

**NENCEL, David**  
**RG-50.560\*0001**

David Nencil was one of nine children born to a very religious couple in Ripjin (Rypin), Poland. He became a watchmaker before joining the Polish army. In 1939, David was captured and held as a prisoner of war for one and a half years in Maków, Poland (Maków Mazowiecki or Maków Podhalanski). He escaped and was reunited with his family, who were hiding in Maków. The synagogue was burned and a ghetto was created.

David describes its conditions as so unbearable that some people drowned themselves. He and many other ghetto residents got typhus. Germans ordered ghetto residents to watch, without crying, the public hanging of a doctor who had saved many lives.

The Germans liquidated the ghetto, and he was sent to Auschwitz, then to Buna, where he was a slave laborer at an R.J. Farber factory, and then to Birkenau, where he was selected for the Sonderkommando. After the crematorium was built in Auschwitz, he was transferred there.

He describes the crematoriums and body disposal processes at Birkenau and Auschwitz. At both, the bodies always were in the same position, having climbed over each other to try to get to a window. "I would rather be shot than be part of this group and have to do what I am doing. I did not have the courage to do away with myself." He says the Sonderkommando cried, screamed and felt unbearable pain.

He witnesses extreme brutality, including SS men shooting a woman's child in front of her, and lethally injecting twins in their eyes. Near Auschwitz crematorium #2, he buried many items that had been taken from prisoners.

One special transport of people with American passports rebelled and were shot dead. SS killed most Sonderkommando during a 1944 uprising in the crematorium. But he was spared because he fixed their watches and clocks. He was forced to go on a Death March to Mauthausen and from there to Ebensee (Ebensee), until liberated by U.S. troops.

He said anti-Semitism in Poland was not much better after the war. He has nightmares. He feels it is too painful to talk about the horrors, and did not tell his children.

[Note that the timings are off and the formatting is not stable.]

## Tape I

- 1:32 I was born in Ripjin (Rypin), Poland, near Brodriza (Brodnica), a well-organized, cultured town with a population of about 20,000-21,000. We had sports clubs, a library, a modern brass band. I played the trumpet. There was a Tarbut. Hebrew was the school's official language. My father exported cattle to Germany and supplied meat locally.
- 1:40 Both of my parents were very religious. I was one of nine children. We took turns taking care of each other. We had a Polish housekeeper and a Jewish cook. The family was nice. I never heard my parents argue. They were very kind. My father traveled all week but always came home for Shabbat. I was a watchmaker by profession. I had to be an apprentice for three years, then take an exam, before opening my own shop. At 21 years of age, I went into the army.
- 8:01 (Something is wrong with the timing of the tape (1:40 to 8:01, and also it cuts off between timings.) I went with four Jewish friends. As Jews, we were forced to work harder. We were stationed at Kutno, a key railroad crossing.
- 10:00 The Germans attacked Poland in September 1939. German planes often flew over Kutno around lunch time. One time, Polish soldiers instructed us shoot at the planes. Our job was to check the bombed railroad cars. We found all sorts of things, like chocolate, cocoa and sardines. We opened the cases and gave some stuff to a woman.
- 13:00 She spread the word and we were attacked by a lot of people who wanted to get food from the train. We gave food to women and children first, and then to men. One grandmother blessed me. I hoped her blessing would help me survive, especially when I was fighting the German army.
- 18:00 At a farmer's house, we heard shooting and realized that we were surrounded by the army. We waved a white curtain as a sign of surrender. We threw away our siddurim. We did not want to be identified as Jews. Anti-Semitism was rampant in Poland. Jews were being beaten up for no reason. Jews were being stoned when they left the theater.
- 22:00 Ritual slaughtering of animals, a shochet's job, became impossible. Jewish stores were boycotted. Priests in churches preached anti-Semitism all across Poland.
- 24:00 It did not get much better after the war.
- 24:40 I was a prisoner of war for one and a half years. Ripjin was occupied by the German army. I was not allowed to go back to my hometown. Somehow, I did get to see my parents. I claimed to have just gotten out of the hospital after being

treated for an injury. I walked with a limp. I tried to board a train, but was stopped by the ticket agent. He would not sell me a ticket, but told me to wait for a later train. A man watching this told me to go to the back of the building and board a train even without a ticket.

