

1 INTERVIEW OF HERMAN SCHIFF:

2 A 1944, March, 19, German army occupied (unintelli-
3 gible) Hungary. And since then, you know, they killed many
4 of our company, you know. I mean, they -- we weren't a
5 company because the concentration camp, that was a number,
6 11035, that was my number that I was in the concentration
7 camp. So, they chased us from all over, I mean, to
8 Hungarians, to Hungary, until Yugoslavia, and they always
9 get something, you know, some -- at school try to shot down
10 anther ten people, who were sick or they be like, like --

11 Q Soldiers.

12 A Yeah. They were sick but they didn't have some
13 good shoes, they couldn't run so fast, they shot down. In
14 one day, they shot down thirty-two, and another day, two,
15 and then another ten, forty-four people just in three months
16 after the Germany Army occupied Hungary.

17 Q When was this, what year was this?

18 A Yeah. This was 1944, from -- I was in jail,
19 in the concentration camp, from 1942, May, until end of
20 1945, May, third of May. Two days more, right?

21 Q Which camp, which concentration camp?

22 A 10145, that's the Hungarian concentration camp,
23 that was the number.

1 Q The number of the camp?

2 A Yeah.

3 Q That was the camp number.

4 A Yeah. Yeah, that is what I am looking for

5 people, you know, maybe, they here. So I survived. About --

6 we survived from house around 20 percent.

7 Q From your towns.

8 A What?

9 Q From your towns.

10 A No, no, from the camp.

11 Q Oh, from the camp.

12 A The camp. It wasn't many, I mean. And from
13 our town, they escape about ten percent. We were in our
14 town, (unintelligible), about 30,000 Jews, we came back
15 around 3,000. And my sister with seven children, my
16 brother and wife with two children, my first wife, young
17 woman, we hadn't lived together about two and a half years.
18 And that's just from us.

19 Q They're all gone?

20 A From my father -- my mother's children. We
21 left about sixteen people, we came back three people, myself,
22 my sister, another sister, and her husband. That's all.

23 Q How old were you when you were in the camp?

1 A Yeah, I, when I was in the camp, 1945, I was 31
2 years, and when I escaped, I was 34. From May, almost
3 exact three years.

4 Q What had you done for a living before you were
5 put in the camp, what job did you do?

6 A Oh, I was a knitter.

7 Q A knitter?

8 A Yeah.

9 Q What did you do in the camp? Did you have a job?

10 A In the camp? In the camp, all the work, you
11 know, to dig the trenches, and pick up what they needed for,
12 you know, the Army. Once they put us to, in Budapest, they
13 put us to the -- when the American and the English airplanes
14 came to bomb, they put us, you know, to the soldiers, we
15 shall give the, you know, we shall give the bullets, the
16 heavy bullets, and some heavy thing, you know.

17 Q The big shells.

18 A Yeah. I mean, thank God no one got shot down,
19 not one plane. Yeah, yeah, thank God, you know --

20 Q You would be in there. Would you see the allied
21 planes overhead?

22 A Yeah, yeah, I heard, yeah.

23 Q And you would hope that --

1 A You know, just -- my father was a (unintelligible)
2 American. I have a brother in America here, you know. I
3 just remember, oh, God, they hit -- they shall not shot
4 down, not one. But, even the soldiers, he didn't care
5 (unintelligible) -- he's just-- sure, you know, he was a
6 real Nazi. But almost all of them, they were real
7 Nazis. Even there, you know, they didn't push that, you
8 know. Some, some people, they were the good heart, I mean,
9 the good will. But everyone -- I was there when the German
10 Army, you know, when they went by, they sound their
11 (unintelligible) they love their some bread, you know,
12 the bread, some bread, a little bread. And I went there,
13 you know, to pick up this bread, you know, to eat something
14 because they need something, you know, just I was like death,
15 you know. They put me, they hurt me on the head, still here
16 you can-- still here, where they hit me, the Army, on my
17 head. Because I want to pick up the bread that he left,
18 that he throwed away, you know, the round of the bread.
19 And --

20 Q What was it like in the camp, day to day,
21 what was a day like? What did you do, what was it like?

22 A We were sometimes in a forest, you know, pick
23 up some (unintelligible) for the Army, you know, to make

1 some -- I don't what they made, I think (unintelligible)
2 for the Army. And many, many, like that, you know.

3 Q Would you get up like before dawn, they would
4 have a roll call?

5 A Oh, yes. Five o'clock we get up, and six o'clock
6 was the up hill, you know, and from six until dark, you know,
7 winter we worked a little less, summertime, more, you know,
8 in the daytime.

9 Q So did you have any time out for food, for
10 meals?

11 A They give, no, they give us food in the morning,
12 (unintelligible) a little soup and coffee, (unintelligible)
13 coffee. And two -- I mean, ten decagrams, that was ten,
14 a hundred gram of bread, it was three and a half pounds.
15 And the (unintelligible) all day long. We got a quarter,
16 I mean three hundred gram of bread, which makes about one
17 half of (unintelligible), like that or more, more, about
18 three quarter pounds. No, no, the gram. 450 grams is
19 one pound. 300 grams would be two-thirds pound, yeah.

