only two copies

Interview with HENRY KRUGER
Holocaust Media Project
Date: Friday, May 1, 1987
Place: San Francisco, CA
Interviewers: Claude J. Marger
Walter Partos
Transcriber: Margaret Drusch Carnes

(Begin Tape 1, Side A)

Q. HENRY, PERHAPS YOU COULD TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE BEFORE THE WAR, WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD.

A. All right, I shall. I was born in 1923, December 14, in a small town near Warsaw, named Wolomin. There was a population of 25,000, five and a half thousand Jews.

We had a nice, new, very 024 minded, very Jewish-minded, good friends who went to heder, went to public school. I had a family, a father, mother, brother and sister, uncles and aunts. And in 1939 -- my father had a business, by the way, building materials, small, like a Goodman here in San Francisco, had two brothers-in-law, partners. We had a decent life. We were not rich, but we were not hungry.

We were scared a lot, because the Poles are very anti-Semitic minded. They hated the Jews, because only one thing keeps going on: We were Christ killers. And in 1939, when the war broke out, September 1st, 1939 was bad. We all tried to run. We didn't know where to go.

We were afraid of the Germans. We took off -- a lot of us took off toward the east. We heard the Russians had taken over the territory. We couldn't move during the day, because the German fighter planes were killing the people walking on the highways. I didn't go. I stood with my family. And September the 10th, Sunday afternoon, they bombed our house. They killed my mother, two aunts. I was wounded, my brother was wounded. A few days later the Germans came into town and started bombarding Warsaw, which the 28th of September Warsaw surrendered.

And then started out the real McCoy. I used to go say Kaddish after my mother, morning and evening, with my father. They used to take us out to work: load boxcars, clean street, clean toilet. They abused us when we got out in the morning with the tefillin from the little shul. They locked us in the toilet, take us out to the railroad station, beat us. We had to load up the stuff they used to take away from Poland and ship it to Germany. We lived with an uncle. His wife was killed. My mother was dead. We had to live in two rooms, two families in two rooms. And after a while I was so beaten, so mistreated, I decided to go across the border, which was across the river Bug, which was down by the side by the Russians.

I left sometime in the end of October. I crossed the border with my cousin, who was wounded from the Polish-German War. He was a Polish soldier. We separated on the railroad station, another side. He went to a town where he was stationed as the Polish infantry, and I stood in Bialystok with my grandmother's sister. They were poor. They were not poor before. They had a factory. The Russians kicked them out from the factory; he couldn't even be a night watchman. I came to the office and I told them I would like to work, because I'm hungry. I was 16 years old; I told them I'm 18. I got a job. I slept on the floor with my grandmother's sister. I worked there for three months. After three months my sister wrote a letter to come back to the Germans, father is sick. My little brother was hungry; he was only five and a half years old. And my sister was a big hero; she was nine years old. I decided to go back home, what was called home. I was taken three times to get shot by the Germans. For some reason I was spared, I don't know why.

I came back to my hometown. They couldn't recognize me. I was swollen. My hands were eaten up from the frostbites. It was the strongest winter

of the whole five-year war. I came home. I had to go outside to make my living to support my father, brother, and sister. I did what I could. I was even stealing, I'm sorry to say it.

Summer, 1940, we sold everything we had, and before I said to my father "Let's buy a horse and go to the Russians" after I came back, the answer was, "I don't want to become a Communist." He was 43 years old, with three kids, didn't want to go. Then we stood in the same hometown until sometime in October. They put us in a ghetto, and I mean I would like to stress the point what a ghetto was: barbed wires eight feet tall, a hole -- holes with water -- Jewish policemen inside, Polish policemen outside, Gestapo and motorbikes, and, the worst part, we had a lot of Volksdeutschen. You know what it is? Those are like German nationals who have lived in Poland before the war. They hated us with passion. I don't know the reason.

The beginning was not that bad in the ghetto. The Jews were smart enough to survive for a while. We baked more bread in the ghetto than the Poles did outside, because we knew how to survive, because we're Jews. The beginning of '41 it was getting tougher. They were tightening up around the ghetto. We couldn't go out,

beg, sell, even steal. It was impossible to get out. If they caught you outside the barbed wire you were shot. There was a few incidents. I had an uncle who worked for the Jewish city hall, and he made me special papers to go bring the mail from the Christian side, from the Polish side, to the ghetto. Every day Jews were shot on the streets of my hometown where I was born. The reason? They didn't go down the side-walk fast enough; they didn't say "Good morning, mein Herr"; or he didn't bow; or he didn't like his face; or he didn't like his armband. He shot them on the spot. The Poles took away the clothes immediately. They put a newspaper in the face with a brick until the Jews from the ghetto came with the two-wheeled little wagon to haul away the body. My sister said "You no going to go kill outside. If we die, we die here." And she tore the paper up, and I couldn't get out anymore.

Right after the war broke out with the Russians, the 22nd, I think, of June, '41, the ghetto became hell. We couldn't live; we couldn't die. A typhoid epidemic broke out. They were dying without even clean water to drink, no medicine. There was a few Jewish doctors. There was no help. My family, for some reason or another, none of us died from the typhoid. We all had

it; nobody died. The people died by the hundreds every day. We couldn't bring into the Jewish cemetery. We buried them in the ghetto. The ghetto had two parts. From the old city of my hometown, Wolomin, there was a mile away was an old, little summer resort, which 90 percent of the Jews lived. The typhoid broke out because we were told the Germans were testing something to help the troops and the strains of typhoid germs in our ghetto. That's what I was told.

End of '41, the survival was very bad. Used to take out every day a hundred young men out of the ghetto to work on the railroad tracks going from Warsaw to (Mul-keen-ya), which was a border town on the river Bug, and then the destination was Treblinka. We didn't know where the trains go. It was end of '41. We didn't know where the trains were going. We saw -- the Poles told us that "your fellow Jews are going someplace," they didn't know where. Then a group of our boys went during the night underneath the railroad tracks where the big cement pipes, the water goes through, and were heard talking Yiddish, crying and begging. Then we knew they were Jews. We didn't know where they were going, until after awhile the Poles came from the villages -- I lived only 60 kilometers from Treblinka -- they came

out and they said during the night first they took all the Poles. The little farmers were kicked out, and the Treblinka camp was extended, and during the night there was loud military music and machine guns. They were killing them and putting them in holes in the ground and putting lime in between. It was going on every night. After we start working the railroads we used to see twice a day trains going, packed with Jews. Two or three hours later they were coming back empty. We even saw Jews from Western Europe -- France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark -- coming in (pu-mas), dressed in furs and diamonds, eating beautiful French bread with whatever, we didn't know about how it looks, in the cars protected by Ukrainians, still dressed in the Russian uniforms, with a swastika and armband on their arms, sub-machine guns, with machine guns, and they told us if we tell them where good Treblinka is they'll (maim) us on the spot. We were afraid to tell where to go. Used to go out every day, a hundred guys, young men, and the guards, and every day one or two or three were shot for fun. The guys sitting in the railroad station in my hometown had an appetite to kill a couple Jews, took a nice rifle and he killed a few of us, for no reason at all. Those trains were going and going and going from all over,

packed. We used to pay the guy on the railroad crossing to let the train go through, because we wanted to have some Jews jumping, maybe, because our ghetto was along the railroad station for three kilometers, six mile long. The ghetto in our hometown was on the railroad station. We paid him so much money he didn't let the train go, and some Jews jumped from the windows. A few weeks later the Gestapo -- and they told our elders of the ghetto if we are not going to tell the Jews to leave, if they're going to find one they're going to shoot ten for one Jew which doesn't belong to our ghetto. They did it a couple times. Once I was staying in the front of the ghetto gate, talking to some other fellow. Came by two Germans on horses. In the front of them was an old, little Jewish lady. Her name was Violet. She used to sell kosher chicken. The two Germans were in back of her, and she was going in front of the two horses. The German went down from the horse, screamed at her, "Lay down on the ground." She lay down on the ground. He put in two bullets in her chest. We didn't run. We couldn't run, because if you run you have something hidden. You had to stay and watch it. After he started screaming to the Jewish policeman: Open up the gate, take this so and so in. And I was the closest guy. The policeman took this elderly lady from the legs, I

took her from the arms, and threw them on my back. It was around 300 yards to the office, but blood was gushing on my back. Then he screams at me: Drop that so and so on the ground. I dropped the dead body. He told them that the elders from the ghetto should pay 2,000 (swat-is) per bullet, because he wasted two bullets to kill "a dirty Jewish woman. We need the bullets to kill Russians." That was the end of the story. There was another incident staying in the ghetto. Three little kids were playing in the dirt in the ghetto. Two soldiers, not 287 not Gestapo, plain German army hooligans, took out a Luger from his holster, put his hand against a telephone electrical pole and killed two of the kids like little chickens. This was his entertainment for the day, with two other Germans. That was fun, to kill Jews. The situation was getting worse. Jews from all the villages, little towns, were brought into Warsaw, to Warsaw and through. They were saying at the time close to a million Jews went through Warsaw, portions of Warsaw, the ghetto Warsaw. We were scared for a while, because a Jewish fellow who had a factory of males, Jews, you know, those things, tried to bring the Jews at a time to their territory, not to leave us in town, and this was our survival ticket for another

spelling 281

few months. He didn't bother us, because they needed us, our help, to build parts of tanks, military box-cars, who knows what else.

