

**RG-50.751\*0038**

**Oral history interview with William Schiff**

This is William Schiff talking about smuggling in the Krakow ghetto. The date is November 4th, 1999.

Q. William, where did you grow up?

A. Well, I grow up in Krakow, Poland.

Q. And when was the ghetto formed?

A. Ghetto was formed in 1941, and that's when they start moving us.

Q. 1941 or 42?

A. '41 or -- '42. I think beginning '41. I think it was end '41, I think. I think it was around '42.

Q. Can you describe what happened in the ghetto?

A. Well, they just--

Q. They who?

A. German government took over the whole country. Polish police took over -- they took exactly what the German government told them, and they loved it. They were just like the Germans.

Q. Who was the government?

A. The Polish police were just like the German, and they did it with passion. They were happy to do it.

Q. Tell me how the ghetto was formed.

A. Well, they just took a small part of Krakow, which was in a part called Podgurze.

REPORTER: Excuse me. What was --

Q. How do you spell that?

A. P-O-D-G-U-R-S-E.

ROSALEE: No, no, no.

Q. Is there one R or two R's?

ROSALEE: It's P-O-D-G-U-R-Z-E.

A. It was almost 50 years.

Q. Was it an old part of Krakow?

A. All city was very old, and this was one part. And this was not the downtown, it was uptown. Like you would say Dallas, Oak Cliff, and this was like Oak Cliff.

Q. And was it the oldest part, the poor neighborhood?

A. No.

ROSALEE: There wasn't special in Krakow, poor neighborhoods. Everything was mixed majority, poor neighborhoods, everything was full.

Q. About how many people live in a house there in the ghetto?

A. Well, don't you want me to tell you about the ghetto, how they moved it? They moved it to Podgurze, and then they put us in five streets or four streets wide. Four streets going from south to -- how you would say -- south to north or west to east. Altogether was -- together one side was about seven streets, the other side four or five.

Q. So it was a small ghetto?

A. Very small ghetto, yes. They put all their own -- they built brick walls like with the German when they divided Berlin between east and west. I mean, you couldn't get to it. Well, you could go over it, but there were Polish police to the doors to the ghetto. There were two main doors.

Q. Doors, not gates?

A. Gates and then all around were watching. Everywhere Polish police.

Q. Was there a Judenrat?

A. There was no Jewish community center, but in ghetto -- I don't think we really have it exactly in ghetto.

Q. What about conditions in the ghetto?

A. Well, like me, I found me an apartment. There were two small rooms. I don't know size of it. Narrow, well, I would say this room is four times as big as each one of the rooms. And we didn't have -- like, there was just two rooms. It is bedroom and the kitchen. Kitchen was living room, dining room, everything together, and bedroom. And we were four people. Four people, I said, well, five people, and we were grown up already. Because when war -1942, beginning '42, I was already practical years old. My sister younger. There were all young people; we were all young people. My parents, after they married, had three kids with one and a half year difference.

Q. William, what about work? What did the people in the ghetto do as far as work?

A. Was nothing to do because my daddy has to do -- my daddy before went to ghetto he was a barber, and he has to sign it over to employee who works for him the longest. And that's what he did.

Q. Was there enough food in the ghetto?

A. They didn't give us rations at all.

Q. So what did you do?

A. We have to organize food.

Q. How did you organize food?

A. Most of the people used to smuggle things inside the ghetto, and I decided I have to do it.

Q. How did it happen?

A. Well, I have to tell you the story. When they moved us to ghetto, I was dating Rosalee then. She was about 16 -- about 18, I think, and I was 22, and we were dating two years. And we have a pass to go to the ghetto. She with her mother and brother and sister didn't; her father was gone.

Q. You had a pass to get out of the ghetto?

A. No. There were not passes out of the ghetto. I don't remember having passes. I didn't say about pass. I said, we have -- my family. We have right to move into the ghetto. We were close to moving, but her family with her mother and brother were forced to leave the city. I moved them just same direction to Plaszow.

Q. It's a concentration camp, P-L-A-S-Z-O-W.

ROSALEE: No. P-L-A-S-Z-O-W.

Q. If you saw Shindler's List, that was it.

A. And at this time, this was about two miles, which was a long distance because we didn't even have bicycles because when the war broke out Polish police go in and confiscate bicycles for the army, and we have no communication.

