

**OSCAR HABER**  
**May 17 & May 30, 2000**  
**Tape 1, Side A**

[Copy-checked and partially authenticated by A.D.—9/1/05]

- Q: Okay, it's May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000 and we're conducting an interview with Mr. Oscar Haber here in his home in Lexington, Kentucky and this is an interview for the Holocaust Survivors in Kentucky Interview Project, which is being sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as the Kentucky Oral History Commission. We are doing an interview that will focus mostly on Mr. Haber's experiences after the Holocaust because he has been interviewed before by the Survivors of the Shoah Foundation. And there is a videotape that is available through the Shoah Foundation. My name is Arwen Donahue and this is tape number one, side A. Mr. Haber, let's start with your date of birth.
- A: March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1910.
- Q: And you talked about, in your other interview and by the way if we ever repeat anything, we'll try to just cover things that we haven't talked about before. But I'm sure that you don't remember everything that you said and didn't say, so I might remind you sometimes if we've already talked about something. But in your other interview you did mention that you went, you had an unusual opportunity, you were growing up in a small town, in a shtetl and you were one of nine children, and you had an unusual opportunity to attend a high school, a public high school and eventually became a dentist. And I'm wondering how it happened that you had this opportunity to study in a public high school and where the high school was?
- A: The high school was in Debica, which is in the district of Krakow and that was about nine kilometers of my village where I was born. And we had, from the age of three, in our house, always a teacher, special for religious purposes. But by this same occasion we were studying normal classes. So in the age of four I could already go in the village to the first class of public school and I still was a good pupil, because no one of them was on the level I was. But I finished there the fourth year and my father decided I have to go into the small city, which was Debica there. In the same time, he put us in a quarter, that means to live in the house of a Rabbi, which was teaching us the Hebrew and the religious teachings. In the same time I went to the Polish public school. And that was a very difficult experience because we have to get up in the morning at six o'clock, sometimes earlier, and before we went to the public school in the morning for eight o'clock it started, we had already to pray and to learn Hebrew and to learn everything about religious life. And more and more. So, I was there about six years living with this Rabbi. At the same time after I graduated from the normal school, from the seven classes, I applied to the high school, but I was too young. Because it was already that you can go to school, start school only by the age of seven, and I was four years old. But I was somehow fortunate, my father knew the director of this high school. And he spoke with him and he said, "Well I cannot do it. He has to go normal now to the sixth class at least, at least and to repeat." And my father said, "You know, make him a test." And I got a test and I passed the test, but still

he couldn't take me. I had to repeat the seventh grade another year. And then I was accepted to the high school. And there I matriculated there and so I continued my studies.

Q: So, what language did you speak at home?

A: Well, the first language we spoke, that was Yiddish. My father was very religious and he want us to know the Yiddish, we are spoken. But we had Polish Gentile servants, too, so we have to speak Polish too. And surrounded by peasants who are speaking Polish and you have to knew the language. In the school was Polish of course. When I went to school in Debica there was in the fourth class was already German, too. So I had German, Polish and Yiddish, and of course, Hebrew, which was, it was the liturgical language, to pray. At the age of three we started already to learn Hebrew and we knew the Hebrew alphabet and we knew to pray and most of the praying until today, I know by heart. Most of the thick books, we learn, we have to do it. And the first when you opened eyes at the religious house, the first is to wash your hands, that's the first things. And to make a blessing about the washing the hands and you make a blessing for the food and you have to thank God that you got up in the morning. That was the first Hebrew praying and that was at the age of three. At the age of four we started already to learn the Torah, which is the Bible, the Old Testament. And so we continued to, so therefore I am quite acquainted about religious Jewish life. And then later on, of course, in high school we learned about, in the public school we learned about history and that was very interesting, world history, too. And German literature. And therefore I, until today, I am quite acquainted with the world literature and especially the German literature and the Hebrew, of course. And the Yiddish. So, this is the way like it was. It was a very hard thing, because the distance to the town was like I said about nine kilometers, eight or nine kilometers. I don't remember exactly. And for Saturday we used to go home, I mean to the village. And when we came to the village Saturday, there was the traditional Friday evening meal with the praying, with everything. In our house was there a minyan, which is the quorum of ten people which is praying, Jews, by Jewish law. And my late father, by himself with his own funds, he founded a Torah. He let scribe it, and we had a new Torah in our house and there was a praying in our house and my father was the master of the ceremony. And the people from the villages around, which were few, not always was there the quorum of ten people. But Saturday morning was always a praying in quorum. If it wasn't quorum, so how many it was, but it was the normal pray. And we had to know it and to participate. And that was in afternoon, my father take a sleep one hour and he took us in the room, me and my brother, because my older brother was with me in the school at this Rabbi. He was sitting down and we had to repeat what we learned all the week. My father wanted to know what we learned and how far we are continuing to progress. And that was the way like it was in our house. Of course, Saturday was like in the Torah is resting day. And that was the religious way of life. Nothing was working, nobody was working, even the servants. Only to feed the animals, to milk the cows and that what was doing. But not working in the field, not other work was performed. Only the most necessary for surviving, which was necessary.

Q: You mentioned that one of the towns nearby, Ropczyce, had a strong Hasidic tradition. Did your family have any Hasidic ties or traditions?

A: My father by himself was a Hasid. But he didn't go to Ropczyce because the old Ropczyce Rabbi wasn't more. The founder of the Hasidic movement which was Reb Nafthali, which you

know. And he was no more alive. There was already third or fourth generation there and there was no potential Rabbi which could, which could affinate (*ph*) my father there. My father used to go to Sans (*ph*), which was quite a distance, about fifty miles. To go for holidays there to the Rabbi of Sans (*ph*). Also sometimes OfBobof (*ph*), which is also a little shtetl there in the surroundings of Sans (*ph*). They were the very famous Rabbis, which is the continuation of this Rabbis is now here in the United States. They are siblings and family offsprings, which are continue this Hasidic movement of Bobof (*ph*) and of Sans (*ph*). And that was, my father was a Hasid of them. He wasn't, by himself, he wasn't a blind Hasidic. He wasn't overdoing. But the basic religious things were holy for him. And that was my father. Of course my mother did everything what my father said to do. The thing was, my father, his first wife passed away. And from his first wife, gave birth a daughter and by the birth she passed away. He was a young widower. He was already thirty-five or thirty-six years old and a matchmaker found him a girl of sixteen years somewhere in another village there. And she came to live with him, and she was my mother. She gave birth to the nine children. And we were in touch with our sister, because Jewish law recognize it, one child, when it is from the same father, is a sibling, more even than one mother. That is the religious way and tradition. Interesting enough, our sister, she married a very interesting man, who was, in the beginning he was a teacher in our house, teaching us the religious ways. He was very educated in Jewish Talmudic teachings. And he married her, and he succeeded, he became quite a rich man. And she gave birth to eight children. And there are only two children survived and they are still living. One is ninety-two years old, lives in the United States. And the other one is eighty-five years, that's the youngest one, eighty-four years old, lives in Israel.

Q: These would be your nieces and nephews actually. Right? Officially. Your sister's children?

A: Are?

Q: They would be your nieces and your nephews?

A: Yeah, they are my nieces and we are in touch with them and we are very much in good relations. And very interesting story about these two nieces. Both of them survived the Holocaust. The one married in the war and had a daughter in the war. And she escaped, run away, being pregnant from Debica, I mean this village there, to Lvov, which was in the Ukraine. Then it was belonged to Poland, but the Russian invaded this part of the country, of Polish country. And she, when she saw the disaster in the ghetto, she put her child under a convent's door. And was looking from far away what happened to this child. And she saw that a nun came out and she took in the child in the house. And then she ran away and she became a servant, as a Polish girl, as a Gentile at the head of the Gestapo in Lvov. That was the older one. The younger one had a friend in Lvov. She was in Lvov studying sewing, to be a seamstering. Mother, very good seamster, which she was. And she met there a boy, before the war he was leader already of the trade unions. And when the Russian came in... in the beginning he was a very big shot. But when the Russians, when the German invaded, he went with the Russian back to Russia and there he joined the Polish Army, which was organized there by the Poles after their agreement, the Polish agreement in exile with the Russians, which allowed them to organize their Army, which was affiliated to the Russian Army. And they were fighting. And he was fighting the Germans until Berlin. And he put her on a Polish family. She was a seamster and she gave birth

to a daughter, but that was already in 1945 when the war is going to end. When he came from Russia to Poland with the invasion, I mean to fight with the Russian Army. And then she gave birth to this daughter. And when the war was coming to an end, he became a governor of a part which was annexed from Poland from the German territory there. And he took her there, and they had another two sons, but they not living as Jews. And they very talented boys. And when it came in Poland the time where Jews moved from Poland to Israel in 1965 I guess, was it? Something like this. They came, first time she told the sons that they are Jewish and they were already both matriculated after high school diploma. And one of them was already studying engineering. And they came to Israel. But their father, himself, he in the meantime, being a governor he studied at the university at the same time to become an agronom... agronomy. And he came to Israel as an agronom. But because Israel didn't have confidence to all these apparatchiks from Poland. I mean all this communist active parties, he couldn't find a job. It was very difficult to find. And we were already at this time in Israel and I had some connection with people and to a member of the Israel Parliament. And I wrote to them and I warranted about him, that he's not one of the Russian services and he got a job in agronomy. But he passed away about six or seven years ago. In the meantime, the older son is working in a very high, secret Israel Army factory. And the other son was also an engineer, but in the same time he was teaching in a school, in a vocational school. And married a girl from Venezuela. And one year ago they decided that they leave Israel and they came to the United States. And he got a job here in California. He must be very, very important engineer, because he got the, he made the green card and he can work and they bought a house. But they have one son, who is at the Israel Army. And just now I heard, two weeks ago, he went to Israel and asked to give him some off in the Army. And he came to visit him here to the United States. He will not stay. He will go back to Israel. But he decided, his wife and with the other two children to stay in the United States.

Q: Sounds as if you've kept in pretty close touch with whatever members of your family have survived.

A: Oh yeah, whatever I have. I have two brothers. I have a second cousin, who was... they were all in camps. And they are living here in the United States. My brothers and my second cousins. Are we are trying to keep all together here.

Q: Let's go back to the time that we were talking about before the war. Did you end up going to high school then because your father wanted you to have oppor... special opportunities?

A: Yes.

Q: That normally your other siblings wouldn't have had?

A: High school, further studies wasn't the main purpose of my father. My father would have very much liked me to go on and study Jewish, maybe Rabbinical even studies. But I was very stubborn and I was in very difficult conditions, making my study very difficult. Often in hunger, often have to work and to gain my life. But I did it. And I'm happy I did it.

Q: So it was really your, becoming a dentist was something that you really wanted to do.

A: I, that was my idea. That was my idea and there was also an idea which I got from a cousin of mine who was a dentist in the other place there. And I liked the way like he was living. I was enjoying more the free life. This religious life didn't match my character. I wasn't never, never... even being young, following all the instructions and prescriptions, but I was never strictly convinced that that was what I want to do. I was always looking on the broad world, and life was for me, more interesting outside the religious life.

Q: You mentioned in your first interview that you were a Polish patriot.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you politically interested or involved in Polish... well, were you interested in Polish politics?

A: No, no, no, no. I was, deep in my soul I was Jewish, but I found that we are living in a Polish country, this is Poland and this is our homeland and we owe to be loyal to our country. That's wherever I am, I found my obligation to be honest and I could avoid serving in the Polish Army which wasn't easy. It wasn't easy. It was very difficult. But it wasn't voluntary, because Poland was an Army which was called to the Army. That was not a voluntary army. You have to go, by twenty-one everyone has to go to the army except that somebody is unable to fulfill the demand, sick and so forth. And a lot of my colleagues and a lot of Jewish people usually they started to do everything to avoid to go into the Polish Army. I didn't try it even. And I did it full hearted and I think it was my obligation to do it, because I owe it. I understand that it is a common responsibility when you are a citizen of a country, you live there, you have to do what belongs. But politically I was never involved in any movement, never any movement.

Q: Not...

A: I loved Poland. I loved the country. It gave us opportunity and then that's it. I did what I had to do.

**End of Tape 1, Side A**

**Tape 1, Side B**

Q: Tape one, side B. Were you involved in any Zionist organizations?

A: It was a time I was involved in Zionist organization. It was a time I thought maybe one has to go to Palestine those times. I will not deny there was not in Poland anti-Semitism. But you know anti-Semitism until today has many faces. There is an economic anti-Semitism, there is a political anti-Semitism and there is a racist anti-Semitism. And for me and my observance, my conviction, I think if I analyze the Jewish situation in Poland, it was more economic anti-Semitism, with some reasons, objective reasons. They were nobody's fault, but the situation became so that this anti-Semitism has his logical reasons, logical reasons, maybe it shouldn't be, maybe it is nobody's fault, but it was. I cannot say there was a racial anti-Semitism. Well, there is in every nation, there are some extreme people, which they can get... and they are more doing it for personal reasons and for gaining something of it. And this is also the political anti-Semitism, which is to gain something to rule over people. You know? And Jews were more educated, absolutely more educated than the common people in Poland. Because as I told you before, I started to study when I was three. You know, and this gives, whatever you study, it gives you more advance about people which are just starting to study something at the age of eight or nine or ten even. Some of them didn't go to school, the Polish people didn't go to school ever. There was illiteracy, too. So, when it came to elections, the Jews, they knew what they wanted. And the masses didn't know. Maybe it is until today a lot of masses don't know when they are going to vote, what they need and what they want. It is until today everywhere. But especially in a country like Poland, which was, which wasn't so educated. There was a lot of people who didn't have, it was only by propaganda, which was from mouth to mouth, from promises and so forth, you know. And then Poland, I would need to go into the situation of Poland, how Poland became free after being occupied by three countries.

Q: Well let's not get into overall historical...

