

Interview with Salvator Beressi  
Holocaust Oral History Project  
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Interviewer: Sue Siegel  
Transcriber: Pat Brody

Q. MR. BERESSI, I THINK WE SHOULD START AT  
THE BEGINNING.

A. Okay.

Q. WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

A. I am born in (Salonika), Greece, in 1919.  
August 14, 1919. And as a child, born to Jewish  
parents, my father and my mother. They come -- we had  
come from Spain. There was the inquisition from Spain,  
most of the Sephardic Jews from Spain, Turkey and  
different other places.

And so we grew up in Jewish community at  
the beginning. But my father did not believe in this  
things. We move to a Christian, completely gentile  
neighborhood. Absolutely gentile.

Q. \_\_\_\_\_.

A. In (Salonika). (Salonika) was, one-third  
of the population was Jewish. The time of the Turks  
was even more. But then they come Greeks from Turkey,  
refugees, and they got one-third was Jewish population.

And my father never believed to be in a  
Jewish neighborhood. If we have to assimilate with  
other people, we have to be not separate. And we moved  
to completely gentile neighborhood, where there was

very hardship for me as a kid. Every kid -- the gentile kids used to beat me, used to hit me. But I decide one thing: One solid thing is to do it, not to cry and not to get hurt. To try, whatever it is, if somebody hit you, hit them back as much you can. Even if he hit you, don't cry. Don't give him the pleasure to cry to nobody. And I used to hit him so badly, they used to say, "The guy is crazy. Just stay a way from him. Just stay away from him." This was my childhood. And the kids were so impressed about me and they were scared about me. Because when they hit me, I did not feel. But when I hit them, they feel it, it was hurt. And that was the important thing in my life.

I grow up. I stay there until the age of 21, when I went into the Greek Army. In 1940, I fight in the Albanian war and then I come home. After the war, I see the Nazis. I tried to escape, to go to other places, but there was no chance.

Q. WHEN DID THE NAZIS COME INTO \_\_\_\_\_?

A. The Nazis come in 1941. 1941 until 1942, I was with my uncle. He used to work in the Port of Salonika, and he managed to put me in. And I was a foreman in the Port of Salonika. And he got many Germans worked. There was some good kind of Germans and many bad ones, and different type.

One German, they told me, he knew I was

Jewish, he said, "Salvator, better you die and don't go to any transport." There was an officer from the German Army. He said, "I have Jewish friends, I am very friendly with the Jewish. And I tell you, this is a secret. Don't say to anybody because I can get completely get in trouble." And he give me a letter where they say I work for the -- it's a German like this, they help me. But he was transferred and this letter, they find the file and they come, they ask me the letter back, not to have this letter from this officer because the officer was transferred from the city.

But 1943, they start to -- end of 1942, they start to make the people have to wear stars, have to register. I never register. I never put the star. Never put the star in the city. And to work, work just like nobody even knew what's happened. They used to think, oh, maybe he is an Italian citizen, maybe a Spanish citizen, and not supposed to wear the star. I walked freely on the street.

In the meantime, I got an officer from the Intelligence, Greek Intelligence, and he give me out papers where they was phony. Instead of Salvator Beressi, he put Salvas (Berberetes). The same thing with a name a little bit different. And I joined the underground. When I joined the underground I was, you

know, safe. But in the meantime they start to take transports. Transport was going. Transport was going. I used to come home, see my mother, my father.

And one day, the guy with the name (Max Sat), I help him a lot, this kid, but he denounced me. And it was in the Jewish Police Department, Jewish (Polizie). He denounced me and they arrest me.

Q. HE DENOUNCED YOU TO THE GERMANS?

A. To the Germans. And the Germans left my family because I talked to the Germans. My son and my brother was sick with typhus. And I said to the Germans, "Look, this is against the law, to transport something without typhus. You can make a big (epitomy)." And the Germans said to me, "How much you pay for this paper, to have this paper in your hand?" I say, "No, I did not pay nothing. I am a poor man. I work." \_\_\_\_\_ (Lufvatten), German team. "I'm a worker and I no make enough to eat, what are you talking to pay?" "Okay," he says, "you stay there." We stay the family there."

In the meantime, (Max Sat) denounce me and he found out my family was still home. They supposed to let on the next transport. They gave us our chance to the next transport. And they took all my family in the (Varonich). (Varonich) is close to the station and Jewish neighborhood but used to be close to the

station. There they close all the Jews there and from there they make transport.

I went there and I said to my mother, "Mother, I will say goodbye because as soon as they make the transport, I have the Chief of the Secret Police ready with two other people, and they will let me go," because I was in the Greek Intelligence at the time of the war. But my mother, the last minute she said to me, "You who speak German, who speak so many languages, where you can save us, you mean you escape and let us alone? We have to go to work and the place where we go maybe you can get a better position and you can save us."

So I could not do it. I just could not do it. The last minute I said, "No, I will go with the family." Just cannot. But my mind was to kill as many Germans as I could. But mother ask you something, you cannot deny it, because all my life will be like this.

That happened. 30 days later they took us in transport. The Chief of Police, the Secret Police was there. They said, "Come on, (Salvas)" -- they called me (Salvas) because my papers were (Salvas Berberetes) -- he said, "Come on, (Salvas), get out from there." He tried to put two other people to hide me. I said, "I'm sorry, I can't. I just can't." And for the first time I wear a star. Because you have to

wear a star. And the star, I borrow the star because I never have a star.

I went to the transport and we went to the transport and we went to Yugoslavia. We stopped at the border. I said, "Mother, bless me and I will escape because my blood is warm. I like to fight. I don't like to go like the cows." She say, "But we are going to work and you know how you can help us. You don't like to let us, all the family. You're the only one to speak. You speak German, you speak French, you speak Italian, you speak all the languages. Always you can survive."

Okay. No chance, I could not escape in Yugoslavia. We went to pick up water. I just did not have the guts to leave my family. I did not have -- not the guts, but I did not have the heart. You see, all my life I will think I let them down.

We arrived in Auschwitz. When we arrived in Auschwitz, we start to people screaming, \_\_\_\_\_ "Down. Down. Down. Leave the stuff there. Don't carry nothing with you. Come down. All in the line. Say, who speaks German from all of you?" And we come, two guys. There was a big tall man, nice looking. And I say, "I speak German." He say to me, "Okay, you come with me. Tell them, all the other people, to go on the trucks. All the younger -- the youngest people to come

in there. All women with children, to go on the trucks. All the younger children on this line."

And then they brought us a big line of people. I stand next to him. I even today sometimes I don't like to remember his name. There was the doctor -- I don't -- I recall a time, I never knew his name before. He comes here and he starts to select. He says, tell them right, left, right, left. Come my father in front of me and he put him with the younger people. My father was only 40 years old. I said to him -- 41. I said to him, "No. No. He is older. Put him on the other side." He said, "Why?" I did not say -- "because my father." "Put him on the right side." And I find out, I personally have sending my father to the gas chamber without knowing it.

And we come, we arrive in (Birkenau). When we arrive in (Birkenau), we march from Auschwitz to (Birkenau). Big sign. (Arbeit Mach Die Lieb Frie). Big sign there. We walk, we walk and we didn't know where we was walking.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?

A. Oh, yeah. That means "Work make the life free." We come there. Rush, rush, rush. Undress, put the things there, together. They give -- put some barbers to cut us the hair. They put us in the bath. And we did not know what was going on. Everything was

with sticks and raining like crazy.

We finish up there. Then they put us in a barracks. There was quarantine barrack. The barrack was number 32 -- 30. 30. It was 30 and 32. I was in barrack 30. They put us -- this was not a barracks, when you talk of barracks. There was a horse stall and they put it, every place where there was one horse, we was nine, nine and nine. Three times, three bunkers of people. You cannot even bend, you cannot even turn. It was the most sadistic thing you ever see. You stay night, you cannot sleep. You cannot -- and they keep us for two weeks without doing nothing. Just make us get -- not enough food, just to get weak, not to be able to fight back. Not to be able to do nothing.

I forgot -- then they took us to get numbers in the arm. As soon as we arrive -- I'm sorry. I forgot one piece. As soon as we arrive, they put us number in my arm. And the guy who was put number, he make mistake in my number. If you look at my number in my arm, there is a mistake number. This is 123 thousand, supposed to be 124. And then he repair it. The others feel maybe from this, maybe they will kill me because there will be one number different and they don't want to have the same number. But they repaired to 124.

