

**INTERVIEW WITH ABRAHAM SUSKIND**

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**Transcending Trauma Project  
Council for Relationships  
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## INTERVIEW WITH ABRAHAM SUSKIND

**INTERVIEWER:** This is an interview with Abraham Suskind. The date is June 13, 1994. Could we just start with you telling me your name, and the date of your birth, and where you were born, please?

**ABRAHAM SUSKIND:** I am born in Poland in a little town of the name Szczekociny.

**INT:** Could you spell that please?

**ABRAHAM:** Szczekociny. Polish. S-z-e-k-o-c-z-n-y. (Note: Szczekociny)

**INT:** Where was that in Poland? What part of Poland?

**ABRAHAM:** In Poland this was near Kielce, a big city. It used to belong, it was 5,000 Jewish people over there. And when I was young, after the first war, my parents immigrated to Sosnowiec. This is a big city, about 29, 28,000 people was till the war, and Sosnowiec was a place near the German border, near Katowice.

(Interruption. There is background noise from street workers throughout the interview.)

**ABRAHAM:** [I was born] December 31, 1908. And after the Second [First] World [War] we immigrated to Sosnowiec. My parents have seven children. Six brothers, six sons, and one daughter. And Sosnowiec my parents make a living. My father was a businessman. And we had a normal life. It wasn't from the rich people, but it was a normal, middle-class family. We always make a living. And my father was a religious man. He was a Gerrer Hasid, and through the war, through all the brothers, I was the third in the line from the brothers. Two of my oldest were married, each of them have two children. I was also married and had twins, twin girls. And they all went with the...

(Interruption)

**INT:** Okay, so you were also married before the war.

**ABRAHAM:** Yes. And the world, it was a normal life, a very nice life. It was a big city. The whole population was about 115,000 people, including the Gentiles. But it was a nice Jewish community.

**INT:** About how many Jews in that town?

**ABRAHAM:** About 28,000. A nice Yiddishe kehillah. With many organizations. Like you say in the morning with the davening, everything we had. Hachnosses Orchim, a Jewish hospital, and a children's home, a Gemilus Chesed, a Talmud Torah, there was a

big Talmud Torah in our city. And it was a very nice life. People lived very peaceful between them. Never was arguments between them, what I remember.

**INT:** Between the Jewish people.

**ABRAHAM:** Between the Jewish people. We have a big synagogue, and also many, many of shtiblach. A lot of Hasidim. And it was very, a normal life, till the tsuris came. Of September the first, it started.

**INT:** Okay, but before we get to the war, I just wanted to ask you first a little bit more about yourself now. How many children do you have now?

**ABRAHAM:** Now, one daughter.

**INT:** One daughter, and she's married and has...

**ABRAHAM:** Two children, two boys.

**INT:** Could you tell me your level of education?

**ABRAHAM:** In Europe, about high school.

**INT:** High school? Like Gymnasium?

**ABRAHAM:** But I was learning a lot. I was learning Beth Hamedresh. It was free, it wasn't forced for nobody. When I was young to the age of sixteen, I went for a couple of hours I always went to the Beth Hamedresh to learn. Most over there older bocherim, what was learning with the young ones.

**INT:** But did you go to a regular high school, too?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, yeah.

**INT:** How were you employed? Most recently.

**ABRAHAM:** Where? In Poland?

**INT:** No, here in America.

**ABRAHAM:** Here, when I came here, we came without money, without a profession. In Europe I was a businessman. I was working a few years in a job. But later my older brother had a business for himself, and was very busy, and he took me in for partner, before the war break out. And when I came here, I didn't have any profession, but I had a friend in my hometown, he came before me over here. He was an intelligent man, educated in Belgium before the war in languages. He was a bookkeeper. He worked in a tailor shop. Special trousers. And he took me in to learn to be an operator. But after a

year, I left because I saw it's not for me, and I couldn't make a living. So finally I was looking for something else, I went back to the same trade, but in a better place, a smaller place, and from this I make a living here, in this country.

**INT:** And you're retired now?

**ABRAHAM:** Yes.

**INT:** How would you describe your economic level now?

**ABRAHAM:** Here? Very good, very nice.

**INT:** Comfortable, or...

**ABRAHAM:** Comfortable, yeah. Belong here to the synagogue here. I'm very active in the synagogue. In fact, I was a little bit helping out the cantor, the baal tefillah.

**INT:** This is, what synagogue is this?

**ABRAHAM:** Beth Tefillah. Overbrook Park. There's two Beth Tefillahs in Philadelphia. One is northeast, and one is here in Overbrook Park.

**INT:** So is that a Conservative synagogue?

**ABRAHAM:** Conservative.

**INT:** And do you belong to any organizations? Holocaust organizations or Zionist organizations?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, we used to belong. No, when we came here they organize Newcomers, they used to call. (laughs) The Greener. Holocaust survivors. And over there I used to belong. Lately, they settled now very far in the Northeast, and I'm not driving, so this is why I don't have a chance to go there and go to the meetings.

**MRS. SUSKIND:** You go sometimes to the meetings.

**ABRAHAM:** Sometimes I'm going with my brother-in-law together.

**INT:** This is, what group is this?

**ABRAHAM:** Newcomers.

**INT:** Newcomers. But it's survivors. It's all survivors.

**ABRAHAM:** Yes. Also just survivors. Lately, also there came the people from Russia came, and they was looking where to go into Jewish organizations, a lot of them are members now together.

**INT:** What do you talk about when you go to these meetings?

**MRS. SUSKIND:** (Laughs) Concentration camp.

**ABRAHAM:** Always that came out the same things.

**INT:** You talk about stories about the war.

**ABRAHAM:** And sometimes they have a meeting, they have also a little entertaining. They bring somebody, a singer.

**INT:** Have you done any speaking on the Holocaust to anyone? Have you spoken at your synagogue, or to any groups?

**ABRAHAM:** No, no. To single people, yeah. In fact, one time the president in our synagogue was asking me, they have a Sunday morning breakfast, to tell them something what I went through. I told them I cannot do it because I'm getting emotional on this stuff from here.

**INT:** So you didn't speak to them.

**ABRAHAM:** No, no.

**INT:** Can we talk a little bit about your father's background? What kind of family he came from, how many children in his family.

**ABRAHAM:** He came also from a Hasidish family. Also Gerrer Hasidim. He was born in a city of the name Przedboch.

**INT:** Could you spell that please?

**ABRAHAM:** (laughs) Lola, how you spell Przedboch? (discussion of spelling)

**INT:** So how many children in his family, do you know how many siblings?

**ABRAHAM:** He had, I think, there were seven or eight. He had a lot. Four sisters, three brothers. Seven also.

**MRS. SUSKIND:** This is P-r-z-, it's hard spelling, but...

**ABRAHAM:** P-r-z-e-d-b-o-c-h. It was also a nice Jewish community. When I was young, my father used to take me over there.

**INT:** It was near to your hometown?

**ABRAHAM:** No, this is a little different, near Warsaw more. And...

**INT:** So he's from a religious, from a very religious family.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, in Europe, in years back, used to be a different custom. They used to have shadchanim. You know, the shadchanim? Matchmakers.

**INT:** Oh, matchmakers, sure. Shadchan. A shadchan.

**ABRAHAM:** Shadchan. This was professional. They knew who had a daughter in a city which looks for, to marry the daughter also from the same caliber people, with a Hasidische home, so the shadchan brought my father to the city of Szczekociny. My grandfather was a very rich man in Szczekociny. He was a big socher, businessman. He was also the head gabbai from the Chevra Kaddisha, and he had also a very nice family. In fact, the one son, and my brother, my mother aleha sholem, was in a yeshiva, a Rosh Yeshiva in Bendin.

**INT:** That was a **big** Jewish city.

**ABRAHAM:** The Bendiner rav was the Gerrer rebbe's brother-in-law. His name was Hanoch Levin. Yitzchak Meyer Levin, in Israel, was his son. The man in the government. And that's why he comes to this, and my father was from Przedboch, my mother was from Szczekociny, later they were settled in Sosnowiec, and we grew up in Sosnowiec.

**INT:** Okay, most of your years you were in Sosnowiec.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, in Sosnowiec, and I was very, very popular in Sosnowiec. I used to belong, later when I left the Gerrer shtiebel, I used to belong to the Mizrachi by myself. And...

**INT:** Could you describe your mother's family a little bit, too? What kind of family she came from?

**ABRAHAM:** Like I told you, her father was a rich man in Szczekociny, and she has two brothers, I think, and two sisters. Not a big family, four children altogether. Three brothers. One of them passed away very young. And also Hasidish people, and mostly from the religious people.

**INT:** So you were brought up in a religious home?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, sure.

**INT:** As Gerrer Hasidim?

**ABRAHAM:** I have to be in the house Friday by kiddush, by the meal, Saturday I went to shul, and I came home to the meal. And I had to be home Saturday night by the havdalah, also. It was a Hasidish house.

**INT:** Could you explain a little bit what it was like growing up there, in that town? What your family life was like?

**ABRAHAM:** It was like normal people. The brothers was busy. My one sister was a secretary, a cashier girl in a big wholesale business. And my mother was a housewife.

**INT:** She stayed home. And you had many brothers and sisters, and you were the third.

**ABRAHAM:** I was the third, yeah. The older one went right away to the camp...

**INT:** Okay, before we get to the war years, though. Did you have a relationship with your grandparents at all? Did you ever see them? On your mother and father's side? As a little child?

**ABRAHAM:** I remember when my mother used to go to (?) to Szczekociny, she took me. When I was a young boy. When I came there the whole mispochah was happy to see us.

**INT:** Can you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters, and the age differences between you? Do you remember how many years between you?

**ABRAHAM:** I don't remember the date, I remember. The oldest was born 1904, the other was 1906. His name was Shlomo Dovid. The second was Eliyahu, and I was Abram, and the middle, after me, was my sister, her name was Shifra.

**INT:** That's my daughter's name.

**ABRAHAM:** And later was Yitzchok, he had already the name after my grandfather from Szczekociny. During the time he passed away already, before he was born, so he gave them the name from the grandfather, and the sixth one was Yosef, and the last was Yaakov.

**INT:** So all brothers, except for your sister Shifra. Could you describe, could you just tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up, as a boy, as a small child and as a boy? Do you have any earliest memories? What would be your earliest memory as a child?

**ABRAHAM:** I was very happy in my town. I was a salesman.

**INT:** Before you were a salesman. When you were a child. Do you remember anything about your childhood?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, I used to like soccer. And as a matter of fact, my father didn't like it, but I didn't do this on Saturday. I was a soccer referee.

**INT:** Oh, were you?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. But they didn't get me never to go on Shabbas, because then I'm not doing for the Shabbas. So Sunday. And I was very happy. I had a lot of friends also in Mizrachi. As a matter of fact, in the Mizrachi, it was when I was sixteen years old...

**INT:** (goes to shut the window to cut out the noise)

**ABRAHAM:** When I was sixteen years old we had a group in the Mizrachi, we used to have our name. He was under the Mizrachi. But we had a minyan ourselves, and every week somebody else davened, was the baal tefillah, and he was Mizrachi, but he was very religious, Shabbas was shomer Shabbas.

**INT:** Could you describe your relationship with your brothers and sisters? Were you...

**ABRAHAM:** Very, **very** good. Always very nice family. Always kept together. Saturday after, the custom was to go and have a (?) after the cholent, you know, but later was a happy life. We come together with the parents, with the children. And it was very nice and very happy. It's just a shame Hitler was born. That's all.

**INT:** Could you describe what school was like? What was your school like? Did you go to school with non-Jews, or did you go just to a Jewish school?

**ABRAHAM:** No, we go just with Jewish children.

**INT:** It was a yeshiva.

**ABRAHAM:** It was not a yeshiva. They didn't call it yeshiva, it was a Talmud Torah I learned mostly. It was Jewish boys, and many, many, it was different. Because we didn't have a yeshiva, the rich people sent also the children to Talmud Torah. They get money, the Talmud Torah used to belong under the kehillah. The kehillah took care for everything. For shoctim, for the chazzan, for the shammasim, and also for the Talmud Torah. And who has to pay money, to pay to the kehillah. And the kehillah supply everything. Even the Talmud Torah. The rebbe, the teachers in the Talmud Torah, they get wages from the kehillah. It was a different life than here.

**INT:** And how long was your school day?

**ABRAHAM:** Till 2:00. After 2:00 we went to Beth Hamedresh, to learn a little bit for ourselves. Like homework, we didn't make it in the house, we made it in the Beth Hamedresh.

**INT:** It was all boys in the school, there were no girls in the school?



**ABRAHAM:** No girls.

**INT:** Was there a separate girls' school for your sister?

**ABRAHAM:** Was a special, how do you call this, was a special for girls, was, forgot the name.

**INT:** Like Bais Yaakov?

**ABRAHAM:** Bais Yaakov, yeah. It was a big Bais Yaakov in our city, yes.

**INT:** Okay. Did you have any, could you describe your parents, what they were like? What their personalities were like? Your father, for instance.

**ABRAHAM:** My father was always respected. He was a Hasid, but he went always away to visit his sister. He had sisters in Lodz, he had a sister in Przedboch where he was born. He went to visit them, he always came home and brought a present to my mother. He asked the sister to go and buy something. But it was a very nice life. Never any complaints.

**INT:** The relationship between your parents? How was that?

**ABRAHAM:** It was very, very nice.

**INT:** Could you describe in a few adjectives what your father was like? How do you remember him?

**ABRAHAM:** I remember him. He was a Gerrer Hasid. Very strict. He was, he has luck. He passed away in '42 still in his own bed in the house. And he had still a normal funeral, a levaye. And after the levaye, I was asking somebody, because they give him a nice place. The cemetery, the Jewish cemetery was also under the kehillah. The kehillah get (?), who deserved a nicer place. In Europe it was different. Was Hasidim together with Hasidim, you know, simple people together with simple people. Womans in another corner, not together in the same place. It was split.

**INT:** There was a mechitzah in the cemetery.

**ABRAHAM:** In the cemetery was a mechitzah. And he passed away, he was altogether 59 years old.

**INT:** How did he die?

**ABRAHAM:** He died because he still had his beard, the only one Jew in the city. When the Germans came in, they took the whole men in the city out to a place, and first they cut them off. He said, "Nobody's going to go." He didn't let us go, and he didn't go. He walked around, and they was calling, "All men, raus." Every man has to go out. They

kept them a few days, and make with them such nice kofes (?), you know, the way they want, a spiel for themselves to have, and they cut off the beard. And my father never went out from the house. When he went out from the house, one brother went in the front of him, and one, like...to take care for the people. Like guards. But he was very aggravated. He couldn't take this. This couldn't be happening what was happened. The older brother with two children right away, without the children, with the wife, they grabbed and sent away for slave work, and the young one was eighteen years old and with a few other friends of the same age, make themselves things, how to call this, on their shoulders to carry, not a suitcase. And they made a package for themselves and run away and all the time, who knows where they are, who knows what they eat, who knows? And aggravation. And so he was sick. And didn't have something, the main thing he didn't have to eat. Because we live on cards. The card we didn't get sugar enough, butter out, completely not. Even eggs we didn't have to eat. Just rye bread and water.

