

1 Interview with EGAN LOEBNER

Holocaust Media Project

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Place:

3 Interviewer:

Transcriber: Margaret Drusch Carnes

4 Begin Tape 1, Side 1.

5 Q. Would you please state your full name?

6 A. My full name is Egan Esteo Loebner.

7 Q. Which year were you born?

8 A. I was born in 1924.

9 Q. And where?

10 A. I was born in Plzen -- that's Czech -- Plzen,

11 German or English, Czechoslovakia.

12 Q. When did you first notice danger for the Jews,

13 and where you were living?

14 A. I noticed it when I was quite young. I

15 remember it rather clearly. It was on a

16 particular Sunday. My parents were listening

17 to the broadcast in the early thirties when

18 Hitler came to power, and it was quite clear

19 the way they were talking about what was

20 happening that this was an ominous development

21 that was going to cause a lot of difficulty in

22 the future.

23 Q. Do you remember approximately how old you were?

24 A. Yes. I must have been about seven, eight years

25 old.

1 Q. So 1931, 19 --

2 A. Yeah, could have been '33 when he came to  
3 power, actually, since I'm thinking of it now.  
4 I was nine years old. Okay?

5 Q. What, specifically -- were there any changes in  
6 where you were living, as far as pre- the  
7 invasion of Czechoslovakia?

8 A. Yes, there were lots of Jewish refugees that  
9 were coming in from Germany to Czechoslovakia,  
10 escaping from Germany. And at that time we  
11 felt very safe. We felt a democratic republic  
12 where Jews were coming to our  
13 country.

14 Q. Okay. So there was no feeling of imminent  
15 danger, of --

16 A. For ourselves not, but something similar that  
17 you experience in the United States when you  
18 have Jews from other countries. It was -- that  
19 was the attitude of the Jews coming to  
20 Czechoslovakia.

21 Q. What about the late thirties or just prior to  
22 1939, as --

23 A. As you probably know, Czechoslovakia lost  
24 during the Munich Pact its most important  
25 Sudetenland territories. We had family living

1 in Marienbad and Carlsbad which were  
2 \_\_\_\_\_ and that family had to  
3 move to Prague, and we visited there, and I  
4 recall one of our last trips just after the  
5 announcement of May and before the pullout of  
6 the Czech forces and the occupation by Hitler's  
7 armies, that we traveled to the land, we  
8 visited for the last time at the cemetery where  
9 my great-great-grandparents were buried 250  
10 years ago. The stones were desegregated --  
11 desec --

12 Q. Desecrated?

13 A. Desecrated, I'm sorry. And we went to the  
14 police to inform them that -- there was still  
15 the Czech police there, but it was quite clear  
16 that nothing was going to be done. So that was  
17 prior to '39, and that was in October --  
18 September or October of '38. Now, in '39,  
19 obviously when the second shoe dropped, and  
20 then the country became occupied, then things  
21 was very ominous, and I can go into some detail  
22 as to what happened in our family at that  
23 particular time, but I don't know how much you  
24 care to hear at this time.

25 Q. Just before we get to that: How difficult was

1           it prior to the actual occupation of Czechoslo-  
2           vakia, with Germans, when, let's say, in  
3           October, '38, already Jews in Poland were being  
4           expelled, how difficult was it for you, for  
5           your family, Czechoslovakia, or the Jews in  
6           Czechoslovakia to get out?

7    A.    Okay, now, I was going to come to that.  The  
8           getting out was rather easy until the end of  
9           March, 1939.  What had actually happened was  
10          that there was a big disagreement in our family  
11          what to do.  My mother wanted the heck out of  
12          there.  She wanted to go, as many other Jews,  
13          just picked yourself up, took a train to  
14          Holland, and you could go to England in those  
15          days.  England was accepting Jews from  
16          Czechoslovakia until the end of March.  Then  
17          the borders closed.  So if you acted fast, it  
18          was possible to do so, but my father did not  
19          want to leave his parents behind.  He felt that  
20          he couldn't earn a living outside the country  
21          since he was not familiar with other languages,  
22          was a business man, and he did not believe, as  
23          my mother did, that things were going to get  
24          very bad.  It was a famous saying that he kept  
25          on repeating for a while, not all through the

1 end, which essentially said, "They will not  
2 drill a second hole into my ass." He was very  
3 explicit about that. He felt that things just  
4 couldn't get that bad.

5 Q. Okay. Why don't you tell us then what happened  
6 then, March, 1939.

7 A. On March 14th, 1939, the rumors were very  
8 strong that Hitler is going to invade; and,  
9 however, my dad had information that the  
10 occupation was not going to be of the whole  
11 country, that only our hometown, Plzen, was  
12 going to be taken, but that Prague was going to  
13 stay free. So he called up his workers, who,  
14 my dad was in the business of various kinds,  
15 and one of them was that he managed 200  
16 gasoline stations in Western Bohemia, and he  
17 had a big truck for the delivery of gas and oil  
18 to the stations, which was in Prague, and he  
19 had two cars, come and get the car and the  
20 truck back. He packed our most important  
21 belongings on the truck. He invited some of  
22 our closest friends to come with us, and in the  
23 night of March 14th we embarked on a rather  
24 gruesome drive in the night, where all lights  
25 were out because of the air attack, so the cars

1 had to drive without the lights on, in complete  
2 darkness, couldn't use any lights. A trip that  
3 normally takes an hour and a half to two hours  
4 during the day took all night. We arrived at 6  
5 o'clock in the morning, sliding twice or three  
6 times into the side of the road, because the  
7 drivers couldn't quite see that well. We heard  
8 airplanes. We didn't know what was going on.  
9 When we arrived in the morning, and it was  
10 daylight in Prague, the German army was already  
11 there. So my mother was very scared. She  
12 didn't want to go back home, so she and her --  
13 and my brother, a younger son, stayed in Prague  
14 without our beds. Dad and I said we were not  
15 going to be chicken, and so we decided to drive  
16 back home that very same day, since it made no  
17 sense to be in Prague, and we had all our  
18 belongings, and we had business there, school  
19 there, I wanted to be back. So we drove back.  
20 That was also a very harrowing business,  
21 because on our way out of Prague we were  
22 stopped by the police, and we were told that  
23 from now on we have to drive on the right  
24 instead of the left side of the road.  
25 Czechoslovakia was getting ready, it was going

1 to take about a year, slowly, to move over from  
2 driving on the left side of the road, like  
3 England still does, to the right side, by the  
4 order of the German army, that it would now  
5 change. So we were driving on the right side,  
6 except the people coming the other way weren't  
7 told yet. So this was one big game of chicken,  
8 because we were obviously under orders to drive  
9 on the right side. The other people felt very  
10 patriotic and wanted to stay on the left side.  
11 We were pointing with our hands for them to  
12 move over. Sometimes we had to go into the  
13 ditch a few times, because they wouldn't move,  
14 but we finally made it back home, meeting on  
15 the way the columns of the German Army coming  
16 in to occupy the country. So that is what I  
17 remember in a sort of overall picture of what  
18 happened on March 15th, 1939.

19 Q. Within what period of time, let's say from  
20 March to the actual starting of the roundup of  
21 the Jews in Czechoslovakia, how long did that  
22 take?

23 A. That took quite a while. I mean we're talking  
24 March, '39, and it was in January, '42, that  
25 Plzen became Judenrein, which means "Jew

1 clean," saying it in German, and when all the  
2 Jews except for a small contingent that was  
3 left behind to carry out chores for the Gestapo  
4 had to leave for Theresienstadt. So there was  
5 a long period, for over --

6 Q. Two years?

7 A. More than two years. It was almost three  
8 years, yes.

9 Q. So what happened to your family during this  
10 three years?

11 A. Well, during the -- lots of things happened.  
12 The -- during that period my brother was sent  
13 in December of '39 to Palestine on the Kinder  
14 Aliyah: children, aliyah

15

16 Q. This was an older brother or --

17 A. Younger brother.

18 Q. Younger brother?

19 A. Three years younger, yeah. The other thing  
20 that happened, actually, we came back the next  
21 week, because my mother stayed in Prague, as I  
22 said, that particular week, and it was just the  
23 week when my brother was going to be bar  
24 mitzvahed. She didn't want to go back to  
25 Plzen, so he was bar mitzvahed in the Prague



1           synagogue, rather than Plzen, the home  
2           synagogue. But after a while she sort of  
3           calmed down, and she came back to live again in  
4           our house, although she cried very hard during  
5           the next few weeks to leave the country, but  
6           Dad wouldn't go, and she finally decided not to  
7           go with the kids alone.

8                       Over that period of time I was at that  
9           time already in a different school. My dad  
10          actually insisted in '38, now sensing that  
11          things were getting too rough, that we may have  
12          to leave. He yanked me out of a humanistic  
13          high school \_\_\_\_\_ I cried  
14          and begged, all kinds of things, but actually  
15          he saved my life that he did that, so I became  
16          an engineering student in a Jewish high school,  
17          four-year school, which was not quite  
18          equivalent to a university \_\_\_\_\_  
19          but that was four years' technical high school  
20          \_\_\_\_\_ And so the things that  
21          happened, Dad had two different licenses for  
22          business. One license was as a business that  
23          was buying and selling, import and export into  
24          Czechoslovakia and out of Czechoslovakia,  
25          importing rice, importing flour, and exporting

1 Czech goods, like cucumbers, vegetables,  
2 importing \_\_\_\_\_ had a very  
3 sizeable business for the town. Although he  
4 worked himself up from \_\_\_\_\_ in the  
5 business \_\_\_\_\_ and  
6 so what happened, what happened then is he  
7 cleverly turned over only one of the licenses.  
8 The other license was as an agent, and he  
9 turned in only one of the licenses and did not  
10 obey the German orders to turn in all of his  
11 business licenses. He found if he turned in  
12 one -- he found that if he turned in one they  
13 wouldn't catch on that there was another  
14 license. So he was able to practice  
15 essentially legally from a German point of view  
16 and legally from the Czech point of view. Yet,  
17 the Czech government was covering the business  
18 directions, and the German government, it was  
19 covering Jews, and Dad was very enterprising  
20 and very clever. He did some other things that  
21 I'm going to mention now, because I may forget  
22 to mention them later. When the time came to  
23 take us in, the Germans were rather thorough.  
24 Not only did they want a complete list of all  
25 the belongings that you left at home, including

1 every spoon, every fork, every piece of cloth  
2 that was left behind, and a list you signed  
3 off, but they wanted all the belongings in the  
4 banks, all the accounts and everything,  
5 including insurance policies, life insurance  
6 policies. What the Germans did is they actually  
7 cashed the life insurance policies. So my dad  
8 figured out that, if he burned the policies,  
9 they were not able to cash them, and if he  
10 wrote down the numbers of the policies, then  
11 after the war it was possible to get them  
12 reestablished. So what happened was that I had  
13 -- he had left with an attorney the numbers of  
14 the policies, and then I was the only one that  
15 survived and came back, I got hold of the  
16 numbers, and I got back the cash value of the  
17 policy. They would not pay his death, because  
18 he did not pay off the premium afterwards  
19 \_\_\_\_\_ and there was no rider  
20 on it, but \_\_\_\_\_ the policies  
21 \_\_\_\_\_ So he was very foresightful,  
22 and in more ways than one, I mean he kept the  
23 other business, and I was helping him in  
24 writing letters and as an agent. He was just  
25 getting percentages for buying and selling, I

1 mean as an agent on behalf of other business  
2 people, so we had income that the Germans  
3 didn't know about that we could live on in  
4 addition \_\_\_\_\_ .

5 Q. During this period of time how were your  
6 non-Jewish Czech neighbors treating you?

7 A. Now, that varied quite a bit, but in general it  
8 was -- probably the best statement would be  
9 "aloof," didn't want to get involved. They  
10 were sometimes very helpful by taking  
11 belongings to safeguard them while we were  
12 gone, except they were not always eager, and  
13 some of them never did return them when I came  
14 back.

15 I myself had a problem in school, because  
16 in 1940 I had just finished the second year --  
17 I was finishing up the second year of that  
18 engineering school in 1940, which I started in  
19 1938, and my homeroom professor called me in,  
20 called the high school \_\_\_\_\_  
21 \_\_\_\_\_ not just in  
22 Czechoslovakia, and he told me that they are  
23 very sorry about that they had to lower my  
24 grades because I earned still -- I was always a  
25 straight A student, all my -- all my school

1 days in Czechoslovakia, and they -- the Czech  
2 government was giving honors and medals to the  
3 three highest grade earners in the class  
4 throughout the country, and they just didn't  
5 feel that they could give a Jew an honor like  
6 that, so in order to avoid any difficulty they  
7 lowered my grades so that I wouldn't be  
8 eligible, but they felt that they'd better tell  
9 me why they were doing it, so he called me to  
10 tell me that. I told him at that particular  
11 time that I really didn't care about the  
12 honors, that all I was being concerned was that  
13 I get through school, which I couldn't, because  
14 the following September, when school started,  
15 the edict was issued that no Jew go to get an  
16 education anymore.

17 Q. Because of --

18 A. No, that was September, 1940. I said it was in  
19 June, 1940, at the end of school year. I went  
20 there two years. The first year was '38-39.  
21 The second one was '39-40. And then I  
22 approached the director of the school for  
23 permission to sit in without necessarily being  
24 registered, but he did not grant that  
25 permission. So then I approached a friend of

1 mine that I could come to his house on a daily  
2 basis and follow his notebooks, because in  
3 Czechoslovakia, in the type of school I was in,  
4 there were no textbooks. Everything was  
5 dictated by the professor or sold, mimeographed  
6 sheets that you had to buy, but there were no  
7 textbooks, you had to essentially copy what the  
8 prof said or went by his notes. So I was kind  
9 of shut out. I wanted essentially -- I didn't  
10 want to go along without continuing my  
11 education. I tried everything that I could,  
12 so for about three months I kept on going to  
13 this guy's house, borrowing his notebooks,  
14 bringing them back again and copying them into  
15 my own, keep up my education. Then he took me  
16 aside, and he said, "Everybody's been wondering  
17 what kind of clandestine thing is happening  
18 here, your coming every evening. I think your  
19 being Jewish, people are raising questions  
20 \_\_\_\_\_ and we're going to have to  
21 stop this." So that was the end of my  
22 engineering education, I guess in about  
23 November, December of 1940 \_\_\_\_\_  
24 \_\_\_\_\_ . That was the end of  
25 it. There's an interesting aftermath to this,

1           though.  When I returned from the concentration  
2           camp in 1945, my first trip was to the school,  
3           \_\_\_\_\_ and so I got matriculated,  
4           and I finished the third class in August, and  
5           then I started the last, fourth class, with the  
6           kids much younger, but it was a new class that  
7           I went into when I insisted on graduating, so  
8           that I could leave the country, because I  
9           didn't want to stay there after the \_\_\_\_\_  
10          \_\_\_\_\_ forces pulled out -- there's  
11          another story that comes later \_\_\_\_\_  
12          \_\_\_\_\_ this was in the aftermath  
13          of the Holocaust, but they sort of remembered  
14          what they had done to me, and they were very  
15          nice to at least try to undo it.  Not only did  
16          they give me money to live on, being supported  
17          \_\_\_\_\_ but they also gave me  
18          honors even though my exams were not quite up  
19          to snuff, and they didn't say that they would  
20          undo what they had done before, but they had a  
21          very interesting story that I do like to tell.  
22          They said,  "You know, we know how capable you  
23          are and that you are going to go big places,  
24          and it wouldn't look very good on our own  
25          record \_\_\_\_\_ so we decided

1 to give you honors, because we know this." So  
2 that was that much about the education in that  
3 disruption. When I couldn't go to school, and  
4 it was dangerous to be at home and be a  
5 parasite, because they drafted you into mines  
6 at that particular time, the Gestapo did, many  
7 Jews in Plzen had to work in coal mines, they  
8 didn't have any \_\_\_\_\_ it was  
9 hard to do, they found engineering jobs for me,  
10 and I was actually able to -- from '40, through  
11 January, '42, I had two different engineering  
12 jobs, before we were shipped off to Theresien-  
13 stadt. The other thing that happened was that  
14 my dad's business obviously collapsed, as I  
15 mentioned. His accountant for 30 years, a  
16 woman, very advanced in age, listened to her  
17 boy friend, went to the Gestapo and requested  
18 overtime pay for 30 years for my dad, which  
19 meant that she wanted something of 300,000  
20 crowns, which was -- which amounted to at that  
21 time -- divide 300,000 by 12, and you get about  
22 a thousand dollars at that particular time. So  
23 what we are talking about is something around  
24 \$10,000. Dad obviously didn't have that kind  
25 of money, so an arrangement was made through



1 the Gestapo for him to sell his house to the  
2 Offiziers of Luftwaffe from Vienna, and our  
3 house became the casino for the German  
4 Luftwaffe's officers through the World War II.  
5 They were -- they were living there. They had  
6 their billets and their food, sort of an  
7 officers' club, because it was a beautiful  
8 villa.

