

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Norman Salsitz

May 12, 1990

RG-50.030*0199

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Norman Salsitz, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on May 12, 1990 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 interview cannot be used for sale in the Museum Shop. The interview cannot be used by a third party for creation of a work for commercial sale.

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.

NORMAN SALSITZ
May 12, 1990

Q: Would you tell me your full name please?

A: My name when I was born or the name today?

Q: Both.

A: I was born as Naftali Salsitz and now my name is Norman Salsitz, but during the war I had a few different names.

Q: We'll get to that. Tell me where you were born and when.

A: I was raised in a small town. It's in southern Poland it's named Kolbuszowa, and this belonged to the minor Poland. We called it in Polish Mourpoliska. And before the first world war, it belonged to Alea which was called Galicia. In 1920.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your parents and your family before the war.

A: Well, we were a very large family. We were nine children, five sisters and four brothers. I was the youngest from the nine. My father was a Hasidic Jew, very religious, my mother...the whole family was very religious. He had a long grey beard and my mother was very religious. She wear a Sheitel, which means a wig. And everything was around Jewish tradition, Jewish religion. I attended when I was 3 years, I started heder, which means a school for boys. Til 3 years I had my hair. By 3 years, they cut off my hair, but they left side locks. And after this heder when I was 6 years, I attended a small Yeshiva. They called it Yeshiva for the young boys. I also started public school, regular public schools for which was together with the Polish boys. And when I was 15 years I was sent out to a Yeshiva to a very famous Rabbi in the town named Tarnow, a larger town and which my father was a disciple of this Rabbi. He was a follower, so he send me to his Yeshiva. And then when I came back...I wasn't there too long, because I wasn't very happy with it, I started to work in my father's business. And my father had a wholesale store in which we sold everything. Now the stores in the villages used to come to us and they bought the merchandise for their stores. So here you could call it a general store. We had there everything what was needed for a household, we sold it. And it was quite a prosperous business. Our town mostly, they were very poor Jews. I would say 50 percent were poor, and 40 percent made a living, and 10 percent were rich Jews. My father was considered to be among the 10 percent rich Jews. And this how we lived. It was a very close family. My sisters, when they were married, my father saw to it that they would remain in our town. He gave them a dowry. He bought them a house, and he established a business for them. What he used to do, he used to take a branch from our business and he gave it over to him and he took care of this on a wholesale level for this business. And this we lived quite happily til the war. My oldest brother went to America in 1919 one year before I was born because in 1919 we had the pogrom. The Poles came and

they killed nine Jews, wounded 200, and this pogrom was for the celebration of gaining independence. So what is a better way to celebrate independence after so many years than to have a little pogrom. Not a big one, but at least nine people killed. So after this, my oldest brother left and he came to America. So he didn't know me because I was born a year later. In 1933, my second brother left. He became a Zionist which all family was always in. There were Hasidic, but they always were, all the sisters belong to Zionist organizations and even my father was enough up-to-date that he was a Zionist. And my brother left in 1933 as a Chalutz, as a pioneer in this time. So those brothers were out from our town, but the rest were living in our town til the war started. And it was a happy life. I was never satisfied with this life in this little stetl because I looked for something else. I wanted to go to school. I wanted to study. I wanted to go to gymnasium. My dream was to become a doctor, but I was too young and I was maybe too weak to say to my father, "I want to take off this Hasidic clothing," which I always hated, "and to be like everybody else, to be a modern man." But it didn't come til a year before the war. I joined the Zionist organization which was the Hanoar Hatzioni. It was the young movement and I was very happy because this was the tie that gave me a chance to belong to organization together with girls, which before I couldn't speak to her. There was special one girl which I fell in love when I was 12 years old, and I had a chance to be with her together with our other friends, and this was quite a happy time for me that I could get out of this burden of what my father wanted me to be a Hasidic boy to sit in the temple, in the synagogue and to study from morning til night.

Q: What happened when the war broke out?

A: Well, then before the war we started to feel when the things happened to Germany, we felt it in Poland. We felt it because the climate started to be...the Poles started to show their anti-Semitism a little more openly. Til 1935 was not so bad because til 1935, Pilsudki was the marshall in Poland, and he was quite good for Jews. And the minute Pilsudski died, a lot of tihngs happened. It changed. Smidli took it over and then special laws came out against Jews. The businesses started to be bad for Jews. They opened cooperatives and slogans were all over and they used to say in Poland, [polish] [polish] means everybody to his own for his own. The small businesses lost everything because those cooperatives started small businesses in the villages. So what they did. peasants didn't sell their produce to Jews, so usually used to buy them, but they brought them to the cooperatives and they used to exchange them for merchandise they needed. So they cut out the Jew who bought the produce and they cut out the Jew who sold them their merchandise. But we, our family didn't suffer because they were not enough advanced to have wholesale places to supply the storekeepers in the villages. So even there were more storekeepers in the villages, our business improved because they had to come to us for this merchandise to sell to the peasants in the villages. So we didn't feel it. But my father always said that this is only for a time being because eventually they will be enough advanced to start their own wholesale stores and their own manufacturing, that they will cut out even the wholesale letting the manufacture which was mostly in Jewish hands. So we knew this is only...in a short time, our business will go down also. And then the climate was so bad that everything what happened in Germany from the papers we started to see, it started to happen in Poland. There

