

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Boleslaw Brodecki
September 18, 1989
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Boleslaw Brodecki, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on September 18, 1989 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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BOLESLAW BRODECKI

September 18, 1989

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

- Q: OK. Uh, the tape is on. Bud, would you give me your name please?
- A: Sure. My name is Boleslaw Henry Brodecki [**NB:** American pronunciation], or Brodecki [**NB:** Polish pronunciation]. I was born in Warsaw, Poland.
- Q: What year?
- A: March 1921.
- Q: Tell me about your family.
- A: I had a sister; her name was Roma. And my mother died when I was eight years old; and my father marry her sister, whose name was Helen. She was like a mother to us. And of course, got uncles and cousins and I don't know if you want me to tell about them but there is a whole bunch of them.
- Q: What did you father do?. What was his occupation?
- A: Well, he was accountant.
- Q: When you were growing up, tell me what it was like for you as a child growing up in Warsaw. What kind of school you went to, what were your friends like?
- A: Well, I have to go back with my mind. I went to, uh, of course, at first I went to a public school and in the meantime I went to a Hebrew school, then I went back to public school, then I went to we called gymnasium, which is a high school. And the school I went was actually a Catholic school, but we had...uh...uh... The ones who are Jewish faith had a Jewish teacher; because all high schools have a religion. They were teaching a religion to kids. And if you were Jewish in a Catholic school, then a Rabbi were...a teacher was coming. And I don't know if it was an hour in a week or two or three hours, he was teaching Jewish history and so on. And uh after I graduate, I supposed to go college. But the war started and it never materialize. My sister, she graduated from high school. Because she didn't ask me about it; and then she was studying piano. And...
- Q: What did you like to do as a child? Did you have favorite games, favorite sports? What did you do?
- A: Oh, yeah. Yes. Sport was bicycle racing and playing hockey on ice.

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Q: You played hockey?

A: Yeah. Not hookey, hockey. (Laughing) Now I play hookey. (Laughing)

Q: Were there...tell me about the teams. Were they all Jewish teams, or were...

A: There were mixed, and one team I was playing was Maccabee-- that was an organization-- and, of course, we were junior hockey players. And so we were usually playing late, like at 10 o'clock at night; because those are public skating and you couldn't get in after they closed. And during the day, we kind of instructing other people in skating as club members. We just go around with them and show them how to skate.

Q: What about the holidays, the Jewish holidays? Did you celebrate those at home, at school?

A: Oh, yeah. Of course, we celebrate holidays.

Q: Did the family all come? How...were those big affairs? Were they small?

A: Well, I am a Zionist, you know. We got together and on the holidays, we just went to synagogues.

Q: Was your family very traditional or pretty modern?

A: We were, uh, we were more religious on the holidays than on a daily basis. We were not orthodox you see, but the house was kosher. If anybody wanted to eat something that wasn't kosher, he better not bring it home, you know. And there was like separate place for milachtig [**NB:** milchig; **Yidd:** dairy foods] (laughing) and fleishig [**Yidd:** meat], you know. But other than that, it was... While we were away from home it was a little different. Some people stick with it, and some people might don't. I mean, there's no use fooling from that. (Laughing)

Q: What was being a Jewish boy in Warsaw in those years? Was your house, for instance, in the Jewish quarter of Warsaw?

A: In a way, yes. There was more or less concentration of...they were mixed...but I think it was a lot of Jews in the area, you know, this was kind of far. Wasn't a trick to just to Jewish, but there was a majority of Jews. It was called Jewish neighborhood. Neighborhood was kind of famous. I don't know if you ever heard of Zamenhof who invented Esperanto. My father told me one time in his younger years he was sharing a room with him, and, uh, uh, they were just in the general area of this the street was renamed to the name of Zamenhof. My father family was living in Pavia. I think it was in the same house where Benjamin Meed was living, I think. So you and Benjamin Meed have known each other.

Q: So you and Benjamin Meed have known each other.

A: No, we don't know each other. We don't. That was too long ago. I can't recall anything like that, but there was a funny incident. We went to--I don't know if you want to listen to that--we went to the Holocaust survivor's gather in Washington. And one time, they had that meeting for the Warsaw Jews, which I am from Warsaw; and Benjamin meet me. His wife--I think, Vladka-- somebody was sitting beside him or Vladka, and there was another lady sitting there. And I went and I asked...I know said....what you were living and I asked if she knew any of my family and she told me that there was a big apartment house. She didn't know everybody or she didn't remember everybody. They had some kind of organization dispute and they were very nervous. I walked away. I put my name...they got information desk and they were taking names and different information regarding your relatives you never find on a computer. So I tell them everything I know and who I be looking for, and a few days later I had a letter in Richmond from a lady in Polish and in English. And she was my cousin. I mean, my father's sister's daughter. And what happened, after we got together...you know, she is deaf. I can hardly talk with her because I don't know what she is talking about. You just can't communicate. And she was sitting a couple of seats from Benjamin Meed when I was asking Vladka, but she could hear me and I couldn't hear. If I have any...you know, some people were walking around with a big sign "I am from so and so, I am looking for relatives." And they were looking kind of funny. I said I should have done this same thing. Hang a sign on me so she could hear what I say, she would recognize me. You don't recognize people 40 years later. You know, is a different set of wrinkles and (laughing) and you don't.

Q: So you have found a long lost cousin!

A: Yes. I find a...and somehow they organize a meeting in Los Angeles in Barbic, California. That is where we went on the Fantasy show and we were in invited to a friend of ours to visit. She says she got tickets for the show and her husband, they are getting plans....

Q: Okay. Let's pull it back. Let's pull it back. That's interesting, so you have really come full circle. Alright, so you have met some of the family. Let's go back to Warsaw and tell me..you were now in the gymnasium. What happened after the gymnasium years to you? When did the Germans come and how old were you?

A: Well, I was just about 17. And, of course, you know the day the war started, I think it was 5th of September, and all of a sudden so quick you see airplanes in the air and you see, you know, columns of smoke and detonations from bombs and everybody in those days were talking about gas, and everybody has a gas mask, and there was a big confusion and it was getting worse cause day by day because the houses were being destroyed and you couldn't even for a couple of weeks you couldn't even tell the streets because if you walk you tell by landmarks, you know, where you are going. Here everything you live in the city all your life,

you don't know you are at because there is nothing to indicate and those were... everybody had a lot of worries...no use talking about people laying dead on the street, and running back and forth, and when they are running with dead children in their hands and we have another worry. We know that the Nazis were coming, so that was even worse than for average person because we knew that we gonna be pointed out, and there was about almost 30 days of bombardment and Warsaw was devastated. And we were running from shelter to shelters. Funny thing, we were living on the third floor. Now our apartment was not destroyed but we kept running back and forth because people wouldn't stay on the top floor. Everybody was trying to stay under big building somewhere. And there is quite a number of people got buried there, because building collapsed. I see a lot of, like you take a tall church. And airplanes came. There was an alarm, you know. Everybody heard; and we came out and the church was gone. What happened, a lot of these places didn't use steel like they use in the buildings today, and they had the basement several floors down. So one gets hit, just crumbles right into the ground. And it is just a devastating thing. It is bad. The whole thing...you come back, it is not there. I mean, (laughing) it just packed in the underground. Well, uh I can talk about it. I don't know if you want me past that point.