9 And so we had to move twice, because what  
10 was happening is, as the German officials were  
11 transferred into Plzen, the apartments  
12 available to them were the Jewish apartments,  
13 go shop for the apartments that they liked to  
14 live in, to be comfortable, to survive, the  
15 Meiser brothers, who had the job of the Jewish  
16 community to take care of the transfers of the  
17 Germans, they would come and they would say,  
18 Look at these beautiful carpets and all that  
19 that you are getting, and Jews were evicted on  
20 two days' notice, would have to leave the  
21 apartment, and would move in with another  
22 Jewish family, so the families got crunched  
23 more and more as time went on; there were more  
24 and more families living in a single  
25 apartment. We were moved twice that year. The

1 first time we moved was, I think, end of '39,  
2 then once more sometime in -- around 1940-41 --  
3 '41, probably, we moved a second time. At  
4 first we lived in (Lee-va-ko-vak) Street, and  
5 then we lived in Polack Street. As I recall,  
6 \_\_\_\_\_ was 6 and Polack 18. We went from  
7 the Polack 18 apartment to the sending place,  
8 then shipped off to the camp.

9 Now, I was very active in those days, also  
10 \_\_\_\_\_ and it so that happened that I  
11 was asked and I agreed to become a leader of  
12 the whole movement, not only of all of Plzen,  
13 but all of Western Bohemia. They did not  
14 suspect that a 15-, 16-year-old kid could run  
15 an underground organization like that, they  
16 would suspect people of military age, and so it  
17 was much safer for me to do that than for an  
18 older person.

19 Q. Had at this the time the Kinder Aliya shut  
20 down?

21 A. We'll come back again and say the Kinder Aliya  
22 had shut down. I had an opportunity to go at  
23 that time. I was too anxious to finish my  
24 education. I did not suspect my family was  
25 going to go, so in '39 I declined to go when my

1 brother went. Later on, in 1940, I changed my  
2 mind. There was an attempt, it was finally by  
3 Eichmann. Eichmann himself, in '40, became the  
4 head of -- the Jews occupied by important Jews  
5 \_\_\_\_\_ was head of the  
6 (Aus-bunden-stelle-prag) and he was head of all  
7 the immigration of Jews from Czechoslovakia,  
8 and the Zionist Organization arranged for  
9 adults and kids -- and I was one of the young  
10 kids -- for getting British -- we got British  
11 \_\_\_\_\_ at that time, but it  
12 was very difficult, because you couldn't travel  
13 on passports from any country, so it was  
14 arranged that our passports or \_\_\_\_\_  
15 passports were waiting for us in Budapest. We  
16 were going to pick them up, go down the Danube  
17 to Cernavoda and then take a ship to Turkey and  
18 a train to Palestine. It was all legal from  
19 the British point of view as long as we had  
20 valid passports. And it was a very complicated  
21 arrangement, but in the final -- final days I  
22 went to a (hav-shur-ra) to prepare for it. My  
23 mother bought all the stuff. I come back,  
24 especially a story of the boots that they  
25 bought for me at that particular time, because

1 I have two or three Auschwitz stories that go  
2 with those boots, and so Mother arranged for  
3 that, but Eichmann changed his mind, and so I  
4 did not get out. With the very last transport  
5 I would have gotten out, but was stopped by  
6 Eichmann in '40. Now, the camp that I was at,  
7 getting ready, was called Deblin. \_\_\_\_\_  
8 \_\_\_\_\_ We all got  
9 together and \_\_\_\_\_  
10 \_\_\_\_\_ but that  
11 didn't occur to us. No, I'm back again to  
12 '41. I was heading out, this particular group,  
13 I came up with the idea of a cover. We were  
14 all, not just attending, but actually we were  
15 working as a choir in our synagogue, so every  
16 time there was an alarm that the Gestapo was  
17 around, walking down on the street, we stood  
18 there and practiced our Hebrew songs that we  
19 sang on Friday night, and when they went we did  
20 some more education, study for the group, and  
21 prepared some other activities, actually  
22 organized a protection for the older people.  
23 There were Czech Fascist groups that were  
24 beating up older men on the street, and we  
25 finally got brass knuckles and disguised

1           ourselves as Gestapo. So we had a number of  
2           activities at a special time that only Jews  
3           could go, because we couldn't go on the  
4           streetcars, we couldn't buy meat, we couldn't  
5           shop in the same hours that other people  
6           shopped. I mean there were many, many  
7           different restrictions that were taking place

8

9   Q.    Did you have to wear the star?

10  A.    Yes. I remember the first time, it was very  
11       scary. I was bicycling to my job, which  
12       started at 6 o'clock in the morning. There I  
13       was, at five o'clock in the morning, all alone  
14       on the street on this bicycle for the first  
15       time with this yellow star, feeling like an  
16       outcast, and not knowing what was going to  
17       happen to me. I was all alone. I had to cover  
18       up the star when I was coming in to do some  
19       Bundesband shopping. Dad, as I said, was very  
20       -- very industrious and understood things very  
21       well, and so he sold his car to a butcher, and  
22       he paid for the car, because instead of money  
23       payment he came and collected meat when nobody  
24       was watching, covered up my star when I came  
25       in, and even though we were not entitled to any

1 rations, I got meat. My mother sold the piano  
2 -- she was a very good pianist -- and we sold  
3 it to a coal dealer so that we would be warm so  
4 we would get coal. So we essentially burned  
5 our piano for heat, and we ate our car for  
6 meat. And there are some other stories like  
7 that, but that should give you sort of an idea  
8 as to how life -- what life was like during the  
9 German occupation.

10 Q. During this time, did you have any news of the  
11 West? I mean was there a feeling that some  
12 other country would come in and rescue you, or  
13 what was the general feeling?

14 A. No, I would say -- the general feeling was sort  
15 of complicated. Let me make -- our news was  
16 coming through the radio until September, 1939,  
17 when we had to turn in all our radios when the  
18 war broke out. Jews had to. And non-Jews were  
19 punished in concentration camps if they were  
20 caught listening to \_\_\_\_\_ so it  
21 was a crime to listen to radios. Obviously,  
22 the fear -- rumors were spreading around as to  
23 what the news were. But some of these rumors  
24 were quite unreliable. I counted 40 times the  
25 rumor that Turkey entered the war. There's a

1 lot of wishful thinking that happens when you  
2 get stopped from having news and knowing what  
3 happens. I recall a particular event. I think  
4 the date actually -- I was able to reestablish  
5 this by reading some history books -- was  
6 January 31st, 1939. That was before  
7 Czechoslovakia was occupied, but after the  
8 Sudetenland. Hitler made a speech. It was an  
9 answer to President Roosevelt's request that  
10 Roosevelt had made for Hitler to provide  
11 guarantees that this Austria and the  
12 Sudetenland, that was it, that he had no  
13 further desires, that  
14 Hitler but then in a  
15 very, very strong and  
16 instructed that if world Jewry would succeed in  
17 starting a world war, he was going to destroy  
18 it. And I had sort of a terrible feeling, it  
19 must be similar to the ones that the Russian  
20 people had at the 1938 trials, sort of a  
21 feeling that it was really something wrong with  
22 us being Jewish, that the other side may have a  
23 point, that we're undeserving of life, that  
24 we're undeserving of that. I was a young kid,  
25 I wasn't quite yet 15, and, as you know now,

1           psychologically, if the people tell you that  
2           you are not worth anything, you're not worth  
3           it, and that really carried. I mean he was so  
4           magnetic, he was so convincing, and there was  
5           so much reverberation of the population,  
6           especially the German population, that I did,  
7           and I think some other people, too, that I  
8           spoke to, although it's not very often  
9           admitted, but there were some of us who felt,  
10          you know, that we really ought to be  
11          exterminated because we are all those bad  
12          things that they were saying. So the answer  
13          especially is that there was obviously hope  
14          that things were going to happen. I mean one  
15          of the big hopes was when finally Churchill and  
16          Roosevelt got together and came up with the  
17          Atlantic Charter. We knew about that, we were  
18          very happy that there was going to be freedom  
19          for everybody after the war, and we believed  
20          all that   . But so we had  
21          some hope and could not, especially in the  
22          later times, imagine that the information would  
23          get through to the West after the Jews would do  
24          as little for us as they actually did.

25    Q.     So during this time, when you had the ban on



1 the news, was there also, I imagine, a ban on  
2 any mail from relatives abroad, like your  
3 brother in Palestine? Did you ever --

4 A. Yes, it was not -- I don't know -- how --  
5 sometimes something came through, because I  
6 remember that my mother did get news, I don't  
7 know how, of her sister dying, younger sister  
8 dying in Palestine at that time. I, only after  
9 the war, found out that she died during the  
10 occupation \_\_\_\_\_ and I  
11 don't know whether she knew the facts or not or  
12 was told at that particular time, but that news  
13 did come through somehow. But, in general, we  
14 had very little contact, very little. My  
15 mother had always a premonition of all the  
16 things to happen. She wrote a beautiful letter  
17 of goodbye to my brother when I came here in  
18 early seventies. She died a few \_\_\_\_\_  
19 \_\_\_\_\_ .

20 Q. So that brings us to January, 1942?

21 A. Yes, January, 1942. The order came that all  
22 the Jews are going to have to leave their  
23 belongings and be evacuated to Theresienstadt.  
24 I don't know how much you know about Theresien-  
25 stadt. I don't want to say too much that is

1 well known. Theresienstadt was a very special  
2 place. It was thought up by the Zionist  
3 leadership in Prague for the sole purpose of  
4 saving Jews. A deal was struck with Eichmann  
5 and others that this was going to be an  
6 exemplary camp, and the argument that they put  
7 up was, Look, if you are serious about wanting  
8 us moved away so that we don't contaminate the  
9 rest of the population -- we have a very  
10 similar argument that happened to the Japanese  
11 on the West Coast, they are also considered,  
12 even though they did nothing, they're put into  
13 concentration camps. So if you want to do  
14 that, why ship us into Poland? Why not the  
15 territory of Czechoslovakia, stay here, but  
16 separated from the rest of the population?  
17 That's what we desired. So the Gestapo,  
18 Eichmann and Heydrich, who was his boss,  
19 Himmler, who was his boss, with Hitler also,  
20 although we don't know what \_\_\_\_\_  
21 \_\_\_\_\_ agreed to have  
22 Theresienstadt set up as a special exemplary  
23 camp, and the Jews volunteered to actually  
24 build up the camp from scratch. So there was  
25 at first a group of 300, it was (Ak-kar one),

1 the (Ak-kar) number one, and then a second  
2 thousand people, all men, who first went there  
3 to prepare the camp for the rest, rest of us,  
4 and then shipments started to come in. We were  
5 started sometimes in the fall of 1941. The  
6 first few shipments were into Poland and were  
7 in the large Litzmannstadt. But then they all  
8 went to Theresienstadt, all the Jews from  
9 Bohemia and Moravia, they first assembled into  
10 Theresienstadt.  
11 They came from Holland and through camp, and  
12 people were then shipped on to extermination,  
13 Auschwitz and other places, and we were -- we  
14 left in January of 1942 for Theresienstadt.  
15 Again, as I mentioned already before about the  
16 insurance policy, my dad expressed his feelings  
17 by leaving a pot full of urine in the middle of  
18 the living room for the cleanup crew who was  
19 going to come there. Several months, it must  
20 have been very smelly, but these were Jews who  
21 were there, who stayed behind. There were  
22 about 12-15 Jews who stayed behind for another  
23 year to essentially take over all the property,  
24 carry on and turn it over in good shape for  
25 German purposes. So my dad

1 ..... and some agree he got  
2 away with some of the things that he did, and I  
3 learned some of the lessons from him that I  
4 have used throughout my life.

5 Q. Was Theresienstadt also used as -- you said it  
6 was like a show camp. Do you remember, say,  
7 the Red Cross ever coming in there?

8 A. I don't. I don't know whether they did come or  
9 not. My understanding is that they did come on  
10 one or two occasions, and the Germans had known  
11 this, and they had -- the nature of the camp  
12 changed throughout that particular period for a  
13 time.

14 Now, my dad had a -- basically, he and  
15 myself had very privileged jobs. Let me first  
16 say something about my dad -- then I'll say  
17 something about myself -- my dad, because he  
18 was very active in the B'nai B'rith. He was  
19 very active in the Zionist movement; so was my  
20 mother. They were community shepherds, and so  
21 they had -- they knew some of the leaders who  
22 established Theresienstadt. It was actually  
23 set up by the Zionist Organization, probably  
24 Czech as well as Jews. So my dad got the job,  
25 but very unusual, and he did something very

1 nice with that job, so I have to describe  
2 that. I've said it on a few occasions, but  
3 \_\_\_\_\_ Holocaust, and \_\_\_\_\_  
4 His job was -- now, Theresienstadt was -- it  
5 was built up; at the peak it had 65 Jews in it  
6 at one time. The whole city was much smaller,  
7 was only three-quarters of a square mile. I  
8 calculated after the war the density was  
9 identical to Manhattan, 75,000 people per  
10 square mile, except we had not only three-story  
11 houses there, and we were pushed in like  
12 sardines into the various places. There was  
13 not enough facility to bake all the bread  
14 inside of Theresienstadt, so part of the bread  
15 was supplied by Czech bakers from surrounding  
16 cities that brought in in trucks the bread. My  
17 father was the receiving department for the  
18 camp for all the bread. He had arrangements  
19 with the Czech bakers that they would stay  
20 delivered more than the official delivery. The  
21 actual--

22 (End of Side A, beginning Side B of tape No.  
23 1).

