

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Josef
September 22, 1989
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Josef, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on September 22, 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. The interviewee's last name may not be shown publicly in any manner.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

JOSEF

September 22, 1989

01:00:20

Q: Would you tell me your first name, please?

A: My name is Josef.

Q: Where and where were you born?

A: I was born in Vienna in 1915 -- June 25th, 1915. And after a few years, when I was a little boy, my parents moved back to Poland and -- before World War I. This was Galicia. And I was living in the town of Przemysl, and I went back with my parents and I living in Przemysl. This was my town.

Q: Ok, tell me about your parents. What did your father do?

A: My father, he had a small grocery store, like small cafeteria, and he worked with my mother in the store. And --

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I have one sister, and I have four brothers. So it -- how many? Three brothers, and I was the fourth one -- and one sister. Together, five children. And we went to school in Przemysl, and my sister was going to the school in Przemysl until war time. And my older brother, after graduation from high school, he went to Italy, to Bologna. He was studying medicine there. So we were home. And after he finished the studying, he was still working in Bologna. He was a scientist, and a very good physician.

Q: Ok -- what, tell me -- let's bring it back to you, ok, since we want to focus on you. Tell me, you have a family, it's -- you're growing up in the town of Przemysl. Did you go to -- what kind of activities did you take place in? Were you in Jewish school? What kinds of --

A: No, when I was in high school -- first of all, when I was in public school, how my life start? I went one time with my father to a dentist, and I look around and I said, "I would like to be a dentist." So my father look at me and said, "Ok, if you will be a good pupil, student, you will be a dentist." But this dentist, he was a good psychologist, and he said, "If you like to be a dentist, you can come to my office to watch after school, after homework, and you are very welcome." And I was coming to him, and when I graduated from high school, still I was coming to him, and I was assisting him. And I learned about everything else from his work.

01:03:23

Then when war broke up, no, that's it, I couldn't do nothing. then after war was finished. I am

going a little too -- then I start to study in grad school, dentistry. But during the war, first when the German attacked Polish country, this was in September 1st, 1939. There was a terrible time. There suddenly became airplanes and they start to bombard people on the street. There was exactly vacation finishing, and the children, they have first day at school, and they came in this beautiful weather. The sun was shining and they was walking on the street. And suddenly came planes. You -- we didn't know. We thought this is our own planes. Very low. And they suddenly start to with machine guns killing the people on the street. Throwing bombs, was killed, terrible thing. And then we heard on the news that this is for the war. The Germans attacked Polish country. So after two or three days, there was -- the President of the Poland, he gave an order to young people to run away to east, in the direction of Russia. So we went, four brothers together in the east to the city of Lvov. We came there. It was terrible way because we were going only really walking, running, and during the day time the planes, they are going low on the way and was killing people, he refuge, the refuge -- no, the refugees. Ok, so this what happened and Lvov, when we were there a few days there came Russian and the German, they went back and they took the part of Poland and half of part of the city of Przemysl where we were living. So the city was divided by river San. One side -- east -- was Russian, and west was German. So we can see each other. And I worked there in polyclinic, but -- and during this time, when was Russian. My parents, they still were working in our place. And my brother, elder, was in hospital. And the young-- younger brothers, they were working in the place to get some work because everyone supposed to working. And then started another war. And this was in June 22, 1941, the German attacked Russia, and in a few hours later they were in our town and other they came.

01:06:14

So it was kills. There was -- after this, the Russian came back and they was fighting about the city of Przemysl one week, seven almost days. So, in the morning, there were Russian. At night, there were Germans. And every person was hiding deep, you know, in the cellars and other, other places because we didn't know what to do. After seven days, the Russians got to go back, pulling back, and the Germans are coming. So we were -- we want-- wanted in the beginning to go with Russian, but they said they won't take us civil people. Only they was going by themselves. So we left there, and the Germans came. And after a few weeks -- this was 1941 -- they start to make orders, ghetto Jewish -- segregate Jewish people. Everybody has to work -- arbeit.¹ And start to be difficult life, but still we didn't know what.

Q: How many of you were together?

A: In this time, we were four brothers together. My sister was still in Lvov, in Lemberg.²

Q: Could you hold up the photograph of your family, please, so we can see it?

¹ Work (German).

² Lemberg is the German name for Lvov.

A: Yes.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

A: But I will explain who is who. So this is my father. This is my mother. This is my older brother, the physician. And this is my sister, and this is my younger brother, who were killed in the war -- like in ghetto. They took them to concentration camp. This is the mother-in-law of my youngest brother's wife. This is her mother and her father. They was together killed in 1942. Those taken to a concentration camp from ghetto. That's my close family. This is from ghetto, when we were there. We were working. This is for my oldest brother, the physician. He worked in hospital, and there was like a field hospital in ghetto -- small hospital. He was working like a physician there, and this is his ID. And this was my ID. I was working with him there, the same, given in, in the ghetto.

Q: Thank you.

