

Interview with WERNER WEINSTEIN  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
Interview #1 (Tape #1 of 2)  
Date: 4-18-91  
Place: San Fansisco, CA  
Interviewers: Judith Backover and D. Beneera  
Transcriber: Catherine Connelly

Interview #1, Tape #1

Video Tape  
Counter #:

Q: TODAY'S THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1991. I'M  
JUDITH BACKOVER OF THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. TODAY  
I'M INTERVIEWING WERNER WEINSTEIN OF TEMPLE (B-shalom) 138  
OF SAN FRANSISCO. ALSO WITH US TODAY IS DEBBIE  
BENEERA OF THE SEATTLE PROJECT. GOOD AFTERNOON  
WERNER.

A: Hi. Good afternoon, Judy.

Q: I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU TO BEGIN AT THE  
VERY BEGINNING BY TELLING US WHERE AND WHEN YOU  
WERE BORN.

A: Well, I was born in Germany in (Smeidleberg)  
which is a little city in the mountains in (Schlaydon) 170  
is close to the Czechoslovakia border. My mother  
comes from Berlin and -- well, her father was  
the founder of one of the founders for (Madati) 199  
Israel, an orthodox, First Orthodox synagogue in  
Berlin.

Werner--2-cc  
(Weinstein)

Well, the way my father -- oh, I'm sorry.  
The way my father came to (Smeidleberg) was that he served in the First World War and he was stationed in that village. And somehow he fell in love with that village. And after the war he went back and he bought a bankrupt furniture factory with a partner. And then later he bought the partner out and so he had a furniture factory in (Smeidleberg). That's where I was born. The city was about 6,000 people. Most of them were farmers and there were only three industries. There was my father's furniture factory and a bleaching for linen and a carpet factory where they made carpets.

So that was all and, incidentally, we were the only Jews in the city. We lived there. It was -- the closest synagogue was 15 kilometers away from our city and so we went there. Our mother took us there by car to religious -- to Sunday school and so to learn a little bit about Judaism and Hebrew and so on.

Now when Hitler came -- well, I don't quite remember when he came. I was too young but we lived pretty comfortable and quiet. Being the only Jews and we actually had no major problems before -- well, I won't say that. My father had a lot of problems by

Werner--3-cc  
(Weinstein)

being Jewish and by being boycotted from different stores and so on. But he managed somehow to have all his furniture in the -- it was, how do you call it in English? The air force ministry. The air force. Two other people was all my -- this was all furnished with furniture -- was actually come out of a Jewish factory and the persons who was the middlemen -- he talked about that with the officials, with (Gerrling) 493 and he says, "Who is a Jew, I will decide." So the Germans were able to buy it but officially they didn't buy by Jews.

So then there was -- once we lived very close to the Czechoslovakia border and that gave us pretty -- that gave my parents security because they said if something happened we jump in the car and we are in fifty minutes at the border and they know us. But one time we were in Czechoslovakia and a friend for my father or from the village, they called him and says, "Don't come back," and that was in '32. I think that was one night where they picked up a lot of Jews, men, and shot them in the forest. So we stayed there and then there came this order that they stopped it and we ran back.

Now otherwise we had a pretty good, a real good life. I mean we went every summer to the seashore.

We went to Italy, Denmark, Sweden and so on through the German seashores. So even in '38 when it was my brother's barmitzvah and we all met in Berlin. And then in the summer we went to (Kukshaufman) for summer vacation in Germany. It was about a month vacation and there we had some difficulties of finding a place because they didn't want to rent to Jews. So we had to stay at the Jewish family in Hamburg and went out and the people always told us -- well, normally they didn't know that we are Jews -- "How could you be over there and it was terrible?" And the border was a (Sudatanland) and Czechoslovakia and so on. We lived there. It wasn't so terrible. 632

So after when the Germans -- well, the chamberlain went to Germany and they make that deal that they gave the Germans to (Sudatenland). All the troops were there and that moved our border away so we were not so secure anymore. 700

And my father tried to sell his factory early on and somehow, you know, they wanted to sell it but they didn't want to sell it. It's hard for a person to give up all his -- what he worked for all his life and just sell it.

And so we had one customer in our house and my mother started crying because the idea from us was

actually -- I mean many German Jews, we didn't think that Hitler would last. That was the hope that somebody sooner or later will wind up. It's the same thing with all this (S~~u~~daam Hussein). I mean there he is and we were hoping that somebody bumped him off a long time ago. So that was also one of the reasons. But that's important that my mother started crying and so on and wanted to lose the house and so on. And so that didn't come through that we sold it but we did ask for visas to Australia. I mean we started working on to get to Australia.

Now let's get to the Crystal Night. That was in November, November the 9th. And we were walking early in the morning at night by having rocks thrown in the window. We had a house and a garden around so after the rocks, after they left, my father put all the rocks on the buffet, on the (betrina). He picked up the rocks and told, "Let and stay." And he said, "Those rocks are going to stay here until we sell," you know, "I'm not going to take them away."

886

So then then we went to school, my brother and I. Many times I'd talk about "we" because I am -- my brother and I, we were all together, you know, and it's kind of hard to talk about "I" when we always went together. So that's where "we" come in.