24 A. (Continuing) -- for the bread to the working  
25 people. That was a decision that Jacob

1 Edelstein made, who was a leader of the camp --  
2 don't turn it off, necessarily -- by a friend  
3 of mine in Israel. It's called Edelstein  
4 (Ne-geb) (Haz-man), Edelstein Against Time, and  
5 it describes his activity in the camp. I found  
6 out about the existence of this book when  
7 Gideon Hausner, in our temple, I went to see  
8 him afterwards, and talked to him about  
9 Edelstein, and he says, You know, there is a --  
10 there is a book that has been written by Ruth  
11 (Bon-di), a friend of mine. She's a journalist  
12 and one of the bakers in Israel, and I tried to  
13 get hold of it, thinking that it's been  
14 translated into English, but it's stuck in  
15 copyrights, and it does not exist in English;  
16 it only exists in Hebrew, and I'm very slow at  
17 it. I can read it slowly. This is his  
18 picture. He was a fabulous leader. This is,  
19 by the way -- this is where -- this is where  
20 Prague is. This is where Plzen is. This is  
21 where Theresienstadt is. Here is where  
22 Auschwitz is. This is Poland. This is  
23 Czechoslovakia. This is Austria. This is  
24 Hungary. This is in -- Now, this happens to  
25 be -- I think it was our synagogue where I got

1           this picture, but I cannot be sure. But the  
2           furniture was kept that was taken out of the  
3           Jewish apartments. They put them into  
4           synagogues, and people who got the apartments  
5           could go and pick whatever furniture they  
6           wanted for the Germans that were transferred  
7           into the city. So what he did is he would --  
8           Dad would see new shipments come in. He would  
9           see a sick child, a woman who did not have any  
10          milk, anything like that, and he would either  
11          trade the bread for milk and bring the milk to  
12          the family, and he had clients. And he was  
13          going -- every day he was going on his rounds  
14          afterwards, so he used the extra bread, not for  
15          getting rich, not for just his own self and his  
16          family, but he acted as a social service  
17          organization of his own, one-man service  
18          organization, so he was quite a guy. I was --  
19          what?

20    Q.    I wanted to ask. You said this -- the nature  
21           of the camp changed?

22    A.    Yes. Well, I -- it -- you know, it changed,  
23           because later on they decided to reward German  
24           Jews by bringing them into the camp. Edelstein  
25           was defrocked, sent into Auschwitz, and not

1 everything that Edelstein did I approved of  
2 afterwards. Insight's always better than  
3 foresight. I mean he knew what was happening  
4 in Auschwitz, and he kept it a secret from  
5 people in Theresienstadt. (interruption)  
6 Sonya, we are taping here.

7 We had one incident where they brought in  
8 Polish or Russian kids into Theresienstadt.  
9 They were going to trade with the West. But  
10 the trade didn't come off. And they  
11 commandeered -- that was still when Edelstein  
12 was in charge, and they took nurses and doctors  
13 and made them parts of that group and  
14 completely isolated them from the rest of the  
15 people in Theresienstadt. We heard rumors that  
16 when they brought the kids to be deloused, and  
17 being brought into the showers, that they put  
18 up a tremendous fight. They didn't want to go  
19 into the showers in Theresienstadt, and that  
20 started rumors as to what was happening. These  
21 kids had heard about the Auschwitz. They knew  
22 about Auschwitz, but nobody in Theresienstadt  
23 was officially notified. There were, to the  
24 best of my knowledge, only a few people  
25 actually knew what was happening. The Germans



1           were very clever. The shipments that went to  
2           Auschwitz -- there was actually one shipment of  
3           whole families that was treated -- from  
4           Theresienstadt -- was treated quite differently  
5           from everybody else. They remained in a family  
6           camp, and they stayed like that for quite  
7           awhile, because there were all these exchanges  
8           that were negotiated, and Himmler was working  
9           on that, and they used the people from  
10          Theresienstadt to do that. So there was mixed  
11          news. Plus, they also had the habit, when  
12          people came to Auschwitz, of sitting down and  
13          asked them to write postcards to their families  
14          that everything's fine. Then they would kill  
15          the people. They would hold these postcards  
16          for six to twelve months. Then they would mail  
17          them, post -- mail them. You get a postcard  
18          that is only a week old, telling you your  
19          brother is fine, so it's very easy for you to  
20          volunteer to go there to be with your brother,  
21          rather than to be separated. So that's how  
22          they got people to disbelieve that there was  
23          anything ominous happening in Auschwitz and how  
24          it got people to even volunteer to go to almost  
25          certain death. Since Auschwitz wasn't -- I

1 mean since Theresienstadt wasn't a very bad  
2 camp, you don't want to believe things that are  
3 very bad, and the reality that was so was not  
4 that bad. I mean people were dying, but they  
5 were dying of sickness. There were only  
6 several executions there, and very few people  
7 got beaten. There were some, you know, but a  
8 few dozen out of tens of thousands is not a  
9 very large number, so that people felt  
10 relatively safe in this fashion.

11 Q. So you weren't -- I mean the women and children  
12 weren't separated, families weren't --

13 A. Originally the families were separated when we  
14 came there, because when we arrived --  
15 Theresienstadt, if you know anything about it,  
16 was a fort, fortress, and when we came there  
17 was still the Czech population, 300 houses  
18 which were occupied by the Czech families who  
19 lived in that garrison town, but the soldiers  
20 were gone, and all the barracks, the military  
21 barracks were available, but all of them they  
22 guarded, and you couldn't go outside of the  
23 barracks. Women and men were in separate  
24 barracks, and actually, throughout the time  
25 families were not living together, men and

1 women were living separately; but after, I  
2 guess sometimes in April, May of '42 --  
3 movement -- free movement throughout the city  
4 when the Czech population lacked became  
5 possible, and we just were visiting each other  
6 and there was no problem going to see my mother  
7 or my father or them coming to see me, even  
8 though we all lived in separate places. My  
9 father didn't live with my mother, and I lived  
10 with a young group of people of my own age in a  
11 youth home that we were living in.

12 There was another very special man that  
13 has been written about. I think there's a  
14 picture of him here, too, Freddie Hirsch, who I  
15 knew personally very well, who was the head of  
16 the -- I think his picture is somewhere. I  
17 think I saw it. Yeah, here he is. He was a --  
18 he was a gymnastics teacher, a very handsome  
19 man. He was known to be homosexual, but he was  
20 grand, and he essentially arranged a lot of  
21 things for kids, special playgrounds, special  
22 places, and he treated the S.S. on his own  
23 level. When they found out that he was in  
24 gymnastics, they engaged him as a trainer for  
25 their running the S.S., and he would shout at

1 the S.S. commandant, "Now, move your stomach,  
2 you are moving too slow," and all that, and  
3 they took it from him. I mean he was very  
4 self-assured, and everybody -- and he was --  
5 for a while he was the only person permitted to  
6 wear hair in the camp. Everybody was shorn  
7 off, but he had the privilege of wearing hair.  
8 He never had to shear it off. I mean he was a  
9 very unusual individual, and he did these  
10 things, not for himself, but again for other  
11 people. There was a lot of optimism, besides a  
12 lot of selfishness also in the camp in  
13 Theresienstadt, but more optimism than I found  
14 in any of the other camps that I was in.

15 Now let me tell you what my job was and  
16 how I got it. Very early in the time at  
17 Theresienstadt, it must have been sometimes in  
18 February of '42, there was an announcement.  
19 News was not printed in Theresienstadt. All  
20 the news came around with criers like you had  
21 in the olden days in England.

22 Q. Town criers?

23 A. Town criers. People came  
24 and they cried out all the orders, all the  
25 rules, all the regulations. Everything went by

1 word of mouth. And so there were some job  
2 openings. The head of the waterworks was  
3 looking for a deputy chief engineer, the chief  
4 engineer of the waterworks, and I, being an  
5 18-year-old kid, put in my name. I come for  
6 the interview with engineer Max Sever,  
7 S-e-v-e-r, and he looks at me and he says, "You  
8 know, I'm looking for a man and not a boy,"  
9 and I told him, "Why do you pay attention to  
10 how I look? Why don't you find out what I can  
11 do?" And he said, "All right," he says, "do  
12 you see that water hydrant here? Everybody  
13 moved out of town, they didn't leave any  
14 tools. We don't have anything to operate.  
15 We've got to be able to open and close these  
16 water hydrants. You go out there; you design  
17 me a key to open and close these things, and  
18 I'll see what you can do." So I went and I  
19 surprised him quite a bit. I gave him a very  
20 good and precise drawing that I designed for  
21 him. I had already worked, you see. I had  
22 half of the engineering school finished. I had  
23 worked as a draftsman and a designer for about  
24 a year in another factory, and I was really  
25 already a pretty good, accomplished mechanical

1 designer at that point, even though I was only  
2 18 years old, and he recognized that. He says,  
3 "Now, I cannot make you a deputy here, you're  
4 too young for this particular job, but I'm  
5 going to make you my assistant." So I became  
6 his assistant, special job ----- and I did  
7 all the special things that he wouldn't assign  
8 to other people. One of the things that I'm  
9 most proud of, that I think if things would  
10 have worked out differently in Czechoslovakia  
11 and I would have stayed there after the war, I  
12 probably would have gotten the equivalent of  
13 the medal of freedom from the country for what  
14 I'm going to describe that I was able to do.  
15 But it was Sever, again, the man who was --  
16 Freddie Hirsch, Edelstein, Sever, all these  
17 (Ak-kar one) people, all volunteers who went  
18 there to set up the camp. They made all the  
19 original arrangements with the Gestapo, and  
20 they treated them somewhat on an equal footing,  
21 and they were not afraid of them. That doesn't  
22 mean that they didn't lose their lives  
23 sometimes as well, but they handled themselves  
24 rather well as politicians and as true  
25 representatives who were not just looking out

1 after themselves, like Rumkowski, for instance,  
2 or (Pak-a-stok) that you heard about. So we  
3 had a -- there was not enough water in the  
4 camp. The 300 houses there had wells, and the  
5 water distribution system in -- from the main  
6 water supply tank was only for the army  
7 barracks, the military barracks that were now  
8 occupied by people, and water was rationed,  
9 because there was not enough water. The signs  
10 were saying, "Kein wasser," no water. "Use  
11 water only from 2 to 3 o'clock." Otherwise,  
12 you couldn't go and get any water, because the  
13 tanks were running low. So Sever picked  
14 himself up and went to see the camp commandant,  
15 S.S. Sturmobergruppenfuhrer Siegfried Seidl,  
16 Dr. Siegfried Seidl, who had a Ph.D. in history  
17 from Vienna, was a very well educated  
18 individual who understood a good argument. And  
19 Engineer Sever said, "Look, we've got a problem  
20 here, and it's not just our problem. It's your  
21 problem, too." "What's the problem?" "There  
22 is not enough water. It's only going to be a  
23 question of time. You can't keep these wells  
24 and bring in all these people, because typhoid  
25 is going to break out. Seepage could be-- E.

1           bacilli coli is going to move across, and the  
2           typhoid bacillus is going to -- germs are going  
3           to spread. We've got to do something now. I  
4           know that you don't care that we Jews are going  
5           to die, but let me tell you these typhoid germs  
6           don't need any passage to get out of this  
7           camp. They are going to go and flow into the  
8           river Eger, and the river Eger goes into the  
9           Elbe, and the Elbe goes up, gets yea close to  
10          Berlin, and gets up to Hamburg to come out  
11          there.       When these germs infect your  
12          war-fighting Germany, and Mr. Himmler and  
13          Mr. Hitler find out that they came from this  
14          camp, you are not going to be the commandant  
15          here anymore; you are going to be fighting on  
16          the Russian front." Seidl understood that very  
17          well, so he said to Sever, "What am I supposed  
18          to do?" He says, "Now, what we have to do is  
19          we've got to provide more water, and we've got  
20          to come up with a new distribution system.  
21          We've got to drill four artesian wells, and  
22          we've got to redesign the water distribution so  
23          that the water gets to all the houses and that  
24          we have more water, because this was all  
25          designed for a population of 6,000. We are



1 going to have a population of 60,000,  
2 definitely supplying not water. "Hygiene and  
3 all that." So he said, "Fine," he says, "but  
4 that's going to cost a lot of money." He says,  
5 "Money is no object. All the Jewish funds are  
6 deposited on the Reichsbank, and I can draw  
7 checks on it, so I have an unlimited account  
8 that I can draw. Money is no object." He  
9 says, "What about ration cards? I mean, it's  
10 going to take a lot of steel; it's going to  
11 take a lot of iron and a lot of stuff in a war  
12 economy," he says. We, the S.S., head of the  
13 Luftwaffe, the Kriegswaffe, and the Wehrmacht  
14 -- which are the three, the navy, the army, and  
15 the air force -- of that, that is no object, I  
16 can get all of this. In three days I want all  
17 the specifications on my table as to what we  
18 have to order." Now, you are looking at the  
19 person who spent three days and three nights  
20 actually designing a water supply for a whole  
21 city in those three days.

22 Q. And 18 years old?

23 A. Eighteen years old. Now, I did some help --  
24 I did get some help. Sever had a professor,  
25 80 years old, whose name was Koerner,

1 K-o-e-r-n-e-r, or K-o, umlaut, Koerner, and he  
2 was very famous. He wrote a special chapter on  
3 the -- on vapor and steam of the major handbook  
4 of German engineering called (bit-ter) and he  
5 gave me instructions for two hours how to do  
6 the calculations. I learned Darcy tables,  
7 Russian graphs, things I've never known,  
8 vernier formulas and things like that, and  
9 there I sat, and I calculated, and I had  
10 handbooks. I was already an accomplished  
11 engineer, I mean even though I hadn't finished  
12 two years of school, and so I was able to bring  
13 the whole thing together. I really did not  
14 sleep for three nights' sleep. There was no  
15 sleep whatsoever. And because he meant three  
16 days, and you didn't joke with an S.S.  
17 colonel. And that was -- he was on the same  
18 level, I think, or just one notch below  
19 Eichmann or something. And so then when was I  
20 was finished I took things into my own hands  
21 with conniving of Sever, and I multiplied every  
22 dimension by two or three to provide much  
23 bigger pipes than were actually needed, so you  
24 have a city that is now again down to just a  
25 few thousand that has a waterworks and water

1 supply system that could serve 250,000. Now,  
2 my calculations indicate that there might have  
3 been more than two dozens of tanks that Germany  
4 never built with the iron and steel that was  
5 buried unnecessarily underground, and I did not  
6 understand until just two years ago why it was  
7 so easy to get away with this. I was willing  
8 to die for that. I mean this was meant to  
9 sabotage things. I mean you've probably seen  
10 this thing, Hogan's Heroes. Now, this was  
11 exactly the sort of a thing, except it was  
12 true; it was for real. I found out from  
13 Speer's Memoirs, when I read that, that they  
14 actually had no way of checking up. They were  
15 running this whole economy, management by  
16 objectives. They trusted everybody. They  
17 trusted certainly the S.S. Nobody was going to  
18 check up on the commandant. The commandant  
19 trusted Sever. Sever trusted Egan Loebner, and  
20 so nobody checked up. It was -- there were a  
21 few hard times I had, because I was also  
22 supervising the digging in of these pipes into  
23 -- the digging in the -- what you call it, when  
24 you open up to lay down the pipes?