was a time that they tried to forbid ritual slaughter for kosher meat which in the time of Pilsudski would never happen, but it happened, but the Jews fought back and it didn't come to be that the slaughters should be forbidden. Also, they organized, they established a concentration camp on the system that it was in Germany in this time because in Germany even before the war, they had a few concentration camp, which starting with Dachau, Buchenwald. So they had in Poland, a concentration camp in Breizakotuska. This was in the northern part in Poland. And what they brought in mostly, supposedly to be for communists which were enemies of the state, but also Jews who they thought didn't do such business, they did something wrong. Instead to put them to jail or instead they give them fine, they brought them over to this concentration camp, which was a very notorious concentration camp. So all those things were prepared against the Jews. Like for instance, there was the Prime Minister. His name was Slatkovski ?. He was a general, so he even was a very famous expression, when there was a debate about Jews and people say the Jews have to go out of Poland, be thrown out of Poland, beaten up in Poland, so he said to beat up Jews no, but to destroy them economically he said ofshun. In Polish ofshun means by all means. So this was a very famous saying, ofshun, Prime Minister said that we have to do it. Now, for instance, the...

Q: Excuse me. I'm gonna have to break in if I may. We need...for this interview, I want to talk about you. So let's focus on what happened to you.

A: Alright. Well, this I give you just a feeling how the situation and this was so in this time, I decided that I have to leave Poland, that this Poland was not for me, so I had to leave. Now to leave Poland wasn't so easy because where would you go to? I wanted to go to Palestine because I became a Zionist and this was my dream. But to go to Palestine wasn't so easy. I was little too young, and then later you had to have a certificate from the English government and only a few got and a few were lucky in that. And so I decided to go illegal to Palestine. So in 1938, I joined a groups that we paid in money and we're supposed to be smuggled to Romania, and Romania to take a boat illegal to enter Palestine. So we had to pay 500 zlotys for it; 500 zlotys was quite a lot of money. I decided with a friend of mine, he was a very close friend. Now this boy didn't have the 500 zlotys, so I remember the day when the letter came that we should pay it in, I paid in my 500 zlotys, and he didn't have it. So his mother had two silver candlesticks, probably from her mother, so she went and she had to sell the two candlesticks and still he didn't have the 200...the 500 zlotys. He was short 200, so I remember I gave him the 200 zlotys, and he said he would pay it back to me in Palestine. And we paid in and we were prepared and we waited to go, but this never came to be and the war in the middle started and we supposed to go in August and the war started in September, the 1st of September. And this dream fell through. Also I wanted to come to America because I had here a brother, and all my father's brothers and sisters were here. My father was the only one who remained home. So I wrote them letters and I begged them to send me papers. But none of them sent me papers. Only what they had to do is to invest 25 cents to go to another Republic and send me affidavit. But they didn't do it. And when they didn't do it, so America was out. Palestine was out. So I had to stay there til the Germans came in. Now, 1st of September the war broke out. And it was a very bad feeling because we

knew that this something terrible will happen. Everybody there were rumors that the Polish army is strong. We have a strong calvary, and they mobilized people, the older people. Now the Polish government, I don't know if they did it purposefully, if they had traitors there, because they mobilized old people. People who used to serve in the Austrian army in the first world war. The young people they didn't mobilize. And so I felt that my duty, I felt myself as a Polish patriot. I wanted to be part of Poland. I lived in Poland. So I went and I volunteered to the army soon as the war broke out. They didn't accept me because they said they don't have enough uniforms for the regular army. How would they take me? So my parents naturally didn't know that I went and I volunteered. The feeling was that something terrible will happen and we awaited it. Now the 1st of September, the war broke out right a day, 2, 3 days later. Thousands of refugee came through our town. And most refugee who fled from the western part of Poland came to us and the reason why they came to us is because we didn't have a railroad. And there was a short cut from Tarnow to cut through to the east, and usually when there was a railroad the Germans used to bomb the railroad and to shoot, so this way because there were fields so they used to go through this route, thousands and thousands, every day more and more. And then later you could see the army broken up, broken units, and they came through our town. And Saturday, the 9th of September, the Germans came in. And as we were never a lucky town, like we had a pogrom; we had other things always happen in our town. So Saturday morning the town was clear. There were no Polish soldiers, so we figured there would not be no battle and the Germans will come and take the town. So it happens at 12 o'clock, a new regiment came in that had run away and they said they're going to make a line in our town. And the Germans came in about 3 o'clock, and there was a battle and there were 65 Germans killed and about 200 Polish soldiers, and there were about 150 Jewish civilians. Why Jewish? They didn't kill when there was a battle picking out Jews, but the Jews were the refugees. They didn't know where to hide. They mostly were Jews, because Poles didn't run away. They were not so much afraid so they were caught in the middle in a strange town and they were killed. And the atrocities started right away. They took us out in a open place, and they burned half of the town. And we were in the middle and they came and they said that the battle, the fight was done by Jews, not by Polish soldiers, and for this reason they're going to burn alive all the Jews from our town. And they burned, they purposely started to burn the town, the houses around where we were located. And we saw that maybe they will do these things, which they did not at the time. But it so happened in the evening, somebody came and they said, "No. They will let us go." And they kept us for a whole night in the fields. The next day we came home, and all the houses were plundered, the houses which were not burned were plundered. The Germans stayed in there a half day. They went in and took out everything they wanted. And we started to live under German occupation.

Q: Can you slow down just a moment. Tell us what it was like for you under these conditions? What did it feel like you standing there watching all this?

