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HOLOCAUST MEDIA PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

ZELDA LEWIS and LEO LEWIS

* * *

1 Q. Would you tell me your name, please.

2 A. My name is Zelda Rose Marine.

3 Q. And where were you born?

4 A. Born in Poland, city DUM-BROV-A-GRA-NEETCH-A. Age,
5 '25, July the 7th.

6 Q. So in 1939, can you tell me what happened to you,
7 please.

8 A. In 1939, when the war broke out in Poland, my father
9 was drafted to the Army, to the Polish Army, and from
10 then he was sent off to war, which the war lasted
11 only eight days. And then he was taken in prisoner
12 of war to the Russians. The Russians fought then
13 together I believe with the Germans or whoever. I
14 was too young to know all the politics at that
15 particular time.

16 It took him about a year to come back. The time
17 in between was extremely frustrating. Quite a few
18 people kept moving on, like -- like, you know,
19 leaving the place, you know, being afraid that the
20 Germans marching in and destroying, not only bombing,
21 but shooting people for nothing. The fear spread
22 tremendously, particularly amongst the Jewish
23 people. Since I'm Jewish, I experienced this all the
24 way.

25 It took about a year by the time my father came

1 back. He was -- he was presumed missing. By a
2 miracle he came back. When he came back, the first
3 thing when he came into the house, which still rings
4 in my ears, the most beautiful thing he said, "I came
5 back with God's help. I wanted to be together with
6 my family, with my wife and children, so I'm back
7 here."

8 He took a great chance to come back because he
9 had to cross so many borders to be able to come
10 back. It was Russian border, German, and all kind,
11 you know, people in between which he had to face up,
12 and he took such a great chance because if he were
13 caught after hours -- there was after hours which you
14 were not permitted to walk the streets, he could be
15 shot at that time.

16 Not knowing I suppose all about it, he went,
17 like he said, with the speed of God. Then he came
18 home, we enjoyed a few moments together. Then my
19 father was again taken, sent away, to prison, to a
20 German concentration camp.

21 Q. Where was he deported to, do you know?

22 A. At that particular time, he was in a small camp,
23 which we knew about it, my mother, and of course I
24 was a youngster, the oldest child in the family. He
25 was in EED-IF-WIKE-ER, not far from Katowice, that's

1 also in Poland. He used to correspond with us.
2 There was times in the beginning which he was allowed
3 to come home.

4 Now, we were puzzled by it because the Germans
5 did not do such thing, but this happened to be a
6 place where my father was very efficient. He was a
7 military, actually, very well trained in the
8 military. He served in the Polish Army three years,
9 and after the war, when they drafted him in 1939, he
10 was 39 years old. They took him back to the Army
11 because he was what they call already a soldier, a
12 soldier with know how. Like you pick up youngsters
13 which doesn't know how to do anything in the Army,
14 naturally you have to train them. He didn't have to
15 be trained. Maybe it was just a refresher course or
16 whatever. But, you know, thank God he was spared at
17 that time.

18 Unfortunately he came back because he loved us
19 so dearly, he wanted to be together with our family,
20 so naturally he came back, but it was very costly to
21 my father because that's where he lost his life.

22 He was in the EED-IF-WIKE-ER camp for a while.
23 I don't know what happened later to my father because
24 a year later, I was sent into camp.

25 Q. Where were you sent?

1 A. The way we were sent into camp is the most tragic,
2 most horrible thing which I hope and pray never
3 happens again to no mankind. I pray again that my
4 children, my family should be spared all that agony.
5 To be separated with the mother when you're 14 and a
6 half years old is the most tragic thing, and not to
7 know what happened to your mother and to the
8 children, which I called my brothers -- my one
9 brother and two sisters, children, our children, our
10 family, we were a very warm family, very
11 affectionate, lovable people.

12 I don't think I ever met people so warm and
13 loving like my parents were. I adored my little
14 brother, little brother, which he was only at that
15 time ten years old, and my baby sister, eight years
16 old, and my second sister from me was only 12 years
17 old. So they were children. And I adored them all.

18 From there on, when my father was sent away, a
19 few months later they kept -- they had -- the Germans
20 put on all homes like a bulletin, you know, that all
21 Jews must concentrate in a certain place. If they
22 should be captured in the house and not come to the
23 particular place, they will be shot.

24 There -- they made a panic. Let's put it this
25 way, they created fear amongst us. Actually, we

1 could have got away maybe by hiding ourself. But we
2 were so afraid in case we captured, in case somebody
3 from our family captured that they shoot us. How can
4 a person -- how can a person unarmed protect themselves
5 against weapons right in the front of your face?

6 I have experienced in my own city before, they
7 took me to camp standing against the wall, which I
8 only was 14 and a half years old, with my hands up
9 and standing there for hours for nothing, not knowing
10 if they're going to pull the trigger.

11 Q. Was this in the concentration camp or was this
12 before?

13 A. No, that was before concentration camp. That was
14 before they send me away. That was right in my own
15 city where I lived. Can you imagine what impression
16 that makes on a 14 and a half year old? Not knowing
17 what's going to happen to you, the fear, the
18 tremendous fear which remains with you -- remained
19 with me I think for the rest of my life. It isn't
20 something you just throw away or shut away or just
21 forget about it. It's with you. And, if I may say,
22 it's more vivid now with me than it was 40 years ago.

23 Q. Why do you think that is?

24 A. Because at that particular time I wanted to block out
25 all the pain.

1 Q. So you were numb then?

2 A. Oh, the tragedy. I couldn't live anymore. I
3 couldn't cry anymore. I couldn't suffer anymore. So
4 to survive, it's like human nature. It's a matter of
5 survival. To survive, you fight for it. The only
6 way you do is block it out. And I think nature does
7 it to you, without even knowing, because it's -- the
8 inner feelings that -- human feelings within you
9 tries to protect themselves, like we have certain
10 things in our body which is protecting us against
11 disease or against other problems I suppose. We have
12 certain strength within our body which is protecting,
13 God for bid, we get sick, so we can withstand all
14 that sickness and all the disease, whatever.

15 So that was like that, believe it or not. The
16 fact is, when they sent me into camp --

17 Q. Where did they send you?

18 A. They sent me in first to -- they call it DU-LAG.
19 DU-LAG was extremely -- this hall remind me a
20 little. It scared me when I came here. Extremely
21 large in size and concentrate more and more Jews from
22 around the whole area.

23 Q. Were you separated from your mother?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And your sister?

1 A. Yes. Before I was sent there, if you remember, just
2 a second ago when I told you that we were called, we
3 have to come and register to a certain point, and if
4 we are find home, we be shot. All of us, dressed up
5 in the best of clothes naturally because we going to
6 register, we wanted to make a good impression on the
7 Germans. So if you look presentable, maybe they
8 won't send you to some ugly, horrible camp or destroy
9 you. So we all knew what they were doing even though
10 we never talked about it.

11 Q. How did you know?

12 A. Word spread. You see killings, people in the street
13 for nothing. You see capturing children, putting
14 them against the wall with their hands up for
15 nothing.

16 Q. Did you know about the camps?

17 A. Yes. For a while my father and mother kept me hiding
18 in our own city, in hiding by a gentile family, which
19 there was a very good friend to my father, and he
20 kept me for a while. But I was so lonely for my
21 family. I cried day and night. I want to go home to
22 be together. And maybe it was the right thing to
23 do. At least I spent a little longer with my family,
24 a few more weeks together. So I came back home, and
25 I was so happy to be together with my mother and

1 father again. That didn't last. It was only for
2 months, few months. There was interruption between,
3 you know.

4 Then they send my father away. Then later on,
5 that was the day when we had to register, which my
6 father wasn't with us. It was only my mother, myself
7 and my little sister and my brother. What they did,
8 they put us in rows, like more or less like cattle,
9 selection. They called it work selection. We didn't
10 know. My mother weeped terrible because she was
11 afraid they were taking her children. I weeped
12 terrible because I was afraid was taking my mama
13 away, you know. So all these things, can you
14 imagine, to endure when you're only 14 and a half
15 years old.

16 Before we know, we stood there a whole day and
17 selected backyard I call or open field. Guarded all
18 around with -- with tanks or with big trucks. Do you
19 know that I lived through now 40 years right now.
20 God, there was big trucks around, and inside they
21 were standing with machine guns. Make one wrong
22 move, da-da-da-da, good-bye. You see what I mean?
23 So we stood there like cattle, like animals, and were
24 selected like animal and cattle, which I -- may God
25 forgive me, I hate those people together. And I pray

1 to God he should be the one to pay them, in full.

2 You don't take human life and select like
3 cattle. You don't treat human being with disgrace
4 for nothing. You don't take innocent children and
5 kill and separate them from their mothers. You have
6 to pay for that. I trust in God, and I pray to God,
7 believe it or not, daily, that God should punish
8 those people.

9 You do not take other people's life for
10 nothing. If you don't pay, your children pay for
11 it. If your children don't pay, your children's
12 children pay for it. They will not get away with it,
13 believe it or not.

14 You may think I'm a hateful person. I am not.
15 I love the sun. I love the earth. I love people. I
16 love flowers. I love nature. I love life. But I
17 cannot see destruction. I cannot see children
18 killed. I cannot see hurt people. I cannot see it.
19 And imagine in this age to see all that.

20 When they took my mother away and my brother --
21 my little brother and sister, I remained with my
22 youngest sister, the second one was to me. We were
23 holding each other's hand like two little kids and
24 clinging to each other.

25 We came back to this open house, which it was

1 robbed. Our house was completely robbed when we came
2 back. Nothing was in it except furniture, odds and
3 ends, and nobody, no father, no mother, no little
4 sister, no brother, except my second sister from me.
5 She was only a year and a half younger. We were
6 there for a while, and then we found one woman, aunt,
7 she was my aunt. She took us in more or less like a
8 guardian.

9 I think we spent with our aunt for about two or
10 three weeks, then again selection come, calling that
11 all young people must go to work. Even though I
12 worked in the city, they took us into a certain place
13 where you work for the military, like sewing. I knew
14 nothing about sewing, but, you know, if you have to
15 survive, you learn how to put the needle in quick.
16 So I was sewing then enough.

17 Of course, my little sister was extremely
18 bright. She was very fair skinned, blonde, blue
19 eyes. She could get away for Aryan, what they call,
20 very easy. But she cling to me. And she had a
21 cousin which she adored, and she was trying to help
22 her because she was left with a child. Her husband
23 was sent away, and she was all alone. She adored her
24 cousin. She was like our oldest sister. So between
25 myself and my cousin and that aunt that took us in,

1 she wanted to be together.

2 She could have very easy survive if she was to
3 go to some Polish family because she was so fair,
4 easy to be disguised. As a matter of fact, she was
5 the one, the courageous little 12 and a half years,
6 which she used to go into stores and bring us bread
7 home, which we were not allowed to go in the German
8 streets. We were forbidden to go there.

9 Q. This was right after the invasion?

10 A. That was right after the invasion, during the time,
11 in the process of sending away people, separating the
12 families.

13 Q. Could she have maybe have gotten false papers?

14 A. She could have, but somehow they didn't.

15 Q. And you were dark?

16 A. And I carry -- well, I was brown. I had light brown,
17 brown eyes.

18 Q. Brown eyes.

19 A. I carry extreme guilt, believe it or not, to this
20 day. What is my guilt is? Because I was with my
21 little sister, and then we both were caught. Believe
22 it or not, we were caught, like you catch animals,
23 wild animals. The SPCA caught us, you know what I
24 mean?

25 Q. I understand.

1 A. Then the SPC and the SPCA took us in. Then I realize
2 my baby sister going to a camp. I knew what they
3 going to do. Even though I was only at that time 15,
4 14 and a half --

5 Q. You knew about the gassing?

6 A. Not about the gassing; I knew only labor camp. I
7 figure, I'm older. Imagine, a year and a half
8 older. I'm stronger than my sister. I can work
9 faster. That's what I told my sister: You know, I
10 am stronger than you are, and I can work, but you are
11 still so little. Why don't you go home.

12 And do you know what I said to her? You know,
13 honey, I watch you run. That's what she did, ran
14 away and went back home.

15 They send me into camp. In the beginning, I was
16 still allowed like more or less to write once a month
17 to a card, open card, home. Later that was against.
18 I lost complete contact.