25 Q. Trenches?

1 A. Trenches. And we had some knowledgeable people  
2 who were trench digging. I wasn't a trench  
3 digger, you see. I was the engineer  
4 supervising the trench diggers in the camp,  
5 although I was only 18 years old. And they  
6 were grumbling, they were saying, "What stupid  
7 guy designed this thing? I mean these are like  
8 sewer pipes. These are not water pipes." I  
9 knew that, but I couldn't tell anybody that I  
10 did this on purpose, but I was young enough. I  
11 might have even gotten away with it, because I  
12 probably didn't know any better, you see?  
13 Anyway, I knew precisely what I was doing. And  
14 so I was in a hurry to see them all covered up  
15 so that the Germans don't come around to  
16 inspect. The camp was really run pretty much  
17 by Jews at all levels, especially the technical  
18 spot of the technical department. There were  
19 some very, very accomplished, good engineers  
20 who knew their business. And it was really  
21 like a small government in its own, and all the  
22 government departments were run, and in some  
23 ways it was like Little Palestine. I mean it  
24 was really -- it was really running. Normally  
25 in the camps you had prison leadership, but

1           here all the prison leadership was Jewish, and  
2           it turned out to be essentially the same type  
3           of a leadership that was there before, the  
4           Zionist leadership that actually had goals and  
5           wanted to preserve as much lives, young lives,  
6           and trade it for the old lives as much as  
7           possible, which was the policy of Edelstein. I  
8           heard him once give a talk. I mean he had  
9           guts. He got up there and he says, "Look, I  
10          mean, I want to tell you what I'm planning to  
11          do. You want to criticize me, now is your  
12          time. I've decided to starve our parents, to  
13          make it possible for the young ones to  
14          survive. We don't have enough food for  
15          everybody. If we divide it equally for  
16          everybody they'll all die, so what we have to  
17          do is we have to essentially give all the food  
18          to people who can survive and who can work."  
19          And so the rations that the old people were  
20          given were absolutely insufficient and they  
21          were starving to death.

22                 Now, let me tell you two more stories here  
23          before we go on, some of the other things. I  
24          don't know whether we can finish it today. I  
25          get too nervous. There was another

1 organization that I was part of that I haven't  
2 seen said much about. I've read a lot of  
3 accounts of the Holocaust, and even those from  
4 Theresienstadt. I have a whole book on  
5 Theresienstadt that was published by the Jewish  
6 community in Prague, beautiful book, mainly  
7 dealing with the cultural programs that we  
8 had. But the two traditional things that I was  
9 involved in while I was there was I was a small  
10 leader of actually three things in an  
11 organization called Yad Command, the "helping  
12 hand," and that was run by a Berlin woman.  
13 Sonya (Af-fin), a Communist, came to the  
14 conclusion that something had to be done for  
15 the old people and for the young people,  
16 because there was no respect for oldsters in  
17 Theresienstadt. The young kids would knock  
18 them off the street, over; they would be  
19 misused; even the food that was normally  
20 supposed to be given to them was not given and  
21 stolen or done away with. They were  
22 essentially being misused by everybody. The  
23 young kids called down to this, and they  
24 thought they had been cut off. I mean there  
25 were gangs of kids who were essentially doing

1 things like that. And Sonya (Af-fin) felt that  
2 we had to do something about it. She organized  
3 this activity which entailed to give a helping  
4 hand to old people. What we did, among other  
5 things, we went in and cleaned up people who  
6 were in their secretions for weeks and \_\_\_\_\_  
7 \_\_\_\_\_ We would come in there  
8 and actually clean their beds for them, put  
9 them back. We would go to the office, central  
10 office, find out, because everybody's I.D.'s  
11 were there, we would find out when any person  
12 had birthdays. We would bake very tiny, little  
13 cakes with one candle, and we would come in and  
14 sing Happy Birthday to those people. Who had  
15 family in the United States, who were all  
16 alone, had no children, no grandchildren, and  
17 they were dying there \_\_\_\_\_  
18 And it was done, not only to help the old  
19 people, but to instill in the young people --  
20 not too many of them survived -- that there was  
21 this humanity that had to still come through,  
22 even under the worst lack of supervision \_\_\_\_\_

23

24 I was in another organization which was --  
25 I acted as a teacher. I was 17 and 18, 19

1 years old, and I was teaching kids who were 12,  
2 13, 14. We had no books. We couldn't use any  
3 blackboards. It was all illegal, coming,  
4 teaching kids. School was prohibited. Again,  
5 the general feeling that we had -- (Tape was  
6 turned off) -- so I was -- I taught several  
7 courses. I taught history. I taught Hebrew.  
8 I taught English, and I taught mathematics.  
9 But I was also a student. I took -- we had --  
10 I took Hebrew lessons in the evening. I  
11 actually studied -- I took one year of course  
12 of Arabic taught in Hebrew. I took the Tanakh,  
13 and I took Hebrew grammar derived from the  
14 Sumerians, through the old Babylonian and old  
15 Sinai into -- something that they don't teach  
16 in universities. Now, I had a fabulous teacher  
17 who did not survive. His name is -- was  
18 (Bos-kin). He called himself (Bos-kin  
19 Na-ha-ka-bi), from the river Ob. He was a  
20 Russian Jew who was a professor of oriental  
21 languages and Hebrew at the University of  
22 Leipzig before Hitler.

23 Q. So that you were learning cuneiform and Hebrew?

24 A. I was learning a lot of things. I was also --  
25 I learned my Hebrew, which I learned the





1 to death who know all that knowledge, so why  
2 not bring this thing together and start a  
3 university, which we did in Theresienstadt, and  
4 I was part of that group that did that. And I  
5 learned -- as a matter of fact, some of the  
6 courses that I had, especially in philosophy and  
7 literature and so on, I took advantage of, and  
8 I got credit for them when I came to this  
9 country, so that I didn't have to take them  
10 over again. So I actually -- I actually  
11 graduated from the university in Buffalo,  
12 Buffalo University, University of Buffalo,  
13 Buffalo, New York, in 22 months instead of the  
14 four years that it normally takes. Part of it  
15 was the education that I got in Theresienstadt  
16 that I applied.

17 Q. What about Jewish celebrations?

18 A. Jewish -- no, the Jewish religion, that's an  
19 interesting question. I'm glad you're asking  
20 questions, because I don't think of all those  
21 things that I should be. So about one-third of  
22 the population was Christian. There were Jews  
23 wearing Jewish stars, because under the German  
24 laws they were Jewish because they had at least  
25 one Jewish grandmother. And so there were a

1 lot of Jews who had converted or whose parents  
2 had converted, but who still found themselves  
3 in the camp. So, besides having all kinds of  
4 Jewish denominations, from the most Orthodox to  
5 the most Reform, we held services up on the  
6 attics, where we also had theaters and  
7 concerts, and we had -- but the religious  
8 services were there, and we shared them with  
9 the Catholics, who had their cross there.  
10 There was a Dominican priest in the same  
11 hospital that I was for eight months -- I was  
12 laid up -- and there were nuns in Theresien-  
13 stadt. I mean, you know, there was the story  
14 of that one nun that the pope is now  
15 beatifying, and I mean these people were  
16 there. And they were there because they were  
17 racial Jews, although -- and they were  
18 discriminated against by the rest of the Jews,  
19 just as the Jews are doing today in Italy,  
20 discriminating against the Reform Jews because  
21 they are not Orthodox, and you had all that  
22 situation in Theresienstadt as well.

23 So yes, Dad, for instance, liked to go to  
24 many different services. On Yom Kippur, for  
25 instance, we would go around and we would visit

1 at least four or five different services  
2 throughout to see how these different minchas  
3 are going around. I mean, you know, all that  
4 was within a short walking distance, because  
5 this whole camp was an extremely small size,  
6 and it was less than a mile across.

7 Q. So, okay, so from '42, then --

8 A. Until '44, when we -- my dad and myself were  
9 shipped into Auschwitz, and I understand -- I  
10 don't know this for a fact, but I understand  
11 from putting the story together that my mother  
12 was shipped in in November of '44. We went on  
13 a separate transport of 5,000 men for work.  
14 The reason that I now know that it happened --  
15 and actually we suspected it at that particular  
16 time -- was that several weeks ahead of this  
17 time there was an uprising of Jews in Slovakia,  
18 and the Nazis were afraid that an uprising was  
19 going to take place at Theresienstadt, so they  
20 decided to get all the able men out in a hurry,  
21 and so they moved us out 30th of October, '44,  
22 and so everytime there was a shipment my dad  
23 and I were protected because of the jobs that  
24 we had, and we stayed on. The people who came  
25 earlier had a better chance to stay longer.

1           You know, the newcomers were always dis-  
2           advantaged in all the camps, not only in  
3           Theresienstadt. That was just a normal --  
4           normal thing like that. I think I told you  
5           most of the essential things about myself and  
6           Theresienstadt. I could obviously spend 10  
7           times as much time giving you all the details,  
8           but --

9    Q.     I did forget to ask you about your mother at  
10           Theresienstadt.

11   A.     Well, my mother actually, until the very end,  
12           did not work. She was -- she lived in a place  
13           with 30 other women, in a special place where I  
14           got to visit her. Toward the end of the war  
15           she was drafted into splitting silica. You  
16           know, silica is used as an insulator -- used to  
17           be used as an insulator in electrical  
18           equipment, and they had -- it's mined, and then  
19           it's very finely split, and they set up a  
20           factory for the women in Theresienstadt to do  
21           that. She was drafted to do that, but that was  
22           only in the last few months. And then she was  
23           shipped out in one of the last, if not the  
24           last, transports out of Theresienstadt several  
25           weeks after we were or maybe a couple of months

1 to Auschwitz.

2 Q. What were the -- you were shipped out in trains  
3 or --

4 A. We were shipped out in trains. There were  
5 quite a number of people in there. We were  
6 told that we were just going to the East. We  
7 only found out on the way where we were headed,  
8 and we really did not know what was happening  
9 there until we arrived. Maybe some people did,  
10 but we did not. I didn't, my dad didn't. When  
11 we were -- when we came out of the cars it was  
12 at night, and we saw the flame burning off the  
13 gas in the crematorium. Now, one of the big  
14 advantages that I had that certainly helped me  
15 survive on several occasions was that I spoke  
16 flawless German. Many Jews came from other  
17 countries, could not understand what was going  
18 on in German, couldn't take the orders from  
19 them, from the German S.S., and so got  
20 themselves into lots of trouble. Also, the  
21 other prisoners, sometimes. You didn't know  
22 what they were up to when they spoke different  
23 languages. The fact that I at that time spoke  
24 five and later on learned a couple of more  
25 languages in the camp was a great advantage. I

1           indicated the Germans and there were Poles and  
2           there were Russians. The only language I  
3           really didn't know and didn't communicate  
4           across -- there are two languages that I  
5           couldn't, but there aren't too many -- was  
6           Hungarian and Greek. But the rest of them, at  
7           least to some degree, I could communicate,  
8           which was a distinct advantage. \_\_\_\_\_  
9           \_\_\_\_\_ I was able to ask the  
10          guard who was guarding us, "What's that?  
11          What's going on there?" And he snapped back  
12          at me, and he says, "No, that's a candle  
13          factory." I haven't heard anybody mention  
14          that before. I don't know whether anybody has  
15          ever asked a German guard that in Auschwitz. I  
16          don't know whether they were trained to answer  
17          the question in this way. I haven't read  
18          anything, but I can assure you that's precisely  
19          what he said. We came to Mengele, who was  
20          dividing the people into left and right. My  
21          dad sort of knew what was happening or guessed  
22          what was happening and also wanted me to go the  
23          other way than he went, and didn't know which  
24          was which, I think, but it was pretty clear the  
25          older people were going one way and the younger

1 people were going the other way. They were all  
2 men, all under 50. There were no really old  
3 people in this shipment, but only about 2,000  
4 of the 5,000 survived. Three thousand were  
5 gassed on arrival. And I think what was in  
6 Dad's mind, because I heard him say so on  
7 several occasions before, he was very much  
8 taking his examples from the Bible, and he sort  
9 of was talking about my brother and me, and I  
10 think it was in his mind in Auschwitz, too,  
11 that when Jacob heard that Esau was coming and  
12 he was afraid that his son was going to try to  
13 slay him, that when Jacob was coming from the  
14 14 years away after he had stolen the  
15 birthright or sneaked it away from Esau through  
16 his mother, Rebekah, and he was bringing Leah  
17 and Rachel back, he divided this camp into two,  
18 so if one gets destroyed the other one  
19 survives. This idea of dividing rather than  
20 keeping together was the thing that Dad  
21 followed, so he wanted us to be separated so  
22 that one of us had a chance to survive. It was  
23 quite a shock -- what?

24 Q. I just want to get back to the transport. Were  
25 there many Jews who died before they got to



1           Auschwitz on the transport?

2    A.    No, no, that train -- I was in transports later  
3           on when that was true, but this particular one  
4           was not that bad. You have to realize that  
5           there were no children, there were only able  
6           men, I think it was from 16 to 50 -- it was  
7           abled men, and it was for a work detail, and we  
8           were all pretty sturdy and pretty good  
9           conditions, so there was -- I mean there was  
10          discomfort, but it wasn't -- it wasn't anything  
11          as bad as what I went through at another  
12          shipment later on.

13   Q.    Okay, so now you're at the point --

14   A.    Well, I'm -- I'm coming in, I'm having -- now,  
15          what had happened was that we obviously  
16          couldn't take all our belongings into  
17          Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, because we were,  
18          again, limited, and since we were knowing that  
19          we were going to work, we stashed away some of  
20          our belongings in the attic. I, after the war,  
21          went back and found it, brought it home, in  
22          Theresienstadt, even found my notes from the  
23          Sumerians. (Noise in the background) Excuse  
24          me. Sorry for the interruptions.

25   Q.    Why don't we just switch it now. (Tape being

1 changed)

2 (End of Tape 1, beginning Tape 2, Side A.)

3 A. There were three items of clothing that we  
4 could keep at Auschwitz. Actually, one of them  
5 was not really clothing. We could keep our  
6 shoes, we could keep our belt, and we could  
7 keep our glasses that we had. Everything else  
8 was taken away. We could not keep even a shred  
9 of hair any place on our body. We were shaven  
10 all over. While this shaving was taking place,  
11 there were prison barbers that would do that.  
12 I had come in with some beautiful, what we call  
13 Canadian boots, which went up to here and were  
14 tied with -- there were such metal, I don't  
15 know what you call them, but the string --  
16 shoestring goes around.

17 Q. The eyelets?

18 A. What?

19 Q. The eyelets? Oh, I know what you're talking  
20 about.

21 A. The buttons, or whatever they are, like that,  
22 so that it didn't go through holes, but it was  
23 done this way. Now, the barber wanted my  
24 shoes. What was happening is that they were  
25 always used to the newcomers to come and take

1           away even the few things that they had. We  
2           were obviously searched for having hidden  
3           things that we wanted to bring through the  
4           camp. They were only permitted these three  
5           types of items. I wasn't going to give up my  
6           shoes. I was beaten up, in order -- because of  
7           spies he broke off one of those so that I  
8           didn't have a perfect pair of shoes. He wasn't  
9           going to let me walk out of there with all the  
10          shoes the way I came, because he couldn't get  
11          them. I was afraid \_\_\_\_\_ So I ended  
12          up with the shoes that my mother bought for my  
13          trip to Palestine in 1940. I had my -- my  
14          (ma-kabiat-sevier), a belt with a Magen David  
15          on it, and I didn't have any glasses. I didn't  
16          wear glasses at that time, so I had these two  
17          items. I got into the camp and again my  
18          engineering background, despite my age -- they  
19          first didn't believe me -- was helpful, because  
20          I -- there was an announcement that they were  
21          looking for lathe operators. Actually, they  
22          were looking for lathe operators, it turned  
23          out, and they were going to ship them to  
24          Leipzig, back, back into civilized Europe from  
25          Auschwitz, and they were collecting people.