Q: Let's talk about what happened to you at this point. What happened to you when the Germans actually occupied Warsaw?

A: Well, they were picking up Jews and nobodies. Things just started and Germans really couldn't recognize. They ask you, "Are you a Jew?" You know, you had to tell them. And we escaped from Warsaw. What happened, my sister had a fiancé. He was from the part of Poland where the Russians came in. Where he was staying in Warsaw, he was going to Warsaw Polytechnic--which is just like here, a university or something. And they supposed to go with each other when he went back on his vacation and summer. You know college started in September, he didn't get back to Warsaw a year. So after the war, we got a note. You know, people were smuggling each other through the border back and forth; and there was not the regular mail. And somebody brought a note. He asked my sister to go, now he asked the whole family to come over there. From two evils, the Russians were better than the Germans at that particular time. So my father decided that he lived in this city all his life and he's not gonna leave. He wants the kids to stay together. So we went to a train station. And while we were saying goodbye to our father, we were separated by some German, push around; and we got up on a freight train and we went toward Russia. And we were told if we got caught... Only that trip can make a two hours story. But really, we were told if we caught on the German side, tell them we came from the Russian side so they throw you back on the Russian side. If you get caught on the Russian side, tell them you are going to Germany so they chase you back. You know, just always tell them the opposite. And we had the nightman night, because we finally got on a train in a dark where was traveling some Christian people. They didn't know we were Jewish, they were talking about "Oh, the Jewish being murdered." One lady was telling them, "Hey, the Germans come and they shoot the whole Jewish family...shoot the Jewish." And that was a terrible conversation going on, and we were scared. Finally we went up in a little country place close to the border in order to

cross, said the, uh, I guess you can call him a farmer. His name was Tom, and we told him what we want to do and he say he know some smugglers and he took us in and put us in the barn and he was scared also, but we gave him some money something. So finally someday he says he is going to take us toward the border. So they put me in the wagon, cover me with straw; and my sister and another lady and the driver of the horse and wagon. And they were worrying why Sunday, because people were going to Church. And so we mix with the church crowd. We came to the border and something didn't work out, we had to go back. Then we made the second trip. And finally two smuggler came and took us and put us over there in the barn. And in the middle of the night they came and wanted to rape the women. So my sister and the other girl was together, and they told them to lay on the top of them. But they were not...they give up, they didn't rape them. Then they were trying to get money; because my sister sick and if you she got rings. You know, we give them all we had. And then they was smuggling sugar, so while we were working with them and the Russian said they got long bags with sugar. You know Russia knows for shortages. And we came to a little stream and they were wearing the high boots; and they took us back in a carriage on the other side. And they told us again, if you see any Russians you tell them that you are going to Germany and they chase you back, you know. And we separated. Then we came to...I forgot what the place was--was some kind of bus station or train station. And everybody was sleeping on the floor, because people really didn't have a home or anything. Everybody was wandering around. And I lay down right on the floor I went to sleep. And...and somehow we travel, and we found ourself in Pruzhany [**Pol:** Pru_ana]--no, Brest-Litovsk. That was the first stop. And we were sitting at the table, and talking about the war and everything with some of my sister's friends. And then we continue on to Pru_ana which was closer to the border uh where my brother-in-law was. So my sister got mad because the Russians came up with the...they call it paragraph 11, which you are...I don't know how to translate it. I guess, a refugee. You right in the same country, but being you came from the German side. So they give you a passport, paragraph 11, and we stayed there. You cannot live in the city. On my...I know 100 kilometers from the border, you cannot get cross; and there was about 50. And I think it said that you shouldn't live in a city of 100,000 population, some kind of a restriction. So I didn't like that. I say if I have to go...I say if I have to go, a 100. I was 17 and I was with my sister; and they tell me to leave. Go 100. Where do I go? So I went back to the Police station, and I tell them I am not...I want to go back to Germany. And that was terrible. And the police chief told me that I was a 10 code or something you know; and called me all kind of names and told the guys to arrest me. I jumped out of the window and I ran and I hid. And my brother-in-law's aunt was a doctor and she got a lot of pull with the Russians. And her daughter was living in France during the... Before the war they sent a lot of... And she took a bunch of that stuff to the police chief and somebody else, and they give her my passport back. She told them I was a kid, and I didn't know what I was doing; and I was hiding in the attic in the cold. And the police chief said he let me go, but he don't want to ever come face to face with me because he gonna arrest me. So in the middle of night I was smuggled out of town and I was recommended to some friends of friends which were living in another town which was beyond 100 kilometers from the border. Then I had a terrible trip. We went and got this...they call it a Baalegole. That is a Jewish fellow who has a horse and

wagon, and that's the way he makes... And he got a couple of goats in the house. They were very primitive. The goat was in the house, and the kids and everybody; and I was sitting on the wagon all night. And the only thing we were trying to get some food. You probably make it into town 30 minutes we go all night with a horse and wagon, so they try to get me food. The only thing we could get was leberwurst [**NB:** liverwurst]. I don't like leberwurst. And we finally came to that little town called Roznau. Like it was just day, and there was a lot of Jewish farmers over there. And this guy was working behind a bunch of cows and had a big... I was from a big city, and I never seen it. And he was collecting cow manure, you know, for fertilizing and I arrived in that little city. And I...yah, my sister came too, I think. You know, it is kind of... My sister came, and then she went back because she had to marry...after you marry somebody then like he become citizen. So after she marry my brother-in-law, she could stay. I don't know, I don't remember if she came the first trip. I know she came...maybe she came visiting for a few days; but I remember she coming in, because in the place where we were staying there were no beds. There was one thing right across the room and everybody was sleeping on it. (Laughing) The whole family. And I remember getting up in the morning, because you had the cows, you know. You know, people don't talk about Jewish farmers alot. Everybody imagine they're business people. I have electronic shop. You know, I repairs. And everybody asks me if I own a grocery shop. So I don't know why. (Laughing) Just a stereotype.

Q: So you are in this town, and you're living there now?

A: Uh huh.

Q: Okay. How long did you stay there?

