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP IN BERLIN, BEFORE YOU HAD
3 TO LEAVE, WHAT WERE YOU FIRST MEMORIES OF ANTI SEMITISM?

4 A TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I DIDN'T EXPERIENCE ANTI
5 SEMITISM IN GERMANY UNTIL HITLER CAME.

6 Q AND THEN --

7 A THEN THEY WOKE UP THE GERMANS, YOU KNOW. BUT IN MY
8 -- I WENT TO GERMAN SCHOOL. I REALLY CAN'T REMEMBER. I
9 PLAYED FOR A GERMAN SOCCER CLUB. I DIDN'T REALLY, I DIDN'T
10 EXPERIENCE ANY ANTI SEMITISM. MAYBE THERE WERE SOME IN
11 SMALL LITTLE PLACES, LITTLE TOWNS. BUT I PERSONALLY DID NOT
12 EXPERIENCE ANTI SEMITISM.

13 THE DIFFERENCE LIKE -- IN POLAND IT WAS
14 DIFFERENT. IN POLAND THEY WERE -- THEY WERE TERRIBLE
15 BEFORE THE WAR, THE PLOES. I EVEN CALL THEM WORSE THAN THE
16 GERMANS BECAUSE THEY DID UGLY THINGS IN THE WAR. THEY
17 COULD HAVE HELPED THOUSANDS AND THOUSAND OF JEWS BUT
18 WHEN THE GERMANS DIDN'T KNOW WHO WAS THE JEW AND WHO IS NOT
19 THE JEW, BUT POLES, THEY DID KNOW. THEY WALKED UP TO THE
20 GERMAN AND SAID, "JUDE." THEY SHOUTED WHO IS JEWISH. SO
21 THEY GOT THE LOAF OF BREAD FOR THAT, YOU KNOW. THEY
22 SINGLED THEM OUT TO THE GERMANS.

23 Q WHAT ABOUT ONCE HITLER CAME TO POWER AND YOU WERE
24 STILL LIVING IN GERMANY. WHAT CHANGE IF YOU CAN REMEMBER
25 SOME SPECIFICS?

26 A YEAH, THE WHOLE LIFE CHANGED AROUND BECAUSE LIKE I

1 SAID, I HAD TO DROP SCHOOL, I HAD TO STOP SCHOOL. MY BIG
2 DREAM ABOUT PLAYING FOR A GERMAN SOCCER CLUB CAME TO AN END
3 IN '35.

4 MY SISTER -- BOTH SISTERS LEFT OVERNIGHT. ONE
5 SISTER, SHE HAD A FURNITURE STORE. SHE JUST LOCKED IT AND
6 WALKED AWAY FROM IT. BUT IT SAVED THEIR LIFE BECAUSE ONE
7 SISTER WENT TO PALESTINE, THE YOUNGER ONE. AND THE OTHER
8 ONE WENT TO ROMANIA. BUT THAT ONE FROM ROMANIA, SHE CAME
9 BACK AFTER THE WAR AND SHE DIED IN BERLIN A SHORT WHILE
10 AGO. BUT THE FAMILY'S STILL THERE.

11 Q WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?

12 A MY MOTHER LIVED IN BERLIN UNTIL 1941. AFTER SHE
13 RECEIVED THE ASHES FROM MY FATHER FROM THE CONCENTRATION
14 CAMP, SHE WENT TO THE STATION IN BERLIN AND BOUGHT A TICKET
15 -- A RAILWAY TICKET TO BOCHNIA. SHE DIDN'T WANT TO BE BY
16 HERSELF ANY MORE, SHE SAYS. SHE CAME TO ME TO BOCHNIA, TO
17 THE GHETTO. AND WE WERE TOGETHER FOR A YEAR. AND THEN IN
18 1942, SHE WAS DEPORTED WITH ANOTHER EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND
19 JEWS. UNKNOWN, WE KNOW IT'S ONE OF THE DEATH CAMPS FROM
20 WHICH I NEVER HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT HER. MY FATHER DIED IN
21 1940 IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP IN BERLIN SO THAT'S IT.

22 Q DID YOU KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO YOUR FATHER? DID
23 YOU KNOW WHEN HE WAS DEPORTED, WERE YOU IN CONTACT WITH
24 YOUR PARENTS?

25 A I WAS IN CONTACT WITH MY MOTHER IN BERLIN AND THERE
26 WAS EVEN CONTACT WITH MY FATHER IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

1 BECAUSE THEY ALLOWED HIM TO -- ONCE A MONTH COULD WRITE A
2 POSTCARD. HE SAID, "IF MOTHER WOULD HAVE A PASSAGE FOR ME
3 OUT OF GERMANY," HE SAID, "THEY WOULD LET ME OUT." BUT
4 PASSAGE OUT OF GERMANY -- IN '37 WHEN I -- I MEAN, I ALWAYS
5 HAD HOPE SOMETHING'S GOING TO CHANGE, MAYBE.

6 BUT NOTHING CHANGED. IT GOT WORSE AND WORSE
7 AND IN '37 I STARTED TO THINK ABOUT LEAVING, TOO. SO I WENT
8 TO THE ENGLISH EMBASSY AND TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. THEY
9 WERE LAUGHING AT ME. THEY SAID, "DO YOU HAVE SOMEBODY IN
10 AMERICA?" I SAID, "NO, BUT IF I'M GOING TO STAY HERE THEY
11 ARE GOING TO KILL ME HERE." SO, I WENT TO DIFFERENT
12 EMBASSIES, BUT NOBODY WANTED TO HELP ME. NOBODY. THEY SAY
13 THEY CANNOT HELP ME. AND THEN THEY PICKED ME UP IN OCTOBER
14 '38.

15 Q HOW DID YOU FEEL LEAVING YOUR PARENTS?

16 A I HAD TO GO. THEY PICKED ME UP. NOW, I MEAN I
17 -- LIKE I SAY, I CAN'T GET OVER IT. WHY DID THEY TAKE ME
18 AND LEFT MY PARENTS IN BERLIN. WE WERE LIVING IN THE SAME
19 APARTMENT. UNTIL TODAY I'M WONDERING WHY. I CAN'T
20 UNDERSTAND THAT.

21 Q NOW, WHAT WAS THE BACKGROUND OF YOUR PARENTS. THEY
22 WERE POLISH?

23 A THEY CAME FROM POLAND, RIGHT. THEY CAME IN 1910 TO
24 BERLIN AND OPENED -- CAME WITH SOME LITTLE MONEY TO OPEN A
25 GROCERY STORE, WHICH THEY OPERATED TO THE
26 KRISTALLNACHT, 1939. NO, '38. '38 WAS THE

1 KRISTALLNACHT. AND THEN THAT STORE WAS DEMOLISHED. BUT THE
2 PLACE IS STILL THERE. I VISITED IT THREE YEARS AGO. THEY
3 MADE A WAREHOUSE OUT OF IT.

4 Q DID YOU EVER MEET ANYONE AFTER THE WAR FROM THE
5 CAMP; YOU KNOW, ANY PEOPLE?

6 A YES. YES. YES, I HAVE. I HAVE SOME FRIENDS HERE
7 WHO SPENT YEARS IN THE GHETTO, TOO. ANOTHER FRIEND WHO
8 SPENT A YEAR. WE ARE A FEW FRIENDS. WE SPENT YEARS
9 TOGETHER IN THE GHETTO IN BOCHNIA.