19 I was in camp from the beginning, 1942, that was
20 a concentration camp which during the process of
21 being in the camp I was sent to several other camps,
22 like interchange camps, you know. They take you in
23 first to a selection camp and select you. If you
24 strong and if you can work -- and I was young and
25 pretty and healthy at that time, and they wasn't

1 taking much chances there by selecting me. One
2 finger and I knew I was going to go to work. And I
3 worked.

4 The good part -- I was working in a weaving
5 factory. Never knew anything about weaving, but they
6 taught me. They had people which they stood over you
7 and teach you do this, do that, naturally, and you
8 learned if you have to.

9 Q. Tell me what you did in that factory.

10 A. In the factory, believe it or not, I had four giant
11 -- to a girl my age, that was giant -- machines,
12 weaving machines. Again, I go back maybe, being
13 young, romantic, and fantasizing -- I used to cry day
14 and night. The first few yards or even hundreds of
15 yards of cloth which I weaved, I learned how to
16 weave.

17 Q. So you wove thread into cloth?

18 A. Oh -- no, no. It was all threaded. That's all you
19 had to do was start the machine, let it run, and I
20 made cloth.

21 Q. This was cloth for uniforms, military uniforms?

22 A. Cloth, basically for the public, I think.

23 Q. I see.

24 A. But I don't know what the Germans done with it, you
25 know. We were forced to do that. So -- and then

1 while I was weaving the cloth, the tears were
2 dropping in it. I cried and cried for months. But
3 then all of a sudden the tears dried out.

4 When I came in first to that factory, the noise
5 is extreme. If you young, your sensitive ears. I
6 thought, I'm deaf and I'm mute. I couldn't talk to
7 anybody because I thought nobody can hear me, but
8 after a while, the noise blocks out on you. Your
9 ears, your eardrums begin to be accustomed or more or
10 less adjusted to the sound, to the noise. After
11 this, I used to pretend, and I think that's what
12 saved me.

13 Q. And what did you pretend?

14 A. The pretends was that I'm standing in front of four
15 pianos, believe it or not, pianos of all things, and
16 that the pianos are playing music for me. Can you
17 imagine?

18 Q. Did you play an instrument, a piano?

19 A. No, I did not, but I loved music. And I pretended
20 that the pianos was playing. And I was extremely
21 good at it, to learn the machine to run the machine.
22 I learned, 'til this day, if you wake me up in the
23 middle of the night, I can make a weaver's not. You
24 know, usually threads tear. The machine goes, goes,
25 goes, and then if something comes in between, it

1 tears. You take out the spool, and then what you do
2 is replace the spool in the right position, and the
3 threads behind it tear. So you can sit -- lay over
4 the machine, over that -- they have like upright --
5 what do you call? Upright pedal where the threads
6 come through. I don't know how to explain it.

7 Q. I can understand.

8 A. Do you understand what I say?

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. And you have to thread it. So I kept threading and
11 threading, laying on machine, threading. So I became
12 very cautious after a while to watch there should not
13 be a big -- they used to call KRAUSH, when you
14 stretch it and tear it, a big KRAUSH, tear. I
15 learned to speak the language very well, German.

16 Q. You learned to speak German?

17 A. Oh, yes. I lived more or less on the German border
18 anyways. I lived in SHA-LAIZ-YA, and that's not far
19 from Germany. So, you know, we were a little
20 inducted to the language. We never fluently spoke.

21 Q. So you spoke three languages?

22 A. Yes. While I was living there, naturally, you live
23 in a country, you learn a language, like I learned
24 English, you know what I mean. And at that time I
25 was very young. When you're young, you learn the

1 language very much better. So I spoke very fluently
2 German. As a matter of fact, I even speak now, even
3 though I don't speak it -- the language at all in my
4 house. Absolutely not. I speak very fluently
5 Polish.

6 Q. Jewish?

7 A. I speak Jewish, Yiddish, naturally English, as you
8 can hear me.

9 Q. And beautifully.

10 A. Thank you. I understand -- I understand quite a few
11 Slavic languages. Polish is a Slavic -- considered
12 in the Slavic language. So even if a person speaks
13 Russian slowly, I might pick a word here and there.
14 I understand Czechoslovakian. I think I could
15 communicate somehow with the people. I don't speak
16 French.

17 As a matter of fact, I had a French guest in my
18 house, and it was amazing how I spoke -- I mean how
19 we understood each other. She says one word, I said
20 another word. We kind of got together and we
21 understood each other. I think to begin with I was
22 linguistic. I learned my languages very well. I
23 don't know if I could do it now, you know. It's a
24 little harder when you go more or less congested,
25 your mine becomes a little slower, and we become a

1 little more tired. And I think that's what can cause
2 it.

3 Now, let me go back again to my family, which I
4 think they are the most important thing to mention.
5 I survive, for whatever reason God had, but I
6 think --

7 Q. Did you stay -- you stayed in this camp working in
8 the textile factory?

9 A. Yes, but I was transferred from camp to different
10 camps.

11 Q. And you did different work?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Same work?

14 A. No, the first -- the very first camp, believe it or
15 not, which is so vivid to me, believe it -- it's 38
16 years or 39 years, it's so vivid, like yesterday.
17 When they sent me into the first camp, it was a ^
18 Wermacht factory that was a munitions factory. They
19 didn't produce the munitions, but they make parts for
20 planes.

21 We were under strict guard, naturally, and
22 guarded by the S.S. women daily, day and night, and
23 the S.S. woman guarded -- I mean, they were walking
24 with us to the factory, walking us back from the
25 factory, guarding us in camp.

1 Well, while I was into factory experienced a few
2 things -- first of all, at that particular time we
3 were not only prisoners. There were prisoners of war
4 men.

5 Q. In the camp?

6 A. Not in the camp. They were working in the factory.
7 We were separated totally.

8 Q. Women were separated from the men?

9 A. Yes. First of all, there were maybe some camps which
10 had men, too, but I happened to be all the time in a
11 woman's camp. In a way, I consider that fortunate
12 because it's harder for a woman, even when you're
13 younger, to see a man cry for food. We went to bed
14 with terrible tears, crying only for hunger.

15 The first few months when I was in camp, I cried
16 for my mother and father and family daily. Then I
17 start crying for bread daily. I was so hungry that
18 only a piece of bread would have suited me. Where
19 would I get that piece of bread? If they gave me
20 daily a square slice, which -- I think it was made
21 out of clay. They said they used to take -- grind up
22 potato peels, make bread out of it, whatever reason,
23 clay.

24 And I was so glad to get that piece of clay, you
25 know, honey, and then they cook the hot soup which

1 you fished for a little piece of potato or kohlrabi.
2 I don't know if -- we have here that vegetable,
3 kohlrabi that's like --

4 Q. Turnip?

5 A. Like a turnip, something in the turnip field.

6 Q. A root?

7 A. It's not a root. It's a yellow vegetable. It's
8 close to the -- what do you call?

9 Q. Squash?

10 A. Squash, something. But it's a much harder
11 vegetable. It takes hours actually to boil. Took
12 them maybe 20 minutes to boil, it was half raw, but
13 you ate it because you were -- I was so hungry, you
14 know what I mean? But -- and many days I went to bed
15 with those terrible tears, for hunger later. And I
16 kept feeling guilty of it. I say, why don't I cry
17 for my mother and father? Why do I always cry for
18 food? At that particular time, the stomach took
19 over.

20 Now, let me finish up about the factory, which
21 is important. It was the Wermachts munitions
22 factory, parts for the plane. We were guarded by the
23 S.S. woman. We were not allowed to talk to anybody
24 around, anybody, including the people where we worked
25 together, and including the people what were together

1 with me in camp. When you're at work, you're not
2 supposed to converse or talk. So we were supposed to
3 be silent for hours.

4 Then for punishment what they did to us,
5 naturally we were young girls -- I was with some very
6 beautiful girls, they picked us like numbers, and
7 they put the scar -- they made us wear scarves up
8 over our forehead, not to show one hair. Now, being
9 young, you know, sometimes you take a chance. When
10 she turned her back, could she watch 50 people in one
11 shot, you know? You took that scarf off. The minute
12 she turned, you put the scarf back on.

13 Well, I had gorgeous at that time. Somehow we
14 communicated in a mute way. To who? To the
15 prisoners in war, the other one. There were military
16 prisoners. I saw Italian prisoners sitting on the
17 wall and crying like babies because they were
18 hungry. There was one there, Yugoslavian, from
19 Yugoslavia. There were for -- I think Polish. They
20 were from different countries there, all prisoners of
21 war, military people. You could see the military
22 uniforms stripped of whatever they wore.

23 Well, how we made contact, by moving our hands
24 and whisper with our lips without even talking.
25 Unfortunately, while I was there, some of those men,

1 believe it or not, starving themself felt sorry for
2 girls like us, and like more or less throwing over a
3 piece of bread or something to be nice.

4 I think I had a few lovers while I was there,
5 believe it or not, throwing me kisses, sending --
6 throwing papers written on it how much they love me,
7 for nothing. They never seen me before, you know
8 what I mean? But I think people have to keep alive,
9 and to keep alive you wanted to be human, and that
10 was part of being human I think.

11 Q. Expressing emotion.

12 A. Expressing emotion. Practically I said if I survive
13 the war, I'll go after one of the fellows,
14 particularly the Yugoslavian fellow made a good
15 impression on me. And he was the one to throw his
16 ration to me constantly, and he was I think either a
17 sergeant or captain, working over the front of his
18 thing. And the minute they saw me, they were
19 whistling.

20 I used to go by with a cart and bring to the --
21 to the part where I worked certain tools, like, you
22 know, carting back and forth with tools. While I was
23 walking back and forth, they used to throw those
24 things to me, like his ration, half of his ration.

25 Q. Isn't that something.

- 1 A. Sharing with me the food.
- 2 Q. Goodness.
- 3 A. And I consider this not -- very humane, and of course
4 very grateful, even though I never said a word to the
5 man, never. I can't speak Yugoslav fluently. I was
6 not allowed, and I was watched by the S.S. woman.
7 From there on, a year later I was sent to KUTS-ERT
8 they call it. KUTS-ERT is concentrateed camp, which
9 it's not anymore. First six hundred woman, then a
10 few thousand women, and that is the camp where I
11 remain for the rest -- until 1945.
- 12 Q. First there were six hundred women and then there
13 were --
- 14 A. -- a few thousand. They concentrate us to a bigger
15 camp. Fortunate for me, while I think -- while I'm
16 sitting here is that I was not sent to Dachau or to
17 Auschwitz where my mother unfortunately was sent, and
18 I knew later where they sent her, how they transport
19 her away, that I was not sent into any of the other
20 murderous camps where they had those crematoriums.
- 21 Q. How did you find out where your mother was sent?
- 22 A. When we were separated, and when they took him away
23 in those trucks, and I thought I'd be sent away to a
24 camp because I was young and ready. They wanted
25 young people like, you know -- young people for

1 work. I cried for my mother desperately, but then I
2 saw how they pushing them and forcing them into those
3 trucks like cattle. And later on word spread that
4 all the transport went to Auschwitz. Maybe some
5 Polish people find out. We lived in Poland, you
6 know. Maybe other people find out that this
7 transport is going towards Auschwitz.

8 Q. That's how you found out?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. I need to stop you for a minute.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. It's too noisy in here.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Can we go out?

15 A. Yes, of course.

16 (Discussion off the record.)

17 A. One day I was reading in the paper, and I -- one
18 particular reporter in the paper -- writer impressed
19 me very much with his writing. I liked the way he
20 writes, so I called up to the news and I asked if I
21 could see him, if I could have interview. Of course
22 he asked me I should come down to the news. I said,
23 listen, when I'll come down to the news, I'll be a
24 little more shaken up. I wouldn't mind if you could
25 take the time, come to my house, and I'll gladly

1 speak to you. Naturally he came to the house. He
2 was very obliging.

3 He came to the house, and he took it in
4 shorthand whatever I told him, and to my own
5 surprise, he had a half a page, including my picture
6 in it. I was so surprised. I said, my gosh, what
7 did I do to deserve that? But he was extremely
8 polite, and he is a good writer. His name is Anthony
9 Cartinelli. I was very pleased what he wrote.

10 Q. Isn't that marvelous.

11 A. Maybe a few words, you know, he took out because I
12 suppose he didn't want to say everything I told him.
13 And he also called me up the following day and said,
14 Zelda, I can't do nothing about it. This is out of
15 my hands. Whoever sets that up takes out certain
16 things, you know.