We were the last little town, ghetto -- was not a town, was a ghetto for us -- to be evacuated to Treblinka. This happened in (sin-kris-star-ra) Night, 1942. We went to other part of the ghetto for (sin-kris-star-ra) like good Jews usually did in those days. I walked my home for the buildings which were the first before the ghetto, the main ghetto, and a policeman, which was my neighbor before the war -- I played with his kids, I lived in an outskirts of town, not between the Jews -- and he told me, "Henry," he says, "you're going to be evacuated tonight," he doesn't know where, to Warsaw or to Treblinka or some place else. I made a U-turn. I went back to my father and told him the beautiful news. The whole ghetto went up in arms. They didn't know what to do. How can it happen to us? We work for the Germans, we take care of their railroad tracks. We work, we work in the factories. They pay us, too. My father came home. It was evening. Had a little brother seven years old; my sister was at the time eleven years old. We had a bakery in the ghetto. We baked bread for the Russians, for the Jews in the ghetto. At the same time we baked

bread for the Warsaw ghetto, for the Polish smugglers. We baked one bread for the Jews, and we bought enough flour to build another three breads for the Warsaw Jews. At one time we had more bread in the ghetto to eat than the Poles had outside, because the Jews knew how to do it. I myself was having a little coffee-grinding machine which I ground with another two friends. One is still living in Chicago, in Skokie. The other one was killed in Auschwitz. We were grinding a hundred kilo or 200 pounds' corn during the night. We got two -- a loaf of bread of four pounds, two-kilo bread, for the labor to feed our families. He came home from (sin-kris-star-ra) Nacht, and he took the money, gave it to my little brother and to my sister and to myself. He says, "Now, that's the time has come, the time came, time to go to get killed." I took all the money what he gave me, and I put it in my little brother's little coat with a piece of string, if he should lose it. And then I said to my sister, I'm going to take Moshe with me -- his name was Moshe -- Max, Morris. He was seven years old. My grown-up sister says "If you take Moshe you both perish. You go yourself, Henry. At least one guy will survive, maybe." Papa was 44 years old. He was an old man, broken down, without a

wife, without a home, without future, three kids who were ready for the slaughter. What could he have done? Nothing. My brother says, "Henry, are you coming with us to the train?" My grown-up sister says, "He'll come some other time. Let him go his own way now." And I said goodbye to them. This was around, who knows, ten-thirty, eleven o'clock at night, cold, frost, windy. I took my two friends who were making -- grinding the bread, who went to school together, who went through the barbed wire. I met my old girl friend from public school. She says, "Henry, I go with you." I say "How can you go with me? I left my sister. What kind of a brother would I be to take a stranger if I had left her to die?" And I left with a broken heart. We came out around twelve-thirty, sometime around there, I don't know. We were caught by a Volksdeutschen. His name was Wilhelm. He used to work for my father. He used to bring up the goods from the railroad station from the boxcars to my father's business. He says, "Henry, what are you doing here?" I said "I want to live. I want to live, Wilhelm." He says, "No, you can not live; you are a Jew." He says, "I should shoot you on the spot, with your two Jew boys; only if you promise me you'll go

back to the ghetto I'll let you go." This was because he knew my mother was killed, I didn't have no house, no home. My father had supported him for years. Wilhelm says, "Go back to the ghetto." Being a good Jewish boy, I left, and I went back to the ghetto. The ghetto was still intact, only not too many Jews. Everybody was hiding someplace, I don't know where. The old-timers were wearing the talises and the tefillins, and they screamed towards the heavens and begged and screamed, "Shema, Yisrael!" I said, "Morris, that's the end. We haven't got nobody to help. We don't know where the families are. Let's go out. Even if Wilhelm shoots us, we have to go. There's no choice. He is there. There's a chance. Let's go."

spelling 395 Went to a farmer, (Hu-met Ru-bi-steins) and -- he lives in Skokie now -- she says she knows a farmer; he'll keep us for a few days till trouble blows away, troubles. We came in. The farmer was very helpful. He gave us hot milk, bread and blutwurst, who none of us touched. We gave it to the dogs. We didn't want to have to eat treif, as we were kosher boys. He kept us till early morning, around five, six in the morning. He came in running, he says "The Gestapo is looking in every farm for Jews that run away from the ghetto. You want to stay," he says, "then they're going to catch

you and kill you. And me," he says, "they'll send to Germany, and they'll burn my farm down." Why should we 406 He brought us out in a field where a German army used to train. It used to be a Polish, Polish training site, now Germans trained. He brought us to an island in the swamp. It was a nice and beautiful day, sun and warm. My friends took off their shoes. For some reason or another I didn't. I had a pair of good shoes just made in the ghetto. I didn't have to take them. A few minutes

spelling 414 later there was screaming in Polish, (Jid-ja, Jid-ja), means Jew. Poles with pitchforks, with knives, were trying to first take whatever we have, then sell us to the Nazis. We were young. A lot of upbringing maybe from the -- from the right side, not to be a good little Jewish boy, to give in to their temptations.

420 I (schlepped) those two boys away. They left the shoes, they left the jackets, they left the silver candlelights and their plates and their knives which we used to go out from the ghetto every day and took some valuables with us to tempt -- buy out the Poles. We left it, everything, to stay alive. We were hiding in the bushes from the late afternoon till around 5 o'clock -- it was dark -- 5, 5:30, 6 o'clock. What are we doing here? We are hungry. The whole day we didn't eat. We got

enough to last for a lifetime in this one night. We need a pair of shoes. You cannot walk around in eastern Poland without a pair of shoes when the ground is frozen. They'll see something wrong with you guys. You must be Jews.

The right commodity in the right time. "Henry, you got your shoes. You got your (smak-is). You have 20 marks in your pocket. Go to a Pole, a farmer, and beg for a pair of wooden shoes at least." I went into the farmer at dusk, and I said, "I need a couple pair of shoes." "What are you doing here, Jew?" Or Juje, they called us Juje. I say "I'm from Wolomin, and you know what's happened? You heard about it?" "Oh, yes," he says. "I know what else happened. We heard it. It was yesterday," he says, "what they did to you people." Said "What do you want?" I said "I need a pair of old shoes, two pairs." He gave me some old shoes, work, maybe by today's standards, 75 cents. And I also had the 20 marks, which was -- that's all we had, three of us, that was our possession. He says "No," he says, "Juje," he says, "I don't want your money. Take the shoes and get the hell out of here." I came back; the boys put on the shoes, two left, one short, one, doesn't matter, at least a pair of shoes. How are we going to go on the train? We had to go back from --

towards Warsaw. We had to go back to the old Russian territories. That is where the Jews still lived free. They didn't know about starting burning and Holocaust. "You have to go back; you have to go buy the tickets, Henry." I spoke Polish. I look gentile. I had to go buy the tickets. Going to the railroad station and buying those tickets, a few Poles, beautiful Christians, caught me. He says "What are you doing here?" They didn't know I'm Jewish. I say "I'm going to (Mul-keen-ya) across the border, to bring some food, to make a living, smuggle." He says "You're stupid," he says. "You see that train is coming pretty soon? We're going to catch Jews. We're going to take their clothes and their possessions, bring them to the German headquarters, to the Gestapo. We'll get everything they have, and they'll kill them. We'll take off the clothes." I say "All right," I said, "we'll do it, but let me buy first tickets." He says, "Oh, it's a dumb Polack. Let him go." I went in, I bought the tickets to (Mul-keen-ya), have to go through my hometown, my ghetto. A day later I came back, I say -- his name was Herr (Schleimer) -- I say, "You know what? We're not going to make it." "Why not?" I said this and this I was told from our beautiful countrymen. You have to go be a smuggler. You going to catch Jews.

You're going to get everything they've got and get paid for that. No, we have no choice. We have no

463 (prayer). You have to do something drastic. Maybe you'll survive. I say "Know what, fellows, kids?" They're all kids, 16, 17 years old. I say "When the train comes, don't come into this station. Jump from the other side. When the train start going, you jump and take off." It worked. The train stopped in my hometown, which was three miles, four miles, like here

470 and South City, like (Millbrae), two stations.

Q OKAY.

A The train stops, Gestapo comes in, police stood with white hats, with flashlights, hunting Jews. Next to

473 me was sitting a nice (ba-cu-va), a little Jewish girl. Her father was a hazzan in the shul. Her name was

474 (Eidelson). She went to school, not exactly mine, a nice little Jewish girl. And the Germans start asking her, "Jude, Jude?" Jew, Jew. She didn't answer. She was -- what could she do, tell them she isn't? Then he wants to push her out from the cabin, from the car, like a Pullman. Everything had a door. She didn't want to, but he took out a bayonet and stabbed her in the back and kicked her out on the station. And the train didn't go. The train was still stopped. They found maybe 30 people, 28, 32 people from my hometown.

Everybody ran. There was smart people that tried to run. The train still stays. What's going to happen? Are they going to look for more or do something with the people who staying around? We figure they'll take time, they'll find another 30, including us three. For some reason or another it was probably coming a military train behind us. They had to send this train on the way. And before the train went, came out two German soldiers with light machine guns to tell the Jews to kneel on one knee in the front of the whole train and killed them and shot them all, the whole kit and caboodle, all of my countrymen.

Q NO ONE SURVIVED?

A No, there were none survived. And the train left. We looked at each other. There's a lot of stations. It can happen a lot to us. We came to the end of the

See 205 road, to the border town of (Mul-keen-ya) and the river Bug, Bug River. There was staying Polish students in the white hats, the school hats, and Gestapo and S.S. guys, making fun and fishing out Jews. Again, that's their entertainment. They found maybe 40, 50 Jews from my home, and they want only 498

We go and get back our tickets. They were turning blind, they didn't see, they didn't see they were Jews.

500 And, by the way, I wore my (Zab-o-kin-ski) jacket,

501 my (rab-bi-ka-han-i) jacket, with all the blue insignia on the buttons. Why did I wear it? Because it was thick, heavy denims, and I was one of the radical little boys who didn't go left. I went right for my fellow Jew. He didn't spot us. All three, none of us were caught. What did he do with the left, with the ones that were caught? They didn't want to guard them. It was a nice, sunny day and night, who knows what else. They took barbed wires from the railroad station, and they put the Jews in a cluster and wrapped around them the barbed wires.

508 There was Dr. Friedman, there was (Gar-deen-a, Einuch), all of them, and they tightened them up all together, and the wires went into their bodies to keep them like they did to Jesus Christ, supposedly. That's what they did to my fellow Jews from my little hometown. What are we doing? Where are we going now? We have to get to the border between old Germany to new Germany. You went from hell to hell. I said "We have to go towards the border." We want to see Poles. Once it's curfew time the Germans will shoot you, not because you're a Jew, because it's curfew time. They don't fool around. If you walk after -- five minutes after seven, if you don't have the right paper, you get shot. What, we'll take a chance. We went towards the border. We met a

Pole. We say "Fellow, we want to go across the border." "Are you Jews? Are you Judes?" We said "Yes, we are." You can't -- the guy knows us. What can we do? Say no? Then you're a liar. I don't want to say what else. "How much will you want to bring us across the border?" He says "Twenty marks." It was a lot of money, and I had 20 marks in my pocket. He says "Give me the money now." If I don't give him the money now he'll call the German patrol and they'll shoot us. We'll get the clothes and get the 20 marks. I said "You know what? You take the 20 marks when we are