10 Q I GUESS WHAT I WAS THINKING, KAREN HAD MENTIONED
11 THAT YOU HAD A STORY ABOUT MEETING THE KAPO AFTER THE WAR.

12 A WHICH STORY WAS IT, YOU SAY?

13 Q AFTER THE WAR, I GUESS SOMEWHERE MEETING A KAPO OR
14 BEING -- MEETING SOMEONE WHO HAD BEEN A KAPO AFTER THE WAR.

15 A I CAN'T REMEMBER.

16 Q LET'S SEE. YEAH. IT WAS JUST ONE OF THE THINGS SHE
17 HAD MENTIONED. AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF YOUR STORIES THAT
18 -- HOW THAT YOU HAD FELT A LOT OF ANGER OR SOMETHING WHEN
19 YOU SAW THE KAPO AFTER THE WAR.

20 A YEAH. WHEN I WALKED OUT FROM THE CAMP, I HAD ONE
21 THING IN MY MIND. I SAID, "THE FIRST GERMAN I SEE ON THE
22 STREET I'M GOING TO KILL." I SAID, "THAT'S GOING TO BE THE
23 FIRST THING I'M GOING TO DO WHEN I COME OUT OF THE CAMP.
24 I'M GOING TO TAKE A ROCK AND KILL THEM." BUT I COULDN'T DO
25 IT. PROBABLY I WASN'T EVEN STRONG ENOUGH TO DO IT. I
26 WALKED OUT LIKE A MAN A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

1 Q COULD YOU TELL ME ABOUT LIBERATION DAY? I'LL PICK
2 UP THE STORY BECAUSE WE NEVER GOT PAST LIBERATION DAY.

3 WHAT WAS THAT DAY LIKE; WHAT HAPPENED?

4 A YOU KNOW, THEY KNEW SOMETHING BECAUSE A DAY OR TWO
5 DAYS BEFORE LIBERATION, THE RUSSIANS PLANE CAME AND
6 THROWING DOWN LEAFLETS OVER THE CAMP. WE DIDN'T KNOW IF IT
7 WAS RUSSIANS OR GERMANS. THEY DIDN'T LET US PICK THEM UP
8 BUT SOME OF THEM PICKED THEM UP. THEY WERE IN RUSSIAN AND
9 GERMAN. THEY SAID, "FOR EVERY JEW, NOW WE GOING TO KILL
10 ONE HUNDRED NAZIS, AND WE ARE GOING TO BE IN THE CITY IN
11 TWENTY FOUR HOURS."

12 SO THEY LEFT. THE GERMANS LEFT THE CAMP. THEY
13 LEFT US. SO FIRST WE FIGURED IT'S JUST A RUSE. PROBABLY
14 WE GOING TO WALK OUT, THEY ARE GOING TO SHOOT US. SO WE
15 WERE STAYING INSIDE AND WE HEARD FIGHTING GOING ON AND THE
16 NEXT DAY OR TWO DAYS LATER, THE RUSSIAN ARMY WALKED IN THAT
17 TOWN, YOU KNOW.

18 AND I DON'T KNOW. THAT DAY THAT IS -- I WAS
19 TRYING TO THINK ABOUT MY FAMILY, WHERE CAN I LOOK FOR
20 THEM. HOW I'M GOING TO FIND THEM, BECAUSE I KNOW THEY
21 PICKED UP MY MOTHER AND I WAS SURE SHEY'S NOT ALIVE ANY
22 MORE. THEY SENT HER TO A DEATH CAMP. MY FATHER, HE WAS
23 KILLED IN ORANIENBURG. SO JUST MY SISTERS AND MY RELATIVES
24 WERE -- TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO LOOK FOR THEM AND FIND
25 THEM.

26 Q WHAT DID YOU DO -- I GUESS I JUST AM

1 INTERESTED, YOU KNOW, AFTER TWELVE YEARS OF HELL. WHAT WAS
2 -- WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

3 A OKAY. I WALKED OUT FROM THE CAMP. I PICKED UP AN
4 EMPTY SACK AND WAS STANDING ON THE STREET. AND WHEN THE
5 RUSSIANS -- THE ARMY TOOK I THINK DAYS AND NIGHTS -- THEY
6 WALKED BY, TENS OF THOUSANDS, THEY MARCHED AND I WAS
7 STANDING WITH THE SACK AND CALLING, "BREAD, BREAD."

8 SO I PICKED UP A SACK WITH SEVEN OR EIGHT
9 LOAVES OF BREAD. THAT WAS ONLY THING I HAD ON MY MIND RIGHT
10 NOW, TO GET BREAD. TO -- TO EAT BREAD, YOU KNOW. THAT WAS
11 ALWAYS A DREAM IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP. ONE DAY TO HAVE A
12 FULL LOAF OF BREAD FOR YOURSELF. THAT WAS A DREAM FROM A
13 GUY IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP. BECAUSE THERE WAS TIMES THE
14 HUNGER WAS SO BAD YOU FELT LIKE AN ANIMAL.

15 SO, THAT'S WHAT I SAY, THAT DAYS AFTER
16 LIBERATION, IT TOOK ME A LITTLE WHILE TO GET TO THINKING
17 MYSELF THAT I'M NOT IN A CAMP ANY MORE. THAT I AM NOT 11360
18 ANY MORE. SO I WAS STAYING IN THE TOWN FOR A LITTLE WHILE
19 TO GET MYSELF BACK -- BACK SOME STRENGTH BEFORE I CAN DO
20 SOMETHING. AND THEN I STARTED TO LOOK FOR MY WIFE AND
21 RELATIVES.

22 Q TELL ME SPECIFICALLY. YOU WALK OUT OF THE CAMP,
23 WHERE DID YOU GO?

24 A I DON'T KNOW. I WAS WALKING ON THE STREETS. MOST OF
25 THE HOMES WERE EMPTY. SEE, THE GERMANS DIDN'T RUN AWAY
26 WHEN THE AMERICANS CAME IN SO THEY RUN AWAY WHEN THE

1 RUSSIANS CAME IN BUT EVERYTHING WAS EMPTY AND THE RUSSIANS
2 TOLD US, "EVERYTHING IS YOURS. EVERY HOUSE, EVERY
3 STORE. EVERYTHING YOU WANTED IS YOURS," HE SAYS. SO WE
4 COULDN'T UNDERSTAND ALL THAT STUFF, "EVERYTHING IS YOURS."

5 ANYHOW, I HAD A GUY FROM THE CAMP. WE WALKED
6 IN THE HOUSE, AN EMPTY HOUSE, AND WE WERE LOOKING FOR FOOD
7 AND WE THREW AWAY ALL OUR DIRTY CLOTHES, WHICH WERE FULL OF
8 LICE. AND TRYING TO GET BACK TO NORMAL LIFE WHICH
9 TOOK TWO OR THREE MONTHS, I THINK, TO CLEAN UP. AND THAT
10 TOWN WAS ALMOST EMPTY. MAYBE A FEW DOZEN GERMANS THERE,
11 BUT THE REST, THEY ALL WERE RUNNING. THEY WERE SCARED FOR
12 THE RUSSIANS. SCARED.

13 SO -- WHAT ELSE?

14 Q WHAT -- WHEN YOU GOT TO A HOUSE WITH YOUR FRIEND,
15 WHAT WERE SOME OF THE STEPS, WHAT WAS THAT FIRST BATH LIKE;
16 WHAT DID YOU EAT? WHAT --

17 A FIRST OF ALL WE HAD TO BREAK IN THE DOORS BECAUSE
18 THE DOORS WERE LOCKED. DOORS, THE WINDOWS, BREAK IN, GO IN
19 AND LOOK FOR SOME FOOD. OUR MIND WAS ONLY BREAD, BREAD. NOW
20 WE FOUND SOME.