17 Q. The editors.

18 A. The editors. And so I understood that. But what
19 he's done, it was just facinating. I think --

20 Q. A story about your experiences?

21 A. Yeah, about my experiences in camp, and about my
22 experiences as a whole. Mostly I talked about my
23 parents and saying where I've been, you know, and
24 what happened during the war. But they modified it.
25 They took out a few things, see.

1 Q. That's marvelous.

2 A. I was very pleased whatever they'd done. I had so
3 many calls. Imagine, people calling me, which I
4 never, never knew them. But they saw me someplace
5 and they told me -- told me on the phone, you know,
6 we recognize your face.

7 Q. Other survivors?

8 A. No.

9 Q. No?

10 A. They are American citizens, people living in the
11 city. I suppose they knew me from seeing me. You
12 know, you live in the city 35 years, people get to
13 know you, you know, neighborhood people, neighbors,
14 friends, business people, you know through different
15 occasions going. My husband is a mason, so we belong
16 to different places, you know. So you get together,
17 people get to know you. So people called me from all
18 over to find out -- and very sympathetic, because
19 Cartinelli found out that I like poetry and he put it
20 in a way of poetry. It was beautiful.

21 Q. Isn't that nice.

22 A. I have several copies. Maybe some day I'll mail one
23 to you.

24 Q. Would you let me give you my address?

25 A. Yes, yes.

1 Q. Now, I want to ask you two things. Would you be more
2 comfortable if you leaned against -- you know,
3 there's something that might give you a little
4 support for your back.

5 A. That's okay. I'm fine, thank you.

6 Q. Okay. And my next question is --

7 A. Difficulty with breathing.

8 Q. Absolutely.

9 A. Not just my eyes, but breathing.

10 Q. Absolutely. That's fine.

11 A. I appreciate that.

12 Q. I'm going to sit a little closer to you.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. Shall we continue where we left off?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Now, I think we left off the time when I was in camp
18 working and the FAUD-ER M, which it was this
19 ammunition factory. Actually, it was a factory which
20 they make parts for planes. From there on we spent,
21 at that particular time, about six months in that
22 factory. Then we worked for another six or seven
23 months in the weaving factory. From there on we were
24 sent to this concentrated camp for a few thousand
25 people, woman, only woman. In the time when I was in

1 camp working for -- I even remember the name of the
2 company, FEER-MA-GEARING. GEARING was the name of
3 the company, their weaving factory. We were walking
4 -- getting up in the morning, they used to wake us up
5 in the morning, four o'clock in the morning,. By
6 four, 4:30, you had to be out, rain, snow, shine,
7 frost, whatever, out, out to be counted. They put
8 you out like armies -- army style, what you call, you
9 know, in rows. And you had to identify -- call out
10 your number. As a matter of fact, I think I still
11 remember the number. I was not at that time to do
12 because our was not 40,000 people but just a few
13 thousand. So they didn't bother to tattoo you. They
14 only put -- like in the army, they have a chain with
15 a number on you. I think, if I'm rights, my number
16 was sieben und fiersig, forty-seven eight -- I don't
17 remember the rest. Three numbers I remember.

18 Q. Was this on a metal tag?

19 A. It was on a metal tag which I carried.

20 Q. Do you still have that?

21 A. No. Unfortunately, after the war, I had a coat and
22 one dress which it was all the time with me during
23 the period in camp, that's all I had And I kept
24 washing the dress at night, hanging it over the bunk
25 which I slept, and in the morning wearing because I

1 was afraid of lice. There was a lot of lice because
2 we were quite congested. We were sleeping 40 woman
3 in one room. The room wasn't larger than -- I would
4 say 18 by 22, something like it, in size. 40 woman.
5 They had bunks, and we were sliding into the bunks
6 like herrings, three triple bunks. And you had to
7 get up quick in the morning. There wasn't time of
8 fussing to wash or something.

9 When you came to work, then you kind of sponge
10 yourself more or less. When I came back from work,
11 then I took a shower and a cold, ice and ice flow,
12 cold water just to keep clean. But, let me tell you
13 how started the day.

14 The day started with no food, standing for an
15 hour outside being counted up, marching for another
16 hour to work. It was like going for two, two and a
17 half miles, you know -- it was kilometers at that
18 time. About three, four kilometers to march to the
19 factory. And they gave us hard shoes, wooden shoes.
20 You know what happened the winter with wooden shoes?
21 The snow builds up on there and it sticks like gum.
22 And you walk like you -- I'm laughing now. It was
23 terrible. Only young people can endure that. You
24 walk like you walk on -- you hold onto each other for
25 security like, you know, side by side people are.

1 You just hole onto each other because you afraid you
2 fall on your face. You know, you build-up snow, and
3 snow sticks to the --

4 Q. So you're walking on --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. -- on high --

7 A. On high things, walking, because there was no other
8 shoes. Those were the only shoes they gave us, was
9 those wooden shoes. Anyways, coming to the camp,
10 naturally there was -- coming into the factory was
11 almost like a relief. The factory was bright lit
12 because you have to work and it was warm because a
13 weaving factory must be warm otherwise the machines
14 don't operate. That warmth embrace you. My God, it
15 was so good to feel the warm. But hungry, terribly,
16 terribly hungry. Then by eight o'clock, something --
17 they gave us one cup of coffee, which it was black,
18 dirty water. I don't think was coffee. Something
19 dirty mixed up. And one slice of that clay bread
20 which I told you. That was supposed to be for the
21 rest of the day.

22 Lunchtime, which they had to interrupt the
23 machine -- the machine could not run. They want us
24 to run but not the machine, so they stopped the whole
25 factory and actually the Germans who guarded us and

1 instructed us had to go for lunch. So they stopped
2 the machine. What we did was sit on the floor near
3 the machine, no food. Can you imagine, to stand
4 around for all those hours with no food. There were
5 days which they offered us a soup, and the soup was
6 made like I told you, one potato or one piece of
7 kohlrabi, you see, and you were fishing in the water
8 for that other piece, you know what I mean? And that
9 was to continue for the rest of the day until six
10 o'clock.

11 Six o'clock when we came back to the barracks,
12 that wasn't finished. There we had to say again for
13 a pale. A pale needs to be counted again, like we
14 were running someplace. Where would we go? There
15 was no place to go, anyways. And they were watching
16 us, guarding us. How can you get away from people
17 like that?

18 Q. Did anyone ever escape, do you know, try to escape?

19 A. As far as I know, nobody would I know. Maybe some
20 other places, but not in the camp I'm in. Never
21 heard of anybody. But there were people which were
22 trying desperately to steal a piece of bread or some
23 potato someplace, and if they ever found on them a
24 potato, which they did not supposed to be, you were
25 punished for it. First of all, they cut your hair to

1 bare.

2 Q. Shaved your head?

3 A. Shave your head, right. Second, you were punished
4 with all kind of manual work around the camp. Even
5 you were dead tired you had to do it, and you better
6 do it, otherwise who knows what they do next day to
7 you, if that big truck comes with the S.S. and select
8 you again.

9 They had selections right in the camp, every
10 four, five weeks the truck came. Who's sick? Even
11 you had one aspirin from that nurse -- the supposedly
12 nurse. She was not a nurse. Who's sick? This
13 particular day you have a little temperature, you say
14 you sick. Up, on the truck. Everybody knew where
15 the truck was going.

16 Q. Auschwitz?

17 A. Naturally. They send you to the nearest crematorium
18 thing.

19 Q. Was that Auschwitz?

20 A. I don't know if on our camp how close it was to
21 Auschwitz. Maybe there was another camp close, which
22 I had no idea what camp was close with the
23 crematories. But we knew.

24 Q. By then you knew, though? By then you knew?

25 A. Oh, human instincts, believe it or not, one word

1 spread around so quick. Maybe somebody was more
2 quick more clever, more aggressive to find out the
3 real thing. And the word spread around very quick,
4 by mouth only, too. There were no radios, no papers,
5 nothing. And no pencils to write.

6 Do you know, after the war, even though I had my
7 primary school, seven years of public schools, I
8 didn't know how to write. You forget how to write or
9 hold a pen, a pencil. Your reading becomes very
10 bad. There's nothing to read. You never listen to
11 radio, you never see nothing, you know. You only
12 know to work and to come home and to keep yourself
13 clean that, you know, the lice shouldn't eat you or
14 something. They took us many things for our and
15 CLOTS-EN, in CLOTS-EN they used to spray on you,
16 directly, face, head, ears, there was something --

17 Q. Delousing?

18 A. Smell thing that was you smell for weeks after. But
19 that's supposed to protect us from lice.

20 Q. Did it?

21 A. Maybe.

22 Q. Did women have lice in your bunk?

23 A. Definitely.

24 Q. So it didn't protect them from lice?

25 A. I think it was up to the certain individual. I

1 didn't have any lice. They never cut my hair. Say
2 what make me so brave? I wasn't brave. I was just
3 brought up that when you get up in the morning, you
4 wash yourself, and if there is no hot water, you wash
5 in cold, ice water. So I stood there under this ice
6 water and washed myself.

7 Q. Do you think you were cleaner than most of the other
8 women, or you were more -- you did more hygiene
9 than --

10 A. I think so. I hate to accuse anybody. Maybe I had
11 more courage to do it. Maybe had more willpower to
12 do it. But it caught up with me, I want you to know.

13 Q. Because you had a cold?

14 A. No, I suffered from malnutrition. I begin to swell,
15 and I was a very slim girl. All of a sudden my legs
16 begin to puff up and I had this size -- I'm not
17 exaggerating, this size of leg. How can I say the
18 size of it? Around in diameter -- wants to be about
19 25 inches around or more.

20 Q. Your calves?

21 A. Yeah, my whole leg -- my whole legs. I couldn't go
22 to work anymore. But people would -- in my -- we
23 call SHTUB-A -- SHTUB-A, the room, drag me to work,
24 drag me out onto this. Hold onto that, just to get
25 there, because I don't want to stay in camp.

1 Q. You couldn't walk by yourself?

2 A. I couldn't walk. I became to swell from
3 malnutrition, legs this size. Then I used to suffer,
4 my knees were extremely hurting, fluid in my knees.
5 Now, a miracle, now I come to the point, why did I
6 survive? How come I survived that?

7 Q. But wait a minute. I don't want to interrupt you
8 while you tell me, so I'm going to turn this over.

9 (Tape turned over.)

10 A. In camp, there was supposedly a nurse. She came
11 originally from Budapest, from Budapest, Hungary.
12 She took a liking to me, in camp, you know. She was
13 also a prisoner like I, but they made her a nurse.
14 She said she worked in a hospital before the war.
15 It's possible she was a nurse. She said her father
16 was a doctor, and she was in a hospital working. And
17 she was the only nurse for the whole camp for a few
18 thousand people. The only one to take care of all
19 supposedly sick people. She took a liking to me.
20 Maybe I remind her of her younger sister, her baby
21 sister. I was much younger than she was. Whenever
22 she saw me, she put her hands on my head. Her first
23 name was Ealie. I only knew her by her first name.
24 I never knew her last name. And she just practically
25 caress me, looking at my eyes and she say to me,

1 don't worry, you survive. You know what she did?

2 She risk on her behalf, brought me in a big
3 light bulb with an extension. We had one little tiny
4 lamp in this whole room where I slept where I was
5 together with those 40 women. And she said, you plug
6 that in and you keep that heat next to your knees so
7 the water dries out. Can you imagine? And that's
8 what I did. She was actually stealing that for me to
9 bring it in. She took such a liking that she stole a
10 carrot, a potato, and brought it to me. She wanted
11 to help me to survive because she knew I had a poor
12 chance to make it, at that particular time I was
13 beyond already. That was in 1944.

14 Q. When, winter?

15 A. Yes, wintertime, 1944, early winter, and fall. We
16 were liberated in 1945, in May, May, you know,
17 D-Day. What was, May the 5th, if I'm right. So
18 naturally all the time I was sick already, high
19 temperature, working with temperature and say never
20 got sick. You're not supposed to be sick. And
21 working with the swollen feet, which I was dragged.
22 I could not already have my part like in the room
23 when she came. You must clean every day that room,
24 to survive it. So we used to take turns. When it
25 came to my turn, when it came to my turn, somebody

1 had to fill in for me. I couldn't do my duties.

2 (Discussion off the record.)