Q. You're saying the ghetto was about two miles from Plaszow?

A. Right, two miles from where I moved her. I don't remember exactly but it was near Plaszow, and that's where I rent them a small apartment. This was one big room, no two. I think it was one big room, and they all four moved don't remember what it was. in there, but they didn't have way to make a living, and we didn't have way to make a living. Let me talk about it. When we have to make a decision, somebody's going to do it. Well, I was the guy that -- my parents depended on me then, and we discussed we going to do about it, but when she moved -- when I moved her to Plaszow, I used to go out from ghetto to visit her without a pass, without nothing. I used to buy off policeman on doors.

Q. Used to buy off police?

A. To go see her. She was in this apartment in Plaszow.

Q. You were in Plaszow or near Plaszow?

A. I was -- I don't know exactly if it was Plaszow or not. It was same direction on the way to Plaszow. I mention rest of story later. She came to ghetto later. I brought them to ghetto and going out visiting her. I visit her a week, two before we decide what to do, but right away when we moved in I used to go visit her. My parents didn't know about it. I didn't tell them. They wouldn't let me.

Q. Why not?

A. Because they were scared they would kill me. It was death sentence. Immediately, they would point a gun and shoot you. And what had happened, Polish policeman called a German and took you and you disappeared.

Q. Tell me about, um, food conditions in the ghetto.

A. There wasn't food at all, no food at all. You know, people used to go out somewhere and smuggle little things. There was a baker making bread, and somebody used to go buy, and somebody smuggling flour for it. I don't know how they did it because I was always tied up with myself. I always have connections with people.

Q. How?

A. I used to have a lot of friends and people liked me. I don't know how it is. I talked to people. I have a lot of friends, and they send you for things, and you are help to each other.

Q. Now, were you friends Jewish?

A. This was ghetto, just Jewish. Some have connection with Polacks outside. There were some helping but very few. Generally, they helped the Germans.

Q. The Polish helped the Germans?

A. Some, many helped Germans. Now, second week when I was going out, I notice that they have a market.

Q. Where was the market?

A. Outside, close where Rosalee was living. Close to Plaszow. Somewhere close to this apartment. This was uptown. Uptown she could live, but she didn't have permit to go to Krakow ghetto or stay in Krakow city. This was the law. When I came home, I told my mother about it. and then I told her I used to go out and she got hysterical. She decided they were going to die if we didn't do something about it, and she decided to go with me visiting Rosalee. She was going out to the market.

Q. Now, tell me, were people in the ghetto dying like they were in other ghettos?

A. Yeah.

Q. Like the other ghettos, were people in the ghetto starving and dying?

A. On streets, just like when you saw person on floor dying, you know. You would pick him up and take him out and help him, but you know, I have family of five. I have to worry about my parents.

When you worry about your parents, you don't know what to do. And we worried about her mother because she didn't have anybody. Her mother has two sisters, but they have their own problem. You know, when it's human beings, we are not selfish, just self preservation. It's me, my family, my kid, everything, everybody. If I didn't took care of them, nobody would.

Q. So how did you take care of them?

A. I notice there's a market, and my mother came out with me and took a look in it. Well, what do I know about chickens? We came back home. We talked about it. Then she decided she want me to go out because I was the only person who she could depend on. My daddy, he was my child, not I was his. He was just crying all day. My sister was a smart girl but was spoiled. The only girl in the whole family and she was spoiled. And my younger brother was just an average guy and like everybody scared. And we decided I would go out and visit Rosalee and stop at the market and try to buy something. Now, you couldn't buy anything for money. Polish money didn't have value. Clothes, money, whatever, I picked up whatever we have left in the house. Her mother brought me something because they didn't have much. They give me something when I was there to buy her something too. And I remember I went to the market. We decided to go buy chicken. Here is the idea for the chicken.

Q. Well, how can you bring chicken?

A. I used to wear a raggy jacket, raggy pants even holes in it, and then on top, I put on an old coat, which was big on me, but I didn't put my arms in it, just over my shoulders, and then took a large belt around it. And mother, we talked about it and she sewed me off a little sack, looks like you put on a pillow. How you call it? A little sack with holes in it. And what I did, I went to this market, trade in the valuables and you know, you could give money, but money wasn't very much. Everything was trading because you were afraid of taking money, and, um, I bought four chickens and hang each on belt like this. Well, there was a clue, you see. Jewish people wouldn't take a chicken if it was not kosher. I had to bring them alive. So what I did, she sew up a little sack of white cloth, but when you put in the chicken, it was enough space that I could hang it on my belt, and I hanged it on my belt and clipped it with two pins to hold it.