21 ALL BREAD WAS MOLDED, OLD. BUT WHO CARED. WHO
22 CARES IF IT'S MOLDED OR OLD. WE WERE EATING IT.

23 BUT LIKE I SAID, LITTLE BIT LATER ON THE
24 RUSSIANS WERE SUPPLYING US WITH FOOD. HAD ENOUGH TO EAT AND
25 THE RUSSIANS GAVE US ENOUGH FOOD.

26 AND CLOTHES, WHATEVER WE FOUND IN THE CLOSETS

1 IN THE GERMAN HOMES, WE TOOK.

2 Q AND THEN WHAT DID YOU DO?

3 A THEN, AFTER I STARTED TO FEEL A LITTLE BIT MORE
4 HUMAN, I WENT BACK TO KRACOW. THAT WAS THE CENTER WHERE
5 THE JEWS WERE CONGREGATED, LOOKING FOR SURVIVORS. THERE
6 WAS A JEWISH COMMUNITY THERE. AND EVERY DAY THERE WERE
7 LOSTS THERE FROM THIS CAMP AND THIS CAMP AND THIS CAMP. SO
8 WHEN I CAME THERE I PUT MY NAME, TOO, ON IT. IN CASE MY
9 WIFE COMES, SHE WILL KNOW THAT I WAS HERE.

10 IT TOOK ME ABOUT A HALF A YEAR TO FIND HER.

11 THEN WE WENT BACK TO GERMANY.

12 Q HOW DID YOU FIND HER? HOW DID SHE FIND YOU? DID
13 YOU STAY IN THAT TOWN OR WHAT?

14 A JUST -- JUST BY -- HOW YOU CALL IT. I DIDN'T
15 BELIEVE ANY MORE I'M GOING TO FIND HER BECAUSE WHEN I ASKED
16 ABOUT AUSCHWITZ EVERYONE SAID, "WHY YOU LOOKING IN
17 AUSCHWITZ? EVERYBODY'S DEAD FROM AUSCHWITZ. THERE'S
18 NOBODY ALIVE ANY MORE."

19 SO ONE DAY I WALKED ON THE STREET IN KRACOW. I
20 MET A GUY FROM HER HOME TOWN, FROM BOCHNIA. SO HE SAID,
21 "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" I SAID, "I'M LOOKING FOR
22 RACHEL." SO HE SAID, "I SAW HER YESTERDAY. SHE IS IN
23 SUCH-AND-SUCH TOWN." SO I WENT THERE, FOUND HER, AND THEN
24 WE WENT BACK TO GERMANY. THAT WAS ONLY PLACE YOU COULD GO
25 IN '45.

26 Q WHY?

1 A BECAUSE NOBODY WOULD LET YOU IN. NOBODY WOULD LET
2 YOU IN. BECAUSE I HEARD ABOUT IT. THEY HAVE A "JOINT" IN
3 GERMANY. THEY WILL HELP YOU -- I MEAN, I WORKED FOR THE
4 "JOINT," TOO, AFTER THE WAR, IN MUNICH. I WORKED THERE IN
5 THE OFFICE.

6 Q SO HOW LONG WERE YOU IN GERMANY? TELL ME THE STORY.
7 FROM WHERE DID YOU GO IN GERMANY?

8 A WE WENT -- WHEN WE LEFT KRACOW, IT WAS I THINK IN
9 '46. WE WENT BACK TO -- TO MUNICH BECAUSE I HEARD THERE'S
10 A PLACE FOR GERMAN JEWS, WHERE THEY CAN LIVE THERE BECAUSE
11 EVERYTHING WAS FLAT IN THAT TIME. THERE WAS NOT VERY MUCH
12 STANDING ANY MORE IN GERMANY.

13 SO I WENT THERE. THEY GAVE ME A -- A ROOM WITH
14 SOMEBODY ELSE. ME AND MY WIFE AND ANOTHER COUPLE, WE LIVED
15 IN ONE ROOM. AND THEN LITTLE BY LITTLE, I WAS LOOKING FOR
16 WORK AND I FOUND A JOB AT THE "JOINT" IN MUNICH. I WORKED
17 THERE UNTIL WE LEFT GERMANY TO GO TO THE UNITED
18 STATES. SINCE WE HAD SOME RELATIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO. SO
19 WE WENT TO SAN FRANCISCO.

20 WE WERE -- WE WERE NOT SURE BECAUSE MY WIFE
21 HAD A SISTER. SHE WAS LIBERATED IN BERGEN BELSEN. BUT THEY
22 TOOK HER TO SWEDEN BECAUSE SHE WAS VERY SICK. THEY TOOK HER
23 TO SANITORIUM, TO SWEDEN. SO WE WERE THINKING MAYBE WE GO
24 TO SWEDEN OR GO TO AMERICA. SO WE DECIDED TO GO TO
25 AMERICA.

26 Q AND THEN WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE?

1 A WE ARRIVED HERE IN JANUARY '51.

2 Q AND WHAT HAPPENED SINCE THEN?

3 A THEN I WAS WORKING EIGHTEEN YEARS IN ALL KIND OF
4 DIFFERENT JOBS. MY WIFE WAS WORKING UNTIL SHE HAD THE
5 KIDS.

6 WE SAVED UP SOME MONEY AND IN 1964 I OPENED A
7 LIQUOR STORE IN SAN FRANCISCO WHICH I SOLD IN 1981. THEN I
8 RETIRED.

9 Q WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE STORE AND WHERE IS IT?

10 A LAKESIDE LIQUOR, MISSION AND 18TH STREET.

11 Q TELL ME ABOUT JEWISH LIFE HERE AND THE CHILDREN AND
12 WHAT KIND OF LIFE THERE --

13 A FOR THE KIDS, IT'S FE, I THINK. WE JOINED RIGHT
14 AWAY A GREGATION. WE BELONGED TO NER TAMID AND WE RAISED
15 OUR KIDS THE JEWISH WAY.

16 WE SPENT ALL OF THE HOLIDAYS -- I MEAN, WHEN
17 THEY WERE LITTLE. NOW THEY ARE NOT IN THE HOUSE ANY MORE.

18 WE NEVER MISSED A HOLIDAY IN THE TEMPLE OR WE
19 MADE A BIG PESACH IN THE HOUSE OR ROSH HASHANAH IN THE
20 HOUSE. WE INVITED SOME FRIENDS TO THE HOUSE. WE SHOWED
21 THE KIDS THAT THEY ARE JEWISH. THAT WE ARE JEWISH.

22 Q HOW MANY CHILDREN AND WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES?

23 A KAREN, AND OTHER ONE IS GITA, G-I-T-A. SHE LIVES IN
24 LOS ANGELES. SHE WANTS TO BE AN ARTIST. SHE WORKS FOR A TV
25 STATION.

26 Q HOW OLD ARE THEY?

1 A KAREN IS THIRTY-TWO AND GITA IS THIRTY-FIVE.

2 Q AND WHEN YOU WERE RAISING THEM, HOW DID THE
3 HOLOCAUST --

4 A WE WERE TRYING FOR A LONG TIME NOT TO TALK ABOUT
5 IT. A LONG TIME BECAUSE EVERY TIME MY KIDS SAW THE NUMBER
6 ON MY WIFE'S ARM, THEY ALWAYS ASKED, "WHAT IS IT, MOM?
7 WHAT IS IT, MOM?" FOR A LONG TIME WE DIDN'T TALK TO THEM
8 ABOUT IT. BUT WHEN THEY GROW UP A LITTLE BIT MORE WE KNOW
9 THEY WILL UNDERSTAND. THEN WE WERE SITTING DOWN AND WE TELL
10 THEM THE STORIES. THEY NEVER COULD GET ENOUGH TO HEAR ABOUT
11 IT.