A: Yeah, I understand. I understand, but the Jews even, in each occupied party, had different opportunities. In the Russian occupied part they couldn't progress like this we could make in the Austro-Hungarian or in the German occupied territory. So here comes the difference. Education, knowledge and education, that was, is and that would always be the point. And this gave also the impulse for political views and for a kind of organized anti-Semitism, which for the Jews, for the victims, it is not important what kind of anti-Semitism it is. He is anti-Semite, why and what, we didn't analyze and that wasn't important. We had to feel it and that what it is.

Q: When you were in the Army then, in 1935 and '36, did you, were you primarily with non-Jewish Poles?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: And how was that?

A: Ten percent was Jews. It was the same, approximately the same relative like it was, the population was about ten percent and there was about ten percent was in the Army.

Q: Were you discriminated against at all for being Jewish during your service?

A: It's difficult to say that you were discriminating because Army is not the thing which gives you the time. You have so many things to do that you don't have the time to play these games. But, but, the officers, the Polish officers generally, generally, were anti-Semites. What kind? They were so educated, they were so prepared. That was the elite. That they, but of course, they didn't, they didn't want to show up as anti-Semites. But you could feel it, you could feel it. Not everybody felt it. And then like I said, the poorer Jews went to the Army because they were not able to pay to get free from the Army, not to serve. The rich Jews who didn't want to go to the Army, there was always finding a way of bribery. To whom? To the Polish officers, to the Polish doctors, to the Polish secretaries, so that they made themselves sick and they write and they are sick and they cannot serve. And so the poor and little Jews were serving in the Army. There were no too many of the intelligentsia which was serving in the Army. And then there was another thing. After matriculation you are going to the officer's school. And in the officer's school, they didn't want the Jews to become officers. They were there because they were, after matriculation that was the law. So usually they find always a way to send them back to the normal Army, not to live in the school to become an officer. There were officers, Jewish officers, but very few, very few. It was difficult to advance, to be a Jew and to be an officer, a high officer in the Polish Army. There were higher officers only medical officers, because they needed them. They have to take them and that's what it was.

Q: So, by the time you were in the Service, you were a dentist, were you a dentist already?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah, so you were, your goal was just to do the service and then get out. Is that right?

A: Yeah. When the time came to go out, I got a phone from Krakow that one doctor who was by himself a Colonel in the Polish Army, doctor, dentist. He had private office. He was ready to retire and he had a private office. But he got a heart attack and they took him to hospital. And they phone to me, they knew that I would go liberated, if I will be able to replace him, to fill out that position. So the last day in the Polish Army... and even the greatest anti-Semite in my unit, came to me, they make me a party, my departure, that was ad hoc make a party for me. He came to me, he said, "You know I am twenty years in the Polish Army. I am professional officer, high officer. I'm a major there." He said, "You are the first Jew I know had such a good time in the Army like you have. Like you had." And I said to them good bye, and I left. And immediately the next day I came to Krakow and I start to work because I had to fulfill this, this... later on he was released from the hospital. He survived and he came to the office, but I still was working with him. He couldn't work anymore. So I was working with him about a year and a half, something like this. And then I opened my own office.

Q: But you said you didn't have such a good time in the... did you have a good time socially? Is that what he meant? That you got along with other officers?

A: Oh yeah. I had a good time, well I got along. They were all, needed me because I was there practicing dentistry. After the first, first recruiting, six months, then later on I organize a clinic and I receive patients. So they had their families and they were coming to me and I had really a good time. I came from the Army with some saved money, which the families of these officers paid to me for services. That was very, very, very little payments, but still I came with quite nice saved money.

Q: You mentioned in your other interview that you were involved with the underground army. The Armia Krajowa. How did you get involved with the army and when?

A: In 1942, when we fled, went with the, on the Aryan papers, so-called. We came to a strange village there. And there the lady, which was the owner of the farm which we were given the address from the priest to go. That was his sister-in-law. Where I was there on this farm, there the Armia Krajowa started to organize herself. And we came there, and I went there as a refuge, refugee from the occupied territory, German-occupied territory which occupied Poland from Poznan. I said I am from Poznan, and I am hiding away because I was a Polish officer and I am hiding from the German Army. So when they became knowledge, they turned to me and maybe I will join them. And I said, "Well I cannot be a fighter to go and, with your fighting." I went with them sometimes. But I organized a sanitary station, when some of them were wounded they brought them to me and I gave them some bandages or some treatments, which I had a sanitary station. And I also took care on the weapons which they had, and the magazine. They had some magazine in hiding in the shelter. And they had some weapons there, which they organize somehow. And I was taking, cleaning and taking care of it. And that was my function, I was going there and there, I was going close to every night I am going there and taking care of it. There were some actions which I am participating, but I was never going in the first line to go to fight with the Germans. Never, ever.

Q: Were you afraid at all or nervous that they would find, that they would check up on your story about having been an officer in Poznan and find out about your identity?

A: First of all, there was a case when somebody, the German has, in every village, in every town they had... will you lay down? Lay down...

Q: I have to...

A: I will approach to you a little bit. They had their spies which are spying what happens to the Polish people there. What they are talking about and what they are doing. And some of them denounced that there is some activity, that they have some activity. And they choose Easter, 1943, yeah? 1943 they choose to go to make an action and to arrest these Polish people who are in the underground. They knew from this people which they send in this *Volksdeutsche* and they took there ten people. Between them was the commandant of this base. His name was Bilig (*ph*), Bilig (*ph*). He was a student of law, of the third year, second or third year. He was the commandant of this unit there in this region. And there was other, there was a teacher and there was several people. And one was liberated by the Germans. That was suspected that he was collaborating with the Germans. They released him. The other nine were taken to Auschwitz. This commandant was so beaten up that he couldn't survive. Because one of these people who



was release, he saw him. That they took him from one room to other after hearings. They took him. He was all bleeding. He didn't survive. No one of them survived. So the commandant of this part was the brother of this woman where we were working on this farm. His name was Kostetski (*ph*). Max Kostetski (*ph*). And this lady, which we were there on this farm, she was a very fine, noble person. She knew that we are Jewish. She knew because when we arrived there, the brother of the priest was there, just there. And he was very angry. He said to the priest, "What did you bring these Jews here? Why did you do it?" And he run away very angry. And she knew, but she was a very, very [phone rings] fine, noble person. And she tried to influence her brother. I am an officer and so forth. And she was helping us a lot with bread, with food, everywhere. Even when we later on, after the denunciation, we had to live in other place. She used to come to bring us bread and all kinds of things. She did help us. I think maybe fifty percent of surviving we had to thank her. She was very, very, very kind.

Q: What was her name?

A: Pardon?

Q: What was her name?

A: Oscietska (*ph*), Stanislaw Oscietska (*ph*). Her father was anti-Semite. Her husband was a terrible anti-Semite. And the priest was also an anti-Semite and still that was the priest who helped us and gave us the paper.

Q: What was anti-Semitic about him? Why do you say that?

A: He was anti-Semite, but he was, in my opinion he was economic anti-Semite. However, he didn't have a business. But in the church he was preaching the Polish people to support Polish people, to buy at Polish people, but most of the businesses were Jewish. And therefore Jews were calling all of this kind of expression, they were calling anti-Semite. That was economical anti-Semitism. They want to support their own people. I don't find it wrong. I don't find it wrong. I think he as a priest has an obligation to his people. How we didn't like it, how we didn't want it, but still it did hurt us economically. But he, as a human being and as a priest, he told us, "I want to help you because it comes a bad time to you." So I cannot say he is a racist or he is a political anti-Semite. He was economical anti-Semite. He was anti-Semite. We are very sensitive. We Jews are very sensitive, but we have the reason why to be sensitive after thousands of years of discrimination. But still, if you have a little bit brain and you want to understand human nature, you can find some objective reasons why some people are behaving so, and not like you would like they will behave. We would like to be taken care on us as the Chosen People. But we are not the chosen, to take care on us. We are chosen because we have obligations. We choose to have the obligations. This is the chosen. We took the Ten Commandments, we took the Torah, we took everything, but we have to perform it. And if there is, you have to love your neighbor as yourself. You can never love like yourself, it is allegoric. But you don't have to harm your neighbor. You have to behave. And that, which in many cases we are missing. Even in the holy books we sometimes mention, "We are the Chosen People. You can do to other people this and this and this. You can take interest by non-Jews. You can do this, you can do this, but not to your brothers." And that was a segregation which was in the

Torah. There is segregation which we choose to make the segregation. This is the Chosen People, not only in the positive sense, a lot of things is negative. And therefore a lot of people who are open-minded, they are taking the teachings of our fathers, not strictly verbally. You make some selection. You have some humanitarian obligations as a human being, not blind to follow scriptures, but you have to find a way how to live with people, how to respect other people. Which is very, very important. How do you respect others, so others will respect you? And this is my conviction which I came after so many years of life and so many readings and studying of all, all this which is written in the Jewish and in the non-Jewish books and teachings. Well it's not a... if you know \_\_\_\_\_, introduction, but I mean you have to know to whom you are speaking. I think maybe sometimes I am going out of the framework which this has in mind, but I still am open-minded of everything what happens around.

Q: Yeah, I think it's valuable for the listeners to know who, who you are, what your beliefs are and where you're coming from and how you developed those beliefs. So, but also I wanted to find out, just make little bit clearer the chronology and the geography of what happened from the years 1940 through 1944 or so. You were, you were, you told the story in the first interview about how you went away to the Russian front. You tried to join the Army, you kind of got caught underneath the Russian occupation and then you made your way back to your home village of Brzeznicza? Is that right? And then I'm a little bit confused. You mentioned that you were working in an S, were you working in an SS camp? Was it a concentration camp for Jews that you were working in? Okay, what was the name of the camp?

A: Pustkow.

Q: Pustkow. And you were interned there as a prisoner?

A: No, never. That was one of the miracles of this war maybe. There were no many Jews who are allowed to go in the camp and to leave the camp. And that was, by some miracle, maybe the reason was the German discipline, which they followed the orders of the Commandants, of the Führers. When I came to this camp, I volunteered. That was a working camp and therefore I was put into this camp as a dentist. There was no big dentistry and there was no big medicine, but still there was three medical doctors and there was rooms with beds, which in the beginning, which people when they got sick, even beaten when they were, they could come to the doctor. And they get care, they get care. In the beginning, even some times they were released from this to go to the town, to the little shtetl close to Debica there. There was other assignment to other works. But that was already not in their competence. In the beginning, how strange it would be, there was a Colonel, SS, who was the head of this health services there, Obersturmbanführer (*ph*) Schumacher was his name. And then, but he was maybe for two or three weeks and started only, that was only in '40. That was not yet nothing. That was the first beginning. And therefore the Jews were slowly getting in circulating. They took him so easy, they took him so by easy. They were voluntary, then later by force and later on by annihilation. They were going by themselves. That was the system. And then after two or three weeks, he left. But that was an order officer. A lieutenant officer.

**End of Tape 1, Side B**

**Tape 2, Side A**

Q: Tape two, side A. I'm sorry, will you repeat what you just said?

A: The Jewish doctors, they were the first. But if there were some people unable to work, they couldn't release them. It has to sign, the SS doctor has to sign. And that what he was doing another four weeks. But later on, they left it to the Jews, but the situation became worse. There was no releasing. Treating and to work, treating and to work, no release anymore. In this time I came to... when I organized this little dental clinic there, so called clinic, everything was provisional.

Q: When was it that you organized that clinic?

A: In 1940 already. The end of 1940 I organized it there. And what could I do? If somebody has toothache, I could help, or to make an extraction, to pull out a tooth. And that was the things. There was no other things, no fillings. I had to make fillings only when an SS man didn't want to go to the SS. They were not allowed to go to a Jewish dentist, not to a Polish even, nor to a German. They had to go to an SS. But they knew that they will have a special treatment at the Jewish dentist, so some of them came. And that was a very difficult task, because I didn't have, I didn't have this equipment, which the German have. The German has the most modern and the most \_\_\_\_\_ equipment. The SS had the most modern. And there was a lot of cases, which I couldn't treat them at all, and I send them to go there. But they were insisting, they were insisting. And so in beginning, that was about a year. I had an ID, SS ID, that I could come to the camp and I left. The bus was standing, I show only the ID and I left. In the beginning the doctors were also leaving, living in Debica. And coming only to work there.

Q: The Jewish doctors?

A: The Jewish doctors, yeah. And even some of the workers were allowed to go Saturday and Sunday for a day home, but they have to come back. If they didn't come back, they brought them by force and that was a terrible thing then. So, after a year approximately, there was an order to take the ID's, SS ID's from all the Jews. But I think, I am not sure, because I was there a volunteer, there was an order of the Commandant of this camp, of the head, Gillar (*ph*) SS Oberführer, who gave, day order, which he gives to the soldiers every day orders. He said, "The Jewish dentist can come to the camp whenever he wants. And every time when he comes to the post they will give him a post who bring him in the camp and when he is finished, he will come to pick him up and take him out from the camp." That was unbelievable. That was unbelievable.

Q: Did that happen because he had a special fondness for you?

A: Because it was in the order. I don't know. I don't know. I cannot comprehend it until today. I cannot understand it why.

Q: Did you know him personally?

A: No. No. I knew the Commandant, the head of the... I'll tell you, I mentioned before, the Germans were strict in their orders. I was a volunteer, and I was assigned by the working office, the special working office, which gave the contingent for the camp, for the people. Bring them and give them to different works. And because of they gave me this job, I didn't belong to the SS, I belong all the time to the working office. And the head of this working office was a German, he became German. He was a German from origin. But he was Polish all the time. Only when the Germans came in, he became a German. And he was an officer in the Polish Army with a German name. Eilmiss (*ph*) was his name, Jule Eilmiss (*ph*). And he was very good to me. I was very good to him. I gave him from time to time, I gave him all kind of bribes. And maybe they respect because I was affiliated to this, maybe this was the reason that I didn't belong to the SS, I belong to the working. And that was the reason. And when I came to this post and I said, "I am the Jewish dentist. I need to go to the camp, please give me company." And they give me an SS man, who brought me to the camp. By the entrance to the camp there was another SS man, but he respected this SS man, he gave me over to him. He opened the gate and let me in. And when I was ready, I went to the office and I said, "I want to go out." They call to the camp, to the post, and the postman came and take me out from there. So, this is, everything is miraculous. Well, it is miracle that I am alive and that I am here. But that was something which was really extraordinary. I didn't hear for a similar case in all my experience of camps and Jewish labor.