A: So in the beginning, when we were in ghetto, we have to go. We were organized. Young people -- everybody has to go in the morning under the guard to do work. So I was working with my older brother. We have to -- they took us to a special place. We were loading coals in the wagons forward and back, under heavy guard, from morning until late evening. And nothing to eat. Only you have to work in there. If you have something with you -- a piece of bread, anything -- you could have.

01:09:29

And we work very hard. Then -- this was like in 1941. Then in 1942, they start to take so-called Aktion³ -- take people from the ghetto and make smaller ghetto. So they surround, for example, one part of ghetto. And this part people couldn't live there. They have to go to the wagon, to the train, and they was taking them out. Nobody knows where they were sent. There's only -- they're taking us another place. They will have good life working, and this and this. So the people cannot say no because there was an order. So you have to stay. So this was in 1942. 1941, they, they asked to get -- to give to them thousand young boys. But the ghetto, the -- no. In ghetto, the people who are partners like small government in ghetto, they, they was taking time. They didn't like to give the young people. They wanted to have a list of young people. So this was going to 1942. And then in the beginning of 1942, they said, "Two thousand." And they came. They have at least -- they came to our home, and they wanted to take me. But my younger brother, he was a little physical stronger, he said, "No, I will go." And they took him to the concentration labor-like camp in Lvov. And this was the young boy who they later hanged. And they took him there. He, he voluntary -- he was going because he wanted to save my life. And I was still working with my, with my parents and,

³ Murderous campaigns undertaken by the Nazis for political, racial, or eugenic ends (German).

and my brothers in ghetto. We apparently didn't know about deaths, what's happened to my brother. But my wife how she told you, she was going over there. She was in contact with us. She help us. She was working with my mother and father in this small shop. She was like our own sister, like a daughter. She was very attached to us. We were attached to her. But she was Aryan.

01:11:52

She had no -- Catholic, so they didn't touch her. So she can go some. She was sneaking under the fences in the ghetto, and she brought something and this and this. We have contact. When they took my brother to Lvov, she was going to see him, because she was a girl and she was Catholic. She could go close and see something. He can go to the fence or something. She ask some watchman who are same day. Maybe they let her go to talk. So she was in contact with him. One thing she make arrangement with him, but she will break. He asked her that he wanted to run away and maybe she will hide him. So she has to bring him some clothes, this and this; and they make arrangement where, where he has to come to see her. And this time she came but they make special hours when she will meet him. But there was now going the military trains, and all kinds of civil trains were stopped. First, military. So it was a couple of hours, maybe two or three hours late she came, because the trains was - - she couldn't come. In meantime, he -- according to, to his agreement with her -- he left the, the camp, and he saw a woman who was similar to my wife. He came to her. And then she was not this right person. So when he was turning back, he want to go back, some watchman, they find him. They saw him. Now they took him back to, to camp. And when my wife came to see him, they told her it's too late. They hanged him. So she came very depressed.

01:13:36

Q: Let's make something very clear. Slow down a minute, please. Relax. We have plenty of time. You are about 18? How old are you?

A: 24 at this time.

Q: 24 at this point, all right. Your wife was 16, 17?

A: She was 17, yes.

Q: All right. We need to make clear that she was obviously not yet your wife.

A: No.

Q: And that there was indeed -- because she was Catholic, you would have tended not to think in those directions.

A: No. She was only very, very attached to us. She was like a relative. We, we love her very much, and she love us very much.

Q: Let's talk now -- I want to talk about you. I don't want her story, or her side of it. I want your side of it, all right? Your brother has been has been taken, has been killed.

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do? Where were you at this point in time?

A: In ghetto, in Przemysl. And we got the message. We didn't tell the parents what was happened. To them, they didn't know about it. And we work. And then -- and this was July -- in August 1942. They make another ghetto -- smaller -- another Aktion. They took our parents, and they took away. And I remember when they was concentration them in the place I was staying, and I was crying. And there was staying a young soldier. He asked me, "Why are you crying?" I said, "They are my parents!" He said, "You will never see them." I said, "They supposed to take them to, to a job to work." "They will murder," he said. "You will never see him -- them." If you want, you can bring them little tea or something to drink. But go fast." And I was running back to home, and I prepare something for them, and I came. It was too late. I saw them already pushing to the cattle wagon, with sticks. They was pushing. And my father, he turns -- like my mother was turned down; and he looked and he saw me, and he said like this [gesturing father waving goodbye to Josef]. And this was the last thing what I saw. Then -- and there was in the meantime other Aktion. And we still working hard. And, and November 18, 1942, there was the Aktion.

01:16:04

Right before the people, they was finding out that they were an Aktion. So they make under the kitchen an apartment. There was like an entrance to cellar, and we make like a bunker. Was hiding entrance, and we make like a bunker. And we were sitting there. There was almost thirty people there, and we are sitting. And we went on November 17th at night there hiding. On November 18th, in the morning, start to be the Aktion. We heard noises, shooting, screaming. And barking dogs and everything. And we heard what's going on. Then, almost at the end, was almost probably before seven o'clock, after six, before seven o'clock in the evening, there was dark because the weather was snow, cold. And somebody pushed the window, and they said it was covered with sack -- with straw. We didn't know about that. Because was called a sound from the people who were Ordnungs,⁴ the people who was helping the, the, the SS men. He pushed with a stick the, the, the sack with straw, and was a little light. Because we were sitting in dark, but still came a little light inside. He said, "If somebody's hiding there" -- he said this automatically -- "has to get out, because we will throw grenades insi-- inside." So there was a woman near the window sitting. She pushed her daughter, and said, "Go. Save your life." She pushed her through the window.