12 Q HOW DID IT CHANGE THE WAY YOU -- OR HOW DID IT
13 INFLUENCE THE WAY YOU BROUGHT THEM UP, YOU KNOW.

14 A OH, MAYBE PUT SOME -- MAYBE MORE LOVE, TO THE
15 UPBRINGING FROM THEM, YOU KNOW.

16 WE WORKED HARD. I MEAN I COULD EXIST ON THE
17 JOB, TOO. BUT I SAID, YOU KNOW, MY GOD. THE KIDS GROW
18 UP, I WANT TO SEND THEM TO BERKELEY, IT COSTS LOTS OF
19 MONEY. SO I DECIDED TO GO IN THE STORE AND WORK THERE
20 SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.

21 KAREN SAID -- YOU KNOW, SHE WENT TO BERKELEY
22 -- SHE SAID, "I LIKE TO MAKE MY MASTER'S AT HEBREW
23 UNIVERSITY IN JERUSALEM." I SAID, "OKAY. GO DO IT."

24 SO WE -- WE REALLY I THINK CRAZY
25 PARENTS. PROBABLY LIKE MOST OF THE SURVIVOR PARENTS.

26 Q SIGI, WHEN YOU WERE SPENDING YOUR TWELVE YEARS IN

1 THE GHETTO AND IN THE CAMPS, WHAT SUSTAINED YOU? WHAT KEPT
2 YOU GOING ON?

3 A I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I COULDN'T EVEN GET -- I
4 ASKED MYSELF THE SAME QUESTIONS VERY OFTEN. I CAN'T FIND AN
5 ANSWER. I REALLY CANNOT FIND THE ANSWER. I DON'T
6 KNOW. VERY OFTEN I ASK MYSELF THE SAME QUESTION.

7 MAYBE THIS HOPE THAT ONE DAY IT WILL BE
8 OVER. BUT I NEVER FIGURED IT WILL LAST THAT LONG.

9 Q DO YOU THINK GOD KEPT YOU ALIVE FOR A REASON?

10 A I MEAN, PROBABLY THE -- THE MAIN REASON PROBABLY
11 WAS TO SEE MY WIFE AND MY FAMILY. I WAS THINKING ABOUT
12 THAT. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM AGAIN.

13 Q YOU MENTIONED YOU HAD TWO SISTERS?

14 A UH-HUH.

15 Q WHO SURVIVED. AND ARE YOU CLOSE WITH THEM OR WHAT
16 IS THAT?

17 A YES, YES. I'M VERY CLOSE. AFTER THE WAR WE BECAME
18 MUCH, MUCH CLOSER THAN BEFORE THE WAR. BUT, LIKE I SAID,
19 ONE PASSED AWAY IN GERMANY. THE OTHER ONE LIVES IN NEW
20 YORK. WE ARE VERY CLOSE.

21 Q WHAT DID YOU THINK OF YOUR SISTER RETURNING TO
22 GERMANY?

23 A FIRST WHEN I -- WHILE I WAS IN GERMANY, I WAS
24 WRITING TO HER IN ROMANIA TO COME BACK. SHE SAID, "I'M
25 NEVER GOING TO WALK ON THE STREETS WHERE THERE'S BLOOD ON
26 THE STREETS." BUT LATER ON SHE CAME BACK AND SHE PICKED UP

1 EVERYTHING THEY GAVE HER BACK. THAT STORE THAT SHE HAD,
2 THE FURNITURE STORE. THEY GAVE IT BACK TO HER.

3 SHE SAYS, "AT MY AGE," SHE SAYS, "WHERE AM I
4 GOING? THEY GIVE ME EVERYTHING HERE." THEY GAVE HER A
5 NICE PLACE TO LIVE AND EVERY YEAR THEY SENT HER FOR A NICE
6 VACATION.

7 SHE SAID, "I'M TOO OLD TO START ALL OVER
8 AGAIN.

9 "HERE," SHE SAYS, "I'M HOME. I KNOW THE
10 LANGUAGE." SO SHE WAS STAYING THERE.

11 Q WHAT ABOUT -- I KNOW YOU ARE JEWISH AND WHAT ABOUT
12 GOD, THOUGH. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOD AFTER EVERYTHING?

13 A I TELL YOU, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I THINK, MY GOD. IF
14 IT'S REALLY -- WHY DIDN'T HE SHOW SOMETHING IN THAT
15 TERRIBLE TIME? WHY DIDN'T HE? SOMETIMES I DOUBT, YOU
16 KNOW.

17 BUT THEN AGAIN WHEN I GO IN THE TEMPLE AND LOOK
18 IN THE PRAYER BOOKS AND -- I GET A GOOD -- I HAVE A GOOD
19 FEELING. BUT IT'S NOT EASY. IT'S NOT EASY. BECAUSE IT
20 COMES BACK TOO OFTEN TO YOUR MIND. WHY DIDN'T GOD SHOW
21 SOMETHING IN THAT TERRIBLE TIME WHEN THEY KILLED BABIES AND
22 -- PROBABLY NEVER GOING TO FIND AN ANSWER.

23 I ASKED MY RABBI ONCE. HE SAID YOU SHOULDN'T
24 ASK QUESTIONS LIKE THAT.

25 Q WHAT ABOUT -- YOU HAD MENTIONED THAT YOUR NUMBER IS
26 11060?

1 A 11360, YEAH.

2 Q WHEN DID YOU GET THAT NUMBER?

3 A THAT NUMBER THEY GAVE ME IN KRACOW, THE NUMBER
4 APPEARED HERE (INDICATES CHEST). YOU KNOW, WE HAD SPECIAL
5 UNIFORMS IN CAMP. YOU KNOW THE STRIPES, LIKE ZEBRAS.

6 AND WHEN I CAME TO GROSSROSEN, THEY PUT THE
7 NUMBER ON MY CHEST. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT IS INK OR --
8 SUCH BIG NUMBERS. TOOK ME FOR A FEW YEARS BUT I RUBBED IT
9 OFF AFTER A FEW YEARS.

10 MY WIFE CARRIES IT HERE (INDICATES ARM). THE
11 GERMAN GOVERNMENT SAID IT WOULD TAKE IT OUT, THEY ARE GOING
12 TO PAY FOR THE SURGERY. MY WIFE SAYS, "YOU COULD GIVE ME A
13 MILLION DOLLARS. I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE OUT THAT NUMBER."

14 Q DO YOU THINK THAT YOU -- I JUST WONDERED HOW YOU
15 MAKE YOUR PEACE WITH IT. HOW YOU WALK AROUND NOT BITTER AND
16 ANGRY BUT BRING UP TWO BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN AND BE A LOVING
17 PERSON.

18 A I AM LOTS OF TIMES BITTER AND ANGRY INSIDE AND I
19 NEVER WILL SHOW IT. I NEVER TOLD ANYBODY, BUT LOTS OF TIME
20 I'M THINKING ABOUT IT AGAIN AND GETTING VERY BITTER, VERY
21 ANGRY.

22 I REMEMBER WHEN I CAME BACK FROM GERMANY. I
23 TOLD THE GERMAN PEOPLE WHAT HAPPENED. THEY SAID THAT'S
24 IMPOSSIBLE, THEY TOLD ME. I SAID I JUST CAME BACK FROM THAT
25 HELL. THEY DON'T WANT TO BELIEVE ME.