Q. MR. BERESSI, DID YOUR MOTHER GO WITH YOUR



FATHER AT THAT TIME?

A. My father was with me and my uncle was with me. It was 1, 2, 3. We have one number after the other.

We stayed there and the next day, after two weeks, they put us to work. My first work where I got it, I was in the new camp of (Birkenau), to work there. Because I spoke German, one (Capo) call me, he said, "Look, you be a foreman. You be a foreman for this group. Give me 12 people." And when I was there with the 12 people, there was more people from other groups, and I find a friend of mine who I worked with him together in (Sakalaloof). He said to me, "Salvator, please, I can't work anymore." I think he was for a long time there. "I can't work anymore." It was in a little trailer; one man up front, one man at the back, shoveling some dirt and carry from one place to the other like animals going around in circles, unloading to loading. I said, "Okay. Take a shower." What I know? First day\_\_\_\_\_work. Like I said to everyone, all of the Greeks, "Take a shower."

Everyone was taking a shower and I have the stick in my hand and I start to fool around. I do not give a -- there was not, nothing to interest to me. The (Capo) come, my first day on, he said to me, he said, "Who is the foreman here?" I said, "I am the

foreman." He said, "Who is getting the dirt?" I said, "They are getting the dirt." He said, "I don't see nobody. All the (trailers) are on the floor. Everyone is at shower." So he put me down, he give me five slicks, which I never will forget the rest of my life, he give me in the butt. So painful, so hard, it was unbelievable.

The next day I said to my father and my uncle, "Where you are working?" "Oh, my God," he said, "We are working the railroad." Because I like to see him. And they told me, my daughter \_\_\_\_\_ who is my sister and my sister was working there, and I like to see them. And I say, "Dad, I will come with you." "Don't come with us," he said, "You go there. You have a good position." I said, "Dad, I am not this type of person. I cannot hit people. The next thing, I have to hit people. And I don't speak German anymore. My German language is out. I don't want to know about German at all. I will not speak German from now on. Make me" -- That's the end of the story.

I went to work with them on the railroad station. \_\_\_\_\_ the next day was quite a bit of dead people. The next day we went, I said, "We are changing the commanders." They used to change the commanders all the time, because they used to protect us like a cattle, put us one side to another. We

changed the commander and we went to work in a place where they was next to the crematorium. They was building a bathhouse. There was a hole and there was dying people. It was getting the dirt and things like this and make cement. And I worked there the first day. I said, "This is bad work," but I say to my father, "I better stay in this one. The other one was even worse. I will try to stay in this job."

We stay in this job. After five days, there was putting cement and was carrying cement, working. And there was a Polish mechanic there. Polish-Irish mechanic -- Gentile mechanic there. I don't think he knew about machinery at all. I look at him. I was standing and the machine broke and the German was screaming to him. And I said to him, because (her) was (bidding) us to carry and the machine was not working. It was getting -- everyone was getting crazy. I said to the German, "Look --" I said to the Polish, "You use this belt there. It's broken." The German said to me, "Come on, you know about machinery?" "Sure," I said. This is what they call chain belt was loose and the machine was going around. The mechanic did not know. He said to me, "Come on, you fix it." I fix it and he make me a mechanic. It was a survival. I started to get a little bit more food, less hitting. They did not hit anymore me so

much. But this will last only a period of one month, then \_\_\_\_\_ goodbye.

Then I start to work back again at the hole because they do not need a mechanic any more. I work on the hole and we start to -- we put the building together, because the building was part finished, part not finished. Then he ask, "Who is a roofer?" They ask who is a roofer and I say, "I am a roofer." Not much I know about roofing but I knew about upholstery so roofing to put paper, it will be easy. I went to work at roofing. About three weeks, the job was complete.

To make the story much shorter, they ask, "Who knows to put sheetrock?" There was not sheetrock, there was paperboard. They mean straw with cement, put it together and they make the same squares as sheetrock. I say, "I do." I got another job, light job. I mean, lucky for me because I was (encouraged).

There went another three weeks gone by. In the meantime, I worked two weeks because the Germans somehow, someone he likes the way I was acting. And then asked, "Who knows how to make steam heat?" I say, "I do." He took the gun, put to my brains and he say, "You do too many things, you damn Jew. (Ferflucta) Jew." \_\_\_\_\_ told me. He say, "You don't know about steam heat. Maybe you know about roofing

maybe. But steam heat you don't know." I say, "I do."  
( But I did not speak German. See, the one thing I did  
from the day while I got beaten, I say I will not speak  
German anymore. And he asked me -- I make me the  
stupid. I say "(Ne Feshten). (Ne Feshten)." "I don't  
understand what you say." \_\_\_\_\_

What it is, I was getting the courage and think to  
listen what he was saying to the interpreter. In the  
meantime, I was thinking what will give the answer.  
Because I knew what he was saying. He did not know I  
knew what he was saying. He said to the interpreter  
and then the interpreter said to me. In the meantime,  
( I already knew the answer completely.

He said, "Come on here. Come with me."  
He come down, he took me on the thing, in the basement  
where there was a German worker \_\_\_\_\_ with  
the red band, with a \_\_\_\_\_. He said to him,  
"You know, this damn Jew, he thinks he knows  
everything. He was first a roofer, then was a  
carpenter, now -- first was a mechanic, now he thinks  
he will do this and do that." He said, "Impossible, a  
Jew to do these things. A Jewish is businessman. The  
only thing, he knows how to steal. But not to be a  
( mechanic. Not to do a carpenter work. Not to do  
this." And I said, "I do." But always I ask an  
interpreter. When I went downstairs, and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ said to him, because they thought I don't speak German, they know I don't speak German. I said, "(Ne Feshten)." Ne Fehsten." Always I was saying "(Ne Feshten)."

They said, "Okay. \_\_\_\_\_ Take him on the other side. I will teach him. I will take some tools away." I knew exactly. But I knew about the steam heat because when I was a kid, always when somebody does something, I used to watch. I can stay for hours watching. That was my idea. Everything, when you do something, houses or something, I used to watch. So I never work, but I watch, I see.

Took me in the other room, "I'm coming back," and for steam heat you have two tools. The more important tool is the male tool, the male wrench, not the female wrench. Because you cannot take it apart.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Come on," he says, "take this thing apart." He put all female wrench. I said "No good. No good. No good. No good. There is nothing that is good there to work." Said to the German, "He knows. He knows what he is talking about. Because -- very few people knows you have to have special wrench for this." He went there to -- I said "Good." I took \_\_\_\_\_ -- German got, tried to talk to me. I knew exactly what he said to me. He said "(Dormitch)." "(Ne Feshten)." Because I can't play

two ways, one I understand, one I don't understand.

Always the same, (Dormitch) and (Ne Feshten).

(Dormitch) and (Ne Feshten) was my biggest trick in the whole concentration camp.

He brings the \_\_\_\_\_ and he said, "How come a Jew knows so many things?" I said, "Look, I was a poor kid. I worked from the time I was eight years old. I worked different jobs to eat. I was starving." I said, "We used to sleep at night with a piece of bread." He said, "Impossible Jews to be like this." I said, "You have one. \_\_\_\_\_"

"Okay." He let me work there. We worked exactly two weeks. The time was getting short and the job is finished. He took me there, he said, "Come on, Jew. Come on, (Juden). Work here in the warehouse, (in the storage)."

He wanted to beat me so badly. He want -- he was even a \_\_\_\_\_ in two ways, hatred and love, because it's impossible a Jew to be a worker. He put me in the storage room. It was a big warehouse. And I knew the Germans. I knew very well. You have to move all time. Don't try to sit down, not even a second. If you sit down a second, they will catch you. I took all the (bull bolts) I was supposed to put together. I took the nails, I used to straighten out the nails every time when I didn't have nothing to do.

I did everything is possible to do it, to be all -- he used to hide from one corner to the next corner. I used to see his eyes. He just tried to catch us. He was like a mountain cat. He just tried to catch me without doing nothing, that's it. An excuse to beat me to death, to kill me. But that did not work. This job is finished too.

And I went to the other place, where there was the building, we was cleaning the building, because everything was cleaned, it was now a new bath. I was hungry and I was eating a little bit of straw from the ground. Took some straw and was eating straw. And a German from the corner, the guard from the corner, call me and said, "Here, you have bread, here." And I was ready to go there. When I was going there, a Gypsy foreman call me, "Come here. He will kill you if you go there." I come there, he took me, he put me down and he gave me five slicks in my butt. He said, "You know what, I give you five slicks to remember. Not from hatred. It's from love. Because this guy was to kill you. He will throw the bread past the line and he will shoot you. He will say you tried to escape."