## Tape II

The train stopped in Warsaw. People were smuggling food and all sorts of things. At the Cherkanov railroad station, which Germany had already overrun, Jews were taken off the train and sent to prison.

- 3:30 The conductor helped him (switches to third person) to get off the train without being noticed. His parents were hiding in Maków (Maków Mazowiecki or Maków Podhalanski). He got there in a truck full of pigs. The reunion with his family was unforgettable. But they had to keep moving. They gave away most of the items they had with them. People were taken to labor camps.
- 6:40 The family became separated. His father and three sisters went somewhere, while his mother and the other children tried to get to Bialystok. They were stopped each time and sent back.
- 9:00 The synagogue in Maków was burned down. Around Rosh Hashanah, a German officer told them that a fence would be built around the area to create a ghetto. Two openings were left in the fence. One was for laborers to go into and out of the ghetto. The other was for people to get water from the outside the ghetto.
- 10:41 The situation became so unbearable that people used the ghetto exit to go out and drown themselves. David and many others got typhus. A doctor quarantined the sick in a house that the Germans had confiscated from Jewish families. When people got better, they were sent back to the ghetto.
- 12:45 Where the synagogue once stood, the Germans started digging a ditch. Rumor had it that some people would be hanged.
- 13:50 The doctor, who had saved so many people and smuggled them back to the ghetto, was to be hanged. Everyone had to attend the hanging. No one was allowed to miss it. And no one was allowed to cry.
- 18:30 David was working in construction. The Germans created a contest, forcing the prisoners to race and see who could carry the most bricks on his back. David came in first. The German officer found out that he was a watchmaker and made him fix clocks in the officer's house. Because of that, the officer helped David get a permit to open a repair shop in his house. It cost David one pound of coffee.
- 21:00 The Jews had to wear a yellow circle on their clothes. They had to tip their hats to all German officers, and were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk. David walked

with his head up, no matter where he was walking.

- 24:00 As a POW in Maków during the winter, he went to the police station to get his bread rations. A policeman handed him a ration card with one hand and hit him so hard with the other that David fell on the floor. Sometimes, the police poured cold water on people.
- 28:00 One time, they pulled the panties off a prominent citizen's wife and badly beat her. Question: were you ashamed to wear the yellow patch? Answer: My feeling was that the Germans should be the ones to be ashamed of themselves. We have nothing to be ashamed of.

### Tape III

- 1:20 The Germans were getting ready to liquidate the ghetto. People were burying their siddurim and talleisim in the backyards of some houses.
- 2:20 The Germans ordered Jews to turn over all jewelry to them. They threatened to shoot anyone who wore or possessed jewelry. They shot on the spot a woman who was hiding a wedding band in her bra. The Germans carried sick or old people to horse-drawn wagons. The German rushed others to get on the wagons, and hit the horses to make them take off while some people were climbing aboard or hanging on.
- 5:00 (Changes back to first person.) We traveled to the Malave (Melave) ghetto. We were told that professional workers will work for the Wehrmacht. Older people had to jump over a limbo stick to see whether they were in good condition. People thought that couples would be more protected, so there was a rush to marry.
- 9:00 I went to see my younger sister. She was holding onto me and did not want to let go. They left to go to a labor camp somewhere. The next day, my group was taken away in the cattle cars. It was awful. There was no place to sit down, no water to drink, people relieved themselves right there. Some people died. At the first station, we saw a man water his horse, but no one gave us any water. This happened at other stops, also. We thought this was done on purpose, to torture us.
- 13:00 After two days of travel, we arrived somewhere where people were wearing striped clothing. Children were running around, asking to be with their parents. The people in the striped outfits directed the boys to go to their fathers, and knew that the children with their mothers were going directly to the crematorium. Then, everyone was separated. Able-bodied people to the right, others to the left. The people on the left were loaded onto trucks. Ambulances followed them. The people on the right walked straight ahead.
- 16:00 Question: How long did it take to get there? Did you know the name of the camp? Did you ever hear of Auschwitz? Were you angry? Answer: It took about two and