524 across the border. We'll wrap it in a (stam), in a brief, and we'll throw it back to you." He went for it, because 20 marks was a lot of money. We went across the border. The Germans started shooting from the towers. Now, they didn't care. It was an open border, like between here and Canada. They only stood there for parade. They didn't kill us. We took the highway which was built by Jews. We came into an Arbeit camp. It's a camp for labor, for Jewish labor. They were eating well, having a good time, only they didn't know what was going on 30 kilometers across the border. We came in, we told them. They said "You're liars." How can it happen? What's this? You know, Jews in the same path, on the other side on the border,

did not know what was going on. They put us down in a barrack without windows. It was freezing that night. It was better than to sleep under the heavens. At least it was a roof, and the girls were nice. They gave us food which was against the law. Jewish girls with Jewish hearts brought us in hot coffee with sugary slices, you know, hunks of bread and things like that. Five, six o'clock, they said "The Germans is coming to take Jews to work, and they are missing a few. They're on their way home." He says "You take their names with their papers." Beautiful. And those little Jews took a big advantage of us. They gave us work which we never knew what to work, you know, to break the concrete on the main Autobahn. We worked till noontime. Noontime I say to the two boys, I said "Let's get away. Let's get out of here. There's no tomorrow. There's nothing. What can we do? We sleep by a broken window again?" We went back, went to

547 another ghetto, (Zahn-ruf). They had (mitz-struck-ah) there. They had a family, those two guys. I didn't

549 have no connections. I only came because I (schlepped) them with me to survive. At least it was better by yourself. No, we liked each other, we grew up together. I say "Why not help two other kids?" Went in, they gave

550 us food. That (mitz-struck-ah) gave us food. The

family gave us food. They gave us a place to sleep. Sometime during the night two Jewish policemen come out and they say to us, "They going to pick you up this morning, the Gestapo, because there's rumors you start troubles. They're going to take you out. Get out of here." We ate something and we got on the highway in the middle of the night, which was against curfew. Now, they were sleeping, the Germans were sleeping, and I said "Let's get out. The guy just told you what they're going to do with us." And we found a farmer with a little horse. We told them we

557 want to go to (Lon-jur), to another ghetto. They had
558 (mitz-struck-ah) there, too. We passed by a little
559 village named (Cher-o-von-a-var). And I saw Jews with Stars of David walking around free, no barbed
560 wires, no policemen. I say to (Sha-lo-min) and
561 Herschel, I say, "You go to (Ge-hun-de-ha), (Lon-jur). I am not going to a big ghetto. I had enough." And I stopped. I said, "This is going to be my temporary home. Between Jews I'll survive." I came in, there was a poor Jewish family. They were all at a like summer resort or the summer before the war. They gave me a straw sack with a few blankets, torn blankets, and I had something over my head, and those guys went
562 on their way to (Lon-jur). Two days later they sent

a brother. "Henry, come stay with us." I said, "I'm not going. You want to come here? Fine. I don't go to a big ghetto with barbed wires, with brick walls." I said, "I don't want it." They needed people to work, to unload ten tons'cement a day, stone.

I enlist myself, the oldest of the ghetto said -- He said "It pay you ten mark a day to go work." I said "Fine, beautiful, I'll go work for you guys." He had a nice, blond, little daughter, spoke beautiful Polish, and darling little Jewish girl, maybe 16, 15. Then I told them the story, I said "Listen, better to go to a big city and be caught than go to Germany to work." "What do you mean?" I say "You will not survive here another two or three months," I said. They finish up -- I said "They'll finish up central Poland; Western Europe is being finished off." "What, finished off with what?" I told the story. They couldn't believe it. I said "All right, don't believe me. They'll come after you where you will know about it." To the month I walked out -- I wore a yellow star already, because I wore a band in the ghetto, ten centimeters, with a blue star. Here they wore a yellow star -- yellow David, Jude on it, like you see in the movies. I walked the street. I see Polish police with Polish uniforms from Warsaw. They're blue like here. I woke

up. I said "What are you doing here?" He says, "They brought us," he says, "the last night with heavy trucks. There must be some Jews," he says, "around probably." I said, "Yes, I think so, there are Jews." He says "They're going to take them tonight." I went back to the old lady and I say "Mrs. so and so," I said, "could you please be washing my two shirts?" That's all I had. "Give me one clean one. I want to go." "Where are you going to go? It's cold, it's freezing, it's raining, it's snowing. Where are you going to go?" I said "The situation is not too hot." I said "Tonight is the night you going to go some place, which you don't like to know about it." She gave me a shirt, she gave me a half a loaf of bread. I put it in my -- by the way, I didn't have a jacket. I inherited a jacket from the Jew who ran away from the labor camp. I got his jacket, a fur jacket, inside sheepskin. It was nice and warm. She said "Don't you want to take my daughter?" I said "No, I would love to, but I can not take nobody with me." I had a birth certificate in my pocket. In the ghetto I had connections with a Polish highbrow, my father had. He was in the business with a little bit better Polish, and I had underground connections.

(End of Tape 1, Side A)

(Begin Tape 1, Side B)

I made passports for Jews in the ghetto to a Polish highbrow, made for the Catholic Church in Warsaw for money, things to pay them, at least give them passports with pictures and fingerprints and their own names they picked. I didn't have enough money to buy a passport. They gave me a present, a birth certificate with a name I picked, Henrich Rosener. The name sounds familiar, because we had somebody working in my father's business whose name was Rosener, and I picked my name, Rosener. Why? Because if they catch me, "Why don't you have a passport?" I say "I'm the end of the Auschwitz; my time didn't come." That was my dumb excuse.

Q BUT THAT NAME WAS POLISH?

A Yes, Polish name, typical Polish.

Q YEAH, TYPICAL GENTILE POLISH NAME?

A Yeah.

Q OKAY, YEAH.

A Then I say to myself, I'd better skidoo out before they encircle the little village. I went out, thanked them for taking care of me, helping me out for a month. Then we all cry, and I took off. I said "They don't take me, I'll come back tomorrow." In the meantime, I don't want to be in the package to be picked up tonight and shipped where I didn't want to go. There was like

little mountains of needles from the pine trees they collected for fire. I dig out a hole and put myself in, nice and warm. Around four o'clock in the morning the woods were full of Jewish boys and girls. They circled them. Whoever could escape escaped. And the old-timers and the kids were put on farmers' wagons with the iron wheels and little horses, and they went on their way the next morning. I spent with those 22 boys and girls for two days. One point was to get someplace to partisans. We heard there was a lot of partisans in the woods and the -- 085 It was hard to get through, because there was too much German troops who went to the eastern front and come back from the eastern front. I couldn't. Then they start fighting, you know, how young guys are, and Jewish, arguing 090
I say "Kids, 091 I'm going on my own. Keep well. I wish you the best of luck. I'm taking off." I've got a piece of paper and a packet. I look German, I speak perfect Polish grammar. I grew up in the outskirts of town, and I spoke beautiful Polish without an accent, and the Poles, as dumb as they are, they couldn't figure out who I am. This was my lucky star.

I went out, I left them. My heart was aching for

doing it. No, I couldn't help. I could only spoil my chance. And I walked side roads, swamps. I used to eat potatoes. I used to hide potatoes in the ground and sleep together with the little mice, eat raw potatoes, eat leftover stuff which wasn't frozen in the field. I got all swollen. I got a lot of lice. Then I said to myself: the winter is here, 1942. I'll die and the dogs will tear me apart. That's what's going to happen. It's snow; it's ice; it's winter, 40 below zero. You can't survive. And I said: I'll go to the German headquarters and say "Shoot me. Get it over with." And then I say "No, somebody's giving me a chance. I made it so far. I'm going to go ahead with it. I'm going to fool Adolph Hitler." And I decided with the birth certificate in my pocket, and my Polish looks and my Polish language in good shape, I'm going to try to get to a farmer as a human being. I came in to a farmer -- first he says, "You're a Jew boy." I didn't tell him -- I'm not going to argue with him I'm not. I am. He spotted something in me

132 very simple. Poland -- the gentile could spot a Jew if he said two sentences; he knew he was Jewish. He spotted my dress wasn't

135 exactly fittable, you know, (smat-is). He knew I was a Jew from a ghetto in a way. I say "Yes, I am."

He says "You have to leave immediately, because you're a Jew." He says "You'll get shot. Why should I suffer?" He was right. He was right. On the way out the old farmer's wife, an old lady -- I don't know how old she was; she was much older than I am; she could have been my mother -- says to me "(Jit-cu)" -- not Jude -- she says "(Jit-cu)" like (Ju-de-lin) with nice thing, she says "I open up the gate from the barn. You crawl upstairs and sleep, and I'll bring you food." I had a pair of good shoes, still from the ghetto, Papa made, and I said "She's after those shoes." That's what was in my mind. I say "She wants those shoes for her family." She didn't. I was with them for two weeks for no money, only because I was an innocent Jew. That was a right gentile. The son slept with me for two weeks in the barn. That's where I slept, in the barn with the beautiful smelling hay. His son -- her husband once heard us talking, and he says "You get out immediately," he said, "because I go to the Gestapo." He says "I can not take a chance with you. I know you're an innocent Jew, you're not guilty. No, you have to leave." Then I said to the son, Joseph, I said, "Please tell your father to let me stay till dark. At night it will be easier to get from one village to another than in the middle of the day."

"All right," he says, "till tonight." Got a little bit dark, snowed outside, and they opened up the gate for me, and the old lady made a cross. She knew I'm innocent. "What did they want from the little Jew boy? What did they want from you?" I said "I don't know. I'm Jewish, finished. They hate me, want to kill me. They killed already most of my family. They already probably burned in the Treblinka gas chamber."

I walked to a farmer who was like in a colony away from the village. I came in the middle, seven, eight, nine o'clock at night. It's cold, winter, freezing. "Oh, who are you?" I say I'm a Pole, I just came from the border, and I spent a couple of days in this and this village, and I worked for this and this family. She says "That's my father." I said "Yes, that's your father." I say "He was a very nice man." I said "I fixed his chairs and I helped him fix his wagon," which was a lie. I had to say something. And I was with those guys maybe four days. And the brother came in, which I slept on the hay, and I knew. I said "How are you, Rosa?" And she know I know the guy. That was a very /9/ "Oh, that's my sister." I said "I know, she told me she's your sister." Sunday morning: "Let's go to church." I said I would love to go to church, but he knows I'm

Jewish. She doesn't know. I mean I'm a liar. But he didn't say a word. I say "How can I go to church? I have no passport." I said "They're going to catch me. They'll think I'm a Jew or a Russian prisoner." "Oh," she says, "you're right. Stay home." Monday morning she says "You did all the work, it's done. You go on your way." She was right. She doesn't have to have a hotel for me. I had to go.