3 A. Anyways, I couldn't do my duties anymore, and they
4 filled in for me. Naturally, by being under pressure
5 and hungry, and hunger daily, hunger, people were not
6 willing to fill in for you? You know what I mean,
7 they did it, but couldn't, and they grumble. I used
8 to plead for them, please, I can't stand on my feet,
9 please. They somehow help me. But, you know, I
10 myself was charitable, my heart. I wanted to do
11 something kind for others, also. There was a girl
12 with me in my room. Her name was HAV-A
13 YUSH-KA-VISH. Believe it or not 40 years to remember
14 a name. She was sick of TB, tuberculosis, spitting
15 the blood constantly, coughing day and night, fever
16 day and night. She was sleeping right below my bunk,
17 believe it or not, and she cried in her sleep. So
18 what I used to do was take one blanket I had, share
19 with her the blanket -- out of here. You mustn't.
20 Where's my daughter?

21 (Discussion off the record.).

22 A. I had -- I have so much compassion for that girl. I
23 knew that her days were limited. So what I done, I
24 went to Ealie, to Ealie, the lady what was the nurse,
25 the woman, and I pleaded with her, I begged her not

1 to put her on the list, you know, KON-KIN list -- I
2 mean, sick list. Please, I said, she's somebody from
3 home. Please save her. She said, I'll do my best.
4 I do my best. Anyways, she has done her best. She
5 took her off the list.

6 Q. Really.

7 A. The girl survived.

8 Q. Amazing.

9 A. TB. But when she survive, she kissed me. I said,
10 please. We were in the same boat. I suffered, you
11 suffered. We supposed to help each other. She said,
12 not too many people did that what you done, she
13 said. You wanted me to live.

14 Immediately after the camp I was freed by the
15 Russians. The Russians came and opened up the camp.
16 We were petrified. We didn't trust nobody. We were
17 afraid. We thought that the Germans dressed like
18 Russians and came in with the tank. What they want
19 to find an excuse to shoot us and kill us all. So we
20 wouldn't move. We were all frustrated. It took us
21 hours by the time we realize that was after the war.
22 Now I think at that particular time could walk out
23 from that camp.

24 Q. Because your water on the knee had -- was that --

25 A. Yeah, had dried out, and I could still walk, you know

1 what I mean. My friend could not walk out. She was
2 carried out on stretcher, straight to the hospital.
3 Now, when she went to the hospital, I found out what
4 hospital they took her. I tried to be at least once
5 a week visiting with her, even though nobody was
6 allowed in this ward. You had to wear a mask because
7 she had TB. I said, I live with her for years
8 together in camp, and if I have TB, I already have
9 it. You see what I mean?

10 Q. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

11 A. So I put the mask on me and I said to her sit to her
12 and I caress her, and I kissed her and I give her as
13 much possible that she's not alone. And I used to be
14 rationed, particularly at that time were rationed.
15 So the one piece of butter, whatever we used to get,
16 a little square of butter, after the war, I want you
17 to know, a little jam, a little bit of flour, a
18 couple eggs, a little flour, stuff like that. I knew
19 nothing about cooking, but if you want to learn, you
20 learn fast. If I could learn this stuff in camp to
21 weave four machines and pretended that I'm playing
22 the piano, why can't I make a cookie, right?

23 Q. Of course.

24 A. So I bake cookies out of the stuff which I was so
25 hungry myself and shared with her, took all these

1 cookies to her, you know, and brought her and sit for
2 hours in the hospital. I couldn't walk to the
3 hospital, so then I met my husband. My husband found
4 a bike and took me on the -- on the -- what do you
5 call, the bar of the bike and I weighed at that time
6 90 pounds, 45 kilos, so anybody could sit on the bar,
7 you know. And he drove me -- not drove me but --

8 Q. Pedaled you.

9 A. -- pedaled me to the hospital. He took me there
10 once, sometimes twice a week. And I spend with her
11 hours. She recuperate to a point of getting out from
12 the hospital. I don't know if she's around. I don't
13 know what happened to her after, but after this I
14 still went to visit her privately when she lived with
15 somebody. What happened there after we were
16 liberated, we didn't have any homes. We had no place
17 where to go. So what we do is grouped up. I had two
18 -- two, three girls from the same room.

19 Q. Were you still with your sister? What happened --
20 you didn't tell --

21 A. No, my sister -- no, my sister -- remember when I
22 told you in the beginning when I was together with my
23 little sister and I told her run, and I watch.

24 Q. Oh, that's right.

25 A. And she ran.

1 Q. And she ran.

2 A. And she ran, and I never saw her after, and I never
3 knew what happened to her. You see what I mean? I
4 told her she was free and she would be able to
5 survive. She's blonde, blue eyes. Beautiful,
6 beautiful child. She spoke languages, not one, but
7 three I think at that time, and I figured the little
8 girl can speak even German, she'll get away somehow.
9 Maybe she lived for a while, but I don't know what
10 happened after, see what I mean, because I wasn't
11 there. I was already in a camp, see.

12 I live with that guilt, believe it or not. I
13 figured, if I wouldn't tell her to run, she would
14 have been with me, wouldn't she?

15 Q. I don't know.

16 A. I question this constantly. Why did I do it? It was
17 a sudden impulse, the sudden impulse came to me, like
18 you are the big girl, you're supposed to protect this
19 little girl, and if she goes to camp, she will not
20 make it because she has to be strong and be able to
21 work. And I couldn't see my little -- my little
22 sister work like that. I couldn't see that. How can
23 she work? She's so little yet, you know what I
24 mean? So I tried to protect her, and I figure, if
25 she goes home, she will go to our neighbors, to

1 somebody, with somebody will open their hearts and
2 take her in, you know. The neighbors naturally
3 they're gentile neighbors I'm speaking of. I don't
4 know what happened. Maybe somebody did take her in.
5 Maybe somebody later told her you must leave because
6 I'm not going to risk my life for you, because they
7 knew the child all over the neighborhood, you see.

8 Q. They knew she was Jewish.

9 A. They knew she was Jewish, right.

10 Q. Tell me what happened after the war. Did you try and
11 make your way home?

12 A. The very first thing I done.

13 Q. You were talking about a group -- you were talking
14 about the group you were with.

15 A. Well, first of all, this was after the war, there was
16 no home for me, no place to go. So what does a
17 person do?

18 The common thing -- the natural thing was to get
19 together with a few girls. So I had three girls from
20 the same room which survived the camp with me. I
21 said, would you like we should live together? Where
22 do we go? The first thing we did, one of our
23 girlfriends -- my girlfriends had a boyfriend before
24 the war, somehow he found her. I don't know how he
25 found her. He found her. He was the one to

1 organize, we call it organize, shelter for us. He
2 found an abandoned German house. He said, you go in
3 there, you sleep there. Whatever you find in the
4 kitchen, you eat. Whatever you find someplace in a
5 cupboard -- they didn't have fridges -- you eat.

6 That was the beginning of survival or beginning
7 of freedom. Unfortunately, we were liberated by the
8 Russians, which I was not pleased. The Russians have
9 not showed to me any sentiment or security of any
10 kind. I was very fearful of them. I feared
11 brutality and they were brutal. They were kidnapping
12 girls and doing all kind of stuff with them. I was
13 afraid of them. You know what I mean?

14 Q. Were they raping, do you think?

15 A. Definitely. But thank God I was safe from that
16 because I live with my girlfriends, and then she had
17 a boyfriend, and before, you know, my husband came
18 along, even though he was nothing to me, there was
19 more or less somebody around and we were not alone.
20 And when you in a group, nobody dares comes and picks
21 one up, then he's afraid of consequences, somebody
22 will report him, you know what I mean? But if you
23 were alone, who knows what they were doing, you know
24 what I mean?

25 Q. Did this go on in the camps, too?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Girls were not raped in the camps?

3 A. No. We were considered, imagine, because of my
4 religion, we were considered dirty. We were -- to
5 the dirtiest a YUD-EN-SHWINE, what they call us, you
6 know what I mean. A YUD-EN-SHWINE, that means a
7 Jewish pig. And they don't bother with that. You
8 see? Maybe there were camps which they did, but I
9 maybe was spared that, too, you know what I mean?
10 Thank God I did not experience that. I never knew
11 what that -- some German will touch me.

12 I experienced one ugly thing in the same camp,
13 which they came with this big truck with this S.S.
14 man with those black ugly boots and those black
15 uniforms to select us, to select us get us with a to
16 down to us, made us undress completely naked and
17 march in the front for those ugly, laughing
18 hysterical men. Well, I was young, but there were
19 older women than I am, maybe not quite shapely, and
20 if you suffer from malnutrition from lack of food,
21 how you supposed to look? Making a spectacle of us.

22 May God punish them forever for the shame they
23 put on us. Can you imagine to endure, to stand with
24 a bunch of pigs watching us, and they called us that,
25 you see what I mean? Can you imagine to endure

1 that? Do you know, after the war I had such horrible
2 nightmares, I used to get up in the middle of the
3 night and sitting on the bed and screaming, I said,
4 look at what they're doing to us. See what I mean?
5 You kind of lose the feeling for humanity. You feel
6 there is no human -- human people anymore. Everybody
7 is a tiger or animal is trying to get you. And for
8 what? For nothing. Just because you born Jewish.
9 You see what I mean?

10 Q. Absolutely.

11 A. But I am proud to be Jewish, very proud. I wouldn't
12 be anything else, even though I endured all this
13 suffering. You would think it would turn me bitter
14 against my people. Never. I even fight for my
15 people. If I have to go to Israel, I will. As much
16 as I love America, America was good to me and still
17 good to me.

18 First of all, I appreciate they open their
19 doors. They let me into the country, which I have
20 gratitude. I am a free citizen. I'm allowed to do
21 whatever I possibly can do to live, to make a living,
22 to better my life, to be a human being, to have self-
23 respect. For this forever I am grateful. What more
24 can I say?

25 Q. May I ask a few more questions?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Why did you come to America and not -- why didn't you
3 go to Palestine? Did you want to go to Palestine?
- 4 A. Why didn't I go to Pal -- to Isreal, at that
5 particular time?
- 6 Q. M-hm.
- 7 A. There was no Isreal -- well, Palestine, yes.
- 8 Q. M-hm.
- 9 A. I had a reason. I had in Canada, in Toronto, Canada,
10 family, that was my father's three sisters and two
11 brothers, which they live there already about 40
12 years.
- 13 Q. Four? 40.
- 14 A. 40 years.
- 15 Q. 40.
- 16 A. Before I came. Their children were born in Canada,
17 you know. They were like the first pioneers,
18 whatever you call -- not pioneers, but --
- 19 Q. Immigrants?
- 20 A. Immigrants. Not pioneers, I don't call this
21 pioneers. Immigrants. They came to Canada getting
22 away from depression times maybe, thinking of better
23 their lives, even though they came from a beautiful
24 family because my grandmother and grandfather, the
25 most beautiful people, and I think for European

1 standards they lived very well. They had their own
2 home, their own house, their own property, business,
3 whatever. For the particular times I think they done
4 very well, you know. So it isn't that those people
5 were hungry to come to Canada. They were searching
6 to better their lives, you know, to -- to have a
7 better life. Also, escape anti-Semitism, which
8 Poland had it all around.

9 Q. Tell me about that.

10 A. The Polish people as a whole?

11 Q. Anti-Semitism.

12 A. The anti-Semitism in Poland spread like a disease,
13 and unfortunately that destroys them now. It does.
14 The reason for it -- I like to say misery likes
15 company. Ugliness is self-destructive, and they have
16 it. They are blessed with it. I don't know if their
17 religion has poisoned them. They are Roman
18 Catholics, all of them. And I don't think a religion
19 should poison any mind, but it poisoned them to
20 death. You know why? Because we supposed to be the
21 Jesus killers. You see what I mean?

22 Q. Absolutely.

23 A. Ignorant, ignorant. I think the force, main force
24 what was -- I want you to know I'm speaking from
25 firsthand experience. I was born there, went to

1 primary school there. My father was born there, my
2 grandfather was born there, and my whole family came
3 from there. I think the reason why they resented the
4 Jew is from pure ignorance, from constantly being
5 taught in the church how to hate a Jew, until this
6 day, and I think it's a disgrace of any human being
7 to be taught to hate. They are taught from the day
8 they were born to hate Jews.