Q: Were you treating Jewish patients only or were there other prisoners there, who were non-Jewish? I mean political prisoners or something, who you were treating?

A: My treating was only Jews. There was close to it a Polish camp for political Polish prisoners, but I didn't go in there and they couldn't come here. They brought in, once they brought in two Polish prisoners, too, which I had to give them some treatment. But the SS Commandant sit down and took my treatment and the second *Schaffner* (*ph*) of the camp took my treatment. And other SS people came in my private practice home. Because I make in the house where I live like this Polish peasants, I make also a little clinic that what gives me my income. A barter business, people brought me food and I treated them. And so some of these SS people came in and they brought me also some tea, some coffee, because it was not on the market, even black market was not to get it. But the SS had everything. And they came in there, most of these SS people which were, plus they knew me, because I was going into the camp, out and in, and out and in, so I was really tolerated in this place like *persona grata*.

Q: Okay, so you were doing that until 1942, when the area was evacuated and the Jews were ordered to the ghetto?

A: The Jews were evacuated earlier. The only Jewish family was my family which allowed, which the Kreishofman (*ph*) allowed them to stay there. They allowed only me, but because the Polish officer didn't understand German, so I take this opportunity and I left all my family there in this village. But there came the Final Solution and they want, nobody could, no Jew could be free. So I would have to go to the camp. My wife, Fryda, had to go with all the family together to the ghetto. From there they went to annihilation, as you know. Some of them went to the camp, to other camps, the brothers, my brothers. My three brothers came to other camps.

Q: So your, at that point your family, did they all go to the ghetto in Ropczyce?

A: Ropczyce and from Ropczyce they send them immediately to Senczyczow (*ph*), which was the next little town. And from there, about two weeks, they send them all to annihilation. I don't know exactly until now. I think to Treblinka. I guess they went to Treblinka, all of them. Except my brothers which went to the other camp, to Rzeszow, from Rzeszow to Mielec. From Mielec there was the factory of airplanes, Hermann Göring Werke. And they were there. And there my oldest brother was killed there by the Germans. And these two brothers survived. And they were taken from there to Germany and they make all the marches and all the way through. And they survived in Germany.

Q: And your Polish, was your Polish good enough that you could pass well without worrying about language problems as a Pole?

A: My Polish was better than all the Polish Polish. Our Polish was exceptional, very good. Otherwise the priests wouldn't give us papers. That was the basic things, appearance and language, that was the things which was the most important. And there was no, any blemish in my language and so till today the Polish people who come here and we are friends, Polish people. They say our Polish is immaculate.

Q: Did you have any, Fryda was talking in the interview that we did with her a little earlier today, she was talking about some of the challenges of being in church and having to adopt this persona, where you had to, everything had to be just right. Do you remember any trouble that you had with that?

A: Not at all. First of all, I adopted it very easy because living in a village, you are involved in the peasant's life. You want, you don't want, you don't have the time even, but still. And so I knew about the habits and about everything how the Poles live. And we were living, even being Orthodox, my father was a very, very, very accepted in the community, in the peasant community. They respected him very well and they came and they lived together. And my father being an Orthodox Jew with \_\_\_\_\_ you have seen. And he spoke immaculate Polish very well and so did all my family. And interesting enough, the children all were speaking Polish home, only when father wasn't there. When father was in field, because we had a farm, so my father was usually, in the summer time always in the field. As you know in a village there is always work, never endless, endless work. When my father came, approaching the house, Yiddish, immediately Yiddish we have to speak at home, only Yiddish.

Q: But your family was unusual then. I mean, I think it was common for Polish Jewish families to be pretty segregated and to just associate with other Jews. But your family was much more integrated it sounds like.

A: Well the question of integration was more common in the shtetl, where there were around Jews. We didn't have, our closest Jew was living a mile from us. A mile in Poland is like hundred miles here. Distances are different. And the other Jews were coming to us to study religious things by the teacher which we have in our house. And they were really poor Jews, poor Jews. It is difficult to describe. Well, in the last years, the situation improve. But I remember as a

child I came in the house of one of the oldest citizens in this village that has Haskila Ascheim (*ph*). And he had two sons... three sons, one went to the Austrian Army and later on to the Polish Army, because it was just a change from Polish liberalization. It was a widow with five children. Of course, the sons came to learn in our house. Not too much, not too much, but the basic prayers, the basic prayers they learned. The other son had also five children and they were very, very talented children, very talented children, but they didn't have the opportunity to go to school, only to the community school, I mean to the elementary school. But they were \_\_\_\_\_, they studied by themselves. And this two sons became even writers and the lawyer in the village there. And one of the sons became a dentist. And the daughter married. Not that this is the point. The point is that this three sons with their families, in the beginning there was here two children, here one child, the other one also two children. They were living in one house, where there was only three rooms. Of course no bathroom, nothing like this. In addition, in the big hall, this old Jew had a pub. He was selling alcohol to the Polish people were coming, drinking there. Everything in this one house. Later on they move on, they somehow organize them, their living. And they have their own houses. No one survived, as far as I know, of all these families. No one. Of all these villagers, no one survived. Only one son and a son-in-law went to America. But I'm sure he's not more alive and I don't know if he had family. I don't know. One grandson came also to America with a very tricky way. His father, who was already in America, sent him a girl from the United States, which he married there, so he could travel to America. But he's not alive. He died. He was a sick boy. Lyman (*ph*) was his name. No one of all this family is around that I know, who survived.

Q: You went from, okay, so in 1942 you went to the Priest's sister. I'm forgetting the name of the town.

A: Jurkow (*ph*). Jurkow, by Szczow (*ph*).

Q: And that was near the time when you got involved with the AK?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you, we didn't get to just talk a little bit more about your experiences in the AK. Did you have any, do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

A: Well, I'll tell you. Thanks to this, my involvement in the AK, I could find a place after I had to escape because of the Gestapo which came. And thanks...the right place...

Q: Yeah, it's going to, so I'll... you don't have to hold it.

A: Oh, and your hand. I have to support your hand.

Q: I guess... sometimes I have to lift up my hand.

A: Therefore I wanted to take from you. I understand it. I give you support.

Q: Tell me when you get tired.

A: Yeah, you'll feel it. [Laughing.]

Q: Go ahead.

A: Thanks to my involvement in the AK, I could find a place when I had to escape when the Gestapo came to pick us up. That was the positive thing what I have of it. Well, I didn't experience too many fights except one when it was already 1944, when our unit was affiliated to a other unit and together we make an attack on a police station, German-Polish police station and the dam of Roznow (*ph*). Roznow (*ph*), that was a big dam which they built on the Danube River, not Danube, but Dunajec river. That was a big dam. There was a little one later of in Szczow where in the beginning the Jews built it. But that was only in 1941, '42. But later on they took away all the Jews in other camps. I don't know what they did to them. I don't know. And there was then a fight, which was quite a real fight with this police, but the Polish police hand over herself and the Germans, some escaped, some were killed. And that was the source where the AK gets more weapons there, from there. No, I am not. You can hold it. I have here support. That was really when I, by my walking in the nights to the base where we have the weapons there, I met some of the AK men, which usually no AK men knew more than other two. That was a conspiracy. And interesting enough, the main active AK man in our unit, which was really an active guy, he was doing by himself a lot of things, he was a released criminal prisoner from Polish prison. And from him I got also for myself a gun, which I had one, but I didn't have enough ammunition for it. And he was the one who give me another gun and then I have some more ammunition, some more for security. [Phone rings.] I didn't use it because I didn't need it, but I was ready in case I will need it. I had a grenade and I had a weapon, I wouldn't go into prison voluntarily. I will kill some Germans and myself, that was my preparation to do. Otherwise I didn't have anything special.

Q: Did you have any, I know that it was a challenge, the AK has a reputation for being very anti-Semitic. Did you have any trouble or close calls with that? With anybody finding out you were Jewish?

A: The only thing which I know, which came through me in the place where I was living, in the neighboring village was another unit of AK and there was a commandant, and all the orders who came from the main office were passing from one unit to the other. And through me was passing from this unit, through me to my unit. And that was already in 1944, by the end of 1944. I usually tried to know what happens because I didn't have a radio. I was relying on the news which I got from the acquaintance, what they get to me. But from this, from this orders who came, I found some orders what happens at the front. There was always messages what is to do and so forth. And the last message which I got, I opened it too. Then I close it and I send it farther. There was a message, the Russians are approaching, not to hand over, not to give them over our units. And before they come in to clean up all the rest of the units of the people which are, which you will find in the forests, whether it is Russian partisans or other kind. It didn't mention exactly Jews, but who was there in the forest? That was the only thing which I have personally met. From person to person, I didn't met, only I say the other two AK men and they didn't know that I am Jewish. They didn't know. And they, we never spoke about it.

Q: Were you afraid at all during that time?

A: Well that is difficult to say, afraid. But you are always watching what you are saying, what you are doing, not to be different. You have to drink alcohol, the moonshine like they are and to do everything like they are doing when they come together. Even if you don't know them, but you have to go on the way like this. And if they are cursing, you have to curse, if it is damn, or another. You have to be always, not try to be different, not try to be different, that's the main point what you have to do. Scared? Of course, you are always scared. You know, when I was watching and going walking in the night from one village to the other, if I heard a frog jumping, my ears were so sensitive, I heard it. Because I want to know what happens around me, to be always prepared and always the hand on the gun. And I didn't continue to go until I found out what is this noise, if it is not people. I find the frog and then I continue to go. That's it.

Q: How did you meet Frantiszek Muschau, who you talked about in your other interview?

A: He was working on this farm...

**End of Tape 2, Side A**



**Tape 2, Side B**

- Q: So you were working together, and you got him involved eventually in the AK?
- A: I recommended to my commandant, I recommended my commandant to accept him. I also accepted the other one, who became the priest, the anti-Semite, which was. And this Muschau was a very nice man, very nice man. And he was not like the common peasant. He was already more civilized because he was working in France as a miner, several years. And he came up from France. He brought some furniture from France. And he was already more progressive. And we exchanged different opinions about the situation, the political situation. About the Germans, about the Russians, so forth. We were politicizing. He was inviting me in his home. We are drinking and eating there. And he invite the neighbor. He has a neighbor there, one Kilbasa (*ph*), who came also and they want to hear what happens in the world. And I have also some news from my fellow man. So they accepted all the news from me as an intelligent Polish officer and Polish patriot, of course. And that was always, with the alcohol, with moonshine. I drank moonshine in my life, maybe I could make a bath in it and swim.
- Q: Was that hard to get used to? Drinking that much without slipping when you were drunk? I mean, letting something slip?
- A: I never allowed to be drunk. I always want to have my clear mind, because that was the most dangerous thing, to lose your mind. To be drunk. So when I felt, I run it out somewhere, I make like I am drinking another one, another one, but I didn't drink it. But still it was quite a bit. I am happy that I could tolerate it as much as I could.
- Q: What happened towards the end of the war? Did you have, you had information about what was happening through your involvement with the AK that you knew where the Russian front was and whether they were advancing and so forth?
- A: Well you could hear. First of all, there was a situation about four months, more than four months. The Russians stopped on the river, they didn't cross the river Vistula to help the Polish resistance, the Uprising in Poland for political reasons. They want the Poles to be annihilated by the Germans and then will go and kill the Germans. That was a very courageous thing to make from the Russian side. But that was a very, very bad thing instead to help to fight the Germans. The Germans killed a lot of Polish people. And of course, a lot between them the Jewish, which were fighting with the Poles, from the rest which remained there between the Poles. And we have all the news about the uprisings. There was, in the bunker where the commandant, ours, was sitting, they had a radio, which they are listening to Radio London, from London, BBC, they have all the news and the movements of the Russian Army. And I knew in one day they brought to me, two English pilots, who escaped from the camp, from the German camp, and I had to transport them to the Russians, because the United States had air bases in Russia. Because the United States were already allies with the Russians. And I was already, I said already good bye to Fryda and I was already on the way to go. But in the meantime when they came to the next base they told me not to go farther because the field are mined everywhere. I will not be able to cross. So I left them at this Polish unit there AK where I brought them there and I came back to Fryda there. And we are waiting the other four months and then you didn't need the knowledge,

you heard the bombardment with the Russians started on the river there, from a distance to bombard artillery. And then they started to move. And that was it. And so we became so-called liberated.

Q: One second before we go on, I just want to make sure I understand your... So, you were involved with the AK, but you were also working on a farm? Is that right? So how did you? When did you?

A: In the night.

Q: Oh, at night time you worked with the AK?

A: The AK didn't work in the day. They were always working in the nights.

Q: Were you, you weren't, were you getting any sleep?

A: Oh well I came, it wasn't until late at night. It was till twelve, one o'clock. And then in the day I was sleeping there. Where we had a shelter with Fryda there, over the pigs there. We had a shelter there and there we were sleeping. We had enough sleeping there. Enough sleeping.

Q: Did the people who were sheltering you know that you were working...?

A: Oh no. They knew that I am AK, and that I am officer, but no, they are not suspicious that I am Jewish. No, no, no. Because the son, which is studying for priest. He was by himself, he said, if I will catch a Jew, I will cut in pieces and they should salt on it. As I said, he was a very, very bad anti-Semite. His parents were not anti-Semites. They were very simple peasants. They didn't understand and think about it. Well, they boarded Jews and they went to the shtetl, they had their acquaintance with Jews. But of course they preferred, they loved the Polish and the Catholic. It is normal, it is normal. But they didn't hate especially the Jews. But the son, which was already studying priesthood and they knew already, they told him already, at this time they were still teaching that the Jews killed Jesus and so forth. So, this young priest, no wonder that he hated Jews. That was indoctrinated.

Q: So you mentioned the "so-called" liberation. Did you feel in any way as if you were free?