26 Q WHAT MADE YOU GO BACK TO GERMANY. TELL ME WHAT IT

1 WAS LIKE GOING BACK. WHEN DID YOU GO, WHAT DID YOU DO AND
2 WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

3 A AFTER THE CAMP, YOU MEAN? I WAS THINKING THAT WOULD
4 BE THE ONLY PLACE FOR ME WHERE I CAN FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED
5 TO MY FAMILY BECAUSE SINCE ALL THE -- SINCE THE "JOINT"
6 WAS THERE AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, THERE WAS A BIG JEWISH
7 COMMUNITY THERE, SO THE ONLY PLACE I COULD FIND OUT WHAT
8 HAPPENED TO MY FAMILY AND I WANTED TO GO BACK TO NORMAL
9 LIFE.

10 SO IT'S -- I MEAN, I WOULD SAY NINETY-NINE
11 PERCENT OF THE SURVIVORS, THEY WENT TO GERMANY. AND I
12 THINK LOTS OF THEM LEFT ARE STILL THERE. THEY'RE STILL
13 LIVING IN GERMANY TODAY. I KNOW SOME GUYS, WE WERE TOGETHER
14 IN '46 AND '47. THEY ARE STILL THERE. THEY ARE NOT
15 LEAVING.

16 Q AND WHAT ABOUT NOW. YOU MENTIONED YOU HAD GONE BACK
17 A COUPLE TIMES WITH YOUR WIFE TO VISIT?

18 A I WENT ONCE. WE HAD AN INVITATION FROM THE
19 GOVERNMENT.

20 Q AND WHAT WAS THAT TRIP LIKE? IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY
21 DIFFERENT.

22 A IT WAS VERY DIFFERENT. VERY HARD. VERY, VERY HARD. I
23 MEAN, FOR MY WIFE IT WAS HELL. FOR MY WIFE IT WAS HELL.

24 BUT IT IS HARD, YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU GO TO THE
25 HOUSE WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND THE SCHOOL WHERE YOU WENT AND
26 THE CEMETERY WHERE YOUR FATHER -- ASHES ARE BURIED FROM

1 YOUR FATHER. HOUSE IS STILL STANDING THERE LIKE WE LEFT
2 IT IN BERLIN.

3 Q DID YOU FEEL LIKE YOU MADE YOUR PEACE WITH IT OR --

4 A I COULDN'T SAY THAT I MADE MY PEACE WITH IT. MAYBE
5 I WOULD SAY MAYBE FIFTY-FIFTY. I WISH I WOULDN'T HAVE TO
6 THINK SO MUCH BACK ABOUT IT BUT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO
7 THINK ABOUT THAT TIME. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. I ALWAYS TELL ME
8 DON'T THINK ABOUT IT. DON'T TALK ABOUT IT.

9 BUT IT'S JUST NOT WORKING. JUST NOT WORKING.
10 TOOK KAREN TWO YEARS TO GET ME OVER HERE TO DO IT BECAUSE I
11 JUST DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT.

12 Q I GUESS I LOOK AT IT AS THE GLASS IS HALF FULL AND
13 NOT HALF EMPTY. IT'S LIKE -- I THINK IT TAKES SO MUCH
14 COURAGE TO LEAD A LIFE AND -- WHILE YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT
15 THIS HELL. AND THAT'S -- AND YOU'RE DOING THAT. YOU DID
16 THAT. DESPITE IT.

17 A YEAH.

18 Q YOU HAD A LIFE.

19 A I ALWAYS THINK, HOW IS IT POSSIBLE PEOPLE LIKE
20 ME CAN HAVE A NORMAL FAMILY. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE? I ALWAYS
21 ASK MYSELF, HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?

22 I ALWAYS THINK A GUY LIKE ME, I SHOULD BE
23 WALKING DOWN THE STREET, BE CRAZY, SCREAMING ON THE
24 STREET. GOING AROUND LIKE A CRAZY MAN. BUT I'M WALKING
25 AROUND LIKE A NORMAL HUMAN BEING.

26 LIKE I SAID, IT'S FIFTY-FIFTY. CAN'T GET AWAY

1 FROM YOU. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. IT WILL NEVER, NEVER -- WHEN
2 WE GET TOGETHER WITH SURVIVORS WE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT
3 IT. ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT IT. DO YOU REMEMBER THAT DAY? DO
4 YOU REMEMBER THAT? DO YOU REMEMBER THAT?

5 Q DOES IT HELP TO HAVE FRIENDS WHO ALSO WENT THROUGH
6 IT?

7 A PARDON ME?

8 Q DOES IT HELP TO HAVE FRIENDS --

9 A YEAH, I THINK IT'S GOOD. YEAH. I THINK IT IS GOOD
10 BECAUSE WITH THEM I CAN SPEAK FREELY ABOUT THAT TIME.

11 BECAUSE SEE, NOW, PEOPLE LIKE YOU. YOU READ
12 IT, YOU HEARD IT, YOU SEE IT ON TELEVISION. BUT IT'S
13 IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND IT. IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE.

14 Q YES. WHAT ABOUT ISRAEL. WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS?

15 A OH, MY -- MY HEART IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT
16 THERE. IF I COULD TAKE THE CLIMATE, I WOULDN'T LIVE HERE.
17 I CAN'T TAKE THE CLIMATE.

18 Q WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO GO TO VISIT ISRAEL; WHEN YOU DID
19 YOU FIRST GO?

20 A I WENT THE FIRST TIME I WENT WAS -- LET'S SEE
21 EXACTLY. I SOLD THE STORE IN '60 -- IN '81. THE FIRST
22 TIME I WENT '68.

23 WHEN I LANDED I HAD TEARS IN MY EYES. I CAN'T
24 BELIEVE IT. I'M HERE IN A JEWISH COUNTRY. I COULDN'T
25 BELIEVE IT. ESPECIALLY SINCE WE HAVE ALL THE FAMILY OVER
26 THERE. MY WIFE HAS TWO BROTHERS. ONE PASSED AWAY. ONE IS

1 STILL THERE. AUNTS AND UNCLES. THEY ALL OVER THERE. WE
2 WERE THINKING ABOUT GOING. BUT AGAIN, I ALWAYS WAS SCARED
3 ABOUT THE HEAT. I CAN'T TAKE ANY HEAT. SINCE I LEFT THE
4 CONCENTRATION CAMP, I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE HEAT. I CAN'T
5 TAKE NO HEAT.

6 THAT'S THE REASON FOR ME SAN FRANCISCO IS
7 PERFECT. I COULDN'T LIVE IN NEW YORK. I COULDN'T LIVE
8 -- MY DAUGHTER'S IN LOS ANGELES. I COULDN'T LIVE THERE
9 EITHER, BECAUSE OF THE HEAT.

10 Q SIGI, IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO -- I
11 JUST WANT TO -- THE MAIN PURPOSE FOR MORE FOR DOING THIS
12 TAPE IS THAT THERE SHOULD BE A RECORD. THERE SHOULD BE A
13 RECORD, YOU KNOW, THAT THIS WAS REAL AND THIS IS HOW IT WAS
14 BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T KNOW AND YOU CAN'T IMAGINE. IN YOUR
15 WILDEST IMAGINATION, YOU CAN'T IMAGINE.