1           The person who was doing the interviewing was a  
2           genuine civil engineer who was entering into  
3           Auschwitz, and who was an employee, and he was  
4           asking -- he didn't trust -- obviously  
5           everybody wanted to go to Leipzig and all of a  
6           sudden everybody was a lathe operator. And  
7           here was this young kid claiming to be a lathe  
8           operator. It was unheard of. So he comes  
9           and he says to me, "Now, are you a lathe  
10          operator?" I said, "No, I'm a lathe operator,  
11          and I've operated lathes," and I had, and it  
12          was part of my school training. So he popped a  
13          very difficult question. He says, "Now, you  
14          have a lathe, and the lathe happens to be in  
15          British inches. But you want to cut a thread  
16          in millimeters. How are you going to do  
17          that?" And I said, "Now, that's very simple.  
18          I'm going to use a 127-gear wheel." And only a  
19          lathe operator would know that. And so I was  
20          hired. So I became part of this special  
21          shipment to go to Leipzig. I didn't end up  
22          there, but that's what I'm trying to talk  
23          about. This was a very desirable thing. We  
24          got much better clothes than other people  
25          wearing the striped pajamas. We got real warm

1 clothes. We got better -- outfitted. It was  
2 quite clear that they weren't sending us into  
3 the gas chambers. They weren't going to do  
4 some horrible things to us, because they were  
5 giving us better food and better -- better  
6 clothes than the rest of the prisoners. So  
7 some of the people, the old-timers, were coming  
8 around. And also we were not going to get the  
9 Auschwitz number. Now, the people who were  
10 leaving Auschwitz and were not going to become  
11 permanent Auschwitz prisoners were not getting  
12 the numbers. People who came straight to the  
13 gas chambers were not getting the numbers, and  
14 people who were shipped out of Auschwitz  
15 without becoming actually part of the Auschwitz  
16 labor camp were not given the numbers. And the  
17 general feeling was anybody who got that number  
18 would never get out alive of that place. And  
19 that was the general feeling. But there were  
20 people who wanted to trade. There was a guy  
21 who came and offered me twelve breads. I knew  
22 the value of bread very well. And it was a  
23 supply for almost two months. I don't know  
24 where I could have kept it from being stolen,  
25 but, anyway, it was -- he wanted me to give up

1 my spot in the Leipzig transport for the twelve  
2 breads that he was going to let me have, and he  
3 had them, and I refused them. But I gave it up  
4 for free in three weeks later. This happened  
5 in the following way. For three weeks we were  
6 getting ready to go to Leipzig. We were once  
7 already at the railroad station. Twice we were  
8 lined up to go, and it was always called off,  
9 because the railroad was bombed and the trains  
10 were not running, and they couldn't get us off  
11 from Auschwitz into Leipzig. Somewhere the  
12 trains were not running. They had lots of  
13 trains going backwards, because they were  
14 bringing people into Auschwitz, but the  
15 railroad was bombed, you know, so -- Then one  
16 day, as I was standing in for chow, a strange  
17 thing happened. One of these criers comes  
18 along and announced and cries out five names  
19 for people to come forth. Among the five names  
20 was the name of my father and mine. Now, my  
21 friends suggested that I'd better not  
22 acknowledge that I'm around. I'm in a pretty  
23 good shipment. I'm going to have a pretty good  
24 fate, and I shouldn't play with that, plus, it  
25 can't be anything good. So I stewed over it

1 for about two hours, not knowing what to do. I  
2 finally decided fate is fate. Hearing your own  
3 name, where everybody was just a piece of  
4 cattle counted off, and they didn't know  
5 anybody, who he was, was enough of a signal and  
6 unusual for me to respond. So I finally went  
7 up to the block leader, and I reported myself  
8 as being one of the people who were called  
9 out. And he said, "No, you are supposed to go  
10 to report to Dr. Eppstein at the infirmary.  
11 Now, Professor Eppstein was a head doctor for  
12 the Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp. He was a  
13 survivor. He was a pediatrician from Brno in  
14 Czechoslovakia, and, as it turned out, he was a  
15 friend of my uncle's. And I come there, he was  
16 engaged in talking to S.S. doctors. I don't  
17 know whether -- I mean he was busy. It's just  
18 like when you see a professor talking to  
19 somebody, you stand around until it is time to  
20 go; then I approached him. And he put me  
21 through a question period. He said to me, "Who  
22 are you?" I gave him my name. He says, "Do  
23 you know Dr. Loebner?" I said yes. "Who is  
24 he?" I said, "He's my uncle." "What do you  
25 know about him?" I said, "He was a physician

1 in Carlsbad. He was a physician in Marienbad.  
2 He was arrested before the war by the Gestapo.  
3 He was in several concentration camps, and for  
4 the last three and a half years we've never  
5 heard from him." He says, "You are the right  
6 guy. Do you see that -- that red-headed S.S.  
7 man over there?" I said yes. He says, "You go  
8 to him, and you tell him who you are. You're  
9 going to see your uncle." So I told him. What  
10 it turned out to be was that my uncle -- and I  
11 can go back and get part of his story, because  
12 his is even better than mine, but he's now a  
13 retired physician in Haifa. And his own  
14 uniform, with his number, hangs in YadVashem.  
15 He was also -- became a privileged prisoner.  
16 It is really -- privileges, there are various  
17 kinds, and if you read the last by \_\_\_\_\_  
18 (Kre-mon-neti), and I strongly suggest that you  
19 do, you find out what he has to say about  
20 that. He was also a privileged prisoner. Some  
21 of us were privileged because we were  
22 professionals of one kind or another, many  
23 others because they undertook some duties that  
24 were not very nice at various times. I think  
25 us professionals were quite fortunate as



1 compared to the others. So I -- he takes me  
2 and takes me to a place and tells me that I'm  
3 going to go to (Jung-bunz-lau). Now, just as  
4 Leipzig was the very best place to go from  
5 Auschwitz, (Jungbunz-lau) turned out to be the  
6 very --the most horrible place to go. It was  
7 awful, because what it was, he was one of two  
8 S.S. men who came, who brought in 120 people  
9 for the gas because they were too weak to  
10 work. (Jungbunzlau) was a coal mine, and they  
11 were bringing in another 120. Or they were  
12 hoping they were going to round up 120 that  
13 they were going to get. Because they rounded  
14 up some people, and in the morning, instead of  
15 120, they had 80, and the next morning they had  
16 60. People just were so scared that they run  
17 away and run into some other places to hide and  
18 get mixed up with somebody else, because nobody  
19 wanted to go to (Jungbunzlau). The average  
20 mean time that people lasted in (Jungbunzlau)  
21 was three weeks. They were just used up and  
22 brought back to the gas chambers. Had a very  
23 bad reputation. So this S.S. man takes me to  
24 the clerk to have me reregistered from the  
25 Leipzig to the (Jungbunzlau) transport from

1           Auschwitz, from the very best to the very worst  
2           that there was. And that guy, probably an  
3           undergrounder -- I didn't know all that -- took  
4           pity on me, and he said, "I can't do that,"  
5           and the S.S. man says to him, "Why can't you?"  
6           He says, "He is in this Leipzig shipment,  
7           which is a very important one, and I can't take  
8           him out without putting somebody in there, and  
9           I don't have anybody to put in there." He knew  
10          and I knew that it was darned easy to pick up  
11          anybody who wanted to go to Leipzig. So I made  
12          the decision right on the spot: I was going to  
13          see my uncle. Fate is fate. I was going to  
14          play it straight. So I said to the registrar,  
15          I said, "That's no problem. I'll get you  
16          somebody." And I just walked out of there,  
17          grabbed the first guy that I recognized from  
18          Theresienstadt, and I said, "Would you like my  
19          place in the Leipzig?" And he says, "Are you  
20          crazy? Are you kidding? What's gotten into  
21          you?" I said "Look, I don't have any time to  
22          talk about this. Say yes or no." He says,  
23          "Obviously, it's yes." So I grabbed him. We  
24          exchanged clothes and identities, essentially  
25          what the -- what the administration was

1 concerned. I got into the (Jungbunzlau) people  
2 and got a number, and he went off to Leipzig.  
3 Now, all the war I was worried what would have  
4 happened to me, because I went through some of  
5 the awful things at (Jungbunzlau). What would  
6 have happened to me if I would have gone to  
7 Leipzig? Now, fate was good enough to let me  
8 know. After the war, when I was going to the  
9 place where the \_\_\_\_\_ registry  
10 was taking place, and people were coming  
11 through in my home town, Plzen, a guy comes  
12 over, shakes hands, and he says, "Don't you  
13 know me?" I says, "Who are you?" He said,  
14 "I'm the guy who you give the place in the  
15 Leipzig." So he told me his whole story, and I  
16 sort of figured out that I would have made it  
17 if I would have gone to Leipzig. But, as you  
18 see, I'm also here, so I made it the other way,  
19 although it wasn't as easy as going to Leipzig,  
20 turned out to be much better. But I didn't  
21 know that. So two days later I jumped off a  
22 truck into the arms of a white-clothed, dark  
23 gentleman, shaved, who embraces me and happens  
24 to be my uncle, and he was the number-two  
25 physician in the camp of (Jungbunzlau). Number

1           one was Dr. (Aur-rick) a friend of his, also a  
2           Czech Jew doctor. And that's how I got from  
3           Auschwitz to (Jungbunzlau).

4   Q.   Do you want to talk about \_\_\_\_\_ ?

5   A.   I guess so. I'm in the process. I might as  
6        well. But I think I would like to rest for a  
7        moment while we do that.

8           When I arrived at (Jungbunzlau) I had my  
9        second of the three incidents with my boots,  
10       the boot story. When I jumped down, my uncle  
11       noticed the marvelous boots. He says, "I want  
12       you to leave them here," and he gave me some  
13       wooden sandals. Boots were very important,  
14       because they were really part of survival in  
15       the camp, and the older prisoners would steal  
16       or take away or force the other guys to give  
17       them the boots and switch them around to get  
18       the best, and I had probably the classiest of  
19       anybody around, being equipped. Those were --  
20       those were bought for walking across frontiers,  
21       you see. And probably they were valuable, the  
22       only thing I had left from my mother. And so  
23       he switched them. I gave him the boots to --  
24       he said he'd save them for me, and he gave me  
25       some wooden sandals. Now, part of the thing

1 was that when they selected us they wanted to  
2 make sure that we bring good shoes into the  
3 camp, because they wanted good shoes on workers  
4 there, and people who had the wooden sandals or  
5 the wooden clogs or whatever you call them that  
6 they wear -- similar things that they wear in  
7 Holland -- What is that called?

8 Q. Clogs?

9 A. Clogs. Clogs. You know, you injured your  
10 feet, and you couldn't walk, and you weren't a  
11 good worker. So the Badenmeister, the man in  
12 charge of the bath house, the bath house man,  
13 grabbed me, and he says, "Now, you didn't come  
14 with these from Auschwitz. What did you do?"  
15 I wasn't going to squeal on my uncle, although  
16 from what I found out later on, I mean he was  
17 very apologetic to my uncle . I  
18 mean he beat me up something terrible, and I  
19 wouldn't tell. I mean, he says, "You lie,"  
20 which I was. "You switched; I want to know who  
21 did it and what you've done with this." Okay.  
22 He wasn't going to stand for this. I had --  
23 there was very little time, you know, but I was  
24 there for a few seconds. So, anyway, I got  
25 beaten up because I didn't have those boots at

1           that moment. I got beaten up twice, once  
2           before, and once later because I had them.

3           My uncle arranged with the camp commandant  
4           for me not having to go down into the coal  
5           mine, and, because I was a technical person, I  
6           ended up in the locksmith department. The  
7           locksmith department was -- I was -- I didn't  
8           even have the strength to work on -- to work  
9           that hard, but we were repairing the wagons in  
10          which the coal was being moved in the mines,  
11          and they were -- they sometimes were in  
12          crashes, and they were all smashed around, and  
13          then they would come there, and there was the  
14          locksmiths there and it was very heavy work.  
15          Also, we had to do some other heavy stuff, but  
16          it was much easier than going down in the coal  
17          mine. The S.S. would never go down into the  
18          coal mine. There were only Polish miners, who  
19          wouldn't work, but who would beat the Jews and  
20          who would also move the Jews into the unsafest  
21          places. There were many accidents in the coal  
22          mine. Many people lost their lives in those  
23          coal mines. These coal mines was really an  
24          unsafe mine that the Poles had closed, but the  
25          Germans had reopened, and was run and operated

1 by the \_\_\_\_\_ department of \_\_\_\_\_  
2 organization which was also running the  
3 (Buh-ner) Monowicz camp, which I told you on  
4 the phone was a very big camp, and there were  
5 many people from there. That's exactly the  
6 camp that (Kre-mon-neti) was in. Much has been  
7 written up. We were close to that particular  
8 camp; at night we could see the lights of the  
9 other. But our camp was small, had only about  
10 800 prisoners, of which probably no more than a  
11 hundred were Jews. Germans, Poles, Ukrainians,  
12 many other nationalities.

13 Now, I want to say -- I want to talk about  
14 one thing that happened in (Jungbunzlau) that  
15 was very unusual, that I've spoken on several  
16 occasions before on, which I think should  
17 be now recorded. The infirmary there was run  
18 by three Jewish doctors. The head doctor was  
19 Dr. (Aur-rick), who later on went to Israel  
20 and then was a physician in Saint  
21 Catharines, Canada, and he died several years  
22 ago. The second in command was my uncle.  
23 The third in command, or the third doctor there  
24 was Dr. Klaus, a Hungarian Jew. These were the  
25 three physicians \_\_\_\_\_ . They

1 had a tremendous amount of power, because they  
2 could take people from very heavy work that was  
3 essentially driving everybody to death and have  
4 them recuperate in the -- what they usually do  
5 is -- I mean there had to be a cause, but they  
6 would perform operations on people. I know  
7 that, for instance, they did a pleurisy  
8 operation there by injecting a man into his  
9 lungs with sulfur drugs and curing him. The  
10 difficulty with all that, curing people in the  
11 camp, was that later on they were killed  
12 anyway. The prolonging of life didn't last  
13 really very long. But the S.S. would come  
14 through and would look at the charts, and if  
15 somebody was in the hospital too long they  
16 would just take him into the gas chambers. And  
17 these doctors managed, for instance, which was  
18 not the intent of the S.S., to have two German  
19 Kapos, very vicious guys, gassed by mistake.  
20 They were drugged, placed them in the thing,  
21 and they were unconscious, and they took them  
22 into the gas chambers, and they got away with  
23 that. So the power was rather formidable that  
24 the doctors had, even though they were prison  
25 doctors, as long as they weren't caught by the



1 S.S. doctors.

2 Q. These were Germans?

3 A. These were German prisoners who were very  
4 vicious, who got -- went in for some minor,  
5 minor things, and they essentially engineered  
6 the execution. Now, what -- these doctors had  
7 complete control of the hospital, and so they  
8 dedicated that particular hospital for eight  
9 nights for the Hanukkah celebration. I want to  
10 tell you about that, the eight-day Hanukkah  
11 celebration. In the same camp was a very  
12 famous conductor who is very well known.  
13 Raphael Schecter was a conductor of the  
14 symphony in Brno and was very famous in  
15 Theresienstadt for conducting very many  
16 concerts there. He knew no Hebrew songs, but I  
17 taught him the melodies, and he composed a  
18 three-voice men's choir from these Hebrew  
19 melodies on that, and he practiced before the  
20 holidays. Now, it was very hard to get  
21 candles, and it's a true story. We had a  
22 single candle, and we melted it down and poured  
23 an extremely long string through the molten  
24 wax, and we cut it into 38 little candles,  
25 pieces, and we used those for the Hanukkah

1 celebration in (Jungbunzlau). We had darkened  
2 the windows, and while the S.S. guards of  
3 Auschwitz were standing around, we were singing  
4 and celebrating Hanukkah in (Jungbunzlau), in  
5 the infirmary. I think that ought to go down  
6 in history somehow.

