

1 INTERVIEW OF: Leo Samuels

2 TRANSCRIBER: Brenda Rutgers

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4 Q (By The Interviewer) Just --

5 A Yes. My name is Leo Samuels. I was -- I come from a
6 little town in Czechoslovakia, and we were the first victims of
7 Germany after Germany itself, the Jews.

8 Q What town was it?

9 A It was Chal-ma-chek, Chal-ma-chek, Czechoslovakia. The
10 Germans came into our country in 1939. There was a lot of
11 (inaudible). But we were lucky, really. We were taken over by
12 the Hungarians to some kind of a miracle.

13 Q Just can you tell us a little bit about your family before
14 the War?

15 A Before?

16 Q All right.

17 A So my family, we come from Fee-na, Fee-na, Bill's family.
18 My father was a baker (inaudible), but he was -- he chose
19 business. And my father went in the flour business. We made --
20 we had mills. And of course, everybody need it for their
21 bread --

22 Q Yeah.

23 A -- so everybody'd come to us for their wheat. All the
24 farmers came --

25 Q Yeah.

1 A -- from 30, 40 miles away come to us. We were very, very
2 warm. Everybody knew us. But very sadly about everything, right
3 when the Czechoslovakian economy -- when the American economy
4 folded in 1928 during the American Depression, it affected us
5 very much on account of we had properties worth close to a
6 million dollars in those days, and my father got involved with
7 the Czech government to build railroad ties for railroads. And
8 when the American reneged on their promises in American -- in
9 there in Czechoslovakia during the American Depression when it
10 hit the American and they reneged on everything, so we were stuck
11 with a million dollars worth of bad debts. But, luckily, the
12 bank didn't close us up; but anything made of flour in the fields
13 and the mills, everything was going for the bank. So we were
14 supposed to be the rich people; but, actually, we were very,
15 very, very poor at home.

16 Q How many --

17 A We were ten-sha-va.

18 Q Ten?

19 A Ten-sha-va.

20 Q Huh. Were you religious?

21 A My father was, yes, a lot. He had -- he had the grief
22 of a really clean life, but he didn't like it or he wanted
23 (inaudible). He wanted to be a Jew, and that's all he wanted to
24 be, and in business if he hadn't.

25 So we were stuck with all those bills from the banks, and

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1 we made it till it came to happen the Czechs -- the Czech
2 government give up to the Germans. And then when the Czechs give
3 up, this part of the country of mine -- it's called the
4 Ca-fa-de-um -- it was taken over by a bunch of hulligans with a
5 fellow by the name -- Vel-ish-an was his name, Ukraine, one of
6 the biggest anti-Semites.

7 The biggest weather in there -- and the name of the weather
8 is dis-a -- we've gone right to the end of an the edge battle
9 town. And the plans were in those days for Mr. Vel-ish-an to
10 take all the Jews and shoot them out and send them down to
11 Budhapest in the river, kill off all the 200,000 Jews in the
12 Ca-fa-de-um mountains and the Ca-fa-de-um cities. All the -- the
13 cities had more Jews than Gentiles in those days.

14 Q Huh.

15 A So then we asked for the Americans when the Hungarians came
16 in and took us over from the Czechs and from the Germans.

17 Q Huh.

18 A So the Americans -- the Hungarians are sadists in those

19 days, in 1940.

20 Q Huh.

21 A So then came the Hungarians, and they took our youth, men
22 and women, our whole family, and arrest them and send them down
23 to concentration -- not to -- labor camps throughout Germany and
24 in Poland in the camps. And we, the younger ones, stayed -- left
25 home. The most businesses were closed by the Hungarians. They'd

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1 taken over even the Jews.

2 Q Uh-huh. How old were you?

3 A I was then 17.

4 A MAN: Were you going to school then?

5 MR. SAMUELS: No, we weren't allowed to go to school.

6 A MAN: Before, before --

7 MR. SAMUELS: Before that, I was a dish-e-da.

8 Q (By the Interviewer) Uh-huh.

9 A So my father was a very smart man. He used to say -- I had
10 four, four brothers, and he says, "We have not many more left."
11 And the other thing that he says, "If you learn a profession,
12 you'll have a -- you'll turn everything around." "Ma-la-ha and
13 ma-la-ka-esht," he said.