**INT:** So he died from lack of food?

**ABRAHAM:** Lack of food and aggravation. So it came together everything. And when we came back from the cemetery, my mother, I remember this wort what she said, "Rebbone shel Olam, I thank you. He had a little protection to you. You took him away in his bed."

**INT:** Because your mother saw that things were not good.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. We know what is going to be, because we saw what is happening. Sent away transport after transport. We never hear where the transports are going. In the beginning, we didn't know nothing from an Auschwitz. They sent away trucks with people, and we didn't have any idea where those trucks are going. Where they took them.

**INT:** Could you talk a little bit, before the war, was there anti-Semitism in your town?

**ABRAHAM:** Always. Mostly before the war. Because a few years before the war, was the same. In Polish government. In the government. They called it (?). It was already when a woman stopped the Yiddishe Shechitah. It came out anti-Semitism a lot. And especially before the war. It was very, very bad.

**INT:** Do you remember any incidents among the non-Jews, when you were a boy, of anti-Semitism?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, sure I remember. They used to walk around before the Jewish business, and didn't let in Gentiles to buy.

**INT:** This was before Hitler.

**ABRAHAM:** Before Hitler came, yeah.

**INT:** But your father made an okay living.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, yeah. Normal living.

**INT:** What did he do exactly?

**ABRAHAM:** He was a businessman in flours. He delivered flours to the stores for challahs. For bread, everything.

**INT:** When the war came, could you, how old were you when the war started?

**ABRAHAM:** The war started, I was 27.

**INT:** 27. So you said that you were married, then.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** So could you tell me how you met your wife, and tell me a little bit about that, before the war?

**ABRAHAM:** Like I told you before, also a little matchmaker mixed in.

**INT:** Matchmaker?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** Is that how marriages were arranged there? You didn't date?

**ABRAHAM:** When the class, from the Hasidish class, mostly was marriages of matchmakers.

**INT:** So you never met her until he set you up.

**ABRAHAM:** No, no.

**INT:** Did you go out with her to see if you liked her, or you just got married?

**ABRAHAM:** No, we met each other, and we came together many, a few times, and later we yes, yes, no, no. Many things, you break up and it was nothing. But mostly Hasidim married from different cities. And those professional matchmakers knew already who was rich here, who was rich there, and they make a shidduch from the...

**INT:** From, they would marry a rich person to a rich person and a poor person to a poor person, or...

**ABRAHAM:** No, those matchmakers, they weren't involved in the poor people, you know.

**INT:** Oh, because they didn't pay them.

**ABRAHAM:** They didn't pay them. They didn't **have** what to pay.

**INT:** So you met her through a matchmaker. What was her name?

**ABRAHAM:** Her name?

**INT:** Your wife's name.

**ABRAHAM:** Kornfeld.

**INT:** Kornfeld.

**ABRAHAM:** Yes.

**INT:** And her first name?

**ABRAHAM:** Paula. Penina.

**INT:** Penina. And what year were you married? Do you remember?

**ABRAHAM:** '33.

**INT:** In 1933. So that was when Hitler was coming to power. Did you stay in that town after you got married? The same town where you lived?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. For the first couple of years I lived with her parents.

**INT:** What did you do for a living?

**ABRAHAM:** Who, the parents?

**INT:** No, you. What did you do?

**ABRAHAM:** I was a salesman. I used to go, it used to be Silesia, to Katowice, because we were near Silesia. I used to go to stores and took orders from the stationery, woman's stuff, underwear, and I delivered this to stores.

**INT:** I see.

**ABRAHAM:** And I bought this in the wholesale places.

**INT:** And what kind of family was your wife from? Was it also a religious family, obviously?

**ABRAHAM:** Not especially religious. But he was very active, also, my father (in-law) was a little bit active in organizations.

**INT:** Like what, what kind of organizations?

**ABRAHAM:** In Talmud Torah, in hachnoses orchim, also, (?), but he was shomer Shabbas. Not a Hasid.

**INT:** So you didn't have to marry another Gerrer Hasid.

**ABRAHAM:** No.

**INT:** That wasn't necessary.

**ABRAHAM:** When I married I wasn't anymore a Hasid. I went into the Mizrachi.

**INT:** Oh, so how did that happen?

**ABRAHAM:** When I was older, I went out from the Gerrer shtiebel, you know?

**INT:** But why? How did that happen, do you remember? What was the pull that got you...Mizrachi is religious Zionist, right? Religious Zionist.

**ABRAHAM:** Here, something, people with children are running out from the house and go and live for themselves. In Europe, when I was a little older, I was like a little bit different dressed. Not anymore Jewish cap, but a little bit more modern. And especially when I used to run and be a salesman, I couldn't wear peyos with everything. So I went into Mizrachi. I liked Mizrachi. We especially had a very good rabbi. He was a very popular rabbi.

**INT:** Was your father upset that you did that?

**ABRAHAM:** No, no, no.

**INT:** Because you were still religious?

**ABRAHAM:** Oh, sure. He went to the Gerrer shtiebel to daven, I went Shabbas to the Mizrachi. He had a big synagogue, Mizrachi Beth Hamedresh.

**INT:** How old were you when you switched over to Mizrachi?

**ABRAHAM:** About sixteen, seventeen.

**INT:** And you cut off your peyos at that point?

**ABRAHAM:** I didn't cut off above, (laughs) I cut off to here. No, I tell you, in Europe it wasn't like here. A Hasid has to have big peyos. They had a little bit. I have a younger brother of the name Yitzchok, he was learning in Warsaw in the Mesivta, there was a big yeshiva called the Mesivta. He was there about two and a half years. When he came back, he had peyos under the ear, yeah.

**INT:** So she was from a Mizrachi family, also, your wife?

**ABRAHAM:** My wife?

**INT:** Penina? She was from...

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, her father was Mizrachi.

**INT:** Okay, so you lived in that town, and you worked as a salesman, and then you had children?

**ABRAHAM:** Two girls, twins.

**INT:** Two twin girls. Okay. How many years after you were married did that happen? The girls. Do you know what year they were born, do you remember?

**ABRAHAM:** Four years later, 1937.

**INT:** Could you tell me their names?

**ABRAHAM:** One was Rebecca. Rivka. We call her Rebecca. The other one was Esther.

**INT:** And so when the war came, could you tell me a little bit how that happened for you?

**ABRAHAM:** We was expecting it. Even the Polish government says, they was running back and forth between Ribbentrop and the German secretary of state to settle, but Hitler has his mind. Nothing was settled. Everything was false from him. They didn't believe him. In fact, he signed with Russia, and later he went with Russia to war. But we was expecting it's going to be very bad, because we know already when Hitler came a little bit under (?) already, it was 1933 already, and our city was close to the German border. Because after the Second World War, Poland took over Silesia. The big city of Silesia was the name Katowice. From our city to Katowice was by train eighteen minutes.

**INT:** Oh, okay, now I know exactly where you were.

**ABRAHAM:** So mostly our city, the city's name was Bendin. Was two big cities. Most people make a living from Silesia. People came to our city to buy everything, and also a lot of people went and make business to Silesia.

**INT:** I see. And because it was so close to Germany, you knew what was going on.

**ABRAHAM:** So we knew already, we were closer. As a matter of fact, the war started Friday, and Sunday morning we have them already in our town.

**INT:** Because it was right across the border.

**ABRAHAM:** And I remember Sunday morning at first they came in, they came in with motorcycles. And they flew in the streets from one street to the other one. And we stood in the windows and looked out, and we saw already what happened. This was in the morning, Sunday morning, in the afternoon was already thousands upon thousands of German soldiers, and they travel around in their trucks, and their cards and was calling on the microphones, "All men raus." All men have to go out.

**INT:** All Jewish men? Or just all men.

**ABRAHAM:** Just Jewish men. They didn't touch Gentiles.

**INT:** So in your town, did the Jews live separate from the non-Jews?

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

**INT:** Okay, so you lived sort of all in together with the non-Jews. So they were just going through the town and calling for Jewish men.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. The Jewish people, the Gentiles came to the cities to buy from the Jewish stores. But a few streets was just Jewish. Ninety percent business used to belong to the Jewish people. There was a few Gentiles what they had also over there a few stores.

**INT:** But most of the stores were owned by Jews.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. But when came a Saturday or a Yontif, everything was closed up. It was like in Tel Aviv. Not Tel Aviv. (Laughs)

**INT:** Yerushalayim.

**ABRAHAM:** Yerushalayim. It was quiet. And we had in our town a rebbe, used to call him the Radomsker Rebbe, Rabinovitch. He was killed in Warsaw. He run away to Warsaw with his family. He has one single daughter. His daughter married with a son from the Krymiliv.

**INT:** From the?

**ABRAHAM:** Krymiliv. Also a little town. And he had sixteen yeshivas. What he supported. Kes Ha Torah was the name of the yeshivas. Had in Krakow. In our city he has two yeshivas. His son-in-law, Reb Moishele was his name, took care for the whole yeshivas. And he was a very, very rich man. In fact, the richest rebbe what exist in the war. He had houses in Berlin in, and where he has the houses, in Berlin was the name Rabinovitch Strasse. His name. How he became so rich, I don't know. It's a long story. But he was, when it came a Shabbas, not hundred, then maybe sometimes thousands of Hasidim came for a Shabbas to him. Mostly from Galicia. Galicia belongs already to Poland. Krakow, Tcharnov(?), Tarnov. They used to wear the shtreimels with the points. Shtreimels, Hasidim, and he used to have his building in center city, with a big business store. And I remember sometimes the, how do you call this, organist, the guy who plays the organ in the church, stood in the street Friday night to hear Kabbalas Shabbas, the songs. And a lot of Gentiles came and stood on the pavement to hear. It was a very freiliche, a very (?) city. Especially with those Hasidim from this rabbi, made the city full of life, each Shabbas and each Yontif. And when the war break out, he run to Warsaw.

I have a book, what our society, Sosnowiec, Bendin, is together. They give out books, they have two books. I brought them here from Tel Aviv. But people, evidently people who came over there from our town told stories from years back, how the city was growing up till the last minute. And this book is written also how this rebbe was killed. The Gestapo came in to them in the room where he was living, in a Saturday. Everything, when they want to make something tsuris for the Jews, they was looking for a Jewish holiday, or for a Shabbas. They said to the rabbi to go with them. The rebbe with his wife and his daughter and his son-in-law. He said, "I'm not going anywhere. You want to take me to kill somewhere, kill me here." And they shot him in the house. This was in the book. Yes.

**INT:** When the war came to you, so you saw them coming through the town, they were calling all the...

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, it was the tenth day when the war break out, Friday, Sunday we had them already.

**INT:** And what happened?

**ABRAHAM:** First was, they burned the shul, synagogue. And our Beth Hamedresh was in the same, in the back from the synagogue, they had a big Beth Hamedresh. I have here the book, I will show you even the picture. Beth Hamedresh with the shulchan and everything. And right away they burn the synagogue, the Beth Hamedresh. And this was happening to them. And they took the whole men into a place, to a shlacht house, where they shecht the cows. A big place. They kept them a few days.

**INT:** All the men.

**ABRAHAM:** All men. Cut them off the beard. And they had...



**INT:** Did you have to go, too?

**ABRAHAM:** No, I didn't. My father said, "Nobody's going to go."

**INT:** Oh, that's right.

**ABRAHAM:** We all came to my father's house when this was happening, to stay with the parents.

**INT:** Now you had two married brothers, they were also living in the town?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. In the same town. Different streets, but the same town. And they came, they take out, but my father said...

**MRS. SUSKIND:** Why did you close, excuse me, you closed up the window?

**INT:** Oh, because of the garbage truck. I'll open it. (Pause)

**ABRAHAM:** So this was happened. And they kept them. Later, after a few days, I wasn't there, but I hear what was happened. That the head from the Gestapo, his name was Dreyer, and he was the whole, they had from the Gestapo, over our town, over not the town, Bendin, they used to call Zaglembie, Zaglembie. Zaglembie was the name like a state. Pennsylvania. Our state belonged to the state of Zaglembie.

**INT:** Inside Silesia.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. And they picked up from the whole things, they took 150 people mixed, young ones and older ones a little bit, and put them into the prison. In our city was a big prison. And they put them there. Later they keep, I don't remember exactly now how many they stayed there. After a few days, no longer than maybe eight days or ten days, they put them out in a line, and they count from one to ten. The tenth they took out. Again, from one to ten, the tenth took out. So they took out from 150 fifteen people, they took them out of the city, they gave them shovels, they make themselves the grave, and they shot them. This was the first thing what is happened in our city. And I think it was, the people, there was a few Yingeleit, they used to call them, Hasidish married people, young people, they had womans with children, and one woman was a widow, also, a very popular woman, her husband was a Hasid, but he passed away. She was a widow with a business. She had a business. Her son, who was seventeen years old, was between the fifteen people. In each house was...

**INT:** Somebody was taken.

**ABRAHAM:** Somebody was killed, yeah. This happened in the beginning. And later, they gave out orders. Not to go in this street, they cut off streets. It's not allowed for us to walk here, not allowed to walk here. And you shouldn't go on the pavement, he has to go in the street. And also, when he go in the street, and we see a German and a munde

(?), no different who, a Gestapo, or a police German, you have to take off the cap and salute to him. This was the way the whole life, till we came to the ghetto.

**INT:** How did you feel about all this?

**ABRAHAM:** They get used to feel this. And we didn't have nothing to eat. Because they give us cards, to live on cards, and the cards, so much bread, so much potatoes. And sugar, I don't know how many grams sugar for a family. And no butter at all. Everything. The stores was empty. And later the stores...

**INT:** Did the non-Jews have food to eat, too?

**ABRAHAM:** No, the non-Jews didn't get cards.

**INT:** They could buy whatever they wanted.

**ABRAHAM:** Whatever they want, yeah. And later, Gentiles used to bring bread to our city and sell this on the black market, but if they catch somebody who was handling with those bread, they took the whole family and sent away.

**INT:** The non-Jews.

**ABRAHAM:** No, the Jews.

**INT:** What about the people who were selling the bread?

**ABRAHAM:** He saw them, he run away. They never catch those people. And later, this was happened 194-...and started with the Jewish community have to deliver them so and so many young people to send away to work. Slave work. Into Germany. In different place.