9 Anti-semitism is first class, helping and
10 cooperating with the Germans, first class. They
11 didn't win any bonus with me. If I had a choice to
12 go to their country for one reason or another, and I
13 have a reason to go to my grandfather's grave if it's
14 still there, I wouldn't go. I wouldn't go for
15 nothing there. My heart doesn't belong there. They
16 destroyed my heart there. I lost my whole family
17 there, my father, my mother, and now my sister -- my
18 two sisters and my brother. Maybe it wasn't all
19 their fault, but they cooperate pretty good. Visibly
20 with my own eyes I saw.

21 I went to our school -- now, let me tell you, it
22 was my primary school. My father served the army,
23 the Polish army. There was compulsory to serve.
24 Like it or don't, you go to the army. He was
25 there --

1 Q. Wait a minute. Jews were -- there was some countries
2 in which Jews were not --

3 A. -- allowed?

4 Q. -- inducted into the army. Isn't that true?

5 A. I don't know anything about it. As far as I know, my
6 father was, and in Poland, all the Jews or non-Jews
7 were taken to the military. You have to serve in the
8 army when you're 18 years until 21, three years,
9 except if one is a cripple. And he was nothing. He
10 was a healthy, young man and they took him to the
11 army. He came out, mine you, from the Polish army
12 with some kind of stripe. I don't know what the
13 stripe.

14 Q. An honor.

15 A. Possibly an honor, because he was a good military
16 man. Even though there were very few Pollocks to
17 honor a Jew, I think it was like pulling all their
18 teeth to honor my father. You know what I mean? But
19 I speak of anger with me, deep anger. That anger is
20 because they have not contribute anything.

21 The president came to this day before speech, he
22 mentioned how a Polish family risked their life to
23 save one human being or two. There was one in a
24 thousand. Maybe I'm even wrong. One in 10,000.
25 They didn't like us. I think we were just a useful

1 thing. My family was useful to them for one reason
2 or another, and we were just like a tool for them.
3 They were not nice people. I'm just sorry that I was
4 born there. That's all I can tell you.

5 MR. LEO LEWIS: You know, when a Pollock, when
6 we came back to Poland, you know what -- you know
7 what they said?

8 Q. No.

9 MR. LEO LEWIS: How come you're alive.

10 A. That's what they told me, too.

11 MR. LEO LEWIS: They say, hey, they didn't kill
12 you? Why did you come back? And --

13 A. They didn't kill you?

14 MR. LEO LEWIS: And they took over the houses
15 and our apartments. They said, what are you doing
16 here? You can't have it back. It is ours now. What
17 are you doing now? It's too bad Hitler didn't kill
18 you.

19 A. They were taught --

20 MR. LEO LEWIS: Anti-Semitism.

21 A. The biggest anti-semitism.

22 MR. LEO LEWIS: Hitler really did one bad
23 thing: He should have killed the Pollocks, too. He
24 did a few, but not enough. The best thing that
25 happened to the Pollocks and to the Germans is

1 Russia. When they came in and slaughter them, took
2 over the country, that's the best -- that's the
3 biggest favor Russia could do us.

4 A. My husband feels also deeply angered by it. I mean,
5 I may be more sentimental and humane in some ways
6 because I cannot see destruction, but if one hurts
7 you all their life and plays dirty tricks and
8 discriminate you, even though you are student with
9 them in school, and point out, you dirty Jew, or spit
10 on you, or do filthy things to you, how are you to
11 remember them? This was my upbringing, my
12 childhood.

13 Do I have to remember those people? I walk away
14 from them, and I see them in the street, I just keep
15 walking. I don't want to hear their language. There
16 are some Jews -- some Jews, believe it or not, choose
17 still hear to survive, some of them speak yet the
18 language. I refuse to speak it.

19 Q. Still speak Polish?

20 A. For one reason or another. They maybe used to speak
21 the language. It's like their tongue, first tongue
22 or whatever. I refuse to speak that language. I
23 speak Yiddish or English. I refuse. And I went to a
24 very good school, mind you, also through a little
25 protective because my father was in the military and

1 stuff like that. They wouldn't take in Jewish woman
2 there. I was among 56 classmates of mine, 56 girls,
3 big class. There were three or two Jewish girls.

4 Can you imagine the percentage?

5 Q. Very small.

6 A. See what I mean?

7 Q. M-hm.

8 A. I graduate from that school, you know, public
9 school. I can't say nothing nice. I wish I could be
10 sentimental about it and say I had a wonderful,
11 beautiful teacher, I had very nice classmates which I
12 adore to be together with them. Instead, I was
13 fearful of them. I went to school because I want to
14 learn. You see? I live in a country which I hated
15 and despised. As a child? A child's supposed to
16 love your country.

17 Q. What did your parents tell you about it?

18 A. My parents would have left that rotten country, and
19 the reason why they didn't leave was finance. Even
20 if they would sell the house, which they had a house,
21 that wouldn't hardly cover for the fare wherever.
22 What about going with four children away. It's not
23 so easy, you see?

24 Q. Did she tell you about anti-Semitism?

25 A. Who?

1 Q. Your parents when you were a child, did they explain?

2 A. My father didn't have to tell me nothing. Even
3 though I was five, six years old, and when the war
4 broke out, I was 14 years old, I knew the Pollocks.
5 I was right with them, day by day.

6 MR. LEO LEWIS: Somebody hit you with a stick,
7 break, and hurt your back, nobody has to tell you it
8 hurts.

9 A. When you go to the school and you're called daily,
10 you dirty Jew and spit on you, whatever --

11 MR. LEO LEWIS: Or you have fights.

12 A. -- or you have fights for nothing, somebody picks on
13 you because you're clean and neat looking.

14 MR. LEO LEWIS: Because you are Jew.

15 A. Because you are Jew. Does my father have to tell me
16 that?

17 Q. Did you wonder why? Didn't you want to know why?

18 A. No, you are afraid to question them.

19 Q. No. Did you ask your parents?

20 A. Oh, my parents?

21 Q. Didn't you --

22 A. The only thing I said to my father, why do you live
23 in this country? Why don't you get out of a country
24 like this? My father used to say, sha, sha, in
25 Yiddish. Like almost saying, don't raise your voice,

1 I have no choice. You see what I mean? What more
2 could he say to me?

3 Q. He felt like his hands were tied?

4 A. Of course they were tied. He couldn't leave that
5 country because, like I said, my father had a house.
6 If he would sell the house, whatever positions they
7 had, maybe a little money they had, still it wouldn't
8 cover for a family of four children and two adults to
9 go to a different country and to start something.
10 And what European country, mind you, would do any
11 better? You see what I mean? The only place for us
12 Jews is Isreal, believe it or not. God bless
13 America, but still my heart belongs to Isreal because
14 there I feel safe. Here, tomorrow the Ku Klux Klan.
15 After tomorrow, who know whatever animals will come,
16 Nazis or whatever. So I have to live for that?

17 My daughter said to me, mother -- sometimes I go
18 out in the street and I know that America was
19 beautiful to me to let me in here, but I stare at
20 people and I wonder, are you my friend or my enemy?
21 Would you kill me like the rest of them would do, you
22 know? That remains with you the rest of your life.
23 You're forever are afraid and question.

24 I have been told in the city where I live by
25 some gentile people, we love you. You are nice

1 people. It's so good to be with you in your
2 company. But there's always the doubt in my mind, is
3 he telling the truth? Does he really mean what he
4 says, or am I useful for something? This will never
5 disappear.

6 MR. LEO LEWIS: You know, Jews think -- Jews
7 think in America we're so safe. We're not safe. You
8 know, they say it couldn't happen in America. It
9 could happen in America. You know, I saw Nazis
10 walking -- you know, they had those demonstration in
11 our city, too.

12 Q. In Buffalo?

13 MR. LEO LEWIS: In Buffalo. And we had -- of
14 course there were marches, we were marching against
15 them. And there was this English lord. What's the
16 name of that anti-Semite?

17 A. It's been quite a few --

18 MR. LEO LEWIS: Yeah, a few years. He came to
19 Buffalo to speak at the university. Of course, too
20 many really -- rabbis marching around, but if a guy
21 like this come with arm bands and with swastika,
22 well, if you see that, that's the beginning. That's
23 the way it started in Poland. You say it couldn't
24 happen in Poland, it couldn't happen in Germany. It
25 did happen. That's the way it happened. That's the

1 way the whole thing starts, and that's the way -- I
2 don't think -- I don't think Jews can live without
3 Isreal.

4 Q. You don't think Jews --

5 MR. LEO LEWIS: Jews can't live without Isreal
6 in America. If, God forbid, anything happen to
7 Isreal, the same thing going to happen right here.
8 The friends and the neighbors we have, 90 percent of
9 those people will turn against you like on a dime. I
10 have friends which they swear, they'll give their
11 life for me, gentiles. Well, maybe some of them do,
12 but the ones who would say they'll give their life
13 for me is because they're lower of intelligence than
14 I am, they're not as -- they're not as intellectually
15 developed as I am. They -- I do them favors. They
16 owe me. Not because they like me, they owe me. They
17 feel they owe me a vote of gratitude. That's why
18 maybe they would stood up. But if somebody would
19 threaten their life, I don't know how it would turn
20 out. Right now they say, I don't care, okay, they'll
21 give their life for me, but if the time comes to give
22 it, I'm not so sure they would.

23 Q. Is there anything you'd like to add?

24 A. Well, what more should I add? What is there to add
25 anymore?

1 Q. You've told a beautiful story.

2 A. Thank you.

3 Q. You speak fluently?

4 A. Thank you.

5 Q. Such vivid messages.

6 A. It's like living it through again. Maybe not with
7 all the details, maybe some things you forget during
8 periods of time, but I live through each time I
9 mention a word Nazi, Germany, Europe, things, I live
10 through those emotions again. It comes back to me,
11 like a picture right before my face, my eyes, like
12 I'm right there.

13 I once went to claim some money from the
14 Germans. For years I refuse to take a dime from
15 them. Their bloody money I don't want. But then
16 some other Jewish friends of mine said, you are a
17 fool. You're not getting paid for anything else but
18 for your work in concentration camp, and not getting
19 paid for it, but a certain percentage they give you.
20 It took me quite a few convincing -- let me tell you
21 the story, when I went into that consul, German
22 doctor consul.

23 He's supposed to examine me and supposed to find
24 out if I'm telling the truth. I became totally
25 hysterical. I forgot that I'm in the U.S.A., in the

1 good old U.S.A. in America, I forgot. I thought that
2 I'm in concentration camp. I said, you ugly human
3 being. You take that money. And right to those ugly
4 friends of yours, brothers of yours, sister. They
5 should choke on that money. I told him that, right
6 in his office. I became so hysterical that I was at
7 that time about 10, 15 years younger. I walked out
8 from his office, dripping, sweating from aggravation,
9 from for living through my agony again. I said, you
10 ugly human being. You don't belong here. You don't
11 belong to question me. That's what I told the man.

12 Can you imagine? He brought back my whole, ugly
13 experience what I experienced, what I endured all
14 those years. And I have to go and answer questions
15 on that? I don't want to see your face with your
16 ugly money, I told him. That's what I told him. And
17 I don't want ever to be identified as I'd been there
18 or lived with you or working for you, anything. And
19 many times people stop me in the street and ask me,
20 are you German? I said, remember one thing, I'm
21 hundred percent Jewish. Don't you ever ask -- call
22 me that name. People in the city of Buffalo told me
23 that. You look like German. You are German. Maybe
24 my skin is light or maybe my hair is color because
25 it's all gray now. You see what I mean? So what am I

1 supposed to do?

2 So, anyway, that's what I felt when I went to
3 this, and that was already being here in this country
4 about, oh, ten years. And when I find out that
5 they're paying a certain amount of money to certain
6 people what they worked, I would never take one penny
7 for my father or mother or my sister -- two sisters
8 or brother. They have no money in the whole wide
9 world to pay for their lives. I don't want their
10 filthy money.

11 Q. So you never got it?

12 A. Yes, I did, later on. I thought that he was
13 dismissing me. I thought that this ugly man will
14 write to those ugly Germans that I hate him like
15 poison, I don't want nothing from them. Instead, he
16 approved it. So a guilty human being that stood in
17 front of me realized that he brought out in me the --
18 the biggest anger possible. He drove me insane while
19 he was questioning me. You see what I mean?
20 Imagine, after the war, to be asked that.

21 Q. Terrible.

22 A. You see what I mean?

23 Q. May I ask, I don't know -- how much were the
24 reparations? How much money --

25 A. Well, they start off with a minimal amount, like

1 \$150, \$180 to pay you monthly. They call it a
2 pension money. Like they call it rent money. What
3 they call the rent?