A: When I was watching where we were in this place, surrounded and when they started to burn the houses around us and I saw there the young soldiers standing there and watching us and I looked at them and in this time I imagined myself being him. Being in a uniform, having a

rifle in my hand, and he should be the victim. And I was thinking, "Would I let him die, to be burned alive?" Because there were children started to cry and I wanted to compare myself what I would do in that case like this and I couldn't understand that they came and they occupy a town and take civilian people and kill them. Because we were sure that they would keep their promise and they would burn us. So then later, the next day they started to take us to work. And every day they came and they took out everybody and there was a lot of work. The whole Polish army was broken up and we had to clean the weapons and used shells from cannons and we used to load it on trucks to take away. Also, we had maybe a hundred dead horses because it happened that this unit which came to our town this day, this was a cavalry unit and when the fighting started, the horses were killed. And the horses were laying dead, and this was still hot summer, so it start that we had to clean them up. Now Jews were not used to such kind of work, bury horses. They were not strong enough for this. So we had to dig holes and pull the horses and bury them because we were afraid of an epidemic. And so there were a case I remember that one Jew when we dug the horses, one officer came and he said to the Jew he didn't [like] him for some reason or other. And he said to go in in the hole with the horse and we had to burn him too alive. And we started to cover and with the dirt. Then in the last minute his wife found out and she came and she screamed and begged and cried. Finally, he was almost buried completely. He said, "Alright, you can dig him out." In those [days] they started to harass the Jews. They used to take old Jews with long beards and they used to harness them to wagons, and they used to sit on the wagons and they used to pull them. Just to show and make pictures and make a film. Everything to insult. In the beginning those insults were very bad, because we didn't know what awaits us. But everyday something else happened. And we got used to the yesterday's insults, but the next day there were more severe insults. So we forgot already what happened yesterday because we had to cope with the new one. And then later they gave out the curfew that Jews can only walk out from their houses between 10 in the morning til 12 noon, and then from 4 in the afternoon till 6. So you imagine only for the 2 hours to go out and to do everything what you had to do for the family. Naturally, nobody did business anymore. They confiscated the merchandise. They took away everything. And in the 2 hours you could see everybody was running, running, running because you wanted to do, to accomplish in the 2 hours what he could do in a whole day. And then later he was in a hurry to go home, not to be caught in the middle. So those were the harassments. Then later it came the harassments which couldn't walk on the sidewalk. We had to walk on the road, on the street. The first day it was terrible. What you mean I cannot walk on the sidewalk? But later we got used to it. We got used to it, so we walked on the street and if somebody walked on the sidewalk in the beginning they didn't shoot us, but they arrested them. Then later came out a order that every Jew who saw a German on the street had to take off his hat. He had to greet him. Now, so they were cases like in my father for instance, I remember, there came a young German policeman, so he took off his hat. So he went to him. He started to beat him up. And he beat him up and he said, "Why do you beat me?" He says, "Well, because why you taking off the hat. Why you greeting me? What am I? Your friend? You are a dirty, lousy Jew and I'm a German. Why am I your friend. Why you greeting me?" So the next day, when he saw a German, he didn't take off the hat. So he went and he beat him up. And he said, "How long do we have to teach you when you see a German you should take off up your hat, take off your hat and bow

because you are subhuman and..... So everything what they did, it was only to make life miserable. And then the war, of course, very bad because every day they caught the same people and they took them away to all kind of work, to clean the streets. And then the Poles were standing and laughing and enjoying because they didn't touch them and they were very [helpful?] and if sometimes the Germans didn't know where the Jews lived, the Poles...usually the young Polish boys used to go with the Germans. They couldn't speak German. One word they learned very fast. Jude. Jude. So they went with the Germans and they used to show the houses. Jude. Jude. Jude. That there lives a Jew. So the Germans went in and took out everybody and dragged them to work. Now the work was done and they didn't pay for it. The people were hungry. They couldn't make a few zlotys in their profession or something like this. They had to go from morning til night to work. And the worst time was in the winter. In the winter we had to clear the streets. From far away, kilometers away, for the Germans that their cars and trucks should be able to travel. So we had to stay in the snow from morning til night. Even when the snow was falling down, we still had to clean. So we sometimes asked, "What's the use to clean up? In 5 minutes they will be covered with snow again?" But nevertheless, we had to do it. And I was with the Germans about a month. Then something happened to my father, somebody, one of his friends denounced him to the Germans that we had hidden merchandise and the Germans took away everything we had from our warehouses. They cleared out everything. They didn't leave anything. And I said to this man...I threatened him and I said to him, "Someday, I will pay you back for it." And he went to the Germans and he told them that I'm a very dangerous. I was at this time 19 years old. I was a boy from the Yeshiva from a Rabbinical school. Before the war, I wore the long peijes. And he told them that I belonged before the war to a communist party which was against...and that I'm dangerous to the Germans, and I also said that I will go and to do some sabotage. This what he told the Germans. Now, they didn't know me, so they said that tomorrow we're gonna arrest him and we shoot him. I find out about it and I run away to Russia. To the Russia zone because Poland was divided. The western part was taken over by the Germans, and the eastern part was taken over by the Russians. So I went over to the Russian zone and I went to Lemberg [Lwow]. And I was very happy in Lemberg because there I joined a gymnasium which I always dreamed about it. And I also joined a Jewish theatrical group. There was a Jewish theatre and I always I said, "If I cannot be a doctor, I want to be an actor." I always had it in my blood. And even in home before the war when we used to make like plays for a holiday for Hanukkah for Purim, every year our school made the play. And I always had the lead in this play and I used to sing by a cantor. I had a voice soprano, so the cantor liked me and I used to sing solos. So I came to Lemberg and my dream was fulfilled. I went to a gymnasium and I joined a theater so I could play...be a part of it. So I said, "Well, the war will last maybe a year or two, and I will meanwhile do what I want to do." Meanwhile, I found out, I was there 3 months. I find out that my girlfriend which I liked...her mother is gravely ill and she was only with her mother because her father and brother and sister were on the Russian side. So I find out about it. I decided to come home. And I came back to the Germans. And I will never forget, this was already in January. We had to put white sheets over us to camouflage the snow and we went through the border and we were caught. Those are long stories. I don't want to dwell on how we were caught by the Russians, and then they had to take us to jail to Lemberg,

back to Russia. We knew once we are in the jail, so after from the jail, they send us to Siberia. So during the night, we overpowered the guards and we tied them down with blankets. We took away their rifles, and we went back to the border and this time we managed to cross the border.