⁴ Ordnungsdienst [Order Service] (German).

The daughter was maybe eight, nine years old. And she pushed her, and she start to scramble go through the window. And suddenly, the SS man who was far away, they was almost finished the job. They turned back and saw the girl coming out, and this guy, he was helping her. They came back. And they start to beat her and kick her with feet in, in the face in front of entrance. And then the mother start to scream. And they opened the doors, and they said, "Out! Out! Out!" And there was standing a row with soldiers and with policemen with rifles.

01:18:14

And they throw us -- "Ground! Ground!" And was they hitting us with rifles. Who got down, they killed him on the spot. Who could run has to go another place. And they, they -- I, I, with my brother and my cousin, we were running. We got the full blows, but we survive. We came to the place they keep us together. And there came a sergeant, and he said, "Now, we will shoot you. Stay in a row." And my older brother, who was saying to me, he said, "Aim your chest to the rifles. Because," he said, "They will hit you in the arm or in your ear. They will not shoot you twice. And they will put line -- put you in a great big line, and you will suffocate. So try to aim yourself," he said, "and stay." And we were staying in line, and they with the rifles, they wanted to shoot us. Suddenly came an officer, an SS officer, and he's asking, "What's going on here?" They said, "No. We find they're hiding Jewish people. According to the order, they're supposed to voluntary come here. They didn't come, so we picked them up. And now we have to shoot them." He look on us. He said, "No. The train still is under the station. We need fat Jewish people. We need there for some -- " He said like soap or something, I don't remember so. "Put them to the train." And he put us -- they put us to the train. There was in my wagon was over a hundred people like sardine together, you know. And was -- this was winter. But we were thirsty, dry mouth, dry tongue. high temperature. We was sitting, and we couldn't, we couldn't breathe. And they locked the door. There was barbed wires on the small window. And the train start to move. And one man, he hang himself in the train in the belt, and they tried to cut him off, and they cut him off and he was angry.

01:20:46

He said, "No. I will not go for -- so you will have to... No! Don't! No!" He was screaming. He hanged himself. And I was going, I said to my brother, "No, I will not go there. I will commit suicide. I will not go." He said, "Don't do this. Don't." I said, "No, I will never go." And I was going little by little, they helped me came to the window. And I don't know how I find in my pocket pliers. I have this small pliers. And I start to break the barbed wires. I was working a long time, and I cut my hands, was bleeding. And I broke the wires. When I was in bunker, I had a loaf of round bread. And I saved them. They was taking us, I took the bread. Here I had little belt. And when I broke the wire, I said, "Push me through the window. I will jump." And the people start to push me and my head forward. Was tight, but when I was looking down, I was on the running, you know, the wheels train. And then I saw the tracks and the small stones, like gravels. Everything. I said, "No. I will not go with my head, because I will -- right to the wheels." It was like instant. One second, I wanted to

commit suicide. Another second -- like instant -- I said, "Put me back! Put me back!" They, they pull me back, and I said, "I will go with my legs forward." And they pushed me with my legs, and I was hanging on the left hand. I was holding the window outside. I was hanging, and the train was in good speed. When the train was taking a curve, I jumped forward and I was sliding. And suddenly I felt severe pain in my chest, and I was unconscious maybe a few minutes. I don't know how long. Then when I came to my normal condition, I saw in my breast there was a hole like a fist. And this hurt my chest, because I stopped on a small post with wires. There were some wires. And I came out, and the train was far away, and I was running up the train. The train -- there was snow, and I was looking where would I find my brother. No, but I find two other boys who jumped. One has broken here bone, clavícula (ph) bone, broken. One was moving.