A: It was a very, very, very mixed feeling. On one side you felt the Russians are coming, you will not be more in danger as a Pole, but as a Jew, you continue to be in danger. And then came the reality. You find out what happened. Because until now, you heard only, they killed here, they killed here, they killed here. But the disaster so big, you realized only slowly when you were liberated. When you came to the big city, Krakow, which has before the war, in the war even, in the beginning, ninety thousand Jews and you barely find five or six people which are Jews. That was a trauma which you couldn't, you couldn't hand it. You were, and you were asking by yourself, why me? Why didn't Anna do what I did? You start to analyze and to understand and those are things that you cannot understand until today. Because there were wiser people than me, speaking Polish better than me or the same like me, having connection with people. Why didn't they survive? Why didn't they choose our way? Was it right we did? And what is the

role we have to play by being alive? Try to organize a Jewish life, or forget about it? No Jews, no Jewish life. You are Polish. Go on, be a Pole. And that's what many Jews do it, did it. And there are until today Jews which are living as Poles. They said, "Forget about it." But we couldn't do it. Our roots are too strong. I don't know. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know what to do. We were poor like mice. We had to look, to find something to eat, not to speak about finding a way to organize your life, to start to be a human being. You are out of it, you are no human anymore. You start to realize you live surrounded in animosity. And you look for some Jews. And I found some. I remember the first night we didn't have where to go. No home. But somehow we met somebody. I don't remember. I think I knew these people or recognize them as Jews. And I did ask him, "Who else is here?" He said, "Come with me." And I went with him, or with her better. And we came in a dark room and there were already several Jewish people, survivors from all kinds of surviving. And we sit there in this room, in this dark room and started to sing Jewish songs, Yiddish songs, very nostalgic Jewish songs. All the Yiddish songs were sad, all were sad. But in this moment, they were healing. They were like Balsam on a wound. Remembrance for a moment, your heritage. And we passed this night, I don't remember, on songs and somehow sleeping sitting on a broken couch. All together there were maybe six, seven people. And each one with his song, not with story. We didn't talk yet about story. We, somehow, I don't know how to explain it. Is it shame or is it... I don't know. But we are here. We left everything behind and we are sitting here. Nostalgia, remembering Yiddish songs. Don't think even what to do, where to go farther. But we woke up in the morning, woke up. We didn't take our work clothes. We were in the clothes which we had, these poor clothes. We find out from one of them that one of my friends survived. Where is he? Who is it? He was before the war, he was a lady beautician parlor. Father was a barber, and he had a nice sister. And I used to come to their house before the war. And he survived on papers. But he was already in the Russian intelligence. Polish uniform, the Russian intelligence. And somehow I met him. I don't remember exactly how. And I asked him, "What is to do. Where to go? I don't have a house. I don't know where to go." He said, "I got back my apartment." There are two bedrooms, a kitchen on the third floor in the \_\_\_\_\_ Jewish section. But he says, "You can go there. And somehow we will find there some way to sleep." But there were already some people in, which survived Auschwitz. That was a girl, a boy, and another girl. And then came other people. I don't know who this were. We all were there, but we didn't have a bed to sleep. We slept on the floor. And I decided, we decided to look around, and we went to my village. To this older woman, who took us on. And she fed us, she gave us to eat. And we left in their house some of our clothes, some of our furnishes. And she was already, she, not her son, who lived nearby... because my mother, my grandmother, my brother's sister lived in her house and I lived in the son's house. There I make a little clinic there in his house. And we went there to sleep in the night in his house. In the night, somebody was knocking at the door and the window. And there's, in Russian, "*Kroy (ph)*! Open! You have here Jews!" He said, "I don't have Jews. They are Polish people like you, like we." They came in. He opened, because this was soldiers which were in the camp, where there was once a camp. There was a field hospital for wounded Russian soldiers. And this were wounded soldiers which were there in this, but they were strong enough to go in between the Poles and to make connections with them. And I understand, I am not sure, I am ninety-nine percent sure. They went to the rich Poles where we left a lot of things and he told them to go there, the Jews came here. You have to kill them, very simple. And for them to kill a Jew is like kill a German. They like a soldier, especially a wounded soldier, a front soldier. And they came in and said, "Are you Jewish?"

And I understand Ukrainian, too, because in the Polish Army where I served there were mostly Ukrainians there. I said, "There's no Jews here." "Who are you?" We had the papers. Said, "We are here, only sleeping here. We are Polish." Well, okay, they left. They went to the house of the mother, the mother's house and they the same. "Where are the Jews here?" "There are no Jews." They gave some shots in the air and they left. In the morning we said to the son of our, we told him to help us to move. We want to move back to Krakow. But there was no communication, there was no train. And I want to take some of this furniture to have something to sleep. So, he took the horse of his mother and the other horse from a neighbor and a wagon and we started to move to Krakow. That is about sixty miles from, hundred kilometers, hundred ten kilometers, something like this.

Q: What had happened to your house in Brzeznicza?

A: Our house was burned.

Q: When did that happen?

A: It was burned. It happens when we were there still. After we left, close to the house there was a railway and a spark of this coal fire fell on the house there and it burned. So, there were not house. And these Polish people, who used to live in the house, took over our house. He was living in the barn which was close to it. There was a horse barn and coal barn and he was living there. So for us he wasn't moving out and I didn't want him and I didn't want to be there. So we started the way to go. And we didn't want to go with the main road because there still the Russian Army was moving. And they were taking the horses from the Polish people for their use.

Q: About when was this? Do you know the approximate date?

A: It was 22<sup>nd</sup>, no 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 1945, after the Russians came in. We start there the way to Krakow. It is not describable the conditions. We had to take food for the horses first because you couldn't buy this. Nobody would sell it. The money didn't have any value anymore. And the horses, if you don't feed them, they will not go. And you have to have the food on the way back, too. So the most of the wagon was food. And we took also some of the furniture which we left there and some of clothings we left there, also. They took it out from the ground, they dig it out. And they give us back everything, everything. They were very honest people. On the way my wife was more dead than alive. She was fainting and I had to do, to work on her. And by the way we were going around way, it was a longer way but more secure. \_\_\_\_\_, where the army wasn't going. I knew the Polish geography very well. I know how I will get to Krakow by longer, around ways. We came to an ort (*ph*), which was called Zakroczym. First of all we passed a place which is called Tochow (*ph*). At Tochow there used to live a sister of my mother, with her family. Her husband, her daughter with her husband. I don't know how many children she had in the meantime. And the sons all run away to Russia, and they survived in Russia. The husband too, the old husband, too. But he died in Siberia, in Russia. They all were sent to Siberia to Infada (*ph*), to Sever (*ph*), to Jakutz (*ph*), or Jakutzia (*ph*). That was where they banished all the criminals in the older country revolutions there. With all the history there, there were trees which ten people have to surround it. Such a tree, such forest. And they

brought them there and they said to them, "Here you have to live." No houses. Their houses were from snow, and their windows were from ice. And they had to work there, but all right that's about them. That's another story. But I came to this Tochow. And I did ask the Polish people there because no Jew was there, "What happens?" They said, "All were killed and some remained they were sent to the ghetto at Tarnow." That was the end. No one Jew was there. No one Jew. So I continued to the next shtetl which was Zakroczym. And of course we have to feed the horses. And we want to come down to move a little bit like I say to you, to try if we can go. We were sitting on the wagon all the time. And this poor Polish guy, this Soltys Stanislaw was with us, he was the foreman. And while we wanted to come down, Fryda fell down on the ground, fainted again. I save her. I put her on the ground laying down, make some exercises with her. Put her on the wagon back, she faint again several times. And when we fed the horses, we went to continue to go. But the night approach and in the night you couldn't, you are not allowed because it is curfew. The Russians didn't joke. Whom they found on the street they killed. So, I went to the first Polish house there where there was a little bit space...

**End of Tape 2, Side B**

**Tape 3, Side A**

Q: Our third tape, so this is tape number three, side A. So there came, a woman came out of the house?

A: And she asked me what do I want? Said, "We have to go to sleep, to take in." And I took Fryda from the wagon and I tried to put her in and the woman said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well we have to warm her up a little bit, because she is sick." And she looked at her and said, "Well what do you think? She is dead already. Better one to put in the grave, like she is looking." But I took, outside I found a brick, an old brick. I put it, make a fire and warm up the brick and I warm up a little bit. And so at this house, on the floor, we slept through until the morning. In the morning we start to go, and we went and we came to Krakow. We went to this house of our friend there and we put what we have, these little furnishes on the dirt floor. This guy helped us, Stanislaw Soltys helped us. And he went back with the horses, back to his home, he had to give back the horse to the neighbor. That was sacrificing. I don't know how he did it or why he did it. It was not human, that was angel work. In this time to go back, to endanger the horses, which is all what the people have, a horse, a cart, but he did it. And she gave us a little products, half a bread, which was the big peasant breads, and some beans, some barley, and we'll have something to cook and to eat. That was our food at the beginning. And so we are being there with all this people around us, other people living there. And Fryda went to the house, which was their house before the war, their apartment. And there was the janitor of the house, which was the janitor before the war. He was a carpenter working in their furniture store. A dirty, drunk man. And she said to him, "Maybe there will come some post here on this address. We are here living..." and she gave the address where we are living. And he, "And what will be if I bring you a post from your father?" And she says, "Well, you will get a hug and a kiss." He said, "All right." A few days later he came with a card, post card from Auschwitz. And he said, "*Pana Fryda (ph)*, Miss Fryda, I get a kiss." And she give him a kiss and a hug. "I got post card from your father." And we have this post card. You saw it I guess. And he is sick and he asks to come to pick him up. In the meantime, I met another acquaintance of me. He had a dental office, quite a primitive office, but a dental office in an apartment which wasn't his. It did belong to a Jewish woman before the war. She was even the owner of the house. And she and her daughter survived. But in this moment, she wasn't there yet. She was in a camp somewhere. And I met him and I said to him, "What are you doing?" And he said, "Well I have here a dental office. But I'm leaving this office. I want to sell it because I am leaving to the once German territory. There I will organize a modern dental office, an apartment and I will be living there." He married, he survived as a partisan. He married a Polish, Gentile woman. And he lived together with her. I guess he had some children with her already. But he was, he was a partisan in the Socialistic, not in the AK, in the AL, that was Armia Ludowa. That was the *Volks* party. And they were more lenient to the Jews. And he was a good fighter. He was a strong guy and he was really fighting there, in this army. And he said, "My party will help me to organize there." I said to him, "Sell me your office here, for a begin, it will be good for me." He said, "I will not sell you. I will rent it to you because maybe I don't find nothing there. I will come back." Said, Okay. I can't give you nothing. I don't have nothing. But for the first money what I will make as a dentist I will send it to you somehow." And I start to organize a practice. And I had first of all, a room to sleep, a nice room to sleep with a bed, with a couch, quite a nice room and a nice kitchen. And that was for the moment a wonderful solution. But I started to think, "If he did it,

maybe I can do the same. I will go to the German occupied, German-Polish occupied territories, Poland occupies German territories. And there were a lot of dentists and dentist equipment and I will organize my clinic there. And to live there.” And I went there, but I didn’t find nothing which I would like. So I left Fryda there. We met there another guy, a survivor who was already working for the Polish security, in the Polish security. He wrote a book about it. He lives here in the United States. He became a very rich guy here. And he became an officer. He survived in his village there. However they were trying to kill him from the AK, too. But he survived somehow. And he was in this part which became occupied by the Russians first, the first month there. And the Polish units there sent him to an officer’s school and he became an officer in the Polish security. And then when the Russians moved, he moved with them. He came to Krakow. And he make a lot of, find a lot of Polish people whom, whom he gave over to, handed over to the Polish security. But while the Russians occupied the German part, they sent him to Wrocław as an officer there of their security. And then they send him to Lidnice, Lidnitz, where we were. And where I was looking for some dental equipment, he was working in his job to look for Germans. And we met. And we make a recognition as a Jew and he as a Jew. We didn’t talk too much about it. He said, “What can I do for you?” I said, “You can help me to find some...” He said, he’ll try.

Q: How did you, let me just interrupt briefly. How did you make that recognition? Was there some special way?

A: Well, I recognize him as a Jew. His name was Polish, Zalewski (*ph*). And when I met him, I said, “Zaleski, but what is your real name?” And he was from Kolbuszowa, which was not far from my village, about twelve kilometer. That’s about eight miles. It was quite close. And I knew people from Kolbuszowa. And he told me, “My name is Zalschitz (*ph*), Nafthali Zalschitz.” And he was called Tadek Zalewski, Tadeusz Zalewski (*ph*). But I left Fryda with him, and I went back to Krakow to see how to organize life in Krakow. I found some instrument which I can use there. And when I came to Krakow, I found this, I have to go, well I mix up because I don’t go chronological. Before we left I went to Auschwitz to take Father, her father from Auschwitz.

Q: You went actually to the camp?

A: It was no more camp there. [Phone rings.] It was liberated by the Russians. That was a card we have that he was there.

Q: Right.

A: So I went there with the Russian trucks, I went there with taking ammunition to the front. There was still war, but Auschwitz was already liberated. And he was the one who remained in the hospital there because he couldn’t go farther. And he said better, they ask to leave, but he said he preferred to stay here to be burned and not to go. And they shoot all the other people who went there.

Q: Did you, before you, so this is around February 1945, right?

A: It's January, still January.

Q: Okay, did you know, did you know what had happened at Auschwitz at that point?

A: Well, I knew from Polish accounting, but when I came there I found everything. I found everything. And when I saw him, I had all the history. That was a man who was taller than me and he was fifty-six pounds, I guess. I took in a blanket a heap of bones. And I was waiting for a truck to take him to Krakow. But that was before we left to the occupied territories there. And Fryda took care of him, and he came to his quite normal. But that was already February when we left for... even more later, maybe March already. It is difficult now to remember the dates exactly. So we left Father in this apartment where we lived. We left to him. And we went to look for, find some existence there with the idea maybe we'll take him over there to us.