So my brother and I, we went to school. We were

first in elemental school and then we went to intermediate middle school. It was before the gymnasium. And at school, actually, we had some trouble with some teachers who were (undezemeets) and when they talked about the stork they wound up as the Jews, because -- not the stork, another, some kind of a bird, who puts its eggs into other birds' nests and let them there to -- how you call it? You know when a hen sits on eggs. I don't know how you call it in English right now.

961

Q: INCUBATE?

A: Incubate, yeah. Incubate. So he started out with that and eventually he came to the Jews who live off the German people.

But there were very few actually now in our city. There were actually two people who belonged to the Nazis who went around with the brown uniform. One was a painter who was very tall and the other one was a guy who was very short and they really look comic when those two were together all the time.

In general our father was very, very respected in the family and in the city, because he was the -- well, he was one -- we had a car. Not many people had a car and if somebody was sick -- or so, they would call my father in the middle of the night to take him to the doctor or one of his people. Like we called

my father (Papeusch), that was his name. I'm going 1072  
back and forth a little bit. And actually his people  
who worked in the factory was about fifty, they all  
called him (Papeusch), so which you know it was very  
close, they were all very close.

Q: WHAT WAS HIS FIRST NAME, YOUR FATHER?

A: (Freiderich). Frederick in English. 1100

So where was I? Yeah, okay now on June the 9,  
on the Crystal Night so we went to school and then  
in the middle of the class the principal called my  
brother. He was older and he told him, "You know what,  
take your brother and go home. There's happen many  
bad things and come back when everything is quiet."

So we went home and when we came home we seen  
a lot of people in front of our house, you know, the  
people from the city and then we came out home and  
the house was just broken to pieces. We came in and  
there was nothing. My mother was there half hysterical  
and she told -- well, I have to go back again.

My father had two factories, well, he had an old  
factory first and then he built a new one. Well, he  
didn't use his whole factory and part of the factory  
he rented to some, that was then some socialists groups  
who -- that was before Hitler -- and they used it.

And then when Hitler came he rented it to the  
(Habertsteins). That was a group which was where 1234  
the Germans put the boys in, I mean the 18-year-olds,  
before they took them to the army they taught them  
how to work and they built boats and so on.

And then they decided that they needed the whole  
place so they offered my father to build another  
factory, another place with more modern machinery and  
so on. So that was next to us. And then they built  
a big fence between their house and our house. So  
my mother told me when this -- what my mother told  
us then what happened is that, a car came with about  
fifteen people with sledge hammers and (heidlebars) 1251  
and they started breaking the door, breaking the house  
and she jumped in, she run out the house and jumped  
over the fence. It was about an eight -- a six foot  
fence and she went to the commander of that camp and  
this commander went over with her again, over the  
same fence and looked what happened.

He came back and says, "Mrs. Weinstein, stay in  
my office. There's nothing we can do. They'll break  
everything." So when we came home then those people  
left and they went to the factory and they wanted to  
break everything in the factory. Those were Nazis.



My mother -- from all the people who were there who came, she recognized one person and that was one person who worked for my father and he was fired because he stole belts, leather belts. At that time the way the factories were running there was a motor who was run and all the machines hang together with leather belts and they were individually run. And so that was one person my mother recognized of them. And so then they came to the factory and they -- the workers came out and they says, "You're not touching that. That's our work. That's our work place." And so there was a little scuffle but they finally -- they let him go into the office. They said the only thing that you can break is the office and so they broke the office to pieces.

So when I came home there was -- well, everything was broken almost. The worst thing what I had, I had fish and they were all laying on the floor and dry and my bird was on the floor and we had a piano, a grand piano, which was laying on the floor which was broken into four pieces. You know, it's everything.

And so my -- we had also an, a govern(ess) and a nanny or whatever, she kept care of us. Well, she was keeping the house and so on, and she was sent to us by the pastor from the church. She actually wanted

to retire but at that time Jews could not have any person in the house for household help below -- they had to be older than 45 years, so she worked for us a few years and she lived by us and she also -- my parents -- she was very religious. I mean she went every morning to church at 5 o'clock and so on. And when my parents were in Hungary they bought her a big crucifix with things which was blessed by the Cardinal (Minsanti), and he was the guy. And she had it over her head in the bed and she says when she dies that goes on her grave. And they broke that too, and she was very furious. 1525

So she was actually the one -- I mean all the people from the city came to see what happened, and she made tours. She took everybody through the house and she was furious and showed everybody until the police came and says to stop it because she may wind up in jail for doing that.

So then we -- my mother brought over the mover, you know, we had one mover in the city and she told him to pack everything, what's left and she took -- this was very funny because you don't see most people doing this case. We went to -- we left over there, our car, everything and we went to Berlin . . . . no,

first we went to another city, come there and she packed and she had just bought new (bedlights). 1610  
They were, well and new and at the handle was a big flat handle and she packed those and, she, -- my brother had barmitzvah and he got, he had an air rifle and she packed that and then he got the tool box, a little tool box for the barmitzvah and she packed that. And otherwise she left everything there.

So then we went to France, first to the near city -- a doctor, and from there . . . . oh, I have to go back again. That's yeah, well, in the morning my father went to the factory and he told my mother, you know, "Before I go, I passed by the police," and tell him what happened. So when they came to the police they say, "Yes, Mr. Weinstein, it's good that you come. We were just about to pick you up. We put you in -- " how you call that? You know, protective custody. So my father was gone and, therefore, my mother was alone and did all the things alone.