A: Well, I couldn't tell you exact times, but you know with the Germans kept going toward Russia one more time. And that was in '41, when they started a new campaign going toward Russian. A couple of days... Coincidental, a couple of days before that, there was a draft board. They were drafting soldiers for the Russian army. Being I was on the Russian side, we had to go to a draft board. Of course, it was real strange because we were naked and most of the people were women, you know. And, uh, when they were measuring you and this and that, and they asked me what kind of education I got, I say I got high school and I got electronics. And she said you be a lieutenant in the Russian army. And I think that was Friday or something or Thursday. Sunday morning, somebody knock on the door, all the people who got drafted and say, "We got a meeting in the city. Move your tail." We didn't know anything would happen. We get in the movie theatre, the draftees. And this Russian general, whatever, come out and said that the German pig stuck a... What do you call? A snout in the Soviet...in the Russian garden. That mean they attack the Russian. And that was Saturday night when this started; and that was Sunday morning. And would you believe while we were at the movie theatre, there were airplanes coming and machine guns; and they start already. I was used to air raids at the time, but it was a terrible panic. And that was Sunday. And Monday, Russian...German tanks were coming in the town. You didn't even

have time to run. So I stayed there for a little while, and then I went back. Because my sister and my brother-in-law were still in Pru_ana. So I hitchhike back on a German truck; and I came back to Pru_ana and then they turn it into a ghetto.

Q: Tell me about the ghetto.

A: Well, (sigh) food was getting short, and things like that. And I...we were beat. They were taking the young people everyday to work outside the ghetto. We knew that one day will come when they gonna take us out of there. And they...uh, food started getting rationed. There was a lot of harassment; even by the police, you know. And a couple of times, I got arrested and my brother-in-law got arrested. One day, we were in line for food. And then we see a pregnant lady. So my brother-in-law stand up for her. So policeman got after him, so I stand up for him. And there was another guy with us, he got in. The police was Jewish, but they working at the time for... So they drag all of us (laughing) to jail. And a friend of ours, he wear glasses, you see. You couldn't get glasses. Anytime was anything dangerous, a German could slap you in the face anytime. So first thing, he was putting away his glasses, you know. So he look at the police chief; but without the glasses, he just like that. Said...the police chief said, "What are you making eyes at me?" So he says, (laughing) "I wouldn't make eyes at you if you had something on your nose." So he slapped him. He put them away. He wasn't actually arrested. He came around, and he got in the dispute you see. How humanly were the things that put you away for anything, you know. We stayed there, and we were let out. And eventually, one morning, they tell everybody come to the market place, you know. And, of course, just like Germans did this type picking out, the people didn't want to go. Like he says, "Anybody sick, anybody's crazy or nuts, shot to death." And they put us on wagons. And at that time, we already knew about Treblinka¹ and those death camps where you go for sure.

Q: How did you know? This is 1941?

A: Yeah, there were rumors.

Q: Already in 1941?

A: Yah, I think this was between 1941 or 1942. There were rumors. We were on the train, freight trains; and we didn't have an idea where we were going.

Q: Describe that trip. What was it like inside that car? What kind of a train was it?

A: Oh, we were [in a] freight train. And when they put us in...first we were in a horse and wagon; and in the snow, too. We come to some place where the train--I am not familiar with the area--and we were loaded in the freight trains. The cars, that's what's called...freight cars,

¹ Treblinka was finished in July 1942.

were filled. I mean, there was just about standing room on the inside. My sister was with a little baby. There was some Russians; but they somehow, they escaped during the night. They took towels and they wrapped around the head, so they don't bump their head. And through a little opening, somehow, all of them get out. And the snow. They were young guys. But we were like... everybody was with a family. And, really, it was no place to go; because there was so much anti-Semitism there. Anybody point out a Jew out, you know. There was some people hidden by friends, but you didn't have a prayer if you ran away. Some people did; but then you had to play like you...not Jewish, you know. And it was kind of hopeless with snow on the ground. Cold, no food. There was...to escape was a hopeless thing. And many instances, there was helplessness... was really no where to go. Maybe in the summer was better. There was somehow a thing when we were getting out of there, I think it was January or something. That was wintertime. So on a train with no food, everybody got some bread or something in a package, you know. But that was in March. I don't... forgot how long we remained in transit. And people practically dying--old people, children. They were doing it on themselves. And then everything...we developed this terrible thirst. And when the train stopped in different places... Every time was an air raid, you know, whistles came off and the train stopped; and some Germans, some Polacks came to the window. And we said, "Water! Water! Water!" He said got a watch or something, so we give him a watch for a little dirty water. Didn't have water. They took it from the locomotive or something...dirty water or some... So they were getting money, rings... But when you are thirsty and dehydrated, you give anything. I mean, you really...people really don't know that thirst is even worse than hunger. You know what I mean. Oh, it's devastating when you're thirsty. And they was giving away rings and anything, just for water; and a lot of time, they took it and didn't bring you water. Well, eventually we came to a place which was laid from all directions with spotlights. And we were not used to it, because due to air raids, you live in the darkness. While we were still in Pru_ana, we had during the night English or American...German planes going throughout the night. No, no...they was not American then. They were German planes. They were going towards Russia to bomb. And during the night, you heard that noise...(humming) all the time. And this... Course, everything was dark. Windows were...they had that tape across windows so they don't break. That was everyday picture you see. When we came and see that little place, you know, and we didn't know what happened. We knew that it is the end of the road. We were warned we were going there right away. And I think you call trestles; when the trains stopped, and we start to fall, like from that ceiling to the ground. Would you believe people were... They said, "Raus! Raus! Raus!" And a lot of people fall out. And the one who were gone were walking on the people who fell out, you know. And this "Andreten!" [Ger: "Line up!"]...you know: "Left, right, left, right." And we were surrounded by Germans with sticks. And there was uh, you know, a little contrast; because you know how neat the Germans are. How they shine the shoes and everything. They stayed there. And...and...and they started chasing us and beating us, and... And go in different lines. And I got hit, because I got a crazy idea. I got a bag with something. [Oh, my friend and I took a long string. I pass by and all of a sudden a little thing comes by. (ph)] And so he said, "Come back, come back." Hit me with the stick. (Laughing) Then they were throwing children. And it was a devastating scene. You