Q: Can we go back? I know you already did go forward, but go back to the Auschwitz experience and what you... you mentioned you really discovered what had gone on when you were there. What did you experience?

A: Not too much. All what Father-in-law told us. I didn't have the time and the courage to go to look what happens around. But he had enough to recount his stories of what happens during the time. But on the way back from this occupied territory to Krakow, I have a car accident. And I have broken my leg, my hand here, and I was taken to the hospital instead to go home. Somehow I could let know Fryda that I am in the hospital. That was everything through people, which are communicating, commuting there and back. So, she came back. She decided to come back. She didn't have money, not even for to pay the Russians to give the vodka for commuting with them. But while she was at this friend's house, he became our good friend, this officer, this Tadek Zalewski. His wife, she was Jewish too, she survived also on Christian papers. She said, "I can't give you anything money." She want to give her some jewelry, but Fryda didn't want to take it. But while she was sleeping, she put in her bag a golden bracelet. And Fryda when she got up, she said, "What is this yet? I didn't have a bracelet." She said, "Take it, you'll need it. Take it, you'll need it. I don't need it now. Someday you'll pay me back." I don't remember if she took it. I guess she took it and she came back to me, to the hospital. And she had to take care of this poor father and of this poor husband. In the meantime, we got connection by mail with a brother of her father, an uncle, Uncle Solomon in the United States. And when he heard that his brother survived, that we survived, he open... in Krakow, an open account. "How much you need, you can have and take." And there was the connection who gave us the possibility to survive further. But that was already a few months later, because mail didn't function so easy.

Q: At that time were you really thinking that you wanted to stay in Poland permanently?

A: Well, I didn't think so much about Poland. I didn't want to stay with the Russians. I knew the Russians before. Poland I wouldn't mind, even, to stay, because I had my roots there, you know? With all minuses I thought I would be able to organize a good life in Poland, even I thought in my dreams, on our farm. I said, I will keep the farm. I'll keep a clinic there, help the people. And having a nice living on the farm. I love the farm too. We have a big farm, a nice farm. And it was the nicest farm in the village. I thought sometimes that will be okay. But when I thought about the Russians and the system of their, when they bring in, I would not have



the farm and I would not have my freedom so I start to think to move from Poland somewhere. Somewhere, the nearest approach was to Belgium, where Fryda has a brother of her father. In the beginning we want to go to Germany, because one of my brothers, who lives now in the United States, came to visit us in Poland. He couldn't take us. When he came only for two or three days. And he saw our misery there and he tried to help us what he could. And he said, "Come in Germany we have apartment. You'll make a living there for time being. Come there." And we found a way where they were repatriating German families from Poland to Germany. So there was a woman, she came to our house. She was making all kind of businesses, a Jewish woman from Krakow. And she had the connection how to organize, to join people who want to go to Germany with the German repatriates. We left our apartment. We went to Katowice, which was on the border to Germany. But when we came there, we were there two days, there was no transport going to Germany. They already, the last transport left. And you have to wait another month or two and I couldn't wait in Katowice there, so we decided to go back to Krakow there. And in Krakow we stayed there until, I guess it was August, I guess, when we find a connection which somebody make passports with a visa to Costa Rica for five hundred dollar each passport. And the uncle from United States gave us the money and we paid thousand five hundred. But we could get a transit visa through Belgium, because there was no straight flights. There was no flight at all. You have to go by train to Belgium. And from Belgium you could have gone to a flyer, a ship to Costa Rica. But when we came to Belgium, we remained in Belgium. And we stayed in Belgium for five years.

Q: Were you originally planning on making the entire trip to Costa Rica or was your intention to just stay in Belgium and not go any further?

A: My intention was to stay in Belgium, but even in Belgium I didn't want to stay. 1948 when Israel was declared independent state, I was doing everything possible to go to Israel. I said I don't want... the uncle sent us papers, everything to go to the United States. He wanted to pay for my studies here and to upkeep us until I make my diploma here, but I didn't want to go to the United States. I want to go home, because after all I am Jewish. There we have a state. I don't want anymore to be a stranger.

Q: Did you ever consider making *aliyah* before Israel was a state and going illegally?

A: To be candid, we in our villages, it's more my nephews, organized a Zionist organization. And I was quasi a member of this organization. But my brother was an active member and he even made *ha-shorah* (*ph*). He was a farmer and he wanted to go before the war. But my mother, even before the war, somehow she said, "There is no future in Poland for Jews, let us go to Israel." It was not yet Israel, still Palestine. Said, "You are a farmer," she said to father, "and the farmers are well off there." It was another kind of farming there. "We will make somehow money here from our farm." We could make then, that was a lot of money for our farm, ten thousand dollars. With ten thousand dollars in Israel you could do a lot, you could do a lot. But my father said, "No, I don't want." He was much older than my mother. My mother was young. With so many children he said, "I'm sure it will be difficult and impossible to make existence there." And he didn't want to leave Poland. He was orthodox Jew. He said, "I will go to Israel when Messiah will come." No Zionists. And my brother was prepared to go, but then there came the war and he couldn't. And so my nephews wanted to go and no one of them did it.

**End of Tape 3, Side A**

### Tape 3, Side B

- Q: Okay, it's now May 30, 2000, and we're continuing our interview with Mr. Oscar Haber. And why don't we start by going back, you had talked on the last tape about the day of your liberation. And just to remind you, what you had talked about, we were, you talked about how afterwards you had met up with some other Jews and you were singing some old Yiddish songs. And then you described going back to your hometown and then back to Krakow. The thing that I wasn't sure about, that I didn't quite understand is, did you immediately leave the town where you were after liberation? And do you remember saying good-bye to the family that you were staying with?
- A: Well, the question of liberation is one of the most difficult time from all the past problems which we had. We were, as I told you, living as Christians. And the liberation came. We couldn't enjoy our liberation or country. It was the greatest shock and the most difficult moment in our lives. That was the liberation. And especially if I want to put it in perspective, the differences between people who survived camps and people who lived on so-called Aryan papers was very different. We have two things to overcome. The first is, which we had all the time, that was the fight for existence and how to survive, of course. And the next, when the liberation came was the shock to find the reality. You don't have where to go. You couldn't find nobody you know, or anybody of your people. You suddenly find yourself, you cannot stay in the place where you were. We were in a village, not in a town. We were in a village. And if I... realize it was a hostage village. They were not sympathetic to Jewish survivors. However I survived, not a Jew, but suddenly I felt that I am back a Jew. But I couldn't officially declare it. I had to stay on my Aryan papers. And how to go and where to go? Because to go to my other village where I was born there, I wasn't sure that I will be accepted. And I wasn't sure to go to Krakow, for example, because I didn't have where to go. Even not where to sleep at night. And you don't have money. And you don't have nothing because whatever you had you have already sold out whatever you had. So, that was the most terrible time in all this events which we had, the so-called liberation was the terrible hit of the reality. You were hit with the reality. Not where to go and not what to do and how to start. Will you be accepted as a Jew? You cannot go on and to say you are not a Jew, because really where you go they know you are Jew when you come to the places where I used to live. And to stay in a strange, foreign surrounding like we were before, so I have to stay like I was all the time, a peasant, a farmer. To watch the horse and the cows. In reality I was a dentist. I want to go back. I didn't have nothing with me, but I have to go to start to look for our existence. And as I said before already that part, I went to the village where I was born, and then later when they went with us to Krakow, all this trouble I have with Fryda and when I came to Krakow. But the question of this liberation, to explain it in a very simple term, that was the greatest shock of everything together. But when I came to Krakow, when I started to settle as I said, I have been there, different places, start to organize my life. And with the help of the uncle which came, we went to Belgium as I said. And in Belgium we became refugees. We became as one of the United Nations refugees. We registered there and I have my register card as a refugee from the United Nations. And I got the permit because I had a visa only to stay there, transit visa to pass through Belgium. But because I was recognized as a refugee, they gave me time to stay three months there. In three months I had to renew my stay in Belgium. And we were under the auspicion of the foreign police, a special department, the *etranger (ph)*, police *etranger*. And they gave us another stay of three months.

Q: Okay, before we go on into Belgium, I just wanted to ask another question about the liberation time. I've forgotten the name of the family that was sheltering you right at the end of the war. What was their names?

A: The Polish people?

Q: Yeah.

A: Soltys. Soltys. That was a woman, a widow.

Q: They were the ones in your hometown, right? But at the time of the liberation what was the name of the woman that you were staying?

A: Oh that was a man, that was Muschau. He was recognized as a righteous man, the righteous between people. I gave him to Yad Vashem, and he is recognized. He was a wonderful person. He helped us all the time, even the time when he didn't suspect us as Jews, he was all the time very human and very helpful.

Q: I thought you were staying with his sister right there. You were actually staying with him right at the end of the war?

A: We stayed with the sister, but it was a very terrible accident. The last, the last bullet, the Russian bullet got his hand, his left hand. Because his house was on the, on the border. Where the front was standing between the Russians and the Germans and there was heavy fire because there was the Dunajec river. And he was close to this river, not far. So he decided, the frontier between the Germans and the Russians, which was standing about four or five months was very close to this place. And his house was under fire, so he decided to come to his sister place, and while he opened the door, a bullet cut his left hand. And he was bleeding and because he knew that the underground station, sanitary station was in my place, so he decided that the neighbor took him on a wagon and he brought him to me there to give him first help. And I cut him. It was hanging on the skin, this hand. I cut on this and I bind around that he doesn't bleed out and I went back with him together and brought him to his house. And there I found out a really surgeon doctor was hiding there in the underground army and they brought him to this house. I gave him the anesthesia, whichever it could be a little bit chloroform. But most anesthesia was I gave him alcohol. We had there moonshine, moonshine. And he was drinking so he was out of conscious. And this surgeon bind him, all these veins and arteries. First of all, he cut him a little bit of this arm farther because it was already gangrenous, gangrene, because where I bound it there it started, it is very fast process. He cut it there and bind all the arteries and veins and so he survived. And then I didn't go more to the place of the sister, but I stayed with him and took care on him all the time. So he survived and he was thankful to me and I was very thankful to him. So it was a very, very good occasion to serve this man, this very nice person.

Q: Was Fryda with you then too? With him?

A: No, for the first two days she stayed still with the sister there. But later on she came here, we brought here. The front was standing there for a moment. There was a fight there. The Germans run away. They left only some guns, automatic shooters. And these were not origin Germans. This were Russians which were collaborated with the Germans. And they were making the last fights with the German. And there in this house just, we were there. The Germans caught the first Russian soldiers who came in, and they bind them together and they put a grenade between them and they kill them there, on the garbage there.

Q: Did you see that happen?

A: I saw it later, after I saw them there. The Germans came in, you can come take in the shoes if you need from this people. And then the Germans escape, of course. That was the end of this fight there. And after several days we went there, to the sister there. We took a little bit of what we had, our clothings and we left there, from there. And then we are looking on occasion somehow to go to Krakow and to go to my village there and to organize this life like I said.

Q: But even though the war had ended and you were supposedly liberated, you didn't tell these people that you were Jewish?

A: No, I didn't tell them and for a long time they didn't know, until... I don't know exactly when they started to realize that I am Jewish. But when the war passed my village where I was, the war continued. It was January twenty-one and the war was continued until, as you know, until May. So here was all the time moving Russian trucks and armaments and soldiers. That was the only way, with the soldiers for a bottle of vodka, which we could have some commuting to Krakow or to the other villages. It was also very dangerous. They were also not very sympathetic to Jews. Sometimes Fryda stand in the line to get a ride to the village there for some food to these Polish people. So there was standing a lot of people and waiting for this ride. So the Russian driver which was taking said, "You yes, you can go. You yes, yes. But you no, no Jews, no Jews, no Jews." Even the Russian soldier. So there is no big difference between one and the other one.

Q: So you really didn't feel then that the Russians were any safer to live with than the Germans had been?

A: First of all, they didn't realize who is a Jew or no, except that they really recognize by physiognomy, they saw it is a Jew. And then in reality they were not more, well they didn't have in their program to kill Jews. That was individual soldiers, some of them which were, I don't know, they were from some other nationality as Russians or Ukrainians or Belorussians or Lithuanians or Latvians. There were all kinds of soldiers there. So that was more individual and then it was also sometimes inspired by some other anti-Semites to go to kill a Jew. The Russians didn't hesitate to kill a Jew, too. However it came in the Polish Army, which was a Polish unit in the Russian Army. In this unit there were many Jews, I mean for us, many... five was many. Because we used already without Jews here in this side, the German side. But there were some Jews and the times when the Jews didn't hear, you could hear... I understand Russian and Ukrainian, too. So, I could hear how they were expressing themselves anti-Semitic even to their officers and to their sergeants. "These dirty Jews," and so forth. So this is the reality like it was.

Q: Okay, then you were saying a little earlier about Belgium, then. And you were there as refugees and you had to be registered.

A: In this village, I came to my village where I was origin. And I told you already before in this story, that they send in somebody to kill us. And I didn't go back there to my village anymore. Fryda went several times for food, but she never slept there. She went to the shtetl and in the shtetl were already three or four Jewish families. And between them was one, my niece, she lived there. She came there back to the shtetl there, and she had already a room there and she slept with her. And the next day she came back to Krakow. When she left I wasn't sure I will see her tomorrow. It was a difficult time even after the liberation. Even after the liberation.

Q: You mentioned last time about the group of people, the group of survivors that you were together with. Where was that?

A: That was already in Krakow. Well, you cannot say group, they formed a group. They find each other and because one of them has a place, so we came there. We could there sleep at night. And with no soldier, we were sitting and singing old Yiddish songs because we couldn't sleep. The horror on our heads was so terrible that we couldn't sleep even. Like taking, by the time, how to spend the time.

Q: Were these people that you had known before the war?

A: No, no, no. I never knew. I never knew these people. I never knew these people. That was only two or three days, until, as I told you, we find the place of my friends there, which they were already coming survivors from Auschwitz after the liberation. Young people which were living together there. Sleeping there on the floor for a time. Somehow that you have, because in the evening there was curfew. You couldn't go in the street, you have to be someplace. So that was the place where we could run away. And that was a very happy occasion to go in.