Q. A live chicken?

A. A live chicken. I made holes in this sack and I took four of them, two on side and two on

back, and put this coat on. But before I walked out from ghetto, I discussed it with one of the policeman and bought them off.

Q. For what?

A. For him to let me out.

Q. What did you give him?

A. Money, plain money. It was like today. Everything is beautiful but everybody wants money because -- that's what he asked me. Well, I came out with it, give him the money, made out how long I would stay that I be in time to get back, and that's what did. I went out and bought the chicken, brought them in, and I remember the first chicken I bought. Well, used to be different than is here. Everybody was fat. Fat was very expensive. Wasn't a fat chicken, nobody would touch it. See, is difference. It's amazing. You're turning down fat here, and I remember they were not fat and no women could sell them. I barely sell them with nothing left of it, and that's where I start smuggling. I used to go out twice a week. Then it happened. In came a law, not a law. They gave an order that all Jews from outside Krakow now have to move into ghetto.

Q. And this is when?

A. This was about two months later, I think. Right, Rose? I don't remember.

Q. 1940 --

A. It was still in 1942, but I think it was beginning 1942. And I went on the same door to find the policeman, you know, taking chance with policeman, if he was one who let me, you know. You got to pick them right, and I was lucky each time I did.

Q. And these were Polish?

A. German was there when they called them. They were the ones who were called when anything happened. They called them on us. And, um, I went to this little town, picked up Rosalee with mother and brought them in. Then I think they opened the ghetto for two days for these people to move in. I don't remember how it was because legally I couldn't do it because she has -- they have bags and all these clothes, whatever was left of it, and a few dishes, and you have to brought in. I think they opened the ghetto then for three days just to move in, not to go out, and that's what I have to buy off. And that's what I did. I brought them to ghetto and found them one room because everything was already taken. I think the room didn't even have a window, I mean just have a door with a window. And her mother move, this was not far from me because ghetto was small. She was four, five blocks from our home. From early morning we were at home together when she came to ghetto. But I still used to go out two sometimes

three times a week smuggling. I used to smuggle sometimes a little fruit, sometimes little bottles of \*\*\* (beer) specially --

Q. You got this from the market?

A. Everything from market. Food, everything from market. People start to knowing that I have connection, that I bringing in food. They decide to come to my home when I buy it, but nobody has money. Everybody has to trade in. You couldn't accept money. What will you do with it? You just have to give money to the policeman. That's all they wanted. There was a lot of, lot of, lot of -- can't explain to you how everything happened. It's hard to say. I kind of worked on it and it worked and I used to go out like this for seven months, and I remember one time -- each time when I left and I came back, she was waiting on the door with my mother.

Q. She's waiting at a door or the gate?

A. Gate, I said there was a door on the gate. With mother, one time this happened. I was supposed to be back. You know, so many times out I usually did, you know, it usually took two or three hours. Walking took two and a half hours, sometimes three. Then this market took me two hours average there and took me four or five hours. Four hours five hours heading back, but usually took four or five hours and I was back. And this time I left early morning. When I left it was eight or seven o'clock, and I used to come back at noon. This time it happened till about four or three o'clock. I went out and the market didn't even started. It started around one o'clock, two o'clock before I could start my buying. So when I came back, it was almost five o'clock. When I got in, I remember my mother, you know, I left, she was, um, still dark-headed, but when I came back, she was gray. She cried. She was eating her heart out that she let me go. She just, excuse me. She was sitting with her. She was standing with her. And this the way we were in ghettos. Should I tell you the story of what happened when people used to come to our home and want to buy? My mother was soft-hearted.

Q. Want to buy what?

A. If was somebody was good Jew, she talked to God. You don't have money, she would give you for less. Some she gave away for less than what I pay for it and I used to get mad about it. And she used to tell me, you know, you got to have a heart. You got to have a little -- I can't talk -- explanation for people. You know, you got to understand how they were, and I used to argue with her. When I have a bad day and I bought something bad, nobody have mercy for me, but then I give in because I love my



mother. We used to do it. It was the way I was brought up. I remember one time I went out -- sometimes

I expected to buy more. I used to take my younger brother with me. He was scared. He never -- didn't

know how to make a decision, but he followed me blindly. I used to bring him down to the door.

I found me a spot in some gentile house and I took all these clothes and left them with them then went to make sure is policeman there. I have some cases sometime that I came by myself and the policeman wasn't there. You know what a chance it was? I just took a chance walking. If they were there, the first thing I did was hand them money. It worked. Each time it worked. Plain luck. Yeah.