Then I went back to the first farmer who kicked me out. I say, "I heard you have a daughter in Germany, and there you could subsidize, send somebody to Germany, and your family member come back to Poland if they want to farm." And I had my birth certificate. He says, "Yes, I have a daughter in East Prussia. Only you're a Jew." He says "You are circumcised. You have to go to the doctor. You have to go take a bath. You have to be an employee, you know, sprayed with the green powder." He says "They'll find you're a Jew." He says "What's going to happen to me and my family?" He says "I don't know." Then I stood there for a couple hours. He went someplace, and the old man says to me, "Go in another room. There's an old Jewish lady; maybe you know her." I said "I don't know nobody. I'm not from this territory." I said "I'm from near Warsaw." I walked in and she started crying. She was maybe, I don't know -- I

was 17, 18. She was maybe 40, 42. I said "Why are you crying?" I said "I can not help you." She said "You can not help me?" I said "We have to find out the way to survive." Maybe five, seven minutes later comes in the little daughter, and she screams. The Gestapo, on horses, are coming through the village, you know, riding through the village. We have to get out, because they're afraid they're coming looking, and there's two Jews 226 two Jews. She walks out from the room, and I walked behind her, you know, like we don't know each other, and she saw those two guys on horses. She ran towards them and started kissing their boots. They were sitting on the horses. He starts screaming in German. He went down the horse and killed her in the middle of the village. And I walked. I don't stay, I'm not interested; it doesn't bother me. I have to walk 233 but walk. And before he finished with her I was around the corner, didn't think about looking for this guy. And I took off. I couldn't go back to the village.

Then I went to another village during the day. Somebody told me this was my spiel: I want to go for an exchange laborer from Germany to Poland, and I'll stay in Germany. This was a luxury thing to do, you know. You want to go to Germany? What kind of a Pole

are you? Understand, there was no thinking about being a Jew. Who will come with an idea to go to Germany? And Poland was terrible. It was hunting us down and killing us on the spot. In the woods, in the barns, in the churches, there was like a hunting straight. Everybody hunted Jews. Poles, Russians hunted Jews. They had the belongings in their pockets. Everybody was hunting Jews. It was a cheap commodity with some value to it for them. I had to get away from them. I walked. Somebody told me to go to a village named

253 (Cur-a-shev-a-tef-ka). I came in. There was an old mother, son and daughter, and I told them the spiel, I want to go to Germany to be an exchange laborer, and they were in seventh heaven. They start writing letters to Germany: We have a fellow who wants to go in your place; you come home. In the meantime I had a roof and I had food, and nobody knew who I am. Everybody thought I was a Pole. Why was I a Pole? I knew how to read, to write. My language was completely different. My grammar was perfect. Shortly before Christmas they got signs on the buildings, on the poles, written: anybody caught without legitimate papers is going to get shot as a Jew or as a Russian prisoner of war. Finished. Now I'm together labeled with the Russian prisoners; I've got company. And I was there in the

village maybe, I don't know, two or three weeks. I said "I need some papers. If I go make a passport 272 I need some papers." I go into the (sol-tist), to the Bürgermeister. His name was (Ko-tus-ky). I say 273 "Herr (Ko-tus-ky), Mr. (Ko-tus-ky)," I say, "I need a piece of paper. I'm going to make myself 275 cards, papers." "No problem," he says. "What do you want me to do?" He says "You write it and I'll sign it." I wrote it. I say "I'm here three weeks. Can you give me a piece of paper I'm here three months?" He says, "Henry," he said, "no trouble. Write yourself a year." A survival ticket. A survival ticket. I wrote a whole year and I'm a good worker and I'm an honest man, I work hard, this and this. He signed it. He put on the seal of approval. This was worth a million dollars. In case I'm caught, they'll kill him, too. This was my revenge for the Poles.

I took my farmer, I say "Let's go to the city. I'm going to make a passport." I say, "You don't want me here on your farm without a passport." I say "You read the signs and placards on the street." "All right," he says, "let's get the horses; let's go to town." I came to town. They were auctioning off Jews' belongings from the ghetto. He asked me "What are the Gestapo doing?" I said "I don't know." I said

"They're selling some stuff, furniture." He didn't know. Is it Jewish or I'm a Jew? He didn't dream about it. I come off to the 293 to the headquarters, everything Gestapo, with the uniform, the brown, the blacks, with the swastikas, with a necktie, the whole kit and caboodle. First I didn't speak German. I couldn't. I'm a dumb Polack; I don't speak German. I come up. They scream at me, they holler, because they didn't like the Poles too. I said "I don't speak German, I need an interpreter, a Dolmetscher." All right, they found me somebody who spoke Polish and German, and "What do you want?" I say "You saw the signs, the whole thing." I said "I worked here over a year in the village." I said "I never thought I needed a paper, a passport, but now you gave orders. Here I am." He says to me,

303 "The (Ahns-com), the commandant, is not in; he's busy. You come after Christmas, after New Year's." I say "Yes," I say, "I don't mind coming after Christmas, after New Year's. In the meantime, in case they start looking for Jews and Russians, I have no legitimate papers." "So what do you want me to do?" I said "Type up something in German; put your seal of approval, and I go home. I'll come back after New Year's." This was worth a million dollars, a

million dollars. I went back. I told my farmer, I said, "They have no time, the boss is busy. We'll come back after new year." I went back to the village. I took the paper in German and go to the Bürgermeister. I say, "Here, keep this safekeeping." He liked me too much, you know. I was still a good Jew boy, no drunk, no fighter, no argument, did my work, shut up. He says, "You need a paper; I don't. You keep it." I kept the paper. Shortly before Christmas the guy -- See 272 the guy who was hiding me in the village, (Ko-tus-ky), came in to this farmer to borrow a little bottle to make home brew, and he spotted me there. He spotted me sitting and eating, you know, on the potatoes and the cabbage and the pigs' feet and everything else. He didn't say nothing. When he went out he says, "Jütju, Jew boy, do they know you're Jewish?" I said no. He said "I will not tell them." He never told them. He borrowed a little bottle to make the home brew, and two or three days before Christmas he comes back, he says "I didn't finish my home brew." He says "Can I keep it until after Christmas? You know, the Poles, they're ready to fight, and they start fighting," he said, "you're hiding a Jew here." I said "I'll be the guy who will suffer." I begged my guy, I said

"Come on," I say, "you have enough for the two days of Christmas and New Year's." I said, "He'll bring you probably some whiskey after he finishes." And I told him, I say, "Joseph, when you finish, bring him a couple of bottles because you keep the bottle." I had to be a mediator. It was fine. After Christmas he brings the bottle back, he says "Jew boy," he says, "my mother wishes you all the luck in the world," not father, mother. And nobody's telling I'm Jewish. One night I was sitting there in the evening dinner, dark, somebody's knocking on the door with a rifle butt, knocks and knocks and knocks the door. Come in two German 340 I say that's the end of that, finished. I'll get shot in the front of the building like a dog. He come in, he starts screaming in German; in German he starts hollering. I spoke perfect German. I don't understand nothing. He comes in and he says "Nobody speak German?" I said no. He says "What are you doing here? You don't belong here." You know, I was different dressed. And I told him -- and I made a mistake -- I said, "I'm from a little town near Warsaw, Wolomin." He says "Wolomin?" He says "My god," he say, "my god, it is the ghetto," he says, "those Jews." I said I didn't live there. I said I lived on the other side where

the flour mill was. I said I didn't live where those ghettos were. "Are they still there?" I said "To be honest with you, I never bothered with the other side. I loved my hometown." He made a lot of flour sacks, he said 352 he says, and where the Jews were smuggled into the ghetto. "What are you going to do," he says, "you going to stay here?" I said "No," I said, "I'm going to Germany on my own free will," I said, "to expedite Herr

spelling 354 (Bol-ler) to come home, because they need help here on the farm." And he liked him. He says, "By the way," he says, "if you hear about Jews or the Russians, come up," he says, "to the commandant, to the headquarters." He said "You saw those signs. They'll give you," he says, "vodka; they'll give you sugar for every Jew you bring to the headquarters." "Oh," I said, "I'll do it," I said. "I'll do it a hundred percent if I see one." A couple nights later somebody's knocking on the window. There were no Germans. She says to her son, "Look outside, maybe some Jewish boys, Jew boys." He says "Yes, the hatmaker's son," he says, "from

364 (Mas-a-dets-ki) is here. Give him some food. They're hiding in the woods from the Gestapo, from the Nazis." I was afraid in case somebody recognizes me. That was my fear. He comes in, tells me go give him the bread.

And he says "Herschel, what business you do?

369 He didn't know. My heart was bleeding. I sleep under the roof, and he sleeps in the woods like I did a few months ago. He left. They gave him food. He left.

And came after New Year's and had to take a sled, two horses, and go back to town. I needed a piece of paper, because this piece of paper is only temporary. Went back to the city of 374 We need papers, legitimate papers. We come up to the headquarters. "What are you doing here?" I say in Polish, I say, "I'm this and this and this. Here's my paper. I got it before Christmas. I want my papers, my legitimate papers." "No problem." They tell me to take off my shoes. That was my scare. If you take off the shoes you take off your pants, and they lift it with a piece of stick, and the Jews get shot, because no Pole was circumcised in Poland, only Jews. It was -- girls was easier. Men was -- you could look. You could speak in the middle of the railroad station, they tell you to let your pants down, take a stick or something to look at it, and you're finished. This was not to look at it, it was only for the paper, for the passport. The passport was done. Everything was investigated. Comes out the guy with a uniform and a swastika with

their 388 with the whole schmear. He says "Where is the nice Polish fellow, Rosener? I heard he's going to Germany on his own free will. Where is he?" And the guy said "He means you." I say, "Yes, Henry Rosener." "Oh," he says, "I heard you're going to Germany to subsidize somebody who doesn't want to stay in our beautiful country." He says "If you go on this farm and you don't like it, I'll type you up a letter with my signature, and you get in touch with my wife. I'm a farmer, too. And you go to my farm. My wife will send you money for a ticket. You have to pay a mark and a half for the papers." I didn't have it. He took out from his pocket a mark and a half and paid for my kosher papers. He signed it. He didn't stamp it; he signed it. I says I'm caught now, he's going to get hanged, too. I said this is going to be my revenge for the Nazis. I'm going to get killed and shot because I am what I am; he's going to be hanged like a dog because he helped a Jew. I came back to the village. My heart was cold inside. I mean I had something to look forward, good or bad. Anything's going to work out, there's going to be a Nazi murder on account of it. I'm a Jew, I have no choice.

In February -- in end of February comes a letter

from Germany: the farmer's wife is expecting a baby. She doesn't want a man; she wants a woman. I'm finished. 408 She says "Let's go to church. We'll find somebody else to subsidize." I said "To church?" I say "You know," I say, "I don't know anybody here. It's not really my place to go." I said "You go to church and come back; you find somebody." "That's fine," he says. He went to church. He found me somebody who had a son who was a sergeant from the Polish army down by Hannover. 412 This was my place I wanted to go, not destruction. It is no good. Western Germany is beautiful. You can sometimes run away. You can hide. You can join allied parties. I don't know, I don't want to be German. I went out of the colony and started working on the papers. To make the story short, in May my papers came from Germany. The farmer in Germany is ready to send back the sick sergeant, the corporal, to get a young man to do his work. We came. The papers came. We have to go to city of (Lon-jur). You heard about it?