Q: Who is... Slow down. We have plenty of time. Who is we?

A: Well, there was one man. Before the war, he was a horse dealer. And he lived in the section where the border is. The town's name was Jarloslaw. It was known that every week he takes a group of people who want to go to back. And when we came back he took a group of people who want to run away from the German side. So he was like a smuggler. He was a Jewish man. And he took at this time 15 boys from our town who wanted to go back. Because in the beginning they couldn't make a living in Lemberg. It was very bad. There were thousands and thousands of refugees. They didn't have where to live, where to sleep. So here somebody told us that the Jews live in their houses. It's bad under the Germans. They have to work. They have to do certain things. But the atrocities didn't start right in the beginning, so they figured they will come home. I came home because on account of this girl. Maybe subconsciously I wanted to be with the family too. And I will never forget the day that I came home, my father was sitting in our kitchen studying some Talmud, and I came in and he saw me and I said, "I'm back." And he didn't lift his eyes. While looking still in the book, he said, "As much as I am happy to see you, you made the biggest mistake in your life that you came back." Those were his words when he saw me when I came back. And naturally when I came back the first week, I was hiding because I was afraid that somebody would say, "The police." because I remembered that they wanted me. But this was already new police, and nobody remembered and I joined the Jews with their misery in our town going to work and starting to do business and my father still had this little store, but it was little in this time. But he didn't come in in the store, because he was a Jew with a long beard and it was like a red cloth when you want to aggravate a bull. So my sisters were in the store and I started to travel to different towns, and brought in merchandise, mostly black market. And this how we started to make a living. And I was the young in the family, so I had to do it, and I did it to support all my sisters because I had the three married sisters. Their husbands were not capable to do it. They were very religious Jews with the beards and I was young. They didn't speak so good Polish. So I used to travel every day someplace else and to bring in merchandise and to sell it and to make money. And we worked like this til about spring of 1940. Spring of 1940, they made a registration, so all the Jews had to be registered. And then they used to make like...there came a few high officers from Rzeszow, and they took us in a big building and they made like a selection. From the people who were registered, they picked out at this time 200 young boys and we had to come to the places where trucks were waiting. And they send us to a labor camp. This was the first time they made this registration. And the labor camp was in a town...in a village called Leipyia. This was near a town Novisanz. This was near the southern border this was in the Carpathian mountains. Our work was that we had to break rocks. It was like a quarry where we had to break rocks, but the problem was that what we did...when we broke up the rocks we had to transport them to a place on hand wagons, on wheel barrels, and the next day we took the

same rocks and we brought them back to the first place. And this was our work. It was very hard work. And they gave us very little food. But it wasn't so bad because in this time, this was in 1940, our people in our town still lived in their homes. They still had what to eat. And the post office could send...we could send packages. So the community from our town used to send every week a package to every prisoner. And they send it to the community of Novasanz, of this town. And this Jewish community brought it us to the camp. So we had enough. After 2 or 3 months, we started to run away. And all of us run away. And the Germans didn't even look for us even run away. What did they do? When everybody run away, they had from different towns, also young people, so they went to other town and brought in other transport. So they didn't bother looking for us. So I came back from this camp and I started to work by the Germans. So they took me and we started to build garages for the Wehrmacht. And they accepted me. They also made us register, they looked us over who is young and strong, so because of my work. So everyday I went to work. They didn't pay us for the work, but I was glad to go to work for them so they wouldn't catch me to work different work like cleaning the streets, cleaning the buildings. Because I had to go work anyways. At least I went in the morning. I had a pass that nobody should grab me from the street. And we worked there. And once being with those Germans or working in the garages, so I used to buy for them a quart of kerosene, a loaf of bread. I used to bring to the Germans a few eggs, and we exchanged this. And it was there where I worked. And sisters were in the store, and they did some business buying this from peasants and selling some produce. It was not like before the war, but we thought it is bad, but somehow we will survive. They didn't kill at this time. But Jews for every little things were arrested. They were harassed. And they caught the slaughter the Shochet who used to slaughter for a kosher meat, so they arrested him. After 2 weeks, they paid a lot of ransom...they paid money, they let him out. And everything was done with money, you could buy yourself out by the German police. And we still lived in our houses, so it wasn't so bad. But we knew that we are under German occupation, and also we heard stories from other towns about atrocities. There was a town Mielec, for instance, not far from my town, so when the Germans came in, they took about 200 Jews and they put them in in the shul, in the temple, and also in the public bath and they closed the doors and they burned the people with the buildings.

Q: Do you see that?