(15) minutes later, somebody else was shot. They throw the bread on the other side, he went to pick up the bread and they shoot him. And this was in (Ukraina), where they are supposed to go back again for the front.



And then, the time was over. They took us as selections. Then I finish. One day they took us as selections. We did not know what it was. It was my father, my uncle and I. They took us on the thing, they select us all three back again. We was lucky. The next (night) they took us another selection. We did not know we are going to the gas chamber, we are going to work. We did not know nothing about it. When they took us the second selection, they found my father -- he knocked himself down, I don't know what it is, it was something in the leg. They took him out of the selection. We did not have a chance. Two days later, they say we have to leave, and we went to Auschwitz. We took a bath there. We stayed one night.

The next day we went to (Washoven), (Washoven) Ghetto, where the Jews was all gone out. There was nobody there. What they was doing there, the destruction from the homes, selling the bricks. We have to take the bricks out, everything was there, we took the bricks. We was working on the brick job. And we stayed in (Washoven) Ghetto, it was a little bit better from it was in Auschwitz because there you can find something, you can give it to the Polish worker, what they exploit us, whatever we give them, they gave us a piece of bread. They took us. But at least we find something to eat. It was not like we was -- it

was a hell, too, but that does not mean -- you find something to eat. You was not really, really starving like it was in Auschwitz. One day you have it, one day you don't have it, but it was not so -- I would say so bad.

One fellow, friend of mine, tried to escape through -- he was going to the laundromat every, twice a week. Take the laundry, wash the laundry for the officers, and bring it back. That was his job. He got in love with a Polish girl there. He was nice looking and they make an arrangement to escape. And they paid, they are supposed to pay the S.S. accept the payment, he will \_\_\_\_\_ he will let him go. And when they was ready in the taxi, ready to go into a taxi, he said changed his mind after we took his money. After we took \_\_\_\_\_. The money come from the girl. The girl took all the money, what they have in the house, the Polish people -- I mean the family, to pay the S.S. But they shot him. Shot him in the leg. And they let him to cure completely and they hang him in front of every one of us. Tried to memorize his name. Always never forgot, but right at this minute my memory I think is a little bit -- \_\_\_\_\_. The name doesn't come in my mind right now, but in the future if it will come in a little while, I will say the name for you.

Then we stay in (Washoven) \_\_\_\_\_  
for a period, almost a year. We went to work on the camp. We saw Jewish was hiding there still, still hidid in (Washoven) Ghetto. And the Polish people, some Polish, they used to bring food for money. They used to pay them. I think the money was over. And according to the story what we hear, they took -- they killed the two men, father and husband, and they left the two girls alone and the two girls admitted -- the girls escaped because they was in the houses there. There was still the houses all there and there was laying in the bunker. Somehow the girls escaped. But the Germans hear the shots and they want to see what is it and they catch the Polish and they said, "They are Jews, and we are the Nazis, we find out there are Jews hiding here." And then they took the girls. Then the girls say, "They feed us for money. As soon as we finish up the money, they kill us, they kill the family." And this one thing was in (Washoven) Ghetto. There was many people hidid until it was 1944 was still in (Washoven). It was hidid. And they killed quite a bit or they took it to (Paviot).

(Paviot) was the prison, the Polish prison, in close to, almost inside the ghetto. You have to go a little bit after the ghetto you go to (Paviotten). There we used to take, once every six

months, shower. Because we did not have no showers in the camp. They used to take us to take a shower once every six months. Otherwise, we have to wash ourselves. The (louses), we used to have (louses) so much, you could not even -- you put your hands, you used to grab (louses) all over the clothes. And the only thing I find to (clean) all of us, we put a fire and we took a can, we put the clothes inside the can and the heat to kill the (louse). This is the only thing. No water, just (plain). We put it inside the water, very hot, and the heat will kill the (louse). It was unbelievable. We could not even sleep at night, so many (louse). But we never took a shower. The only thing, we bathe ourselves in the water. And there was no hot water. Forget about hot water. It's always cold water. In winter it was so much the same thing. And one was clean, one was dirty. You know.

The first 500 Jews when they arrived in (Washoven) Ghetto, it was all 502 Greeks. All Greeks. We built the camp. We built the barracks and then they bring old extra-nationality where there was not Polish. I mean, they could be Belgian but was from Poland; they did not know. So long as they were Belgian nationality \_\_\_\_\_ All the nationalities were different. French nationality, Belgian nationality, Yugoslavian nationality; all people. But 90 percent

was Polish. Because they used to be people where they went to the other countries before and they changed when they come from the countries where they come. And they used to speak Polish perfectly and they used to -- I mean, they start to be about 5,000 people in (Washoven) Ghetto.

One of the people that was in (Washoven) Ghetto, this is Mr. (Lowenberg). Mr. (Lowenberg) was in (Washoven) concentration camp. Not ghetto; concentration camp. Many people don't even think (Washoven) was a concentration camp. He was in concentration camp in (Washoven). Blue uniform, stripes. Go into the crematorium -- nothing in (Washoven) there was in the crematorium. Every time when you get -- they get people that was sick or there were things things, they put them on the buses and they disappear. Never come back again. They send them to other country -- to other places, in crematorium. And (Washoven) concentration camp, they took one time 550 people, all the strongest people what you can believe it. Very strong, they check it to be strong. We never knew what happened. Nobody -- I knew at least ten Greek people; never nobody come back. Nobody come back. I believe, they took -- I believe rumors are they took in the coal mines on the bottom to work a very bad job that they could not make it, they die.

Because I did not see nobody from this 550 people who went to this transport.

We stayed there until 1944. In 1944, they decide us to -- they said the Germans -- the Russians was coming. And they decided, this was approximately September 19 -- no, August 1944. August 1944, they took us to transport. We walk, march, five, six days. And the six days march, they kill many people on the street. When they could not walk, they was shot immediately.

One, a friend of mine, (Jacob Bov), went and hided, because we was always planning how to escape. There was definitely escape, escape few. But went underneath where the sewer, close to the (marsh), went down, got underneath the sewer. I think they catch him and they shot him. Some other people was lucky. Only two or three, what I remember, they was lucky and they escape. And the Polish people help them without knowing they was Jewish. They said they was Greek.

We come in the barracks they put us all, I think there was 100 people in one barrack. And the two Germans, two Germans was inside the car. We did not have no water, no food, no nothing. And one of the guys, he make a little hole on the train to see he can get breathe. The Germans saw he was having gold teeth.

I don't even know if it was gold teeth, but he saw it was gold. He took his bayonet and he hit him so much until he kill him and he hit one in the mouth. He took the tooth out and he put in his pocket. It's unbelievable. But . . .

On the road, there was another Greek fellow, that was -- he see a river. He was so thirsty. The Germans was there. He jumped from this place, to the Germans, to the river. I don't believe he make it because never saw him again. It's impossible to me. But there were --

If I tell you the truth, we drink urine. We take our own urine and we drink it. You tell me how? Don't ask me. We let him cool it off and we put it on the face too, because there was so hot \_\_\_\_\_the train. There was unbelievable until we arrive in (Dachau). We arrive in (Dachau). We got pushed. We got kicked\_\_\_\_\_. And we ask the people there, "You have a crematorium?" The first thing we ask is if he has a crematorium Because the only thing we know is we are going -- this is time to die. But we did not want to die. We tried to find out if we are going to crematorium, maybe we will try to do something about it, to escape. We was weak but always -- I was young, always I was having the idea to escape. There was nothing that can stop me

without escape. I say concentration camp, I have to escape. I have to find a way to escape. I don't know how but I have to find.

I make many plans to escape, even in Auschwitz. But there was caught so many people. And this was not only was caught. In Auschwitz, when somebody escape, they die maybe 10 or 15 people. Because there was all standing on the line and they (appear) cold, with the cold, with the snow, with the rain, whatever it is, you stay there straight until they find the people who escaped. There was no other chance. And I feel if I tried to escape, maybe I will be one soul. How many other souls will die for me. And this was not worth it.

We come in (Dachau). From (Dachau), they send us -- we stay three days in (Dachau). We ask people how it is and always we ask, "What is the outlook there?" They said, "Don't worry. So long as you are here, this is not so bad as Auschwitz and (Washoven). It's a little bit better because you are on German soil and the Germans are losing the war. The Americans are coming very close. The Russians are coming very close. And they start to get scared and panicking. You have to be careful because they are panicking and they can shoot, sometimes they shoot people. And be very alert. Don't try to do any



movement without be alert."