So then after a while we didn't know where my father was and after a while we went to Berlin to my grandmother. And in Berlin there was the same thing, you know, my grandfather had a big hat store, a hat factory, where they make the womens' hats.

Also the window, everything was broken there. So we went to Berlin and we stayed there and we waited for my father what happened. And so when my father came -- what happened to my father is, he was taken to (Glariv) to another city, don't know (Glasgow) or something in jail.

1743

And then he was suddenly released. Also my uncle was in there, in the house and he was also held and then they pick him up, (my father's brother). And my father was released because the intervention of our policemen in this city -- our, you know, the mayor and so on. So when he came to Berlin my mother says, "Okay, now take a bath and so and eat something and then we can go back to (Schmeidleberg)."

And my father says, "I am never going back to (Schmeidleberg). We're going out of Germany."

So because he was afraid, he also had the gun in his office and in the meantime there came a law that Jews may not have guns and he didn't know if they found the gun or didn't find the gun, but in general he was so disgusted he couldn't have gone back to Germany.

So we stayed a few days in Berlin and then they looked around for ways to get out of Berlin and

officially we couldn't go because, you know, we didn't have any visa and so on, and it was -- so there was always people. One time there was a person from Holland who took people over the green border. And another time there was somebody from Belgium. And at that time there was this person from Holland, so from there we went to (Kern) and ( ). 1856  
And then we went to the border.

And at night we came into a house and that house -- the people who were in the house, they had company. So they put us from the back into a room and, of course, everybody had to go to the toilet. You know, if you are stuck in the room you cannot go out so my father took all the flower pots and so on.  
(He chuckles.)

So we went then those people left and we slept one night in that house. And the next morning they picked us up and first they took my parents separate and my brother and I, and so we went to a butcher and we had to sleep with the grandfather in the bed which was terrible for little kids. It was a strange person to sleep in the bed. But they had had very good, you know, the food was very good. He was a butcher and we never ate as much meat in our life as

we ate there.

Q: WHO PICKED YOU UP?

A: Oh, some people, you know. The people who were involved in smuggling people over the border. And my father and my mother, they also took them over the border and they were disguised -- my father went as a young girl and my mother went as a man and they had all, they walked like they were lovers in the forest and then they went over the border.

And when I -- in the morning then my brother and I, they told us, okay, here is a lawn, a field, and on the other side there is a hole in the fence and now you're playing ball and slowly go on the other side and then when you're on the outside you jump through the fence and there will be somebody who'll take you, who picks you up. So we went there and we played ball with the boys from the village or something and we went through the fence and there were also people who took us and they brought us into a train and there we met my parents.

And so from there we went to Amsterdam and in Amsterdam we were rich two weeks ago and penniless the other one. I mean in Amsterdam we had nothing. We had to go to the Jews agency and they helped us,

Weinstein--15-cc

they provided us with an apartment just like the Russian Jews now when they come to the United States.

But there was one thing bad in Holland, that Holland didn't allow anybody to work, yet you needed a permit to work and the immigrants -- we didn't have any permit. So we had to be supported for a while. And so luckily we, well, luckily or not luckily, we started to work on to get to go to Australia. And we had after a while, we got the visas for Australia but we needed a thousand pounds to, just to show it when we arrive in Australia. And then we could send it back and we didn't have that money.

My father had a very good friend which he, well, good friend owned a business. He also sold his furniture to Holland, that was (Mr. Levine). And my mother always told him, "Go to (Mr. Levine) and ask him." And my father, "I don't want to." I mean he was too proud to go to him and finally my mother says, "You know, you don't want to go, I go." And then she went.

He was so mad that she didn't come earlier. He says, "How could you? A thousand dollars? You send it back." So he took her, he went to the bank. He gave her a thousand dollars. He went to the ship

Weinstein--16-cc

company and bought the tickets for us and we were all set to go to Australia. We had the visa, we had everything, and then the war started with Poland and as soon as the war started, Australia closed the borders and we were stuck in Holland. Now let's see.

In Holland we arrived and then we came in 8-38. (August, 1938) to Holland and my parents decided that since -- I mean we went first to school where we learned Dutch in order to, you know. And then my parents decided to send us to a school which is half a day trade and half a day regular school. They have this in Holland which are very good. So we went two years there and we learned cabinet making, my brother and I. Because my father's reasoning was when we go anyplace he knows the business part of the thing and when we both learned the same trade we could build up something very very easy. Actually, what he wanted to have a sheep farm in Australia but that's --

So we were in Holland pretty happy and then we met some, well, we lived for a short while that was right in the beginning and then the Germans came to Holland in 1940. And as soon as the war started with Holland it was not allowed for any foreigners



to be on the outside to travel because the Germans when they came the came with the paratroops and they never knew who was an immigrant or was a German, who was foreigners. And so the war started and we were first. We didn't go anyplace and then finally we decided we'll take, we'll take a taxi and went to (Ayemoyden) which is the harbor where boats and from there we wanted to go to England. I mean the streets were still open but when we came there we couldn't get any ship or any boat or nothing becuase, well, the Germans airplanes were in the air and whoever went out they bombed or things so we seen that there was nothing can be done and we had to go back. So we took the taxi back again and hoped to make it back to Amsterdam before the Germans cut us off and so on.