wouldn't believe the inhumanities. They were knocking people down, hitting with the stick, and finishing them off, and... And tearing kids from women, and throwing them in the air. And the screams and the cries, that was just devastating. I have a bottle of cologne water. Going back in my mind, Russians used to drink that. Russians are big alcoholic. They used to come to a barber shop and drink half the after-shave lotion, the tonic. I see them like poison themselves with it. So what do I have to lose? I was so... It's alcohol. So I drink the cologne. They should put that in there for drink; because when you burp, it smells good. (Laughing) Really! That is the truth. And a German came up to me. And I was kind of a little drunk; and he smelled. He says, "Those Asians!" You know, like "Ignorants!," like "Drinking cologne!," you know. And we were in line. And they just take, of course, the ones who didn't make it. To give you a little idea, we were going in the transports like a cow. There was 10,000 people came out of the particular area, and this particular transport going to Birkenau. And I think, in a few days, we were only nine hundred. So we didn't know really what was happening to the others, you know. Nobody come and give you a daily report. You go this way, they go that way. You don't know anything. And why in Birkenau, then being transferred to Auschwitz. We felt that smell in the air, and they said that was crematorium. And they were experimenting with people. Like in the morning it's called the "antret" [Ger: lining up]. They count the prisoners in the morning, you know. And a lot of time, two or three [SS] walking, and they looked somebody in the face: "Out!" Put them on the side. "Out!" You didn't know where the people were going. And they were taking them for experiments in Auschwitz. Of course, there was a bunch of people laying down who die in the night or something on the side. And the wagon. You see these wagons...pulled people. And the legs stick out here, and the head and a head. And they just thrown some on; they were naked, they were in prison outfits. And uh can you imagine...we went to work, we came back was a band playing. A first class band. They were people...

Q: I am sorry. There was what?

A: A band. You know, that gate "Arbeit Macht das Leben Frei" [Ger: "Work Makes the Living Free"] You probably seen it in pictures. We marched through it. And on the right side, there was a big band playing marches and they were all...musicians from all over Europe. I mean, they were excellent. They were playing marches. And on the right side...on the left side--I don't know if everytime--there were people laying shot to death, bleeding... And they said, "They were trying to escape. See what happened to them?" And the day we came, there was a table and a chair. And on top of the chair, there was a woman with her hands tied, bumps on the head. Oh, she was massacred! And there was a sign that her son escaped from the camp. And that was not for the Jews, because Jews don't leave any families. They were for the Polacks. There is a misconception. They think everybody in Auschwitz was Jewish. There was all nationalities. And they said her son escaped from the camp. "And if you escape, that is what is going to happen to your mother." You see, if she was there. On the table, on the chair, lot of blood, broken up with bumps... Really fixed up for the show, you know. And when you march, they tell you to look to the left; and there were people laying shot. They say they tried to escape, and a lot of times it wasn't true. I

mean, we were working one time in there...one time in...they call it a...werkhalle [Ger: "workshop"]. Train comes through; and there was rails, you know, for trains. And those guys were walking back and forth; and a lot of time they took a stub from cigarette and throw it. We pick it up. So the guy threw the cigarettes on this side of the rails, so the prisoner wouldn't go. He said, "Go ahead and pick it up." So he go pick it up. And he reported the guy was trying to escape and they had another trick. If we were marching to work...a lot of times we were marching at night...somewhere on the highway to a factory, suddenly somebody sneaked out and escape. A lot of times was organized, like might been in cahoots with one of the guards. I was asked a couple of time to escape. They gonna help me. So what they did...

Q: Don't leave that just yet. You said you were asked by a couple of people to help organize an escape?

A: No, to escape. I didn't trust them. I didn't trust them. One of them was true. Because after the war, I found out that he became a police chief in a certain city which I can't recall it. He was always working with the underground. He was a Polack. But we were fooled and cheated so many times, I just didn't trust him.

Q: Go ahead. I'm sorry.

A: Anyway, somebody, like I said, escape from the column; well, they might take 10 or 15 people and shoot them to death and make out a report that "16 people were trying to escape. One made it, and I shot 15," you know. Big hero. So, (laughing) that's they way they were protecting themselves sometimes. There was a lot of good souls during the war, even Germans. Which I never want to forget, because I think if it wouldn't be for the good ones I wouldn't be alive.

Q: Tell us.

A: They were helping. I remember when the ghetto was closed because we were going to get out...being transported. At that time I was working...like you got a Coast Guard in the USA. Of course, this [wasn't] a Coast Guard; but this was a uh...like a border patrol, I would say. And they got high ranking officers. So one of them--I should remember his name--he was no more or less a high ranking officer. And he came with a... You see, his idea was that after Hitler wins the war, they gonna make a special city and all the Jews are just going to live there and prosper. He wasn't very intelligent, but he knew it was wrong; so that was his idea. When I was in the ghetto, he came and got in an argument with a guard. He wants to get in, they wouldn't let him in. So finally he sent a message...a messenger, and I came to the barbed wire. He threw me one [of] his best leather briefcases, with newspapers and food, you see. Then another one was a Zollen... (ph). He was a real high ranking person. And he was very intelligent. He would never say what this guy said. (Laughing) I had to stop by his place every Saturday. He gave me cigarettes, vodka. While I am drinking, he says, "Elektriker,

kopf hoch, alles wird noch gut sein."

Q: Translate please!

A: "Electrician, keep your chin up. Everything going to be good." The future going to be alright, you know. Then uh when I was working and in a werkhalle, which is a factory, there was one guard. And he kept calling me and in the dark he would give me bread. And one day he said he is scared to death, he told somebody seen him he gave me bread; so he says, "If I am a prisoner tomorrow, don't be surprised. Because that is what they do with us when they catch us." Which was true! So I said, "I'll tell you what you do." I say, "I am going to come up; you call me all kind of names, you kick me, and that's gonna help." He says, "Are you not gonna be mad?" I said, "No." So, I say...I came out there. And he said, "You Schweinehund!..." Insult me. He kicked me, and I screamed. And then he said everything is fine. (laugh) He says... He also was kind of farmer. He said, "After the war," he says, "I have a farm. You gonna be my Kutscher [**Ger:** "coachman, driver"]." I gonna ride with his horses, he says. There was a lot of good people. But there was a lot of bad people. You cannot just go...(laughing). I think every country depends who is ruling, you know.

Q: So you were in Birkenau, Auschwitz-Birkenau...

A: Birkenau. I was in 8.

Q: Which?

A: At the end of the war, when the Russians were approaching, they keep transferring us. I was in Birkenau, Auschwitz, and Schwientochlowitz.² Then Gräditz-Bareza, Mauthausen, Leitmeritz³ and Theresienstadt. I think. I know it was 8. I must left something out; there were so many of them.

Q: Let's go back to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A: Uh huh.

Q: What happened? How did you know you were going to be moved from there? What happened?

A: Well, first, they moved us to Schwientochlowitz; which was same in the general area, like from here to Petersburg [**NB:** Virginia].

² Formally named Eintrachtütte. Subcamp of Auschwitz, located at Swietoch_owice in Upper Silesia.

³ Subcamp of Flossenbürg. Located at Litom__ice in the Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia).

Q: Excuse me. I need to go back, and... I apologize. You came in, you were with your sister in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A: To Birkenau, right.

Q: Tell us what happened to your sister at this point.