16 A NO, NO. YOU CAN'T.

17 Q SO ONLY PEOPLE WHO WERE THERE CAN TELL --

18 A RIGHT.

19 Q -- WHAT IT WAS LIKE. SO IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANT
20 TO TELL ABOUT ONE OF THE THINGS YOU DON'T GO INTO TOO MUCH
21 WAS ANY HORROR STORIES AND I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR
22 PEOPLE TO KNOW THOSE STORIES, TOO, . SO THAT THEY DON'T
23 REPEAT IT.

24 A THEY WERE HANGING IN PLASZOW. ONCE IN A WHILE
25 SOMEBODY TRIED TO ESCAPE. SO WE HAD TO STAND SOMETIMES SIX
26 OR EIGHT OR TEN HOURS. RAIN OR WINTER -- I MEAN I WOULD SAY

1 A HUNDRED PERCENT THEY CATCH THOSE GUYS. THEY BROUGHT THEM
2 BACK. THEY PARADED THEM AND THEN THEY HANGED THEM AND WE
3 HAD TO WALK BY AND WATCH HOW THEY HANG THEM.

4 OR WHEN THEY CAME IN -- SOME PEOPLE WORKED
5 OUTSIDE, NOT IN THE CAMP, OUTSIDE THE CAMPS -- SO ONCE IN
6 A WHILE THEY TRADED SOME FOOD WITH THE POLES, YOU
7 KNOW. THEY BROUGHT IT IN. MOST OF THE TIMES THE GERMANS
8 WERE SEARCHING AND THEY FOUND THEIR THINGS AND YOU GET TEN
9 OR FIFTEEN OR TWENTY LASHES ON YOUR BARE BUTT. IT WAS
10 ANOTHER TERRIBLE THING. TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE THING. YOU HAVE
11 TO COUNT. IF YOU DON'T COUNT, YOU -- HE START ALL OVER
12 AGAIN.

13 THE WORST THING WAS FOR ME, THEN -- HELL IS
14 PROBABLY NOTHING IN COMPARISON TO GROSSROSEN WHERE WE
15 WORKED IN THE QUARRY, THE ROCKS, CARRYING ROCKS FOR TWELVE
16 HOURS A DAY. THEN THE GUYS WERE SITTING THERE, THE GUARDS,
17 WITH THE DOGS AND SENDING THE DOGS AT YOU, YOU KNOW.

18 BITING YOU ON THE -- ONE OF THE GUARDS ALWAYS
19 HAS A SUCH BIG, BIG RUBBER TRUNCHEON AND HE THINKS YOU ARE
20 NOT FAST ENOUGH WALKING BACK AND FORTH CARRYING THE ROCKS
21 AND HE -- HE KNOWS THE RIGHT SPOT WHERE TO HIT YOU. IN
22 THE NECK, YOU KNOW.

23 YEAH. BLOODY YEARS, BLOODY YEARS.

24 Q ANYTHING ELSE?

25 A NO, NO. IT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.

26 Q DID YOU EVER GET ANY OF THAT PUNISHMENT OR BEATING

1 OR ANYTHING?

2 A YEAH. I GOT THAT PUNISHMENT IN LANGENBIELAU. THE
3 GUY WHO THREW ME IN THE SNOW, NAKED. HOW I SURVIVED
4 THAT IN DECEMBER OF '44. THAT WAS A BITTER COLD. BITTER
5 BOLD, MY GOD.

6 Q HOW LONG WERE YOU OUT THERE?

7 A IN THE SNOW? I DON'T KNOW. I HAVE NO IDEA. TO ME,
8 SEEMED LIKE HOURS BUT PROBABLY TEN MINUTES MAYBE. BECAUSE
9 I KNOW IF I'M GOING TO BE THERE LONGER, I'M GOING TO DIE
10 BECAUSE HE SAID, "YOU LAY THERE UNTIL YOU ARE DEAD." BUT I
11 SAID, "I DON'T CARE ANY MORE." SO I GOT UP AND WENT BACK.

12 I MEAN, PROBABLY ANOTHER -- IF THE WAR WOULD
13 GO ANOTHER THREE MONTHS I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SURVIVE
14 BECAUSE MY FEET WERE ALREADY STARTING TO SWELL. THAT WAS
15 ALWAYS A SIGN, WHEN YOU ARE GOING, WHEN YOU ARE GOING. WHEN
16 YOU FEET STARTED TO SWELL IN THE BIG CAMPS THE GUY LOOKED
17 AT YOU AND HE SENT YOU RIGHT AWAY TO THE OVENS WHEN YOU
18 STARTED SWELLING.

19 Q IN ANY OF THE CAMPS WHERE YOU WERE, WERE THEY JUST
20 CAMPS WITH OVENS?

21 A NO. NO. NO. THE GHETTO HAD NO OVENS. ONLY IN
22 GROSSROSEN WE HAD OVENS. THE OTHER ONES WE HAD NO
23 OVENS. BUT THEY WERE CAMPS THEY WORKED YOU TO DEATH.

24 Q IN THE CAMPS WHERE THEY WORKED YOU TO DEATH, HOW DID
25 THEY KILL PEOPLE; WAS IT WITH TRENCHES?

26 A WITH TRENCHES, WITH ALL KIND OF THINGS, ALL KIND OF

1 DIFFERENT -- DIFFERENT WAYS THEY KILLED YOU, YOU KNOW. I
2 MEAN, YOU WERE ALREADY NINETY PERCENT DEAD.

3 YOU WERE ON STARVATION SO MANY YEARS, THAT GUYS
4 THEY HAD DIFFERENT GAMES. AND THEN THE QUARRY, THAT ONE
5 GUY WAS -- HE ALWAYS HAD SOME ROCKS THERE LAYING NEXT TO
6 HIM. AND HE WOULD THROW ROCKS AT YOU. WAS ALWAYS LOOKING
7 FOR THE HEAD. ALWAYS LOOKING FOR THE HEAD.

8 Q SIGI, WITH THE OTHER PRISONERS, I KNOW THAT YOU MUST
9 HAVE BEEN DEAD TIRED AT THE END OF THE DAY AND, YOU
10 KNOW, NO FOOD AND EVERYTHING. BUT WERE THERE ANY MOMENTS
11 YOU REMEMBERED, YOU KNOW, OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE PRISONERS?

12 A YES. YES. YES. YES. I REMEMBER THAT. IT WAS ONE GUY.
13 HE WAS POLISH GUY. WE HAD A NICE FRIENDSHIP WITH
14 HIM, YES. YEAH. WE -- EVEN AFTER THE WAR WE WERE STAYING
15 TOGETHER A LITTLE WHILE. YES. IT WAS -- GAVE YOU A GOOD
16 FEELING IF SOMEBODY NEXT TO YOU WHO HAD A HEART, YOU
17 KNOW. WHO -- I MEAN, HOW MUCH HEART CAN HE SHOW? HE WAS
18 DEAD TIRED, TOO.

19 I REMEMBER ONE DAY, THEY BROUGHT US THE LUNCH
20 TO THE AMMUNITION FACTORY. BIG KETTLES, YOU KNOW, WAS
21 THERE SOUP INSIDE. AND WHEN WE WENT HOME, WE HAD TO TAKE
22 IT HOME. EMPTY, BUT WAS HEAVY. VERY HEAVY. VERY HEAVY. BIG
23 KETTLES LIKE THIS. SO ON BOTH SIDES TWO GUYS HAD TO CARRY
24 IT.