( They send us to (Mildorf). (Mildorf) is a little camp, little camp, a little camp, and they make it two -- they built two camps. One is close to the airport like to the German (Lufwaften) airport. Like this they make sure the Americans would not bombard the place where there is prisoners of war -- I mean concentration camp people there. Exactly, this is the fence, this will be here, and this was the plane.

( We got some French prisoners and I meet a pilot. And I say, "John, you are a pilot; I'm not a pilot. I like to escape. I can make a way to escape. You know how to fly an airplane?" He said -- he laugh at me because he said, "To skip, to fly an airplane it's not easy. The airplane has to be ready. You have to have a second to" -- I say, "There will be much easier for what you think. That we will be prepared." I took a spoon, I make knife, very sharp knife. I said, "We are going there as soon as the pilot is ready to go on top on the airplane, we will kill him. But we have to escape." He say, "Impossible. I don't know the American airplane -- the German airplane." I'm sorry. "I don't know the German airplanes. After 15, 20 minutes instruction, I have to read a book. I -- "

( This, my plans was over in this thing there.

I went working to the (Boucheteller),

where we was building underground airport. There was  
( in a (vald) between (Mildorf) and the (Valkalar).

(Valkalar), they built a camp there\_\_\_\_\_.

The first day I was getting cement; the second day I  
was getting cement. Then a friend of mine said to me,  
"You know what? I took a job as a mechanic, of cement  
mechanic, cement machine. And I don't know. You know,  
if they find out I don't know, the guy will kill me."

He said, "Why you not take my place? I can find  
another place." So, "Okay." I went to his place. The  
Germans used say, "A prisoner is a prisoner. You have  
the stripes. How you look make no difference." He was  
( a Greek, I was a Greek, but we don't look alike. He  
was fat; I was skinny. He look at me, he said, "What  
the hell, this guy was fat yesterday, today is skinny."  
But I went there I work.

He said to me, "Yesterday, you did not  
know nothing. How come today you know?" "Ne feshten."  
The word "Ne feshten" was always in my mouth. Always I  
did not understand because I did not want to say.  
Because if I speak German, I'm stuck; I will be always  
stuck. Anyway, he let me go, forget it. I work on the  
machine for a good period of time.

( I meet a voluntary worker, Greek voluntary  
worker, in the camp and he told me I could escape. I  
say, "Look, I can make a paper for you. When I come

home, I will give you my house, it will be yours."  
Because I don't think my family is even -- "It will be yours." He said to me, "I take too much risk." I said, "Bring me a false papers, one of voluntary worker, and don't worry about escape. I have a plan to escape so easy, nobody will know. They will take a week until they find I escape the place, complete a week. You just bring me a papers and you bring a ticket from the train just to go to Munich. From then on -- and give me a name of somebody who I can trust, who I can go there."

Okay. He brings me the papers. He bring me the paper. He says the rest he is working on. He say, "Here is the papers. You don't have no photograph but you will go the first thing, you will get your photograph as soon as you go to Munich and you put the photograph there. Take this photograph out." It was very difficult for the photograph because we cannot take a photograph\_\_\_\_\_. See, the only thing we need is a photograph to put it on the paper. But I say I take a chance. The guy who was in the photograph look like me. I said I find somebody who look like me and more of a chance. Anyway I'm dead.

He brought the papers the one night and my plans was like this: My uncle was working with me. I told my uncle, "Look, I'll work in the daytime; you

will try to get night shift. We come, the one group, we stay on the line and (dissolve) the other group and this group goes home." I said, "What I will do is, you will come and I will go in the night group. I stay for three days playing games. I work night shift and I work day shift. Nobody will know. Nobody will be missing. You will come and then as soon as I find the right minute, I will escape. There was nobody missing for a week. You will do this for a week. And when I arrive in Munich and I get established, I will find a way for you to escape."

But unlucky. In the morning or the next day was supposed to maybe all the plans working, they tell us we have to go on transport. We prepare us for transport. All my papers where I was in, I was in hiding in the machinery, I did not have a chance. These plans disappeared.

We went to, we went transport, we arrive in (Plinik). It is about, oh, about 40 miles from (Mildorf), it is 20 kilometers from Munich. When we arrived in (Plinik), they say, "You know, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ crazy idea, you are liberated. You are liberated. The war is over."

Somebody \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ the war. We start to go all out for the train. They come Germans from the (Lufwar), with the

motorcycles. They said, "What's the matter? Crazy, all these things." He start to call the SS men and all the SS men said to the guys, "Let me kill them. Kill both of them." They said, "You are crazy." I said, "No, we are liberated. We kill somebody." I said, "Look, I will not go in this camp, for nobody." I said, "Come on, let me go on the train." He said, "The people are going this way." "We are going in the opposite direction. We are going in the field. I don't want no streets, no nothing. Just field, field, field, until we find someplace to escape." I would not go anymore in concentration camp.

He come with me, he follow me. We come, we see a little (vald). If I tell you the truth, I went to see it because I did not remember how long it took, the walk, and fast walk between the field, between the -- like these people don't see people walking. Even they see walking, it doesn't mean nothing because there was lots of German workers there.

We come to the field and I see a (vald), small (vald), pine trees all around. I said, "We are going there." But when they liberated, said liberated, the first thing that I did, I stole a cheese, a big two-pound cheese. This is the first thing that I took from the (Stolischon). Because there was everything \_\_\_\_\_the house. I grabbed this. We

come to the little (vald) there and we sit down. I said, "Now I am hungry, now I will eat." I start to eat the cheese and I got thirsty. I told you, I was ready to escape. I was in civilian clothes underneath me. I was in the coat and the stripe, but underneath me I was in civilian clothes. And we was in (Bromlagit).

I said to my uncle, "I'm thirsty. You see this little barracks there, I think they are French prisoners." I said to him, "Now what we will do is, we take the blanket, you cut it, put it here because it will start to get night, it start to get dark." Now, this was about 8:00 o'clock, 8:30 at night. And it was (April) month. If I don't make mistake, it was the 26th of February. 26th of February. I said, "Cut the pieces, put it here. Put the thing like a (cup) part of the blanket, like this will not spot the stripe." We don't know what is going on with the other people. The only thing I had seen, one guy was shot, the only thing I saw, and then disappeared. When we come out from there, I said, "Now we are going to see to the Frenchmen, maybe they can help us." There was anti-aircraft place. When I look at anti-aircraft, I went this way and I said to my uncle, "Walk. Walk." And a guy with a bicycle is coming behind us. He said, "Where you are going?" I said, "We come from Austria."

We come from Austria." "And what you are doing here?"  
"Oh, we are looking for a job because we are work in the farm. You know, the Russians arrive already there and we are looking for a job. We have to hitchhike and we just arrive." And he said, "How you arrive here?" I said, "We don't know. The truck where we hitchhike left us here, left us on the corner. I didn't even know where the freeway was, but so they left us on the corner." He said, "Okay. Come with me. I have a job for you."

They took us there to the stall there, and come a young lady there and she said to me, "You want something to eat?" I said, "You have something to drink?" She said, "Drink? Sure, bring a glass of water." "No," I said, "bring a bucket of water. I am very thirsty." \_\_\_\_\_ And she comes and she brings us a little bit to eat. She says, "You stay here tonight and tomorrow we will try to get you, we will give you a job we will find. But you have to sleep here in the stall." I said, "Make no difference to us. We sleep in the stall."

I said to my uncle two things: This guy; or he like to survive himself or he like to kill us, try to bring the SS tonight here. I said, "Take one door and take the shovel and stand up. I take the other door, if they come, anybody would come in through

( the door, be sure, wait nothing, right away on his head." We stay all night, like a little bird, waiting with the shovel, but nobody showed up. In the morning by 5:30, the young lady comes over, say, "Hello? Hello? Hello?" Tried to find us where we are hiding and she couldn't. I said (Gestures with right index finger up to lips.)

( When she went out, we come on down, went in the straw and she come back again, "Hello? Hello?" (Showed her) we were sleeping so hard. I said, "Oh, yeah, bring us coffee." She brought us (coffee). She said to me, "You ever work on the farm?" "Sure, I work on the farm," I said. "You come to work with me." I went to work for them.