A: Well, she wouldn't separate from her baby. And there was a lot of people; and I couldn't control it, and... I didn't see her any more. Only her...my brother-in-law was with me, but he went in about a couple of days. You see they pulled this like they told us to take all our clothes off and go into a shower. And he tripped over a rusted pipe, and his foot got swelling. And you know what they did with people which got sick. They just pick him up and put him in a gas chamber; and that's what happened to my brother-in-law. I never see my sister again. Then next day, I see the people, you know, in pajamas. You know, you see the outfits. And the area over there was very muddy, you know. Everything had big wheels. You keep pushing wagons, and back and forth, and doing a lot of unnecessary digging and work. And stuff like that. And eventually we were sent to Schwientochlowitz, which was a machine factory over there. They were making parts for airplanes and stuff like that.

Q: How far was this from Auschwitz-Birkenau?

A: There's no way I could tell you. That wasn't too far. Like I said, might mean like here to Petersburg [NB: Virginia]. It was in the general area. I couldn't recall. I know that it wasn't too far.

Q: What did you do in the factory?

A: Uh, I finally wound up working on a machine. And uh, I don't know where I had the experience from. I was working on the lathe machine. There was a lot of people. And then, I had 2 or 3 people I had to cover for. They didn't know nothing about the work, but they were very sick. And if they go outside, they would die. So I kept running back and forth and helping them. And couple of them met me after the war, and tried to give me money. (Laughing) But anyway....

Q: Talk about this a little more. How did you cover for them? How did you...keep talking about this.

A: Alright. Recognizing you put a certain item on it, and it's a knife cutting. Right? So you put it on, and you just let it go and push the button when it's on this end. And wave to me, and I put another piece on, you know. There was something like, it takes time and...and...did... The guy who asked me if I wanted to escape, he was a civilian foreman. He made me a prisoner foreman. This is no like a carpet...this is work, you know what I mean. This is not... So I was

covering for a few people as much as I could, but, uh... One was a Czech. He was Jew. He was a machinist, but he was so sick that he was breaking stuff. So I made a special thing I made for him so nobody...when he was making the run...those, so. I don't know how to explain. And you had to go to the machine, run; and he was breaking it. So I made a device to hold it. You see, if he doesn't do good they put him outside; and when he is sick that is the end. Then a bunch of people lift the crane, you know, like this big long thing was laying. And it fell down and broke about 20 people's legs. They all got shot, you know. They didn't care. And, uh, we worked there and one day, of course, uh while we go back from work we had to watch hangings before supper. They had 2 or 3 sets of wires--and electric wires--and the people to be hanged, they put them between the wires and they might stay there for three days with no food, urinating on themselves. And they bring them up when we come from work. And they put a table and a chair, and they hang them; and they read some funny sentence and they kick the chair out. And a lot of them...I see one that was shot before he was hanged. He started calling, "You murderers! You are going to lose the war! Hitler gonna die!" And all that. And the guy just...(making shooting sounds), and they hang them on top of that. And we just got so cold, it didn't bother anybody anymore. Looking at dead people, looking at people getting hung... You know, you get so...just like watching a movie. And you feel like after the war, how do you react to things, you know. But for some reason, you get back to normal. You see somebody hit by a car or something; and you...I think, with time you come back to your own self. You know what I mean.

Q: Okay. Let's break it here and give them time to change the tape.

A: Oh, sure.

TAPE #2

Q: Okay. So you were the prisoner foreman in this factory trying to help people from being killed basically. What happened to you? What were the living conditions like for the factory workers? Where did you live?

A: We live in barracks and every day, I don't know what time it was, but was usually dark...we marched...that was the guard was helping me. He would be walking beside me, put a piece of bread in my pocket. A lot of time was dried out, but it was terrific. I mean you was starved. You know what I mean? And we walk every morning to the factory. I don't know how far. It took awhile and at night we walked back, and before you do anything, they were always counting the prisoners, you know. They say: "Antreten! One, two, three..." And even the dead ones had to lay dead to make the figure going. And we came to the factory, and then we get like 30 minutes or 5 minutes break. And we fall asleep instantly and then we get up, run to the machines. And the toilets were outside. That was the scariest part, to go out in the dark. First you didn't know if somebody was inside, was completely dark. Sometimes you just open the door, and you do it, and somebody scream, hey you did it my face, you know, and you run in the dark, and that was a every day situation, and, uh, food was any better than anybody else's you know. They were giving the same garbage to eat. And I don't remember we have any day we didn't work really. I couldn't recall. And, uh, a lot of time, they wake us in the middle of the night, and the start beating everybody, like somebody did something, you know. We had to watch hanging, you know. And that went pretty quick day by day, the same situation, and you felt yourself fortunate that you were working inside because people were in the snow and everyday you see the dead. People were dragged around and put ont he wagon and taken away, you know. If you were sick, you didn't get any help, but I suppose you want to come to the end of that episode. One day, the Russians start coming and we get evacuated, but before we do, we had to make the place spic and span. You had to clean everything, because the Russians wouldn't think much of the Germans if we leave that behind as you know, so we had to clean it up. Shine it up! And then march us to a railroad station, and we like cattle. It was very cold. I think it was in January. It was very cold, and they left us all outside and they were inside. And you know, you might have a stove one time when you take a chicken like a piece of chalk and go across her bill and she going to stay there. She thinks she's tied down and it was the same situation. We could get up and run, all of us. Of course, they probably machine gun us. But the guards, everything went inside because it was cold. We just, you know, prisoners just get together like chickens and just holding on to each other. And finally we took off and I don't know...it's kind of...I started developing typhus fever and, which came on on me, and we were like partial on trucks and on trains and eventually we were marching. And anybody couldn't walk, they take him under a tree and bingo. And people started disappearing a little bit. Because the Russians were getting close. Sometime you heard explosions, and cannons from far away, and air raids; and we were laying on the ground when there were air raids. And we marched. And I remember like a woman was walking with a bucket to the barn for pigs. You know, they put bread and all leftovers. And she walked a little too close to our column, and a couple prisoners jumped