01:23:13

Another, his face scratched, but nothing special. So I helped. I took the, the belt. I put like here [showing that he tied the arm to the man's side], to, to keep the hands not moving. And I said, "We have to run away." So we are going under the hill just like small way. There was snow. And we were going to the place that was called Lipowice. Was after Przemysl maybe seven kilometers, maybe more. And I went there, and I told them, "I have here a man." And normal, in wintertime of skiing, and I was coming to him to buy tea or coffee or some cookies. And I said, "I will go to him. Maybe he will give us shelter for one night. But then he will think in the morning what he have to do." And I went to him, and I knocked on the window. He opened, and I told him who I am. He was a nice man. He was scared, very, because he knows what happens. "Nobody has seen you?" I said, "No, no." And he gives us the shelter. We were sitting on the bench all night. And he give some to drink, you know, coffee or anything. People drink only water, because we have very high temperature, very. Then in the morning we said goodbye. And we said to each other, "Everybody's going in different way. They will not catch us together. Only separate way." As a matter of fact, after war I met them. They survive. So I went to my friend, who was working in hospital. And I went to him. I was holding my loaf, bread loaf, under my arm, and I was looking like a working man who's going to work. And when I came to him, he was scared. I told him what's happened, and he said, "Ok, I will try to do the best for you." And he was keeping me in a small cottage, which was his mother's cottage, but she was not in this time at home. So he said, "Stay here." He locked me inside. And I was there all day, and I didn't know what to do. And I was..."Maybe I can trust him, maybe no. Maybe he can go to Gestapo or something, and this will be the end." But on the evening, he came. Was about eight o'clock. He said, "Joe, I am sorry. I was going around. I cannot find place for you. I cannot keep you, because my wife she is scared. We cannot risk our lives. So what you want to do? Tell me. I will bring you in any place." He worked in hospital, and he had those carriage with two horses. Always he could travel, because he can ride this. So there was -- on the other side of the Przemysl there was a bridge. So to go to the town where I was living before, we have to cross the bridge. But on the bridge, there was always watchmen, German.

01:26:10

They were watching who was crossing; they were looking inside you're not smuggling something. So he said, "I will risk my life and your life. But you have to lie down under my feet. I will cover you with a blanket. I will keep my feet on your face. And I have the pass, so I will try to go. But don't move. We will see. Maybe we'll be lucky." And really, we went there. They stopped him. But they know him, and he's showed them the pass. They was looking inside, but they didn't look too much. He was holding the feet on my back. And we passed. So they came downtown, close to my street that I was living. He said, "Joe, good luck. That's it. And do what you want." I said thank you, and he left. So I didn't know where to go. I went back to the place where we were living before. And I went to cellar. There was not basement, only cellar -- open cellars. And I was sitting there, and, and I saw this is not realistic because the people who maybe who lives there know who was living there, they can come back to cellar. They will see me. There was open space. And there's -- in fact there were rats and mice and dirt. So I said, "Maybe Stefania, maybe she will let me stay for one night." And I went upstairs, and I was knocking at her door. And she -- first she asked me, I told her quietly, "It's me." And she opened the door, and she saw me. Now, I was really in very bad condition. And she was very mercy to me with her really soft heart. She was most caring. She helped me to wash and this -- and she gave me her bed to sleep. And her sister, she was wondering what's going on. Because she saw me first, little sister. And she explained her how this, anyway. And the morning, she put me under the bed; and on the front of me, she put a sack with potatoes. She had a sack of potatoes there. So I was behind the sack of the potatoes, and she covered me blanket. She said, "Don't make noise, because the people are coming -- friends and this -- and they cannot see you." So this was for a few days. Then she went to my brother. He worked in, in a farm which was under supervision of military, belonged to the military, and they -- all brothers was going through the military.

01:28:27

So my brother was working there with his fiancée. And when was the Aktion in the ghetto, they hold the people there because they know they will go back to ghetto, and they will take them. The, the -- no, the SS will take them. But they wanted to save them, because they needed them for work. So they told them stay this night and one day more here. They were sleeping there. So my wife, she came. She told him what's happened, and she told him that I survive. I came, and I'm at her home. He was very happy. And he was crying, also, because we lost the rest of the family. And then his wife, and they was taking them back to ghetto under guard -- I don't know how -- she run away. And she came to us to home...to...to my wife's, where I was hiding temporary. No, she said, no, she will not go to ghetto. She doesn't like to go. I didn't like to either go to ghetto, but my brother, he went back to ghetto with the group. And then he came there. He start to contact with us. And then he told us in the ghetto now is quiet, temporarily is quiet. "Nothing there, nothing. No Aktion. So you maybe you'll come back." After a few days, we went back to ghetto.

Q: What was the ghetto like at that time?

A: This was no -- there were a few streets they surrounded with fences. And there was watch, like police. Police watch-- watching men, Polish, and there was German. Was the stationary because when it was Aktion, it came special group--SS or special military group who was taking the Aktion then or doing this. But when this other, they left to the domestic people to take care about the ghetto. That the people cannot get out, that cannot go in. But my wife's little sister. She was going, playing and she was the messenger. She was bringing some message. We wanted something. We asked her. She would prepare in, in the evening. Always I was under the fence sneaking through the town and I was coming and I took her to pick up something. No. In the meantime, my brother, he got typhus and his friend got typhus.

01:31:26

That was terrible thing, but we need something to -- there was no medicine. Nothing but something to, to keep them strong, to fight the temperature. So my wife, she prepared a sugar or milk or some cheese, butter -- something. And I smuggled this back to ghetto. Some drugs like painkiller drugs, you know, against high fever. This was, she could get without a, a prescription. So, like aspirin, you know -- such things like that. So kids, they survive, thanks God. But one time -- I have to tell this story. I was going from ghetto, and, and my watch was 8:30. But the, the curfew was until 9:00. After 9:00, they can catch anybody on the, on the street. They can kill without asking if you have no permission to go on the pavement. And I had always dressed similar to the dress like the young Hitlerjugend,⁵ they were wear. Those high shoes, short tight black pants, and nice coat and a nice hat with a, with a -- with the, with a -- like a, no, like a shaving thing, you know? Like a feather, yes. And I was going always dressed in this. But this time I had an attaché case, because I was going to my way to pick up some food and my watch.