- half days to get there. I had never heard of Auschwitz. And yes, I was angry from the moment the cattle car was locked.
- 18:00 Generally, an ambulance is used to help people, but here it was being used to pick up the dead. People jumped out of the cattle cars' narrow windows. SS men were waiting and shot them. I was sent to Buna, to an R.J. Farber factory to work.
- 19:35 In Buna, I recognized a man from Maków. He asked me for some bread. I knew someone who had been in Buna for a long time who had good connections. I was to meet him at 6:00 P.M. The Germans were ordering some men to sell bread and then turn in the people who bought the bread. The Germans found bread on my friend. He told them that he had gotten it from me.
- 22:00 My name was called the next morning at 6 A.M. The Germans asked where I had gotten money for the bread. They beat me, and offered a whole bread if I told them the name of the man I had gotten the money from. But I did not give away the man. Back in the barracks, the lagerkapo (in charge of the whole camp) also tried to get the information from me, by hanging me by my hands. Finally, they found out who was in charge of the money and so I told them that I got the money from that man. The lagerkapo was very respectful toward me. He gave me special food and hid me in the barracks for two days.
- 26:00 I was sent to Birkenau. Some guys were taken out to somewhere every morning and were returned each night. They did not want to talk about their daily activities, and just said, "you will find out." It turned out that they were part of the Sonderkommando. When it was finally my turn to be sent out with these guys, I was taken to a little white house with a stucco roof, near a barrack. A transport arrived and the people were chased by dogs into the little house. I carried an old woman into the house. I was crying and wanted to stay there with her but I was not permitted to. As the people went in, the Germans kept count, to be sure that no one was missing or had escaped. This little white house was the gas chamber.

#### Tape IV

- 32:00 The Germans packed the people into the house and sealed the doors. There was a trap window, where the Zyklon B gas was thrown in. While the people were being gassed, one could not hear a sound, but when the doors were opened, the scene was always the same. People had been trying to get to the window to get some air. They climbed on top of each other. There was a trap door that led to railroad tracks, and the dead bodies were loaded onto a flat wagon. The wagon was on a platform and that was driven to a large ditch. The bottom of the ditch was covered with wood. The dead bodies were dumped into the large ditch and their fat dripped into a smaller ditch beneath. This was ignited. The smell was awful.
- 38:38 I was pulled out of this group for three days and was working in the clothing section. I was to take out all valuables, and the Germans took them away. I heard

- that this process of killing people had also been used in sealed trucks. Question: What were you thinking when you saw people being herded into the white house? Answer: How can I describe my feelings to you. My first reaction was to join them but that was never allowed. The guys in the Sonderkommando never spoke to each other. Because I was a watchmaker, I was taken out of this group at times, but I was very depressed. Zalman Lowenthal wrote, "We were ashamed of one and other, could not look at each other, our eyes were swollen from tears and lamentation. He, Zalman Lowenthal, was a very intelligent man. Lots of people tried to write something to leave information for the future. Special prisoners were building the crematoriums for later use. On top of the buildings, heavy machinery pulled the air out of the gas chambers. The chambers had shower heads with openings for the air to be withdrawn. After the crematoriums were completed, we were transferred from the white house.
- 5:20 Downstairs in the crematorium was the so-called undressing room. Maybe 60-70 meters of wooden hangers were on a beam. Benches were around the walls. The Germans ordered the people to undress, hang their clothing on the hangers, so they can find them later.
- 5:55 We were considering telling people that they were going to die, but decided against it. They did not have to know, would find out soon enough.
- 7:20 One day, an orthodox group arrived and I saw a Rabbi take out a bottle of whisky and say the prayer, the last prayer a Jew is supposed to say before death. I went over to the group and told them that they were going to die. No one said a word but they started to pray. This occurred outside of the crematorium. Then they went inside.....
- 10:00 The selection for the Sonderkommando varied. No one knew why one was selected. Question: Did you feel privileged to be part of the Sonderkommando? Answer: No. I felt that I would rather be shot than be part of this group and have to do what I am doing. I did not have the courage to do away with myself. I was still somewhat religious and suicide is forbidden. We were also aware of the fact that all Sonderkommando would be killed by the Germans, after a while. They would select a few here and there, kill them and replace them with an equal number. Some people begged to say alive. When I was pulled out, I was prepared to die. However, the SS wanted a watchmaker and I was not sent back.
- 13:00 The Sonderkommando had access to some special items, such as food, vitamins etc. I could never eat at the crematoriums. I cannot remember how food was brought in. I remember helping people whenever I could. I gave them shoes, so they did not have to wear clogs. I sent a pair of shoes to a French girl.

