

1 Interviewee - Martin Travis

2 Transcriber: Philippa Benson

3

4 A . . . Travis, from L.A., California. (This is my nervous  
5 And I'm born Warsaw, Poland. (??) I left Poland -- I didn't left  
6 Poland -- but the Germans SS grabbed me on the street when I  
7 was walking with my sister Saturday, May 9th, 1941. I was  
8 afraid all the time to sleep in the house with my parents. I  
9 have three brothers, three sisters -- most of them were married  
10 -- I was the youngest. I walk with my sisters early in the  
11 morning -- it was maybe about 7:00 o'clock in the morning --  
12 they grabbed me from the street. They separated my sister  
13 from me and they took away from the street -- this was on the  
14 Franschesska<sup>n\*</sup> Olitza (phon.) in Warsaw, Poland. They took me  
15 away and they keep me for three days because they caught lots  
16 of people -- young people from the street and then they sent  
17 them -- a place -- Scheussel -- which they built a tunnel  
18 which Hitler was supposed to come in from Berlin and they  
19 exploded big mountains and we have to clean up all the -- all  
20 the rocks, everything to build the tunnels. This building  
21 tunnels was very bad. Was very hard labor -- with big dogs,  
22 lots SS, beating, pests, lots of people couldn't stand - lots  
23 of people that dying every minute, every day. After work with  
24 our clothes they pushed us in the lake because we were very  
25 dirty from the whole day work - they grabbed the dogs who

1 couldn't swim - who was afraid to go deep in the water - they  
2 push with the dogs. You have to go swimming. Lots of them  
3 never got a chance to come back from the lake. I was not a  
4 great swimmer but I tried the best -- I was hiding my head  
5 under the water to come out from the lakes and this way we  
6 came home wet and maybe sometimes we got a little soup - most  
7 of the soup was more water than soup and this was my best  
8 dinner what I have during Warsaw ghetto.

9 In Warsaw ghetto I went through too much. My father  
10 and mother, my brother and sister - they have (crying) I have  
11 to go -- in the night he get food for them, I tried the best  
12 --they was very sick - I have <sup>typhus</sup> ~~trifles~~ (?) - it was a ghetto  
13 but I was getting better - better - They catched me after my  
14 <sup>typhus</sup> ~~trifles~~, I never saw my family. I don't know what's happened  
15 to them. When I went over there they took me to Pruszkow. I  
16 have to build a concentration camp with many people (crying) <sup>for the</sup>  
17 it make a city for them - for the SS- they were beating - they <sup>Poles</sup>  
18 were killing us. I didn't have no food. I was skinny like an  
19 old man -- like 80 years old. I couldn't stand up on my feet  
20 I was so weak. I don't believe I gonna survive the concen-  
21 tration camp. I never believe I gonna see my family any more.  
22 (Crying)

23 Later on, six months or a year later, they put lots  
24 of Russian soldiers -- maybe 6,000 of them -- most of the  
25 Russians were all killed - they were going like the flies.

1 We were going like the flies. We had to build highways. We  
2 had to build gas pipes for the gas - deep, maybe 20 feet down.  
3 Every pipe is maybe 20 or 30 feet long. I was -- I have to  
4 ~~sorter~~ those pipes -- from a different camp - the snow was  
5 maybe two, three deep high -- three deep high from snow - we  
6 have with the hand grab the snow away and sorted them out,  
7 pick them up, put them on the shoulder, straighten out - if  
8 you not straighten out with the pipes they beat us all over -  
9 no chance to bend a little bit. Sometimes if I find a little  
10 piece of bread which was old I grab from the dogs what they  
11 have - hide them dogs - the SS was bringing food from the  
12 kitchen for the dogs. I grabbed the food - I didn't care if I  
13 - they gonna kill me or no kill me - I (crying) grab it - I  
14 was hungry - I eat everything. I never believe I go survive.  
15 I have to bring (?) dead people at the camp - put them on the  
16 grave and dig for them - they shoot them who was very weak  
17 already - they already tried to kill me and shoot me because I  
18 was <sup>working</sup> watching building railroad tracks. I asked mine Kapo  
19 -they called Kapo which is a lead man - I asked him, I had to  
20 go out, I had to go to urinate. He said it's okay, just maybe  
21 five pipes, seven feet and I came back. The SS took the rifle,  
22 tried to shoot me again. I cry, I beg him, I asked, I told my  
23 kapo told me to go and I come back but took me but 15, 20  
24 minutes he let me go. From Bruskov (phon.) they took me to  
25 Auschwitz - to Birkenau which was 14 by 120, 130 people those  
railroad track (trains); no windows; closed tracks (trains),