*see 562*

422 by the Prussian border. You go there to the unemployment agency, and they'll take care of you. I was glad I could get away, because I knew in another village they'd know I was a Jew. This was always in my mind, anytime something happens: there's a Jew,

easy target. I said to my farmer's wife -- the husband is in Germany, and she was on the farm with her folks -- or his folks, his folks -- I said "You take some bacon, some eggs, some cheese, and make a couple sandwiches." "We don't need it," she says, "we have enough sandwiches." I said "No, we're going to need it." We came back to

Dec 562 the city of (Lon-jur). We sat down on a fence, goes by a Polack, and he says to me, "Hey, you, you know this was a Jewish ghetto. Don't sit here, it's filthy." I said "I don't know," I said, "I'm not from here." I said "I'm from the village, whatever the colony was,

434 from Russia, (Ko-dauf-sky)." He said "Oh, there was a lot of Jews here. They took them away a few months ago. They took them all to the gas chamber." And I was sitting on a ghetto, willing or not willing. I looked around. Everything was ripped out, no window frames, no floors. The Polacks took care of everything, like usual. We go into this unemployment agency, and the lady says "Tomorrow morning at 8:30 you have to go to take a bath. Nine-thirty you have to go to the

441 (Noi-son), and 10:30, 11 o'clock, you have to go to the doctor." It's no use, it's not going to work. It's not going to work. Someone will 443 In the meantime comes in a Gestapo fellow and he says to her in German, he says, "We caught 22 Poles, and we

need to take care of them," he says, "bath, shower, doctor." She says, "Oh, I see a fellow who goes on his own free will to Germany. Why don't you combine them?" "Uh, uh, uh," to myself, "this is dangerous, not with 22 other Polacks." And I'm going on my own will. I mean I am a traitor. Why am I going to Germany? What kind of a Polack am I? Uh, uh, this is to be changed. I didn't have no lunch. Next morning, instead of come 8:30, I came 9:30. I came in to take the bath. The guy who gives you the bath says "The 22 Poles are already gone. They're already shipped to the doctor. Why are you here? Why didn't you come on time?" I said "I have no watch." Then I said to this farmer's wife, I said "Take a package and put it on his chair." She took one of the three packages and put it on the chair. He looked at it. I said "Come on," I said, "you know I'm not dirty. I just came from a farm. I slept normally, normal." He looked at me. He put a stamp on it. Don't have to go to the bath, get a shower. Now I have to go get the shooting in of the green powder. I'm not too happy, living lice or something, or diseases, or whatever I needed. I said "Let's go to the other place. It's late; now we have to take care of it." We came in and the same thing: the Polacks were just left; you're late. Then

he says "I'll take a little bit." He says "I'll shoot on top of you." I said to the lady, "Leave them the package." They were hungry. They were Poles. "Leave them the package." Now to the doctor. That's a German doctor. You can not fake with him. If he took off, only thanks god, for lunch, and he was already took his job, he finished his job, he left for the day. I say "I have a ticket; I have to go to Germany." I said "Where are you going to hold me?" I said "I'm healthy. 466 ? Look, I'm healthy and clean. I took off all the stuff." Leave him a package; leave her a package. She stamped it, too. All three without going through the real McCoy. Now we go to the railroad station to buy a ticket for Eastern Poland to West Germany. How do you do that? And they say "Yes, you have all the papers in good shape, all the stamps, all the seals, everything is clicking." All right. 472

You buy a ticket. From here you go to Warsaw; from Warsaw you go to Pruszkow; from Pruszkow you go to Miedzyrzecz; from Miedzyrzecz to Frankfurt, on the Oder to Berlin to Hannover. I say -- I finally say something in Polish. I say, "I don't want to go to Warsaw." I said "Didn't you read the papers? There is an uprising or something; some Jews uprised a ghetto." I said "You should have heard about it over the radio, where they

run from it." She says "You're right," she says. "They can catch you and ship you to Germany, and this

477

is why I'm not coming home." Said "What do you want me to do?" I said "Why don't you route me through Konigsberg." Instead of to go west, go north, and my Warsaw, and I say to this farmer's wife, I said, "You have some more money?" I said "I don't." She said "How much do you need?" I say "Three or four marks." She says "Oh, no problem. Buy the ticket." I took a loaf of bread, a half a loaf of bread -- a loaf of bread, not like here -- a half a loaf, about ten pounds, some bacon, some hard-boiled eggs, and I went on a train and I left the territory. I came to a city which my mother was born. Polacks got ahold of me. They said "Where are you going?" I said "I'm going to Germany." "Why?" I said "I'm substituting a Polish officer who is sick. He's coming home on his farm." "How much does he pay you?" I said "Five hundred marks." He says "Five hundred marks?" He says "I'll give you a place where you're going to get 50,000 marks to subsidize somebody from German hell." I said "No, I'll do with you something else. I'll go and I'll come back and you give me that other guy. You know, you go to Germany. You release this guy, you come back to them, and you go on back to

a regular business 493 and they let me go. Then we came to a town, Poznan. You heard

495 about Poznan? There was a name, (Ju-dow-ska), a Jewish street, was painted all over. It was called something else. There was no Jews in it. I came to -- it took me five days to go three-quarters of Poland and three-quarters of Germany. I couldn't go in express trains, only in local trains, because I was a foreigner, you see, an Auslander. I couldn't do those things. I came to the land. I saw Jews with yellow stars working on the railroad station. I turn away from them. I was afraid. I was afraid, because in case somebody

502 recognizes me, you know, I had too much in stake to jeopardize it now, to be caught at that time. Then I met another Pole. He says, "I know," he says, "you're going to Germany to subsidize somebody." He says "I'll give you 10,000 marks right now. Come to my barracks, and I'll take off and go home, and you'll be having my name." That's easy. I didn't want to do it. Why? Because there was somebody in Poland knew about me, you see. There's a Jew for you. He took the 50 marks and he took off barracks, and the Germans start digging. They're looking for a Jew. I said "No, I'm going for this corporal. He's coming home. Maybe he'll come back to you."

I came to this little town about 6:30 in the evening, Hannover. I had to take a small train, and I ran into a policeman wearing a German uniform with a hooked paraphernalia and with a disc on the chest, and I gave him my papers. I didn't have to talk. The papers talked. He start asking questions. I don't speak Deutsch, I don't, I'm Polish. He found me an interpreter, a Yugoslavian. He found me a Yugoslavian boy. And he says "I'll give you a passport. You bring him to the village -- he stays there -- and you come back to your place where you live." We walked those three kilometers. We talked Yugoslavian, Polish, Serbian, Russian, becuase it's a Slavic language.

522 (Rube), will you please bring the candles?" And I came to the village around nine o'clock at night, and the Pole was in seventh heaven. He has his subsidized, slave labor. And he was staying with me for three weeks, and he went back home. He sent me once 50 marks. I was glad I don't get no money from the 526 territory. This would ease my heart. I said "They can not blackmail me, say I'm a Jew. I'm no good Jew. I was here," I said, "beautiful, pure Aryan, with the Poles 530 And I spent there 1943.

Q YOU CERTAINLY LOOK POLISH. I MEAN YOU COULD CERTAINLY

PASS AS AN ARYAN, NO PROBLEM, EASILY HERE, YEAH. YOU KNOW, THE POLISH. I MEAN IF I DIDN'T KNOW, I WOULD SAY POLISH.

A And I worked there for six months on this farm. The Poles liked me. I was always anti-Nazis. Between the Poles I was labeled "Henrich from this and this farm." They never saw a Nazi like this, and they liked me. Now, suddenly that situation changed. The Pole who used to work with me was a Polish prisoner, too, had an affair with a German woman. Can I talk? And I was scared to death, because all the Poles start asking, "Henrich, when is Joseph coming home?" I say "I don't know; I'm tired and I don't know, and I don't care when he comes home." I said "He's a good worker; he's a good Pole; we get along fine." The other Pole left already for home. I was afraid if some of the Poles speak up and he goes, the Gestapo comes, and they start asking questions. "And you're sleeping with him in one barrack, and you don't know when he's coming home?" They knock the daylight out of you. It's not working. And I start manipulating with my work. He sends me to plow here. I plow there. He tells me to put in fertilizer here; I put it and burn his crop. He says he has to get rid of Henry, he has to go, said he can not stand me anymore, and he gives me my papers,

and I go back to town. I come back to town, and they start hollering in German, and I don't understand, I need an interpreter. You doing this, you doing this, you're slowing the family. You're a saboteur. I said I didn't understand it. I said I don't speak German. I said I didn't saboteur nobody. I tried to work honest and decent. Then I say to the interpreter, I said, "By the way," I say, "I came to Germany on my own will," I said. "I'm not the guy caught in a (rat-see-ya) or something," I said, "and picked up." I said "I came because I want to help you Germans, I want to work for you." "Oh?" She looked into the files and she says "Yes, he's right, he's working for the good of Germany. He doesn't want to manipulate. He wants to work. So what do you want to do?" I said "I want to go back to a farm." "Well, you don't know how to do it." I said "Try me." And I went to another village. I came in, the Bürgermeister took me in. He needed three Poles in the village, and Mr. Fritz from the village took me in, and he says, "You want to stay here, and if somebody needs help I'll farm you out." Fine. No problem. And I worked for this farmer until the war was over, in a village named (Hole-a-gay) for the Bürgermeister. Once he wanted to shoot me, once in two years. The incident was they worked a (kin-nect), a laborer who was a German.

He was a hunchback, a little guy, maybe four-three, and he hated Poles with compassion. He hated us. I didn't care. Better to be a Pole hater than a Jew hater, better a Pole. He came down once in the wintertime. They keep potatoes in holes in the ground, covered, and he gives me a machete, and he says "If you catch mice, kill them," he says, "kill them." I said "I loathe potatoes. I'm not killing mice." This was the end of '44, don't forget. The Allies were in France, Poland and Belgium. And he hit with me with a fist, with a knuckle in my mouth, with a 578 from the axle. Then I had to hit -- I didn't know where to go. Where can you go? There's no doctors. The Poles in the field? Who's going to help me? Then I put my face against the wagon, and it hit a few times and I went back. It got swollen. I came back to the farmer's Friday afternoon, and I did my duty. I had 17 calves and maybe 50 pigs and three horses. I took care of everything. Otherwise you're a saboteur; you get shot. You have to do your work. You like it or not, you do your work. I did my work. Comes to eat dinner, Abendbrot, I call it, after work, around 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock. I don't go to eat. I'm not eating. I'm striking. "Well, a dumb Polack. What can I do?" he says. "A stubborn, dumb Polack. He doesn't want to eat." The word went around the whole

village -- Poles, Serbs, Yugoslavians, Frenchmen, Russians -- the whole camp. Henrich, from the Bürgermeister, is striking. They don't know why, but he's striking.