What else you want to know about it?

Q. You said you took your brother?

A. Well, I used to, when I needed some more help. I have all these people who want things, and this way I don't have to go three times. I just have to go twice or one time, not three times. Sometimes somebody wants me to go out, but not have enough money to have enough to eat. And I remember each time in the morning, I sometime have arguments with my sister about it because she was the only girl. She was always right and my mother went with right. I used to argue about it. I remember one I got mad with my mother. I even told her, I go put my life out and she tells you what to do just like that. My mother tells me, I don't want you to do it anymore. Don't do it for anybody. She start crying. Next day, I stand up to go, she didn't say a word. I went. It's hard to explain.

Q. For how long did your smuggling go on?

A. All the time we were in ghetto. From 1941 to '42. Over a year, I think, to '43. Then they moved us to Plaszow, but before they moved us to Plaszow -- should I tell you all the details anytime what's happened? You know, I was telling about the smuggling. Many times I was stopped my Polacks. I wish I could have good English. I was A student. Geography and mathematics and English, these were my three good subjects. My sister, who if it come to business she couldn't do anything, she started school a year ahead of me. I never missed a grade and she finished three years ahead of me. When war came, she was jumping grades, yeah.

Q. Okay. So you were telling me more about the ghetto.

A. Well, German used to come just for the kicks.

Q. Germans, wehrmacht?

A. Wehrmacht, yeah, they used to come. German is wehrmacht. They saying just SS bad, but not just

SS men. They were sometime SS men not so bad, but some wehrmacht were bad.

ROSALIE: You got it backwards. The wehrmacht was not so bad but the SS were terrible.

A. But some wehrmacht were. I have a different experience with them. I know. You didn't do much with them. You were sitting at home with your momma because you couldn't do anything. You could imagine my mother's heart to let a kid go.

Q. How old were you?

A. I was a kid about 22 years old. War came, I was exactly 20.

Q. Okay. Now, when did you marry Rosalee?

A. I was 23.

Q. And Rosalee was

A. 19?

Q. And you moved her into your apartment?

A. This really was after, you know, when we were in ghetto. 1942 they make the ghetto smaller and they were evacuating people and they took my parents. I was only one to stay. They didn't have papers and I got my papers to stay. Her family -- nobody has papers to stay. I work in a nail factory, I think I used to mention about it, in a nail factory three times a week.

Q. This was --

A. But this started shortly before they move us to concentration camp. I start to go to nail factory, and I have permission to stay and my sister. No one else did. Her family didn't. That's when Shindler saved her life. She went on street and he saved her life. He took her out and say, you're too beautiful to be in line.

Q. Can you tell me about your wedding?

A. This was a wedding. Well, you know, they took my parents. I didn't want my mother going because I loved my mother dearly. She was the smart one in my family. You know, at this age you know everything. You understand everything, and I was a very advanced boy then. She ordered me to stay and

take care of her two other kids. That's what she told me exactly. And I gave her money to get them settled in, but she said no, but I gave her money. She was wondering where I got the money. I always have money. I give her money and she take it, and they took her. And about a week later they took her family, her mother and sister and brother. If she wouldn't know me, she would go with her mother, but because of me -- her mother trusted me and give me ultimatum. I told you about it.

Q. Tell me again.

A. Well, two things. First, you got to marry her. She said, I trust you, and don't touch her until you marry. It's a true story. Ask her. She was there when she told me.

Q. And how was the --

A. Then they took her and her family, and we didn't know what they took them there for. Her mother had sewn in money in her coat and I wouldn't take it. Do you remember this? I said, don't worry about it.

It was hard to get out from ghetto then because they closed up everything. Don't ask me how I survived. I could tell you another story about it. They took our parents and we had few witnesses. Most Jews in this time, they wouldn't marry with the government. The kids were called after their mother. Did you ever hear this story? Or you never heard about it. Well, most, a lot of, not most, they wouldn't go to Court. They wouldn't. They didn't recognize Court and Court didn't recognize Rabbi. They call him a person. Rabbi was like just a person to Court. Well, the kids were called after their mother, but in my case, my parents were open-minded. We were called by the father's name. We have one name, Schiff. And when I married Rosalee, they took our parents and I liquidate her apartment and moved her to my room. I was left with her and my sister. There were two rooms. Second room, I moved her into my second room with my sister, and I slept in kitchen. And after I married her, I moved into second room with her, and sister slept in first room. That's what I did, and what happened, we had been there about seven months, and then they decided we should go. And, you know what was going on in our ghetto. They were killing people, and whomever they don't like they took a Jew, I saw, they tore out his beard and put it on fire?