2315

So we lived in Holland and the Germans were there and many of our friends, like one family, who was a family with two girls who were very good friends -- suddenly we heard that they killed themselves. They got killed. I mean everybody in this family killed themselves and we were afraid of the Germans.

And after a short while some Germans came to our house and arrested my father because they said

he took out money, which wasn't true, but the reason for their suspicion was there was a German corporal in Holland and they had a hair salon, barber -- not a barber, a bigger place. And they wanted to go back to Germany because the wife couldn't stand the climate and so we had some dealings with them. We thought they could take over our factory and we could take over their business but it turned out the Germans took away our nationality and also the factory that we really didn't own anything. So but the people came and he says, "Yeah. You bought a place here and we looked for your place. We couldn't find it but we have to arrest you anyway."

So, of course, my mother, we all were very upset and then finally a Dutch policeman came and says, "Mrs. Weinstein, you don't have a worry. Your father's in our hands. Your husband is in our hands again but we have to send him to (Westenberg)."

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(Westenberg) was a place in Holland where the Dutch built to observe the, well, the refugees, you know, they didn't want them to have them all in the city so they built that place and it was barracks and they put many refugees there. And later they used it as a transit camp. Everybody went to (Westenberg).

Then my father was, actually, he was before already

arrested again by the Dutch, shortly before we came to Holland. I should have wroten or written up all the things a little bit, then it would be more consequent.

It was shortly after we came to Holland that he was arrested and sent to (Hookvan, Holland? or Hookvanhollah?).2509

That was also a camp they put the Dutch put in for refugees. But he was released there becuae he had diabetes and there he met the person which became very good friends of us. then later on and we were together with them. So -- where was I? Let's see. Okay, so he was in (Westenberg) and he, we were still in Holland, I mean, in Amsterdam and my mother -- this friend he met in (Hookvan, Holland) before, they had a factory for clothing. And so when my father was gone my mother tried to find all kinds of jobs, you know, home doing things at home and so on so she gets away from the support from the community. And so finally we -- through them we get some work and she does it at home and so she could tell them, "I don't need your support anymore."

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And after we went -- finished, after we finished a school, my brother and I -- I always wanted to be an architect. And we went into a school for architecture, for art school. And just when we were supposed to

start, then the Germans make a law that Jews cannot study anymore. So we had to leave that school and then all the Jew Students and the Jewish teachers opened a school by themselves. And that was over the Jews theater.

And then we were there for a while and then my mother, then there was a possibility to get a permit to work and my parents felt it was safer for us to work than being a student to be picked up and so on. So we started working. My brother and I, we got the apprenticeship in factory for furniture, to make furniture.

Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

A: I was fifteen.

Q: FIFTEEN?

A: Fifteen. Yeah, around this time.

Q: YOUR BROTHER WAS SEVENTEEN? EIGHTEEN?

A: In Auschwitz I was seventeen.

Q: NO, BUT YOUR BROTHER AT THIS POINT?

A: Yeah, he was sixteen. We were about a year-and-a-half, sometimes we were a year-and-a-half apart, sometimes a year. It depended on the birthdays.

Q: AND WHAT WAS YOUR BROTHER'S NAME?

A: (Shouel). His name is (Shouel) now, but at that time it was (Gunta). So yeah, where was I? Again. 1668  
(smiles)

Q: YOUR FATHER, I'M UNCLEAR ON THIS. WAS YOUR FATHER RELEASED FROM (WESTENBERG)?

A: No. No, he stayed there. He stayed there. Yeah, he stayed there at -- that's, well, you know, everything is -- it's better. Well, we -- my father, actually, at that time we could visit them a few times and we got to know a friend, a person in swimming pool, a good friend of us and they always wanted to hide us. You know, many people went underground but we never could do it because my father couldn't get out. And whenever my mother and I would have done it, they would have sent my father away immediately. So we were always hoping that he comes.

There was a time when they let people out for a short while for relief, and they never -- at that time the whole camp was on the Dutch hands -- there was no Germans. So there was then the Germans started to pick up people. You know, sending out in the beginning, they sent new young people a letter that they have to report then and there. And then the Germans had, they had, well, it was the Jewish community actually, the (Yushrad). It was a group who was, you know, the Germans they didn't do all the dirty

work.

They had some people, some people were there who helped other people to get free out of one reason, you know, one or the other reason. So one time, at that time, when you baked a cake, you sometimes brought it to a baker, you know, to a bakery, that's well, I'm getting -- you'll find out why I'm coming in with that. That was in Holland and so my mother baked a cake and when she picked up the cake, it wasn't her cake. They gave her cake to somebody else and they mixed up the cakes. And then the woman says, "Oh, that cake, what you have. We must have mixed it up with (Dr. Schlutzka). (Dr. Schlutzka), was one of those influential people. Very influential people. So my mother knew who he was and so on. But she said, "Oh, I go there," and so she went to him. He lived there in the neighborhood and she says, "Oh, you know, we mixed up the cakes," and so on, and by this case she became friends with them, you know, acquainted. They talked together and so on and so she knew him. 2846

And when we -- then a short while later, my brother received a letter that he had to report to this, to be sent away. And so my mother run around

crazy. What can she do? She went to the doctor's and said and the doctor says, "Well, you know, if I cannot give him anything." So she went to (Dr. Schlutzka) and then the only thing what he said he can do is he could employ him to a place where he has to sort clothing and so on and they said they need those clothing to send to the people in the camp. Actually, they may have needed the clothing to send to Germany or something. We didn't know. So he was -- he had to give up his shop as cabinet maker and sit there and was very unhappy because he was still, and, you know, sort clothing eight hours a day. Old clothing. It was terrible, but it saved him from being sent away.