( But before they brought to work with her, they brought me a Frenchman who worked for this brother. Here come the Frenchman. I did not say we were Jewish. I said to him, "We are Greeks and we was in concentration camps and we escape." I said, "I'll tell you the truth. You like to go tell them, this is -- if you (know), nobody will survive. If you tell them today, in a few days your friends will kill you." "No, he say, "I am in the Resistance. I'm not to let you go."

( We stay there for awhile. I went with the girl. The girl got in love with me. I said, "You



brought me anything, I don't care. So long I get free, freedom." We used to go to -- they used to take me anyplace. And then one day -- there was only three days. One day we went to work. Then they said, "Salvator, the SS are giving clothing to the Germans. You like to come with me to help me." My uncle say, "You are crazy. You go with them. You are crazy." Now I spoke German. I spoke German. Now my German came out, oh, beautiful.

They come, say, "We are taking the bicycles. You know how to ride a bicycle?" I say I know how to. I say my uncle doesn't know how to ride a bicycle, because I spoke German and he worried like hell. My hair was already, I let it grow already, I was prepared to escape. You say, how they let you grow in concentration camp? At the end of the war there was a little bit slack. Sometimes they used to put (Lousenstrassen) when they get the orders. (Lousenstrassen), as soon as they put the (Lousenstrassen), they forgot about it, it start to grow. And I have a barber who used to -- God bless him, he just died, about three months ago. He was here.

Anyway, they took me there. We went to (Maxwam). (Maxwam) is about 20 kilometers from (Plinik). (Plinik) was the place where we was the

little while. We went there and I see the SS. I said, "My God, why I'm going here?" Exact \_\_\_\_\_ thing. But I didn't have a choice. Otherwise they will think I'm escape. I'm going in front of everyone. Everyone introduced me to everyone, "My new helper. My new helper. And the SS come to me, "What you doing here?" "You ask her. You ask her. She is my boss." She said to him, "What you fighting with my helper? It's my helper." "Okay. Okay." Took the clothes, we went out.

The next day she said, "You know what? We will take the ox and the cart, we take plenty of stuff because they are giving too much." "Oh, no," I said. Now this is -- they went to April 29th. April 29. Take ox. I went there with the ox and we got -- she got plenty of stuff. I used to help her. And the SS, he knows already about the helper, one of the SS. The other SS look at me. I said, "My God, if they look at my arm and find my number, I'm dead," and I don't have too much of a chance, but I play cool. I don't exist, nothing, just helping. And got few words. You know, we was a little bit close in the few days. She teach me (Borish) words. (Borish) is Bavarian words. And I start to say stupid words. Doesn't mean nothing to me but like this the other people say, "No, I'm long time there." Anyway, we loaded the cart load and we come to

the house.

Two days later, I went to work on the farm every day, my uncle and I. My uncle went with the father. The girl took me to the other farm because I was a good helper for her. And we come -- they say -- I think there was, if I don't make mistake, was 31st of February. I lost my days, but it could be 31st because first of May, was liberated. 39th -- 31st of April, yes, 31st of April, they said, the guy, "Tomorrow morning, they come, the Americans, \_\_\_\_\_." He said, "Now you will come sit down at the table with us to eat." "My God," I said, "You have a choice?" Sit down at the table. They come to airport, two guys from the airport. For the anti-aircraft they come there. They sit down at the table with us. And I say, "How long we have to live now?" The guy start to apologize. He said, "Look, we are soldiers. We are Germans. We don't have nothing to do with the (Auslanders)." They did not know we were Jewish. "We don't have nothing to do with the (Auslanders). Don't get us wrong. This is part of the war. The government said to fight, we fight. We don't have other choice." I said, "No, no, no."

They give us the bed to sleep, a room to sleep, in the bed. They said, the guys, "You get my daughter's bed." I said, "I'm sorry. I don't want no

bed. I sleep on the straw. I like to be secure."

"No. No. You will sleep on the bed tonight." "Sleep on the bed?" I said, "Stand by the door because tonight we will not sleep. You stand at the window, I stand at the door, because we have to be careful. Maybe this is a bluff. Maybe we will die."

No, there was not a bluff. In the morning, knock the door, breakfast on the bed. And the more -- by two hours later in the morning, by 10:00 o'clock, the first -- everyone was in white gloves in the house, and the first American troops arrive. And I said, "Thank God, we are free. But not before the Americans come in the town because if they kill us, we -- nobody will know who we are."

But there was -- they survive the end of the day. The next few days American troops come in the town, to occupy the town. We got -- we went to the Mayor, we got coupons to eat and this is our end of the liberation until we are -- thank God, we are today alive. My uncle and I, we are alive. My uncle is in Israel. My uncle is only five years older from me. He is 75 years old. And this is part of our life.

And then, the rest of the things, a successful story when I come to the United States --

Q. WHEN DID YOU COME TO THE UNITED STATES?

A. I am coming in 1950. August 27, 1950, I

arrive in the United States, in Stockton, California.

Q. WHERE WERE YOU BETWEEN '44 AND -- WHERE WERE YOU --

A. In Germany. I was in Germany. After the liberation, I was successful businessman. I opened two stores in Germany with partners. I was very successful. It tried to -- I opened up a \_\_\_\_\_delicatessen store. I mean, I did pretty good there.

And then I said, "No, I will not stay in this country. I don't want if --" I was making very good. I said, "For all the money in this world, I will not come -- stay in this country." So when I said "very good," I mean you was making a good living. You was earning -- this time, \$6,000 was lots of money, 1950. Sure, before we come here we spent all the money to buy clothes because in the United States we will not find it. The stupidity. We bought some junk. When we come here, we come out without money. And I come to Stockton, California and I work the first week. I arrive on Friday; on Monday I went to work in an upholstery shop. And the boss kept me for one week and he pay me 75 cents an hour and he fire me. I was not a good upholsterer. "I was not a good upholsterer," I said to him I was miserable.

The next Monday was Labor Day. I never

( forget this day. All the Jewish people, there is this one, this Charlie Glass, who I meet in Stockton, California. Charlie said to me, "Sal, don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. Tomorrow we are going to the park. There are lots of Jewish people there. They will tell us, maybe a Jewish guy is an upholsterer. Don't worry. We will find something. Don't get so upset. You just arrived. You work only one week." I said, "I cannot stay without a job. What I will do at all around here?" He said, "Otherwise, we will take to our factory where we work." There was working making sacks.

( I went to the park and there was -- we met, oh, it was about a dozen refugees there. Sit down. And there come a fellow that was from Russian from a long time. He said, "Don't about it. I have a friend. I know somebody. The name is Ed (Sorren), tuxedo upholstery. If you know about upholstery, he will take you. He doesn't have no people but he will try to help you because he like to help a Jewish fellow." Okay. That was a Monday.

( Tuesday morning, I went to Eddie (Sorren). And he said, "Yeah, they told me you will come. Okay. Come on here. Start to work here. You know, I will pay you 75 cents. 75 cents an hour." I said, "It's fine." I start to work there for exactly 15 minutes.

The guy come to me, say -- now I don't speak English. The only language I speak with him was Yiddish. He said to me, "I cannot pay you 75 cents an hour." I said, "My God, what is going on here. Pay me 65 or 50." He said, "No, I will pay you 90 cents an hour because you know what you are doing."

I was happy. I start to work more faster, more (happiness). He come by noontime. Eddie (Sorren) raise me to \$1.25 now. He said, "You know what? You are a damn good upholsterer. People don't appreciate. The guy where you was working, he doesn't know about upholsterer. He is a butcher. But you are fine upholsterer. You know exactly what you are doing. I will pay you 1.25 an hour, I will teach you the American way where you don't know."

I did not know the magnetic arm. Always I used to put the nails in my finger. I did not know. Because we used to take it and put with the thing. This is magnetic arm. You put the arm in the mouth and you nail. I mean, it was hell of a job until I learned because, you know, you did not work for so long and then you used to take the nail and nail it. You put the nail, put the nail, boom, in the finger.

Anyway, I worked for Eddie (Sorren) for about two and a half months. The guy fire me. He come there. He say to me, "Sal, you know what? I have to

fire you." I said, "Why?" He said, "You do it all my job; I don't have no work. My wife is fighting me all day long. This I used to work. Now you do all the job. You don't left no job for me. You are too fast. You make good job and I don't work." And, you see, there was a house in the front and in the back, there was even a garage where they used to make upholstery. It was small upholstery, but good job. He said, "I have to fire you and I can't afford to pay you." I said, "You can't afford to pay me? You like to pay me less?" He said, "No, I am supposed to pay you more and I feel I am exploiting you. When I come in this country, they exploit me and I don't want to exploit you. You will go find you a job. And be sure \$2 an hour, no less. You are value more, but \$2 an hour at least." That was before Christmas.