**INT:** Into Germany?

**ABRAHAM:** Into Germany. In different places. Factories. Where they build houses for groundwork, and we have to get people.

**INT:** Did you have a Judenrat that was picking these people out? Or how did you...

**ABRAHAM:** Judenrat?

**INT:** Was there a Judenrat?

**ABRAHAM:** No, I wasn't in Judenrat, the leiter from the Jewish community, his name was Meren, so in the shlach house, the Gestapo was asking, "Who from you people are from the leaders from the city?" So one man of the name Meren. Moshe Meren. Monye Meren. He said. So he make him for the leader, "You be the leader of the whole Jewish

people, from the whole state, not from the city. For the whole state. Bendin, Sosnowiec." And so, they have to make Jewish police. The Jewish police, they used to call them in German, "Strasseordener." To keep the streets that people don't walk on the pavement, that people don't come together and stay together and talk. Like before the war, people used to come together and stay and talk in the street.

**INT:** You're not allowed to do that anymore.

**ABRAHAM:** Not do this anymore. And later, this leiter, this Meren, he was not a friend, he was a businessman. My mother used to make business with him. My mother used to have a little factory in rolling cotton, with my brother Yitzchok. They both used to handle in wholesale. They used to have a little factory. In the house where they live, they have a special place in this house where they handled this. And he bought it, but this Meren, he was the wholesale man who sold this cotton to manufacturies. So because he knew my mother, so I had a little break. When we received cards to come tomorrow to this and this house to go away with the transport, I went to the Jewish community and I came up to him, and he said, "Give me the card." But the older brother, he couldn't do nothing, they caught him. I can't take him anywhere out. Later, when they knew already they have to go to the ghetto, and the ghetto's going to be closed up, just Jewish people, he got an order from the Gestapo to make himself a group of Fuhrerlashes.

**INT:** What's that?

**ABRAHAM:** How do you call the Fuhrerlashes here? As a fact we have here a neighbor, also. A foreman.

**INT:** Oh, a foreman.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, foreman. So he called a meeting and said, "Listen, Abe. My father's store is completely empty." His father used to have a big store. "Is a big store, is very empty. Find yourself twelve people, and you be the leader, and you organize Fuhrermans." And so they arranged for me the head from the foremans, from the Gentiles from the city, he's going to give us lessons how to handle a fuhrer. So he gave me such a job. This why I have a chance to stay home till to the end, because thousands and thousands of young people, of mine age, younger age, was sending away to slave work, to camps. In the beginning, they had a chance to send a package to that child to the camp. In 1940. But 1941 it was no more. (Pause) You understand what I mean?

And this how the life was. Every day we was sitting in the house. The other people didn't go out from the house. They were sitting and listening. And one time was an order to give up this fuhrer(?), pelts. The winter coats, silver, candelabras, gold, everything we have to give up. They was offering the Jewish community, they have to have so an amount of gold and the Jewish community has to take the gold from the rich people, and give it to the Gestapo. And we was thinking always, if we get something, we have a little more menuchah from them. But they have the orders from the higher things not to give us menuchah.

In 1942 they started the big problem. They came in in an evening, and picked two big houses. In Europe the houses, it wasn't a house like this. In a house used to live maybe thirty, forty families.

**INT:** In apartments?

**ABRAHAM:** In apartments. A big house. And in the house was many, many houses, here was stairs, here was stairs. They picked two big houses and took out the people and put them into a movie house. And the Jewish community with the Jewish police has to take care that the people has to be inside till the next day they would come and take them out. This was the first Aktion what they make it in our city. This was May 15, 1942. But what...

**INT:** This was men, women and children, right? Men, women and children in that big house.

**ABRAHAM:** They took out everybody. Whole families. With children, with everybody. But a lot of people during the night was running out. A little bit the police let them out, a little bit they went out from the roof, and they went from the houses from on the roof to the other roof, and they went out here, and came out there. So they came the next day, and they took the people, and they saw they don't have the amount what they have the night before, and they took them already. A train came to the city. The train was loaded with German people. They brought a train. This was in the beginning. They still have the good trains for the passengers. It was lately when they took the people to Auschwitz, they took the other trains, for horses, for cows. And they still have the Jewish, the German people was sitting in the train with suitcases, with everything, they didn't know where they are going. And the last two (?), the last they let in people, was a place for the people from Sosnowiec that they took into the movie the night before, what they grabbed out from the houses.

And this time was the head from Katowice, which is the head over the Dreyer. Dreyer was our leader, was the leader of our government, of our state.

**INT:** The German leader.

**ABRAHAM:** The German leader, the Gestapo. And he had a head of him, his name was Miller, in Katowice. A big officer of the Gestapo. He was there, and he saw all of a sudden he didn't have so many people as they grabbed last night. He gave an order to go back to this same two houses, and take the people out. So they run, the Gestapo themselves, to the two houses, was Targover fier, Targover I, Targover II and Targover I, and they took out everybody, whole people, and they sent them away, and we didn't know where. There was one family named over there a Hasidic man, a Radomsker Hasid, he was a Hasid from the rich rabbi. He was a very rich man. It cost him a fortune, with the people who handled the trains, working on the trains, you know, Gentiles, to find out where this train with the people went.

**INT:** Oh, he paid them.

**ABRAHAM:** He paid them. And they find out that they took them somewhere to Auschwitz. So we find out this time what is in Auschwitz. This was the first Aktion what they make May 16.

**INT:** And they sent them to Auschwitz.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, and they took out also a big rebbe. The rabbi from the city, Orthodox. We had two rabbonim. A Mizrachi and an Orthodox. In Targover I used to live Rabbi England, a very popular. He comes out from a very rich, rich family. Tzedakah people. His parents was very rich. They gave a lot of tzedakah in a little town of the name (?), but he was the rav in our city, in Sosnowiec. And he went, and the leiter from the Jewish community, from the Judenrat, Meren, wants to take him out, and the Gestapo wants to let him out. And he said, "No, I go with everybody." And he went with the whole family.

**INT:** Was he killed?

**ABRAHAM:** With the whole family. This was the first Aktion.

**INT:** Did you know what Auschwitz was? Did the people explain what it was?

**ABRAHAM:** Auschwitz was before the war, they used to call Oswiecim. Was a Galizianer shtetl with a lot of Jewish people. A lot of frum people. Very, very religious people. A little shtetl. So over there, they get the name Auschwitz, not Oswiecim, and there are a lot of woods, they cut off the trees, and over there they build this camp.

**INT:** But did you know in 1942 what was happening in that camp, when you found out?

**ABRAHAM:** No, no, nothing.

**INT:** You just knew that the people were sent there.

**ABRAHAM:** Nothing. In the Jewish community they knew, late already, at the end of '42, because one man from Bendin disappeared from there, and he came to the Jewish community in Sosnowiec. Nobody knew in the city, just the people from Judenrat knew, because they won't give out that he disappeared. And how he disappeared from Auschwitz, I don't know. How he made this up.

**INT:** But he told what was happening there.

**ABRAHAM:** He told what has happened there. But later they make it already, every couple weeks they came with two big trucks, and they grab people from the street, and they took them away.

**INT:** No warning, no warning.

**ABRAHAM:** Aktion after Aktion. And in July '42 they give an order. In our city, in the city of Bendin, in the city of Dombrover, and the whole state of Zaglembe, the whole Jewish population has to go out with everything, with the children, leave the houses empty, because if somebody is going to be find in the house, he is going to be shot to death. To this soccer...

**INT:** Stadium, or field?

**ABRAHAM:** Stadium. Was a soccer stadium. And over there, they kept the whole city, everybody, and the babies with children. Some people took with them a little bit handbags, and things, and then the house is like you say, hefker, open. And over there came the Gestapo, and the leiter also from the Jewish community, with his secretary, Mrs. Charny, Meren has a secretary, a woman. He used to be a Zionist before the war, and he became the Shlomo Hamelech over the people, he took a secretary also, a woman, married woman, from the same organization, and make her things. And in the sports stadium, to select people, who go out, who go in the other corner to stay. Most people they put to the corner to stay, and we didn't know what they going to do with the people. And...I have over there also a lot of, my mother, my father was already dead this time. But overnight we helped each other. We took out a lot of people. And Gott hat gehelfen, like we say in Yiddish, "Az der meinigdem, der noch," you had enough, take more, and it came a big raining overnight. Big, big raining, the people was under the roof in a stadium with children, without a drink of water, nothing, and they took the people in a few different houses, Kolontayer 9 was one house, what they put in a lot of those people from the stadium. Later Targover 8 and another house, I don't remember which house. And they kept them over there in the apartments that people used to live. Each apartment was packed with twenty, there used to live five people in the apartment, they sticked in twenty or maybe more, maybe less. And everybody was looking where to (?) himself. How to be out from there. So they went up, was three-floor apartment, four-floor building, they went up to the roof, and on the roof was an opening, and a little bit, they run out. A lot of people disappeared, helped themselves. What the use, that they went later. But meantime, when they made the Aktion, and they took thousands of people out from the city, this time they came with trucks, they took out the people from, no, not trucks, they came with a big army of Gestapo, and they took them out from the houses straight to the train. Not in trucks. And the trains went to Auschwitz.

**INT:** And what happened to the people in the stadium? What happened to them?

**ABRAHAM:** The people from the stadium they brought them into those houses. That's what I'm telling you. And the next morning...

**INT:** Where were you?

**ABRAHAM:** I was also in the stadium but I run out of over there. And when I run out, I take my mother out, and my wife. We build a hole under the things, a big hole under the

thing, it was dark in the night, and we know where to go, and we went into a house overnight, we stood overnight there, and the next day it was light and we went home.

**INT:** You and your wife.

**ABRAHAM:** (whispering) Yeah, yeah.

**INT:** And the children.

**ABRAHAM:** (?)

**INT:** But they took your mother.

**ABRAHAM:** I took her also out, and she went with my sister, and later...

**INT:** What about your brothers? Where were they?

**ABRAHAM:** One brother was already in camp, one went before the war with a group to Russia, run out from the war, and the other brothers went also with the Aktion, they went away. They send them away.

**INT:** So all that was left now was your mother.

**ABRAHAM:** So this what was left, the rest of them, in March '43, they took us out to a ghetto. Out from Sosnowiec was a little village of the name Scrodula.

**INT:** Could you spell that?

**ABRAHAM:** Just Gentiles used to live there. It was two villages. One village they used to call (?), and (?) little (?), bigger (?). So they took out the Gentiles from there, and brought them into the city to our apartment, and took us into this ghetto. The ghetto, the village was small, and still was thousands of Jewish people, 8,000 people were still left from the 28, or maybe 10,000 people from Sosnowiec just, and they let us into a village with a few hundred apartments, just. What this did? They stick in three families in one apartment. It was small apartments. A bedroom and a kitchen. We used to live, I and my wife, and my in-laws, and my mother and my sister, in an apartment with a bedroom and a kitchen. This was in '43. And later in '43 in March.

And from there they make also during the time twice Aktions. We call it an Aktia, we used to call it in Yiddish, "Sie gewen an Aktion. Er grabt menschen," they grab people and they send them away. Until August 1, '43, this was on a Sunday. It was Tisha B'Av. And a Saturday night, every night we took care if they are not coming in during the night. What we did is, in each house went out a man on duty. We stood together in the ghetto overnight. They walked around. Not every night. One night I was, and another night was another neighbor. And we looked if the Gestapo's not coming, and finally Saturday

night we saw the tsuris is started. They going to make Judenrein. You know what Judenrein means?

**INT:** Yeah.

**ABRAHAM:** They liquidated the whole Jewish people. But everybody in the house made themself where to hide. Some under the roof and some under the ground.

**INT:** Like bunkers?

**ABRAHAM:** Bunkers, bunkers. And people was afraid, they didn't let in neighbors with children, because children used to cry, they have to take a find, they go here, it wasn't already anymore so friendly between them, you know, because everybody was looking at themself to help. And this was on a Saturday night. And Sunday morning already they took, we had a Jewish hospital in the city. When we went to the ghetto, was in this ghetto a school. So we liquidated the Jewish hospital with all instruments, to this school, and we had also in the ghetto the Jewish hospital active. What was full. Everybody was sick. Mostly children. When they started the liquidation, they came in the trucks, and they throw out the children through the windows, to the truck, and take everybody together, and went transport by transport, one transport went Sunday, one transport was Monday, the third transport, my old papers was written, "I came to Auschwitz the third of August. I went on a Tuesday."

**INT:** But you were in the bunker.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, but I had to go out. They used to shot into the bunkers. But they was calling. Everybody has to come out. But to the end came out, many people didn't came out to the end, they let them already, they took them altogether, and they put them out from the ghetto somewhere a little deeper into a village, was 150 people, and they kept them already from August till December. And Christmastime, the people were still there. But before New Year, '43, they liquidated them to Auschwitz. Yeah.

**INT:** So that was it for your town.

**ABRAHAM:** But the day, we was already on the place to go Monday, the second of August, the second day of the Aktion. But it was already night, so the Gestapo said, "Go back to your house, but tomorrow morning, you have to be here." When we came tomorrow morning, they give an order. Young men who wants to go to work can step out. But not with their wives. So a lot of people who had wives went out. And I stood, I said to my wife, I said, "I didn't grab you from somewhere, in the woods. I married you because I like you. Wherever you go, I go." And we went. The children we didn't have anymore. They died in the bunkers.

**INT:** What happened?

**ABRAHAM:** They died in the bunker. One after the other one.



**INT:** How?

**ABRAHAM:** When we was hiding in the bunker. They was skinny, we didn't have nothing to eat for them. Yeah, so it was skelets, you know, and one of them died on my legs one time. Later, another Aktion, we went into the bunker, yeah, and we still buried them in the cemetery, in the Jewish cemetery (?).

**INT:** How old were they?

**ABRAHAM:** Five. What can I tell you? So later, in the train, people was crying. Other woman was saying, one woman said, we were sitting in the floor of the train, packed, you know. Thirsty, no water. Not air.

**INT:** It was August, it was summer.

**ABRAHAM:** Not air even, not air. And one woman said, "My husband can do this to me, is the end of the world." And my wife said to me, she wished she will be able to see one time more her mother. Her mother went the day before. And to tell her what a husband she had.

**INT:** What...

**ABRAHAM:** What a husband she had. Because I had a chance to help me. After all, going to work is not going to the gas chamber, you know. And I went with her, but the minute we arrived to Auschwitz, they opened the door, it started in the evening, (pause) and took her right away left, me right.

**INT:** Separated you right away.

**ABRAHAM:** That's all, I didn't see her no more. And later, Mengele make a selection. They took women separate and men separate and make a selection with woman, they took her right away to the gas chamber. Because they never took her also to work, like they took me. I would know if she's there.