01:32:58

And I changed my dress from my old dress to this dress. I forget to put this -- I'll show you this false document. And I'm going... There was a bridge from the ghetto, which was going to the town, but the, the bridge was going from street to the factory which there was fixing broken cars, trains and everything. So -- but on the side was entrance to ghetto, but this was blocked by barbed wires. And was like a road that you cannot go to ghetto. But always I was going through the holes, and I was going to the bridge down to the town. And when I was going downstairs to the town already, suddenly a flashlight went to my face. "Oh," I said. "That's it!" And in German language, somebody said, "Hände hoch!"⁶ I put my "Hände hoch," and the attaché case fell down. So he came close. And I said, "No, this is German police. That's it! They will finish me." But I said why. And then came this Polish policeman. He was speaking German. He asked me, "Who are you? Where are you going?" I said, "No, I will not tell him that I am come from ghetto." I said, "I am going from the factory. I worked for my father." I said, "Dinner -- lunch. And I -- dinner -- and I am going back from factory

⁵ Hitler Youth (German).

⁶ "Hands up!" (German).

home." "Give me your documents." And I am looking in pocket, and I don't have my -- they called the ID card was Kennkarte⁷ in German, ID card. I was looking. I said, "I am sorry. I don't have in this dress. But if you like to come with me to the factory, there everybody knows me and, and they will tell you who I am." And I told, "I will go with you back." Then we will be close to the entrance to the block, entrance to the ghetto. I will give him a blow, and I will jump to ghetto. But he was smart. He said, "No, no. No way! No way!" I said, "Why?" He said, "Maybe you are a spy." I said, "What kind of spy? You are a Polish man, and I am a Polish man. And I am a spy for whom? I am spying for Germany?" He was working for Germany. "I'm not spying for Germany." He said, "Don't touch me." He start to swear to me: "You such -- out. And you, we're going to Gestapo."

01:33:29

And I know if he will go with me, and this is -- he said, "You know, it is 9:30." And I show him my watch, was 8:30. He said, "Throw your watch under the running train. This is 9:30." My watch was not working. And I was late. After curfew, curfew. So he said, "We are going to Gestapo." And like this, and I know if he will go on the street at night with this -- with me, the German, you know, police, they are going also patrols. And they will see him holding. They will take me from him, and they will kill me on the spot. So I, I know the psychology of the Polish people. I start to talk him: "Hey, you are a tall guy and I am a little short man. And you are holding me under gun. What you think, that I will kill you or I will run away? You're supposed to be ashamed! You're a coward." Like this. And he said to me, "You don't --" I said, "You're a coward." So he put his gun here, the rifle. He walked with me like this, and we start to talk Polish. I talk to him Polish. So, really, there was going a German patrol, but they look on us and they didn't touch. Because he was a policeman, and I was talking to him Polish. He was talking to me Polish. They didn't understand what we were talking about. So they thought maybe I'm also a, a secret police. So I am going with him.

01:36:44

So one thing passed away behind me, and then we are going, there was a street up. And I see from far away, like maybe two hundred yards, a small light. And there stand a watchman as the Gestapo watchman. That's the Gestapo office. I said, "This is the end!" And I talked to him. No, no, no. He is taking me there. I said, "Listen, if I am a partisan, you know, they are watching you. Your whole family will be killed, and you will be killed. They will put in fire your house. You will not survive." I said, "I don't care. They will kill me, but you will --" He said, "I don't care. Now this is wartime, and this is my duty." And sudden, I don't know, came to my mind something. And I hit him with my right hand. He was taller than me. I hit him once right, and then upper cut his left. He fell down like a piece of wood. I felt I have such power because this was death -- life or death. And I was so angry. I was said to him, "You dirty pig! You will get what you deserve! I could kill you right now," I said, "but I will not do this. I will not make my hands dirty." And I turn around and I was going on the hill

⁷ ID card (German).

the street down. I was not running. And then, in the last minute, I start to run away. And I came to my wife at night. I was out after 10:00, and she was, "What's happen?" And I told her the story. And I was all night staying there. And next morning, I told her, "Go look on the street. Watch what's happen." She went. She came, said, "Nothing. No nothing, and nobody." I don't know. You know, quiet. And in the evening, I was going back to ghetto. And when I was jumping through the bridge, I heard shooting -- [Imitating shooting sound]. And I went myself, and then I saw, look what's happen. There are another like SS man or maybe not SS man, but he was a secret police. There was lying a woman he took from the train. A woman, he was taking off her shoes. She was still alive, and he was taking off her shoes. He killed her because he felt she was a Jewish person. They found her. Anyway, I went to ghetto. And I came to there, and I was there for a while.