(End of Tape 1, Side B)

Interview with Henry Kruger

The whole Saturday I did my work. Sunday I did my work. Saturday was a half a day. Sunday was a day of rest. You know, the beautiful Germans believed in Sunday. Monday morning he came in with a Luger. He was a little-bellied guy with a little beard. He looks like a Jew, like a German Jew with a little beard, chubby, 60-odd years old. He says to me, "If you go," he says, "to the Arbeit Sundays I'll shoot you, you dumb Polack." "Fine, if you want to shoot me, shoot me. I am not working for you anymore." And his daughter was staying outside, and she was afraid I'm going to knock the daylight out of the father. I would never do. He hollers, he hollers, he hollers. I don't come to the table to eat breakfast Monday morning. I get dressed. After I finish work and I go to the city--and this was a bad omen to do, without a pas-sier schein, without a piece of paper--you go to town? It's a day of work for you waiting. Now I had already took too much liberty. I had to continue to fight for my survival as a Pole. And the Poles working in the fields--"Henry, where you going?" I say "You heard a story with Karl McNeck and things like that." "You better don't go. They'll send you to a concentration camp." I said, "Now the Allies are in--are all in Belgium." I said, "This old

guy will not survive two minutes after the Allies come in if he sends me to a concentration camp." He didn't. I went to town. He didn't seek the police after me. I came to town. I went to the unemployment agency. They knew my papers. They respected me for it. They told me, "You go home. You do your work. As soon as we catch a few Poles or Russians you go to another farmer."

INTERVIEWER: And which town was this?

MR. KRUGER: This was a village, Hole-a-gay, by Vol-Soy-er, not far from Hannover. They called it Lüneburger Heiden.

INTERVIEWER: How many miles, approximately, was that?

MR. KRUGER: From what?

INTERVIEWER: From Hannover.

MR. KRUGER: From Hannover? I would say around--

INTERVIEWER: Or--

MR. KRUGER: --seventy or eighty miles.

INTERVIEWER: And about 30, 40 kilometers or something?

MR. KRUGER: Something like that, and it was not far from Bergen-Belsen. Bergen-Belsen was freed the same day I was, the same day, on different time. After she told me to go home, they dealt with me nicely. I came back to the farm. Nothing was said. "Come eat your lunch," this and this. "You go work." Forgotten, finished. The Polacks succeed. The Poles were in seventh heaven. "How can you take a chance like this? You know the camps and the Gestapo and

everything else, and you took a chance like this." I said, "We cave in, they're going to treat us like this--every little criminal German is going to treat us like garbage." I said "Now the Allies are on the other European soil. They're bombing the daylight out of us, day and night." They never found nobody to subsidize me. I stood till the war was over.

One Sunday, noontime, 1945, April the 15th, the farmer says to us, "You see how quiet it is? The Allies have pushed back. Your friends have pushed back," he says. "There's no shooting," he says. "Our mighty army pushed them back. We don't know how far they pushed them back." I said "Fine, beautiful." I said, "You are a strong country." You couldn't argue. Going down to our--we slept in a Backhaus. They used to bake bread before the war, little house in the woods, with an oven, we two Poles slept there, with two beds and straw sacks. He comes, he comes. We go into the Backhaus. We go down to the bunker. There was a bunker against air attacks, Allied air attacks, machine gun. We used to go hide underground, go down, go lay down on the ground around four o'clock in the afternoon, April, a nice sunny afternoon. Why did he give us a nice meal today? They asking a question to ourselves. Why is he treating us so royalty? He give us cigars. I don't even smoke. He gave us pudding. He gave us a regular whole chicken--not the

bones, not the legs, not the wings--a chicken, a half a chicken, with pudding, with wine. I said, "What's happened to him?" He was not bad to us. He treated us decent anytime the police came to look over the prisoners of war. He used to tell us, "Stay home tonight." We knew what's going on. They're coming to knock on the doors, and they came to see if everybody's asleep. He was nice, I mean I cannot condemn the old guy. He was a prisoner of World War I in England, and he knew the taste of being a prisoner. We lay down on the floor, on the floor on the--on the straw, and suddenly the earth, like the earth shaking, like an earthquake. I said to my koh-fel, to Joseph, I say, "What's going on?" I say "The Germans coming back? Are they going forward?" Because the whole earth is vibrating. I says, "They're probably bombarding Hannover," because they used to bombard Hannover or Bremen or Hamburg, the whole earth used to like boil. The chain bombs used to go down, four bombs in one hole in the bunkers in Germany. Five minutes, ten minutes, it's getting closer! I said, "What are they bombing here, bomb blitz, the ammunition factories?" No explosions, nothing. I go out on the roof on the bunker. There stays a green tank with a white star. I say to my Polack, I say, "Joseph, do the Germans changing the color of the tanks from camouflage to green and white stars?" He says, "You drunk?" I said, "No, I'm not drunk. Come out, look." We

go out. The Allies have your--the village. I had a Polish uniform with silver button with a "P"; that was my talisman, you know, my protection. I dressed myself up with people to go to with Wladek across the street. I says, "Wladek, we don't know who these Englishmen, Americans or Russians; somebody's back here, who are out in the street, three of us like you see down Yankel Doodle Dandy, three guys walking in the middle of the street. And the Englishmen jump out with the Tommy guns, and he turns the cannon on you and we start screaming. "Polonai, Polish, Polack, Polski," and he said through the loud speaker to somebody who speaks Polish, come out, two Polish guys with a Poland on top, and he start kissing and hugging and giving us food and everything else. He says, "You guys have to get off the street, because we have to move out," and this is what we didn't like. They move out and leave the village again wide open to get killed by the werewolves and the wolves, the Germans used to hide in the woods, who run away from the German army. They offered us clothes, money, diamonds, to give them our civilian clothes, the Germans, the big heroes. We're afraid to start out with them, you know. We wanted to be a long way, it's already too long to get jeopardized. We go out and suddenly somebody takes a pot shot at a tank, at the Panzerhaus, which is an anti-tank, and the tank withdraws, and we don't know where to go, and the soldiers jump out, and they say to

us, "You help us find the Germans." I said, "Uh-uh, I'm not going to help you nothing." I said "You are the soldier; you go find the Germans." I said, "I'll find a German now; you'll take off; after you take off the village will be open, wide open, and they're going to throw a grenade at our little house and finish us off." I said, "You are the soldier; you do your fighting. I did enough." They catch the two Germans, give me a pistol. "Shoot them." Uh-uh," I said, "I'm not shooting them. I am not--I went through enough hell; I don't want to shoot no one." "What shall we do with them?" I said, "I'll tell you what to do. Put him in the front of the tank like this. Nobody's going to take shots at you." He says, "You're right," and they hooked him up with a string, legs and hands, and they drove away. Maybe two or three hours later there came another one. The Pioneer Corps came in, the English Pioneer Corps, and this was the best time of my life, you know. I still didn't say I'm a Jew. I didn't have nobody to go tell nobody. Who am I going to tell, the Polacks, I'm a Jew? They'll kill me. "What, do you mean you lied, you cheated us? You're a Jew?" Henry continue be Pole. This was around six weeks, came an order from the Allied forces: every foreigner, every displaced person who doesn't go to a D.P. camp has to live under the German rule. Who wants to live under the German rules? I had enough of it. All right, we going to

a camp, to an artillery camp, used to be a German high-ranking artillery camp, beautiful koszary, beautiful buildings. The Bürgermeister's daughter comes running to me, to me, to a little Pole. She says, "I heard a rumor the Russians are going to kill my father." I said, "What do you want from me?" She says, "They like you. Why don't you tell them not to kill my father?" I said, "They're not going to kill him. They're going to beat him up a little bit because he was our mighty Bürgermeister." Now, I talked to her. I said, "He was good to us." I mean he had to have some times heart, too. He didn't bother nobody. And they gave us wagons with metal wheels, you know, with the wood and metal. "Uh-uh," he said, "we want the wagons with the rubber wheels." I said, "I don't care, go take from another village. Bring them up here." We went to the camp. Three, four days later I lay in my bed. There were 28 Polacks in one room from my village, you know, clean, nice, two, three bunks on top. Comes in one of the guards from the Poles, from my--during the war years, and he says to me, "Heinrich," he says, "you want to see Jews?" And I said to him, "You go to hell," I said. "There's no Jews left." I said, "Didn't you know what Hitler did to the Jews?" "Come on, you so and so," he says, "let's go look for the Jews." I didn't want to go with him. I wanted to have the pleasure to find it myself. It got dark. I went into the office of the camp,

and I say, "You got some Jews from the camps of a concentration camp? Where are they, which block?" He says block this and this. I go down, yes, the Jews. They speak Yiddish, mammeluschen. I come into the barrack. They attacked me. My fellow Jew attacked me. You know, I wore a British uniform, German shoes, blond hair, suntanned. That was July, August, '45. I didn't do a day's labor for three and a half months. I weighed nearly 200 pounds, a beautiful British uniform, nice boots, shined boots, with blond hair like this, and here comes in and he tells them he's a Jew. They couldn't believe it. They couldn't believe it, those poor concentration kids. And I heard somebody was calling "Goldberg." I said, "Give me the fellow Goldberg." I said, "He'll believe me I'm a Jew." All right. Mendel Goldberg comes in. I say, "Your name is Goldberg?" He says "Yes." I say, "I'm going to ask you some questions. Do you have mishpoche in a little town near Warsaw, Wolomin?" "Oh, yes, I had," he says. I say, "His name was Meyer Goldberg?" He says "Yes. How do you know?" I said, "He was my uncle." I says, "Is he coming from the town of Wuskus Zdroj?" He says, "Yes." He said, "This is you?" "And I am," I said, "his nephew," and those guys says I was a cop-per. You know, a copper were those rotten guys in the camps. I said I hadn't seen a camp with my eyes. I said, "I never saw a camp. Please, believe me, I'm not what you think."