**INT:** They took her to work.

**ABRAHAM:** No, they took her also where they send women. They took women separate. They didn't have a lager together women with men.

**INT:** No, I know that.

**ABRAHAM:** And they took me right, and they took her left. And the Gestapo was forcing to make a line, eight people here, a whole line of people, and Mengele and trucks used to stay on the side. And we didn't know where the trucks were going. And Mengele...

(END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

**ABRAHAM:** ...we were going in the truck, we understood with the truck they going right away to the gas chamber. And mostly they used to ask what profession people are. If he was a question mark on somebody, ask them, because they used to need people for work. Roofers, electricians, in the camp. And finally they took me not in the truck, just to work. They took us in over there to a house, bath, showers, they didn't make a...First of all when we came there they told us, "Undress completely, and make a package. Fine, nice, like a package, like a gift." They show us how to pack. The jacket, the slacks, the shoes inside the middle, the shirt, and we stood completely like we was born. And we was hanging around the whole night in a shower house like this. The next morning was a little bit dark already came the first group what came. They make us the numbers. Later came a barber group, they cut off the hair, they make us a one inch shave. They cut us off the hair completely, but when they shaved already, they make us a, when they cut off the hair with the machine, they make us a line here one inch wide (he indicates down the middle of his head) shaved, ausgeschaved, that we are prisoners. They recognize us. And later they gave us to make showers, and after the showers, again, we stood in a line, they gave us dress, a shirt, pants. Was a joke. Nobody recognized each other, what they gave us. And also not shoes, just from wood, these...

**INT:** Clogs?

**ABRAHAM:** And they send us already into Birkenau to the blocks, but they didn't let us into the block. They kept us the **whole day** in August in the **hot**, hot weather. Dry. Sunny. Stand not, on the pavement was so wet because over there was woods. They cut out the woods, and they didn't make this with stone, we stood on the ground, you know, it was burning the legs, you know. Thirsty. I don't know how, one young boy went over and drank himself, he had a shirt, he had a undershirt. This was his shirt. Be brang this wet, and everybody make a little bit wet the lips. And who knows if this wasn't urine? Who knows? I think this was from where he took the water.

Finally came the evening, they let us into a lager, and they gave us over to a Blockaltester, a head of the block, this was a Gentile, also a prisoner, but he was a Polish Gentile from Warsaw. He took us over and he was worse than the Gestapo.

**INT:** He was a kapo?

**ABRAHAM:** He was kapo, he was head, he was more than a kapo. He was the head from the block. They used to call them "Blockaltester." Heads from the block. And besides this, he had a few others who helped them, they called them "Stubendienst." "Stuben" means a room. The block was not a door to go in from this and this side, it was like horses, a long block to go in from here and to go from the other side.

And they give us something, they brought a little bit of coffee, one dish, four people a dish, and everybody has to drink from the same dish, and you have to watch to left something for the fourth one. And so it started again the problem in Auschwitz.

But the life in Auschwitz, it wasn't, you can't believe what went on. 4:00 in the morning, the bell ring, and we have to go out. Completely out from the block. It was cold in the morning. Some of us was not proper dressed. We stayed and made ourselves a group, the one was warming up the other one. But came out who was the last one disappeared, he was looking a place where to go to come in the middle to warm up a little bit. And later, they called this coffee, this wasn't any coffee. The hot water black with something.

And during the day they give us, they sent us to work. Where? They sent us to work out from the camp to a train station, they brought with the train stones. Not square. Just stones they just brought in with different kinds of points. It was a stone, a point here, eight points in the stone, we have to carry this on the shoulders and bring this into the camp, and this shoes what we had it was very tough to walk, and people became holes in their shoulders, and we passed by the gas chamber, and we feel the gas chamber is working. I passed by the gas chamber maybe four or six times a day.

And what they give us a little soup, and one potato and a slice of bread. Until they give us this, our appetite was already disappeared. Some people couldn't sleep in the night because of hungry, being hungry. And when we came out they gave us something, the soup was make, I don't know, every minute they gave up the water, the urine, and we didn't have where to go with this. So when they waked us up in the morning, we run to the toilets. They have toilets. The toilets was very dirty. Who cleaned them? And it was also near the toilet was a line. A **line**. Because not everybody can go. A lot of people can go at one time, and during, standing in the line, they ring the bell already to come back and stay and make an Appel, so people run back, running back, and you know what I mean. This was the life at Auschwitz.

Later came Mengele. Not every single day, about five days in the week. And the Blockaltester, as the people stand up in the line, half undressed, and Mengele came with a secretary, with a block, we didn't have any more names, we had numbers, and he looked nobody in the face. He was looking in the arms, and looking in the shoulders. And not names. And somebody saw he write down his name, a lot of people went out from their minds.

**INT:** What did it mean if he wrote down your name, your number?

**ABRAHAM:** You saw he wrote down the number, the next day to come to take him out in a truck to the, this was the selection. The selection was, he came, who, he didn't like it anymore, can't get production, work, he mark down the number, and later they came with a truck and called out this and this number, and the Blockaltester has to deliver according to the list which number was on the list, he prepared them to go to the truck and come to the gas chamber. It was young people. And (?), and they know they going to die. And a lot of people became crazy in the night.

After three, four months, this was already in October, the Yom Tovim time, between Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur came three Gestapo people, and they was looking to take out from there 600 people into Germany. To make a selection. They took from three blocks. And each block was 800, 700 people. The (?) was just from woods, no straw, no blankets, we was sleeping in the plain woods during the night. The night (?) During the few hours what they let us **sleep**. And they make a selection in one block, the people went in from the back, and they were sitting in the front, and those blocks what I told you where the blocks are, a door there and a door there, everybody was (?), and they selected 600 people, and G-d, the Lord, helped me. I became between the 600 people, and they took us out already. The 600 people they took us already in a different place, separate away from my block where I used to be before, they gave us a shower, they gave us other clothing, also the same shmattas, the same boots, and they gave us a half of a bread, and they took us into Germany. Not so quick. We was two days there till they took us out. From there to Germany where we went supposed to be the normal time, maybe a ride from five hours. We was two days and two nights. And the Gestapo was with us in those trains. The trains stop, they let us go down, make what we're supposed to make, and let us back in, and without water, without nothing, we arrive in a place in Germany.

Not far away from our home. It was in the beginning Silesia. But Silesia was split. When Poland took Silesia, they took a half of Silesia. The other half used to belong to Germany. And they took us in over there near Breslau. Breslau was a big German city. Over there was a Krupp ammunition. Krupp factory. Krupp used to make ammunition for them for the war. A big factory.

**INT:** Krupp. K-r-u-p-p?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. Krupp. They make the ammunition. And when we arrived in this camp, they have just two houses for our 600 people, and two Polish people, Blockaltesters, Gentiles, also prisoners, that they brought them from a camp of the name Gross Rosen. Our camp used to belong, the camp, the name of the camp was Funfteichen. Funfteichen means Five Oceans. A teich is an ocean. Funf is five in German. We used to call this place Funfteichen. And they gave us numbers. I remember my number was 13552. Not anymore on the arm, but hung up here, and also in my jacket a little on the arm, here in the pants in the side my number, and the jacket here, a little things with the Magen David I am a Jew, with my number. And we went to Krupp. And they selected over there people to go to Krupp, they picked out who is doctors. They brought, there were a couple doctors with them. Who is (?), who is sanitarior, who is a nurse. Who's a cook. They took a few to the kitchen. And the most they sent to Krupp to work, and they picked me to go to Krupp. Not knowing who I have there, in this group.

Being there a week, or ten days, when we came back from work, they used to call, "Who likes to go to Revier, who has fever, who is sick." They cannot work, because the room, and the shoes, we walked to Krupp seven miles one side, and seven miles back. One week daytime, one week nighttime. Each shift is twelve hours. Without meal, without nothing. In the morning when they wake us up, they used to give us a little coffee and a

little bread. Some people picked up the bread before he even went to the Krupp. After ten days I find out that in the Revier they have a little hospital. They call this hospital. Revier. No hospital. Revier we know is a hospital. And I find out that over there is a doctor of the name Moshe Zabransky. And he is a cousin of my wife. When I find out he's there, I went over there and he saw me, he says, "Where you been? You came here with us with the 600 people, and we didn't know each other? Where you going? Where you work?" I said, "I go to Krupp." If he would know I am there, he would right away said he has a sanitator to take into work with him, or to work even in the Lagerkommander. Lagerkommander means to clean the camp inside. It was also easier than to go to Krupp and to work and to stay over there the ammunition machine and make ammunition. And this was happened, so when I find out he is there, I had a lot of help.

**INT:** How did he help you?

**ABRAHAM:** He had a lot of people in this Revier, the kitchen sends according to the books that he had 136 people they send in 130 portions. But a lot of people were sick, they couldn't eat anymore. This remain in Revier. So he had a little bit more, a few potatoes. Sometimes brought in from another camp already, from a working camp, our boys that they used to send away 1941, '42, to a camp, was a camp over there near Funfteichen, and they came in and they built houses for more people. And they brought in to the end. They started with our 600, and we left with 5,000 at the end. Because they brought in more people, more prisoners. When the Polish people used to make the revolution in Poland against Germans, they grabbed the Polish people who made revolution and brought them also to camps. So they brought a lot of Polish people out here.

And over there I helped already a lot of boys. For example, my Blockaltester, from the block where I was, he knows I am a cousin from the doctor, he give me a break. He make an Appel in his block to see if he has his whole amount that he's supposed to have, and he saw one is missing, he said, "Kossinik." He called me "cousin." They know I am a Revier. I'm a Revier. So when I came to work, I went to him, and he gave me a cup of potatoes, and a piece sometimes of speck, sometimes a piece of onions, because the Polish people used to receive packages from home. And when they was in Revier they used to give the doctor, so the doctor keep them a few days longer, they gave the doctor bread and salami, everything whatever they received from Poland. And he helped me. And when I came back to my block later, and my portion stood on the table, a few people were standing already in their bedroom to look out if I'm already back, and I paid the five portion meal, and I gave the other people to eat.

So it came out to the end I was looking a little bit not so skinny, than the other people. When I had a night shift, I sleep in the day. When I came back in the morning, I didn't go to the Revier. I went to my bed, took a shower, and I sleep. When I came up, I run to the Revier, and he give me to eat, and I eat a lot of potatoes. Mostly he had potatoes.

**INT:** So that you had food to eat.

**ABRAHAM:** Yes, I had food to eat. I never was hungry. And this was sixteen months together with him. But in the end, and also, the Gestapo man who took care of this Revier, was a Gestapo man took care, he was a varschtente German. He wasn't in his heart by Gestapo. He was because not to go to fight in Russia, he better be a Gestapo and be in the camp. And he was a friend. Any time my cousin took me in for a few days, he made me sick. And he kept me a few days. And he knows this, and I used to stay near the window, and watching if somebody's not coming, another Gestapo people, because he used to play checkers with my cousin, with the doctor, this Gestapo. One time he came to my cousin, and he tells him, "Monik," -- he used to call him Monik -- "Take your cousin and send him out from here to a block, because they are coming, a commission, to make a selection."

**INT:** And you don't want to be in the hospital during that.

**ABRAHAM:** And he took, the Gestapo told my cousin not to keep me in the hospital, because in the hospital they don't make any selection, they take the whole Revier. So they took me back into a Revier, and everything goes with the book. But the minute he sent me out from the Revier, he right away has to run with the book to the office, Shteivestubet (?), and let know this and this number, this and this block, if a few people went every night to the Revier, to stay in the Revier like he kept them, he has to let know the block and the Blockaltester went with the book to the office and let know this and this numbers he didn't have any more. You know what I mean?

**INT:** Why was he helping? Why do you think he helped, that Gestapo man? Why do you think he...

**ABRAHAM:** They became friendly.

**INT:** With your cousin.

**ABRAHAM:** With the cousin. They became friends, yeah. And then so I was in block when the commission walked around from one block to the other one. What they did, they was sitting near the door from the block with also a secretary with the block, same like Mengele did it in Auschwitz, and everybody was undressed from the head, and have to jump out from the bedroom to this, to him, and they looked at him, and he gave the sign. Or he said to him, "Verschwind!" They're being disappeared. Right away, he let them go, or he told the secretary mark the number. And I jumped into him. He said to me, "Wie so kommt (?) ausgefessen bist?" How comes that you're so full in your body? Ausgefessen means full eat. Up, in German it says Upgefessen.

**INT:** Full up with food.

**ABRAHAM:** He said, "Wie so kommt das?" How comes this that you're so, because I had a little bit more than somebody else.

**INT:** You're not a skeleton.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. But he said to me, "Schwein," he said to me, "Pig, disappear." So I went in. This was separate. If I wouldn't have had this doctor I wouldn't be now here. Sure, because the 600 people what we came from Birkenau to Funfteichen, after three months, a half from us was disappear. Because the little one, the small one, but the big people, they need to eat, and they didn't have, right away. After three months, 300 was missing from our 600.

**INT:** They died, or they...

**ABRAHAM:** Died. Till, we was in this camp, till January 21, of 1945. The Russians came closer already, with the Americans. They didn't run away from the camps. They took the camps with **them**. So they liquidated this camp. They let the Revier with the people they let, and they survived. Because one man, he has in our town a drugstore. With all kind [of] drugs. So he said in camp he was a verkoveder mensch, you know? They know him. He's a big baal tzedakah, and everything. Let me tell you in Sosnowiec, in our town, the assimilitorishe people, who didn't know even from a Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, they was building the old age home, they was building the children's house. I had in the book everything. They didn't hold from Yiddishkeit, but they geben tzedakah.

**INT:** They gave a lot of tzedakah.

**ABRAHAM:** And this Weiner, this same man, he was a sanitorator in the camp. He was in the camp, they took out the camp with them the 21 of January, and they let the sick people with the sanitorators there, and he remained. Later, when I went home three months later, I saw he stood in his drugstore.

**INT:** What happened to the people in the camp?

**ABRAHAM:** To the people in the camp? They took us out from the camp 4:00, this was on a Sunday, the 21st of January, '45. And we walked five days till Thursday night, to Gross Rosen. Gross Rosen was deeper in Germany, away from (?). Our camp used to belong to Gross Rosen. My number what I used to have, was a number from Gross Rosen. And little camps used to belong to a big camp. So finally came there a lot of people already on the road, couldn't make it. They shot them. And if somebody couldn't walk anymore, because we walked day and night.

**INT:** It was winter.

**ABRAHAM:** Winter. In January. And during the night, we didn't walk. You sleep in the snow fields. Many people didn't stood up anymore. They shot them to death. Or somebody from the group. Somebody from the group people, somebody fall down, couldn't walk anymore, we have to throw them away to the side, and they shot them. And this was (?). Finally we arrived, half of us, we arrived to Gross Rosen. And in Gross Rosen...