and knocked her down. And everybody got in on the top, eating from the ground. We were terribly hungry. We were out. And the guards were hitting us with the guns. And then several of them...I think some guards escaped. Well, finally...I forgot what transportation was used or how we did it. I think we got somewhere to Mauthausen, or Gusen.⁴ I told you I was going bad from typhus. And one remarkable thing over there was that when "Antreten," when everybody lines up and some guys came--they were wearing German uniforms, but they were prisoners. But they didn't have any insignias or anything. And they say, "All the kapos, come out." You know what a Kapo was. So they figured they going to get a new position; so they all lined up outside. Said, "Take then first one." He said, "Did he beat on anybody, or did he ever hurt anybody?" So nobody say nothing funny. While we were...at one camp, I think, Dresden-Bariza--oh, that's camp I forgot--we came from the factory from work one night...one morning, and we were infestated by louse. So they got big barrels of some kind of chemicals. We all have to take our clothes off and dip them in there. And then they wouldn't let us in the building, because we were wet. So we...everybody tied on the clothes; and we run around to try and dry it out. Because the guards would not let you in while you wait. And here it's January...is snow on the ground. And now and then, they were playing around. And this boy's father...I don't know, he was a little clumsy. So they told him to get in a barrel, and the guy put the arm around him and smoke a cigarette and wait until the guy die. They killed him in the barrel. So his son was young. He come out and he say, "He killed my father!" So the guard tell them, "Beat him up!" So he beats him up. He said, "Anybody want to help him?" So they open up...he said, "This guy mistreat me, officer." And all the Kapos were beaten by the prisoners. One guy, he had his head split four times. I swear, you can see it this way and that way--four splits. And bunch of them die. And in the morning, one got common sick. "Could somebody help me?" Said, "Oh, the dead ones. Hang him in the toilet." We tell the Germans that he hang himself during the night. (Laughing) And they put him out. We were surprised when they put him; and uh they said that they hang themselves. That happened in the Mauthausen. But now before we got there, I think...I forgot the order of things, I had to read it myself now. It's been many years. We were [in] Gusen. And look like we came in and everybody over there was naked, because they got some typhus or something. And so they took everybody's clothes away. And they also kill a few people there, because their rations were very little. So they were going by the morning count them; and after they deducted dead people, they say, "75 in this room, save 75 portions of bread." So what the Kapos did: they went in the washroom and see somebody weak or something, they killed them. Hold their nose and waited until he died. So they got extra bread. It's kind of sad, isn't it? But that's what actually happened. And uh uh then, of course, we were at Mauthausen...

Q: Come back. The incident at Mauthausen...

A: Where they were beating up kapos.

⁴ Subcamp of Mauthausen. Located in Langenstein, Austria (Province of Upper Austria).

Q: ...where they were beating up the Kapos.

A: Yah, when we first came, they beat up a bunch of Kapos. They told the prisoners to get even.

Q: Did you ever find out how Jews got ahold of German uniforms, and had the power to attack the kapos?

A: I didn't know if they were Jews. I don't know if they were Jews.

Q: Okay.

A: The uniforms were, uh, sort of like the Schutzpolizei, but they didn't have insignia. Just like you go here to a surplus store, and you buy a uniform and don't have any... It's just wearing those uniforms. They were kind of blue. Because the soldiers were wearing green, and so I think they SS people.

Q: So you never found out how these people got the authority to get to allow you to do this.

A: I don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: And then, uh, uh, then one night we were told to pick up. They were Mauthausen...I think it was in the mountains, and there was a lot of POW camps. And I think it was an outbreak when the Russians came. You know, they were Russian prisoners and they shoot the heck out of them. They shot the heck out of them. And they called us to pick up the dead...dead Russians. And uh they also had a thing in Mauthausen. They had a crematorium, that they were burning the dead people. We were cutting them up in front of the crematorium. And the irony of it was when one it was like a lunch time, we sit on a dead body. A lot of people had their clothes on, because they were deteriorated from blood and stuff. After the finish with whatever you had, you look in the pockets. If they got a little cigarette butt or something like that. Now, I tell you another incident. I was in Gräditz-Bareza (ph) when my typhus really went out. I know I hit the nurse in the head; and I don't know what was going on. So I was in the night shift there working on the machine. And the guards come to me and tell me to walk and walk back, and said, "Take him away." So they bring me back to the barracks. That was a memorable night. They brought me back to the barracks. I tried to lay down; and on every bunk is about 4, 5 people and people get real mean. So finally, I find a bunk in the bottom with just one guy sleeping. So I figure maybe he is a kapo or something special. So I put my hands on the ground so I didn't disturb the bed; and some kind of slipped on it, and I went to sleep. In the morning, the guy say, "You better get away from there, because it is wet on the bed and they are going to think you pee under the bed." So I jumped off, and I told this guy to get off too and they guy don't move. He says, "That man is dead. Don't bother him. That's just when he die, he wet it." I was sleeping with a dead man. Now my typhus got worse. I

couldn't eat. Even the rubber bread. So I give it to a guy and he was carrying me, you know, under his arm. And the following night, I decided to hang myself. I had the belt and the belt was cut in half, you know, because I need... I got wooden shoes to part of the belt and tied my shoes, so I don't lose it...and I don't know what to do. So I went on the upper bunk and I put it around my throat and I tie it; and I jump off. That's all I remember. The next thing I open my eyes and I am on the ground. And a guy standing over me, he says, "You going to miss the bread. Come on! Come on! Come on!" I said, "Whose bread?" He said, "Come on!" Because I was giving it to him. So he finally gave up and he ran, because he would miss his too. You know they were giving out the bread. So I remember when I was laying, some Russian got to me and stole my shoes...he stole my...everything. When I was laying down, we were like a homeless people. I got a little metal box in my pocket and I got...I don't know, a nail and a half a razor blade and a couple of cigarette butts. I say, "I know what I am going to do. I am going to take that little blade and cut my wrist." Was stolen. (Laughing) My pockets were empty. (Laughing) The Russian [who] stole it saved my life, because I suppose if I slice it that it would be the end of it.

Q: You never found out who cut you down or who took you down?

A: Yah. The guy took me down who I was giving the bread.

Q: Okay.

A: Because he was holding on to me. You have to see some bread. I think it was steamed. I wouldn't even beg. I mean, it was a mess. The guy, finally, after the war...he wants to give me money because he was one of those guys I kept alive in Schwientochlowitz on a machine, you know. He didn't know a machine from a hole in the ground. I kept 2 or 3 of them going, because I was keeping that thing running, so...

Q: So what happened? You are lying on the ground. You have discovered that you failed at hanging yourself. You don't have a razor?

A: He took me down, so he don't lose the bread.

Q: I see. Your pockets are empty. You've been stripped. You can't cut your wrists. What did you do? What did you do?