01:39:00

Then her sister always was with her and counting, and I came back. I talked to my wife was yet to find a place to hide, because in this place we cannot stay. I said, "I have to come with my brother, with his fiancée, and my friend and his daughter. Would be about five to seven people." And so we organized. She's under -- "The beginning," she said, "it will be very hard." So I said, "Listen. We have to do this." So she was looking, and she find on the hill is like a side street on the border of the town. The name of Tatarska (ph) Street. And this was like a nice small cottage. And I came with her once there before she made the arrangement. And I said, "This is perfect for this purpose." So she make the whole thing legal. She says she make -- she get the papers. And when she moved there, I came there with my friend. And first we were looking around; and I think, "We have to make a bunker." So under her bed, I cut a piece of floor. We start to digging hole. We were digging, and she was taking in the evening in a sack this ground. And there was some trees, and between them she was putting the, the, you know, the soil, so nobody would see the soil. And we make such in that two could stay there. The attic was too open. And there was like a ladder from the hole. There was a hole between attic. So I was thinking, "Later." But for first thing, I said, "Instead of sit in the open attic, maybe we will be there." But then came the father of, the father of the girl, and, and came another, my friend. So was a little more people. And I...I don't know what to do. I said, "Now we have to go upstairs because we cannot be in the hole." So we are, we are sitting in the open attic. And then I told to my wife, "Look, maybe we will find an old wood, something that we can call and make a first row similar to this round wood."

01:41:26

This would be nothing new. And I said, "We will make a false wall, do something." Was very difficult. She was running around many places, and then she find somebody. And they brought her this, and she said she like to have this for wintertime for, for fire. So they left this. And she brought this little by little inside. The neighbors was asking, "What?" She said, "No, for I like to cut this and cut for wintertime." So was not for -- not I wanted. Then when she brought the -- we measured everything. We cut it by little and we make numbers that everything will fit. Then we have to nail this. There will be noise. So I advised my wife

make washing, laundry -- everything. And ask them if they have ropes and nails, that you will put them in attic, you will hang them and they will dry. The, the, you know, the washed laundry. So that. So they did, and this time, instead of putting nails and put, you know, the ropes, we know they, they were fast. Then we put a little also outside, and if you put everything there, there will be not now, they will be exact like is dirt and, and from the spiders. The -- took from our place they put another place. Was look exactly like old thing. And this the, the attic was shut in maybe like two yards. I make sure of it. And I make, make the roof was going on an angle, so I make a small door, so that I can every time open, watch and close right away if somebody will come. And I was this what I have my curved spine. And that's because almost two weeks I was laying like this, because I was watching always if somebody not come. And it's hard to know. We were there. It was very fine. And then the people that come, little by little, from ghetto-- then my brother and his wife, they came, the last ones. But so other people, they came little by little. There was story how they were coming. But my wife, I think she thought about it. So anyway, we were all 13 there..

01:43:47

Now we have to organize food and organize the regime control that we do not do something which can be dangerous to our life. So I make like the [indecipherable]. Every two hours somebody sitting watching. They will be not snoring at night. So we have a stick with a rabbit, this was from a rabbit like with the tail. And I told them if somebody was snoring, you go to your nose to wake up. But don't make noise. Because you have to be, perhaps somebody will wake you up and try to sleep on the stomach. Everybody on the stomach, not on the back because you will snore. That was dangerous, number one. Number two, no smoking. The people, they want to smoke. They were smoking anything. I said, "No smoking, because the, the smoke will go to the place within the, the wall, or they can see at night light through, or can be a fire. We don't need this." So there was really a fight to convince the people that this is tragedy. This is not for us. Then one, the woman who came with her two children, she got typhus there. And she, she was infected in ghetto, but after a few days, after a week, the typhus develop. And she had high fever, temperature. She was talking. So I was the one who was taking care of her. I said nobody could come close to her. So it was really tough, because there was not too much space, but she was -- I was watching her. I shave her hair, and I said to my wife, "Do anything what you wanted to get something." Because after experience with my brother in ghetto, to keep her going. And she was trying to buy for her sugar and something, and aspirin and this and this. And anyway, I, I make also a prescription for heart, you know, some medicine to keep, make the heart going. And she went to pharmacy. And I said, "Maybe, we ok. Maybe, no." And she made it.

01:46:22.

I don't know how. She got started. It was another story, but a lot -- she made it, she got it, she came. Anyway, the children were prepared if she, God forbidding, passed away, that we in the hole will make a, we will make a hole, a grave. We will put her temporary there. Because

we had to be prepared for everything, I told them. But anyway, she survived, was Ok. Then I convinced the people stop smoking, and about snoring. Then was problem with, with food, because this woman she wanted special, special food all the time. But something was very difficult to get. This was not so easy. Was tough time. But we were sitting. Was many, many stories, like my wife told you. They came, they gave her two hours to move out. We asked her to run away, to save her life and her sister. "No," she said no. And she was staying, and she survived. Then came the German. They came, they have two nurses -- there were two nurse and their two boyfriends. And they was almost everyday sleeping there. So we were above them. And sometimes there was little noise, because they can hear. And I was feeling that this is very dangerous. They are there. And one time, like my wife told, they came. They was holding my wife, and one nurse also was with them and one was running. There was like not stairs, only there was like no...