**INT:** How many were you in the beginning?

**ABRAHAM:** We was about 5,000 people was in camp. Mixed with the Gentiles.

**INT:** So 5,000 went on this march?

**ABRAHAM:** A lot of people run away during the nights. They're going, you know? Mostly Polish people run away. The Jewish people was weak, who can run anymore? What is going to be, is going to be. And over there in Gross Rosen was packed already, because they brought in from other different camp people there, there was no place, it was so high snow. After being there three days, they took the people on trains, and they sent them away there, in deep to other camps. It was a camp, camp Buchenwald. Maybe you heard of this camp Buchenwald. My transport went to Buchenwald, but we stood the whole night on the line, the train didn't move, and we didn't know what was happening, and finally came an order, Buchenwald is packed, they cannot take anymore in people, they sent us in a different direction in to a camp to Austria of the name Mauthausen. (Pause, crying) This was something. Dead, what can I tell you? Nothing, no food, nothing. It was also packed. And they brought in the same Gestapo people, what people recognized them from Auschwitz, they took there, because they disappeared already in Auschwitz before they took us out from our camp, they already...

**INT:** Because the Russians were coming.

**ABRAHAM:** Coming in. And we was in Mauthausen.

**INT:** Mauthausen was in Austria?

**ABRAHAM:** In Austria, Austria. Not far away from Linz. Yes. And we was there, also every day was already night. 3:00 we have to be undressed and going and laying on the beds. The beds was three floors, bottom, middle, up, you know, one bed, and in each bed six people, tied up, (?) And later they had an order to take out all Jewish people from those blocks and put us open on the field. They make us like blankets to cover us up. We was not in houses anymore. Just on the outside.

**INT:** In the winter.

**ABRAHAM:** You know, we came up in the morning, we stepped on the dead people. I remember I recognized one man (?), tall, young, tall man. Six foot or maybe taller. He stood like this. I said, "Wachsman, stay. Help you. Help you." He didn't listen already what I am talking to him. Took him away. In a couple of hours, he died.

And from there, and the Americans was putting bombs already overnight on these camps.

**INT:** They were bombing the camps?



**ABRAHAM:** Bombing the camps. So they brought also people from Hungaria. Hungarish people. And they didn't have place anymore, they left them open, and a few of them was killed. (pause) When they was killed, other boys was running with knives to cut pieces from them, and make fire and cook them to eat. This was the life.

Finally, they took us out, a few thousand Jewish people, and they told us they take us to Tyrol. It was already in April.

**INT:** Take you to where?

**ABRAHAM:** To Tyrol.

**INT:** Oh, the Tyrol. Where the Alps are.

**ABRAHAM:** Over there, we get free. We was walking with them a day and a night, we didn't see any Tyrol, no food, no nothing. I said to another young man who was walking with me, his name was Wolf Zagelman. I said, "Listen, Wolf, what we have to lose? Who knows how long we have more to walk, and we never make it. Let us run into the woods. What is going to be happen, is going to be happen." It was dark already. The transport went, and we sat down on the ground, and ran under the, and the lakes, to the woods. When we came into the woods, we find already over there five people more from this transport. Also Jewish people. One was a father with a son, one was a uncle with a nephew, and one was a single young boy maybe seventeen years old. And this boy didn't talk nothing. We couldn't ask him even what was his name. And the night fall down. I was thinking, what can we do now? Stay in the woods, or go out and find a place where they'll let us in somewhere? Meantime, the head who takes care, the Austria man, for the woods, was an Austria man. He takes care for the woods. He was inside, and he saw us staying in the corner. The going out, he run over to us with a gun, and he told us, "Zeit hier, you are from the group what passed by today here?" We said, "Yes." He said to us, "Don't go out from here. If they catched us outside, they shot us right away to death. Stay here. It's not going to take anymore long, maybe a few days, and you'll be free." He was a nice man.

**INT:** Why was he helping you?

**ABRAHAM:** This what he told us.

**INT:** He was a nice man.

**ABRAHAM:** He wasn't like Gestapo. He was a nice fellow. This what more he did it. He said, "Pick up two people from you, and I'm going home, and let them follow me, and I'll send you something to eat." So we picked up the uncle, and this young boy, and they went with him, it took a few hours, they came with a big pot of soup, and a round bread, which they baked by themself, and we had something to eat. And he told us something more. "When you go out from here to organize something to eat, you see the light over there in this house? Don't go to him. He's a (?). He belongs to the party."

**INT:** So he warned you. He helped you.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, he warned us. A nice man. And later, it was fine, a little bit sun came in, we cleaned up a little bit our shoes what we had over there.

**INT:** This was in the spring? This was in April?

**ABRAHAM:** This was in April. A day later he comes in again and he said, how we are, how are we doing, give me two people, let us come with me. So we picked the same two people, and took hours, and we didn't know already what to think. We didn't see him back. We didn't know what happened. Finally, in the middle of the night they came back, and they brought us again to eat, and they told us this same man can offer them to keep them, he can keep, hide, just two people, no more. He cannot bring all seven of us to this house, because he doesn't have a space for seven people. If you won't give up, he said to the two people, to leave them where they are and stay and help yourself, I can hide you. But they give up, they said no. They don't know what is going to happen to us, and we hope everybody of us be free. He said, "If you don't want it, take your meal and go back." They came back with the meal, and the next day, we were sitting and cleaning us a little bit, washing us. Came in three police with one policeman there. Somebody give us out (up) because they was counting if we are seven, they didn't look anybody no more to find more. This why I know somebody gave us up.

So they give us up, and they took us to a police station in a little village. The police put us into a basement. They gave us water to drink. It was also not Gestapo, but just German police. This was in Austria already. In the morning they came with a wagon with two horses, and they put us in the wagon, one here, one there, and two police on bicycles, and took us into Linz to the Gestapo. In the city of Linz, to the Gestapo. When we came to the Gestapo, they said, "Such a Scheisse, such a shit that they didn't see in a long time." And they start to make with us a little bit hakofes without saying (?) They told us to stay near the wall, with the point on the wall, stay...

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

**ABRAHAM:** We didn't saw where we are. It was so high of water. This wasn't water, it was urine from prisoners. It was a little bench, maybe for three people, and we were seven. So this time we start to argue. "Let **me** sit a little, let **me** sit a little." I remember the father was just here with his son wants to sit, the uncle wants to sit with his nephew. So finally in the middle of the night they came, and they knock on the door, and they opened the door. The door wasn't from wood, it was from steel. And they throw in a big flashlight to us and he said, "You are still alive, lehtene Hunde? Dogs, you are still alive?" So, because I was speaking German, I said to him, "It's possible maybe get us a little Wasser einbekommen. That we get a little water." He told us, "Das haben mir nicht. Eure komraden, our friends, our comrades, the Americans, (?) der Wasser leit

kaput gemacht." They're throwing bombs. So he said our friends ruined their water pipes. Is nicht. They closed the door and left.

And the same night, in the morning they came in, they took us out, and we came out from there, then we all fall to the ground, because we were already from the smell inside, you know, we couldn't take anymore. If they let us in another few hours...

**INT:** You would have died.

**ABRAHAM:** We would have died. Sure. And then we came out with the...

**INT:** Was there any air or anything?

**ABRAHAM:** No, **nothing**. Dark. Not a window, nothing. So when they let, they brought us out, we was like drunk from the air. And they put us in a wagon, a nice wagon with horses, and people went to work already, and they saw who we are, and people took with them lunch, they used to call a sandwich used to call "Butteschnitte." Butteschnitte it means butter with bread. In German it's Butteschnitte. We call it a sandwich here. They throw us a few packages to eat. They didn't disturb them. They let us. So one package was two eggs, and how we going to split two eggs with seven people, we was cutting so nobody has a piece more. And they passed into a camp which the name was Schtrablager, Punishlager. This was the name in the camp.

**INT:** This is still in Austria?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, in Austria. I was wearing, the only one, I still have a pair of good shoes from the camp of Funfteichen. Leather shoes. Because over there, when they give people the clothes, my cousin the doctor took care that I had a better coat, better shoes, I got good shoes. And I had over there that cousin from my wife. His name was Rosmarin. And we made a business. I took, he gave me his right shoe, and I give him my left shoe. So I was wearing two right shoes, and he was wearing two left shoes. If somebody see them, then nobody's going to take two right shoes. You know, this way. Came the time they call his name, and they took him out of Mauthausen. We was in Mauthausen together. And they took him into a camp which called Gusen. Him, without me. So we changed back the shoes. And we came up to this punish camp, and stood a soldier on duty, a Gestapo, he was a Rumanian. They used already Rumanian people to help them, Hungarian people, they made them for SS, and they gave them ammunition. And they was taking care for camps. And he saw the one man of our seven has a pair of good shoes, better than he was wearing. So he came into the room where we was located, and looked on the shoes, and find me with the shoes, he said, "Take off the shoes." And he took away my shoes and didn't give me another pair of shoes to wear. So I remained without nothing. Until finally, in this camp was mostly Polish people, prisoners. Nice boys. They had...

**INT:** Jewish? Not Jewish.

**ABRAHAM:** No, Polish. Gentiles. They had a little bit like I was feeling, they had a little bit rachmones with us. Because they knew something, but they didn't told us. What they knew I'll tell you later. They saw I had no shoes. And besides taking away the shoes, he hit me with the hand in my face. I was sitting in the floor and taking off the (?), and he, because he was thinking I'm going to steal out the (?) from the shoes. Finally he told me, inside in the kitchen, he asked me from where I am. I told him from the city of Sosnowiec. So he said, "In the kitchen is over there a Polish girl, a Gentile girl, she is from Sosnowiec. When you go to collect your meal, ask for Sasha," her name was Sasha. I remember. "She's from your town. Maybe she can help you with shoes." So I came to the window, I ask the girl, who give out a few potatoes, if she is from Sosnowiec. She said no. She called, "Sasha, Sasha, somebody from Sosnowiec is here." She came to the window. And I talked with her and she asked me right away from what street I am, and I ask her from what street she is, came out we was neighbors. One street after the other one. And I told her, maybe she can help bring me a pair of shoes because they took away my shoes. She brought me a pair of ladies shoes. How can I go to work? And first the shoes had a cut in the back. I opened the cut so I'll be able to walk, a little help.

And I asked the Polish people why they don't take us out to work? They take out the Polish Gentile people from the camp to work every day, and us they left in the camp. So one Polish boy told me, "A week before they brought us here, they brought also the same amount Jewish, Hungarian Jewish people. And they took them out one time in the middle of the night and liquidate them. I don't know what to tell you. Could be they going to do the same with you, but let us hope not." That's what he told us.

So one night we hear noise. This was already the fourth of May, 1945. We hear noise inside in the camp. And we look out and we see they have trucks, and the Gestapo are moving out their stuff on the truck, and they disappear. In the morning, it was already dark, a little light, everybody went out and see nobody's already near the door, no duty anymore. No Gestapo anymore. We was free. This was the date, May the fifth. In the same night...

**INT:** Did you know you were free?

**ABRAHAM:** Sure. I saw them.

**INT:** They were all gone.

**ABRAHAM:** I saw all gone. So we went into the kitchen. Right away we grabbed what they had to eat. They had a lot of meat hanging, all the pigs. First what I did, they had big, big, kociols, they used to call them. They used to cook soup. I let run water. I went into the kociol, and I made me a bath. I made a bath in the pot where they cooked the soup, because they didn't have bathtubs. They didn't have showers. I don't know where the showers was. But what was from the shower? I had to put on the same clothing, the same shirt. But the same night I went in already, I sleep in the Gestapo, on their beds. And their beds was clean, also. And the whole night we was cooking us to eat. They have stoves, they make warm the room. On those stoves, we take potatoes and carrots,

and all kinds of things. We make soup. We ate, a lot of people right away became diarrhea.

**INT:** Yeah, didn't you get sick from having food after all that time?

**ABRAHAM:** No.

**INT:** You were okay.

**ABRAHAM:** Let me tell you something. The same night this nephew passed away. The same night the Gestapo disappeared, we had one dead from our side. This young boy, we didn't know even **where** he went. The first hour we didn't see him any more. He run away. This young boy who was with us.

So finally we went out, the Polish people organize right away. they went to the houses, and they rob horses, and they rob things, and they made themselves a Polish, how do you call this, a flag, Polish flag, red, white.

**INT:** Because they were free, too.

**ABRAHAM:** And I organized also a little bit for myself. And we went also, we took also, I went to the magazines, where they had the old stuffs. All kinds of food. And I brought boxes, full boxes of speck, of cheese, and cigarettes.

**INT:** What's speck? What's that?

**ABRAHAM:** It's from fat. All kinds of fat. It could be from pigs, also.

**INT:** Whatever.

**ABRAHAM:** And the rest people disappeared. I remain just with this boy with who I run into the woods together, with him I remain in the camp.

**INT:** You're still with him.

**ABRAHAM:** The rest, the father with his son, the uncle, I don't know where they are. And finally I went to look for them, I find them in the hospital in another camp. They were sick. The father and the son. The older man, the uncle, I find in the city, in Linz, in the hospital. Being there two days, the American came in, the American army, and two officers took over the camp, I remember they came in a jeep, and I saw in the jeep in the front was a piece of chocolate. I took something to clean the window, and I steal the chocolate, I eat up.

And they were stationed over there not far away from this camp. Two days later my friend, the other boy, he fall, he has temperature, he became ill. What can I do? I went to the army, the American army, and I couldn't talk English, and I told him that somebody's

sick (in sign language) and so they took a jeep, and went with me to the camp and took this young boy into Linz, to the city, and put him to the (?) the sisters, the nuns, the nuns' hospital. And they left him in the hospital, and they brought me back from hospital to the camp.

And I was left with a lot of stuff, mine and his. What we organized for ourselves. I went to private people and I ask them if they can take me in. So there was a woman with a boy, her husband was in the army, in the German army, but she find out he is alive, he remains in England. In England. And he's coming home, but she don't know when, but she can let me in and get me a room, where to stay, and I give her everything what I have. The (?), and she cooked.