14 Q Uh-huh.

15 A So he was a very smart man. So he took all our four boys,
16 and he put everybody in the room to learn a profession. And this
17 is what saved us in this second part of the Holocaust on account
18 of all my brothers, we learned. We each one learned a different

19 profession.

20 Q What was the profession you learned?

21 A I learned to be a tailor, and it saved me on account I
22 learned.

23 Q Uh-huh.

24 A And I make (inaudible) for the German Army in Poland. They
25 took me from Auschwitz there, which really turned me about.

5

1 Q Uh-huh.

2 A So that for me was -- we were -- we would learn. We would
3 learn the profession with many interruptions, because we were,
4 again, as Jews in Hungary, and they were supposed to have been
5 with the -- the Hungarians were together with the Germans, the
6 Allies, you know. There were a lot of problems for the ghettos
7 and everything else.

8 Q Let me ask you. Even before that, in your early life, do
9 you remember anti-Semitism?

10 A I remember only one thing I could remember was, I did
11 remember this. I remembered when I came from the town and we
12 used to -- and the only incident that I remember when I was in
13 the fifth grade, when I went to school and we had a teacher by
14 the name of Francis Czech-mar. And this kid I knew, this kid --
15 this kid who was in school called me a dirty Jew. In those days,
16 I was a very proud Jew. And I remember the kids who used to call
17 me Jew, and I used to feel that the kids were hardened. "You
18 can't call us Jews, dirty Jews. When we Jews have mak-fas, in

19 the morning, we take showers. Every morning, we take showers.
20 In the showers, the showers will be going a minimum of a half an
21 hour every single day."

22 Q Uh-huh.

23 A "And we came to school, to the school nicely dressed,
24 dressed in style. When you people take a shower, you don't even
25 have showers. You only wash from a bucket, you know. You call

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1 us dirty? You can tell -- I'll tell the same thing to the
2 teacher."

3 So I told the boy, and I really let him have it. So when
4 the teacher -- he took me in there, and when the teacher came to
5 me, he grabbed me by my polos I had. He said, "You don't
6 realize, in Germany, they've already killed Jews, and you are
7 beating up on a nice Christian boy?"

8 I said, "The Christian boy started with me. He called me a
9 dirty Jew."

10 Q Huh.

11 A He said, "You are a dirty Jew."

12 I said, "Take a look at me. I take the (inaudible) to the
13 teacher all day." I said, "Take a look at his anus. It hasn't
14 been washed for a month. Take a look at mine. How can you call
15 me dirty, I am the dirty one, and he's the clean one? How can
16 you call us dirty Jews?", I said.

17 "That's all," he says.

18 Oh, I could not fight him.

19 So he says, "Don't do it any more."

20 So I didn't. And two years later, I went to another
21 school.

22 Q Huh.

23 A So there was anti-Semitism there at our school in this
24 country, even -- this was even into the church.

25 I went home and told my father about what happened in

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1 school. So my father had a lot of influence in the city, in the
2 little town. He went to the teacher, and he told the teacher,
3 you know, and he got him fired; but nothing happened on account
4 of the Germans and the Hungarians were combined, and they took
5 over everything. We lost our house after a while and everything
6 else, and we were out of school.

7 So I left to learn my profession to Budhapest, Hungary,
8 which is 250 miles west of us -- no, east of Budhapest 250 miles.
9 I went there. I learned my profession in Budhapest. I stayed
10 there a couple of years. And, too, I helped out at home, for my
11 mom.

12 One time my father, the Germans had forced him constantly
13 to send food to Germany on account of he owed the bank the notes.
14 And they differed with my father, but he knew a lot about food.
15 He was very, very professional. So he was the life route to
16 Germany. And they wanted to take everything away from us, in
17 other words; so my father had to send food to Germany for
18 everything. So he did not want to. Each time, the Kree-tas

19 arrested him, you know.

20 Q Uh-huh.

21 A So this was my father's life in all those two or three
22 years that I was away from home. He made plenty of money to pay
23 back all the money for the

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