4 Q. Pension.

5 A. Pension money, pension money.

6 Q. For the time you were in camps?

7 MR. LEO LEWIS: Yes, in camps, right.

8 A. That was for the time that I labored in the camp,
9 worked in the camp.

10 Q. So they saw it as compensation for work?

11 A. For my labor, right.

12 Q. Was how the Germans saw it?

13 MR. LEO LEWIS: That's right.

14 Q. This wasn't compensation for suffering?

15 A. Oh, no. They don't -- do you know what those ugly
16 people can tell you? I lived there from 1945 until
17 '48, until I came to this country.

18 Q. In Germany?

19 A. In Germany.

20 Q. Where?

21 A. I lived in a small town in Bavaria, MARK-DOV-OV-ER-
22 WORT, and they forever kept playing innocent to me,
23 telling me that they knew nothing about the war, that
24 they knew nothing what Hitler has done. They had
25 nothing to do there.

1 MR. LEO LEWIS: They were not Nazis.

2 A. And they were not Nazis. I said who --

3 MR. LEO LEWIS: Who were all those people?

4 A. Who were all those people marching with Hitler and
5 screaming their hearts out and yelling for him and
6 trying to keep him in power, who are those people?
7 Where are they people? Denying and lying. I called
8 people like this sheeps, followers, no men with a
9 real brain in it, even though they claim to be, you
10 know, clever in their technology or whatever,
11 wouldn't do such ugly thing, lying on top of it.
12 They're supposed to be straight going people. That's
13 what they claim.

14 Q. So how do you feel when they say the Jews went to the
15 -- to the gas chambers like sheep, slaughtered?

16 A. How do I feel about it? I feel anger, I feel
17 frustrated, and I still feel helpless because we all
18 were helpless.

19 Q. You feel helpless?

20 A. Helpless. I feel helpless at that time without a
21 weapon, without a means of leadership. I was at that
22 time a youngster, a teenager, and why my father
23 didn't fight, I never know until this day. He was a
24 military man. Maybe he felt his hands were tied,
25 too. You don't fight with bare hands, do you? You

1 cannot organize any help to fight, so one man against
2 hundreds of thousands? How can you fight. If you
3 fight, it means your life is gone. So it means this
4 day you choose to die. So maybe I didn't choose to
5 die.

6 I had no weapons, and I was a teenager. Maybe I
7 should have fought. Maybe I should have belong to
8 one of those underground things. Maybe I didn't
9 have --

10 Q. Did you know about the underground?

11 A. No, no. I knew nothing about it, you know. I knew
12 one thing is fear, the minute the war broke out.

13 Q. Do you think you might have joined the underground if
14 you would have had an opportunity?

15 A. I think so, with the people -- right people in it, a
16 person would know and trust, I would follow. I would
17 follow for the right thing, for justice, I would
18 follow to help mankind, to help my people first. I
19 speak only now for my people. I haven't seen any
20 other people stick their necks out for us. You see
21 what I mean? So I would go for my people. I fight
22 with them together, but if I would come across a
23 leader, somebody I would trust and I wouldn't be
24 afraid to follow him. How can you follow somebody
25 you don't know? You see what I mean.

1 Q. There has to be trust.

2 A. You have to be trust.

3 Q. With some personal connection.

4 A. Of course. In my age, at that particular, I never
5 came across a person like that, you know. I was a
6 girl from school. What did I know about fighting,
7 see. What else? What else can I answer?

8 MR. LEO LEWIS: Tell me, how do you put up with
9 all those stories you hear?

10 (TAPE CONCLUDED)

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Interview With: Leo Lewis
Holocaust Media Project
Date: Place:
Interviewer:
Transcriber: Dorothy Wachter

Q: WHY DON'T WE JUST START. YOU TELL ME YOUR NAME AND WHERE YOU'RE FROM.

A: My name is Leo Lewis, and before we came to this country the name was Lefkovich. I'm born May 13, 1924 in (Benjin), Poland. In 1939 I came back to Poland because I was away. We lived at that time in (Katavitz) which is (Kloskahuta) and that's called (Obershlizen) or on the German border, or more directly so. When Hitler came in 1939 to our town in (Kloskahuta), which was close to the German border, that had to be called (Mayjudenrein)- all Jews are to move because they claimed that was German property, German land, and therefore all Jews had to move out. So my parents and I had to move too, but to (Benjin) which was a little further inland in Poland.

Q: WAS IT A SMALL TOWN?

A: (Benjin) was a Jewish town really. There was a majority of Jews living there. There were a few Poles but the majority was a Jewish town and it was a very Jewish oriented town. It was a - well what can I say- it was a Jewish town, that's all there is to it. In 1941 I left (Benjin) because already at that time there were Germans who were rounding up Jews to go into camps and to work, and we really didn't know were called (Arbeitslagers) or work camps. Now those work camps- their propaganda was saying they were trying to re-educate the Jews to work. Of course they tried to tell everybody that the Jews are lazy and merchants and they have to be re-educated. So this was the spiel they gave us. At that time I was-let's see how old was I at that time- I was born in 1924, I was about 16 years old. At that time I decided, well my grandmother decided, and my father decided so we better leave town - they're going to grab you so why don't you leave. So I got on the train and I went to Cracków. And I spoke Polish well, I was well educated in the Polish language, and I spoke well German because my mother spoke German. She went to a German school. So I got some papers, Polish papers, which were of course false, and I lived in Poland, in Crackow, as a Pollack. Since I spoke German well, they had stores where only Germans

could buy, so since I spoke well German I masqueraded as a German and I put an insignia on my lapel to look like a German. I came in and I bought things and I went back to town to my hiding place - I found a place in Crackow- a Jewish family; there was a Professor Stein and it was coincidental the way that happened. I came to Crackow, a 16 year old boy, not much money in my pocket obviously because my parents weren't rich people, and I came to this little dairy store like. And I walked in and ordered something to eat and drink and I asked for what they have, and they didn't have, and I saw that the man was - something under the table was shuffling, and it was a black market obviously going on. So I said look, I saw a can of Sardines I thought he had in his hand and I said gee, could I buy a can of sardines from you and he said no, no, no because he didn't know me and he was afraid that I'm going to be an informant or something. So we started talking in Polish, he sat down and he talked to me and I told him where I'm from and what I'm doing. I told him I come to visit in Crackow, you know I didn't tell him right away because I wasn't sure who he was either, really.

Q: YOU HAD TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF PEOPLE.

A: Yeah, well, I had to be careful who you talked to. Finally he invited me home to dinner; he and his wife, they had no children. They came from (Comia) and I found out his name was Professor Stein. Since he was a Jew he could not be working at the University so he and his wife opened up the dairy store. And of course he was selling things on the black market - this is the way the whole conversation came about. And then I didn't have really where to stay. I had a room I rented from a lady. He said why don't you do that - they had one large room and because at that time the Jews were put together in one ghetto area - so they had a large room and they said look, we have a cot. If you'd like to sleep on it you can sleep there. So I said look, I'll pay you. I don't know if I paid them or not but I stayed there. They had a little curtain around it. That's the way I came to Crackow. At that time I still corresponded with home.

Q: YOU COULD CORRESPOND?

A: Yes, I could correspond.

Q: AND EVERYONE WAS STILL BACK IN (BENJIN)?

A: Yes, in Benjin. Everybody was going back. This was in 1939-40, late in '39. The Germans were marching forward, and then they made the pact with Russia, with Stalin - this whole business was going on, so I wrote home and I talked and got a letter back and they said if I don't come back, my grandmother suggested that if I don't come back (my Aunt wrote me), they had already taken my father to camp at that time I found out-while I was gone.

Q: WHERE WAS YOUR FATHER TAKEN?

A: To camp. I don't know exactly where he went.

Q: TO A LABOR CAMP?

A: To a labor camp, yes. To be re-educated; to work. So I went home. They told me if I don't come home they'll take my two sisters and brothers and my stepfather. My mother died by then. They lived in a room or an apartment - and they'll take the apartment away or room away, and they'll take the food stamps away. And they sent them to camp. And the children were small. I was 16 and my sisters were 10, 8, 7. So I said well, I'll go home and see what's going on. So I went home and started talking to people and sure, that's what they were doing. People who disappeared, who ran away, they took the families and sent them away. At that time was the idea, that if I go to camp my family would be able to stay. And there was like a Jewish council, and the council advised the elder Jews that that would be the best thing to do. To go. Because if you don't go they said, look what's going to happen to your sisters and brothers and your stepfather and your grandmother. They were taking everybody.

There were a lot of orthodox Jews in Poland and they felt - don't fight, don't fight back. Don't do this and don't do that. They were very afraid. And they were sort of good citizens. Really! So my grandmother said to me - at that time I was home - I signed up to go to camp. I volunteered.

Q: YOU THOUGHT IT WAS THE RIGHT THING...

A: Well...I felt...and Grandmother said to me..(?)
I stayed with Grandmother because she had one room and you had to have at least three people to one room. So Grandmother and myself and another lady lived in the same room. And we had shared a room. And Grandmother said to me it would be better if you really go, because if anybody is going to survive you'll survive. I was the oldest grandson. So

Grandmother had really a warm feeling towards me because I was the grandson. And she said look, if anyone is going to survive, you'll survive. I don't know why she felt that way, but she did. So I signed up. Then I found out, as far as my grandmother was concerned, the Germans came when they were cleaning out making Judenrein again in that area - because obviously their plan, as we see it now, was to clean out the Jews, concentrate them in concentration camps, and eliminate as many as they can. You know, that's the way they....that many people got killed. I mean Jews was burned. So she said well why don't you sign up. But then I found out from other people that I met after the war who knew my grandmother, that the Germans came to clean out so the Germans took her away to camp because she was an older lady. She was 60 - over 60 by then. And she begged the soldier to shoot her - she didn't want to go. So the soldier said No, we're not going to shoot you. We don't want to waste a bullet on an old Jewish lady. So that's the story about that. So I signed up and I went to camp. My Camps were - first I went to (Otmund), (Marksted), (Reichenbach), (Langbielow). In the camp I met my father - in Marksted. Marksted was a big camp where they brought people in and out - shipped them out to - they were weeded out every day, so they brought them from other camps and then they segregated the older ones who couldn't work were sent to be burned, and the younger ones, like me, who could work, those they left alive I guess. And I met my father in camp. In camp where my father and I were together, we were working on the same job. We were sent out to dig sand - so a group went out and we were digging sand. My father was on the same work squad.

Q: DID YOU GO OUT EARLY - FIVE IN THE MORNING UNTIL FIVE AT NIGHT?

A: Yes...we went in the morning. We got over to the sand pits and we were loading sand on the trucks as the trucks were coming. Well, as you load the sand you go deeper and deeper below. So as we get below my father says let me down the bottom, because it happened to be Yom Kippur. So my father said let me pray. And he davened, he davened. And then we came back. After that, a few days later, my father was sent away, and that was the last I saw him. (Tears). I don't like talking about this. Anyway that was the end of the (). After my father left we were shipped to another camp in Reichenbach. But it was after that, I guess, I don't remember, we set up

like an old flour mill. And at that camp we were shipped out to places where we were signed up as a mechanic, because I'm a dental technician by trade. So when I came in they asked for technicians or mechanics - in German (Teknika), so I didn't lie much when I said (Teknika)..was some (Teknika). I didn't know what they were going to need dental technicians for but I figured well maybe with that I can get some kind of a job (release). Through the matter, it did save me, because we were sent out as they were bombing. At that time was coming the Allied Forces - the United States were bombing Germany and were bombing military installations - military producing factories like in Essen. So they brought us into a small town - Reichenbach - and they took old weaving factories and we removed the machines and they brought the machines in by trains, and we had to re-install them. That was part of my job. Anyway, at that time, in that camp, typhoid broke out. I don't know what happened, and I don't know really - there was no medication obviously, so what we did is we just blacked out. We couldn't eat anymore. Whatever little food you got, you couldn't eat that. And we blacked out. When we blacked out people died. We couldn't (). When I woke up I saw people who had died next to me, which wasn't really very unusual, and I climbed down from my bunk. As I climbed down I couldn't walk because I was weak. I don't know how long I was out obviously there were a lot of people who had died because when I got to the steps there was a big pile of bodies. You know people who died which were dragged out. And I climbed over that looking for food somewhere, so I climbed in the kitchen and sure enough in the kitchen there was food, because nobody was eating. All those people died. So I got some food, some warm food, and from that camp on..... and then they

Q: HOW DID YOU...