Q: Okay, do you want to skip ahead then and talk about Belgium? Because we talked, that's where we left off.

A: Well when we came to Belgium. We founded there, because we came with Fryda's father, he found there his brother, who survived in Antwerp. And he used to live in Antwerp before the war and he was in Antwerp quite a known person. He was in the diamond business. And he was poor, but he already contact his other brother, younger brother in Holland, in England. The youngest brother, who changed his name from Himmelblau to Hill. And then he became recognized by the Queen as a British officer, decorated. And he already makes good business. He was quite already a rich man. And he did help him. And also this uncle from the United States, he opened us a place in Antwerp where we can take the money, how to survive our time. But I didn't want to be supported. I organize, even illegal, a little clinic, and I treated Jewish patients, refugees who came there. And there was a yeshiva, an orthodox yeshiva, which I treat without money this all students there. And I don't know if I told you, one day came in a student. And you know whoever it comes you started to talk, "Where from are you? How do you survive? Where did you been?" And there came in a yeshiva boy. A nice, pretty wonderful

boy. And I ask him, "Where are you from?" And he said, "Well, I am from Krakow." "From Krakow? We are also from Krakow." "Yes?" He was happy to hear that we are from Krakow. "Where did you live in Krakow?" He said, "Well in Diver (*ph*) Street, number four," and this house was the Himmelblau house of the house of my wife's family. And I remembered his father. And Fryda knew his brothers and sisters, they were living in the same house for so many years. And he started to cry and Fryda started to cry. I called in Fryda. In my clinic, I had a corner in my bedroom where I put in an engine, a foot engine and actually did the patients, somehow. But slowly I make a living off it and I had a possibility to make a decent living. So, I stopped the help of my uncle. I didn't want to be supported. In the meantime, as we have been there for close to two years, Israel was established. And I was already connected with the Zionist organization there in Antwerp. I was a member of the committee there. So I said, "I want to go to Israel." Well, Fryda's father didn't want to go. He preferred to stay in Antwerp. Well, he knew the languages and he had his brother there and he had the support from this two brothers, so he decided he will not go with us. In the meantime, our son was born. He was already two years old.

Q: What was his name?

A: Henry Edward. He lives now in Texas, in Austin, Texas. He grew up in Israel. My uncle from the United States sent us a visa and he even want us to come to the United States. And he'll pay our upkeep, my studies, so that I will be independent and we can live in the United States. But I found that our place, after all we survived and surpassed, my place is Israel. This is the only place for a Jewish person to live. That was my conviction.

**End of Tape 3, Side B**

**Tape 4, Side A**

Q: This is tape number four, side A. Did you, did you have, what kind of experience did you have in Belgium, just as far as... were you just working all the time? Or were you having any leisure time?

A: Oh yeah, leisure time enough. And as I said, I was an active Zionist, too. And...

Q: How were you active?

A: Well, organizing young people who came there, many refugees from Poland, from Russia, from Germany. They start to come from all places there. And then they came from Israel. There was the Israel soldiers which are serving in the British Army. They were in Europe and Germany and everywhere there was fighting against the Germans. And they are the people who helped us to organize the people to go to Israel. And quite a number of them went to Israel. Some of them remained in Belgium, some went to Australia, some went to America. But as I later heard, many of these young people who went to Israel became soldiers, even they were unexperienced soldiers, only to fight for freedom. And most of them were killed in this fight because they were not experienced soldiers. But Israel need everyone there in this time. It was a very hard time there in Israel, too. And when I decide we are going, we organize. We brought everything, because in Israel we knew there is nothing, refrigerators and the stove, furniture, hardware, what we need for the kitchen for a living. We took everything. We took several lifts and we went to Marseilles by train. And from Marseilles we went by boat, by the Kadma (*ph*). It was quite a nice boat. And that was my son's second birthday on this ship. The captain make him a party, well, kind of party, a reception for our son there.

Q: What was the date?

A: That was April the 6<sup>th</sup>. My son was born April the 6<sup>th</sup>. So, we left Marseilles April the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Q: 1948?

A: 1948. No, 1951, excuse me. 1951, because '49 our son was born. When Fryda was pregnant we didn't want to go for this experience. We were waiting that he will be able to make this transport. In April of '51 we left for Israel. We were so far fortunate that our friend from Antwerp, who is also from Krakow, left for Israel a year before us. And he rented a house there with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom. And they invited us that we would be able to stay with them for the first day until we find a place to stay. Because that was no other way. And we came to them, we stayed with them. And the lift arrived. There was a yard there, we could put the lift there. We were searching for an apartment. And we rented an apartment, which was a living room and a bedroom, a hall, a kitchen and a bathroom. That was all.

Q: What town was this in?

A: Pardon?



Q: What town?

A: Givataim, a suburb of Tel Aviv. We didn't want to go to Tel Aviv. First of all, it's a big town and everybody was going to Tel Aviv. And that was a settlement which was in development and that was, to compare, a little bit cheaper. And I didn't have enough money to buy an apartment. We rented an apartment. And we organized there. I organized in these three rooms, the hall was the waiting room, the bedroom was the clinic. And there was a bed which was in the day, closed like a cabinet. In the day I could accept patients. And the living room was the bedroom for us. We were sleeping there in the bedroom. And the child was there. There was a terrace. It was nice. After working there about two years we rented, just close, became free another big room and a kitchen and a little hall. So we rented this, and... excuse me. We bought it. I bought it. In the meantime I bought this apartment where you are renting. I bought this apartment. And I made of both of them one bigger apartment and a separate clinic. And life became more comfortable. We organized a very nice apartment and a very nice living in this room.

Q: When you said you came to realize that the only place that you as a Jew could be at home was in Israel, what had happened after the war that made you come to that conclusion?

A: Well maybe it is not known in the world and people are more concentrated on Poland and Polish anti-Semites in Germany. But Belgium, which seems to be more sympathetic to the Jewish case... in Antwerp, where there was quite a number of Jews, when you were looking for an apartment for rent, it was in the windows written, "Not for foreigners." And that meant not for Jews. In some of the apartments was written exactly what I said, "No Jews." And I in the meantime learned to speak Flemish, which was the language in Antwerp, because Brussels was more French. But Antwerp was Flandria. That was the the part of... Belgium has two nations, Valonia and Flandria. The Flandrians were more, more German sympathetic. They were German oriented. Valonians were more French oriented. And Jews which were saved in Belgium, they mostly were more saved in this part which was Valonian. In Flandria there was impossible to survive. We came, rented an apartment. And still we were all the time renting there. And that was a nice apartment. We love it. And the administrator showed us the apartment and the conditions where it was not expensive. It was nice and the place was nice. And when it came to write the lease, he says, "Yes, but you are not strangers." And we said, "Yes, we are strangers. We are from Poland." And he said, "But you are not Jews?" I said, "Yes, we are Jews." So, "I am sorry, I have instructions from my... I am not the owner, from the owner, no Jews. I am sorry, no Jews." And that gave me a lot to think about it. Around you see no friends, no friendly, no foreigners, no Jews. So that means there is no place to live here for the Jews. However there is a lot Jews remained there and lived there. They didn't care about it. But I was, I don't know, personally more sensitive realizing this problem. I said, "No, I don't want to be, that can happen the same everywhere." And therefore I decided to go home. I said, "That's the one place where nobody would tell me as a Jew you have to live. You have all the rights." And that was the reason.

Q: Was there a particular organization that you were working with in Brussels? A Zionist organization?

- A: Yeah, it was the general Zionist movement. General Zionist movement. Not labor, not revisionist, general Zionist. That was in this time a general Zionist organization.
- Q: You mentioned in your last interview, I believe, that you had spent some time studying in Germany as well. Was that, did that happen after you had gone to Israel?
- A: Yes. After I became involved in my profession. In the dental association I became one of the active members in the management of the organization. I became vice-president of the organization of the dental association in Israel. And because a big part of Jewish dentists in Israel, their origin was countries where they spoke German. If it was Czechoslovakia, even Poland, they spoke more German than Yiddish, or even Yiddish, they could understand German. And there was a necessity, there was not world literature in Hebrew in this profession. And we were interested as these people became more educated and more acquainted in the profession, which made progress terrible. Progress during the five years and then later on and on all the time. And there was English literature, which the people didn't know. I spoke already a little bit English, but not enough to be fluent in literature or to give a lecture in English. The University has some professors which were lecturing in English. But for the mass, I mean for the majority of the dentists it wasn't understandable. So we needed German-speaking lectures. And time by time, we start to bring in from Germany lecturers, professors. And so I became acquainted with these professors. And we started to exchange normal relations between them. So we started organize even at the universities in Germany, some courses for the occasion, for progress, for professional progress. So we make a course in Bonn. We make a course in Berlin. We make a course in Munich. We make a course in Marburg on the Lahn. It was in Frankfurt also some courses. Some from time to time there were a group of twenty, thirty people who can afford it, who are going only for education there. And that was the reason. And so I went with this group there. And I went to Bonn where I stayed for three months there. And I make my, my graduation doctor there in Bonn and then Marburg. That was the two universities. Marburg was a general university and Bonn was only a dental school. So here we got a dental license as a dental practitioner license and here you make your doctor up in Marburg. So you are a doctor and a dentist, both of it.
- Q: So up until that point you hadn't actually been a doctor until you...?
- A: No, I haven't been a doctor until this time. I be only a dentist, a licensed dentist in Poland. A licensed dentist in Poland.
- Q: And how did it feel to, as a Jew, to be doing these studies in Germany after what had happened?
- A: In general, the staff of the university, of each of these universities, they were very, very forthcoming and they were very gentle and very willingly to help us. Even we knew that some of them were with a Nazi past. The more Nazi they were before the war or during the war, the more forthcoming they were after the war. They didn't know, they said, about anything what happened before. And they were always good with Jews and they had good relations and even there at the university there were professors Jews and so forth. In Bonn, for example, the head of the school was Professor Kirkhaus, which was known that he was a member of the Nazi party.

And he was the first one who quit the Jewish professor who was there. I don't remember this moment what his name was.

Q: So you're there for three months and you're studying in a German university. Did you feel angry? Or did you form any friendships with any Germans?

A: I can hardly say that you were angry, because nobody forced you to go. You have to, to have your attitude, you come there, you have to accept the reality. Of course, you knew exactly that you are stepping on the burning ground. You know this is not the place where you should be. But it is not only there. You start to think with the real terms even then already. This is the reality of life and this is the future of life. If you want to separate and if you want to be somebody else, chosen for something. There is no place for you on this world. You have to accommodate it to the future life. And this is the future life. This is the future. Now you see what happens. Israel has relations with Germany, with France. However we know there are still a lot of anti-Semites. And they are everywhere. They are everywhere. But they are not because they are special anti-Semites. There are anti-blacks, there are anti-yellows, there are anti-Asians, there are anti, all kinds of antis. This is the reality of the world now. You know, it sometimes is for me difficult to accept the general view of the Jewish world about the Polish anti-Semites, about Poland. I born in Poland. I got my education in Poland. I lived there. And I was a Polish patriot. And so were many, the majority. There were some Jews which didn't accept never that they are Poles. And to say that the Poles were all anti-Semites, I will not put this category, put them in this category. There were some interests. And people are behaving very often, very different in different situations. But to say a priori all the Polish are anti-Semites, it is exaggerated. It's not true. It's not true. But the same you can say about Jews. They are anti-Arabs, they are anti-Poles or anti-this. There are Jews who are anti-Jewish. Everything exists. But mainly I don't know how to categorize it, even with my most sophisticated thinking, I think in every human body there is some anti, some anti. Anti- this, anti-him, anti, is it anti-blacks or some blacks? Or anti-yellows or just some yellows? Anti-Asians. There is in every human being, there is an anti. But you have to come to some point that you are living in this world, which is very differentiated and if you will not accept this, there is no place for you. Because every day brings surprises. We are not done with wars. We are not done with discriminations. It was, it is and it will be forever, forever.

Q: When you first moved to Israel did you feel, I mean there you were among your own people, did you feel a sense of relief or a sense of being at home as you had hoped to feel?

A: Well, this question is a very sensitive question. When you came to Israel, how difficult it is to say, there was a gap between these born Israelis, long living in Israel and newcomers in Israel. Like everywhere, a stranger gets feeling of a stranger. You are a stranger for a while until you are not accommodating to the reality. And then some gap, some gap, it is sixty years after establishment of Israel state, fifty-two years, but there's still differences between born Israelis, longest living Israelis and new coming Israelis. Is it good? It is reality. I don't know. I don't know. Maybe it is human nature. It's this kind of jealousy. But in the beginning when you came in, the feeling was a little bit different, because a lot of people in Israel, living in Israel, not born in Israel, but living in Israel for many years, who were the elite in Israel, came from Poland, Russia, maybe Czechoslovakia. Some came from Germany, too. Zionists. They felt the elite,

and you felt when you came in with a feeling how could you survive? You must have done something which is not right, that you could survive the Holocaust. Because my parents, my uncle, my grandparents, my brother, my sister, they were killed. Everybody. Nobody is here. And you survive. You must be guilty of something. You have to feel this guilt.

Q: Did people actually say that to you?

A: I heard it. It wasn't meant maybe special straight to me, but I heard it. I heard it in a quite clear voice. These people who survive, they were collaborating with the Germans. And that gave you a very, very strange feeling, very bad feeling.

Q: Will you say a little bit more about how you dealt with that? I mean you had such high hopes of finding a place where you would really be at home. Did you, how did you deal with it?

A: I was maybe more fortunate than the majority of this newcomers. First of all, because I was involved in the Zionist organization and secondly because I knew the language. And that gave me a very great advantage not to be singled out. That was worse with people who couldn't communicate. And they had to communicate in other language, which was in Yiddish or in German, and the Israeli-born children didn't speak Yiddish. They didn't want to speak Yiddish. I think they're quite chauvinistic. I think they are quite chauvinistic. And the same thing can be said about the long living in Israel. They were maybe not so chauvinistic as they were the best one, the good one. "We came here and we built this country. We fought for this country and we gave us a country." You know, that was also a very strange feeling. A very strange feeling. But with the time you got used to all kind of treatment in your society.