I went to (Baum and McDonald), I asked him for a job. He said, "Where you work? For Sonnen?" "Sure, \_\_\_\_\_ I work there." He say, "How much Mr. Sonnen pay?" You know, honest me, "\$1.25." "I pay you \$1.35." I work for them about a month. Eddie Sonnen come and he said to me, "How much he is paying you?" "1.35." "You stupid. I told you you will get no less than \$2. You don't work for less than \$2. Tell him you want a raise." I said, "I cannot ask him for a raise. I need a job. I don't like to be without



a job." And there are not too many people around.

"Ask for a raise." Anyway, I did not ask for a raise.

There come New Year's and (Eric Reich) supposed to get married, (Eric Reich), with his wife, supposed to get married in San Francisco. (Charlie Glass) moved to San Francisco. Almost everyone start to move to San Francisco. (Eric Reich), this is another -- he said to me, "You know what? I have a job here. I can make \$1.85 an hour, work for Metropolitan Furniture. You can get more, I don't know, you get more money." Okay. I went to his wedding and Charlie Glass said to me, "Don't worry. You stay in my house." He was in a little house. I mean, one of these did not have no phone, did not have no nothing, just beginning like every refugee. I said okay. I went there.

In the morning, I went to the union. They send me to, I work on Commercial Street, (Dan Gregory). It was (Dan Gregory) Upholstery. I worked for him, but I start to get (smarter). I went to him but the union give me apprentice. Apprentice supposed to pay 1.85. I work for him. He said to me, "You know how to make (taffeta) job?" I said "Sure I know." I work. By Friday, he call me and say, "You know what? I cannot pay you too much, but I will pay you 2.25 an hour." This is as far as I can do." The union wages was 2.02. Now the guy is paying me 23 cents more and he is

worried I will quit.

Okay, I work for him, three, four -- two months. He said, "Would you like to work on the boats?" It was the President Line. "You will work day." I would work on the boat. He said, "You like to work at night?" "Sure," I said, "I need the money. This is nothing -- I need any money where I can get it." I worked until -- the first time I work until from 8:00 o'clock in the morning. 11:00 o'clock at night I went home. The next morning I come back again. He said to me, "You like to come on (Libertarian)?" I said, "Sure. What time?" "6:00 o'clock." 6:00 o'clock. I make, that was 1951, my check was \$850 for the week. And there was big money. Overtime, doubletime. They give me another week like this and I said, "Sure, I can work." I work; I sleep on the boat. I started working -- I went to bed 11:00 o'clock. I get up 4:00 o'clock in the morning. I start to work. And I put lots of hours.

Did not like it. I make \$950. What they did is, he did not pay me. And when does the job finish? I was already 900 -- I \_\_\_\_\_ \$950. I was supposed to go in the shop Thursday and Friday. He said, "Sal, you know, we don't have no work on Thursday and Friday. You will come on Monday." You see, I did not know. I could not speak English. I did

not know too much about the work. But I'm smart; I'm not stupid. I went Friday to pick up my check. The guy said, "Why you do not work?" I said, "I don't know. He told me did not --" "Sure, there was work." There was some Spanish fellow, he did not speak very good, he said, "You know, he is a crook. He tried to cut your doubletime to regular hours." Instead of 950, I got \$850." I did not say nothing. On Monday, I did not come to work. He calls. He say, "What's happening?" I said, "I don't work any more for you. I'm going to find me a job." Even if I don't have a job, but now I have money in my pocket, now I can talk.

I went to work -- I could not find no job here. I went to work for a nice fellow, very nice fellow, Jewish fellow in Richmond. I worked for him and he begged me to take me for a partner. He was having some kind of sickness. And I said, "Look, take me two hours to go to Richmond, two hours to come back, I lose four hours a day, at least. This is not a life for me. I cannot work for you and I cannot be a partner for you." He said, "Why not?" "Because I don't have no money. I never be a partner for nobody when I don't have no money." He said, "You don't need no money. You pay me." I said, "My wife doesn't like to move to Richmond." I asked my wife. She said no.

I went to work for Macy's. I work for

Macy's and I start to open my own business in my basement at home. I was working at home, I was working there and I open up a flower shop on Market Street for my wife. It was (Norina) Flowers. It's exactly where this (Weinstein) was. Next door was the annex. I opened up a shop there. We was making a little bit money, but times was rough because there come the plastic flowers. People was buying plastic flowers. They weren't buying no live flowers. We start to lose money because \_\_\_\_\_ we was working through holidays, holidays, you know.

But (Songer) was downstairs. The (seller's) girls from Weinstein used to send all the people to me to make upholstery. I used to work upholstery below. If other people used to sell for a chair \$75, I used to charge \$35. The sofa they used to charge \$250, I used to charge \$75, just to show to people I'm good upholsterer. The word start to get around. And a neighbor of mine across the street on 35th Avenue, this is Mrs. Cooper, (Libby Cooper), the wife of (Dan Cooper). They are real estate people. I don't know if you know them. They used to be \_\_\_\_\_ . She come one day. She looked at my job. She say, "You used to work where?" "(Ludley)." "He did all this thing for me." "I still work for (Ludley)," I say, "but this I do it extra for

myself."

I used to have the flower shop. I get up in the morning 5:00 o'clock. Go to the flower shop by 6:00 o'clock. Come by 7:30 from the flower shop to the flower market. Come to the store by 7:30, unload the flowers, go to work by 8:00 o'clock. Finish up by 4:30 from the work, come to the flower shop, work until 8:00 o'clock; and 8:00 to 10:00 o'clock I work in the basement at home.

Because many people, even my neighbors used to ask, "How come you can make -- you buy a car, you are more successful, and my son will finish up college and he is educated and he cannot make it?" I said, "Your son doesn't work. I work Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Every day. 14, 18 hours a day, sometimes even 20. I sleep only four hours. And I never have the (recreation the goal)." I said, "But I try to make it. I come into this country. I have to make it."

And then I collect quite a bit -- I make quite a bit of money and I say, "Now I'm going to enjoy myself." In the meantime, I divorced my wife. We divorced because we did not have no children, not because -- it was not other thing. She could not have children. She said, "You love children and you will not be happy with me for the rest of your life. Better

we divorce and you find a woman that can have your children for you, Sal, for you."

Q. WHERE DID YOU GET MARRIED?

A. In Germany. My wife was Italian, the first wife. And I went to Greece and I decide now I'm going -- I have a little bit of money. I am going there, find me -- really to marry a girl, you know.

Q. In Greece?

A. In Greece\_\_\_\_\_. I will get married to a Greek.

Sure my relatives I won't because there I never was in concentration camp. I have cousins, everyone, all introduce me to lots of girls. I was 40. Introduce me girl 22. I said, "You are crazy. I cannot marry her." They introduce me to a girl 28 years old. I said, "No, I am not -- I like to get a woman at least to be 30, 32. Eight years difference is okay because we can have children, we can have family. But 22, we will not be happy." They said, "You are crazy."

Forgot about Greece. I went to Israel. My uncle said, "Okay, I introduce you to a few girls." Accidentally, I meet a nice girl from Romania. Nice girl. She was an engineer, Ruth (Schonfeld). I meet her, I like her, I said, "I marry this girl." Coming here. I went to my lawyer, Peter (Levy) and I said,

"Peter, I like this girl, we like to get married."  
Okay. We wrote to her. She has an affiliation with the Communist party. She was in the Communist party. He said, "Don't. Don't do it. You will have always people behind you. They will not let you in peace. Don't do it. No matter how much you are in love with her, the love will not mean nothing." I forgot about Ruth (Schonfeld).

I was here in the city and once I was having a girlfriend. My girlfriend said to me this day, "I have relatives coming. You like to come?" I said, "No, I don't want nothing to do with the relatives." I went to dance in (Avalon's) on Post Street, Post Street or Sutter Street, I don't remember the street anymore. I think it is -- there was the -- what do you call it?

Q. I KNOW THE --

A. (Scottish Auditorium). I went to dance there. And I was looking. People dance. I'm a good dancer. I'm a good dancer. I was looking. The people dance\_\_\_\_\_and they play (Paul Jones). Person, woman throw me out, say, "Go dance." You know, because (Paul Jones) is supposed to be -- "Go dance." They grabbed me and push me out. I was in the dance hall. Change partners. I got a tall blond lady in front of me. I said, "Oh, I hate it." I said, "Oh,

another German."