Now then later we lived in an apartment house and my mother worked for that. The Jews tried to get on some kind of list which they are protected by working for important industry or something and so our friends they had one of those lists. She worked for them. And she was on many lists and always got picked up. Somehow, the people of the lists, she was there.

So when the Germans came they knocked on our door, and then in Holland, there were closets like here -- wall closets. And so we had a wall closet

and my mother put my brother and I into the closet and then pushed another big closet in front of the closet. And always then they picked up my mother, and then we came out of the closet and called this (Dr. Schlutzka). And he could, he got her free about two times. So she came home. But then the third time he only got her free if we all go to (Westenberg) and join my father in the camp.

See, (Westenberg) was then made as a transit camp and the people who were the older people in the camp who was, they were the workers. They were the ones who, well, kept care of everything in the kitchen and in the -- like my father worked for the dentist, you know, they had a dentist and they had a hospital and all kinds of things. And so we had to go, my father and I , my brother and I, my mother, we had to go to (Westenberg).

So in there was antoher little incident, also was that the Germans, that was before, a little bit before, and when we still lived in Holland, and the Germans they always they came in with their trucks and they closed the streets and then went from house to house to look for the Jews.

Q: IS THIS IN (WESTENBERG)?

A: No. No. This was in Amsterdam. Amsterdam.



And so one night my mother called me and says, "Don't come home. They closed off the street." And then she called me to the place and said, "Now you can come home because they cleared that street." And so I went to that street and we had friends in the street that was, I don't know the name anymore, and so I went to those friends, because they cleared that already, and then my mother seen that they come and close up the same street again. And I was with friend so I went up to the roof, to the attic, and there was an empty box. And I went into the box and they turned it around and I see how the Germans came in and they say, "Is there somebody?" and they looked around and they shoot around, but they didn't see me. But for my mother to see, you know, she could see from her house, you know, that street, and being closed up again. So it was quite a very, very strenuous time in Holland at the time, because many times, you know, you had to wear that star, the yellow star, and they could pick you up on any place in the street. So then now back to (Westenberg).

So we had to pack our things and we had to join my father. And when we came there we had, my father had the little place there -- a room. I mean we all lived in one room. And so in (Westenberg) my brother

and I, we worked as cabinet makers again in the shop and my father worked in this and I don't know where my mother worked but she did something too. Everybody has something. So we lived there and we hoped the war would be out and (Westenberg) was a terrible place, because actually they brought in people, and the people who they brought in, they were in another camp, in a transit camp in big barracks.

And then they had these trains coming in and they loaded these people up, you know, the Jews, and every time before the trains left, the people in the train, they started singing, you know, because well, singing. Actually, nobody knew where -- what will happen, you know. We didn't know in Holland that Auschwitz existed. So we thought they were going to work or something. And the spite the Germans they were singing and it was a strange time because in one way --

But then later on they also ~~decided~~ decided to send all the people away from (Westenberg). Also, the older ones. Since my father was in the war, he was eligible to be sent to (Terraizenstadt). That's a camp in 3257  
Chzechoslovakia. It's a ghetto. And so we had to pack everything and we went with the transport and then other people were sent to (Barrdenbells). Like 3267  
our good friends we had in Holland. They were sent

to (Barrdenbells) and they bought some kind of South American papers and they went there. And many people were sent to Auschwitz. So we packed and we were surprised because people in (Terraizenstadt), usually, people there were sent away in those closed, how do you call it? Those wagons? And when they sent us to ( ) (?) they were railroad cars and so we thought, well, something different.

3302

And so after about three days or so we arrived in (Terraizenstadt). And in (Terraizenstadt) we went out, you know, we were all brought into a big, big place -- those were (Kazins) for the army. Buildings around, big buildings around, and in the middle there was a big place and they went through all the pockets and everything. You had to give away everything valuable and so on. And when they found some -- my father had some little gold hidden in this handkerchief and they found it and luckily they agreed that he just could throw it to the things which were, you know, where people are supposed to put their valuables because, so if they, usually, they send people to a little -- they had also a concentration camp in (Terraizenstadt).

In (Terraizenstadt), we lived together and my brother and I again worked in a cabinet shop and my

father worked in, you know, bringing wood. And my mother, first she worked in cleaning the barracks, and, also, she had an easy job. She just walked around with a broom all the time. And there it was, most people might not know that, but the Germans decided first of all, we had this Swedish commission came to inspect the thing. And before they came, we had to build schools and all the things. Actually, there were no schools in (Terraizenstadt). Kids couldn't learn. But when they came we built schools, cafes, and did all kind of -- just to, you know, to show for the committee. And then they left and then the Germans decided to make a movie. And the movie about how (Terraizenstadt) and how good the Jews lived. And I think I worked 36 hours to just to make things for the movie, you know. And they took us to the river, swimming, and working in the field and doing all kind of healthy stuff.

Q: WHERE YOU LIKE AN ACTOR IN THIS MOVIE?