7 It was January 18 when the camp closed  
8 down and when all of Auschwitz and everything  
9 was being evacuated. I was together with my  
10 uncle on the death march. It started on  
11 January 18th in (Jungbunzlau). It took us one  
12 day and a part of a night to get into  
13 Auschwitz. We stayed overnight in -- not in  
14 Birkenau, but in the part of Auschwitz which  
15 was made out of stone, rather than out of wood  
16 barracks, the old Auschwitz. We then continued  
17 on, and we walked, I guess, one or two days and  
18 got into (Livitzon), another large camp. These  
19 were all satellite camps of Auschwitz.  
20 Auschwitz had about, I don't know the exact  
21 number, but somewhere around 18 satellite camps  
22 that were all under the supervision of  
23 Auschwitz, but had their own separate  
24 commandants and own separate organizations.  
25 But, for instance, many supplies came from

1           Auschwitz. The wash came in and out, dirty  
2           linen was collected, taken into Auschwitz and  
3           brought back, so that these were not completely  
4           autonomous camps, and especially with  
5           (Jungbunzlau) being very small, was not an  
6           autonomous camp from Auschwitz, but it was  
7           about 20, 25 kilometers away from Auschwitz,  
8           was east of Auschwitz, it was on the way  
9           towards Krakow, Krakow. It was in that  
10          vicinity. There were some prisoners who never  
11          came out when the evacuation started. We were  
12          moved because the Russians were coming close,  
13          and they were cleaning out there. There were  
14          some people who stayed behind. Eppstein, for  
15          instance, was on T.V., I mean radio, and  
16          newspapers later on, I think, shown in the  
17          movies, not on T.V. those days. We had movies,  
18          not T.V. And he was liberated there. He was  
19          in charge, or essentially was used by Mengele  
20          on this project of twins, which you've probably  
21          heard of. They had saved many, many twins, and  
22          they were doing biological experiments on  
23          twins. Many of these twins survived.  
24          Unfortunately, my two cousins, who were twins  
25          in Litzmannstadt, one of them died, so when the

1 other one came to Auschwitz he did not have his  
2 twin brother alive, so he was gassed. But if  
3 the twins were alive, they would have  
4 survived. I mean, you know, idiosyncrasies,  
5 things like that happened all the time during  
6 that period. There are several important  
7 things, at least interesting things, to talk  
8 about about the death march. The death march,  
9 I think, is sort of pretty well documented,  
10 because there has been a trial of one of the  
11 guards who has been found in Hannover as a  
12 railroad man as a result of a deposition that  
13 my uncle made right after the war. He  
14 deposited information about practically all the  
15 guards and got into the records, and they  
16 finally -- I think Wisenthal found the guy.  
17 And so he was being tried, and my uncle and I  
18 were witnesses twice at the trial at Hannover.  
19 I also was visited -- just to show you that  
20 something is known about (Jungbunzlau) -- I was  
21 visited by the special office of the prosecutor  
22 from Washington, D.C. in the justice department  
23 with a book of photographs of (Jungbunzlau)  
24 people, S.S., trying to see if I could identify  
25 any of these people, who they were, and so on,

1           because they are working on some of those cases  
2           here in the U.S. They are trying to hunt them  
3           down. So that (Jungbunzlau) is not completely  
4           unknown, but the Holocaust library has never  
5           heard of it.

6           I want to talk about one particular S.S.  
7           man who saved my life twice and who essentially  
8           was helping people to survive and who was  
9           actually trying or who had been intentioned to  
10          help us to escape. It wasn't really  
11          consummated. I wasn't in on the escape  
12          arrangement. Unfortunately, I don't know his  
13          name. I really wish I did, because I think he  
14          almost ought to be remembered as a righteous  
15          gentile, even though he was in the S.S., a very  
16          unusual case. There was another S.S. man, by  
17          the way, that helped Jews to escape, helped  
18          pretty much to escape from Auschwitz, but was  
19          caught and executed by the S.S. He had a  
20          Jewish girlfriend. So it's not a completely  
21          unique thing, but you normally -- I personally  
22          believe that one cannot go by the uniform.  
23          There is at least one Jew who's living now in  
24          Florida who almost caused my death, and there  
25          is one S.S. man that saved me twice. So you

1           can't go by nationality and you can't go by --  
2           Now, this particular S.S. man, the first time  
3           he saved a group of people was on the death  
4           march, we came, after being (gleib-ers), we  
5           were put on a train. Actually, at the time, I  
6           wasn't fast enough to go on the train, so I was  
7           hit by the butt of the rifle, and my scapula  
8           was punctured by an S.S. man because I wasn't  
9           moving fast enough on the train. But the train  
10          went nowhere. The railroads were bombed, so  
11          they took us off and we -- we went by foot, for  
12          something like 20 days, to another camp called  
13          Grossrosen.

14   Q.     This was in the winter?

15   A.     This is January, February, yes.

16   Q.     So the winter --

17   A.     And it's very, very cold, and the clothes that  
18          we have is not very warm. As a matter of fact,  
19          this Heinrich Niemeyer, who was the guy who  
20          tried -- the first -- I don't really know  
21          whether he was convicted on the second trial,  
22          but the first conviction was set aside by the  
23          highest court in Bonn, and the newspaper in  
24          Hannover -- and I don't know whether this is  
25          just a newspaper story or whether this is true

1           -- but the newspaper story that I read, that I  
2           have somewhere in my files, I don't know where,  
3           stated that he should not be convicted because  
4           it wasn't proven that the shooting that he did  
5           of all the prisoners who couldn't walk was done  
6           because of racial hate; after all, these  
7           prisoners would have frozen anyway. And so  
8           they set him free. That only happened a few  
9           years ago in Germany. I told this story about  
10          the other S.S. man to convince the court that  
11          I'm not prejudiced against S.S., that if I'm  
12          testifying against this guy and I'm saying that  
13          he was a vicious killer, that I can tell a  
14          story about another S.S. man who was the  
15          opposite. So they both were on this march, I  
16          mean the killer as well as the other guy. They  
17          were both (Jungbunzlau) guards. Somehow, for a  
18          while, the (Jungbunzlau) prisoners and the  
19          (Jungbunzlau) guards stuck together, almost a  
20          mutual affection to some degree. And that's no  
21          kidding. Because these guards finally decided  
22          that they needed some prisoners, otherwise they  
23          would be shipped off to the front, and they  
24          provided job -- we provided job security for  
25          them as long as we were around. I mean they

1           didn't care how many of us died as long as  
2           there were enough around to justify their  
3           jobs. And it's a believable story, because  
4           this is how human nature appears. So what  
5           happened was that it was dark, and we were  
6           walking in deep snow, and some of the Poles  
7           revolted, jumped the S.S. and took hold of the  
8           machine gun that was on a slant and turned it  
9           onto the S.S. And a fight broke out, shooting  
10          broke out, panic broke out. And all the  
11          prisoners made left turns on a very long  
12          column, about 6,000 of us, and started running  
13          up an open plain, and there was a road on top,  
14          and then there was a wood behind, and obviously  
15          the idea was to get into the wood so you would  
16          be covered so that you wouldn't be shot, but  
17          the S.S. set down its machine guns and was  
18          mowing them row by row down. And they were  
19          spreading their hands and falling down, and the  
20          snow was turning red. We didn't know what to  
21          do, because we were caught in this fire, cross  
22          fire between these -- what was going on, so the  
23          S.S. man, who was very well trained militarily,  
24          issued an order, he said lie down. But not  
25          everybody knew him, so people refused to lie



1 down, because they thought they were going to  
2 be lying down, he was going to shoot everybody  
3 in the head as the others were doing. So he  
4 lied down himself, took his gun and threw it  
5 away as far as he could, and says, "You  
6 dummies, you'd better lie down if you want to  
7 survive." So you have the spectacle of this  
8 big S.S. man in this blue-green uniform and all  
9 these prisoners lying around him in a circle,  
10 hiding and staying away from the bullets until  
11 the shooting was all over. So that's when he  
12 saved my life the first time. The next  
13 incident that happened was when I -- that's the  
14 boot incident I'm coming to. By the way, some  
15 friends of mine didn't survive because their  
16 shoes were stolen, and they woke up in the  
17 morning -- see, we slept, for instance, in a  
18 Gasthaus, in an inn, on the tables. They  
19 brought us in at night. We went about 18  
20 kilometers, maybe 20 kilometers -- about 12, 15  
21 miles a day -- we walked every day, and we  
22 slept wherever we arrived. And that night we  
23 came to a place which was an inn, and we slept  
24 on -- and many people felt, you know, they  
25 couldn't bear their shoes anymore, and they

1 would take at night their shoes off, but in the  
2 morning they'd wake up and the shoes were  
3 gone. And there was no replacement of any  
4 kind. So here is this friend of mine,  
5 20-year-old boy from Czechoslovakia, who was  
6 walking barefoot, his feet are getting red and  
7 white, and finally he can't go anymore, frozen  
8 feet, and he gets shot to death because he  
9 can't walk. His fiancée called me up after the  
10 war and wanted to know what I knew about him,  
11 and I told her, well -- was a non-Jewish  
12 fiancée. So shoes were extremely important.  
13 So we got into a place where they wanted us to  
14 put us up in a penitentiary. We stood there  
15 for an hour. The S.S. was negotiating with the  
16 warden, and the warden wouldn't let us in, and  
17 I have to say that in all my life I never  
18 really wanted to go into a penitentiary as  
19 badly as I did that evening. I couldn't make  
20 it. Because it was going to be warm and nice.  
21 So we ended up on the meat market in the middle  
22 of town in an unheated place, and it was about  
23 20 below. I mean I'm not kidding. I mean it  
24 was terribly cold. And I obviously never took  
25 off my boots. I just didn't. But there was an

1 S.S. man, a Ukrainian, who didn't even speak  
2 German, whose boots were not serving him very  
3 well. He also had to walk. So some of the  
4 prisoners who were in cahoots with him, and who  
5 did things for him, and I presume he did things  
6 for them, were looking out for somebody whose  
7 boots they could get. They found me, and I  
8 ran, and they pinned me down and they stripped  
9 my boots, those Canadian boots. The S.S. man  
10 came over, and he says, "Look, I'm a really  
11 nice guy. I really don't want you to die.  
12 Here are mine." He gave me his. His were too  
13 big for me, but what was worse was that they  
14 had metal nails on the bottom, and the road was  
15 icy, and I was slipping, and instead of each  
16 making one step I had to make three steps, and  
17 I was getting tired, and I knew that I wasn't  
18 going to make it to the evening. So I tried my  
19 problem-solving capability, and I noticed that  
20 we were walking five across in columns, five  
21 across, and I noticed that if I were completely  
22 on the right that I could be at a place where  
23 at the end of the thing the snow was piled up,  
24 and I could sort of walk a little bit further  
25 to the right than the rest of the column, and

1 my foot would sink in a little bit, and I would  
2 have hold, and I would just take one step at a  
3 time. That saved my life. So I finally  
4 decided that that wasn't even good enough. I  
5 needed some protection also, and so I  
6 volunteered to push the bicycle of the camp  
7 commandant who had his weapons on, you see,  
8 and so -- and all of his belongings on his  
9 bicycle. So I pushed him. It was very  
10 difficult to push it uphill, but it was getting  
11 me downhill and -- when it was straight, so  
12 with the bicycle and having another hold of  
13 things, and knowing that the guy probably  
14 didn't know who was going to push his bicycle  
15 next, so he wasn't going to be too tough on me,  
16 I sort of went -- went along, and this was a  
17 long, long march for many, many, many days.

18 Another general interest thing was that --  
19 it was in Lower Silesia or Upper Silesia, I  
20 don't know, it was Silesia, and the towns don't  
21 come to me, but I could find them on the map:  
22 I haven't bothered; I haven't done it. But the  
23 important thing was that there was a big  
24 difference between the Catholic villages and  
25 Protestant villages, the reception that we

1 prisoners received. In the Protestant villages  
2 they jeered at us, they threw stones, and they  
3 jeered on the S.S. to shoot us.

4 Q. The Protestants?

5 A. The Protestants, a billion population in the  
6 villages that we were going to. In the  
7 Catholic villages they stood out there and they  
8 distributed bread and cottage cheese. All  
9 these years I didn't understand why until  
10 somebody gave me an explanation that is  
11 probably the correct thing, although some  
12 people have still doubts about it, and this is  
13 that the Catholics were a minority, and the  
14 Protestants a majority in Silesia, whereas in  
15 Bavaria it would have been the other way  
16 around, and there the population would have  
17 been friendlier, the Protestants, and less  
18 friendly the Catholics, because it's really the  
19 underdog, and the minority that feels for  
20 prisoners and has not such strong feelings  
21 about this thing. It was in a Catholic village  
22 that the next events that I want to talk about  
23 that brings in the S.S. man took place. I was  
24 getting to the end of my wits. I was terribly  
25 hungry. I felt dirty. I hadn't washed almost

1           20 days; my beard has grown on me, and I just  
2           didn't feel myself, like myself, even as a  
3           prisoner. It was getting pretty bad, the  
4           shooting was, except for that one guy was  
5           stopping because the S.S. decided that they  
6           needed the prisoners as much as the prisoners  
7           needed some protection.

8           (End of side A of tape two, beginning side B of  
9           tape two).