And I said to her, "You are German." So she got mad, she almost killed me. She said, "I'm not German. You call me German. Shame on you. You have to ask me first what I am. I am Swedish and I am not a German. I don't like Germans." (Mad). A mean person. But at least she is not German.

Okay. I went to -- we stopped the dance. I said, "You like to the next dance?" "You ask me. If I don't have nobody." She is tough; tough cookie. Anyway, I try to make the story more shorter, this thing. We meet at -- she give me the telephone number and she say, "You want to write it down?" I said, "No, I have a good memory. I remember all the telephones in my mind." I did not call the first week. The second week I said -- she was working as a nurse for Richard (Swig). She was working as a nurse for Richard (Swig). They love her very much. They grown up, the kids. Now they are big ones. And I call on Thursday and she was not there. She went to the uncle. I call next week, she was there. She said, "Sure I like to go out. Why not?" Not to make the story long, in about two months we got -- three months we got married. We got married.

I said to my boss, "I quit the job." He said, "Why you quit the job?" I said, "I have to support a wife. From what you pay me, I cannot



support." First I ask my boss if he like to be a partner. He said, "You like a partner?" He said, "Let me think it over. I will open up" -- he was in a big building. He said, "I will open downstairs. I will make the -- you will be a partner, but I will do the job. I will hire the people." He said, "No, we cannot do it because we will have two different conflict --"

I went, I start to work only in the basement at home. I was making enough money. I was making in two days what I was making all the week from the boss. The work, Mrs. (Libby Cooper), she help me a lot because she thought -- I make a few jobs for her. She give me all the friends. She used to say, "I know a guy who will make a beautiful job and he is very, very reasonable." The word \_\_\_\_\_ "reasonable." I was having jobs through my ears. I could not even finish up.

Anyway, I get married. My wife said, "No garage. You will get a store." I said, "I don't have no money." She said, "You will get a store." We put a store, we took open on Noriega Street. And I decide to make a quilting. And I was losing money because I tried to be a competitor; competitor to my boss, a competitor to the others. I have two -- you see, quilting you cannot sell to the public; you have to sell to the upholstery shops, to the decorators. The

decorators doesn't trust you because you are new. I have to make a lower price, like this, I can get. And lower price, I was losing, I was losing, I was working the upholstery shop and losing on the quilting.

My wife used to say, "You are crazy. You are losing money in the quilting. Figure out. The girl doesn't give -- you pay for this girl \$10 every day from your pocket." I said, "You wait. You wait." Everything was, "You wait and see." Slow by slow, we start to get more speed and are training more girls. I make more speed on the quilting and more speed on the quilting, more speed on the girls. I hire some people, handicapped people. I pay them the same thing, but they was devoted to work. They was just like to work because they was not lazy around. And I start to make money. I got a contract from (Simmons) Company, (Simmons) Mattress Company. I got a big contract from them and we work for four, five years. We give it to the girls. Our place was too small. Now I have a little bit of money -- no, still I don't have no money because all the money was in the business.

We need a house. I have two kids. We need a house. I see an ad in the paper, "A house, 1962. 1962 price." It was 1963. I called Max (West) and I said, "Max, what is this house?" He said, "You go look. Here is the key. I don't have to go with

you." It was Monday morning. I went there with my wife. The house was a wreck. You touch the door, it was falling down. My wife said, "What do you think?" I said, "You like the house?" I said, "As a house? Forget about this\_\_\_\_\_." She said, "You think you can fix it?" I said, "Don't worry about it. I will fix it." I said, "Max, I buy the house." Now, I don't have no money. I gave it only \$800 in my name. This is why. The rest is on the business and I cannot take nothing from the business.

He said to me, "Okay. I make the papers." I said, "How much is the termite, the dry rot?" He said, "\$2,800." "No," I say, "I get my own termite people." I got my own, it was 3,200. I say, "Max, it's 3,200." "Okay." "How much is the downpayment?" "3,100." I said, "Give me \$100, Max." He say, "For what? There's \$3,200. You have to give me cash." "The termite, I will do it myself." He says, "You are crazy, you cannot do it this way." I said, "You put on the papers you sell the house as-is. You give me \$100," because I don't have no \$100 for the closing costs. You need \$100 for the closing costs. I said, "You cannot do it this way." He said, "Okay. I will try it." He went there. He give me \$100 for the closing costs. I bought the house. It cost me \$865 for the closing costs, and I have a house. I don't

have no money to fix.

I work, finish up the work. I went home and I start to work, fixing up the doors, fixing it up a little bit, paint it a little bit. Like this, we can move in. It was dirty, filthy. I mean filth. I clean the bed -- I paint the kids' room. I bought sheet paper, wallpaper for the kids' room. I make our room (paint) and I (painted) the kitchen. And the kitchen was unbelievable dirty. Greasy, unbelievable dirty. The tiles was so dirty, my wife was getting sick in the stomach. But I said, "You give me a chance, I will fix."

I find a fellow who likes to work. He was working with termite people. He likes to work for me on Saturday. In the meantime, he said to me, "You know what? I got another colored -- black fellow. He comes from Mississippi. He is a good carpenter. He cannot get a job." I said "Okay, I pay him \$5 an hour. This way he gets -- he will be okay?" he said, "Okay." He start to work for me. We lifted up the house. I mean he was doing it. I was working with him the hours where I can. And we put -- we lifted up the house, we put the reinforcement, everything. Slow by slow, we fix it. We took a permit. We make a room for the kids, playroom for the kids. Everything was a little bit on the time. Now it took two years or more to fix

the house. Don't -- it was not overnight.

When we fix the house, the store was going so busy, I do not -- I have a little room and I rented across the street on top of the barber shop to work. I said to my wife, "You know, I will buy a little house and I will build it." She said, "No. No. No. You don't like me to move there." I said, "You no move there." We find a house. It was a Greek fellow with the name of Mr. (Brower). I said, "I would like to buy the house." He says he doesn't want no money; he want only so much downpayment and so much a month. He doesn't want no more because he doesn't want to pay income tax or something. You know, he was retired. He wants so much a month. I said okay. But he did not want to pay the termite. Because I want to have downpayment for the termite. But he doesn't want to take the termite. The termite was -- he said, "No, I don't sell." I wait five years. In 1966, he sold me the house for \$28,000, on Taraval Street, across the street from the library.

I start to build the downstairs. We try to make, you know, garage to make a workroom. My wife says, "My God, we got so much business, we have to have more machines. I don't think we can make it with this room where you are building. There will be not enough." We build the yard. I take a permit, I build

a yard. I borrow -- I went to the bank and I ask a  
loan. Bank tells me, "Okay, I will loan you 20,000 --  
\$10,000." He loan me \$10,000 and I start to work.  
\$10,000 did not went too far. See there was more work  
because -- \$10,000 was good to make the first  
\_\_\_\_\_but we start to build on the back.

I went back again to the Bank of America  
to put money in the bank and the guy call me, he says,  
"Sal, how's doing? .I see you are doing a beautiful,  
wonderful job on the thing." I said, "Yeah, but I  
don't have no more money. I have to stop." He said,  
"How much you need?" "\$10,000." "You come tomorrow."  
It was assistant manager. He said, "You come tomorrow.  
I will give you the \$10,000." I said, "How will pay?"  
He said, "Don't worry about it. You take \$10,000.  
Three months you have to pay it. You pay the interest.  
Three months you have to pay. After three months, you  
give me \$1,000, it will be \$9,000. You pay the  
interest, then you pay another \$1,000 every three  
months. You will be able to afford -- you are doing  
terrific job. You will do it." I said okay. I borrow  
the \$20,000 total from the bank. We start to build on  
the back. We finish up the back. The business was so  
flourish, so flourish, we pay all the \$20,000 in the  
period of two months.

Q. WOW.

A. And then, I mean, because I already -- oh, I forgot to tell you. I already come -- this is, I have to go far back, about six months back.

I'm coming home one day and said to my wife, "We will start to make bedspreads." We was making upholstery and quilt. I said, "We will start to make bedspreads." She said to me, "You are crazy. Bedspreads cost a fortune. Who like to have bedspreads?" I said, "I'm going to the home sometime. Every woman has a filthy bedroom. The bedroom is the more filthy thing you ever saw." Every time and place where I used to go, they used to make a nice living room, a nice den, but bedroom, unbelievable filthy. Unbelievable. I mean maybe -- when I say "filthy," I mean the looks, dark, just something on the bed, one little -- one chair there. I said, "And you think --" I said, "The bedroom will be a showroom in short time." She said, "Okay, you like to start? We start to make, we start to make bedspreads."