And over there, and a few days later, I went into the city, and I saw in the city already a lot of people, our people, Jewish people, came from different camps, and they organized already a Jewish community. But they had, this camp of mine was out from the city of Linz, maybe eight, nine miles to walk. There was no transportation. And being in the Jewish community over there, in the Linz, I stayed with a table full with papers from other camps, with names, who survived. And people was looking in the papers for who survived, to find somebody. Where. So finally it passed by me a cousin of mine from Lodz, in another city. And he recognized me. "Avramel?" He called me Avramel. I says, "Yeah." He says, "Who you have?" I said, "I have nobody. I have myself. I don't know where my brothers are. I survive here in Linz." I said, "Who you have here?" He said, his brother Fishel is here, and his brother-in-law, Leibish, also his sister's husband, they survived all three together. So went into Linz, this was already Linz in the city, and I went over there where I stood in a nice place. The woman give me a nice place, and clean and everything. And I took cigarettes, I went out to people in private houses, and organized me a suit, and shoes, and a shirt, a couple shirts. In fact, one woman saw me staying near the camp, she passed by, she said, "Can you walk with me? I live a little further away from here. I can give you underwear to wear." And I walk with her very, very far, and she let me stay inside, outside near the houses, and she went in and she brought me a package with two pair of shirts, and shirts and undershirts, and I went back to the camp. So I became right away dressed like a chassan, you know? (laughs) I went into the camp from the city, people looked at me (laughs) "From where you have a suit?" I organized my size a suit. Was a fight between husband and wife. She said, "The boy is alive, he's going to come home, and you want to give away his suit." The father wants to give me the suit. And the mother said that his boy is going to come home. And he said, "When he comes home, you'll be happy to see him, you'll buy another one." Finally, I make with her, I give her a few cans of cheese, and a few cans of this, and cigarettes. And later I sold cigarettes for whiskey, and I give away whiskey. I was a little bit in business. Till July I came.

In Linz, in camp, I find a friend of my hometown, of the name Leo Korona. And he came also to Philadelphia. (Pause) I recognize him as a tall man. We went together with him with one of my cousins to organize in the villages bread and eggs, in Linz over there. And the UNRA give us also packages. Something to eat. So, we have a lot to eat. In

July I was already a little more bekoach, I go home and see what I have in the house, who came back. And we went into Prague...

**INT:** You didn't know what happened to anyone in your family at this point?

**ABRAHAM:** No. Till July. In July we went into Prague, Czechoslovakia, we took a train. They let us, they know survivors, in Czechoslovakia we didn't need any tickets. They let us travel free.

And I took out from the Jewish community in Linz, and also from the city hall in Linz, a piece of paper, that I, Abe Suskind, I am delegated from sick people who survived there in hospitals in Linz to find out from their family who came back to the city of Katowitz, and Sosnowiec. This was my passport. With this, they let me got through the border. From Poland, Czechoslovakia. And I arrived to Sosnowiec.

What can I tell you? Hoshech. You know what Hoshech?

**INT:** Dark.

**ABRAHAM:** No people. The few people, they organize already a Jewish community, youngsters that came back from the camps, what they sent them away in '40 and '41 to work. Mostly from them, they had a chance to come back, and they came back.

**INT:** Why did they survive, and not the others?

**ABRAHAM:** Because they didn't have so much (?). You know. They had, they was working, and they wasn't under the Appels to count them every day. It was slave work, you know, but not everybody.

**INT:** They didn't have Selektzia, and they didn't have Aktions.

**ABRAHAM:** They make in their camp also selections, who is skinny, and not working, they took them out from their camp to Auschwitz. But mostly young people came home, and I didn't have where to go, and in so many homes, I lived here, my brother here, my parents here, my brother there. I didn't know where to go in. All were Gentiles.

**INT:** Gentiles were living in your homes.

**ABRAHAM:** They were living in the houses. I was afraid to go in by myself. Who knows who the Gentiles are? The first night I was sleeping on the railroad station. A big station in our city. And the policeman, at the police station, in the railroad station was a police duty. He came up and asked me where I am. I told him I came home and I don't have where to go. And he said, "Come, I'll take you into my office." He took me into his office. The next day I went down, and I find that name, a man of the name (?), a very good friend of mine. We used to belong together to the Maccabee. I used to be a big man in the Maccabee. Soccer. And a member also in the board in the Maccabee I used

to be over there. My name is a little bit popular than my brother's, you know? They was more, sticking with the Yiddish, and I wasn't out, I was in the Maccabee. My father didn't like it, but he took it. I told him Shomer Shabbas is different. It's not Saturday. And he took me and I stood with him a few days, and I was there a week, two weeks, and every day I went to the train. Trains came. Each train brought home a few Jewish people, and if I recognized, I asked if they saw my brother, did you saw my sister? My sister, I know that she's not going to come back, because she went with my mother the second day, a day before I went. She went with a train to Auschwitz.

**INT:** How did you know she wouldn't come back?

**ABRAHAM:** Because she went with that train to Auschwitz.

**INT:** But she was a young woman, maybe they would have...

**ABRAHAM:** She wouldn't leave my mother. They make a selection they take my mother, she went with my mother. And kach azoy is gewehen. And being there two weeks, and I saw, what is the use to hang around? I went to the city hall, and I registered my name, that I am alive. (Pause, crying) And I registered me also in the Jewish community, and until now, didn't hear nothing.

**INT:** Until now. Nothing about your brothers? You don't know what happened to them.

**ABRAHAM:** I left the town, and I remember what I said, when I left Sosnowiec, I said, "What's the use to stay here? To stay here, when the fact that everybody left there, they was temporarily there. Our city is completely without Jews now."

**INT:** So the Jews that were coming back were just coming back to find out what happened to their families?

**ABRAHAM:** Families.

**INT:** And then they left.

**ABRAHAM:** Left. They were settling there. They were sitting there a year, two years, you know? They took an apartment away. Where the Germans used to live, they went into those apartments. When the Gentiles didn't want to go out. They see a nice apartment, they went right away to furnished houses, because nobody took out the furniture from the house. When we went into the ghetto, we took just clothing, with a pillow, with a blanket. But no furniture. Where we can put furniture? Twelve people in one room? When I left the town, I said, "Eli, Eli, lamah azavtani?"

**INT:** So you still to this day don't know what happened to your family?

**ABRAHAM:** No. I just know from one brother, I know. But when I was waiting near the trains, the people came home, I came home a few days later than I came. One young



man, and I ask him, he said, "I was together with your older brother, Shlomo, and when they sent away, they liquidated this camp, he had swollen legs, he couldn't walk. " And...end. (crying)

**INT:** Okay. Maybe we'll stop here.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**ABRAHAM:** ...there, you can't believe what we went through. You see in the pictures.

**INT:** How do you think you, you were the only survivor of your whole family.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, yeah.

**INT:** Everyone. You're the only one.

**ABRAHAM:** Only one, yeah. Nobody.

**INT:** Why do you think you survived, do you...

**ABRAHAM:** The cousins what I met in Linz, the three cousins, they were settling in Los Angeles, one in the Queens. Two brothers and the sons just all passed away already. Since eight years, ten years.

**INT:** Why do you think that you got through the war? What helped you get through the war? Do you think? Do **you** think? What helped to get you through the war? Was it your faith in G-d, or was it your cousin who helped you?

**ABRAHAM:** I believe if I wouldn't have had this cousin sixteen months, this was my whole foundation, because I came together, and my sister was engaged, and I came together with her chassan in the same camp. As a matter of fact, in the first couple of days, he gave me a potato, and says, why you give me, what you going to eat? He knows, like my sister said, his name was Pinchus, says, "Pinchus, eat yourself. What is going to be with me is going to be with you." And he disappeared from the camp. And I think he went with the 300 people what died in the camp. I didn't saw him.

**INT:** This is your sister's husband?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. Yeah. I had luck. I met this doctor together, that's all. This was my help. (Pause)

And in New York, he was single, so somebody recommend him also a shadchan, a matchmaker here. Was three sisters that came here before the war. A Wiener girl. They was from Vienna, Austria. He came here and married one of the sisters. And he was living here, and he was active in the synagogue. Later he moved from here to town. He had a costume jewelry business on Chestnut Street. In fact, the wife still has things.

Later he moved to town, he was in Eighteenth and Spruce in the synagogue, a president four years in the shul and was very active. And he get cancer and passed away.

**INT:** He was from Linz. This was a cousin of yours from Linz?

**ABRAHAM:** No, I met him in Linz. Another survivor. When I met already my three cousins, later I find him. He find me, I find him.

**INT:** We were very interested in how you started your life again. How you got yourself the strength to start again, and...

**ABRAHAM:** We lived in Germany. I lived in Germany. In Linz, we was in Linz till September '45. And later, I and the same Korona, and this boy who I find in the hospital, what the Americans took him to the camp, he survived with me in the camp, and he was sick, and they took him. And later I went to the hospital to look for him, how he is doing, he is no more there. He was sick in his lungs, and they have a special hospital somewhere, away from the city. In the woods, special for lung sickness. I organize bottles of milk and eggs, and I went over there. And I went, passed by a bridge, in Linz. This hospital was after, over the bridge. And I was carrying for him every few days food to eat. And he looked very terrible in this hospital. I didn't go in. I look at him just through the window. Sick in the lungs.

And later, a few months later when we was organizing already to leave Linz and go into Germany, because we hear in Germany that Jewish people are settling in Germany and not going home. People are coming from all over. In Poland was afraid to stay with the Polish people. So I and this Korona, and this Zagelman, we came, I even still had this little paper with me, to leave Ostreich and go through the border into Germany. And we did it, we make a tour, see everybody was here over there, "You going away? You going away? You going to take me?" Everybody wants to go with us. And also the cousins what I met in the Jewish community already. So finally what we did, we make a tour in the front of the (?), May 23, and we took a bunch of people and we took a train and we went into Germany. And the border was Passow, Ostreich, in Germany. We was singing Hebrew songs and things, and nobody came in. The police was outside, but they don't come in.

**INT:** It's a different situation.

**ABRAHAM:** Situation. So we went into Germany. And we came to a city of the name Regensburg. And over there was already a few Jewish survivors. They organize already a Jewish community. But they said they cannot take so many people at one time. It was impossible to register them because (?) who gives people where to live, are still the Germans, not the Jewish. They couldn't register 23 people at one time. So they told us, we are near a city of the name Strohbing. Split. Half go into Strohbing, and half. So we stay here. So I remain with my cousin, with Zagelman, and Korona, we remain in Regensburg.

And we settled there, and I became a member of the Jewish community, in the board of the Jewish community. They make election. And they make a community, a kehillah like we used to make in Europe, because we was European people. We selected seven people on the board. I was selected. My job in the Jewish community was, I was the supplier of the UNRA and the Jewish community. Because the UNRA give us everything to eat. Children's food, and everything. And I was the supply officer between the UNRA and the Jewish community.

**INT:** And you stayed in that town?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. And this Korona, he became also between the Jewish community and the (?) to get people apartments and to register them, and to the German city hall.

**INT:** Okay.

(END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

**INT:** This is a continuation of an interview with Abraham Suskind. You had some things that you wanted to add.

**ABRAHAM:** In the beginning, when the army came in, the soldiers by themselves, maybe not the whole army, but many of them, went to the private houses where Jewish, just where Jewish people lived, not to Gentiles, and they took off the women's rings. Some of them was looking around in the house to steal what they can, but mostly they took off the earrings from the ears of the women, and the rings, and they was afraid to say something. They was happy they went away with just what they did.

And second, also the order from the Germans was the beginning, not just in our town, all over where they came in, first they make a curfew. They say curfew in English?

**INT:** Yes.

**ABRAHAM:** Curfew. I think from 6:00 or from 7:00 in the evening, everybody has to be in the house. Not one person should be in the street. When they catch somebody, was a big, big punishment.

**INT:** For the Jews and Gentiles also?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, I think the Gentiles fall also under this rule, yes.

**INT:** Is there anything else that you wanted to add about that time?

**ABRAHAM:** Yes, and also during the whole time people was living their life was (full of fear). Their whole life, day and night. When we hear a truck, an army truck pass by a

street, we right away was shivering, who knows which house they will go in and grab people. In the beginning, they give a order to the Judenrat. Up from the age of sixteen years, girls and boys, have to be delivered to them to send them away to Germany or to Czechoslovakia, wherever, they occupied already Czechoslovakia this time, to work in many kinds of slave work. Girls have a little bit maybe easier, but some camps was very, very tough. After the first month. In the beginning was a little bit better. But was a chance to send packages for the children who was sending away to the camps. But later they stopped this, also.

**INT:** So from the age of sixteen they would send away.

**ABRAHAM:** From the age of sixteen. And also, everybody receive a card to the house. You, the name of this and this, have to be tomorrow morning. They used to make from a school, they emptied a big school and over there they had to place, everybody has to go to this school. They used to call this school "Dulags," Dufs gangs lager. Was a German, three words. "Dufsgang" is passing lager. They called this Dulags. And some of children who didn't show up, they took members from the house hostages. You know? If the girl didn't come to go to work, they took the mother or the father, and kept them so long till the children show up to go away. Yeah. This was in the beginning.

Later started the other problem, with make Aktions to grab people and send them away, older people already. Knowing, not knowing where the people go. In the beginning they took older people, because they give us to live cards, we live in Lebensmittle card. "Lebensmittle" means in card, so much and much bread, so much sugar, so much salt and everything. But was already too expensive for them to get older people to eat, so they was ordering older people from a different age to take already and send away, and also hospital, sick people from the hospital they grabbed. And later they grabbed already everybody who they catched. Before they make the big Aktion, like I told you before, in the stadium, they took away, they took a few houses with people, and overnight they put them into a movie house, the next day they came with trucks, they took them with trucks. This was from the beginning. This was to the end.

And later we was sent to the ghetto, and the ghetto was closed up, not to go anymore out from there, to the city. For example, somebody used to need a doctor, which we didn't have in the ghetto. With big, big protection. They allowed somebody under their police, under German police, to send out from the ghetto a sick person to a specialist, like somebody was sick in their eyes, or in the nose. Send them out to a visit to the doctor's. But we didn't have anymore Jewish doctors, because in our city, we had a lot of Jewish doctors before the war started.

**INT:** What happened to them?

**ABRAHAM:** They took them away. They took away the doctors. And when they sent the people to the slave work, they picked some doctors and send them also there, to be the doctor in the camp, where the people used to work.

**INT:** So you would go to non-Jewish doctors?

**ABRAHAM:** I by myself went one time already to a non-Jewish doctor because in the beginning, the war started in September. Came October, November. In Poland, in Europe, the winter comes earlier than here. In November we had already big, big snows. So they took a lot of young people, and sent into Germany. Not deep Germany, close to our city, like I told you before. Our city was the border from Germany. To Katowice, to (?), to shovel snow. And it was very, very bitter cold. I by myself, and especially, in Zaglembe they had trolley cars. Closed trolley cars like we have here, and they had also a few summer trolley cars which was open, like you see in Atlantic City on the boardwalk. So they especially took those trolley cars to winter, to put in more people, and packed into Germany. And we were shoveling snow from the day in the morning without a cup of warm water, or warm coffee, or not eat. And I became sick here, I had pain in my head, here, under the eyes. It was a special word.