20 Q Yeah.

21 A Yeah. And nothing else.

22 Q The whole day.

23 A Yeah, and then, you know, they took away, before

1 we left to Hungary, to Germany, I mean, to Yugoslavia, they
2 took away from us everything. They left us only one shirt,
3 one under -- one suit, I mean, the suit was -- I mean this
4 was a terrible, you know, lousy. It was mud. From, I
5 remember from November until March, I didn't wash myself
6 because I didn't (unintelligible) We used to sit in a
7 (unintelligible) and it was so cold. We didn't have time
8 for nothing. Just like something I washed on this mold,
9 you know, I'd wash that and I come back. But that was the
10 terrible things, you know, they allowed. They allow. And
11 I was almost, they said, because some people died, you know,
12 from Hungary, from Lodz, and they said now, the next time,
13 it will be, then it will be me. I just said, I don't care.
14 Absolutely, you know, I didn't have no -- like nothing,
15 something life in me. I just like that. I didn't have
16 no strength, you know.

17 Q What kept you going? What allowed you to live,
18 what allowed you to live when others didn't? You say you
19 had no strength.

20 A Yeah, that's what I said. Then we were in
21 Yugoslavia. In Yugoslavia, they (unintelligible)
22 in the forest. And (unintelligible), that's 102 Jews,
23 I mean, housed, out there, and the German people just said,

1 (German phrase), that means to eat, we can't give you.
2 And the pedals on the bikes, and they -- the girls, no,
3 their husbands could tell they was in the forest, and they
4 brought us everyday a 102 apples, and big, two big pots
5 of beans or something else, you know, the soup they throwed
6 out, the soup, you shall have the thick, the bean or the
7 potato, you know. Not the soup, you know, you shall have
8 good. And then this was -- they keep us alive. It was
9 about two weeks before the (unintelligible.)

10 Q So this was after you had gotten away from the
11 camp.

12 A Not away. We were in the camp. But they,
13 the gentleman hadn't given me nothing because how I heard,
14 the (unintelligible) said, if for one Jew men just anything
15 be happen, be shot -- we will shot all of you. So they
16 hung the two men. We survived. Because of the girls from
17 the Slovenian, Yugoslavian girls and women.

18 Q How did they get the food into you at the camp?

19 A Oh, free, free. The soldiers then, it was--

20 Q The soldiers didn't care.

21 A No, no, didn't care. They couldn't give us, and
22 they was afraid. They were afraid. Nothing, didn't give us
23 nothing. Didn't do nothing then. Nothing. we didn't work

1 nothing. Just before that. I mean, about twelve, five days
2 before the Air Force (unintelligible) after five days,
3 they stop and they left us. And we (unintelligible). We
4 were --

5 Q They were afraid of what would happen to them
6 when the war ended.

7 A Yeah, they was afraid. And how they did, you
8 know. Up from the German Army, you know, the population.

9 Q And were the Germans still there when the Allies
10 came?

11 A No. No.

12 Q They had gone away?

13 A It was about ten days before the Allies came
14 and in the people's Army, they disappeared. And so we were
15 there in the city, (unintelligible)

16 Q So you weren't liberated by the Russians?

17 A No. By people, Yugoslavian. I was freed by
18 Yugoslavians.

19 Q What happened then? What happened then?
20 You were still very sick.

21 A Oh, then, they said, it was two days after the
22 war ended, you know, until we get a little -- and then
23 they give us away.

1 Q And where did you go then? What happened?

2 A Home. To Budapest. They give me, I mean, the
3 people, the Army gave us some billets, you know, tickets.

4 Q Tickets.

5 A The tickets on the train. And the train took us.
6 And then we come back, you know, we were in the Hungarian
7 border, such a ugly guy. Somebody asked me you got passport.
8 I said when I went out you didn't ask me for a passport.
9 Yeah.

10 Q But you need one to get back in though.

11 A Yeah. Now, they want passport. And so about
12 15th of May we arrived Budapest, almost healthy.

13 Q So you were very fortunate that -- to have Tito's
14 people find you as opposed to the Russians.

15 A Yeah, this is -- they, the Russians, I was to
16 Russia, I talk to the people, you know. In the Hungarian
17 army, they felt that the arrow, arrow crest, arrow crest,
18 you know, like Germany has the hachen crest, you know,
19 you know the hachen crest, like that.

20 Q The swastika.

21 A The Germany, they, Hitler, hachen crest, the
22 cross, you know.

23 Q Oh, the iron cross.

1 A The swastika, yeah. They had the arrow crest,
2 like arrow, you know. And they killed out there, the
3 Hungarian people, they were very bad what they did with
4 those. And I have been telling you maybe about twenty
5 percent came back from our -- from the ones when they went
6 out. We were there about 800, a 102 we were there, and
7 came back to about 100, 120.

8 Q When you came back, what was there for you?
9 Was your home there? Was there money in the bank?

10 A I didn't find nothing, nothing, rubbed out.

11 Q So what did you do when you arrived back in
12 Budapest? What happened?

13 A I start to work in a factory.

14 Q Did you have friends to stay with?

15 A No. Nobody, nobody, but nobody was there.
16 Not my wife, not my brother, not my sister, nobody but
17 nobody was there. So just like a stone. Later came my
18 sister, very, very sick. The ambulance brought her from
19 the patient to the hospital. That's all. Sometime I said I
20 should like to forget it, but we never, not supposed to
21 forget it.

22 Q In your life now, do you talk about it, do you --
23 are you - do you have friends where you live now who are

1 also other survivors.

2 A Yeah, yeah, I have friends here, but I'm looking
3 for the neighbors. Thank you.

4 Q That's it. He's signing the release form now.
5 The camp he was in, apparently was a numbered camp, 110/5.
6 He didn't give any other name for it except that, so I
7 guess that's all we've got.

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