01:47:50

Q: Ladder.

A: Ladder. And...and no -- you can hear the noise if somebody stepping on the -- so I was hearing something. And I closed the door. And suddenly came one of the nurse. She was looking around, going around looking, not quiet. Was the last moment. And she went down, and she told them no. So my wife, she saw what's going on. Then she bought chicken, and she was holding the chicken in, in the hole, and the chicken was making noise. Something to, you know, to mask the noise. And this was what we're doing to, to try to, you know, to camouflage everything. Then about food. Her little sister, she was coming bringing something bread. I have always there a few loaves of bread, which changing I make some mess, like a nest; and there was exchanging every time fresh and they all using what we were eating. And to not make suspicious the, the neighbor, so she says, "She is bringing bread and she is selling bread." And always was going in this way, that they couldn't count how it is. What was hiding. And she never was talking to people. She could play with little children, and never -- she never said a word about us. And one time, they came. My wife, she didn't come to work. And there was another, she has to work. So she was -- a few days she didn't come because she was feeling sick. She didn't feel good. And I see through the window -- because always we were watching to see if someone could see a policeman is coming -- a Polish policeman and a German policeman is coming. So I told her, "Go with us to the, to the" I said, "to the bunker. Hide. And they will only your little sister.

01:49:53.

She will tell them that you went to buy some food, you know, in the village, something." And they knocked on the door, and she opened. They came. "Where's your sister? Who are you, your sister? Where's your sister?" Said, "She went to the village to...to buy some food." The policeman, he turned and slapped her in the face. She fell down. And he said, "Why are you lying? Your neighbor, they told us that she was just now out here in the yard." And she start stutter "Why I, I have to lie? She went -- she has to go through the yard. So she was in

the yard, and she went to, to the village. How she can go to, to the village. She has to go through the yard, so maybe they saw her." She talk to them. I, I don't know. She told she told them that she's going to, to buy food, and they look and they start to look around. She didn't have nothing there. A piece of bread and a little soup. Nothing. He said, "That's all you have?" "Yes." "You're alone at home?" She said, "Yes." "You sleep alone?" "Yes." "You're not afraid?" She said, "Why I have to be afraid?" "That's what you are eating?" And she said, "Yes." They left her, and she didn't say nothing. And they left her, and, and my wife was hiding, and she came out. That was one episode. There was many, many episodes during the time. There was almost two years. Every day, each hour was something that our life was threatened with gun. At the end, when our -- one thing was good. They have a radio, the German. And they was listening to the news, and I was listening to the news. And we can, they are listening to us we can thinking how they are going back. They're running away. And I said to my wife, "Soon or later, very soon, you will have your Russian. Because they give them hell, and they ran." And all my -- almost I find the day when they will come. And I remember the last day when we heard there was fighting. And we can hear the noise of the different noise of different bullet, different rifles.

01:52:16

The Russians have different rifles, and the German have different rifles. We heard the difference in the noise. So I said to my wife, "Probably they will come, but they are fighting." We cannot go down, and we have to stay in the attic. But the bullets and ding, ding, ding, you know, was hitting. I said to my all people there, "Listen, we have to lie down. Keep something between your teeth. If somebody -- they will hit somebody, you cannot scream. If somebody will be dead, he will be dead. This is our last chance. But if they find us, if somebody will scream, she will be killed and her sister will be killed. And we will be killed. Because everybody now look for each other. So you have to be prepared that something will happen no worse, nothing." And we are lying down and listening, and she went down with her sister. She went down, and with the neighbors was waiting. And anyway, we under-- we can hear the bullet. Some start to be more close, and some start to go away. And I said, "I think probably the Russian are coming. Because listen to the Russian sound of the bullets, the noise. But we will see." Then early in the morning, by six or seven o'clock in the morning, I look through the small thing. They are going about six German soldiers with rifles, the helmets. All came back going on the street up. I said, "My God, still, still there are Germans here." And suddenly it came out a few boys with the armbands and a few soldiers, Russian soldiers and to them, "Hands up!" And they fell down, and they were begging. I said, "Thanks God, we are free!" And that's it. Next day, this what happened -- or the same day. I don't remember. Came two Russian, White Russian. One was the lieutenant and one was a sergeant. And they came. She was in the window singing, and this happened.