**INT:** Sinus? Sinuses?

**ABRAHAM:** Sinus. And I became headaches from this. So they send me into town, and I was living with this. But when we came already to the ghetto, I had terrible pain, so with protection I have a chance to go into town already to a doctor, which he was a Volksdeutsch -- you know the Volksdeutsch -- to stay with the Germans. A lot of Polish people turned over to be Volksdeutsches, because they have a little bit better than other Gentiles. So this doctor told me, they called this sickness, is (?), that here was something frozen, and this is why is stuck up my sinus condition. I wasn't the only one. A lot of young boys had the same things. But to shovel the snow, they took just men, not girls. And this was in the beginning, right away, in 1939. The end and also 1940. Yeah.

**INT:** Okay. (Long pause in tape. About thirty seconds.)

I'd like to talk a little bit about after the war with you, if we could. Could you tell me a little bit after Liberation, what happened to you? You talked about...

**ABRAHAM:** I survive in Linz, Austria, with other six people. In a camp which was called Panishcamp (sp?). The way we hear over there from the Polish people, a week before they caught us and put us in over there, they catch also seven Hungarian, from Hungaria, Jewish people, and one night in the middle of the night, they took them out from there and liquidated them, they didn't bring them anymore back. When I was asking a Polish boy over there in this camp, he was very nice, polite to us. I saw that he has a little bit rachmones on us. I ask him how come they didn't send us out to work, and let us stay here by ourself here in camp? So he told me this story with the Hungarian people. "And I don't want to make you bad feeling. It could be, if this is going to take long, if they're not going to come to the end, they can do the same to your group of seven people." But thank G-d, the end came, and they didn't, wasn't able anymore to do this, and they left us. But the night when they disappeared, one of our seven passed away. And later, the rest disappeared, we didn't know where, and I remained with this Wolf Zagelman, in the camp, but two days later, he became ill, and I went to this army, and

two officers took a jeep and took me on a jeep, came to the camp, and took him to the city of Linz, to (?) they had sisters over there, the hospitals, in Austria the name (?), with the nuns.

They took him over there to the hospital, and I became by myself, like they say in Jewish, "In alle sieben, (?) gebleiben." From all seven, I remained by myself. Later I went in private, I was afraid to stay in this camp. I don't know where to go. I never before went into the city of Linz. The plain where the camp was was Schorring Grupp (?). This was a little town out from the city, suburb. And I went, and private people, finally, I find a place, a woman, which her husband was in the army, and she found out he's alive, but he is a prisoner in England. But she hopes he's going to come back. And she gave me a place, a room, and I gave here this what we organized. I told you before, we organized cigarettes, and speck, I gave her everything. Because I have a lot. I have the portion what Zagelman left me, and what I had. And she had what to eat, and she make dinner for me, and I stood over there.

Later I feel a little bit already better. I went into Linz.

**INT:** Were you in bad physical shape at the end of the war?

**ABRAHAM:** I was very weak, very skinny, very weak. And I went into Linz, and I find already over there, I say a lot, but not thousands, but survivors, people who survived, and they came and they have already a house what to make the Jewish community, and the table was full with papers from the other camps, from Germany, from all over. The names of the people who survived. And in each some, some find a sister, some find a brother. And later they find, like my brother-in-law find my wife. She is in Sweden. He survived in Warsaw. But according to the papers, later he came to Regensburg. When he was already in Regensburg, he finds that she survived in Sweden through Bernadotte, what he took out from the camps, exchanged something with the Sweden government, with the German government. So over there we walked around and...

**INT:** You were by yourself?

**ABRAHAM:** By myself, I registered, but I didn't look where to stay in Linz, I went back, there was no transportation. I was able already to walk back and forth six, seven miles. And over there, I find my three cousins, in this community already. And later the American army discovered Goerring, the head from the German army, had a moshav, you know moshav in Hebrew?

**INT:** Yeah, settlement.

**ABRAHAM:** Like in Israel, a big, big moshav in Linz. But not like they have in Israel. Is big, with cows, and horses, and houses for the worker people to live. So they took this house away, because nobody was there, Goerring was not there, and the people who lived there disappeared. A lot of German people disappeared when the Americans came in. So they put in over there the people to stay to live there in this house. And I still lived over

there with this woman in my place till later I moved out from there. And I met over there a few German people, friends, they had rachmones, a little, you know, I went into them, they give me something to eat. And I find also a woman which she helped me a lot. She gave me something to wear. She find for me underwear. But I was a little bit confused in her house. Her husband went to work in a mill, I don't know how to say a mill, where they made the flour, you know. And later I find out from a neighbor from her, she has a daughter in her house, and she's hiding her upstairs, because she was a Gestapo girl. But personally, she was very nice.

**INT:** So she's helping you, but she's also helping Gestapo.

**ABRAHAM:** She was helping me, but it was things. Maybe she want to make a little bit revenge to help somebody, because she know her daughter was in with the...but it didn't bother me. I will not go out and see to arrest her. Later, one of my cousins from the three, (?), his name, he passed away a few years. And they took him to Israel, Har Zeitim to bury him. So he went with me and I organized me a wagon. I took already my stuff what I organized the whole time there. What I have to dress, you know. And I became a room in this Goerring house. And I lived there with Korona and with Zagelman, and all together.

**INT:** So Zagelman got better. He got better.

**ABRAHAM:** No. Zagelman wasn't there. I'm sorry. I'm mistaken. With my cousin. Zagelman was still, I didn't know what had happened with him. The reason I used to go to him, I organized me milk and eggs, and I went with him.

**INT:** To the hospital.

**ABRAHAM:** To the hospital. His hospital was past a bridge. But later came the Russians made out with the Americans, they took over half of Linz, and the half what they took over was the place where this hospital was. And one time, I had a problem. The American duty, what stood on the bridge, was one time, they let me go back and forth, but one time, I catch an American soldier, he was a little bit black, but here when I came to the United States, I find out, he wasn't a colored, he was an Italian, a little dark.

**INT:** He had dark skin.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. And he didn't let me go through. And I didn't know what to do. I didn't have where to go. And I was by myself, young, I have to help me with ideas by myself what to do. So I left the bridge to hide me, because I find out, he's not going to stay day and night here. Each soldier has his own hours, duty hours. So finally, when the duty changed, I went home, and I gave up anymore to go to this Zagelman to the hospital.

**INT:** So you stopped going to see him.

**ABRAHAM:** I stopped going. Because I was afraid to have trouble. And later I didn't find nothing. But after few months I went already, in July, I feel better, so I and Korona went to Poland to see who we find over there.

**INT:** Korona was your cousin?

**ABRAHAM:** No, Korona was my friend, from my hometown. And we went to Poland to see who we find. He find a sister, he find out he has a sister already there. But I didn't have nobody. I didn't find nobody. Like I told you last time. And we was there two weeks, and I left with nothing, and that's all. And he find his sister, and we went back to Prague. In Prague was already a little more organized between Russia and Austria. It wasn't so free to go borders like it was in the first couple weeks. They helped us. They saw a survivor, they let them go. Even without a ticket on the train we went from Prague to Sosnowiec. By the express train. And later it was little bit more strict. You have to have a little visa, a little passport to go back. From Czechoslovakia into Linz. Finally we find out a train, not a passenger train, a train what is for luggage, for horses, for cows, goes through, so we went in the evening to such a train, and we was hiding, but in the middle, the train stops, and Russian soldiers looked in with flashlights, and they discovered us. But we had a bottle of whiskey, and we gave them the bottle of whiskey, he said, "(Russian)" "Go."

And we came into Linz, we was settled in Linz over there, we went back to this home, from Goerring's house, and over there every day came groups and groups with people, more and more, they didn't have so much place anymore, and a lot of people started already to make a little bit business, handling with this and this, gold and silver, big business people. And there was no use to settle there. Finally came a young man from Germany, from the city Straubing, near Regensburg, and he find out he has a sister in Linz. And he told us in Germany a lot of people are coming back from camps and are settling in Germany. So we decided to go and we organized, and I became a little paper. Meantime, one time walking in the camp, I see Zagelman was here. He was very pale, white. He was a little bit, he didn't know what I went through with passing the bridge. He was a little bit...

**INT:** Wondered what happened to you.

**ABRAHAM:** Not so happy. Why I stopped coming to him, you know? So I told him what was happened, and we became friends back, so we three, Korona, Zagelman and I, became a paper from the city hall, also from the Americans, and we go into Germany.

**INT:** How did you feel about going to Germany?

**ABRAHAM:** By train.

**INT:** How did you feel about going to Germany?



**ABRAHAM:** We find out a lot of Jewish people are going in there and settling there, and we know this is just temporarily. We didn't know Israel is going to get a country there. So we went in temporarily, because in Poland there was nothing to look. It was better to settle, in Poland there is no future.

**INT:** It's dangerous, too.

**ABRAHAM:** It's dangerous, and everything is dead. And over there, to walk around and see in the streets where people was killed, you know? A lot of people was killed. By each Aktion, when they saw people are running, they didn't run after him to catch him. They shot them. And this was happening. We went into Germany, a whole group of twenty-three people. We make from the three, twenty-three, and we pass by the border without nothing. We came into Regensburg, it was a big group, they couldn't register the whole, so half went into Straubing, and half they settled in Regensburg, and over there it was already organized a Jewish community.

**INT:** You stayed in Regensburg.

**ABRAHAM:** In Regensburg. And later, being in Regensburg, and I was elected to the Jewish community over there, like I told you, I was supervisor, overseer. And my brother-in-law brought the sister, Lola, my wife, from Sweden, also to Germany. And she told us that she was there in Sweden a nurse in a hospital. And because we had already a Jewish clinic in our Jewish community, just not from outside people, just for the members from the Jewish community, was a doctor and a nurse, so my wife went into, became a nurse in this hospital. And over there was the president from the Jewish community was also a man from the same town from Europe what my wife is.

**INT:** Where was she from?

**ABRAHAM:** Radom. Radom, Poland. And this man was a uncle to her sister-in-law. His name was Yaakov Gottlieb. So he told me, he made the match, and I met her, and we get married.

**INT:** Right away? It was pretty fast?

**ABRAHAM:** Not right away, no, we get married in December, '47.

**INT:** And she had been in Sweden for all of the war?

**ABRAHAM:** She was in Sweden, she came out from Sweden from a camp of Marburg, also was a slave camp for Jewish girls. And Bernadotte, you know the name Bernadotte. He was the dealer with the German government to let them take into Sweden a few hundred girls. And Sweden gave them something, trucks, I don't know for what. And later, but in the beginning when I came to Regensburg, I was a little ill, because we had to go and see a doctor. I was suffering in my stomach. It was from the food what they give us to eat, a lot of people came out with diarrhea. And if the war took maybe another

four weeks, thousands of people was more dead than came out. Because the last time, in this camp, what we was there about ten days, they gave us to eat soup from grass. Not to eat, but we was hungry. So we eat it, and we became ill. So I went to a German doctor, and the German doctor examined me, and he told me something by my stomach is not right, I have to be careful with food for the rest of my life. That's what he told me. And that's all.

**INT:** How? How careful?

**ABRAHAM:** Not to eat, because this time he saw I was very sick. He told me. But thank G-d, years back, I certainly came out fine. And so we married, and...

**INT:** What attracted you to your wife? What did you like about her that made you want to marry her?

**ABRAHAM:** Because I was single, I didn't have nobody, it was better than being by yourself, better to get married. So she was from a nice family, and a nice girl, so we decided to get married.

**INT:** You got married in Regensburg.

**ABRAHAM:** In Regensburg, yeah.

**INT:** So then you lived there for...

**ABRAHAM:** We lived there till the end of, no the middle of November.

**INT:** From July, like.

**ABRAHAM:** From the, no, we came there to Regensburg we came in September '45. '45. And in December '47 we married. And I live over there by myself also, in somebody's house, in a German house. Because they confiscated the houses from the people where the Nazis used to live. They took away from the Nazis things, they give them to Jewish people to live.

**INT:** So was it a DP camp? Is that what it was?

**ABRAHAM:** No. DP, there was a lot of DP camps in other places, where the people used to be over there in camps. Used to be Landsberg, Feldafing, used to be...many, many like this. But the people who lived in the city, it was no camp. We was free to go all over. Normal people.

**INT:** But how did you organize Jewish life, and food? Were you working? How did you...

**ABRAHAM:** We was supplied from the UNRA. The UNRA sent to the Jewish community, and we in the Jewish community gave it out to the people.

**INT:** And that was your job, right? You were...

**ABRAHAM:** My job was to bring the food from the things. To give out was a different man who gives out.

**INT:** So you were getting food. And were you working then?

**ABRAHAM:** No. Nobody was working. A lot of people was just handling a little bit of black market. The American people didn't like this, the black market, you know. And the Americans were people, I mean, not American people, the American...

**INT:** Soldiers?

**ABRAHAM:** No, not soldiers already, the American government took care from all cities for all DP camps. It was three partners. A lot of places in Germany with the French soldiers took over. The people live over there under the...

**INT:** But you were in the American Zone?

**ABRAHAM:** The American Zone, yeah.

**INT:** Well, what was that like? How were the American soldiers toward the Jewish people?

**ABRAHAM:** Very good, we didn't have anything to do with them, nothing.

**INT:** So how long did you stay there, and what happened?

**ABRAHAM:** Till November. But later, Israel became a country already in '48 and young people was going to the army over there, so right away there came from Israel people, shalichim, and they took people from there to Israel, and they went right away to the army.

**INT:** Did you think about going to Israel?

**ABRAHAM:** I was thinking of going, but since my brother-in-law, my wife's brother, came here, who left Germany in '47. He wasn't at our wedding. When we married he was already in Philadelphia. Because, she, my sister-in-law, had here a very, very rich family from before the war. And they took them over right away in '47. And because I didn't have nobody, and she had just one brother, my wife said she wants to go where the brother is. What use to split again, from the whole family two people are alive, one in Israel, and one in America? So we came to America. And we arrived here November 5, 1949.

**INT:** How did you feel about going to America?

**ABRAHAM:** How do you feel? (laughs) To be rid of Germany was very good.

**INT:** You wanted to get out of there.

**ABRAHAM:** Get out of there, sure. It was no use to stay there. Even, many people still remained there, but (Yiddish) let them stay there.

**INT:** It was not for you.

**ABRAHAM:** I never went back, even to Germany. No.

(END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE)

(TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO)

**ABRAHAM:** When we came into Germany in the beginning, the people was a little bit, they didn't bother us. But sometimes a lot of German people was bothering us in the cities. For example...