Q. They ripped out his beard?

A. No, burned it. Put it on fire and laughed and joked about it.

Q. Who did, the SS or wehrmacht?

A. Most of them were SS. Most of them, some were wehrmacht, you know. I can't believe how inhuman these kind of people be. I never believed in it because I would have escaped. My dad said it, but said no because the Germans, who was the culture of whole Europe then, how could they do

thing like this? And after the war they said nobody knew about it

Q. Now, were you and Rosalee married by the Court?

A. First thing, we were married by the Rabbi and then we called Court and I think they came to ghetto and give us the papers. I still have original papers here.

Q. Now, this was in Polish court?

A. Yeah, Polish. According to law, we were not legal, but majority Jews, older ones, my parents were not old fashioned. They were modern people.

Q. What kind of Rabbi married you, Hasidic?

A. I don't remember because -- I don't remember. Like here, I know that the Christians were Catholics and Jews were Jews. One thing, but it's everything together. I don't remember this Orthodox Jews, Reformed Jews. Not all Orthodox, but some people were modern. They did it their way, but it was the same thing.

Q. Now, after you and Rosalee were married did you still smuggle food?

A. Well, I mentioned to you before, I got married to her and I couldn't because they send me on a job to nail factory, and they used to pick me up each morning and take me to this factory. You remember, I told you this story where they brought me up for sabotage.

Q. Tell me again.

A. Well, I was going out each day to work. This was a nail factory. In charge there was a Polack which worked for the wehrmacht. We're going out on this, on this, um, group there were about 22 boys, I think, or 21 boys, around 20. The oldest one was 27 and the youngest one was 19. I was second oldest, but you see, I was never in charge. The oldest one was in charge, but I was next to the man in charge. Anytime there was any trouble I always can get out of it because I was close to him, and I always try to help. I wasn't scared. I was jumpy if they told me something. I remember one day this Polack approach one of the Jewish boys who work with us. The boy was -- I think this boy was not even the youngest one, 19 years old. They always hitting hitting him and hitting him. Now, how I make a living then? This was still in ghetto. I notice that they have blocks of aluminum stacked long, stacked in, um, how you call it? Warehouse, a long stack of aluminum in a warehouse. How you call it? Long -- how old you say in English?

ROSALEE: Pipes.

A. Like pipes, long pieces of aluminum. Very simple, I was stealing them, just taking them.

Q. For what?

A. To sell in ghetto.

Q. Why

A. Because if I would sell them I got clothes for it and then could have food.

Q. Why would people buy aluminum?

A. I don't know. They have connection from outside. I don't know.

Q. So that was your sabotage?

A. Wasn't my sabotage. One of us was stealing this, and I was the one who decided I be his partner.

I could smuggle it because I didn't know how to steal it. He was good in it. He took it from them, and this was stuff they stole from people and put there, the Germans. And I remember he brought me back each day four or five pieces of it, and one time the Polack got kind of suspicious. You know what I used to do? Put them in back pocket here.

Q. A big piece of aluminum? How long was this?

A. Oh, how long? This much, take about maybe a foot wide, a half foot.

Q. How could you put it in your back pocket?

A. Well, it was this way long and I tied it together with my jacket and I had about 7 or 6 of them each time and I give to him and he sold it. He has connection and I watched him how much money he was selling for and he pays me out of that. One day, he suspected me something because I decided I going to bring some food to ghetto or something and he picked me up and checked me from top to bottom. All my feet, from top here, check this backside but didn't touch here, then let me go. You tell me what it is. You tell me what it was.

Q. So you had the aluminum on the right?

A. He just, on left side put his hand in and felt this way. Many different things we used to do like this.

Q. What else?

A. I know you say, how can it be stolen? In storage where the Germans keep it -- they stole

it from the Jews. What do you think they did? And he used to bring it up to me and give me and after I came to ghetto I give it back to him to sell.

Q. Aluminum?

A. Yeah. When I smuggled it in, I give it back to him to sell it. I didn't know what he did with it.

Q. So you stole it from the Germans and brought it into the ghetto?

A. I didn't stole it. I was the smuggler, and then he sold it.

Q. To who?

A. I don't know. He wouldn't tell me because I take his business away from him.

Q. The Polack stole from the Germans?

A. You see, some Jews from ghetto have connection with some Polocks were making a living and everything was not legal or black market or stolen.