A: No. No. No. This I didn't see, but this was in the next town. So we heard about atrocities from different towns, but they asked...it was just arresting contribution...we had to pay money, but nothing terrible happened. Until in the fall of 1940, they came, they established a very notorious camp near us named Pruszkow, and Pruszkow was an SS camp. Now Pruszkow was established because this was the place where they started experiments for the V-1, V-2, rockets. This is the first what they did it, and they picked out this place because there were a lot of woods. In Poland, there was a section, it was called Pushun Sandomerska. It means the wilderness of Sandomierz, the town. Before the 18th century practically, nobody could go through it. It was old, virgin forest. Later, people started to make villages, towns. In this section of Pruszkow Sandomierzko, they made the first experiments. They brought in Jews and Poles too, and they worked there for a certain time. Later, they killed the

people. They were afraid that they would run away and they would start to tell stories about those experiments. I remember that during the day, three or four times you could hear a boom, a noise, but you didn't see a airplane. You didn't see anything. You could hear it. It sound like something is flying then noise, then it was an explosion in the air. You could see a ball of fire and it disappeared. And this happened a few times a days, so this were the experiments that they used to shoot the rockets, but they exploded. Then later when the rockets exploded, then on the places pieces of cast aluminum used to fall on the ground. Now the peasants used to collect it and they used to make utensils, spoons, jars, cups, everything they used to make from this. So the Germans didn't want it should be, and they used to send out special police to go and collect those items. And this came from Pruszkow. So in 1941, at the end of 40, I was taken to Pruszkow. Again, there came a commission, and they took the young people and they looked through and while they picked out the people, they beat up everybody. And I remember I was beaten up terrible. I was standing in line, then somebody and I didn't move so fast, so SS men with their rifle butt hit me in the back and I flew to the front and I feel down and I was all bleeding. So the man who was in charge, his name was Schmidt. He was a Feldwebel, I mean a Scharfuhrer from the SS. And he saw me on the floor, so they picked me up, and I was bleeding from my mouth, from my nose. So he came out and he said, "Hey, what happened to you?" Like not...he joked around. So he took out a handkerchief and he gave the handkerchief I should wipe the blood. So I wiped the blood. He said, "Now, clean my boots." So with my blood, I had to take and I had to wipe his boots with the blood." So those were the things that they were terrible in this time, but looking back those were things that you could survive. They were terrible, but it was not extermination. It was not killing off everybody. But in this time, those were the bad things. So I was taken to Pruszkow. They were so vicious that when they took us on open trucks and they took in this maybe 100 from our town in the open trucks, when we traveled, they took us by the trucks to Pruszkow. The driver purposefully, in Poland on the road, on both sides, there were trees. Now trees were not high so he purposely drove the truck under the trees where the branches were sticking out and the people should be hurt, and a few of them were hurt. It cut open their heads and all that because the truck went in the branches. I was in Pruszkow about 6 weeks. During the time, every night was there a ritual. When there was the appell, this Schmidt picked out somebody and he was hanged. We all had to watch by the appell how the man was hanged. And usually he picked out somebody of us, and he was the hangman. Now there were times in the books that I am writing there and I give more details, so there was a times that he picked somebody who didn't want to hang the other Jew. So he took a knife and he cut his throat because he didn't want to hang him. And also this Schmidt had a habit, when we walked to work we cut trees because they wanted to make the camp a little larger, so he used to shoot just in our rank, in our column. Not aiming. So once I was hit in my right arm. And it was very difficult to work because the hand, but he didn't do no damage and I with somebody's help, I was transferred to other detail to put up telephone poles through the town of Tarnow. And one time when I lifted a telephone pole, I dislocated a disc in my neck and I couldn't straighten out. And then I knew that if I would be there and they would find out that this happen, they would shoot me because what do they need a man with a dislocated disc? And then with the help of somebody I escaped, and I came back home.

01:40

Q: Let's back up again. Tell us, again...slow down. Tell us how you escaped.

A: Well, when I was shot, so the Germans, they didn't know would be tied down to 1, 10 men. I went to work. It was hard too, because we worked there cutting the trees. So it was hard, but with the help with others, they covered me. You know, in a camp the comradeship, the friendship was so big that everybody would do everything for his friend. Even we were strangers we became so friendly that at times even they would endanger their lives to help their other friend. So they covered, but when I dislocated a disc it was very bad for me. I used to hold on to two guys when we worked I should be a little straight. And I knew that I would not be able to hide this a long time. So there was a man who was in charge of the Jewish columns. It so happens that this man was a cousin of my girlfriend. And I told him this. His name was Kleinhandler from Tarnow. And he was the head, he was like a middle man between the workers of Tarnow in this Pruszkow camp. So through him, he recommended me to somebody else and through the other man helped me to escape. He opened a truck when I went to work...a truck went to a town Bembitza. And he told me to go on the truck, and they took me away. Because the truck was a SS truck, but he had to pick out so many workers to go to this town so he picked me out. He knew that I have his name, I remember even was Immergluck. And he was not very much liked, because he did things that he didn't have to do to the Jewish workers. But to me, he was good because this other friend told him to do it, so he picked me up and they helped me go on the truck and they took me to work supposedly to the Bembitza to bring some merchandise or to bring some supplies. So I went to Bembitza, the Jews were still there, so I didn't go back. And that's it. They didn't look for me. I came home and I started to wear a brace. And then later after a few weeks, it healed. I had problems later, but I could walk out. I came back home. The situation started to be much worse, every day, every day, you could see that the situation is worse. Then later we received, we got in our town a Land Kommissar which is the head of the county, because our town was the county seat, and there came a Land commissar, and his name was Farding. And he was the biggest sadist ever lived. And he was a German, but he also was a Polish guy, because he spoke German and Polish. And this was very bad, because he could speak to the Polish people and he could find out a lot of things which was not healthy for us. So this Farding came to us as a LandKommissar. Before he used to be in the Gestapo in Rzeszow. So they said and we used to say he is so bad because he has all bad things from both nations, the bad things from the Germans and the bad things from the Poles, and he combined it in one person. He looked like a caricature. He was short, very fat, with a big belly, a shaved head which in the sun it was gleaming like a mirror, small little eyes like a pig, very small piercing eyes, and he had a voice that it was like a shrilled voice, like it came from animal or something, very shrill you say, and he was very shrewd, very smart. And he wanted to outsmart everybody, but he was very vicious. So when he came he organized a ghetto in our town. And our ghetto was organized before large towns had ghetto because we already had a ghetto in June 1941, which was very early. And he pushed into the ghetto, where before used to be 70 Poles, he put in 2,000. And it was very cramped. And we