A: The actor, the person who did it was, actually, (Gordon). (Garro, Kirk Garro). He was a German actor, and he lived, you know, there is this famous song -- it's an operas. And he was the one who did that and the shark has teeth and he has it in his --

Q: "MACK THE KNIFE"?

A: "Mack the Knife" -- yeah. There was a German play and (Kirk Garron) was the character or the person who played it. And in (Terraizenstadt) we were, there were big, big rooms and actually he had the rooms just next to us. And we were in the hall and we built up little things. And I mean the place was very small, but we were relatively -- it was relatively liveable. I mean, we were just hoping that we would stay there until the war ended.

I knew many times we had a small family, my father says how lucky we are. We are all together.

Q: DID YOU GET PLENTY OF FOOD IN (TERRAIZENSTADT)?

A: Oh, no. That was one of the things which we didn't get.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US WHAT YOU DID GET?

A: Well, we get soup and we got some bakery. In comparison, I mean, what came later, it was plenty, I mean, you could live.

Actually, in (Terraizenstadt) when we came from Holland, we had some food with us and my grandmother was sent from Berlin to (Terraizenstadt). And we met my grandmother there. We knew that she was in

(Terraizenstadt) because she was allowed to send a card or so. And when we gave her the food, I mean, she just swallowed it, and my mother says, "Oh, it must be terrible here, you know, to eat." It's like hungered out.

And so going back to that movie. So we went swimming, well and good, and after the movie was over, well, everything was back to the old. And then they started sending out the people from (Terraizenstadt) to Auschwitz. Well, we didn't know it was Auschwitz. They said they send people to labor, to a camp where they work, and so on.

And also going back a little bit, my mother was very happy what she was doing. She was going around and suddenly she got called to (Glimmet).

3590

There was an industry in (Terraizenstadt) and that was to split (glimmer). (Glimmer) is a rock, and it's used for irons and so on, and you split it with a knife into little sheets, and she was called in, but she had to work, and she tried to get out of it. And they told her, "No. Take it. You never know what it's good for."

And so she had to leave in the morning at 5 o'clock and walk outside the camp, far to that

factory, and was very unhappy about it. But then the order came to send some people, and my brother and I, we got the order to leave. And the train was supposed to leave on Yom Kippur, but somehow due to technical things, it didn't come and we were on Yom Kippur in (Terraizenstadt).

I think it was the worst, I mean, we knew we had to leave on Yom Kippur and it was the worst Yom Kippur ever in my life.

So after Yom Kippur -- oh, yeah, also my brother at that time was very orthodox, and there was a possibility for people who didn't want to eat the food, to eat kosher, but the kosher food was worst because that little meat what we had occasionally they took out, so my brother lost a lot of weight and my father took him to a ( \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ ) and he talked to him and this man told him, "No. You're not supposed to eat kosher, you're supposed to eat everything because to keep your life, that's the most important thing." So he started eating, already then, other things which helped him to gain a little bit weight. I mean, he gain him a little bit, but not losing so much.

3668

So then my brother and I, we got the letter and

we had to leave. We packed our things. We had to leave after Yom Kippur, and we went there. There were those cars, you know, the animal cars, the railroad track cars, and we went in and I know my mother was on the window. My father couldn't go. He didn't want to go because, you know, they may grab him too. And so we left, my brother and I, which was very hard. Very hard for us. And my mother was whistling all the time, you know, our family whistle. So after that, after we -- I'll finish the train thing first.

A few days after that, my father got, actually after a few transports left, my father got the order to leave and my mother tried to go with him. She run around and they say, "No. You work at that place at (Glimmer) and you're not allowed." So after she run, one of the engineers told her, "Don't run around and try to leave. You never know what's best." So my father left alone in this transport. And he was so, you know, upset that we left and everything that he got sick. He had a gallstone. And he left actually with the transport that was the last transport from (Terraizenstadt) -- that was gassed. They gassed the whole transport, that was what we found out later.

So that's the way my mother got saved because



she was liberated in (Terraizenstadt) after the war.

So now let's get to -- my brother and I, we were in this transport, and we traveled for about three days. There was -- we had -- they put food in the wagons but no water, very little water, so once the water -- . We were about, I don't know how many people. I mean we couldn't lay down or so, we could sit maybe. After the water was gone, nobody could eat any more because you cannot eat when you're thirsty. Water's more important actually. So after three days and three nights, I think we arrived at night in the evening in some place. And when we arrived, we seen big flames, you know, big, big flames. And we didn't know about crematoriums and so on and we said, "Oh, what, the crazy Germans, are those Olympics?" It looks like Olympic flames at night, you know. Big red flames at night.

Q: WHEN YOU ARRIVED WHERE?

A: In Auschwitz, in (Burtonow).

3872

And then, they opened the doors and say -- you know, the Germans -- "(Aus)" out "(Aus, aus)!" They had dogs and sticks and hollered, I remember, I don't

know what, but if I remember, if somebody told us, if you are all healthy and between 18 and 50. Some of the people, you know, the workers, the Jews who were on the train. Then we went to the guy who says to the German and he asked, "Are you healthy?" And we say "yes." And my brother was first and he says, "How old are you?" And he says 18 and so he makes this (nods head) or this (nods head) -- oh, I don't know, I forgot.