### Tape V

- 0:01 Some women who worked in the ammunition factories stole black powder,

dynamite. When they transported old clothing in wagons to the camp, no one checked the packages. That is when they managed to smuggle in a few packages of dynamite. Sometimes, they threw some packages of dynamite over the fence. The women's camp was adjacent to one of the crematoriums. Once, a commandant passed by on a motorcycle and noticed something being thrown over the fence. The Germans made us all get down on the ground, stepped on each of us with their boots. They wanted to find out what was in the package. Finally, one of us said that the woman threw over a cake and we ate it.

3:30 Each morning, on our way to the crematorium, we passed women going in the opposite direction. I noticed a young girl who resembled my little sister. Although I knew that my sister was dead, I had the desire to help her somehow. SS guards and their dogs accompanied us and they also marched with the women. We were privileged to some extent and at times received cigarettes. As we walked by each other, I threw my cigarettes to this young girl. She came to expect this each time we met. One time she passed me a letter. It was written in French.

10:00 A Frenchman translated it for me. She told me the story of her life. She had come to Auschwitz from Lyon. Her father had gone to Warsaw to clean up the ghetto and she was sent to Auschwitz. She had been sick but the nurses hid her in the infirmary, thus saving her from being sent to the gas chambers. One day, she ran out of her line and gave me a kiss. Somehow, she was not noticed by the SS. She asked me for a pair of shoes and I managed to get them for her. After that, I helped another woman but that one must have been killed soon after, because I never saw her again.

13:00 We tried to hide photos taken away from people arriving at every transport. We buried them in metal boxes that we used to take the ashes out of the crematorium. There was one of Churchill, one of Stalin and others. We buried them, then poured cement over the spot. I buried the copies of plans of the crematorium also. All near crematorium #2. Many other items were buried as well.

15:00 We managed to bury the plan that the Germans had for us in the future. A guard was present always in the crematorium when we worked. When the guard napped or went out for some minutes, I would copy some lines and bury the papers.

In his last testament (Zevorah) Rabbi Langfes, who was also in the Sonderkommando, said, "These grounds should be considered holy, people should take their shoes off before entering the crematoriums and the Red Cross should station trucks at the entrance with empty Zyklon cans." Rabbi Langfes died around October 20, 1944. His last message was left on that day. That was about 14 days after the crematorium was blown up. In his message, he said that 120 men were selected that day. He probably was part of that group. The selected people were sent to Lublin or Auschwitz from Birkenau.

17:16 We were locked up in our barracks. We were allowed only to go to the latrine. I

heard that our capo was trampled on at a railroad station in France.