lived in the ghetto. And then we had an old man who was the President of the Judenrat, which was a Doctor Unterman. And I think this Doctor Unterman should be remembered. If the Jews would have in their religion to make a saint of somebody, I think he should have been the first saint. Because being that president of the Judenrat, he actually sacrificed his life for the Jews. Before the war, this Doctor Unterman didn't consider himself a Jew. He was a assimilated Jew. He never bothered with Jews. He never belonged to a temple. He never even stepped in a Jewish temple. Only had his friends with the Polish people because he was a Polish officer, and was a Polish patriot, and he was considered by them that he was one of the most important people in our town. But with Jews he never had anything to do. He had Jewish, had Jewish patients, but that's all. When the war started he saw that he can speak to the Germans different than a Jew with a long beard. He was clean shaven. He was a captain in the Austrian army. He

01:46:40

studied medicine in Vienna, spoke beautiful German, and he could stand up to them. Now, again, he couldn't understand that the Germans will be so vicious and he thought with him they will think twice. So he agreed to become the president, which before he said, "What I have nothing to do with Jews?" But later, we convinced him and he said he will become president if he would pick out 12 people which he liked with him. And he picked out 12 younger people, Jews without beards, people who were outstanding citizens before the war. Honest people. Fine people. And he said, "If they will be with me in the Judenrat, then I will be come the Hauptman. And they agreed. As a matter of fact, between the 12 people, he picked out my older brother and my brother-in-law he was one of the 12. And he ran this Judenrot that I don't think so that any Judenrot was run like this. He was so honest. I don't know if we should go in details, but Linda, I'll give you two examples. Once they brought in, they gave to the Jews to divide pieces of soap, to give every family a piece of soap. And the Judenrat divided the soap. And then about 5 kilo soap was left. It was more than they...so the Judenrat, the man who was in charge of dividing the soap, he made 13 packages to give what's left over to each member of the Judenrat to take home. And one was for Dr. Unterman. And Dr. Unterman came in, and they said, "This is for you." He said, "What is it?" He said, "Well, this is the soap." He says, "But I already got soap, what I suppose to get." "Well, this was left." And they explained it. And he said, "It was left and how much?" And they said, "We made 13 packages." He said, "I want to see the 13 packages." So they brought back what everybody took for himself. He opened it and he said, "Give me a list of 13 poorest Jews in our town." So they picked out 13 poor Jews. "I want everybody should get a package. Not you. Not I." And he divided...this kind of man way he was. Like to the Germans he spoke to them like to equals. Like this Farding who came in, he wanted to take over Unterman's house because he built this house a year before the war. And because he was a physician he was well off. And he built a beautiful house, and this was the only house in our town that had electricity. He had his own generator. The only one in town that he had indoor plumbing. He made it a beautiful house. So naturally, Farding wanted this house. So he asked him, "I want to move in. Why don't you move in into the ghetto." So he told him, "In the ghetto I will move in til the last Jew will have a roof over his head. So long as the last

Jew doesn't have a roof over his head, I will not move in." Then later this Farding said, "The Judenrat will have to pay 10,000 zlotys to me to renovate the house." He said, "Renovate? I just built it. And besides if I could live in it, you can live in it. And then why should you renovate. After the war will end, I will come back to my house. You will go back to Germany." Now he didn't like this thing, we were in the ghetto about 2 weeks, he took the whole Judenrat with Dr. Unterman and he arrested them and they were sitting in jail in Kolbuszowa about a week or 2 weeks. They they were sent to Rzeszow and from Rzeszowize they were sent to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, there were orders was right in the beginning. This was in the fall of 1941. In this time, you hardly knew that Auschwitz exists. And then they were sent to Auschwitz, and after 2, 3 weeks, telegrams started to come to the families, and the telegram said that your husband died on cancer. Other one your husband died on heart attack. Your husband died while he was running away. And then it was a letter that the widow had to sign that her husband suffered for cancer for 2 years, that her husband had heart trouble for 4 years. Why they did it, why this evidence they needed, I don't know. But they had to sign a letter that he actually was sickly and to add salt to the wound, everybody received a bill for the cremation. They said people were cremated and the cremation cost so and so much, and you will have to pay the money. So every widow had to pay money for the cremation. Now when the Judenrat was liquidated, naturally, Farding organized a new Judenrat. But [for] this Judenrat he already picked out people who he liked. And this Judenrat, I wouldn't say that they were murderers, but they were more to the liking of the Germans than Dr. Unterman. That the old man of this Judenrat wouldn't go out and wouldn't, if there was left there 13 packages of soap, he wouldn't say divide it to the poor. He probably would say I want the whole 13 packages. This was a different. And then it was life started to be more and more terrible. Another [thing] I want to tell you about is Dr. Unterman. When he saw that the Jews are so poor and they cannot afford a doctor, so he organized an ambulatorium. And every day he gave 2 hours, he was sitting in the ambulatorium, and this was in my sister's apartment, and everybody who was sick who couldn't pay could come to him, and he treated the people. And then later the Judenrat had to pay for medicine what they received. Because he liked me, so he took me in the ambulatorium I should be his assistant. As I mentioned before, I always wanted to be a doctor. So I worked with him and he taught me how to open wounds, how to clean wounds, how to put in all kinds of ointments, how to bandage, all those things. And I worked with him every day and he showed me all these things. This gave me opportunity when we were later in our camp, which we come to it, and we were in the woods I became the doctor, the so-called doctor. We had to do some medically, I always had that little suitcase with all kind of instruments which I inherited after he was killed. And I had this and I used to treat the people as much as I could, as much as he taught me. So this Doctor Unterman got killed, and the Judenrat got killed. He had a wife with a son, and his wife, after he was arrested, the wife with the son escaped to Warsaw and they lived as Aryans, illegal people, Poles, illegal papers which they could very easily survive because they didn't look Jewish, and their language was only Polish. And during the uprising, not the ghetto uprising, but the general uprising in Warsaw, her son was a officer of the AK, the Polish underground, and he was killed. She survived and came to America, and after the war and since then she died. So men like this should be remembered because we didn't have too many people like this. Actually,