A: Survive? I don't know.

Q: NO, I MEAN WHEN YOU WENT TO GET FOOD HOW DID YOU - DID YOU JUST WALK OUT WITH FOOD?

A: I didn't walk...no, no, no. It was in camp. The camp was isolated. They didn't want the Germans coming in because they were afraid to catch typhoid. So nobody came in. Nobody came in. The Germans just stayed out because they didn't want to get infected.

Q: IT PROBABLY WAS, IN A WAY, THE SAFEST PLACE TO BE.

A: Yes, because they didn't want to come in. So Finally I got in the kitchen, I got some food and we started walking around then they started the same routine again. They started exercising with us, teaching us how to work again, re-educating me. At that point they were taking blood from us, because I guess the blood from a person who was infected with typhoid is an antidote. So they were taking blood from our..we gave blood - they took it! We gave blood to inject the German soldiers so that they wouldn't get infected. Jewish blood was good for that. Other than that it wasn't very pure, but for that purpose it was allowed. Anyway, after the war we got liberated by the Russians.

Q: DO YOU REMEMBER THAT DAY CLEARLY IN YOUR MIND?

A: Oh, I remember, yes, sure.

Q: WHAT WAS THAT DAY?

A: In 1945. I remember we were in the camp; at that time it was (Langbielow),(Langenbielow).

Q: THAT'S IN POLAND?

A: In Germany. And we built the camp. It was just outside the town like a piece of farmland, and we built the road and we built the barracks and we built the whole thing. I was involved. I was brought there when they first start building this. When the war came to an end we heard about something, you know shooting where you could hear, but we saw one morning that there was no guards in the front. You know there were towers and guards. One morning there was no guards. So we slowly walked up to the gate and see maybe that it's just a trick...you know who knows what they're going to do. So finally, somebody brave pushed the gate open. Nobody shot, nobody came running. We saw somebody walking away, because we were up on a hill. So as one went out, the other went out, so I decided I'm going to go out too. So we walked down to town, because we used to work in those towns and we worked in those places. And I walked into town and I came in and I remembered there was German camp where the German soldiers were stationed, and I figured if there's going to be any food, that's where it's going to be. So I went over to German camp and sure enough the candles were still warm. And I look, and there's meat in the kettles. Big kettles. So of course I found some container, I filled myself with food, and I filled up a kettle and

I walked out, you know, slowly. I figured well, some general might come back and start shooting or something. So I walked out and all of a sudden, far away, a Russian tank column came down- armored column. And the soldier, the fellow in charge, started shouting (Ivray, Ivray), you know, Jew, Jew. I don't know if he recognized me, I guess by my clothes. And he says (Koijun), come on over here. So I got over there, you know, I was afraid of them too, I didn't know what they were going to do. Finally, the guy start talking to me Russian. I didn't understand very much. As it happened, the fellow in charge of this tank column was a Jew. And he says (pudjom, Ivray), you know, whatever he was. So he came over and started talking to me and asked me if I want anything. I forgot what it was. It was a very exciting conversation. While we were going by some old German went by with a wagon, I guess came from town to get some food. The soldier said Deutch, Deutch, he started hollering at him, and the man, I don't know what he answered him, but I guess he found out he was German so he shot him, right there and then. So anyway, he says, look - we have to go on - the column has to go on. We have to go somewhere. He says, look, you go into town and whatever you want, you take. It's yours. It's yours. Take it over. Take over the town, take over the clothes, take over the food, do whatever you want. It's yours. So what happened was that was an exciting time. And at that time we went in and started looking for clothes, because you know clothes first of all weren't clean, and there were lice, and they were infected. So I came to a house.....

Q: YOU WERE STILL VERY WEAK FROM ().

A: Well, I weighed 100 pounds, or less than 100 pounds. I walked into a house and I looked around and there was nobody in the house. So I went looking, opened all closets to see if there's any clothes. Maybe somebody left some clothes behind. The Germans ran away. When the Russians came it was like the plague. They were afraid of the Russians - unbelievable. But they had no mercy for them. The Russians were the best medicine for the Germans. The Americans were too gentlemanly like, too softlike, too generous. Everything, too! The Russians were from the hinterlands of Russia really. Who came out to the front- they sent out first: the lowest Russians. So when they came they had no compulsions of shooting the whole town out. They had no problem with....anyway I found some clothes, I put it on, and I went in the basement and I saw some jars of fruit. Canned fruit. So I took a couple of jars, but I couldn't carry

anymore. So I took a pillowcase I filled up with stuff and I took it back to camp. I figured some of the guys couldn't go out. So we brought some stuff back. When we came back to camp, that was the beginning. Then we were around the camp, and the Russians said to us, do whatever you want. There was no law, there was no order, there was nothing. You can shoot all the Germans and nobody is going to ask questions. Just do it! Forget it! Don't bother me! So the Russians, as far as I was concerned, they did the right thing. Alright, so there was a weaving factory. Some Russians said, look - some huge Russians came around and said, look - you want to do something, tell you what you do. Find some guns, the Germans left there and put a red band on it so that we know that you're not a German. Take over the weaving factory watch so the Germans won't rob it. The Russians were not very (up) to rob the place either, but they didn't want the Germans to rob it, or somebody else. You go and do whatever you want. There was a guard house in the front, so a few guys from the camp - by then we got a little stronger - it was a few days later, we went to the camp and we stayed there in that factory compound, and we watched -watched, (skeptically) what are you going to watch; nobody came near. There was no Germans around anywhere. Just stayed there; someplace to stay. Then at one time, this friend of mine who was with me in camp, and he was not - I was more aggressive I guess by nature than he, and he says to me you know what - he used to (come there). You know we have some Jewish girls here. There was a camp - a Jewish camp. Where my wife was at that time. And in that lager, in that camp, she says there were living in one room maybe half a dozen girls and they haven't got no place, just one room. You got houses - every day guys went out and opened up another house. You broke the window, you got in, it's your house. You didn't have to sign no papers, you didn't have to do nothing, just take it. Anyway, so he said they would like a house but they are afraid - girls - they're not going to do like the guys. By that time we found whiskey, and vodka, and we were - a little bravado was going through us. () became brave. So he says - you know, let's go and look for a house. So we go around house shopping. We found a nice house up on a hill, with a garden. He says, but we are afraid. Some big German used to live there - a big Nazi. He was afraid, you know, that he might still be hiding in there. So, a couple, three of the guys got over this. Don't worry about it. We've got some more vodka - we'll take care of this German. At that time the mode of transportation was bicycles

because, you know, there wasn't anything else. So we got on bicycles, which we took away from some-place. We stole them from some of the Germans some-place, and we drove over to that house, beautiful little house, with a nice garden. There were strawberries still growing in the garden. (Child's voice in background calling grand-pa; Laughter, then continuation of monologue). Then we opened the window, two of us guys, and went in. (Child's voice calls grand-pa again. He answers "yes, dear" "Just wait a minute". Interviewer asks child to wait until he is finished talking). So we opened up the house - took over the house, you know, rummaged through the house to see what we could find. I found boots, and sure he must have been some big German. Some fancy boots were in there. You know, those high boots they were wearing - shined, polished. I found some nice clothes. Some of it fit me. I said sure, and some of the guys took whatever they want. I said now let's go find the girls. And sure enough - I never met those girls - this guy told us where they are, and they lived in one room. Maybe half a dozen Jewish girls. Maybe they didn't have very much, but compared to the camp this was a palace.

Q: THESE WOMEN WERE HIDING OUT THERE.....

A: Jewish girls.

Q: THESE GIRLS WERE HIDING OUT THERE OR THEY WERE JUST LIVING THERE?

A: They were living there. So I guess a German woman rented them, or they took it away. I don't know how they got that room. So we took them over there and said look. At that time I met my wife and a few other girls, and we took them over there and said -look- there's a nice house for you. You want it? Move in! It's yours! Oh geez, they started running around and looking. There was linen in there, and there were dishes in there and there was....like a house, you know. Order! That's where I met my wife. That was in the Russian occupation zone. Okay. Pretty soon, a few months later, decided the Russian zone with all its good things, is really not, you know..... Everybody says where you want to go to is the American zone. From there you can go to America, you can go to Israel, you can go to Canada. The Russians don't let anybody out. At that time there was still anarchy, really, because war was still going on. It was 1945, there was still Germans hiding - you could do whatever you want. Really wasn't much order. So we went - I decided let's go look over this American zone,

since I was - you know I always tried to explore - the explorer. I went to explore. So I hopped a train. The train was going - you know the Poles at that time were (shootin) all the Germans out going back to Germany, and American zone was under Germany. I spoke German before, it didn't take me much, and besides by then I wasn't afraid of Germans any more. So I hopped a train - I was just going with the call, German (uzilook) they call it. The Poles just chasing the Germans out. They didn't want them there. So I hopped a train and I went to Germany, through Czechoslovakia, and then I went to Czechoslovakia. My mother spoke Czech, so I know how to get along there fine. I went to look for my family there in Czechoslovakia, and in Czechoslovakia I found I missed my cousin and his family - moved to London in 1939, just before the war. And he was in the English army. So he too came looking for his family. I missed him by about two hours. Oh geez, when I came the neighbors told me he was here just two hours ago. Anyway, that was the story. Then I went into the American zone, I smuggled myself across the American zone, and when I got there they told me not far from Munich was a, what was the name of that town - (Markoberdorf), there were some Jewish fellows living there and they have apartments, and nice..so, I says fine, and so I went over there and hopped a train again and got to the town, and sure enough there were some Jewish fellows there and I met them, and there were (discamps) and they put me up. One of the fellows said to me, you know what? My sisters live in Poland. They're still there. The () of the camp would like you to get them here but we don't know how to get them. I said well, I'll go back. I didn't mind. I didn't have anybody really, because in Poland I went through checking for my family and there was nobody there, and in Czechoslovakia there was nobody there. I went to different towns and I couldn't find anybody. (Tape 1 side 2 follows). So I smuggled myself back to the Russian zone.

Q: HOW DID YOU DO THIS?

A: How did I get from one country to the other? It wasn't very hard. I spoke several languages....

Q: YOU HAD NICE CLOTHES ON.

A: Well, not nice clothes.

Q: YOU GOT THE CLOTHES FROM THE HOUSE.

A: Well, whatever I could find...maybe it wasn't Fifth Avenue.

Q: WERE YOU STILL VERY WEAK?

A: Well at that time - I don't remember how weak I was. I felt like I could move the whole world by then. If you ask me to move the United States to another continent, I think I could figure out I could do it. (laughter). Fear left me. I had no fear any more. And I wasn't afraid of anybody. So I went back, smuggled myself back across the Czech border at night. Between crossing guards, I smuggled myself across. And then I smuggled myself across the Polish border and I got back to Poland, where all those people were what I left in the camp where I was. Then I found those other girls, you know, the sisters of those fellows, and my wife, and I brought them to the American zone. I smuggled (the way out) the other way again. So we smuggled back and forth.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE?