**INT:** After the war?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. One time I passed by a house and I was wearing a coat, and a German took from the other side, with a big dog, and he just say something to the dog, the dog jumped on me, and teared me off the coat. Because he recognized me, I'm a survivor, a Jew. And later, we walked a few people, and a German passed by, I remember, in fact, on purpose he stepped us on the foot, on the back. There was a lot of Nazis. And a lot of German people said, "We didn't know what is going on. We didn't know nothing what was happened." They had the sons, they had the husbands in the Gestapo, and the Gestapo robbed everything and sent them home, and they didn't know what was happened.

**INT:** Well, how do you feel about the German people now?

**ABRAHAM:** Now? It was a Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan the United States make them stay. We didn't, when we was inside in the camp, and we saw what is going on, what we went through, and what they're doing, the way they liquidated a folk, a Jewish nation, and besides us, how many people was killed, other people, Germans, Russians, the Russian government is going to stick to, the whole rest of the life, under the ground. You know. There don't be anymore Germany. And it came out, they're now the richest country in the world. And this is America was helping them in the beginning.

**INT:** How did you feel when Berlin, when the war came down and they united East Berlin and, East Germany and West Germany?

**ABRAHAM:** I didn't think too much. Because they are the same Nazis, the same Germans. There was no use to think about it.

**INT:** But...were you worried that maybe Germany is going to get strong again?

**ABRAHAM:** They are **very** strong. Sure they are strong.

**INT:** How do you feel about German people, when you see them on the street, or if you run into them in Israel? Sometimes you see a lot of German tourists in Israel.

**ABRAHAM:** We saw a lot of groups in Germany, in different countries. And also I saw a group in Germany. It was, in fact, in Israel we went to the Kotel Maaravi. And we were walking away from there, we saw they built up, upstairs across the Kotel, new buildings over there to walk up. So we went up and look around, and they find somewhere a little museum. So they want to go in. I said to my wife, "You all go in." We was together with my brother-in-law and sister-in-law. So they went in, and I wait outside for them. During the time I was waiting outside, an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes, an hour and a half, a lot of groups passed by. Not one Jewish group. All Gentiles, from different countries. But I stood, and a guide used to explain to them everything what he knows to talk to them. What is here, what is here. And many languages I didn't understood. But one language, German, I understood, and I stood with them. When the guy find out, that was looking at me, he recognized me. First of all, he know I didn't belong to his group, and he saw I'm looking and hearing what he says. Maybe not because he's a German and he recognized I'm a Jew. Maybe he didn't say something what is true to them. Who can believe what he is saying. A guide's job is to talk. He talks, he talks. So (laughs) he tooks the group, he went away, he let me stay.

**INT:** Oh, he didn't want you around. So you were glad to get out of Germany.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** And were you nervous about coming to America? You didn't know English?

**ABRAHAM:** In the beginning, I was very nervous. First of all, the HIAS, the American HIAS, the survivors who came to America, they took them over, and they gave them temporarily where to stay. If somebody had relatives, the HIAS didn't bother. Because in our papers it was said, my wife has a brother in Philadelphia. And the brother has to pick us up. See, the brother is an American now. He is himself a survivor, he has a place for us to take us in. They didn't think of nothing. So the end was, we came here, we arrived to America. And we went to my brother's house. He had one bedroom. He gave us the bedroom.

**INT:** In New York?

**ABRAHAM:** Here, in Philadelphia. And they have a little boy of two years. They had a couch, I find out, one sleeps on the couch, one sleeps on the floor. I wasn't satisfied from this. But after being here a short time, I have a cousin, we had a cousin in Vineland from my wife's side. He had a farm, he came to see us. And he went home. He calls back, to come over to him. So we came here, we had, we brought up from Germany a little boy. We had a boy in Germany. He was born...January '44, '49. He was about nine months old when we came here. Ten months. So we went to Vineland over there. And I couldn't stay. I have something to do something. I'm, I didn't come here to settle, to sit on a farm in Vineland. I have to go and look for the things. So I came back, and I went to the Jewish charities, how do you call this?

**INT:** Jewish Family Service?

**ABRAHAM:** Jewish Family Service. And I told them, "You brought me over, and you give me into a house, they don't have by themselves where to stay. The child sleeps with them in the bed, they have a small apartment, how can you somebody stick there?" So finally they took us out, and they gave us somewhere a room.

**INT:** In Philadelphia?

**ABRAHAM:** In Philadelphia. And later I had a friend here, he was a bookkeeper, and he came here before me, a year before. He had a job in a clothing factory, it was pants, trousers. And he told me, "Abe, what you go hang around? You don't have a profession, you don't have money. Come, learn a trade. This trade is very good." The shop was the biggest, the biggest wages was this time, in the beginning was clothing, you know? Clothing factories. So I went and I learned, I was working. And I make a lot of money. 52 pennies an hour. (laughs)

**INT:** That's a lot of money.

**ABRAHAM:** I came home with salt and pepper. And what can I tell you? After a year I look around, I saw it's not for me, especially after not a vacation. This was in '51. I came home, and went back to work. So a lot of people didn't remain back from the vacation. It was a big factory. So the foreman was bothering me. American people wouldn't do this. And this place was empty, he needs the work, because it was a factory what everybody makes a part from the pants. Not, you sew on the pocket, one makes the seam, one makes...so he throw me from one machine to the other one during the day, and not on hour wages, but on piecework. So I said, "You give me every minute something else?"

**INT:** You'll never get anything done.

**ABRAHAM:** He gave me jobs what I never did it. He showed me to do it, and went away, and I have to do it. I went to this clock machine, I punch my card and left there, and that's all. What is going to be is going to be. So I came home, I hang around in the house, and a few days or a few weeks, and I can't do nothing. I cannot find nothing to do.

I went to the union from the Algemeiner, and they send me back to another factory, to an Italian guy, custom make job, work, also with slacks, and they like me, the boss liked me, took me in, and he showed me better, and over there I was working, I make a living.

**INT:** How did you learn English?

**ABRAHAM:** Over there in the shop, and a little bit when my daughter grow up, and we have a child, who goes to school and comes home, you learn a little bit. But in the beginning we went to night school.

**INT:** Did you speak Yiddish at home? What was the language that you spoke?

**ABRAHAM:** Yiddish, a little Polish, sometimes. Mostly Yiddish. And...but we had a little tragedy. We have a little boy, like I told you, and when he became four years old, he became ill, and passed away. He had a tumor on the brain. And my daughter, COSTP, was at this time about three years old. And a big tragedy, especially for my wife. (pause)

**INT:** So COSTP was born in this country.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah. (pause)

**INT:** So you worked in this factory for a long time, or you...

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, sure. Till I retire.

**INT:** Oh, so you stayed on the same job?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** Could you tell me a little bit about your feelings about G-d? Before the war, you said you had gone from being a Gerrer Hasid to Mizrachi, you switched over as a teenage boy. And can you tell me a little bit, do you remember how you felt about G-d through the war years, and then after the war? Did your faith in G-d change in any way?

**ABRAHAM:** I give you a short answer. It's a tough question. When we went in those tsuris in the camps, we asked each other, somebody asked me, I ask somebody else. "Wie is Gott?" He sees such tsuris? Even the Germans was joking with us. "Haben Sie ein Gott? Wie mutt(?) im Gott?" He can do to me whatever he wants, and God doesn't help me. But after the war, I remember, we settled already, and other people was asking this question from the rebbeim. In Jerusalem, the big rebbes, and the rebbes said, "Not to say what is nothing." You know this?

**INT:** No, no.

**ABRAHAM:** I know this. The rebbeim said to take this off from the table, and not to ask such questions. G-d is G-d, and that's all.

**INT:** You don't question Him. You just...

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** How did you feel about that answer? Was that a good answer for you?

**ABRAHAM:** What can I tell you? I go to synagogue, and I say Shma Yisroel, and I believe. Everything what a person goes through is, thank G-d. Even if you don't believe, you also say "Thank G-d." This is a style of living. That's all.

**INT:** When you met your wife, was she from a religious background, also, or she...

**ABRAHAM:** I'm not from the same town with her.

**INT:** Right.

**ABRAHAM:** I cannot tell you.

**INT:** You don't know what her family was like?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, but in Europe and even, there was Hasidim, even not Hasidim, was the same Shabbas was candles on the table, the room was cleaned out for Shabbas, the high holidays, everybody went to shul, even if you was a Hasid, or not a Hasid, so it wasn't too much to think from what family she is, a yiddishe tochter is a yiddishe tochter.

**INT:** But did you make a, when you came to America, did you decide to continue to lead a religious life, or...

**ABRAHAM:** Sure, yes.

**INT:** So you had Shabbat, still.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** Okay. Did you make friends here easily? Did you have friends?

**ABRAHAM:** Friends, yeah, sure. We had neighbors, we have friends from the synagogue a lot of friends.

**INT:** You settled here in Overbrook Park all those years ago?

**ABRAHAM:** When I came here in the beginning I have a big family and a lot of friends in New York. And every few weeks, it was very cheap by the bus three dollars round



trip, and I used to go to see the family, the friends every few weeks. And now, the end of the year, the last couple of years, I don't have where to go.

**INT:** They're all gone.

**ABRAHAM:** All gone.

**INT:** Did you make friends with other survivors when you came to Philadelphia?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah surely, like I told you last week.

**INT:** The Griner Organization.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah.

**INT:** What happened to Zagelman, your friend, Zagelman, what happened to him?

**ABRAHAM:** To who?

**INT:** To Wolf.

**ABRAHAM:** Zagelman. He remained in Germany, and he married a Gentile German shiksa girl. Yeah. And he lived in Frankfurt am Main. And we used to write each other. He is back, about ten, twelve years he wrote me, he is going to Australia. And his brother-in-law, the shiksa's brother, he is a professional, makes cakes. How do you call this? Baker. And he went there, and he bought a business, and he goes there also because, when I ask him, "How come you married a German girl and you are in Germany," he said, he sent me a card and he says that he decided not to stay anymore on the Pulle fasse.

**INT:** What does that mean?

**ABRAHAM:** Pulle fasse means again they are expecting there's going to be another war, and another gas. So he didn't want to sit the rest of his life in Germany.

**INT:** But why did he marry the non-Jewish woman? Did he tell you?

**ABRAHAM:** This I don't know. Maybe he met a girl, and he fell in love.

**INT:** Could you tell me a little bit about raising your daughter? What that was like? She went to school? What kind of school did you send her to? What was she like?

**ABRAHAM:** She went to school, and she went also to the synagogue every day when she came home from school. To learn the...

**INT:** Hebrew.

**ABRAHAM:** Hebrew things. The name of the shul was Bnai Aaron when we lived in Wynnefield. She knows a lot from that.

**INT:** She went to public school, and then she would go to Hebrew school after school?

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, she went to the synagogue many years. And later she had the bas mitzvah, and later in Shavuos the Conservative synagogues, children about the age of fifteen or sixteen, they are confirmed, how do you call this, they make on Shavuos confirmation. You know what this mean? And she know a lot of things.

**INT:** What kind of child was she? What was she like?

**ABRAHAM:** Very good. She was a little bit, in the house was a little bit different life. Because of the tragedy what we had, but she grow up fine.

**INT:** When she, how did she meet her husband, and when did she get married?

**ABRAHAM:** She get married eight years I think, already. She met my husband's sister, she had a sister used to live here, on this street. And she know us, and she sent her brother to meet my daughter.

**INT:** Do you, through your life, do you think about the Holocaust a lot, or do you put it somewhere?

**ABRAHAM:** I never forget it. I can never forget.

**INT:** Can you put it away, or is it always with you?

**ABRAHAM:** I can never put away. I remember always, maybe every day my whole family. Yeah.

**INT:** Would you consider yourself an optimistic person or a pessimistic person? You look at life with hope, or you look at life...

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, sure. Gott will help. And thank G-d, He helped me, I'm well, and not sick, and I'm still alive. A lot of my friends and all the cousins went.

**INT:** Can you tell me a little bit about your wife, what she's like, and how your marriage was through the years?

**ABRAHAM:** Very nice. She likes to go out. She belongs to a choir. She sings in the choir.

**INT:** In the beginning was it difficult for the two of you because of what you'd been through?

**ABRAHAM:** No, no, never, no. She never went to work, because she had to raise COSTP.

**INT:** Is there anything else you'd like to add to this?

**ABRAHAM:** No, nothing special. I have to add that I hope we will be well, we will be still many years to life.

**INT:** Thank you very much.

**ABRAHAM:** You're welcome very much.

(Pause)

**ABRAHAM:** The English army arrested him because he...

**INT:** The Russian government, the Russians.

**ABRAHAM:** No, because he came to Israel, to Moshe Sharaf, so they get some help. So the English government, in Palestine, arrested this man, I forgot his name.

**INT:** Why do you think, do you think that something like this could happen again? Do you think it's possible?

**ABRAHAM:** With the Germans, it's possible, I think.

**INT:** The Germans. But there are other people, the Polish people helped them, and the Ukrainians helped.

**ABRAHAM:** Yeah, they helped them. For a pound of sugar, they told them where the people are hiding. Hundreds of people were hiding in Warsaw, all over, and if the Polish people wouldn't show the Germans where the Jewish are hiding, the people went under the ground.

**INT:** What do you think about what's going on now in Yugoslavia? Do you think Clinton should have done something about that?

**ABRAHAM:** It's quiet already, it's settled already.

**INT:** But we didn't do anything.

**ABRAHAM:** There's a different place now, Haiti, how do you call this country?

**INT:** Rwanda?

**ABRAHAM:** Rwanda, yeah. There will never, never be peace. Not here, somewhere else.

**INT:** How do you feel about Israel? Could you talk a little bit about Israel, when you went there this last year? Was that the first time you were there?

**ABRAHAM:** No, we was there maybe eight times.

**INT:** Oh, really. How do you feel about Israel?

**ABRAHAM:** Very nice. I wish I lived there.

**INT:** Do you think there'll be peace with the Arabs?

**ABRAHAM:** Sure, I like there, I like the place, I like the life. You only see Jewish people, you don't see any schwartzes, you see Gentiles, groups, what come to see Israel, but all over Jewish people is all over.

**INT:** It's a Jewish life, it's a Jewish country. Everything closes down on Shabbat.

**ABRAHAM:** Even the people who don't have so good over there, they are also happy, and live in Israel.

**INT:** Do you think there'll be peace with the Arabs?

**ABRAHAM:** Not in our generation. Never.

**INT:** How is your relationship with your grandchildren? Do you spend a lot of time with them?

**ABRAHAM:** Fine, yeah. Very nice. They are nice kids. They call me up yesterday. Happy Father's Day. Two beautiful kids COSTP has. Thank G-d for this.

**INT:** Do you enjoy them?

**ABRAHAM:** Much, much, very much. Thank G-d, like I say many times, thank G-d for das er lebt. Yeah. (END OF INTERVIEW)