**End of Tape 4, Side A**

**Tape 4, Side B**

Q: This is tape four, side B. Who were your friends then, mostly other refugees when you were in Israel?

A: It's not only me, but usually people are always closer to their landsmen. Coming from Poland, get with the Polish people. Coming from Hungary, are living with the Hungarians because of the language. I cannot say. We had people from different, from Hungary, from Romania, from Czechoslovakia, from Germany. And in reality, the most educated people which we met in Israel, which were the leading intelligentsia in Israel, they were original from these countries. From Germany, coming from Germany. Because the *aliyah* which came to Israel from the Arab countries, they were merchandise mostly. Very, very, very few which were professionals. They all business men, all handy people, making something for a living. But in general, there were the poor people who came, that were the first who came into Israel. That was the big problem. They didn't have the language and they didn't have the... for them life was very difficult when they came poor. So there was difficult for apartment. They built temporary shelters for them. And they were living in these shelters for several years until they somehow came out there. There are some of them living until today. Some of them built houses on the places where the shelter houses were. They allowed them to build, so they gave them... because most of the land were belonging to the Keren Kayemeth. So they allowed them, these people to settle on this places because the government wasn't able to give them stable living. So there are some slob until today and there are some which built nice houses. And of course, with the time, the new generation there went to school and they make progress. And a lot of them came with their religious leaders, with their Rabbis. And then they settled in their own circles. And this is now Israel's greatest problem, is their religious Orthodox problem. With the Sephardic, Sephardic those are those, Sephardic in reality means the Spanish people. They don't have nothing to do with Spanish, except maybe their ancestors came from Spain. But generally they are Arabic Jews and they learn quite fast, Hebrew. And they arrange their life very nice. And they make terrible progress, very, very nice progress. But the problem of Israel is not solved and will never be solved in my opinion. That's war... my son, for example, was in two big wars, in the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. And that was one of the main reasons that he left Israel. He said he had enough of wars, when he came to the United States for studying his business, so he found that he would be better here. And he stayed here. And therefore we are here. We came after him, otherwise we wouldn't be here in the United States. I would be here in Israel until today. And I'm not sorry that I did it, because I'm not sorry of one step in my life. I don't look backwards. I take the reality. I am here happy. I live happy. And so is my son. I have two grandchildren. My granddaughter graduated now from the University here in Kentucky. But she lives also to Austin, Texas, where my son lives. And our grandson is in Virginia Beach. So now we are without children and without grandchildren, but we have here very good friends. And we are happy here, making our life here.

Q: When your son was growing up in Israel did he ask you about your past and about the Holocaust years? Or did you tell him about what had happened there?

A: Well the first years, I myself couldn't talk about it, neither could my wife. And she is until today not so outspoken. And for her the language barrier in Israel was very difficult, very difficult.

She learned the daily language, but usually she couldn't live a cultural life, except going to concert and eventually from time to time with me to the theater. But usually it was a barrier for her. But we have a society where she could speak Polish, where she could speak German. And we had very wonderful company, very good friends. And then concerning our son, it came when he went to school, to elementary school. He asked in the first grade, he asked about whether we could help him with something in his homework. And mother told him, "I'm sorry but go to Father because I don't know." So he ask a very simple question, "Mom, did you ever go in your life to school?" So it is difficult to say that we spoke with him about the Holocaust because it was a painful thing to go on to put it on your children. But of course when he growed up, when he went to high school and later on to military, he realized what happened and he asked some questions. But not too many, not too many, not too many. And I think until we came here, to the United States, he learned more about all of this than all his staying in Israel.

Q: So it wasn't so much a part of cultural life in Israel then to even talk about it, even though it's a society mostly composed of Jews? People weren't, the children weren't being taught necessarily about what had happened in Europe with the Nazis' extermination of Jews?

A: Well, I, I cannot agree with this what you ask for. My culture life in Israel was very, very developed. First of all in the professional way because I was very active in my profession and I studied a lot. And except of which I went to concert and I went to theater, all Jewish theater, I mean Hebrew theater. I understood and I could take it. And then I had a very rich library in Hebrew language and I was reading in Hebrew and for me Hebrew became my, really to say, my first, or my second language if I would say the truth, because the first always remains the Polish language which you have your basic education.

Q: My question was more about whether your son, your son was... or even in this, I would maybe have guessed that in the schools he would have been taught about the Holocaust because he's living in Israel. But from what you're saying it sounds as if there was not very much talk about the Holocaust.

A: You are right. In the first maybe ten years there was no talk about the Holocaust. Later on bit by bit it came out and they start to open more the world and exchange of knowledge of the world, with all other countries in Europe and the United States. And the Jews from the United States, tourists used to come, family members looking, searching for family and some of them finding. And there was always exposed to the Israeli informations in the papers and everywhere that was always the corner, the sensitive corner of Jewish life, to find families, far families and families and friends from shtetl. Here they found a sister, here they found a brother after not knowing that they survived, because they disappeared and they went to different corners of the world, to Australia or to New Zealand and to Africa and wherever you want, you have everywhere people in the world. So when they start to come somehow together it was more exposed in the reality of course, with this knowledge it came always a history and development of knowledge about Holocaust, how it came to it, and this opened the door to more knowledge about the Holocaust.

Q: How long did you live, oh, here's what I wanted to ask you. How segregated were you from your Arab neighbors? Did you have any interaction with them at all? Or were your lives just completely separate?

A: My personal life was never involved with any Arabs. With any \_\_\_\_\_ Arabs, I didn't know. Well, I can say that I knew nothing, but from the press and visiting to go to the South to Beersheba and passing some villages where Arabs was living going to Nazareth. If you go to see the country, you met the Arabs and their way of living. But in my place where I lived there was no Arabs at all. At that given time there was no Arabs. In Tel Aviv, for example, there was a section which was Jaffa, the port of Jaffa, the old port of Jaffa is the oldest port in the Mediterranean. There are living Arabs until today. The majority of them are Arabs and they are Christian Arabs and there are Muslim Arabs. There are churches, there are mosques. So when you are going to Tel Aviv, because there is not separation between Tel Aviv and Givataim, Givataim was on the rand (*ph*) of Tel Aviv, that's like a suburb of Tel Aviv. And then when you want to go for a good meal, you went to Jaffa there. Good restaurants. Were Arab restaurants. And Oriental Jews opened oriental restaurants. So this is the way where you came together with the Arab world. You want to go to buy some fresh fish in the harbor there. So you could buy it at Arab fishers there. There were Jewish fishers, too. But generally we didn't have any, any, any connection and live together with the Arabs. We knew from the press and we knew from the medias how they live and where they live and what their problems are, but we didn't have nothing in common, nothing in common. You came to Jerusalem, of course, after the Liberation, I mean after the Six-Day War there, western part of Israel, or Jerusalem which they annexed. So you learned something. When you came to Jerusalem before when it was divided, you came always to the gate, where we saw the Arabs here. It was always a danger to approach close because there were shootings.

Q: When did you first go back to visit Poland?

A: I went to Poland after, to be exact, about after fifty years.

Q: Fifty?

A: After fifty years I went to Poland. The second time I went after three years.

Q: So it was about 1995 that you first went to Poland?

A: Something like this, yes.

Q: Will you talk about that, that trip?

A: We decide to go, when the parents of our good friends which live here in Kentucky came to visit here. It was a very old Krakow family which knew the business of Fryda's parents and he by himself helped one Jew to survive. And they are very, very nice people. We met them and became friendly, very friendly. They really embraced us and they asked us to come to Poland, to be their guests there. And to see, you will see it is not so bad. Just try, come and you will see your sights. That was one thing. The other thing was we wanted to see our savior, this Muschau, who got his righteous papers there, and his family. We wanted to see him because he was older than we are and we wanted to see him alive still. We supported him from Israel. We were sending parcels and money from time to time. And we supported him and he was very

thankful. They were not rich people, very poor peasants. And he also wrote us that he will be happy to see us. So we decided we will go, we will see how it is. We went there and as I told you maybe before, I was a member of Rotary International in Israel and I became a member of Rotary here in Lexington, too. And as a Rotarian you are obliged to visit a club wherever you go. You should go to meet. Rotary have to come together, whoever it is. The Rotary in principle, Rotary has to have the best people. That's what the principle of Rotary is. And we went there to see Rotary in Krakow on their meeting. And one of the members was a Jesuit priest, who was a professor at the University there. And he was a doctor of biology and a doctor of philosophy. A very bright person. After I had my speech there, at Rotary they are always asking guest Rotarian to give his impression and his greetings from his club to bring there. He came to me, and we became very friendly, very friendly. So that even when I came back to the United States, we were writing to each other. I have maybe fifty letters from him, which he wrote to me and I wrote to him exchanging of some ideas. He was very fond of the Jewish religion and of Judaism. Which I, I have studied a lot about Judaism, biblical Judaism and Talmudic Judaism. So I could give him some answers. We had some very, very interesting talks about this subject. We had a very good time there. We went there to the village. One of our Polish friends which we became friendly, he visited here with the University of Kentucky for a year. We became friendly and he invited to visit him in Krakow. And he went with his car with us to these villages where we used to be in hiding there. And we went there and met the people. There was a very exciting experience. And we really enjoyed to see this everything from perspective, it gives us some good feeling that we could do it. And therefore we went for the second time, too.

Q: Had you kept in touch with anybody in Poland apart from Muschau?

A: Yes, we saw Muschau for himself.

Q: No, had you kept in touch with anyone other than Muschau during the years that you were not in Poland?

A: No, no, not at all, not at all, not at all. Except these people here from the United States which we met here and this people who visited here and the Jesuit priest which we visited, otherwise we didn't have.

Q: So, Mrs. Soltys or her son, did you see them?

A: Oh yeah, we saw them. We saw both sons. They were, well, they were very touched. Madame Soltys didn't live anymore, she was gone. The second time we were even the Soltys son, the oldest son passed away, too. Only the youngest son, Kazimierz Soltys, which writes us until today and we send him from time to time some money. Otherwise no.

Q: What about, there were people who, I assume you had left Poland and they didn't know at the time that you were Jewish, but you were friendly with them, such as the people who hid you. Did you have any encounters with people like that?



A: No, I didn't meet more people. I will tell you, I didn't want these people to have different feelings, that I was Jewish and they couldn't know and could even help me, maybe they will be sorry that they did it. I don't want to put them in this conflict. I don't know. You can never know human thinkings, human spirits, human soul. You never know. I don't want to hurt people.

Q: But overall your visit was very good it sounds like.

A: Yes, my visit was very good. Short. Very good. Well, we experienced one a very, very peculiar experience while we were walking in Krakow. In the market place, in the most important place in Krakow, in the most beautiful place in Krakow and I am not sure that the person who did it knew that we are Jewish and it wasn't directed to us. I think because this person run away from the market, screaming, "Death to the Jews." And that was a very, very strange feeling, very, very strange feeling. I couldn't blame my friends. I couldn't blame nobody. Maybe some crazy. You never know what people are able to do and who they are.

**End of Tape 4, Side B**

### Tape 5, Side A

Q: This is tape number five, side A of an interview with Oscar Haber. And you wanted to mention about your visit?

A: Because I was talking about Krakow, about the unpleasant what happens to me, I will try to make some remarks about the Sharoka (*ph*) which is called the high street. And there is the oldest synagogue in Europe, called before the world the Alte Shul. And there is now a Jewish museum. There is another thing there on this street, which is one of the oldest, maybe oldest too, maybe in the same time. I don't know exactly. The Remu Shul, the shul which is named after Reb Isserls, which was a Rabbi in Krakow in the, I guess it was in the fifteenth century if I am not wrong. There is still a shul and there are still Jews coming and there is a minyan and praying in Shabbas. And they're of course coming curious. And there is always a meeting of Jews who come visit Krakow. They are always coming there. And the site of this shul is the old cemetery which a gravestone of this famous Rabbi, Rabbi Isserls. They called the shul and they called the Rabbi "Remu". Rabbi Moshe Isserls. About him, used to say, "From Moses, to Moses was not like Moses Isserls." Was a very great Rabbi, who corrected one of the main Jewish religious books, the *Shulchan Aruch*, on which the Jews, the Western Jews were living their daily life. That was included every point of life from the Jews. But I will go back to the museum. There are remnants from Jews in Krakow. There were several severed Torahs, Bibles, and all kind of religious utilities. And last but not least, there are many photos of old Jewish life in Krakow. And we were there for a Shabbat prayer at the Remu Synagogue which I mentioned before. And there were a minyan, there were even a group of young students from Canada came to visit Poland and they were visiting this shul and sitting all the pray and praying. And another thing which is to see of Jewish life, there is a Jewish cultural center on the Meilzel (*ph*) Street. A foundation of Canadian Jew, a \_\_\_\_\_, and there are also kind of all Jewish life in the past and the present Jewish life. And they are cultural meetings. There are coming writers and meeting there and presenting their books. And there are Jewish books there in this unit there.

Q: Did seeing all of this inspire you at all to, to think about the possibility of Jewish life continuing in Poland? Did you ever consider living there yourself again?