Q. Let's get this straight. The Polock stole the aluminum from the Germans, right?

A. No. The Germans took everything away from Jews.

Q. And you took the aluminum?

A. And this boy work in this factory on this aluminum, and I work outside with other people, but he works there.

Q. So you have a partner and the two of you steel the aluminum?

A. Okay. We both stole it because I helped him.

Q. Then you sold it to the Polocks

A. No. I give it back to him and he has connection. I don't know. It's the only way. Don't call it stolen. We took it from Germans -- how you call it? How you call, not garage. They have storage. We took it from Germans, stole it from German storage, yeah. He did it and brought it to me. And when I was, when we were going up, he was scared. I smuggled it because he was scared. He was there when I was doing it. He was there when they checked me and didn't say anything. He wondered how I got away with it. Plain luck. I have another case where I got away with life. Let me tell you about it. It was too when I

was already in concentration camp. You know that Goeth for every the name of this man was Goeth. You saw the movie.

Q. G-O-E-T-H

A. Yeah. But he wasn't small like in the movie. He was a tall man about 6'6" or 6'7".

Q. He was in Plaszow, the commandant of Plaszow.

A. He was in Plaszow, right. And one day when I was working, he was to hit the youngest of us all the time, the Polock. The same one who was checking. And I tell him, what do you want from him? Leave him alone. He was too maybe in 30s somewhere, I was in the 20s. And he said, that's not your business, you stinking Jew.

Q. Who said that?

A. He, he told me this. I said...

Q. Goeth?

A. No.

Q. The Polock?

A. The Polock who hit the boy. I went to him and ask him a question. Goeth, how could you talk to Goeth? This happen on a job, where I was working in this factory. And I came to him and told him, why you hitting him? I notice you doing this several times. What you want from him? He said, that's not your business you stinking Jew. And I said, if I'm a stinking Jew, you're a stinking Polack, and he hit me. After he hit me, he said, well, see, look buddy, I am not him, and I am not going to take it with you because the German is just kicking you behind like he kicks us. He hit me again, and we start fighting. I hit him, and I think I pushed him, he fall. The police came. Everybody joined. That whole group joined us, and they picked us up, called us sabotage. Called upstairs, they bringing up for sabotage. They lined us up. They taking us up. And in this time I know they going to shoot me because there wasn't case that anybody got away witit. But then, I have another thing against me. It's happened things like this before. Few months before I have this case, a man escaped. After he escaped, they picked up 50 people. First, his whole family what was left. They forced him to dig a hole. The Ukrainians shot him and buried him.

Q. The Ukrainians?

A. Yeah. And I know what was going to happen to me when I was going there. Back then I have my wife, my sister, only one aunt with two little kids, my mother's sister and then was her brother about a few years older than me. How could I do it? I remember when they picked us up and lined us up and tried taking us upstairs. They were staying with the watch, were watching us that we not escape.

Q. Upstairs in what?

A. They took us from the job where we were working from concentration camp. Came down the German police said get them down to pick us up because we committed sabotage, and they were picking us up. When they were picking us up, they were, we were walking back to the concentration camp, it was about maybe a mile--

Q. All right. Now, wait a minute. This is after -- you weren't in the ghetto anymore?

A. I was on a job --

Q. You were in the job?

A. -- when this happen.

Q. But you were still, you were still in the ghetto?

A. They were bringing me on this job from ghetto --

Q. To the job.

A. -- three or four times a day, and this happened, same like it's happened with this thing.

Q. Okay.

A. He hit the boy.

Q. Okay.

A. And I saw it. And then when I start fighting him everybody joined and then the German joined. Then they called po -- the German, why the German upstairs ghetto? Because this was on a hill. They came down, pick us up to bring us back up. My luck again. What's happened they came down and picked us up. When they were taking us up, the people kept picking up, one was German, one Ukrainian, which one was working for the Germany. They took up the German. They were -- they joined the SS. And they were the people that were killing the Jews, not the German, the Ukrainian. And this particular one came to me and said, look, Jew, give me everything you have. In the room, they will shoot you. You know they will shoot you,