25 SO ONE GUARD SAID, "TONIGHT, SIGI, AND THE
26 OTHER GUY TAKE IT HOME." I MEAN, HE DIDN'T SAY "SIGI" TO

1 ME. I COULD FEEL IT. AFTER TEN MINUTES I CAN'T DO IT ANY
2 MORE. THAT FRIEND WALKED NEXT TO ME. HE SAID, "LET ME DO
3 IT." HE SAID, "I WILL DO IT FOR YOU." AND THAT WAS A BIG
4 THING. A BIG THING, YOU KNOW. AFTER YOU WORKED TEN HOURS A
5 DAY AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO, YOU OFFER YOURSELF TO CARRY THAT
6 HEAVY KETTLE. THAT'S SOMETHING I'LL NEVER FORGET. THAT'S
7 WHAT I CALL FRIENDSHIP.

8 IT'S MORE THAN IF TODAY SOMEBODY WOULD GIVE YOU
9 A BIG BIG DIAMOND, YOU KNOW. IT WOULDN'T BE THAT
10 MUCH. THAT HELPS, YEAH. THAT WAS A BIG HELP. BECAUSE
11 NOBODY HAD ANY MORE FEELING. NOBODY HAD ANY MORE HEART
12 LEFT.

13 Q WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

14 A STEINER, THE LAST NAME. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED
15 TO HIM. I WAS TOGETHER WITH HIM AFTER THE WAR IN KRACOW. I
16 DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM ANY MORE.

17 Q WHAT'S HIS FIRST NAME?

18 A SOLICK. HE WAS A PRINTER, TOO. BECAUSE I WAS -- I
19 ALMOST MADE IT IN GERMANY. LEARNED TO BE A PRINTER. WE
20 WORKED EVEN A SHORT WHILE TOGETHER. THEY HAD A PRINTING
21 SHOP IN PLASZOW.

22 AND HE HELPED MEE THERE, TOO, BECAUSE HE WAS AN
23 EXPERIENCED PRINTER AND I DIDN'T FINISH THE BIG -- ONE DAY
24 THEY CALLED, SAID THEY NEED PRINTERS. SO I GOT OUT BECAUSE
25 I FIGURED IT'S GOING TO BE A BETTER JOB. YOU CAN WORK
26 INSIDE. SO HE WAS A BIG HELP TO ME.

1 Q WHAT WERE SOME OF THE JOBS THAT YOU HAD? YOU
2 MENTIONED THE ROCKS AS BEING HELL. AND THE PRINTING. WHAT
3 WERE SOME OF THE OTHER JOBS?

4 A NOTHING. SHOVEL. WORKING WITH A SHOVEL. DIGGING
5 TRENCHES OR CARRYING AMMUNITION BOXES OR PULLING OUT TREES
6 WITH -- WITH TOOLS WHICH YOU CANNOT DO THAT KIND OF
7 WORK. WINTER TIME WITH THE -- THE EARTH IS FROZEN. THAT
8 WAS IN THE GHETTO TIME. THAT WAS HELL, THE KIND OF WORK.
9 WE DIDN'T HAVE THE CLOTHES TO BE WARM.

10 Q WHAT WAS THE DAY LIKE IN ONE OF THE CAMPS, LIKE FROM
11 THE TIME YOU GOT UP?

12 A YOU GOT UP AND THEY STARTED ROLL CALL. EVERY
13 MORNING AND EVERY NIGHT, THEY COUNT YOU.

14 IN PLASZOW THERE WAS I THINK SIXTY, EIGHTY
15 THOUSAND JEWS. IT TOOK SOME TIME TO COUNT. TOOK SOME TIME.
16 SOMETIME WE WERE STAYING THERE FOR HOURS BECAUSE SOMEBODY
17 MADE A MISTAKE, DIDN'T COME OUT RIGHT. START ALL OVER
18 AGAIN. AND IT WAS RAINING. IT WAS SNOWING. IT WAS HOT. IT
19 WAS COLD.

20 THAT ALONE WAS MISERY, MISERY. YOU HAD TO
21 STAND AT ATTENTION. AND I THINK MY BRAIN DIDN'T WORK ANY
22 MORE. I DON'T THINK -- MY BRAIN DIDN'T WORK ANY MORE. JUST
23 WAS A ROBOT, I THINK.

24 JUST ONE THING I ALWAYS HAD MY MIND -- BREAD,
25 BREAD, BREAD, BREAD, BREAD, BREAD, BREAD, BREAD.

26 Q WOULD YOU TAKE ME THROUGH A DAY AFTER THE ROLL

1 CALL. AFTER THE ROLL CALL, WHAT GOES ON?

2 A YES. AFTER THE ROLL CALL, THEY WERE CALLING OUT
3 GROUP NUMBER SO-AND-SO, GROUP NUMBER THIS, GROUP NUMBER
4 THIS. YOU HAVE TO STAND THERE. THEN THE GUY, THE CAPO IN
5 CHARGE OF THE GROUP, CAME UP AND WE HAD TO MARCH LIKE THE
6 SOLDIERS. WHEN WE WERE WORKING OUT OF THE CAMP. WE HAD TO
7 SING SONGS, GERMAN SONGS.

8 AND THEN WE HAD TO WORK LIKE CRAZY. SHOVELING
9 DIRT OR CARRYING CLOTHES AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE WHO GOT JUST
10 BURNED IN THE OVENS, YOU KNOW. YOU WORK SOMETIMES, IT WAS
11 WITH THE RAINING AND POURING. YOU ARE STANDING IN THE MUD
12 THERE AND YOU STILL HAD TO SHOVEL AND SHOVEL AND SHOVEL AND
13 SHOVEL. MOSTLY WAS USELESS WORK. JUST TO WORK, TO WORK YOU
14 TO DEATH. AND THEN MOST OF THE KAPOS, THEY WERE
15 BEASTS. BEASTS. HITTING YOU AND KICKING YOU AND --

16 Q AND WHAT DID -- YOU KNOW, YOU WOULDN'T STOP FOR
17 LUNCH, I GUESS. DID YOU REST?

18 A NO. THERE WAS -- AT 12 O'CLOCK YOU GOT -- CAN'T
19 EVEN REMEMBER, I THINK TEN MINUTES, FIFTEEN MINUTES
20 STOP. WHEN THEY CAME WITH THE SO-CALLED SOUP. THE SOUP WAS
21 WARM WATER AND POTATO PEELS AND SOME PIECES, PROBABLY
22 ROTTEN POTATOES WHICH THE GERMANS THROW AWAY, YOU KNOW.
23 THEY THROW IT IN THAT AND THAT WAS THE SOUP WE GOT.

24 Q WOULD YOU TAKE ME THROUGH THE REST OF THE DAY. WHEN
25 DID YOU STOP?

26 A SO WE WORKED THERE FROM 7:00 TO 6:00, USUALLY. 7:00

1 TO 6:00 WAS ABOUT ELEVEN HOURS. COMING CLOSE TO THE GATE WE
2 HAD TO AGAIN MARCH NICELY. AFTER YOU'RE FULL OF MUD AND
3 ALMOST COULDN'T WALK ANY MORE. HAVE TO SING GOING THROUGH
4 THAT GATE THERE. THEN AGAIN YOU HAVE TO STAND ON THE APPEL
5 PLATZ FOR ROLL CALL AGAIN, COUNTING. THE COUNT WAS TWICE A
6 DAY. FINALLY EVERYTHING WAS OVER. IT WAS ABOUT -- IF YOU
7 ARE LUCKY, MAYBE 7:00, 8 O'CLOCK. YOU WENT BACK AND YOU
8 DROPPED ON YOUR SACK. I DIDN'T HAVE ANY MORE STRENGTH TO
9 GO -- A LITTLE WATER OUTSIDE TO WASH UP -- I DIDN'T HAVE
10 THE STRENGTH TO DO THAT.