All right, they believed me, and they say "Now you're moving in to us, you know, a gitz-schu-di-ick." I said, "No, I'm not moving in with you." "Why not?" I said, "I'll tell you the truth. I'm sleeping with rotten Poles. No, it's clean." I said, "It's a mehaya. Every day somebody has guards, cleans the dishes, washes the floor, makes the bunks. It's a mehaya. As bad and as rotten as they are, you know, I feel I don't want to step down now." They were hungry, those kids. I don't blame them. They were from the concentration camps. At one point was food, go to the village, bring a sheep, kill it and cook. You know, they were hungry, those poor guys. They were already--they came back from a special camp. They came already fat and good dressed and everything else. Now, they still had the fear of being hunger. I said, "I'll stay with you a whole day. No, at night I go back to the Polacks. I'll sleep in a cleaner room." Two or three days later comes an order: All the people from the concentration camps are going to Belgium. I said, "Now I'll go with you," and my cousin says "Fine." "Oh, you have to change your name from Wozniak to Kruger." He said, "Let's go to the headquarters and tell them forget about Wozniak." I am what I am, Hirsch Kruger. Finished. I went to the camp, changed my D.P. card. Two hours later the loud speaker says "Belgium is out. Belgium doesn't want to take in anymore." Then I go back to my

Polacks. My bunker was taken. My bunk was taken. I say, "Get off, you so and so," I said. "So you just came back from Belgium?" I said, "No, Belgium doesn't want us. There's enough people like us." And they gave me back my bunk. A few weeks later I got friendly with some of the guys, the Jewish kids, Lieberman, who visited me a couple months ago. I said, "Let's go to Hannover."
They wanted me to sit here in the camp here with all the displaced persons. I said, "Let's go." We went to Hannover. We found a place to live between Germans, between Jews, a lot of Jews in a part of Hannover, and I spent there four years, from '45 to '49, in Hannover. I had some--an incident with a Jewish lady. I used to have special papers. I used to go into factories, get shoe polish, ship it to Munich and get coffee for it, you know, like a chance to make a living. That's all. They call it black market, and I call it survival. Very simple. Then we used to get cookies from Bal-zun. You've had the cookies, Balzun cookies? They sell them now in San Francisco and Hannover, made in Hannover, manufactured Balzun cookies, Christmas time sell a lot of Balzun cookies. I used to go in there every day and get two satchels of cookies, broken cookies. They didn't get--they didn't want money from me. I had a special paper from the Kazet Auschutz, you know I'm a Jew, and I'm a survivor and things like that, and they donate every day like 30, 40

pounds of cookies, and I went to the camp, and I sold them. I give away to the poor guys, and I sold it to the rich guys. Once I was standing on a streetcar corner, comes out an old, little lady with gray hair, and I wore the British uniform already from green to blue. I tinted it. And I wore a Star of David. She comes up to me and she touches it. And I didn't act nice, and I told her, "You German so and so, take your bloody hands off of my Star of David," and she turned around; she walked away, started crying, and it got my guts. She was my mother's age. I went to her, and her husband was with her, and I said, "I'm sorry." I said, "You know, I'm Jewish," and I went through this and this, "and this is my holy talisman, and I hate Germans to touch it." He says, "No, she's not--she's German, but she's Jewish." "She's Jewish?" I said. I said, "A thousand times forgive me," I said. "I didn't mean--" He says he knows the feeling. He was hiding her during the war on the farms, between his family. He was the direct--director of the police academy in Hannover before the war. He spoke English better than I speak when I'm in America 50 years. He was a six-foot-two gentleman, spoke fluent English, and he was a doll. He treated me sometimes even better than a father. And she invited me to her home. I said "Fine," I said, and I come up to her home, and I say "Here you living? You're Jewish, and you live under sun umbrellas?" She says,

"It's warm." I said, "It's come and go rainy days. You have no walls, no windows, and a bunkhouse, bunkhouse apartment." What can she do? I left her two cases of cookies. I said, "You eat as much as you want. Go trade it with your neighbors to give you some other food, and I'll give you an apartment." I went down to the city hall. There was one of our boys, interpreter, a Hungarian and Jewish boy, and I said, "Listen, boychick, we need an apartment for an old Jewish lady who survived Hitler. I need it on the double. Give me two M.P.'s and--yeah--and I'll find her a place. It's still time." And I went to another Jew down on the street, and I said, "Mr. Busch, you let me know. There's a few Gestapo guys still living here or guys or real Nazis. I need an apartment for an old Jewish couple." "Oh, he said, "here and there's an apartment. "He lives," he says, " like God in Rome." "Get them." I took the two M.P. guys with an interpreter with submachine guns, knocked on the door. I say, "Three hours--you out." "Oh, I'm not a Nazi." I said, "I don't care what you are. Three hours. I give you more than you gave me, than gave me to my folks." I say "Three hours. Every sofa, furniture stays." We came back next morning. The apartment was vacant. All the furniture was there. Everything was gone. I come up to the old lady. I said, "Mrs. Ahrens, there's a key from an apartment. Move in. If you need help I'll send you the English M.P.'s.

They'll help you." "No, no, no, I don't want it," she says. "I'm afraid, I don't want it." I say, "You take it. You're entitled. You are entitled to a decent place. Let him go to hell. Let him go to the Elbe River." She moved in in a few days, in this nice place. I came to visit her. She says, "You want to live with us as a son?" I was 20 years old. They were in the late 60's and 70's. She said, "This room is yours. You don't have to pay nothing. It's yours." I lived with Gentiles in a neighborhood like you see in San Jose, in a labor neighborhood. Oh, I didn't mind. Who was I? I was nobody. I lived between working class; no, I didn't--I don't know discrimination against class. A human being is a human being. She said, "This is a better neighborhood. You gave me the apartment. Move in with us." I lived with them for three and a half years. I fed them. I dressed them. Whatever I had, I used to go and get special food stamps. I used to make business, feed them, dress them, buying furniture for four, three and a half years. They treated me--royal. I slept in a room with three carpets, thick Persian carpets which she hide during the war. She just passed away. She was 93 years old.

INTERVIEWER: Just recently?

MR. KRUGER: Six years ago.

INTERVIEWER: Where?

MR. KRUGER: In Hannover.

INTERVIEWER: In Hannover? What was her name?

MR. KRUGER: Ahrens, Julia Ahrens.

INTERVIEWER: Julia Ahrens?

MR. KRUGER: Yeah, Pann-lis-ter Street. He passed away before, and she had two kids who were half Jews, which this guy was hiding on the farms, too, two little Jewish girls, and they came to visit her during the war, and they throw a bomb in a station in Nuremberg, Nuremberg, and the kids were killed by the station, two Jewish kids. And those guys were better--better than anybody else I knew in my lifetime.

And then we came to America, thanks God, May the 29th, 1949. We came to America.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you come to?

MR. KRUGER: I came to Boston.

INTERVIEWER: To Boston?

MR. KRUGER: There was a story behind it, too. When I came to the camp in Putzbad, in Germany, on the transit camp, they told me I'm going to stay between four and six months, because the ship to the west coast goes once in six months, the military ship. All the ships went to New York and Boston. I had a nice little Jewish boy working for the H.I.A.S. who was in the Polish army, a German Jew fighting in a Polish army, which came from England, and we liked each other. He was a nice but poor little boy. He said, "Henry, you want to stay here four to six months?"

I said, "No," I say, "I don't want to stay on the German ground for another six months." I say, "I want to go to North America." He say, "You going Sunday morning to America." I was two days in a transit camp, and he send me on my way. I had to stay in Boston 10 days because my shmattes was still in transit. I came faster than anything else. Then I got married, have a nice son, God bless him. Have a good wife, an American Jewish woman which I married for 33 years. I work hard. I was in business for 25 years. I was an honest business man. I had a Jewish partner who passed away nine years ago, who went through all the hell which I didn't. I didn't see no concentration camp in my eyes. I was always zigzagging around it, always. There was always something behind me to push me the other way around, not to get caught, not to get in. That's more or less my story about my survival under Hitler.

INTERVIEWER: Can I ask you one or two more things? How, when you were 16, how could you see these things? How could you be able to withstand when you were in Poland, when you first got through? A 16-year-old. How could you see these things go on?

MR. KRUGER: You get used to it. You live with it everyday, and you live in a ghetto, and you work, but you walk between dead bodies who's starving from hunger, and the skin busted open from being swollen from water drinking to

fill your stomach, and you have a little brother who has a typhoid, and he crawls the walls with his nails, a five-and-a-half- or six-year-old boy, your own flesh and blood. You get used to tzuris, believe me. A man is stronger than steel. Believe me. Whatever you saw in "Shoah" or in "Genesis," anything else, not one-tenth of the real truth you saw, my friend. When I was in Yad-va-shem I told the guide, I say, "Now show what you can show. Now show what you can show what's happened to my fellow Jew under Hitler." He says, "First, we haven't got too much. And if we would have," he says, "we are afraid to show it. The people would get sick." Like you just said.

INTERVIEWER: That's the problem. They should show the real--

MR. KRUGER: That's what I keep telling them.

INTERVIEWER: They should show the real hell even if--

MR. KRUGER: If they vomit, let them see it.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been--was it more painful afterwards, when you had time to think about what happened?

SECOND INTERVIEWER: Or before?

MR. KRUGER: During the action, believe me, there was a pain in your heart. You always figured you're next. You're next to it. You're next getting shot. You're next being hung. But there was done worse things. During the war in Germany we used to wash ourselves with soap, and

they used to tell us, "This is soap made from Jews." The Poles used to tell me, "Henryk," he says, "you have your green soap?" I say, "Yes, the bar they give me." He says, "You washing," he says, "with Jewish bones, their skin." Yes, sir. They used to cut out liver in the Warsaw ghetto. You know that? They used to cut out from dead bodies the liver and bake it and eat it. Yes, sir. And they don't show it, because nobody survived to live to tell you about it. They ate human liver in the Warsaw ghetto. Horse meat is nothing. Human liver. They used to cut out the liver and bake it and eat it. You know, those people were starving. You didn't see them when they used to look out from the little boxcars, from the little windows behind barbed wires with those big, hungry eyes, you know, looking out through the barbed wires. They show you now that's all actors, thanks God. Now we saw little kids. They used to rip up the floors and throw them out under the train. Maybe somebody have mercy to pick them up. They used to pick up little kids and bring them to the ghetto. This same destiny, what kind of a destiny, the same death, today, tomorrow or next week. That what they used to do. You cannot imagine what was to be a Jew under Hitler in Poland. The cheapest commodity, there's nothing lower in the world how they treated us. They burned our synagogue. They took out the sacred Torahs, and they told the Jews, the Orthodox Jews, to wear the