01:54:37

And they came, and first they asked, "Is Germans here?" She said, "No, there are no Germans here." "Can we come?" And said, "Ok." They came inside. And my wife, she

closed the windows; and they start to talk this and this and not so. My wife asked them always, "How far are Germans? Maybe they can come back." They was suspicious. "What?," they asking. "What?" "Because," she said, "there was one time that he went back, the Germans came back. So this is what I'm asking." He said, "Don't worry. They are chasing them. They are running away. They are loosing their pants, pants." And they said, "They are running away. They will never come back here." And we heard. We were standing behind the doors, but we heard this. And we came and sat. But look, we couldn't talk, because we didn't talk, only were whispering for almost two years. We couldn't walk, because there was not walking up and down, just not exercise. We were pale, you know, and terrible. And they picked up their rifles. "Who there?" They thought maybe partisans. So she told them. And one of them was a Jewish lieutenant and his family was from Ukraine killed by Germans. And he -- and his sergeant, he was a regular Russian. He said, "My, my goal is to chase the German and give them back what they did to my family, to my family." He was crying. He was kissing us, hugging. He said to my wife, "You are really hero! You are really hero! Without weapons, without nothing, you could fight so many as in the little girl, the sister." They took pictures, and said, "What you need? We will give you what you need." He said, "We have the German hospital here, there, there. The whole thing there. Loaded with everything. What you -- dresses, shoes maybe. And we will bring you meat." And we said, "No, no. Not now. We would like to have freedom." And how we did it, because we were afraid about neighbors still. So we told them that -- it was night, we will go, the men, with them back to hospital. And next day, they will bring us, we will come back like guerrillas who are coming to, you know, with the army. And we will look for my wife. I will ask the neighbors about her. We will come like guests. We came. We survived; we will hug her, we will kiss her. So they will not suspect that it was us she was hiding people. They said, "That's a good idea." And we went, and the women and children were still with my wife there. Next day, in the morning, we came with them. There was a wagon with horses and everything was there. We had rifles with us. And I came, and I am looking; and I asked one neighbor. I know them, because when I saw them, I said, "Hey, do you know if still around a...a girl? Her name is Podgórska, Stefania Podgórska. She's my friend, my, my neighbor. I have to seek her." She said, "Why, yeah, yeah, yeah. She is a good girl. She's...she's..." They thought maybe we would kill her. Because some people came to take advantage, maybe somebody that paid them or hanged them. Said, "No, no. She is my good friend. She's -- I'd like to see her." She said, "Well, she lives there." We were going there. We knocked on the door. She came: "Ahhh! Hi. Hi." And we were greeting each other. And there was beautiful thing what she did. They -- we start to give to her some food, bring everything. And we lived --

Q: Ok, we've got about two minutes. Is there anything -- this is quite a story. When you, you had embraced, you were free, where did you go?

01:58:00

A: In town, to find an apartment to live. And next day, I find apartment. Was occupied by German, some people. German, and they run away. They left everything they had. Everything was there. So I moved to the apartment. And I took the apartment. And then I

had -- twice they came because there was some band of people who were killing people who saved Jewish life and, and the survivors. They killed them. They said, "One bullet for the survivor, two bullets for this who saved them -- for them who saved them." And they was going around, but after a while they caught them. They came twice to my apartment. I was living with my brother, his fiancée, my wife, her sister; and we lived there. And they came. That was on the second floor, and there was a balcony outside. There was knocking on the door. So it was night, was like in winter, in February. And they said -- I said, "Who are there?" And they said, "Milice! Milice!"⁸ "Open!" I said, "What are you looking for?" "You have to go with us to, to work. We have to fix the bridge. Is broken bridge." I said, "No, I'm not going at night with nobody. You have some business to me, well, come in the morning when it's lighter." People. I will see who's who. They start to swear to me. "Open the door, or we will break the door!" Like this, like this. I saw who were there. I run on the balcony. I was screaming for help, help -- and they start to run away. This was number one. And then a few months later, another time they came. So the commandant of the city -- there was a Russian commandant. And I went to him, and he told me, "Listen, you will never survive here."

Q: You left, is that true?

02:00:34

A: Yes, I left. He said, "Go to another part of Poland, where nobody will know you. Nobody. Change your name from the Pol -- Jewish name or German name to the Polish name." And we did. "Under new name, go and stay in another place of Poland where nobody knows you. Maybe you will survive." But the best thing that I will tell, if I don't tell you this in secret. I ran away from him. This no place for me to live. We want to survive. "Go west in the country. West, if you can." And this happened. I went to Kraków. I changed my name. And then I went to Wroclaw. I was studying. I was accepted there. Again, I studied from beginning my dentistry. I graduated. I was working. I was assistant, and until I left Poland; and now I am here, thanks God. And I am very happy I am in the United States. I went here to Tufts University. I graduated, and I am a dentist. Thanks God.

Q: We have I think two seconds. Take out the picture that you did in hiding. Just hold it up.

Q: Ok, you drew that in hiding?

A: When I was hiding, I was drawing. This was the old man who passed away after war, a few years after war. This is a woman and mother of two children. This is her son. And this is my brother's fiancée, and this time. No, excuse me. This is the wife of my friend, who -- she was survived, my wife, she saved her life and her husband. He passed away in, in Jerusalem, I think so. Israel. He was a dentist. Then, here we have what? That is my brother's wife. This was his fiancé. And this is a father, he's a dentist still in Poland. He

⁸ Militia (French, but adopted into many languages).

was with his daughter. We saved him and his daughter. And I was drawing at this time the faces.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

Q: That's it.