### Tape VI

- 2:06 We were not allowed to gather in groups. The Germans feared that we might be planning something. The revolt was being planned. We would be playing cards and discussing plans. Black powder, dynamite, was being packed into empty food cans. There was a woman we could rely on to get things ready for us. When the things were ready, they were thrown over the fence. We got knives from civilian workers and sharpened them. The roof of the barracks was made of pressed wood shingles. Two or three shingles were removed, the items were thrown in and the shingles replaced. These items fell down to the bottom of the walls. All the camps were notified as to what we were planning. There was a Russian prisoner camp. A general in that camp was ready to join us. The underground of the city of Auschwitz did not want to join and did not want to know about anything.
- 8:52 The plan was to explode a large drum used for disinfecting clothing. The time for the uprising was planned for 4:30. The changing of the guard in the towers, as well as the fact that the commandoes were returning to the main camp at that hour. The men from the Sonderkommando would kill the guard, take his bike and his gun. The guard on the next shift would be dealt with the same way. We were to run out to the road, form two lines, jump the guards, take their guns and other weapons away from them. The prisoners from the camp were to throw hand grenades at the booths where the guards stood, cut the wires with scissors so the prisoners could run out.
- 13:00 On the day of the planned revolt, a transport of about 200 SS men and young people arrived from Poland. They arrived at the ramp leading to the road that we were supposed to start the revolt on. Capo Kaminsky told the guard that he had to go to the cleaning plant to conduct some business. Thus, the plan was stopped from going forward.
- 16:24 A few days later, Kaminsky was shot on the way to the Gypsy camp. A short time later, the uprising in crematorium #3 took place. The building was burned down and a German guard was killed. There was a lot of black smoke. We saw SS on motorbikes and cars rushing toward #3. We were watching #1, to see if any action was taking place there, but our view was blocked. We know that they killed a guard and put his body in the oven. His metal belt buckle was found in the ashes. The dynamite prepared for the uprising did not work, must have been damp.
- 21:00 The explosion did not occur. The men ran out of crematorium #1, were shot and brought back dead. We, in #2, were counted to see how many of us were missing. Since we were all accounted for, they decided that we were not part of the plan or planning. A while later, we went over to #1 to see if we could find some weapons. The wall where the weapons were hidden had been opened either by the men or the Germans. Nothing was left. We opened our walls, flushed the dynamite down



the toilet.?????(interviewer or transcriber put question marks, perhaps questioning that there was a toilet, one that flushed, and was within their walls in addition to a latrine they were allowed to use). We covered everything with sand so the black powder would not be noticed. We heard the first air raid that day. The Sonderkommando from #3 and #4 were lined up and shot. We from #2 were taken back to Auschwitz and locked up. The civilian workers left newspapers they had wrapped their sandwiches in. That is how we managed to learn some news of the outside world.

29:00 The leaders of the uprising were: Panich, Grodovsky, David Golan, Kevin Sogol. Four women were arrested for transporting the dynamite to the camps. The Russians were closing in on Auschwitz.

### **Tape VII**

David says he has nightmares when he talks about his experiences. David did not share that part of his life with his children, or his new wife of six years at the time of taping. He also has nightmares around the Jewish holidays. He feels that it is impossible for people to believe or understand what happened and it is too painful to talk about the horrors of the past. His wife would like to know about his past so she could share his pain. David does not want to discuss his feelings about God. He cannot make Kiddush on Friday nights, and cannot say Kaddish at the cemetery at his wife's parents grave. Some people went to camp with deep religious feeling and came out completely irreligious, others changed the other way, he says.

25:00 David feels that all religions should become one world religion, so no one would feel that theirs is better and so there would never again be a war about religion. David's current wife is German. Her father was one of the largest furriers in Berlin before the war. After Kristallnacht, the windows of all the Jewish identified businesses were smashed. Their chauffeur was cleaning the glass on the sidewalk and passersby, men and women, were ready to kill him for helping a Jew. He told them that this Jew was helping him feed his family for the last 13 years and he was happy to help him.

### **Tape VIII**

David shows pictures of his parents and siblings, only three survived the Holocaust.

He describes a transport on any given day at the Auschwitz crematorium: Each transport was brought by trucks to the crematorium. The people were brought to the so-called dressing room. They were told to undress, place their belongings on the benches around the wall and to remember where they put them, so they can find them later. Naked, they went into the gas chambers, which were equipped with shower heads that were built to suck the air out of the room. Question: what

was the reaction of people? Answer: children's reaction was much stronger than that of the adults. The doors were sealed by the SS, who were taking pleasure, making comments, laughing, etc. while watching the people suffocate. The Sonderkommando was attending to the clothing, separating items of clothing and valuables.

When people were finally dead, the doors were unsealed. The scene was always the same as in the little white farm house. People were piled on top of each other, trying to get somewhere, where they could find air. The Sonderkommando had to remove the bodies, place them on a lift, which was raised to the level of the ovens. There their heads were shaved, gold teeth pulled. This was done by a special unit of prisoners. Then they were placed on special metal stretchers, placed on a kind of a rail, which pushed them into the ovens.