the Poles begged him to escape from jail in Kolbuszowa, and they wanted to take him and hide him and do anything for him. And he said, "I cannot do it, because I cannot leave the Jews, because nobody will stick up for them." And he thought that he would be able to speak up, and then later they got rid of him. Now once he was killed yes, also under his administration, because you asked me I should tell about me. Because I before the war, I

01:55

worked in my father's store and I used to go to different towns buying all kind of merchandise for our store, I knew the suppliers. I knew the ways how to buy and bring in the stuff. And also when I left our ghetto, we had to wear the arm band, a white arm band with a blue star of David. Every time I left the ghetto, the first thing I took off my arm band. And I traveled, nobody stopped me and it so happens that I was never, never stopped for questioning that I'm a Jew. I look so Polish, more than the Polish people. So I never was suspected, so it was easy for me to go because and then later to bring in merchandise as a non-Jew. So Unterman picked me out and I was the one who used to go to different towns and to bring in merchandise for the ghetto. Now, we later organized a kitchen for the people to come in to have a warm meal once a day. Now when we had to buy those things we didn't receive as for the ghetto on card, but we had to buy like potatoes, flour and other things. So I used to go out to the peasants and used to buy it and bring it in. And I did it for the Judenrat. Now, also the ghetto received flour for baking bread, and each family received so much. Sometimes two

01:57:

loaves a week, sometimes 1 loaf a week. This had to brought in. So I used to go to the flour mills and bring it in. This was officially I brought it in. We used to get sugar. We used to get marmalade. We used to get other things...supplies what the Germans get. And this we used to get in Rzeszow. So I went twice a week, once a week, with wagons and I brought this in and this was my job. Instead to go and work on the streets and clean the streets, so this was my job that Unterman assigned me to. And for me, it was very good because when I went to buy all those things, I always brought something on the black market. Paid extra money, and together with this merchandise, I could bring it in and then later to supply my family and to sell something like this. This went on til he was arrested. When the new old man [Aeltester] .

Q: Excuse me. This is a good place to stop and break and change tapes.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: You were telling us about you bringing in the supplies in the ghetto.

A: So when the second Judenrat came into power...meanwhile, we had all kind of new orders. Orders like to give up all the furs, and if somebody would have a fur, and they would be caught with a piece of fur in the ghetto and would be shot. So naturally most of the Jews gave the Germans the furs. I remember there came a truck.

Q: Gave them what?

A: Fur. Fur. Fur. And then they had collars and fur, they gave them. And it was not a rich town, so you could see somebody had there a coat with a fur lining, it was maybe a 100 years [old] or so. It was all falling apart. But they brought it over. Everybody was afraid. Some younger woman had Persian Lamb coats because this was the style. So some didn't give the Persian Lamb coats because it was valuable, so we used to hide it or give it to peasants to hide. I remember one of my sisters had a Persian Lamb coat, so she gave it to me and I brought it out from the ghetto to somebody who we trusted and they should hide it for us, which by the way they never gave it back to us. And then there were other contributions. Once this Farding came in and he said he wants to have 10 kilo of gold. Ten kilo of gold in our town...they were poor Jews...how could they could, but I knew how. But this new president from the Judenrot, his name was Pashek Rappaport. He was very energetic. And people were sometimes afraid of him. So he somehow managed to get together the 10 kilo gold to give it to Farding. And when they gave it to Farding, so he said, "You know, you saved 20 Jewish lives with it because I was prepared to kill 20 people if you wouldn't give that 20 kilo gold." I remember to the gold, everybody gave what he had, a wedding band, a pair of earrings, but 10 kilo is a lot. So I remember there was still missing, this night I will never forget that my father came and he brought a package and he opened it and he had there, he said I'm going to give this too to save lives, so he opened it and there was a gold watch on a long chain like in this time the women used to wear a gold chain with a watch and also he had in this package a cigarette box from gold. So he said, "I'm going to give it. You see when I was engaged with your mother," he told me, "I gave her this watch, and she gave me this cigarette and I saved it through the first world war. I had it hidden, and now I'm going to give it." And he gave it. And now the Jews gave...and we came up with the 10 kilo gold and then he said we saved so many lives. And every day new atrocities a new one on top of one [that] was not finished, the other came up. The other came up. We lived in this time in the ghetto. We were fortunate that my brother's apartment was in the ghetto, so we could move into his, so he had two rooms, so we moved in in one room and he had one room. I had three married sisters, so one of my sisters lived in the place where the ghetto was with the other two sisters moved in. So somehow I was appointed by the new Judenrot to my old job to go to other towns and to bring in the merchandise which was very helpful. But in December of 1941, I went once to Rzeszow, and Rzeszowi was a epidemic of dysentery. And a lot of people died. And I ate there. I remember I bought two tomatoes, and I ate the two tomatoes and I came home and I had dysentery. And this was very dangerous because with the Germans, because this was