10    Q.    Besides my age, so she was scared stiff,  
11           obviously, and she says "What do you want?"  
12           Again, the fact that I spoke a perfect German  
13           was very helpful. I said, "I feel very  
14           dirty." I said, "I would like to come in, and  
15           I would like to wash up." I, with all my  
16           education, with all the hunger that I had,  
17           could not bring myself, even in the worst  
18           situation, to beg. I couldn't do it, not at a  
19           German house. And so she goes back and I wait  
20           for about two minutes, and she comes back and  
21           she says "Come in." And I'm ushered into the  
22           house, and they have this basin that you have  
23           in these old houses, you know. There's warm  
24           water there; and I strip myself up to here,  
25           soap, and I wash myself and I dry myself, and

1           then they say, "Are you hungry? Would you like  
2           some coffee and cake?" And I said yes, and  
3           they fed me coffee and cake. In the meantime  
4           -- in the meantime the old woman -- this is now  
5           a Catholic house, it's Sunday, and it turns out  
6           that the old woman was in church, and she comes  
7           back -- or was going to church. Church was  
8           involved. And she starts questioning, "What  
9           terrible thing did you do that you are in such  
10          a predicament?" And I said, "All I did is I  
11          was born a Jew." She said, "That's not  
12          possible." I said, "Yes, it is." Now, here's  
13          at least one family who didn't know. I'm not  
14          surprised that they didn't know, because  
15          there's probably no Jewish family living, or  
16          they're all gone, and they had no idea. I mean  
17          there was no way of them getting information.  
18          Plus they were the minority, and they probably  
19          weren't in on the inside track of what was  
20          going on. And she starts saying terrible  
21          things about Hitler, and the rest of the family  
22          says, "Now, you old one, you'd better keep your  
23          mouth shut if you know what's good for you."  
24          She says, "Now, we are not going to be much  
25          better off than you are. We are going to be

1 refugees tomorrow, we have to leave here."  
2 They told us they became refugees. There are  
3 no refugees in Germany, see, the German  
4 refugees, because Poland couldn't hold them.  
5 They never got their homes back. And so she --  
6 she knew what she was talking about. Now,  
7 then, they said, "You can't take anything from  
8 here, we don't want you -- you'd certainly be  
9 quiet, and we don't want them to be able to  
10 trace us back through you. So you fill your  
11 stomach, but you go out and be handicapped  
12 then. You don't take anything, okay? No  
13 food." And so I asked what's going to happen.  
14 I tried to find out what the situation is, and  
15 they convinced me that my chances of survival  
16 -- and they were right, by the way -- I figured  
17 out from other people who didn't do what I was  
18 planning to do and didn't do afterwards, and  
19 I'll tell you what happened there. I came to  
20 the conclusion that I was going to be -- first  
21 of all, I was in prison clothes. I had the  
22 Auschwitz number. I was a runaway prisoner,  
23 and I was going to be shot from sight. There  
24 was going to be no questions asked nothing,  
25 boom, right on the spot. So I decided to go



1 back and see whether they are still around, and  
2 they were just getting ready to go on the next  
3 track. The S.S. men looked at me like I would  
4 be crazy. I had a full stomach. I had a nice  
5 conversation with civilian people, and I come  
6 back again in being a prisoner and continuing  
7 my concentration camp experience. Now, it  
8 turned out that it took six weeks for the  
9 Russians to get to that spot after I was  
10 there. I would have had to been in the woods,  
11 lived on and survived -- when one or two people  
12 that survived that way, but most of the people  
13 that tried got caught, and my odds, as I was  
14 figuring them, I think I was figuring  
15 correctly, so my answer to the people who say,  
16 "Why didn't you escape or try to escape?" is  
17 "I did, and I found out that I was actually  
18 better off, or at least thought I was going to  
19 be better off and stayed."

20 Now, the next camp that we got into was  
21 Grossrosen.

22 Q. I just want to backtrack to the march. During  
23 this 20 days, what kind of food was there to  
24 eat?

25 A. Almost very little, almost nothing.

1 Q. Almost nothing.

2 A. There was no supplies that we had. Many -- we  
3 ate and drank snow. And some people got  
4 diarrhea and was sick from digging up potatoes  
5 and eating them raw as we went along -- some  
6 got shot on trying to do that -- or whatever  
7 was found, whatever the people gave us on the  
8 way. We were really pretty much emaciated.  
9 When I got into the next camp, or actually when  
10 I was liberated by the U.S. Army, Patton's  
11 army, I was down to 92 pounds, 21 years old.

12 Q. And, also, the -- you talked about the S.S.  
13 officers. What was the average age of the  
14 officers in the death march?

15 A. Well, it was -- it varied very much. There was  
16 almost a bimodal distribution. They were very  
17 young and very old and nothing in between.  
18 They were -- there was a group of them who were  
19 between 18 and 22, and then there were the  
20 oldsters who were 40 to 60. Because, you know,  
21 they were scraping the bottom of the barrel in  
22 terms of their manhood at the end of the war,  
23 and these were Wachen S.S., rather than the  
24 normal S.S., the guards that they took who were  
25 essentially their elite soldiers, but not

1 really the true S.S., with the  
2 (Volken-span-tod) as it's called, with the  
3 death scowl on their caps. They had the S.S.,  
4 just the two S.S.'s -- S.S.'s on their  
5 insignia, but not the -- they were not part of  
6 the Gestapo S.S. as the commandants of the  
7 camps were. So only the commandants and the  
8 ones in charge were, let's say, around 30 and  
9 so, in their prime, military prime, 35 or so.  
10 Most of the guards were either very young or  
11 very old. Now, the old ones were wise; they  
12 were not vicious killers or anything, but the  
13 youngsters, many of them felt, you know, that  
14 was their chance, and they felt like many  
15 people do on a hunt, they were hunting  
16 prisoners, and they enjoyed killing them. And,  
17 actually, some of them were just addicted to  
18 killing, and this one guy, Niemeyer, that I  
19 testified was one who actually volunteered and  
20 kept on swapping with the others, who didn't  
21 want to do it, and he wanted to do it, so he  
22 went and did all the killing.

23 Q. And what about the makeup of the women, men,  
24 children, as far as the prisoners?

25 A. Now, the prisoners were purely a male camp.

1           There were only men where I was. The men and  
2           women were completely separated in Auschwitz  
3           and the sexes were completely separated.

4   Q.    And in this march they were just men?

5   A.    Just men. Now, sometimes in the middle or  
6           toward the end of -- I don't know exactly the  
7           date, sometimes between February 14 and 18, or  
8           somewhere thereabouts, we arrived -- we were  
9           about 20 days on the march from the eighteenth,  
10          it might have been earlier in February, started  
11          on June -- on January 18, and about over 20  
12          days on the march. We came to Grossrosen,  
13          which was probably the most awful camp I've  
14          been in. It was overcrowded, and it was  
15          disorganized. Nobody knew what was going on;  
16          it was terrible. But they were bringing in all  
17          the prisoners, and I don't think they had it  
18          too much straightened out as to what they were  
19          supposed to be doing. I was there with my  
20          uncle, with the other doctors and everybody,  
21          and the rumor came about that they were looking  
22          for lathe operators. Again, turned out to be  
23          not far off, and I obviously -- I convinced my  
24          uncle and the others that I can teach them  
25          enough to be lathe operators, to go and

1 volunteer, so we all volunteered as lathe  
2 operators and to get the hell out of the place  
3 where one couldn't survive. I should tell you  
4 this particular story. It's probably --  
5 doesn't matter where I'm going to fit it in,  
6 although it's not -- the thing that I'm not  
7 talking about is not as well organized as if I  
8 would be writing a book; it's just the way that  
9 it pops into my head. My uncle, as I said, has  
10 an unusual story of his own. He was an M.D.  
11 who got cast away by the Gestapo as a political  
12 prisoner, not as a Jew, and had certain  
13 privileges because he counted as a political  
14 prisoner. The rather ironic situation is that  
15 since they felt that he was an active dissident  
16 who actually fought Nazis, they had a record on  
17 him, he was not eligible to go into the gas  
18 chambers, because he was a political prisoner  
19 and not -- and even though he was Jewish, the  
20 reason that he was in there was for political  
21 reasons, and therefore he was -- and he was one  
22 of the political prisoners, and he was  
23 obviously -- he knew all the things that were  
24 happening at that time also. So he had been in  
25 Ravensbruck before he got to Auschwitz, and he

1 survived because he did not tell them his  
2 position. It was almost anything intellectual  
3 was almost a death sentence in the early days.  
4 Then when he got into tough situations he had  
5 -- the only people who were doing physicians'  
6 work were butchers, actually, by profession,  
7 that the Germans put up to do that. They  
8 weren't really interested in helping the  
9 prisoners. In the end of the war they wanted  
10 people work, so they were interested in  
11 conserving manpower as much as possible, and  
12 they took these doctors, but that was toward  
13 the end of the war, not in the beginning. And  
14 he was actually in there before the war, and he  
15 was probably -- probably somebody tried to  
16 score a personal grudge with him, from  
17 Marienbad, and accused him of being a member of  
18 the Black Front, which I don't know if he ever  
19 found out what it was, but it was a dissident  
20 group under the Nazis, and he was accused of  
21 being part of it, and so he was a political  
22 prisoner. And he was one of the very few  
23 surviving Jews that came to Auschwitz very  
24 early -- he has a low number -- and he worked  
25 as a farmhand. And one day an S.S. man had

1           injured himself in a brawl in a beer hall and  
2           was bleeding to the death, cut, and they came  
3           out among the prisoners and they said, "Is  
4           there a doctor among you?" just like they do  
5           in -- on a train or on a plane, you know, if  
6           something happens. And he said the Hippocratic  
7           Oath got the better of him, and with a simple  
8           needle he sewed that guy up, and he saved his  
9           life, and he got promoted to being a doctor at  
10          that time. Now, we arrived -- we arrived --  
11          that's important to know how he became a  
12          doctor, because he didn't volunteer to be a  
13          doctor. He got sort of recognized or caught by  
14          the circumstance into it by this situation. He  
15          did obviously want to be able to have save the  
16          guy's life, the S.S. man. And so, you see,  
17          they trusted these Jewish doctors. And there  
18          was a certain amount of collegial interaction  
19          between the prison doctors -- and this has been  
20          written up by others, in other books and so on  
21          -- and the S.S. doctor. So, while one was a  
22          prisoner and the other was a jailer, they still  
23          professionally recognized themselves as  
24          doctors. Now, one of these doctors was  
25          musterling us. We had to strip ourselves

1 completely naked and walk so they could see  
2 whether we had enough strength and muscles left  
3 to be lathe operators, when my uncle, who was  
4 just ahead of me, naked just as I was,  
5 stripped, carrying our stuff with us, but  
6 walking naked in front of the guy to look us  
7 over, looks at him, recognizes him and said,  
8 (Wie wannen sie), a (schlos-ser) or, you know,  
9 a lathe operator. "Since when are you a lathe  
10 operator? You are a doctor. We need doctors  
11 here. What's gotten into you?" So they yanked  
12 him out. I only saw him after the war. And he  
13 went off to other camps, and I ended up still  
14 with that particular shipment. They did need  
15 technical people, but they wouldn't tell you  
16 exactly what it was. I'll come to what I  
17 actually was able to do and what happened in  
18 the next camp. So I was separated, and this  
19 time I got on a train where they put 120 of us  
20 instead of 40 into one boxcar and shipped us  
21 all the way around Bohemia into Southern  
22 Germany, Flossenburg, which was the last camp  
23 that I was in, and 20 of us arrived dead,  
24 because at night the order came to sit down.  
25 There was no -- there was just enough room for



1 everybody to stand up. To sit down, we  
2 couldn't do it all sitting next to each other;  
3 we had to be on the top of each other. Now, I  
4 decided I didn't want to be on the bottom, and  
5 I didn't want to be on the top. I should have  
6 got in between. I was next to a Jewish couple,  
7 young kid about 22, from (Jungbunzlau) that I  
8 knew. He wasn't a very bad guy. He did not  
9 beat people and so on, but he was very  
10 selfish. He got into it to save himself. And  
11 at night we got enough food for two days. Now,  
12 there were different strategies, tactics, that  
13 one did with food when you got it for two  
14 days. The safest thing was to eat it all, put  
15 it in your stomach, and nobody's going to steal  
16 it, but you know that you are going to be  
17 feeling hungry for the next one and a half days  
18 or even longer, because you will have nothing  
19 to eat. In terms of managing your hunger, it  
20 was much better to spread it out, but the  
21 danger was you were going to get robbed or  
22 stolen and robbed almost, because they used  
23 force, not necessarily weapons, although they  
24 had those too, knives, and things like that.  
25 So at night I have a feeling that somebody's

1 taking away my meat can that I was saving. I  
2 had eaten only one-third of the meat, but I go  
3 into my pocket and it's still there, and so I  
4 fall asleep again. In the morning I wake up  
5 and I get out my can, and it's empty, it's been  
6 switched, and I notice the guy next to me, this  
7 couple, is eating out of my can, because I made  
8 a V-like-shape opening for it. I was the only  
9 one that did that. I saw that opening, and I  
10 knew it was my can. And I told him, "Now,  
11 look, you stole this, and you'd better give it  
12 back to me. You put your empty one into my  
13 pocket, and you took my full one or three-  
14 quarter full to gorge yourself on." He says,  
15 "Do me something. I mean if you start a fight,  
16 then shoot us both." Can't do anything. So we  
17 arrived at the camp, and I'm terribly weak. I  
18 haven't eaten again enough. I mean I was  
19 already in pretty bad shape. The shoes were  
20 hurting me. I had frozen feet, because of all  
21 the wounds that I had. I didn't have the right  
22 shoes. I mean until the first third of the  
23 death march I was doing fine with my Canadian  
24 boots. From then on it was very bad. So what  
25 happens is that we come into the delousing in

1 Flossenburg. It's very hot, so hot I feel very  
2 uncomfortable, and I pass out. In the morning  
3 I come to, I'm piled up with the dead bodies.  
4 They are washing us off to ship us off into the  
5 crematorium. And I crawl out, and I go back  
6 among the living again. That's why I'm saying  
7 there is a Jew that almost caused my death.  
8 Now, interestingly enough, Sonya and I bumped  
9 into him in 1950 ----- . At that time he was  
10 already making lots of money by directing porno  
11 movies ----- . He's now a very rich retired  
12 man in Florida. I don't wish him any ill, but  
13 many people used the privilege to save their  
14 own lives by taking away the rights of living  
15 of others. Now, when I arrived in Flossenburg  
16 -- we are coming to the end -- when I arrived  
17 in Flossenburg, something else very important  
18 for my survival happened, and that is that as  
19 we got into quarantine we were separated from  
20 all the other prisoners in the camp, but there  
21 were some prisoners that brought in food for  
22 us. One of the people who brought in the food  
23 -- by the way, the Flossenburg camp had a large  
24 contingent of Czech, non-Jewish Czechs,  
25 prisoners in that. It was only two kilometers

1 from the Czechoslovakian border. I can point  
2 out on the map where it is if you have a map,  
3 or I can use the map. First, you have it  
4 pretty well -- here it is, Flossenburg. As you  
5 see, it's right smack on the Czech border. And  
6 so he heard me speaking Czech to somebody else;  
7 we were speaking Czech. So he takes me aside,  
8 and he says, "Are you Jewish?" I said yes. He  
9 said, "Don't tell anyone you are a Jew. You  
10 are not going to live in this camp if you tell  
11 them." I said, "What do I do?" He said,  
12 "They've lost all the records. They don't know  
13 who is who. You are just going to register as  
14 a non-Jew. They are setting up a registration  
15 table over there." And -- and so now I have a  
16 conscience. Shall I do it; shall I not?  
17 Again, the same type of situation like in  
18 Auschwitz. Fate is telling me something to  
19 do. If I tell some other people and start a  
20 panic, why other people will do that, they'll  
21 catch up to us. I had no close friends left.  
22 My uncle was somewhere else. My close friends  
23 were somewhere else. I mean the guy that  
24 almost caused my death, I didn't care for very  
25 much, and the other people I had very little to

1 do with, I didn't know very well. So I decided  
2 not to share that sort of information  
3 . My time came, and they asked me  
4 why I was -- I mean everybody had to have a  
5 reason being in the concentration camp, so I  
6 had to fabricate another reason. Being a Jew  
7 was not good enough for what I wanted to do, so  
8 I decided that the best thing for me to do is  
9 that I had got caught listening to the BBC,  
10 because I knew that happened to other Czechs.  
11 So that was going to be a story.  
12 So I fabricated a complete record of myself. I  
13 was a little worried, because only Jews are  
14 circumcised so I knew that if I  
15 did become suspicious looking I needed another  
16 explanation. So what I had to do is I said  
17 that I was a -- of a mixed marriage, and that  
18 my mother wasn't Jewish and that my  
19 grandparents were not, only my father was,  
20 okay, and that's why I got circumcised, but I'm  
21 really not. But that was a story that I made  
22 up, never had to use. Because it never came to  
23 . And so then, when I get into the  
24 camp, again they have one of these town criers  
25 announcing: Are there any mechanical engineers