A: To answer this question is not easy. From a historical point of view I'm sure Jews will live in Poland. First of all because of the root, of the roots. It may be even second, third, fourth and fifth generation, they have their Jewish ballast, if you want to say, which asks them to go back to the sources. This is one thing. The second thing is, of the globalization of the world. The world is globalizing. It has united Europe. In another few years if it will continue this way there will no be borders between European countries. It will be a united Europe and Jews are living in Europe and will live in Europe. We have the best example, Spain. The Jews were driven in the fifteenth century from Spain and there are Jews living there. There is a Jewish life in Spain. And there will be everywhere. There is Jewish life in Germany. We may not like it. We may not want it. But life is stronger than all our views. May it be political, philosophical, whatever it is, life has his right. Bread is easier. Where life is easier, people will always go. And that's my view. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't know. But I am sure and I know that the last visit of the Pope in Israel gives a great contribution to somehow living together, Catholics and Jews. It is maybe ironic that in general even in the United States, people, Jewish people in general are more

involved in general Christianity, maybe less in Catholic. Because there is a minority of Catholics. But Poland is ninety percent Catholics. And the Pope, his origin is Wadowice in Poland. And he was during the war behaving as a fellow Semite. And he now with his visit in Israel and his approach to the problem of Jewish-Christian connection, I think opens more the door for Jews to go back to Poland. Maybe I am wrong, maybe I am right. It is still a stereotype of American Jews which have a guilty feeling that they didn't do nothing, nothing in time of the Holocaust to help their brothers. That they are putting all the guilt of the Holocaust on Polish people. I know the truth is that the majority of extermination, gas chambers and so forth was in the Polish territory. But I find my very answer, I think the main reason is that it was much easier for the Germans to make it where the biggest concentration of the Jews were. There was, in Poland was more Jews than all over the world. So instead to go to Holland or to go to Belgium or to go to Germany, of course they didn't want to take them because they were ashamed to bring the Jews to Germany. So I mean to this other little countries, to bring million of Jews it was for them impossible. Impossible. Physically it was impossible. Maybe it would be good if they had come to this idea. But their idea was to do this fast, fast and more able to do it was in Poland That's my opinion. Maybe I am wrong, but that is the reason. And of course, there is something to it that in Poland were no many objection to it. But there is another answer, Poland was the biggest country of this all occupied territories except France. But France has its own Anti-Semitic history, so we can put it in another perspective.

Q: So, if you knew that you had another hundred years to live, could you conceive of living in Poland, moving back to Poland for part of that?

A: It is like I said, it's a very, very difficult answer. Maybe yes, maybe no. The yes is I would like to be the first one, not the second, not the third, not the fifth. But if I live fifty years and there will be a community of a million Jews, I am not sure if I would not prefer to live in Poland. Well of course, my first priority is Israel, but I don't know what will happen to Israel in the next future. I am very worrying and it is one of my greatest pains to think about, about a bad outcome of this situation. I don't want to be a prophet and I don't want to put my words in tapes or in history. But I am very afraid of the, what happens in Israel.

Q: How do you feel about life in the United States?

A: It is the same question like you ask me before.

Q: Hard to answer?

A: If I am living in the United States, it is the most wonderful place to live. If you ask me to live between Jews and the United States, I am not comfortable with it. I was more comfortable in Jews to live in Israel or to live in Poland. And there is a reason to it and it is very difficult to raise out from history the past and the relations between American Jews and world Jewry at all. It is a very difficult task. And even now, with their best will, with their greatest contribution to Israel—which is a feeling of guilt, of course—the relations between old American Jews and the new American Jews, except this which became very rich and involved in commerce and science and so forth, but the Jewish *volks, volks...* that means the Jewish Jews. The Jewish Jews which

are speaking still Jewish, which are reading Jewish books and they have the Jewish folklore and they still have the memory, the heritage of European Jewry, is still differentiated.

Q: Do you consider yourself an American now?

A: Yes, I'm an American, loyal American, a loyal citizen and I know about what happened in the United States, politically and socially and I am very involved. I mean spiritually, because physically I can't more. But I was a member and I still am a member, but not so supportive as I was, I am a Republican. I cannot say I don't like Democrats because they are democratic. But I don't like Democrats because they are more socialistic. And whatever smells of socialism or communism is for me, a red flag. And this is also a part of my Israeli past, which was the Labor party, which was the priority movement for many years. And still they are trying to be, I don't know what the outcome will be. Barak<sup>1</sup> is a Socialist and a member of the Socialist Labor party. And so are many of the desert members. And I don't like the religious extremists in the same way like I don't like the liberal extremists. I am used to a middle way, to a way of tolerance and living in harmony with everybody.

Q: When did you come to the United States?

A: In 1980.

Q: And did you come directly to Kentucky?

A: Do I come?

Q: Did you come directly to Kentucky?

A: Yeah, because my son was living in Kentucky, I came to Kentucky.

Q: Do you remember your first impressions of the United States and of Lexington?

A: Well, I came to the United States before I came to Lexington. I came to New York several times. And I make tours in Canada and California and Florida. I make Caribbean. And I knew about American life and I met American people. I had my own idea about America. And my idea about Jewish America didn't change from the beginning until today. However my two brothers are living here since '48, here. But they are still Polish Jews. They are Americans, but they are Polish Jews. That's what I meant before what I said.

Q: What is your idea about, what is your idea about Jewish America?

A: Jewish Americans are Jews which speak Yiddish, love Israel, enjoy their life in the United States, are good citizens here and live a Jewish life. It mustn't be Orthodox, it mustn't be strictly religious, but humanitarian Jewish life, with everybody humanistic. That is my Jewish life, very humanistic. Our great Rabbi and teacher, however it is a Rabbi, but a great Rabbi, the Orthodox Rabbi, when it came to he, to him one famous gentile person. "I will become a Jew if you will

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<sup>1</sup> Ehud Barak, Prime Minister of Israel from 1999 to 2001.

teach me the Torah, how long I will stand on one leg.” He says, “No problem, love your neighbor as yourself. This is whole Jewish religion and whole Jewish Torah, the most important thing.” And that’s what it is, what I mean, a Jewish American or an American American or a Polish American. Love the people who you are live with and you have to live with and everybody to see a human being. That’s my opinion.

Q: Are you a member of a synagogue here in Lexington?

A: Yes, I am a member of the conservative movement. I accept it. There were asked about many things which they change in the meantime when I approach the synagogue. There were no women called to the Torah. There were no women Rabbis. Now there is. But if they ask my opinion and I said, I will not be an exception. I am for the majority. You decided that you want it this way, I will agree. But not that I am fond of it, not that I like it. And that it my opinion.

Q: You think that women should have the same traditional roles that they had in Orthodox Judaism?

A: No, they have to have more liberal. But I still cannot accept a woman going to the Rabbi, because it is against the Halachic teachings. I mean, I accept it, but I don’t find it nice. And the teaching there is, if a woman is not clean, she shouldn’t come between the community. She is not clean, that means when she has her menstruation. Only after she goes, she has menstruation, after she finished and take a ritual bath, she is clean. And she is even with everybody. I don’t say she is not even, I don’t say this is a dirtiness or an illness, but it’s against the teachings of our sages. And if you go on to take off barriers one by one, officially as permissible, you take the balance off Jewish religion. One of the two. You want to be Jewish you have to follow the teachings. Even when you don’t follow, but you don’t have to revolutionize it. That what I think. I am not kosher, for example. I am not doing a lot of things. I am riding on Shabbat. But my opinion it is in those times, Shabbat there was no cars to ride on Shabbat. There was no electricity to light. There was many things which I found it. But that’s for me, but I don’t say it is permissible. It is not permissible, but I find it, I can do it. If somebody doesn’t like it, it’s not my problem. It’s his problem. But I can do it. I can do everything which I found, in my opinion, it is an answer which is logic.

Q: Do you have friends here in Lexington, who are Jewish or non-Jewish or what kind of community do you have here?

A: Well, I can say really friends are non-Jewish. This is the majority. Maybe there are some numbers really which I can say they are not Jewish. Three, four families maybe or something like this. But not to count as a really friend. These are really the Polish people, which are helping me in need, when I had to go to an emergency, I call to the Polish people. They come even in the middle of the night and they bring me to Emergency. My wife is not driving and they bring me. I don’t have to go in ambulance. And other things also, they are really good friends. So, I really don’t differentiate it. Because you ask me I say they are accidentally Polish or Christian or Catholics and they are accidentally not. But they are my friends and they are my friends, but not because of they are Polish, because they are Catholics or they are Christians. I don’t know if I have even one Catholic, exception of Polish people.

Q: Has it been important to you at all, did it, was it... let me start over. Was it ever important to you to talk about with other people your experiences during the Holocaust. Did you get to a point where you felt like I really have to tell people that's what I experienced and to be around people who understand?

A: I was talking several times in school, whoever invite me to give them, I give them my own experience. But there was now a Remembrance day in the St. Luke church where there are members, two or three Christians which are my friends. And they are always counting on me that I will be the speaker. And I for nine years will be making the Remembrance. They make it this year, too and I went to them, I don't know I show it to you or you have it? No? I promise you to give it to you, my talk. I have to make a copy. I forgot to make a copy. I will give it to you someday if you will ask for it. And they make it in such a honorable day that was really a pleasure to talk to these people and to explain to them, this time I spoke generally about the situation. In the previous I gave from my personal experiences. And they are always anxious and they are...

**End of Tape 5, Side A**

### **Tape 5, Side B**

- A: Well, you asked me if I spoke to people. I must tell you, to my disappointment... I don't know, maybe not disappointment, but take the reality like it is. I didn't have occasion to say my opinion or even something about the Holocaust to Jewish people. If they invited me to the Temple when there was Remembrance Day, they were asking me to light a candle. That was all. And they were making some prayers. And the same was here in our synagogue, when they make. And they come such a small number of people that it is really not worth it even to open your mouth to talk to them. But I wasn't asked to talk about the Holocaust. I wasn't asked. They talk, they make some prayers and that's all. And that was very miserable, miserable. I was ashamed that I was a part of this Remembrance Day. And that's it. Jews are not interested in it. Maybe they have it enough in books. Maybe they read about it, if that's possible. I don't know. But even when it is written, even when they read about it, I think, in my opinion, they have an opportunity to hear it from the first source. They should ask to hear of it, they should. But I don't know why they didn't. Very ignorant, very ignorant. And then they are not interested. The people, the few people who survive, they are not interested, because they know the same, they have their opinion. And the other people are here, born here or for years are here, they are already, they are already accustomed of the American habits, of the Jewish habits. That's what it is. They are not interested.
- Q: Do you feel that the people who were born here and who are from here, are less, have been less receptive to you personally than have the newcomers?
- A: Well, I feel it, I feel it maybe personally, but I don't blame them. Maybe they were expecting more involvement from my side in their community life, which I couldn't do, first of my age, secondly my language is not good enough to expose my... it is maybe improved already, but in the beginning my English was good to read, to understand. But to speak with my accent, to talk about my experience and to be active in their community, it wasn't easy. It was maybe difficult. I even proposed and asked the Rabbi I can help him with the Hebrew lessons in the Sunday school maybe. But he never asked me. And nobody did ask me to give a hand to something like that. Maybe to a money drive, maybe they will ask me to do it, but that's not my speciality. I will not do it. And that's one thing. The other thing is, which one influential person told me, that they feel humiliated in my company. That I am too special for them, so therefore they are hesitating approach me. Well, I don't know what is true, what the reason is, but this is the reality what I told you. I am a stranger for them and I will remain always to them a stranger. However they are friendly. If I approach them they answer my questions, but that's all, that's all. What can you do? That's the reality. And you have to live with it and we take it. And we learn after so many years of life, you learn to live with the reality, with each reality. This is the main source of our strength, to take the everyday reality in our life as custom life. And that's it.
- Q: Last time after we finished our interview you mentioned off tape, something about the "business" of the Holocaust or the business that the Holocaust has become and I wonder if you would say something about that. Does it bother you or do you feel that the Holocaust has been overly commercialized?

A: Again, I don't know who will hear this tape, but in the meantime there will be more business in this field. You know, each community tries to make a museum, a Holocaust museum, which in itself is maybe a nice deed. But who will come to this museum? I think the Holocaust museum which is in Washington is the one which was a necessity, very important. And it fills all the spectrum of Holocaust and of Jewish life, before the war, in the war and after the war. Maybe there are some nuances which come out which are not of value. But to make so many, I think people will not be interested to go to the main museum where they have everything. And this happens because of the way how Jewish society is built in the United States. It has to be a society, it has to be a president, it has to be a vice-president, it has to be a secretary, it has to be members of the board and so forth and so forth. Maybe in itself it is as a social thing, maybe it is good, maybe. But I think a majority of the raised funds goes to administrative use, the paperwork and to expenses which are not profit of the social needs of people who really needs the help. That is what I think. And about commercializing the Holocaust, I think when you take thousand books and you put them in a computer and you take the essence, I think from these thousands you will make one book which includes everything. So there is no need, in my opinion, for so many editions, for so many work with it in... I don't know, I don't know. Of course, you can see a lot of people who became very famous because of the Holocaust, very famous. But I don't want to criticize them. I don't want to criticize nobody. But I think it is a crime if somebody makes it only for the business.

Q: I'm coming to the end of my questions. Is there something that we haven't talked about that you'd like to talk about?

A: Well, I gave, I gave a sketch about my experiences and about how I see it. It doesn't mean that I don't have, in general, what to say about. And especially to the future generations of Jewish people. Maybe somebody will listen to it. Maybe somebody will try to understand my point of view. But it is in the moment, I am ninety years old and I passed through all kind of Jewish life with joy and suffering. It is like one Jewish sage said: "It is good to be born a Jew. It's good to die a Jew, but what do you do in the meantime, this is the problem." From the beginning until the end, the Jews have a very rich historical experience of life, which many other religion or communities don't have. Not because they wanted, but the wind of history put the Jews in the center of cultural life. Even in the world. Not only in Germany, not only in Poland or in Russia or in Palestine or Spain or in the United States. Everywhere where the Jews were the center of civilized life, of cultural life was concentrated in the Jewish communities or singles. Jewish Nobel Prize winners, there were scientists in the United States in medical field, in general science are not compatible to no one other people. Maybe this is the reason that the jealousy of other people brings them to hatred. I cannot wish that the Jews wouldn't concentrate of all this progress and culture and civilization. A country they have to do everything possible what brings progress to the world. But I am turning to the other point not to cover this with egocentric religious or national use. To take it more in human general perspective and civilized ways. This is my advice and this is my way of thinking. And that, and we will remember this, this can maybe, maybe some day bring to make us even with other nations in civilized world. That we will not be scapegoats in any way, which we were during all our history from the beginning until today. To avoid it, listen what I said. Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much.



## **Conclusion of Interview**