1 closed railroad tracks like the horses - we had (?) 120 people  
2 in a railroad track. This was in July, 1944. I was very  
3 weak. I took off everything what I got; I was trying to go  
4 the door but I couldn't go. I forced myself to go closer to  
5 the door to catch a little air from the side from the doors.  
6 I came to Birkenau-Auschwitz. I think maybe ten people sur-  
7 viv ed from éach railroad track. They didn't give us a chance  
8 so we could offer (?) our clothes for our shoes - they pushed  
9 us, they screamed - they killed us. They did everything with  
10 us and they were sorting the people - left and right, left and  
11 right all the young. I went over there. There I started -  
12 tatoood - on everyone who was a little young, who got a  
13 chance to survive. I got my tattoo on my left hand. I was in  
14 Auschwitz a few months. I didn't believe I gonna survive.  
15 And then they took us to the gas chamber. I step in the gas  
16 chamber - the whole group - I know already I'm going in -  
17 I said goodbye to my friends (crying) - to Chalip (?),  
18 We know we won't be coming out any more and they give us a  
19 towel, little piece of soap, the last minute came three SS  
20 officer and they took us away because they need some people  
21 for Gleiwitz. Gleiwitz Three. And we went over there for  
22 Gleiwitz Three maybe three or six months building ?? *already over there*  
23 and then evacuate again to Blechhammer. I was *working* ~~watching~~ *all kind of stuff* day  
24 and night, day and night in Blechhammer. Many people died on  
25 the highways - I have no chance to survive any more, I was so

1 weak - my friend, which is today, his name is Salsman - he's  
2 here today, he was very young like me - maybe but 19, 20 years  
3 old - he grabbed me - my head on his shoulder - went into  
4 Blechhammer - the camp. I sleep on the floor all night, I  
5 didn't know, I was unconscious - I didn't know what was going  
6 on with me. And the next morning they took out about ten  
7 thousand people - I don't know where they went. And we were a  
8 group of 50 people - I was standing around in the front of the  
9 lane from the group and I didn't see no SS soldiers; cross the  
10 street from the camp there was a forest. I told the guys -  
11 this was in January, 1945 - I told my friends "Let's run.  
12 It's nothing to lose any more - we are dead." We ran, maybe  
13 about six guys - and this was in January - with lots of snow,  
14 maybe three feet deep -- all snow. We covered the snow our-  
15 selves - we laid down over there for two, three days. We have  
16 nothing to lose. I told the guys, "Let's go again on the  
17 highway. Let's march. What's left to happen? Who cares?"  
18 We were marching and marching until we came to Gleiwitz Three.  
19 They stopped us on the highway - the SS and asked us "What  
20 you doing here?" I told them our commander for the camp told  
21 us to go - we have to do more work for the camp. They let us  
22 go. Three days later we were afraid - we have to hide in the  
23 camp -- after two, three days we were afraid maybe German are  
24 still over there maybe they come into us, looking around for  
25 us - we didn't know. We hide under the machinery - all kind

1 of places until we send out two guys in the morning - was  
2 about 5:00 o'clock in the morning we hear lots artillery - we  
3 saw lots airplanes - we didn't know what is going on - if it's  
4 Germans or who knows what is going on until somebody came back  
5 to us - two friends of ours and told us they think this is not  
6 Germans, maybe they are Russians. After a few hours later we  
7 saw was a little more light - was no darkness any more and we  
8 saw the ?? - we started smiling - we started talking to each  
9 other, we started running for the kitchen - used to be from  
10 the SS - we grab bread - what ?? was left from them - we grab  
11 bread - we grab all kinds jelly and began eating - we didn't  
12 eat like human beings - we eat like horses - like goats (?) -  
13 we didn't know - we were -- we didn't know how to eat even.  
14 We grabbed.

15 Q How many days like had you gone at a time you think  
16 without getting anything to eat?

17 A I -- I think days - days of food - ??  
18 I didn't know what is ??? (crying)

19 Until January '45 - January 1945 I was liberated by  
20 the Russians -- some of the Russians - there were lots of  
21 Jewish officers - Jewish soldiers - they grab us, they kiss us  
22 - they told us grab all kind of guns, shoot the Nazis, kill  
23 them whenever you can. I did it! I killed them whenever I  
24 can. I grab food. I grab everything. I have to do it. I  
25 didn't care any more. I had to pay them back for they did to

1 friends, what they did to my family - what they did to the  
2 Jewish people - then was my satisfaction later on whatever I  
3 could do - I am now very happy I came back to Washington DC  
4 today. I can see all my good friends -- all the Jews coming  
5 together - I didn't have a chance to go to Israel - I came  
6 here to Washington DC in April and this was last Sunday - '83  
7 - and I'm -- I can't express what I have on my mind for so  
8 many years - (crying) my heart is ?? (crying) I had to speak  
9 up <sup>Jewish people</sup> and people all over the world don't have to go through  
10 what we Jews went through in our life but I have to tell you  
11 the truth - I see in 40 years what's going on in Europe -  
12 what's going on in America - we come every half year - and  
13 Bobby <sup>Babi?</sup> (?) which was the chief gestapo from (?) killed 7,000  
14 Jews - so many friends under ground in the United States -  
15 left in ?? this country -- let them move around to Bolivia, to  
16 Europe, and we have maybe 20,000 Nazi Gestapos - where they  
17 took away the money, the gold from the teeth of the people -  
18 now the big industrialists - big bankers - big politicians and  
19 they're making from them great people - where is justice  
20 today? This country let them move around in this country for  
21 twenty, forty years here. And they listen the radio - they  
22 hear what is going on - they see the television - they see the  
23 books - no one is doing nothing - ??? Israelies, the Jews,  
24 they trying to help, they should be ashamed even President  
25 Roosevelt didn't do for us nothing. 1500 Jews from Germany

1 they tried to come to this country to liberate - to have  
2 freedom - they have no space for them. They send them back to  
3 Europe until they put them in Auschwitz - they burned every  
4 one of them. This is my end of my story what I like to express  
5 today to you I very grateful you let me express - you let me  
6 tell all my story.

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25