talis and the twillim, and they told them to urinate on it and then they put it in gas and they burned it. And the whole Polish, beautiful Christian world looked at it with laughter in their face. You cannot understand what was going on. Before they killed you, you know. When they killed you they think it is the end, finished. Before the misery for two and a half, three years, day in and day out. Gestapo here and Gestapo there, and headquarters here and headquarters there. And police here and black uniforms and brown uniforms and yellow uniforms. But the whole schpiel of the troops, entertainment was the Jew. That's all we were good for, entertainment, cheap entertainment. You did your duty, finished; you go. That's what they did in the concentration camps. You worked. You worked. When you were weak enough (inaudible) Next they took the Jewish girls, the young girls, had sex with them; they raped them. Next morning they shipped them to the oven. That's it. There was nobody to go to complain, nobody in the world was to complain. You couldn't--who was listening to you? Whom you going to talk? To a Pole? To whom? to a German? There was nobody. We were cheap commodity without any way to turn, to cry, to beg, to pray. Gur nicht. There was no synagogues. It was all blown up, burned out, ripped apart by the Poles for firewood. There was nothing. Who you going to talk to? Your broken-down father, or to your nine- or ten-year-old

little sister? She saw it. She saw what was going on. My little six-, seven-year-old brother, what could he do for me? I couldn't do nothing for him. Oh, I give him more food than I had. I stole, I begged. I paid, I begged to keep him alive, the little guy. That was my life. That's the reason I came back from the Russians: this little boy. That was my life. Then I worked in Bialystok. I went to the synagogue. The foreman was a Russian guy. "Why you coming late to Schulen to work in the morning?" I said, "I'm going to Schul." He said, "What are you doing in a Schul? Today's Monday or Tuesday." I said, "I'm saying Kaddish for my mother." "What's Kaddish?" I told him what Kaddish is. He said "Why didn't you explain to me before?" He said, "I'm a Jew." He said, "I will punch your card. You go say Kaddish." Twice a day, morning and evening, after my mother. Thanks God she was killed from a bomb. She didn't have to see the tzuris. She was killed September the 10th, Sunday afternoon, from a German Stuka. This was my mother before the war, and this is my mother when she went to college in Warsaw. Seventeen people got killed. Right? That was a war. This was war. He didn't pick Jews; he didn't pick Poles. He killed people. This I cannot blame him for. He was a Fascist. He was a murderer. He killed people, innocent people. How he came to this situation with Jews, this was the end of the road.

That was the end. There was nothing to compare. Here you can take animals, that people screaming you cannot use them for testing purposes, for guinea pigs. He didn't have to use dogs; he used Jews. Jews. He used kids who were crippled, you know, legs, backs, hunchbacks. That was all opened up without anesthetic, nothing, cut to pieces, held and restricted with ropes and cut them to pieces until they finished off their life. Can you understand something like this? You cannot understand something. It's impossible. That's only a story to you kids, thanks God. You cannot see something like that. To kill innocent people without a cause, no--no reason, only for fun, for glory, for the greatest Reich. They should show more. I said it years ago. Every Jew should be assessed to pay for the showing for films like that. This is our defense for tomorrow. First tell you young guys: beware, it can happen, because Germany before the war, before Adolf Hitler, was a beautiful country. The Jews were high up, the Jews were somebody there. They fought for their country. They were good citizens. They were the highest-grade Jew in Europe, assimilated, and the best living Jew in Europe, not the Jew in Poland. The Jew in Poland was good, only he was poor. Most of the time he was hungry. Most of the Polish Jews, I will never allow people to say we were rich, but well-to-do people. We had our days when we were hungry before the war as human

beings. Papa couldn't provide because it was expensive. He made it up next week or next day. And there were kids, which I have a living witness, living in Israel, who we shared every piece of bread. It was a poor family with four kids, used to make collars like this, go to Warsaw, and we used to wear them with hooks to hook up collars. That's what his penusa, life was. There was a lot of poor Jews. I think most of us were poor, humble, poor and honest. We didn't go do things we not supposed to. We didn't even know about it. A Jew in Poland didn't know how to go. He didn't dream about it. He knew about it from hei-der, from the synagogue. He has to be good, decent. That's all we knew. Can you imagine? He had a chance to live with us in--under the Russian. The answer was, "I don't want to become a Communist." That's what he was feeling. I said, "They don't need you to be a Communist." He was mit payes. He wasn't dressed western. Only we didn't put out the light in Shabbes. We didn't walk even out of town Shabbath. We went to Schul Friday, Shabbath and Shabbes bei nacht--Shabbath night. That what a Jew believed in. In Judaism. He did not have a choice. That was given for generation to generation. Shabbes after dinner, after the big meal. Everybody was screaming under the window, "Let's play soccer." Papa says, "No soccer. You go to Heider." Saturday afternoon. And you didn't tell Papa no, because you would have all your teeth

on the floor. And nobody sued the father for it. That's the reason we had heart. We respected Papa and Mama. When I was 16, during the war, I had an incident. I picked up a cigarette butt. You know how Germans throw away cigarette butts? I was 16 years old. I was supporting them all. I was feeding them, and I picked up a cigarette butt and came home to the apartment, to the room there. Papa opens up the door. He says, "Hirschel, did you smoke?" I said, "No." He slapped my face. I didn't say why. He said, "I'll tell you why without being asked. Not because you smoked; because you lied." He says, "A liar is a thief, and I'll kill you before you become a thief." I was 16 years old, and I would have gone to hell for my father. I came across borders. I was taking three times to get shot, to come back to my little family, to my little brother and sister, and father, too.

INTERVIEWER: One other thing. If someone wants to make a film, what things would you want them to include, what other things? Because you said that they didn't include a lot of things.

MR. KRUGER: If they have real evidence, if they're the real films which they captured from the German newsreels--

INTERVIEWER: Well, no, there are German films. There are very--there are German atrocity films that shows

everything, but they wouldn't dare show that on television. It's out there.

MR. KRUGER: Wait a minute. They should say like this. If you watch something with sex you tell the people: keep your kids away. We should show those films. If you don't want to watch it--there's a lot of cruelty--don't watch it. Whoever wants to see it, let them see it. Let them see it, please, because all of the things they say, even with the last film, the actors looked too good.

INTERVIEWER: In "Shoah," it was too professional. It was all professional.

MR. KRUGER: Sure, professional. It looks to me like phoney.

INTERVIEWER: Phoney.

MR. KRUGER: I saw something else. Like I told you, the big eyes. You see skeletons. That's how it was walking around. When I came to Bergen-Belsen three weeks after the freedom, the British, there were 18,000 people died after the liberation.

INTERVIEWER: I saw that movie. There was newsreels, as such, and a movie, and they showed--actually, there was a black man named Leon--Leon--Leon Bias, I believe? Do you know his name offhand? He was a liberator to Auschwitz, and you can believe what he said.

MR. KRUGER: I have a guy here who was a doctor, Manzion,

who was in the army. He was writing an article in the Jewish Bulletin.

INTERVIEWER: But there's a black guy. He speaks on the Holocaust.

MR. KRUGER: He says, "Henry," he says, "what you say, I saw it." A little guy. He's a doctor, Manzion. He writes in the Bulletin all the time.

INTERVIEWER: All I'm saying, in that particular--on that issue, they did show the actual--they showed the news-reels. On that film, you will not see that--that was in a private movie. That would not be shown.

ANOTHER INTERVIEWER: They had one mistake in the news-reels, too. What happens, sometimes they forget to show what it was before the war.

INTERVIEWER: Before the war.

ANOTHER INTERVIEWER: It shows them dying. It's sad, but if you don't show them when they're alive--

INTERVIEWER: Alive and--

MR. KRUGER: We were poor. Now, we had beautiful life in Poland. We had the organization, Jewish youth organizations. That's all. We didn't have too much. We had two movie houses. It was expensive to go. We had Halatzim Goladonians. And then we had Poland. We had Commies, Jewish Commies. We had everything you want to know in Poland. We had a beautiful opera. We had soccer teams. We had Ping-Pong teams. We had Jewish theaters.

We had five and a half thousand Jews in my little town. We had everything. Kids went to trade school. Kids went--

INTERVIEWER: There's something I'd like to ask you, Henry. There is a movie that showed a Jewish orchestra. Was that the Warsaw Philharmonic? They were all Jews. I remember I played the army musician, classical musician, and it said something about a--

MR. KRUGER: They played like--

INTERVIEWER: They said there was a Jewish orchestra in Poland. I was wondering where that would be. Do you have any idea?

MR. KRUGER: Maybe now? Before the war?

INTERVIEWER: No, before the war. Before the war. In the 20's.

MR. KRUGER: Wait, now, I don't know. I was born in '23. I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Or the 30's.

MR. KRUGER: I know in the ghetto, in the camps, they had Jewish orch--Jewish bands to play for the tzuris, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

MR. KRUGER: You know, to play, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. KRUGER: When they go to death.

INTERVIEWER: And Treblinka, there was also a symphony orchestra in Treblinka.

MR. KRUGER: This I don't know. That was Treblinka. I lived not far away, and I saw plenty of trains, like I told you, going day in and day out.

INTERVIEWER: Did you hear screams or anything? Did you--

MR. KRUGER: Yes. I went under the railroad tracks, because we didn't know what's going on--we were only told--till a bunch of us, maybe six boys like me, sixteen, seventeen years old, went across the barbed wires in the night and were hiding under--under the railroad, and we listened. We listened. We listened. That's Yiddish, "Man weined und man betet," and the davint and man screamed. We were Jewish. Then we knew the story. We saw the Ukrainians. We saw Ukrainians. We saw Lithuanians.

INTERVIEWER: Um-hm.

INTERVIEWER: That's fine.

MR. KRUGER: No, no, it's not fine. No, no, you come to my house; you're going to eat.

INTERVIEWER: I'm a very good listener. I like to listen.

MR. KRUGER: You're going to eat.

INTERVIEWER: Go ahead. Okay.

MR. KRUGER: After we heard more or less my past history of my war years, as a young man in Poland and in Germany, and one thing I would like to tell to my fellow Jew, young, old, or in between, woman, child: not to

capitulate, not to give in, to be proud we are Jews. We are a good race, and we shouldn't give in to any pressure from any other people. We should only look out for ourselves, protect ourselves, help ourselves and to look for a tomorrow for us and the Jews in Israel. Look up to them, what they did in their five or six wars, what bravery they're showing to the world, because there's only one survival ticket for us: Keep on fighting. Don't capitulate. Don't give in to our enemies, and be proud you're Jews. And don't forget our past. It just happened, looks like yesterday, 40 years ago. And our six millions were burned, murdered, cut to pieces, tortured, died from hunger. This alone has to keep our eyes to look up to our generation of the 40's, 1940, 1945, 1939. Think of it. This is not going to keep together; I see a black tomorrow for us. Now let's hope we keep our candles lit and remember our past, and we have a good future if we help Israel, to try to help them. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.