A: I did nothing. I just got up, I guess, and I just went on and.. I tell you what else happened. In a few days, we will have evacuate, and I was still have trouble walking. Friends of mine were holding on to me. So they say, "We going to be going, wherever. And the ones who can't walk, we are going to put them on the trucks." So the first thing, people stepped out. I make a step, and my friend says, "Don't be a..." I don't want to say the language. (Laughing) "Don't be..." you know what. "Stay here." Sure enough, they had shelters where the Germans were coming in, you know. Everybody was worrying about the Yperite gas, and

they all got gas masks. So they have shelters, and the shelters have some kind of air coming in there, you know. Is separate from the outside air. They take all the people that couldn't walk and put them in there and throw Zyklon or gas. And we had to dig graves and they put them in the graves. And you know they even...all day they just spewed that white stuff... chloro somehow. And they wouldn't even cover up. And then when they marched us to Czechoslovakia. And...oh, I think there was a thousand of us; and I think maybe a hundred made it. I don't know. They were shooting people on the way, and guards were disappearing. They were escaping. Prisoners were escaping. I couldn't go any place, because I was hardly moving. And I finally got to Leitmeritz [**NB:** Litomerice]. I was in Leitmeritz, a friend of mine from Warsaw recognized me here. And he went up to me and he said, "Come on this side. They don't know I am a Jew. I am a Polack. I can get you on the other side." I refused to go. I was... My age, I was 21 at the time. So I refused to go. I said, "No, I am going to be here and I am going to die like a Jew. I am not going." He said, "You are an idiot!" And I stay with all the people. And sure enough they were taking people to Final Solution, you know. Well, I was trying to say, there's just rumors, the Red Cross told the Russians that we all going to murdered in Theresienstadt and this is a rumor. And they asked for volunteers, because they wasn't agreeing with the military plan. And they asked for volunteers, and a lot of Jews and other people came and we got liberated.

Q: I am confused.

A: I know it.

Q: Back it up.

A: We were walking from the last camp toward Leitmeritz, which is next to Theresienstadt.

Q: Okay.

A: And when I got there, there were camps. A guy was trying to save me, and I wouldn't go in for it. I didn't care anymore. And they said that they gonna kill everybody, you know. So that's why he was trying to save me. He says they're going to take all the Jews now and finish them off. So they said that the Red Cross carried that to the Russians, that we all going to be destroyed over there. So the Russians asked for volunteers because that didn't agree with the military plan. But this is just what I heard. And one of the divisions or outfits or battalions went and liberated us. We were liberated by the Russians.

Q: Okay.

A: And after the Russians liberated us, we gain a few people. There was a few Jews in the Russian Army, and they didn't want to be in the Russian Army. So they got in with us as war prisoners; and that's funny but that's what they did. Polish citizens were drafted in the Russian army, and they escaped. They got mixed in with us. And, uh, and right after that,

there was a terrible typhus epidemic. I think I had typhus. What saved me was walking. That's what they tell me. Me keep on walking would save my life. And we were in a kaserne [Ger: barracks]. How do you call it? Like a camps, military camps over there.

Q: What was it like? The Russians had taken you and put you into military type camps.

A: That was Theresienstadt. I think it was ghetto before, but original, I think, was a military place.

Q: How did the Russians take care of you? Did they feed you? What did they do?

A: Well, we were kind of, more or less, free. We were kind of feeding ourselves. We went out and we pick up peaches and this, and they let us go. But the remarkable things...when we first came was still Germans. And one night, we were waking up, the Germans are capitulate, you know, and the Czechs were running up and down the streets. "The war is over. Long live Beneš!" Whoever was the President [of Czechoslovakia]. And next morning, trains came with prisoners. And they didn't know the war was over. And we hollered to them, "You are free! The war is over!" And the Germans stayed there, and nobody was doing nothing. We were like the chicken with the chalk. We just...officer and there was a bunch of people came with arm bands, whatever you call them. And they picked up all the Germans and take the guns away, and they marched them off. And we tell the prisoners, "You are free!" And a lot of them didn't believe it. And then a night burst started because people were used to eat. You see dead people in the public places like toilets. They were laying on the ground and there was dysentery. Oh, those first moments after the war, they were horrible! I was in a kaserne, you know, Theresienstadt. And we had dead people piling every morning, and wagons were picking them up, picking them up, and that was after the war was over. And that was terrible. People were dying because of the after affects of the war. And then we went through different kind of things like... I tell you a incident, and I keep my hand out. We went to a...you know they got public baths. I never been to one in the United States. Public bath houses. I think they have...I was in Minneapolis, I see one. And they took us to those places to get us cleaned up and dressed. And, of course, all the clothes-- I don't know where they came from--you never got anything to fit you. And there was a number of women. And we all had to take the clothes off, but was nothing to look at. Everybody looked like...I was 80 pounds. And uh...uh well, there was a certain process. They were going under a magnifying glass; because some people got different bugs. I don't know what they call it. They were checking your body. But the washing machines or whatever...who was washing the clothes, they couldn't keep up with it. So they put us in an empty room, like 100 at a time. And all of a sudden, like women dressed like nurses come and tell us to turn the face to the wall. You know, a hundred of us, naked. All of a sudden they come out; and a hundred naked women on the other side. Well, in today's times, that would make a nice X-rated movie that, wouldn't it? But nobody had any thought in that direction. One boy turn around and recognized somebody. So everybody got curious. You say, "Where you from?" People were running around naked. Nobody know naked, you just

see up to here. "Where you from?" "What happened to my mother?" "Are you from my city?" "Are you from my town?" And the women were shaved. And the whole place got all mixed up, and all you heard: "Where you from?" "Is my mother alive?" "Are you from my city?" "Are you from my town?" "Did you...are you been with my father?" "I think you...are you from Slonim?" "Are you from here?" People forgot they were naked. And those nurses come up and said, "Oh, my God! Would you all get back in your places?" (Laughing) You know, people were running around like that; and... and nobody even noticed that people were naked, you know. They were so overcome, looking for relatives, and...and something from home that just... The scenes like that, they will stay with you the rest of your life.

Q: You told me before the interview that you were in Landsberg, the DP camp in Landsberg. Tell me about that camp...and I believe it's there you met your wife. Tell us about the camp first, and then about meeting your wife.

A: Well, that was...I assume that was a displaced person camp. It was run by American. I don't know. There was a... You heard of IRO, International Refugee Organization. It was run by the IRO. Of course, we were in barracks. Maybe in one room was two guys. Were not too many families, because everybody came out of the war and today, you see a guy and tomorrow he disappeared because you know, they said the biggest freedom is when you have nothing. You're really free (laugh), and that's happened to people. They were free. Like you talk to him, the next day he see a train or a car, he jump out, he goes to the next city. Nobody really was binded to an area or to a place. You know a lot of people thought they would go back to Poland. Other people want to go here or there. So it took awhile to settle that situation, you know, and people started getting married. Me and my wife was about the first marriages in this particular camp, because we got married in 1945.

Q: Back up. How did you meet her?

A: You really want to hear that?

Q: Yeah, I really want to hear it. You are where in this?

A: I had to put a little beggar into it. I like electronics, you know; and I went looking for a job in the camp.

Q: You are in Landsberg?

A: In Landsberg, a displaced person camp. The chief of police and the man in the employment office had the same name. So I walked in the police station. So guys in there--friends of mine--said, "Hey, join the police force." And after the bad taste during the war with the police, you know, that stuff, I said, "Forget it." He says, "It's not like the police you know. Nowadays, you watch warehouses." You know, we got warehouses from IRO with stuff.