11 Q WAS THERE ANY FOOD AT NIGHT?

12 A NO. TWICE A DAY. YOU GOT IN THE MORNING A PIECE OF
13 BREAD AND AT NOON TIME YOU GOT THE SOUP AND THAT WAS
14 IT. THERE WAS NO OTHER THING.

15 Q WAS THERE ANY UNDERGROUND OR, YOU KNOW, PEOPLE
16 TRYING TO --

17 A YES. IN AUSCHWITZ THERE WAS UNDERGROUND, YEAH. I
18 MEAN, SO FAR I ONLY KNOW THESE TWO GUYS WHICH YOU KNOW,
19 TOO, WHO WERE FRIENDS OF MINE WHO ESCAPED. DRIMMER AND
20 SCHEON, THE ONLY ONES I KNOW WHO MADE IT OUT. THEY COME
21 FROM MY HOME TOWN, THOSE TWO GUYS. OTHERWISE, YOU COULDN'T
22 ESCAPE. THE FENCE WAS LOADED.

23 YOU TOUCHED THE FENCE -- SOME PEOPLE COULDN'T
24 TAKE IT ANY MORE. THEY WALKED UP TO THE FENCE AND TOUCHED
25 THE FENCE AND YOU DIE, YOU KNOW. YOU ARE DEAD. AND THEN
26 THERE ARE GUARDS OUTSIDE. EVERY FEW STEPS THERE WERE

1 GUARDS. LATVIAN GUARDS AND ESTONIAN GUARDS. THEY WERE
2 MURDERERS. THEY WERE MURDERERS.

3 Q LET'S SEE. THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE -- WAS THERE
4 ANY KIND OF JEWISH LIFE IN THE CAMP? YOU KNOW, WITH THE
5 PRISONERS?

6 A WE HAD A LITTLE BIT IN THE GHETTO, YES. A LITTLE
7 BIT. NOT VERY MUCH. NOT VERY MUCH. NOT VERY MUCH. I KNOW
8 SOME GUYS THERE, THEY WERE HOLDING IT UP. I MEAN, THEY
9 WERE PRAYING IN THE MORNING. YOU KNOW, GUY I SAW IN THE
10 MORNING GOING TO THE CORNER. HE WAS PRAYING. BUT I DIDN'T
11 SEE VERY MUCH OF IT.

12 Q IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL
13 PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, YOUR MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD?

14 A THE MESSAGE? THERE'S ONLY ONE MESSAGE.
15 NEVER LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN. NEVER, EVER, BUT WHO KNOWS? I'M
16 NOT SO SURE ABOUT IT. I HOPE FOR IT BUT I'M NOT SO SURE
17 ABOUT IT.

18 Q WHAT ABOUT FOR YOUR CHILDREN. ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE
19 TO SAY TO THEM?

20 A I HOPE THEY KEEP UP THEIR LIFE, THEIR JEWISH LIFE,
21 AND THEY LIVE LIKE NORMAL HUMAN BEINGS. THEY WILL NEVER
22 HAVE THE KIND OF EXPERIENCE THAT WE HAD. THAT'S ONLY WISH I
23 HAVE FOR THEM.

24 Q AND FOR JEWS?

25 A FOR JEWS. STAY. STAY JEWS. BE JEWS. IF WE COULD
26 -- IF WE COULD STILL BE JEWS AFTER THAT, WHY, EVERYBODY

1 SHOULD BE -- STICK TO HIS RELIGION, I THINK, AND HOPE FOR
2 THE BEST.

3 Q WELL, I THINK I JUST -- YOU KNOW, I THINK THAT YOUR
4 DOING THIS INTERVIEW IS THE BEST THING YOU COULD DO TO HELP
5 PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.

6 A I HOPE. I HOPE. IF THIS WILL PREVENT IT, I DID IT
7 HAPPILY. BUT LIKE I SAID, I'M NOT SO SURE.

8 Q YOU NEVER KNOW.

9 A NEVER KNOW. NEVER KNOW. THAT'S RIGHT. I NEVER WILL
10 NO ANYHOW BECAUSE, I MEAN, I'M ALREADY AT THAT AGE NOW. I
11 JUST HOPE MY KIDS WILL NOT HAVE THAT EXPERIENCE ANY MORE.

12 Q SIGI, I THINK THAT'S ABOUT ALL THE QUESTIONS I HAVE
13 FOR NOW. YOU KNOW, IF YOU THINK OF ANYTHING LATER THAT YOU
14 WANT TO ADD --

15 A ALL RIGHT. FINE.

16 Q CALL --

17 A FINE.

18 Q AND WE'LL JUST ADD IT TO YOUR STORY.

19 A FINE.

20 Q THAT'S VERY EASY TO DO.

21 A YEAH.

22 Q HEIDI, ANY THINGS THAT YOU WANTED TO ASK?

23 Q (BY HEIDI:) ONE THING THAT I'D LIKE YOU TO ELABORATE
24 ON, WHICH WAS WHAT WAS IT LIKE WHEN YOU WERE REUNITED WITH
25 YOUR WIFE? I MEAN, THE DAYS, WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS
26 LIKE, HOW DID YOU -- WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST GLIMPSE OF HER

1 LIKE? WHAT HAPPENED?

2 A SAME THING. IT'S HARD TO DESCRIBE IT. SHE LOOKED AT
3 ME, I LOOKED AT HER. BECAUSE SHE SAYS, "WHEN I WAS ASKING
4 ABOUT GROSSROSEN, THEY TOLD ME DON'T LOOK FOR ANYBODY FROM
5 GROSSROSEN BECAUSE THEY ALL WENT IN THE OVENS. NOBODY'S
6 ALIVE." AND THE SAME THING THEY TOLD ME ABOUT AUSCHWITZ.
7 SAID, "THERE'S NOBODY ALIVE ANY MORE." SO I FIGURED LIKE I
8 LOOK AT A GHOST, AND SHE LOOKS AT A GHOST WHEN SHE LOOKED
9 AT ME.

10 IT WAS NOT EASY THE FIRST FEW WEEKS AND FIRST
11 FEW MONTHS. IT WAS QUITE TOUGH. ESPECIALLY MY WIFE, SHE HAD
12 A BIG FAMILY. THERE WERE TWELVE KIDS IN HER
13 FAMILY. TWELVE KIDS. MOST OF THEM GOT KILLED.

14 Q JOHN, DID YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE? SIGI, I JUST
15 WANTED TO THANK YOU AGAIN.

16 A YEAH. MY PLEASURE.

17 Q (BY JOHN:) CAN YOU TELL US WHO IS THIS AND WHAT
18 YEAR THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN AND WHERE IT WAS
19 TAKEN, PLEASE?

20 A YEAH. THIS IS MY GIRLFRIEND MILLIE. WE GROW UP
21 TOGETHER IN BERLIN. AND I -- THE PARENTS HAD A PRINTING
22 SHOP AND I LEARNED TO BE A PRINTER. I FOUND HER LATER ON.
23 I FOUND OUT SHE LIVES IN BELGIUM AND SINCE THEN WE'RE IN
24 CONTACT AND SHE EVEN SENT ME THE PICTURE THAT WAS TAKEN IN
25 1931 IN BERLIN.

26 Q THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN IN 1931?

1 A 1931 IN BERLIN.

2 Q AND HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

3 A SIXTEEN YEARS.

4 Q SIXTEEN. AND SHE WAS HOW OLD?

5 A SHE WAS FIFTEEN, I THINK, OR -- NO. SIXTEEN,
6 TOO. YEAH. SAME AGE.

7 (THE END)

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