1           around here, and electricians? And you're  
2           finding the pattern, the survival pattern. So  
3           I volunteered. I think it happened -- it was  
4           almost a birthday present. I think it happened  
5           on February 24, 1945, and I suddenly find  
6           myself in the weirdest place possible. There  
7           was an underground Messerschmidt factory  
8           fabricating fighter planes in the camp at  
9           Flossen. It was a secret installation never  
10          bombed by the Allies, with a marvelous setup to  
11          have people who are not very well educated,  
12          everything already prepared, all the tools,  
13          super tools for tools, I mean a marvelous,  
14          ingenious way of shipping two airplanes a day  
15          out of that place, and I find myself, because I  
16          speak German, I'm an educated engineer, I found  
17          myself elevated overnight to being a quality  
18          controller, and my job was to go around and  
19          supervise other people, who, again, pretty  
20          young kid, this time close to 21, supervised  
21          other workers doing the proper riveting job,  
22          the proper putting together, just like, you  
23          know, you have these -- what you call these  
24          things kids put together from --

25 Q.    Lego sets?

1 A. Lego sets, or however, but this is metal.  
2 There's a metal counterpart to Lego. It's  
3 similar to that. It was done, that  
4 sophisticated. So even though I couldn't walk,  
5 I mean I was dragging myself along, nobody  
6 could believe that I survived, half the people  
7 that knew me, because I was down to almost -- I  
8 had an easy job. It was a twelve-hour job. We  
9 had to work for twelve hours, one week during  
10 the day, one week during the night. There were  
11 no three shifts, only two shifts. But my job  
12 was very easy. I had a little lamp, and I  
13 walked around and I saw whether the rivets were  
14 too high or too low or were just right. If  
15 they were too low or too high, they had to  
16 drill them through, and they had to do them all  
17 over again. It wasn't very, very hard to do.  
18 I could have done much more sophisticated  
19 stuff. It was not a very safe job, because  
20 there was a young Ukrainian kid who had dropped  
21 a drilling machine, and they hanged him for  
22 that: it was sabotage. I mean they had -- they  
23 had -- they was afraid very much, and right-  
24 fully so. There were many people who were in  
25 the underground who were making sure that these

1 things weren't coming off, and they wanted to  
2 nab them. I wasn't playing that game. I  
3 didn't know anything about the underground  
4 there. I was too young to be even trusted by  
5 anybody of the oldsters who were there, plus  
6 nobody took a young kid like me very  
7 seriously. The only thing was, I was one of  
8 these brains who could get through purely on  
9 knowledge and brain power rather than anything  
10 else, okay? A very unusual type of a  
11 situation. The proof of the pudding is that  
12 the brain's lasted me through the rest of my  
13 life, and so it wasn't just an accident. But  
14 -- but it's still an unusual story, I think. I  
15 made one big mistake. I had trusted one -- I  
16 mean somehow I was very worried, and I was very  
17 bothered by the fact what I was doing, and a  
18 crazy notion, I still don't know why, but I  
19 know it was very strong, was that -- I didn't  
20 think I was going to survive, but I wanted to  
21 be buried as a Jew, and I wanted somebody to  
22 find me after the war, looking for me. So I  
23 couldn't quite completely have nobody know  
24 about what I did, where I belonged. So to one  
25 of the non-Jewish Czechs I confided that I was



1 really a Jew and that I was hiding this way.  
2 So at the end of the war the S.S. decided to  
3 kill all the Jews in the camp. First of all,  
4 the Jews were not entitled to sleep on beds;  
5 they all had to sleep on the ground. They were  
6 mistreated. I mean the treatment of Jews in  
7 that camp was something awful. Okay. And I  
8 was completely separated, because I was in a  
9 completely different group, and I was in a  
10 secret detail working on secret military work  
11 in the concentration camp. So I told him. So  
12 when the order came for the Jews to step out  
13 and they marched them off with machine guns,  
14 each of them in the ravine, this guy came  
15 looking for me, found me, and says, "You step  
16 out, and you go where you belong," in front of  
17 everybody. And I said to him, "I don't know  
18 what you're talking about." And he laughed and  
19 came back, and he says "You come and see the  
20 block leader." Now, the block leader was not a  
21 very nice guy. He had a reputation, which I  
22 saw him actually exercise once, to have the  
23 ability to kill a person with a single blow on  
24 the neck, and he liked to exercise that skill  
25 once in a while. He was a graduate of the

1 French Foreign Legion, had twelve years of it.  
2 He spoke a perfect German and a perfect French  
3 -- I don't know what nationality he was -- was  
4 a political prisoner, and one of the top guys  
5 in the block of prisoners. And he grabs me,  
6 and he shouts at me, "Du bist eine Jude," "You  
7 are a Jew," and I looked him straight in the  
8 eye, and I said, "Nein," no. He tries twice  
9 more, and then he says, "What are you?" And I  
10 said I'm Mischlinge-- I'm Mischlinge (grat-tis)  
11 -- I'm of a mixed marriage of the first  
12 degree. It made no sense afterwards, when I  
13 found out, it was only valid among the  
14 military. I didn't know that it really didn't  
15 amount to anything, but neither did he. And I  
16 -- what he did is he called again the  
17 Schreiber, the registrar, and he said, "Look up  
18 this guy's record." Now, the record was okay.  
19 I had managed that. So the guy -- the guy had  
20 -- this guy who came was, from his insignia,  
21 was of Yugoslav nationality, and he vouched for  
22 me that I was what I was saying that I was, and  
23 said, "You can go," and that got me from not  
24 being shot. Then -- now let me just jump into  
25 the future a little bit and say, somehow the

1 weird thing is I come and meet these people all  
2 over again. In the camp of (Beg-en-dorf),  
3 about eight months later, which was a D.P. camp  
4 for Jews from Theresienstadt, where I joined  
5 Sonya, there was a man whose name was  
6 Wasserman, which was the same name that this  
7 Yugoslav had, who turned out to be a Polish Jew  
8 himself, who has done exactly what I did and  
9 who came over, and he says, "I'm wondering when  
10 you're going to stop and say hello, because we  
11 know each other, you know." I said, "Where do  
12 I know you from?" It finally dawned on me that  
13 he was the guy who vouched for me that I wasn't  
14 Jewish, even himself being a Jew and having  
15 done it and having managed to do the same  
16 thing. There were a number of other Jews who  
17 survived in Flossenburg, doctors and other  
18 people who also escaped in another way, hiding  
19 hiding in this way.

20 Now I'll tell you the rest of the story  
21 very quickly. I was very -- when finally it  
22 came to the end of the war, the Germans left  
23 the camp, came back again. I was terribly  
24 hungry, and I didn't know I was going actually  
25 out of my mind of hunger, so I decided that the

1           only way that I can keep my mind off of hunger  
2           was to read books. And fortunately they had a  
3           library for only German prisoners in the camp,  
4           that all organization had fallen apart. There  
5           was a library there for German national  
6           prisoners. I wasn't a Jew, so I could go into  
7           that place. At least for that time I wasn't  
8           one. And I was looking for getting some books  
9           that would keep my mind off what was happening,  
10          and I found -- I was roaming through the  
11          library, and I saw some novels that were about  
12          the German soldiers having a good time with  
13          frauleins in Paris. I figured that that was  
14          nothing that would interest me to read about, a  
15          soggy story like that, and I finally ran -- I'm  
16          coming to the end here -- I ran -- I ran across  
17          two books that I picked off the shelf and took  
18          with me to my bunk bed. One of them was by  
19          Thomas Mann, called The (now-from) Christos,  
20          the Christ, the deranged Christ, and it's the  
21          story of a man who comes to the -- he was in  
22          the mountains, and who has all the character-  
23          istics of Christ, the coming Christ again, and  
24          who gets crucified by his people all over  
25          again. I mean the idea is if Christ came today

1 he wouldn't get recognized, and he would be  
2 treated the same way that he was two thousand  
3 years ago. And the other book was the original  
4 Mein Kampf. Now, I have to say something about  
5 the original, because when Hitler wrote his  
6 Mein Kampf originally, he had prophesized that  
7 if he ever gets to fight the East and the West  
8 at the same time he's going to lose. But when  
9 the war broke out, and he found himself  
10 fighting both sides, both fronts, the Eastern  
11 and the West, he had all the books recalled and  
12 republished without that in them, but they did  
13 not recall the book from the concentration  
14 camp, so in the concentration camp the original  
15 book of the thirties, unchanged -- the camp got  
16 started in '39 -- was still there. So here I  
17 was, reading about Hitler's prophecy of his own  
18 doom and listening to the American guns in  
19 Nuremberg where the American force was coming  
20 to, and that gave me a big heart, and it perked  
21 up my spirits, and I forgot my hunger. I  
22 finally got helped by a German Kapo prisoner in  
23 charge of the infirmary. I was already very  
24 familiar with hospitals in concentration camps,  
25 and I knew that if I can become an orderly --

1 and I knew how to do an orderly's job -- I  
2 could eat some food, because many of the people  
3 who were dying and too sick to eat couldn't  
4 eat, so there was food left over. So I became  
5 an orderly for a few days, and then when  
6 finally the camp was being liquidated and I  
7 just couldn't walk, I decided to hide myself  
8 amongst the people who had typhoid, because I  
9 felt that nobody wants to go close to them to  
10 get infected, and I figured that if I survived  
11 that the Americans were going to take care of  
12 me \_\_\_\_\_ and inject me against the  
13 typhoid. And, if not, what's the use anyway?  
14 They did not have time to burn the infirmary,  
15 which they did in other concentration camps.  
16 The U.S. Army, Patton's army, came and  
17 liberated us. I had the unusual experience of  
18 running across one of the G.I.'s who liberated  
19 the camp and being able to show him in Burton  
20 Park here in Palo Alto a photograph on which he  
21 and I were on the same picture. I was able to  
22 do that in 1962. And then a few days later I  
23 did not wait for the Americans to ship me to  
24 Nuremberg and to register me and to find  
25 everything out about me. I picked myself up

1 and I jumped on a truck that came especially to  
2 pick up a Czech general whose army sent for him  
3 after the war, and I found myself at nine  
4 o'clock in the evening, early May, just about  
5 this time of the year, 43 years ago, on the  
6 street of a town where I was the first Jew to  
7 return to the town after the war. No friends,  
8 no place to go, didn't know where to go, and  
9 finally decided to go to the place where at  
10 last there was some people who knew me, and who  
11 picked me up ..... That's how.

12 Q. You were going to talk about something after  
13 the war, you said, the situation going back to  
14 Czechoslovakia and how dangerous it was?

15 A. I think what you mean by that is that I think  
16 that the time is pretty late, and what happened  
17 after the war is another set of stories. I  
18 will just give you a very brief outline. I ran  
19 an underground railroad for several  
20 organizations, including the Palestinian Army.  
21 I was smuggling Jews from the eastern occupied  
22 zone of Czechoslovakia into western occupied  
23 Czechoslovakia to help them on their journey  
24 into Palestine at that particular time. I  
25 helped more than a thousand people across the

1 border, which was in a military border between  
2 the Russians and the Americans, and I have lots  
3 of stories to tell. One of the people that I  
4 helped to escape was my wife, and those are  
5 long stories that have to be told right and  
6 that are not part of the other thing.

7 Q. Okay. Well, I was thinking of a question,  
8 maybe just in summary: What is your overall  
9 feeling towards life in general, considering  
10 the tests that you were put through during  
11 these two years, '42 to '44? What kind of  
12 impressions did that leave you with?

13 A. I will answer this question in sort of making a  
14 -- making a distinction. I'll answer it  
15 several ways. First of all, one of the things  
16 my uncle said when I came to (Jungbunzlau) that  
17 turned out to be very true, and that it's a  
18 part answer to your question. He said that if  
19 you ever get out of here, out of Auschwitz --  
20 which is very unlikely; he didn't believe that  
21 it was possible to get out of there because of  
22 all the experiences that he'd had -- then you  
23 would have earned so much education that it's  
24 going to be worth more than ..... I  
25 would say that the fact that I, in my life, was



1           able to survive some of the worst things that,  
2           as you clearly see in another privileged  
3           situation, I was able to be saved some of the  
4           worst things. I was never really tortured. I  
5           was beaten a few times. I wasn't deprived as  
6           much as others. I mean I had a number of great  
7           advantages that made that possible, and I don't  
8           think it was a picnic that I went through, but  
9           at the same time there are people who went  
10          through much more situations than I. At the  
11          same time I've also managed in my life to get  
12          some very advantageous positions in my life.  
13          To be cream of the crop of a major capitol of  
14          Europe for two years and to mixed with top  
15          officials of the top two super powers and  
16          things like that gave me perspective, from the  
17          top as well as from the bottom. So, when I  
18          answer this particular question, is that I feel  
19          that, "a," life is worthwhile living; never  
20          mind how bad it can get. I've even put that  
21          into writing. I think the way that I said it  
22          is that the important thing is that we try to  
23          do the right things; whether we succeed or not  
24          doesn't matter. And I have, similarly, to  
25          Viktor Frankl, if you know anything of him -- I

1 mean he is pretty famous, because, as a matter  
2 of fact, he was the chief doctor of the  
3 hospital that I was hospitalized for eight  
4 months in Theresienstadt with my eyes. I  
5 almost lost my left eye in Theresienstadt from  
6 infection, infectious disease, which may or  
7 may not \_\_\_\_\_ and so I would say that I  
8 have learned a lot that was directly applicable  
9 to life thereafter. One of the things I've  
10 learned is sort of a sixth sense of figuring  
11 out who the good guys and the bad guys are from  
12 little things. You become very conscious of  
13 that when survival is at stake, and you can use  
14 that. That doesn't mean that I necessarily  
15 buckle under or that I do the things that the  
16 bad guys want me to do, on the contrary, but I  
17 use my own judgment. But I realized that the  
18 world is made up of all kinds of people and  
19 that they only behave when they are forced to  
20 under certain rules to behave properly. And  
21 there is a free-for-all, whatever you can do.  
22 Life is not very pleasant, because certain  
23 people who take over make it very miserable for  
24 other people. And I have taken it upon myself  
25 in most places that I am, and where I can do

1 something about it, just like my dad did try to  
2 do that. So I would say that the Holocaust has  
3 strengthened me to be a much stronger person  
4 than I would have been otherwise. And I don't  
5 feel that the world owes me something as some  
6 survivors feel, that it's terrible what's  
7 happened to them. I feel I just happened to be  
8 at a time and a place where things like that  
9 were happening and that I played my role the  
10 way that I understood it to play at that  
11 particular time. I think the world needs to  
12 understand that, and I think that the world  
13 needs to change. I completely disagree with a  
14 guy like Wiesel. I think he was in the camp  
15 and he was much younger than I was. I think he  
16 still did not live past the immaturity of his  
17 experience. I won't go into detail as to how  
18 it works out, but I don't think that I share  
19 his views on the Holocaust at all.

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