A: There must have been a dozen people; girls, mostly girls. A couple guys. Anyway, we came to the Czech border, and of course we got some false papers for the girls, and I said look - by yourself is one thing, you know one guy, you can smuggle yourself across at night, you can get by. But if you got a group of people like this, you better get some papers ready. So we did some business on the black market - you know - and we got some money together, and somebody said those are real genuine papers. Well, they weren't more genuine than a seven dollar bill, but anyway we get to the Polish border. It looked authentic to me. You know, it had the stamps, it had pictures on it, it looked like....we paid some money for that, you know, to get those papers to smuggle ourselves out of Poland. We get to the Polish border and the Polish crossing guard says - okay, papers. That's the first time I went with papers. I never had papers before. The only paper I had was dollar bills in my pocket. And we had suitcases with stuff in it - you know, take vodka with you and stuff, so that you can give them to the crossing guard, and I had some watches. I found a gold watch I kept around, you know. Anyway, so when we come to the border, the Polish guard said to us well those papers haven't got the right stamp. You got to have a later stamp, or whatever. I guess he knew they weren't the real thing. So we went ahead and I was the spokesman again, I was trying to.....So I go and talk to him and sit at his desk, and he says - look, you know you can't go across. You haven't got the right stamp. So I said, listen! So I had some watches and stuff. I says look. We got those watches here. And he says, well....But he opened his drawer, so I pushed them in his drawer. He says - okay. I'm going to let you go across, but the Czech won't let you go by either. The Czech border crossing guard. I said let me handle

him when I get there. First you let me by you and then we'll worry about him. If I have to come back, well, so you take us back, so what. He says well, alright, so he let us go by. We paid him off and we got to the Czech border. The Czech were much more sympathetic to us, really. The Poles were anti-semites from year one. They helped the Germans. They were worse than the Germans many times, really. So we get to the Czech guard, again I'm the spokesman - I speak the little Czech I had, and I talked to him. The same story. He says - look. I can't get you guys going across with the same thing. You couldn't pay him off. He wasn't interested in any... I says look - We started talking to him and pleading with him - we're going to visit our relatives - we're going to try reuniting with our relatives in Czechoslovakia. We didn't tell him we're going through Czechoslovakia. He says, Well, I can't let you in. Finally I realized - look I'm going to be truthful with you. No matter, we don't even want to stay in Czechoslovakia. We want to go into the American zone. And he says I simply can't let you go through here. They're gonna pick you up at the railroad station. Don't worry about it. When they pick us up they'll bring us back here, so what are you worried about. He says - I can't let you go on through. We gotta see the commander. I said well who is he, where is he. Well he's in town. He's got an office in town. So he and I marched into town. The rest of them were standing at the border. They waited. I put some cigarettes in my pocket. I figured just in case you know, maybe I can bribe him with something. We got to town, and this Czech, he was very strict and this guy comes and tells him in Czechoslovakian that, you know, he got those people here, they want to cross, they want to go into the American Zone and haven't got the right papers. And he says, well you know we can't let those people through here. They'll cause all kinds of problems and we don't have the right papers. We can't let them through. So I start talking to him. I says look, you know we're not going to stay in your country. All we're gonna do is pass. And besides that I says look, we got my relatives whoever there is, my friends, live on American zone. That's where we want to go. Anyway, he says well, I can't help you. That was his final answer. I can't help you. So when I left with the guard he didn't say exactly no. He said he can't help me.

Q: HE DIDN'T SAY LIKE YOU HAVE TO STAY HERE?

A: Yah. So I said to the guard, you know he didn't say

that we stay here. He didn't say you should put us in jail. He didn't tell you to send us back. The guy says no, he didn't. I says what did he say. He said he can't help us. Alright, so you help us. You let us go. Anyway, I convinced him to let us go. I stuffed some cigarettes in his pocket. He didn't want to take it, really, he didn't. But he says okay, now if they catch you he says, don't tell them I let you go. I says fine. So we got on a () to the railroad station, cause I know already how to go across Czechoslovakia, and I told all the fellows, we bought some Czech papers, you make believe you read Czech. Look. Look like a bunch of Czechs! We sat there reading the papers, they didn't know what they were reading. They looked at the pictures. We got through Czechoslovakia. Then we had to cross out of Czechoslovakia into the American zone. Now that was another trick. That we did at night. We went down there looking and we saw where we could cross the border at night without papers; where there was not too many guards. Fine, so we finally crossed. The Americans were not too anxious to stop anybody anyway. So we come across the American zone. And that's the way we came to (Markoberdorf) that town. I went back where those two sisters was going. So we stayed in that town. It was about 50-60 miles from Munich. That's where we stayed.

Q: NOW THIS WAS 1945?

A: Yeah, '45 That's right. At that time my wife and I weren't married yet. She came with this group. We were friends. She says look. If we're gonna stay together we have to get married together. Look, you don't have anybody. She's the oldest from her family and the only survivor. I'm the oldest from my family and we had nobody, really. I says well, makes sense; so we have each other. So we got married.

Q: AND THAT'S WHERE YOU GOT MARRIED?

A: In Germany. And we had some friends. An orthodox Jew came, he wrote the (Chupah Kadishin) he did the whole well not really, but it was done according to Jewish law as we knew it, as best we could. We had a Chupah Kadishin, we had an exchange of rings, I think we did. We had some newly acquired friends and that's where we stayed until 1948. We couldn't get out of Germany because there's quotas. Even at that time they wouldn't let the Jews --even if we wanted to go it wouldn't make any difference, we couldn't go. Well, my wife had relatives in Canada. So we corresponded with

Canada and they found out where we are and we got some packages from them, and we got some letters from them. Finally, they sent papers - they were gonna send papers for us. By that time we were married, But Canada had a worse quota than the United States. The United States wasn't good - Canada was worse. They wouldn't let anybody in. So finally we went ahead in....do you mind if I take my jacket off I'm getting warm. It's hot in here. I'm hot in me. (laugh)

Q: I WANTED TO ASK THOUGH, YOU SAID YOU WERE THERE FOR TWO YEARS. WHAT DID YOU DO THERE. DID YOU WORK?

A: In Germany? Well I worked. What I did is, I was a dental technician. Before the war my uncle lived in Czechoslovakia, my mother's brother, and he was a dentist. So I went to him as an apprentice to become a dentist or dental technician - first a dental technician and then a dentist. So I stayed with him. He had a nice house. By European standards he was well to do because he was a professional, he was a dentist. Anyway, he had a nice house living in Czechoslovakia, a nice apartment, and I stayed with him. I went to school, to a trade school to become a dental technician, working with him in the office and the lab, helping out - and that's it. He, when the war broke out, he decided, he had a car, that he and his family - he had a child, one baby - they are gonna go to the Russians. They run away from the Germans, they run to the Russians. Well it was there they got killed by the Germans, because at that time the Germans and Russians got together and the Poles, the Pollaks - you know, killed Jews. So that's what happened to them. So he got killed there. But at that time that's when I went back home and the whole story started all over with me. But since I was a dental technician when I came back to Germany in 1945, I went to town and I says look. At that time they tried to deNazify the Germans. Of course the Germans said none of them were nazis but they have records, and obviously it wasn't true. They said they didn't know anything about a concentration camp, and it's not their fault, and they had nothing to do with it and they didn't know nothing happening, and they didn't know nothing....they were so innocent, so pure...you know. But obviously it was not....So they said look, why don't you go to work, if you want to, if you can, take over a German dental office. I said what am I going to do with a German dental office. He said well, maybe you'll work with them. So in this town there was a dentist - a father and a son - and I went and talked to them. I said look, I don't want

to take over your office, don't be afraid, I don't want it. And I don't want to stay here either. But while I'm here I want to do something, so I'm going to work with you.

Q: THIS WAS A GERMAN? WAS THAT DIFFICULT AFTER WHAT YOU'D BEEN THROUGH?

A: A German. No, it wasn't difficult. Well, he was afraid of me at that time. The shoe was on the other foot, and he was afraid that I'm gonna take it away from him, that I'm gonna chase him out of the house, or that I'm gonna make some accusation against him. That wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to get out of there. But while I was there he says well, he can't pay me much. So I said pay as much as you want. I didn't care because we were getting money from the HIAS, and then there was some black market business we were doing. You know we were selling cigarettes - buying from American soldiers and selling it back and so made a little money that way. So, there wasn't really much....but anyway I worked with him. While I was in Germany I worked with him for a couple of years. We finally got the papers from my wife's family in Canada to come to Canada, but through the United States. We came to New York, they had a cousin in New York and he signed the papers and it worked out that way. So we came to New York, well the whole family was there because my wife was the only survivor from her family. And they were all very emotional when we came, and they were well to do people in Canada, came in Buicks and Electras and we stayed in a hotel. When we came to New York we decided, it was after a few days staying in New York, we're gonna go home. After kissing and hugging and telling stories we're going to drive to Canada. We came to the Canadian border and the guard says wait a minute. Those people can't go. Now I understand what he said, because at that time I couldn't speak English. So he says to me, well you can't leave. You can't go across to Canada just like that. They got papers just to go to the United States, not Canada. Well, so we turned around the cars and went back to Buffalo, because that was the closest town. That's the way we wound up in Buffalo.

Q: WHEN YOU COME TO THIS GATHERING, WHAT HAS IT MEANT FOR YOU, TO COME TO THIS GATHERING? YOU SAY THAT NO ONE IN YOUR FAMILY SURVIVED AT ALL?

A: No. I have a distant cousin which is - her father and my grandfather were brothers. So that's like third cousin, fourth cousin. That's the only one. Well, what does it mean to me? Well, I'll tell you.

As the speeches go on, as I meet the people, memories come back. I can't help it. And it hurts. And tears come to my eyes. Well, what can you do? You got to remember, you can't forget. I don't think we ever will forget, but you have to live with every day life. I have a family now, I have two children, I have a grand-daughter, my daughter lives in Jerusalem. She has a daughter. And my son lives in Buffalo. He is in research - microbiology. That's my life now. I built a nest, and maybe that was my purpose to stay alive. I don't know.

Q: WHEN I MEET SURVIVORS - MOST SURVIVORS I TALK TO ARE SO OPTIMISTIC, I MEAN OBVIOUSLY THE TEARS ARE THERE AND THE MEMORIES WILL NEVER GO AWAY AND PEOPLE THAT WEREN'T THERE WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND, BUT WHY - HOW DO YOU SAY- WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOU GO ON, OR WHAT MADE YOU HOPE OR....?

A: What made me hope? Well I'll tell you. You know in the camps in the life, the time that I went to camp when my grand mother says I'm going to survive, well I was 16 years old at that time - I loved my grand-mother. She really was a pious person. If ever there was a pious person, she was one. And she says just live from day to day. How pious she was, you know a Jew's supposed to pray every morning and put on tallis and tephilin. So she says, you know you're going to camp and I know you won't be able to put on tallis and tephilin every day, so I'm not going to give you the tallis and tephilin. But, she said, take a siddur, a prayer book, and whenever you can, pray. Alright the book got lost of course when we came to camp, we threw our clothes away and put everything away, so they took the book away too. So what happened is you lived from day to day. You lived that tomorrow would be a better day. That it would be a day that the war would come to an end. You hope again that the people gonna live - the parents, maybe somebody from your relatives gonna be alive. That you're () or your brothers or your sisters - you find somebody. Nobody realized, you know, what happened. We realized at the end that there was shooting and burning people, but we didn't realize how bad it was, really. So you live from day to day. You know it reminds me of when we walked to work. You know, we had wooden shoes on. and you walk; sometimes you walk in the snow and it was tiring. It was winter and it was cold. We wrapped a sheet of paper to keep warm- on the body put some newspaper on so keep warm. The clothes we had were not much clothes.

Q:: NO BLANKETS AT NIGHT?

A: Well we had blankets at night. We had a blanket at night. And it meant make one more step. Don't stop. Because when you stop you're left by the wayside or got shot, or got sent back to the camp and sent away to be put away. So it was a question of making one more step. One more day to live. Another piece, and another piece of bread, maybe you steal a potato someplace or maybe you'll find a beet someplace on the way you can pull out of the ground. You lived from day to day. Now, I don't know, you develop sort of philosophy on life. My philosophy is, you know people really can put up with an awful lot. We don't realize how strong we are. We also don't realize how weak we are, how easy it is to destroy a person. Look how many people that burned - it was nothing, like paper - like it's garbage - like nothing. If you think about that, how you go on, that's the way you go on. Go from day to day. But now you know, I'm coming to the conclusion. I have a family, I think I served my purpose. I served my purpose, whatever that purpose is. The rest of the life I have, I try to live as comfortably, help my children as much as I can, guide them, advise them - that's my job. That's what I've done. I'm active in the Synagogue, I've become a Mason, I joined the Masons, I'm active in the business. I make a good living and I have a few dollars, and that's all. That's my life. That's life. I'm active in social affairs you know where I can, and I'm the Treasurer of my Synagogue and I'm a (master Mason). When I was a dental technician when I came to the United States I had a dental laboratory. I took tests and became a certified dental technician and that's what I accomplished. That's my accomplishment.

Q: SO YOU NEVER LOST FAITH. YOU THINK THAT THAT'S IMPORTANT?

A: No, I didn't lose, but many times you know when you sit by yourself and you think, memories come back. Or you talk with other people and the question comes up - you know a lot of questions come up - you question even God. When you find out how bad it was, because you didn't realize, because you were one isolated situation, you didn't realize those things would happen in other camps. You heard about them but didn't realize how bad it was. You know what happened to you, to your situation, but you didn't know what happened somewhere else. So you question God, you question your religion, you question yourself. You ask "why Me", what did I do to deserve it? And then you think about

my grand mother, my sisters, other people. They were much more worried than me. So there was the question; those were the questions. (Tears). That will be enough.