and I have to bring you up. And I said, well, how can I escape? I have a sister, I have a wife, two small little babies still, cousins, aunt, uncle. He said, it's not going to help. They will kill them anyway. What's the difference? Save yourself. And I said, well, I tell you the truth. I couldn't take it on my conscience. How could I live, if I live it through, having on my conscience they got shot because of me? But they go shot them anyway, he said. Then I said, but it wouldn't be on my -- because of me, and I went up. I even remember one of the boys he has the -- he tried to escape and I hold him. I wouldn't let him. I watched him because he got scared. My luck again. When they brought me up, before we get there, I remember. Rosalee remember this thing. They cut a group of people. There were two about around 60 or 50. Some of them were smuggling food from outside to concentration camp. They were coming from work like I did, and then back way they were smuggling food. Just like I did, and they caught them with it.

Q. They caught them?

A. Caught them. After they caught them, when I came back, they were already shot. What they did -- Rosalee remembers it. When they -- what they did, they took the whole family, and the whole family has to watch him shot. First thing, they make him dig a big hole. Then the Ukrainian shot him, and the family has to bury him. And when I came up, I saw Rosalee standing and crying and pulling her hair. What could I do?

Q. All right, well

A. But that's not the point. When they brought us up, Goeth came see us. You know who was Goeth?

Q. Amon [sic] Goeth, G-O-E-T-H.

A. Yeah. And he just look on him and told him German, well, they young people. We can use them. Beat them good up and put them to work.

Q. This is the commandant of Plaszow.

A. He was so eaten up with killing that he said, no, they young boys. We can use them. We need lot of work. Put them to work. Not just this. Then they took me upstairs. And each time they put you to work, you have to salute Goethe when he passed me by. And I remember, he passed by me and a boy before me start shaking and he shoot him. And when he came to me, I start shaking, and he just didn't even look at me. He passed me by.

Q. This is when you were in the camp already?

A. Yeah. Outside working.

Q. Outside working. All right. Tell me the -- how did you finally get caught? Did you get caught for your smuggling?

A. Never

Q. Never?

A. I wouldn't live today.

Q. You never got caught for your smuggling?

A. Never. I used to do it from ghetto, and then one day I went out to work and came back and they took her. The whole world collapsed for me. I jump everybody. If they didn't shoot me then they would never shoot me. I didn't care who I jump on, German. There were, I remember two German I jump on, German in uniform, and two boys help me. When I woked up -- I was hit with a gun over the head. When I woked up I found out that the other two they shot and me just hit with the gun. That's what I was told. If they lied, I-- why would anybody lie to me about it?

Q. All right. So this was 1943?

A. '43, and yeah.

Q. Rosalee was taken to Plaszow --

A. From Plaszow to Skarzysko.

Q. -- to Skarzysko.

A. This was Septemer 19

Q. Do you want us to spell it, S-K-A-R--

ROSALEE: S-K-A-R-Z-Y-S-K-O

A. Don't you understand exactly what I said? In 1943 --

Q. Wait. Skarzysko.

A. And when they took her, I jumped to the next train thinking that I'm going same direction. I wound

up in Auschwitz. And I was \*\*\* from Auschwitz.

Q. And this is 1943.

A. 1943, I was sent to Auschwitz in September 19-- that's where they put the number on my arm in 1943 in Auschwitz.

Q. Okay. All I need is the ghetto, that's all we're talking about.

A. There's the number. This was put on in September 1943 on my arm. Q. Okay. All I need from you tonight is the ghetto, is the smuggling in the ghetto?

A. Yeah. Well, most of them I was smuggling in the ghetto. That's what I used to do, smuggling chicken --

ROSALEE: Yeah, but how about -- how about in Auschwitz you smuggled meat.

Q. No. I don't need the-- no. This is where-- this is just the ghettos. We're just talking about the ghettos.

A. Well, that's another story. The ghettos, yeah. Until they put us in work, I was not smuggling just, you see, there were lot of people having some connection. I didn't. I have connection just with people.

Q. Just with the Jews

A. You know, I even have connection like, for instance, I was in concentration camp with Rosalee. I was all known by these boys who worked there. Rosalee, grabbed and took her to work. She was already my wife. I came in said, that's my wife. They already release her, let me go with her, go back because she was my wife. Now, if it comes to other thing, they try offering me this and this. I just couldn't do it. I just couldn't.

Q. All right. This is already in the camp. This is outside the ghetto?

A. Yeah, outside the camp, yeah.

Q. All right. But you didn't have any Judenrat in the ghetto, and you had --

A. Not that I know. It was just between the Jews alone. No.

ROSALEE: Sure we did. Sure we did.