And then it came to me and he asked, "Are you healthy?" And I said "yes." "How old are you?" I said 18. I was actually 16-and-a-half or 17, I was 17. But I can't remember if I did that instinctively or if somebody told me. And so then we went all in one big line and we went to the shower. And first everything what was on our mind was to have water, to drink something, you know, we were so thirsty, but there was no water available. And I think my brother brought a pair of (tefillin) 3963 and he hide the (tefillin) someplace and I don't know if he ever got them back.

So then we got to that place so we had to strip and we got our -- I don't know if we got -- no, no, we had some of our clothes. We could keep our clothes then. We went into the shower and so on and we

kept our clothes. And we went out, and after that we went into the big barracks -- no, the big, those big buildings. And at that place we couldn't lay down, you know, we were tired and so you couldn't lay down.

One person was sitting and -- you open the legs and the other one was sitting on that leg, and then you could lean back, and that's the way we could sleep. One couldn't lay straight, no. And so we were there and at night they, those (Gestapoes) 4028 they tried to, they were thinking that people was hiding stuff in their shoes and so on. And they took off and beat some people up and it was terrible.

In the daytime, everybody was out and it was, well, they took us in over there, it started to be cold already in Poland. Then on the daytime, we seen all those flames. We seen at night at (Borganine). We asked the people, "What is it?" And they told us, "That's where they burn the Jews. That's where -- that's the crematoriums." And that's the first time we knew about what's really happening. So we -- oh, let's see. Where was I? And daytimes, they sent everybody out and you had to stand in the outside. You were standing and standing, all day from the morning until the evening. And then the

Germans came around and they selected people. People who were skinny, also, they selected them for the gas chamber. And so we were about four days in (Bergenow) and then came one guy, a German, well 4025 an SS from a camp, and he said, "We are looking fro metal workers and wood workers, cabinet makers and wood workers."

So, of course, my brother and I, we immediately went there. We say, "We are workers." And he said -- and we had a friend, also where I stem from -- from Holland. We met him because that was our same name. But we are not family, but we are together with him. And then we said, "Come on, come on, be a wood worker. Come on. Come with us." "No," he says, "I'm afraid. I don't know what to do and they're going to find out," and so on, so he didn't want to come. And then we came to this German and he asked, "Where did you learn?" and we say, "Holland." And he says, "Go away. I can't stand Dutch." But actually we were German so we didn't have to, we spoke German.

So then he selected those people, and my brother and I , we have to get out of here. So when he wasn't looking, we smuggled ourselves to the people who were selected to work. So he didn't notice.

And so at that time we went, we were showered again. We had the shower and then they put the number on us, you know, the number I still have. And from there we went again into the train, into those wagons, and we arrived in (Glywitz) in a work camp. 4172

Now that camp, when we arrived, was totally empty. We were the only people except some (carpos) 4177 in that camp. So we went to the barracks. They were better because we had some beds there, one over the other. And then there was another appeal and there was a big -- they looked for -- the first thing -- what they looked for was musicians. Yeah, it sounds crazy. There was one person who was a musician.

He was very tall and apparantly he wasn't a musician. He couldn't play, so they had a lot of -- the Germans -- after that they killed him because, being tall was not too good, because he was very obvious.

Q: SO DO YOU THINK HE WAS KILLED BECAUSE HE WAS TALL?

A: No, no. He was caught because they had all kinds of , you know, they selected somebody with whom they, the Germans, had fun. Their fun was to beat him up and to make him, make his life miserable

and give an example to the others, you know, just sadistic. They are sadistic humans. And after a while we found him and he was laying dead and there was a big sign that says, "(German words) They killed me what I was running away," but actually -- In that camp we had to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and we got a little bit of bread in the morning and some soup at night and some kind of a soup at lunch. And we walked to a factory where they fixed railroad cars and so we were wood workers. We were cabinet makers but they put us to metal workers.

So we had to hold there. There French workers in that plant. And we put many ribbons and we had to hold against -- oh, it was very hard work. And those guys, they had food and we didn't have food, so they were strong. And so we were in that camp for about -- until February or so and --

Q: FEBRUARY OF WHAT YEAR?

A: '45, yeah, '45.

Q: YOU HAD ARRIVED AT AUSCHWITZ?

A: Well, (Berkenow) is Auschwitz. (Berkenow), Auschwitz is the camp where the new people coming in. Auschwitz was the camp where the old ones were there.

Q: WHEN DID YOU GET THERE?

A: I -- we got there at Yom Kippur, three

days after Yom Kippur:

Q: WHEN?

A: That was about in September or so. September '44. So in that camp then, we worked and finally we, they changed it over to wood workers, so we worked to fix, to make furniture for the railroad cars, because the German and the aircraft was on railroad cars, so we make the, we changed the cars into, you know, make some furniture for the soldiers to live in. And one time I fell and I hurt my knee and it was swollen. It kept on swelling and swelling very big. And so I had to go to the sick block of the hospital and the doctor would operate it. But they didn't have any anesthesia, so nothing. So he says, "Just hold on and we'll open up, make two cuts and put some gauze in between and cover it with paper." You know, it was the only thing. So I was then a few days in the sick place in the sick block and it was kind of dangerous because if somebody stayed too long in there, the Germans would send them to Auschwitz to kill. Matter of fact, that's what they did with the camp, the camp we had, we were in, they sent everybody to Auschwitz. After they -- for to gas and fill it up with new people.