- 13:00 We had to push and pull bodies with our bare hands. The smell of gas was very strong. The SS did not watch us during this process. I did this for two years. Always the same thing. Sometimes the German officer needed me to fix some watches. Some watches I fixed had been removed from transports. During this period, I did not have to be in the gas chambers.
- 17:00 One German officer had been a political prisoner. When he took sick, we all wanted to go see him. He behaved very decently to us. By the time they gave us permission to visit him, he was dead. We noticed that his face as well as his body was very red. We suspected that he had been injected with something. The SS might have wanted to get rid of him for some reason.
- 19:00 David objects when the interviewer refers to his kind of work as work. He wants it called forced labor, for lack of a better term. The heat in the oven room and the atmosphere there were indescribable. No one could possibly understand it and it is unexplainable. The Sonderkommando were crying, screaming, their own pain was unbearable. The crematorium was set up as a factory. It was automated.
- 21:00 We took the ashes out of the ovens. Then the ashes were taken to a river bed and spread all over. We did not do that part. David does not know who performed that part.
- 25:00 When people had been selected in the camps, they knew what their future was going to be, so when they were placed on trucks and transported to the crematorium, they would sing The Hatikvah or cried Shema Yisrael.

### **Tape IX**

- 1:00 Question: was it hot in the crematorium? Answer: David says he cannot answer; cannot believe such a question is being asked. Bodies were burning in the ovens. Question: Did the bodies burning become the bodies of your family to you and the others in the Sonderkommando? Answer: We were always crying. We were

- crying for everyone, no matter what country they were from. We were questioning God. Why did no one care about these happenings? For me, God died in Auschwitz.
- 6:40 David asked Rabbi Langfes, Where do you think God is now? Rabbi Langfes answered, Do not torture me. There was no hope at all. To see such cruelty in action, how can there be hope. Why was the crematorium not bombed? Nothing hopeful was happening. Thousands of people were being gassed and nobody, not even God our Father was doing anything about it.
- 11:35 There was a special transport, they were put on trucks. They all had American passports. Well-dressed, bedecked with jewelry, wearing furs. I don't know where they came from. They were mistreated, beaten. They resisted everything. They did not want to go to the dressing room, did not want to undress. One woman undressed, with her underpants in hand hit an SS in his face. This signaled a general revolt among the people. Somehow, they shot an SS. The lights were turned off, the Sonderkommando was told to leave the area, more SS came in with machine guns and shot everyone. We had to undress the dead bodies.
- 26:00 Question: As a Sonderkommando, if you thought you had had enough of being part of this machine, why didn't you put up a fight along with these people?  
Answer: I don't know.

### Tape X

- 1:14 I was not in the gas chambers at times. I was not witness to certain happenings. Rabbi Langfes talked about a transport of some 600 boys from Terezin. They were well-dressed, stayed in camp for a while. We enjoyed seeing them from time to time. At one point, they were liquidated. They were naked when brought into the crematorium, which was a common occurrence.
- 4:00 Once, a woman and child were brought in. I was ordered to hold the woman, while they were killing the child. Then the woman was killed. This was done with a sport rifle.
- 7:00 Ambulances brought in a group of twins. They were held in a special room in the crematorium. Some were injected in their eyes to see how long it would take them to die. This was part of the experiment they did on twins.
- 9:00 According to Rabbi Langfes, healthy women arriving in the gas chambers were fondled by the SS. David never witnessed such happenings, but he says if Langfes wrote about it, it must be so.
- 13:30 According to other reports, the Sonderkommando heard people sing the Hatikvah or cry Shemah Yisrael. David heard it only on rare occasions. After the crematorium doors were closed, no sound could be heard from inside the gas

chamber.