A. You did? There was something? I don't remember. I don't remember.

Q. I don't see any Judenrat in any books. I've looked up the Krakow --

A. No. I don't think so.

Q. I've looked up the Krakow ghetto and I don't see any --

A. No because we just between each other. You know, they trust each other, Jews to each other. I was raised in Krakow. I spend my whole life in Krakow.

(Off-the-record conversation.)

Q. Rosalee, do you remember a, um, somebody like Rumkowski or Cherniakov, don't worry about the names, in the ghetto?

ROSALEE: It's been so many years.

Q. No. So there was no-- you don't remember that there was either kind?

A. You know, we used to smuggle more sometime --

ROSALEE: Hilovich was.

Q. Who?

ROSALEE: Hilovich

Q. Hilovich. Spell that. H-I-L-O-V-I-C-H?

ROSALEE: H-I-L-O-W-I-C-H.

A. He was the one who worked with the German.

Q. He worked with the German?

A. Well, they picked him up. He was in charge. He was the governor in Krakow.

Q. Oh, he was in charge of the --

A. The Jewish, Jewish police, yeah.

Q. There was a Jewish police in Krakow.

A. They made the Jewish police.

ROSALEE: Oh, yes.

A. There was, well, there was some pretty bad one too.

Q. And the Jewish police pick up the smugglers?

A. One day said they need 20 people. Jewish police picked them up. Some, if you have connection you got out. They let you get away with it. Usually, you know, I always got away with it because I was known. I was known but they were bringing everything from little countries to down to big towns, like Krakow, Warsaw.

Q. Now, Krakow --

A. Well, then Krakow was the oldest city. Krakow was --

Q. Yeah, but it was one of the smallest ghettos.

A. Not that I know. I don't know. I think it was one of the smallest ghettos. The biggest one was Warsaw with Lodz then Krakow.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. Yeah, yeah. And Krakow was smaller. Krakow was -- the biggest population was Warsaw then Lodz.

Q. Yeah, well Gilmett [sic] was a bigger ghetto.

A. Well, you know, I don't know. When I was -- used to be before second World War used to be Poland, but before I think was Russia.

Q. You don't need this.

(Several minutes conversation.)

A. Vie Geist? Where you going?

Q. Oh, vie geist, which meant where you going? Like old man, I cover my head. I can't explain to you but I always got away with it?

Q. All right. The coat was black? Big, black coat.

A. Wasn't exactly black, was dark, very dark.

Q. Dark, yeah. It went over your head too?

A. No. On my arms, all over the hands, and I -- like you --

Q. Like a cape.

A. Like a cape, yeah. I wore it exactly like a cape, but it was a heavy, big coat, you know with pockets inside my mother sewed for me..

Q. What did you do in summer?

A. What you mean in summer? Same thing.

Q. It was too hot for a coat.

A. But in summer it was not hot. There hot -- the hottest would like here would be 80 degrees,

78. Poland has a nice climate. We have three and a half months snow. Summer was summer. Winter was winter, autumn was autumn. We have a beautiful climate.

ROSAELEE: You know, you make the --

A. You know, I used to be good on skates, skis. You have small mountains, right now behind us, in the concentration camp where the ghetto was, and I used to be good on skates with it. And I used to be on skates there. I was good in it. I was very -- I used to dance on skates. It's just everybody like sports I never like sports. I hate-- well, I'm not interested. I used like night groups, parties. I used to sing a little. The problem, I'm almost 60 years older now. Quite old buzzard.

ROSALEE: How much? Almost 60 years?

A. Almost 60. That's right. I was 20, 22, 21. 21 when the war came.

Q. Almost 60 years older, not old.

A. 60, I-- that's what I said, 60 years older.

ROSALEE: If you can even imagine what a tragedy this was be taken away from your home

and put  
in the ghetto where children were dying on the streets.

Q. Okay. What were you saying Rosalee?

ROSALEE: What a terrible tragedy was the ghetto.

A. See, when we met, she was just 16. I was 20.

Q. All right. Listen, um, Rosalee, you don't feel well --

A. I'm sorry I can tell you more. I just can tell you what I know, what I went through.

Q. That's all I need. Did you do go through morr.

A. I was plain lucky. I was wild. I was jumpy.

Q. Do you have more to tell about the smuggling?

A. Well, not in ghetto. I was smuggling in concentration camp too.

Q. Auschwitz.