When we start to make bedspreads, the business was booming, it was just booming. You know what I mean "booming"? Unbelievable. We was having more people. We took the new place.

Q. EVEN I KNOW ABOUT YOUR BEDSPREADS.

\_\_\_\_\_ IT'S TRUE.

A. We were selling. I mean, people was

( coming from all over. I went all over the United States by myself. Personally, I drove 15,000 miles every trip. I'm going from here. I took all the north part of California. I went to Oregon; Washington; Idaho; Montana; Utah; Colorado; Las Vegas -- Nevada; Southern California; and I'm coming back. I used to make twice a year the trip.

( I used to -- now, I was not a seller. I was my own owner. That mean I work all day long. If I finish up the job by 5:00 or 6:00 for the people would go to the hotel, I used to travel for the next town. I did not know the town; I did not know the furniture store; I did not know where to go. I went there. I sleep until 2:00 in the morning and 2:00 I get up, I took the map, I took from the telephone book all the furniture store to see. Then I walk around the windows to see what furniture store has the best furniture, because only the best furniture would sell bedspreads. I did all this thing until -- I mean, I was bringing so business what my wife went -- she used to call me, "Come back. Don't send more business. We have too much business. We cannot finish." And I went -- I got (Sloane) job. Look me long time. Very hard to get it. But I got it. I got City of Paris. I got Macy's. And I got Bullock's. All these companies.

( Then when I was really booming, come a



tragedy. I lost my son. My son got killed one month after 18th birthday. I lost one of my sons. And this hit me very bad. I did not want to be business. I did not want to have nothing. I didn't -- I was a wreck. It took me over a year to say, "Wait a minute. What you are doing? You have another son. You will not destroy your other son because one is gone." But I was a wreck.

Q. WHAT HAPPENED?

A. My son died in an accident, very, very very unrelated, would never happen maybe in a million years. My son went to the airport, in the parking lot of the airport. He was a football player from the Burlingame High School. And to see one pom-pom girl, took her to the airport. And on the way back, he decided he was hot. He was hot. It was a cold day, but destiny. He said to the guys, "I'm going back on the pick-up truck, on the back." He was having his own car. He went in the back on the pick-up truck. Coming up on the ramp, from the ramp, from the fourth floor, coming down, we don't know what's happened, I think he turned around, he was 6 foot 3, three inches and it hit on the concrete. And we did not know what's happened. And the kids talked to -- they say he laid down because he was cold. When they arrived in the place and they took him, they took him home, they thought something --

it was (jumpy). Then they took to the hospital. When we went to this hospital, the doctor said to me, "His brain is flood. I have tried to save him, but you don't have not even 10 percent a chance." My son lay six days with the heart still beating. After six days, pronounced dead. According to the doctors, they told me he was dead long -- the first blow, was dead.

And after that, I was a wreck. I tried to decide to save my other son because it was not -- it was crazy me to destroy myself and destroy my family. I start to work (back) again. I start to make a successful business. I open up a flower -- I bought lots of -- I bought property. The property there \_\_\_\_\_ in (1504) Bryant is mine. I bought it for a wreck. I pay \$93,000 and I fix it up by myself on weekends and nights; what is today two and a half million dollars worth.

Q. CONGRATULATIONS. YOU'VE EARNED IT.

A. Yeah, I owned. Part is the bank's.

Q. \_\_\_\_\_

A. Yes. And I was very successful. I sold the Taraval and bought another piece of property. And, I mean, I am very comfortable off. I would not say I am rich. I am comfortable off because if I sell it, I will pay the \_\_\_\_\_ and most of the taxes. And this is part of my life.

Q. WONDERFUL. AMAZING LIFE.

A. Yeah, this is what is. This is nothing what you -- it's amazing. But I can tell you, I start to work for -- this is the true, what I said to the gentleman, I start to work from eight years old. Yes, I start to work from eight years old. I was eight years old when I first got from my aunts, I brought some cherry (kirschen). I mean, this is \_\_\_\_\_ (kirschen) was in a tree. And they give me 10 (drowms). 10 (drowms) is like 10 cents, 10 pennies. I bought some (willmes) eight years old. I bought for 50 cents; I sold for a dollar. The first I make the 10, I make 20, and by the end of the day I was earning 100 (drowms). A worker was making 50 (drowms) a day. It was on Sunday. My father saw me there, he got crazy about it. He start to scream, he start to -- but there was vacation time I did this thing. And then I sold balloons. Then I changed to balloons. Then I changed to postcards to the foreigners. I was making tremendous -- I was working. I never know what they mean playing yet. I worked from the time I was eight, I was playing 10 minutes, go to school and working.

Q. THAT'S YOUR LIFE?

A. It's a life.

Q. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A. You are welcome.

Q. WONDERFUL LIFE STORY.

A. It was gorgeous life. I mean, everything is beautiful except when I lost my kid. I don't regret not one minute of my life. Even I went through everything, but life is wonderful.

Q. THANK YOU.

A. Okay.

(Pause)

A. I forgot to tell you in 1943, I was with the Germans occupation. I have to go out of town and buy something, food to eat. I mean have to go in the country. And I have to sneak on the other border for the German not to catch me because I am a Jew.

And there was rainy day this day. And I bought some bread and different things to bring it home. I have to walk at least 10 miles to cross -- because I could not go on the bus and things like this because I would get stopped. I have to go through the fields. And I was thirsty and I drink water where there was dirty -- rain water and it was dirty. And after a little while, I got typhus fever.

My typhus fever, I went to the clinic and when I was in the clinic there, usually you have 21 days typhus fever. I passed the 21 days, because the fever was (terrific). When I get up one day, I was in a room where they put the people who they supposed to

die. You don't ever -- there was just four beds there. Next to me, when I get up, I open up my eyes, I see a casket. I said, "My God, I'm not dead, I'm alive. I'm not dead, I'm alive." Then the nurse come, "Don't worry about it." My mother was always there. She went out for a minute. She did not even realize. She comes, she said, "No, you are not. The guy next door, next to you, next to your bed would die." They used to have these crazy things to bring the casket exactly next to.

They come 42 days. Still my fever was too much. They come 63 days. I was mentally talking things, but the worse part is everything I was saying, that was what happened in my life. I say, "I will have factory, I will have this, I will have this." And they figure out the guy is crazy. "How can he have factor? He's a poor guy. He cannot get rich. And in Greece. Cannot get, Greek." But always he was thinking -- I was saying everything.

After 63 days, I say, "I'm hungry." The nurse said, "Doctor, can I give him your food. This is burning." Interpreter. The doctor said in Greek, said to him, "Give him food. At least he will die not hungry." Start to give me food. And I said to my mother -- I never get up from bed, I was paralyzed in bed. I said to my mother, "Please, mother, help me. I

like to go to wash my face." She helped me one day. And then the next day she did not come on time. I have to go to the toilet and I did not want to call the nurse to help me to go to the toilet. I did not want anymore to do it in bed. But I was burning a fever. I get up and I start to crawl on the walls. The nurse ran to catch me. The doctor said, "Don't. Don't do it." Lifted up his hands and said, "Lazarus \_\_\_\_\_" "Lazarus is alive." You understand me?

Q. YES.

A. It's from the -- he said, "Let him. Let him."

Q. HE KNEW THAT WAS GOING TO SAVE YOU?

A. Yeah. He want -- I went around, around. This was after -- the toilet was there. I cannot cross. I went all around the lobby and I come in there to go to a toilet. And I went to a toilet. He did not help me. He did not help me. He did not send the nurse to help me. He let me crawl around the whole thing around there. It took me three months and I went out of the hospital, paralyzed. I couldn't -- I have to walk with sticks. I could not walk. My legs could not hold me. And this is part of what I forgot about.

Q. BUT YOU RECOVERED?

A. I recovered and the doctor said it was

medical history. I don't know if this time they used to say it, but it is medical history because nobody ever survived 83 days, 84 days typhus fever. Nobody ever survived, in Greece\_\_\_\_\_.

Q. A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE STORY.

A. Yes, that's why I said, it's very important, because I was dead and I was alive and I am still alive.

Okay. That's it.

(End Of Tape)