You get a suit, and you can eat in the cantina. You get cigarettes, you know. So I joined it. My wife was 16 at the time. She came with a girlfriend. And they went to a dance, you know, that was...and some guy falls in love with her--a Greek--and follows those two home. And get in a room with them and put a knife on the table. And he says, "You gonna marry me or I'll kill you, kill myself." And I don't know, we got...somebody call the police. And I was the heel who arrest him. And the next day (laughing)... This is a true story. The next day, I came checking out; because I thought she was cute. But I was 22, so I kept check on her and I got myself in the biggest trouble in my life because ...

Q: How?

A: I had a date with her. And we were walking, and this Greek showed up. And he knew I was the guy who arrested him, separated them; so he wanted to fight me. So this other policeman...he got a beating. So he went and got the whole Greek colony trying to attack me, and broke head into it, tore my ear. That was a big fight, you know. (laugh). We were in the 20s. So...well, eventually, we got married. We knew each other for about... Basically, she had a fiancé in Holland; and I was doing everything trying to help the girl back to him. He was a wonderful guy, believe me. He came visiting us in the United States. He met an English lady, a doctor. He die. He's dead. He stay with us a few days. Wonderful guy. He saved her life. He brought her food to the camp and everything. She just told me, "He's a wonderful guy, but I don't love him enough to marry him, you know." So she didn't get married. And we got married, and...well, you know, she's...but that was some kind of traditional wedding. I think the whole camp came, because that was one of the first wedding. And I had 300 people, which 275 I didn't know from Adam. And there was like a covered dish...everybody brought apples and food, and somebody got together a band. And the band was terrible! (Laughing) Half of them didn't know how to make music. But that was nice, and...and we got married. We had to get married two more times.

Q: Why?

A: Because in order to go to United States, they didn't recognize certain marriages. We got married in Landsberg [**NB:** the DP camp], a religious wedding. Then we got married in Landsberg [**NB:** the city], in Germany; and went to the Justizpalast. To the Palace of Justice. We got married over there. Over there, you advertise it for 3 days. If nobody come around. Then before we went to United States, we got to get married by...I think it was a clerk or something. Wearing an American uniforms. They didn't recognize the other marriages. So we already had the little boy! (Laughing) So we got married 3 times. We said that's why we never divorced. We had to do it three times. (Laughing)

Q: Tell me about trying to get to Israel. You are still in the DP camp.

A: Yeah. And the first time, they caught us; because we were playing like we were Greeks or Italians. And I don't know how we got out. We talked to a Jewish Rabbi in American

uniform that we didn't have the food, and we trying to get to Israel. And the first thing you know, we were surrounded by jeeps and everything, turn around and going back to Landsberg. Now in 19...I think '46 or '48, we were from some kind of underground organization in connection with the Irgun or Haganah. Our job was steal arms from American forces and send them to Israel. So like I was a police officer. When I was standing guard at night with the American soldier, I usually tried to get rid of his rifle or something. And he was so sleepy when they took him send the other guy he got up without it. So I put it aside. And then...now and then the brought a whole trucks with weapons like the _____. They were organized. They came to Newport News [Virginia] and bought a ship, and things like that. One day we had an assignment to throw...you know...pamphlets or fliers. So I ask...I went down to the switch where you turn off the lights, and we turn the lights out. And when the lights came back on and every move you take they was flooded with pamphlets and stuff and by Israel (laughing)... And one day I had occasion to talk to Ben Gurion. He wouldn't talk to me. He came...he was wearing a dirty shirt, you know...that was... And everybody got it together...putting him on the wagon, and he was talking to his aunt. And I was trying to send a note with him to some relative; I wrote it. And he says, "Got to be in Hebrew." I said, "I don't write Hebrew." "Forget it!" So I went...while he was talking, I was running around trying to get somebody to write it for me. (laugh) He put it in the pocket, but he was... You know, when he came to Landsberg, we were trying to get him uh, uh, a royal welcome. And we didn't got nothing to do it with. We have a old police car which was smoking and making a lot of noise and some old motorcycles. And some guys got the idea that the driver is going to sit like this, and the guy in the back seat is gonna turn the other way. We got funny. And the Germans, I think, were laughing when they see that parade. And first thing, I think, he says that day, "The gates of Israel are open. You all can come." He says, "Don't ask where you gonna eat or where you're gonna live. We don't know. But you can come." (laugh). That's what he told us. Then he went on talking. Oh. I think. I am all mixed up some. That might be...I know it was Ben Gurion; but the guy who said that I think was the first ambassador from Israel came to talking to that thing. That was because I remember Ben Gurion got on a wagon, but we went to pick up from the train station the first ambassador. And I think that is when we made that funny calvacade with broken bicycle and old motorcycles and cars, and the Germans were laughing, you know. They are used to real parades, and here this is just like a comedy carrying the guy in. And that's who said that...he said...because when Ben Gurion talk to us, there was no Israel that time. That was before. And this guy was the first ambassador, and he says that the gates are open. He says, "Just don't ask me where you gonna eat and where you gonna live. The gates are open." So we were going to Israel; and the war started, you see, with the Arabs. So I was...we had a outfit and one of us became a general, a lieutenant. No, I never made it. So we had a difficult getting out of Germany too. We had to play Italians due to the English intelligence. You know what happened to the Exodus, you know.

Q: What happened to you? You were trying to get out now?

A: Being that we never left yet, I keep running back because we were a couple hours away from

my wife, from Landsberg, you see. Munich wasn't that far. So, I came back a couple of times. And the neighbors jumped me. And my wife was crying. "You are not going to leave her here, in a strange land. There's enough young people to go. You don't leave a wife with a child." You see. So, I didn't go anymore. They convince me. She was crying, you know. Of course, I felt kind of bad; because all my buddies were going, and we were going together so...and so I stayed behind. Then the war was over, and we came to the United States.

Q: Okay. Alright. Is there anything you want to add? Anything you want to say?

A: Well, I hope maybe someday we can find some people which... maybe they're not dead. Just like I find my aunt after 4 years. And for some reason, my son do whatever he is doing now in the Holocaust Museum... I wish that he be a success, because he said to me he is born in this displaced person camps, we are Holocaust survivors. So he says he wouldn't trust the job to anybody. That's exactly what he told me. He says he wouldn't trust that to anybody. He's real...I hope he's doing it with his whole heart. He doesn't do it like a job. And if anything else you want to know, I'll be glad to tell you.

Q: I think we are done.

A: We are finished?

Q: I think so.

A: Okay.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Oh, I thank you for taking an interest. I mean, you know...

Q: It's a very moving story.

A: Like they say, there's a thousand of stories like that. I mean, I wasn't by myself.