Weinstein--40cc

So we worked there on Sunday. We worked six days out of the week and on Sunday they made us carry rocks when we were in the camp. So they had some dugout trenches around the fence and we had to go out and pick up rocks and carry the rocks and deposit them in the trenches, go back, and so. And that's, well, after I was in the block then the Russians came closer and they decided they want to evacuate the camp.

Now that was the marches they usually took. Well, I could walk but not too well, but I couldn't stay there because everybody that stayed there they would kill. I mean they shoot them after everybody was gone as they escape and they kill them. So we walked there, there were a few things I just wanted to --

Sometime we were laying and I with my brother and we said, "Oh, if we could -- our biggest pleasure -- if we could have as many potatoes as we could eat," you know, that's what we were thinking about. So then we went out. We had to -- they marched everybody, so we marched a whole day and at night we came to one camp. I don't know the name anymore and we stayed there overnight. Usually they gave us each one bread when we left this camp to carry and that was



all what we had.

Q: DID YOU KNOW WHERE YOU WERE GOING?

A: No, no. We just walked. And it was ice and it was snow and it was cold. And so we walked all day and then we came into one camp and we stayed overnight and the next morning we walked again and we came to a camp that's called (Blahammer). And this camp was in the middle of a forest and we came in there and in the next morning they again said to get out. And we were not in a hurry -- I mean we didn't really want to go too much. And then my brother, we were, then my brother lost his bread. I mean somebody stole his bread because I ate part of mine and he wanted to keep it. He was always the -- you know, in the family. 4509

And then we looked around and then we found this sack with food. And just when we found it, somebody came out of the closet and says, "Hey! That's mine! I'm hiding. Don't take it away," or something. So we gave him back his bread. My brother gave him back his bread. But then we came finally to the gate and they said -- then at that time they controlled the people already, and when we came they said, "Muzzlemen, go back, we don't

need you." That means (muzzlemen) that the Germans called (muzzlemen) are the people who were so skinny already that they didn't need them. So we were kind of upset about it because in the past camp they shot everybody who was back.

But we went back into the barracks and then we -- the Germans took the able people. They wanted to take, the rest they left there. Then they manned the towers and they shot in with the machine guns. Just fired into the camp, to anybody.

They apparently were too few of them to go in and really kill everybody. And no, before that, there was actually -- a German came in and he said he wants to count the people, they want to send in food. And then he put everybody on an appeal -- no, you know, to count the people and I notice --

Q: A platform?

A: No, no. Not a platform. You know, everybody had to stand together, how do you call it?

Q: ROLL CALL?

A: Roll call, yeah. They put them all on the roll call. And he wanted to send in food. And when we seen him he had a gun in the hand and saw he was kind of shaking, you know, and he wasn't

expecting so many people being there. And apparently on the outside there were not so many. So then he left. And then they manned those towers, you know, those observing towers, and they just shot in and put a lot of those barracks -- burned them and so on and at the --

Then suddenly they were gone. So we went out -- other people too. And the first thing that we found was a warehouse with sauerkraut. So everybody went into the sauerkraut. Then we found a warehouse of flours and everybody want some flours but what can you do with flours? So we had some water and flours and fire from the burning buildings so we got a piece, my brother and I, we got a piece of metal and we mixed the flour in the snow and the water. We put on the (\_\_\_\_\_) and we baked matzah. And those matzahas we had -- oh, we had still months later for when we went to (Russia), We always took that with us, even when we had other food.

4685

And so after that, I remember seeing people, you know, dead people and they looked so peaceful. So after that the Germans left, but the camp was in a forest and one side we had the Russians and the other side, we had the Germans and they shot over the -- and the cannon and so they didn't have a

rocket at that time. So we felt that the German left already and we were not safe in the barrack, so we decided to go into a cellar. We didn't know it was actually a potato cellar, and we went in there. And there was some other people who celebrated their freedom, you know, their liberation, and were very noisy. And we wanted to sleep and we couldn't sleep.

But in the middle of the night, the doors opened and those flashlights came in and the Germans came in and says, "Rouse. Everybody out." And so they took everybody out. And my brother and I, we pass by, you know, everybody went out in one row and suddenly, we passed by the building and there was an open window. And we already passed that window and we suddenly, without even talking to each other, and he says, "We have to go in there." And so I, my brother, we jumped into that window. We already went back a little bit like we lost something, and when we were at the window, we jumped in and we were laying there all night. It was freezing cold and in the morning everybody was gone except some people who were in another part of the camp where they didn't come. And so I don't know what happened to those people they took out.

Then later on the Germans left, I mean, then we didn't see any Germans anymore. And we went around and looked for food. We couldn't -- we and other people -- and so they went around and found some, all kind of little things, and, you know, for instance, we found two dogs, but we didn't eat the dogs. But other people found some pork and they made some pork goulash which made people sick, like this diet.

And after a while I see, we met our first Russians, when they came in. Since my brother and I were from Holland, we couldn't communicate with the Russians so we stick to other people who came from Poland and so on. And we went to a building, we went to (Glywitz) and lived in an empty building. Well, should we stop at this second?

4839

Ends at 4869

End of Interview #1

(Tape #1)

Thank you for allowing me to transcribe for such a pleasant man. -- Catherine Connelly