- 16:00 The crematorium doors were closed by the Germans. They also brought the gas into the chambers. They did hear songs being sung by the prisoners in camp. The most often heard song was “My Shtetle Brent” (“My Shtetle Belz”?).
- 22:00 Indifference is a silent crime.
- 23:00 At the end of 1944, the remaining Sonderkommando were locked up. Most had been killed in the uprising. After the order to evacuate Auschwitz, they were brought back to Birkenau from Auschwitz and scattered. No one knew that they had been part of the Sonderkommando.
- 26:00 On the death march. Some people managed to run away and hide. Conditions were very bad. It was cold, snowing, no food to be had. Some people could not go on, so they were shot. At one point, we were loaded onto open trucks, the blankets we were given got wet and heavy. We threw them away. The transport stopped at Morava Ostrava. People going to work noticed us, stopped and threw sandwiches to us. An SS shot a woman who was throwing food to us from an overpass. In 1946 at a gathering, David made a contribution on the condition that the story of this woman be told publicly. He and other marchers made it to Mauthausen.

### **Tape XI**

- 1:00 Question: Back before the death march, did people know that you had been with the Sonderkommando? Answer: No one ever talked about that or anything else.
- 3:42 In Mauthausen, we were taken to a room of about 10 feet by 15 feet by 50 feet. We undressed, showered and deloused. Two men stood at the entrance, and beat us with bats as we passed.
- 5:30 From there, we were shipped to Eibenseigh (Ebensee). Seven hundred to eight hundred people died in that camp each day. Their bodies were burned. We were asked to volunteer to help with the burning of the bodies in exchange for additional rations.
- 11:20 We worked in tunnels that were being built. We cleaned garbage and used-up dynamite, from January to May 1945. At one point, I felt I could not go on any longer. I threw away my shovel and sat down. An SS told me to go back to work. That was kind of him, because a different SS would have shot me.
- 15:00 Around the time we were eating, we heard Allied bombing. The food server was not very fair, giving Jewish prisoners soup from the top of the barrel, empty water, while the non-Jews got soup from the bottom of the same barrel, which had some barley or potato in it.

- 18:45 Air raids were increasing in numbers. We went to bomb shelters.
- 20:00 Somehow, a message got to us: The SS is going to send us into the tunnel, under the pretense that it will be safer for us to be there, because air raids are getting more frequent. Then, they will blow up the tunnel with us in it. The message to us was: don't go. Indeed, the next day, the commander showed up with that request. We did not go.
- 21:00 A short time later, while we were waiting to be fed, we realized that the guards were not around. We heard loud screams coming from somewhere. We saw the sick prisoners marching toward us. We were told that American tanks were at the gate of the camp. We ran, climbed on the tanks, kissed and hugged the soldiers. We never expected to get out of these hell holes. I went back to the barracks and fell asleep. In my dream, I saw smoke bellowing out of a crematorium. I saw an American tank. I woke up and felt great joy and happiness.
- 25:00 German civilians were brought into the camp to clean up the dead. We recognized one of them as an SS. We beat and trampled him. We were admonished by the Americans for our action. They said that they are the ones who would be taking care of them.

**TAPE XIII** (there is no tape #12)

When we used to go to work in the tunnel, we saw a trailer. In the window, a woman was standing and eating each time we passed. We felt that this was the same kind of torture we experienced when we watched the horses drinking water on the side of the cattle cars that transported us to camp years ago. The trailer was not there after liberation.

- 1:30 David asked to work alongside the American army medics attending the sick. After liberation, many prisoners died from overeating or eating the wrong food. David tried to eat light food and not too much of anything.
- 4:00 Question: Talk about the time when someone gave you some family pictures. When I arrived at Birkenau, I wore a long coat. I had sewn my watchmaking tools and some other precious items into the lining. Everything had been taken from us. We were given a pair of wooden shoes and a striped set of clothing.
- 6:00 A young man from my hometown, Ripjin found me. He wanted a piece of bread from me in return for my family pictures he found and recognized to be mine. We made the exchange.

The interviewer informs David that this tape is being done specifically for research purposes about the Sonderkommando. It will possibly be aired on Public Television or cable. Most probably, all of the tape will not be shown. David will

get a copy as will the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

9:30 David is still having nightmares, but less frequently now, especially since his second marriage. In his dream, he is trapped in a house. Looking out, he sees SS men with machine guns and he feels he trapped again. He starts screaming. .... He feels that he has been screaming ever since he arrived at Auschwitz and no one heard his or anyone's scream.

Pictures of family. Old and new ones.