very contagious and when the Germans find out that there is somebody with dysentery, probably they would have me killed. So we didn't tell nobody. I went to the attic, and my younger sister which was the dearest to me because we were the closest in age. She was 3 years older. Her name was Rachel. And we decided I would be on the attic. We wouldn't tell nobody, and she was with me during all the time. She used to give me food, what I could eat, and she used to take away from me what was necessary because it had to be buried because the Germans. And I somehow survived this dysentery. We didn't have no injections. We didn't have no doctor. And as I recuperated I got middle ear infection, and

02:05:30

I started to have terrible pain. And, again, no doctor so home remedies. We used to put in oil and this and that and it went on and on and got worse and worse and worse. And after 3 weeks, the pains were so terrible, I cannot describe the pains because everything was infected. So this was in the winter. Somehow my brother got a sleigh with somebody, and they took me out from the ghetto, and they brought me to the ghetto in Rzeszow, to Dr. Heller. He was a . It was a specialist for ear, throat and nose. And he said that I have to have an operation right away. If I wouldn't have operation, I would die because all the puss was around the brain, but he cannot operate. There is no facilities. There are no Jewish hospital in Rzeszow, and I cannot go to a non-Jewish hospital. So I went there with my sisters. I was there with my sisters. So I have to go to Krakow. How can you go to Krakow? Jews are not permitted to ride by train. So my brother went back to Kolbuszowa and somehow he managed to get a false...from this Rappaport some that he had, a pass signed by this Farding, by this Land Kommissar, but it was not made out to nobody, so he made out my name with my sisters and they took me, with the train, to Krakow. On the train, a young Polish boy came up and he saw that there are three Jews, my two sisters and myself. He said, "What are Jews doing on the train?" He said, "I'm coming now from Germany. I work in Germany. In Germany, they wouldn't allow Jews on the train." And he started to speak to the rest of the people. He said, "We cannot have Jews on the train. We have to throw them out." And they came to us and they wanted to throw us out from the running train. So my sister started to cry and to beg. They said, "Look this man...this boy is almost dead. He's so sick. He needs an operations." My head was all with bandages. So some people they said, "Well, Let's...let's wait til a station." There was a station. So this man went down. He brought up two policemen, German policemen, and he said, "I want you should throw them down because they are Jews." So we showed him the papers. So the policeman said, "What...we cannot do anything. They have the Passier Schein." That means they have a pass for travel. So again they started to yell, "Oh, we don't want to travel with Jews. So we will throw them out." Again the same story, and my sisters begged them so they said okay. We'll not throw you out, but the next stop you have to go out. So we had to choice. The next stop. Meanwhile, they caught the other Jew, and they threw him out from the running station. Not the Germans, the Poles. So the next station we stopped. So happens that it was in Tarnow. And Tarnow was quite a big town. I knew Tarnow because I went to the Yeshiva in Tarnow, and we had there a cousin. We came to the cousin and we were very lucky that in Tarnow there was a doctor. His name was David Rabinowitz. And this David Rabinowitz, he was the chief

surgeon in Lodz in a hospital in the name of Poznanski, a very rich manufacturer. And he was thrown out from Lodz and he came to Tarnow. So we came to him, and he looked at me and he said, "I don't think so we can do anything to this boy because it's too long. Everything is already full with puss." But anyway, they made an operation. The operation took 8 hours, and he operated and he said, "Well, he will be deaf or blind or something or he will die." But anyway, he operated so that after 3, 4 weeks my hearing came back and when he operated he even cut the drum for the puss to come out, and then later he sew it. He was a wonderful man and I became alright and I came home with my head all bandaged and in our town they already spoke about it that I'm dead already. Now I want to tell you what happened to this David Rabinowitz. He was such a wonderful surgeon, such a wonderful man; a Jewish doctor couldn't operate on a Gentile. But there was a case that somebody was very sick on the same thing and there was not a Polish doctor he should do this operation because it was a very delicate operation. They came to him, and he told them, "I cannot operate on a non-Jew." So they said, "Listen, you have to save this man." He went and he operated." And he saved him. About a week later, a brother-in-law of the man who was operated... a Polish guy also, went to the Germans and he told them that this Rabinowitz operated on his brother-in-law. They came to the hospital, and from the hospital they they dragged him out to the yard, and they shot him. They shot him because he operated a non-Jew. And he saved him. Well, those were the times. So when I came home, the whole situation in Kolbuszowa was already different. During the 3 months, everything was pushed toward the end and we didn't know in this time that are

02:11:30

death camps, gas chambers. This was in April 1942, and this time you didn't have any transports yet, but we could feel from the Germans' behavior that every day something else came up. When I came back so I got back my job. Instead to go to work, I got back my job to go for merchandise from the other towns, and I got the pass. I took over the ambulatorium from Dr. Unterman and I got all his instruments and I got medicine. I already knew what medicines applied to this and which medicine applied to his, and I bought in the Apotheke more medicine so I got a pass that I am in Gesundheitsdienst, which means a health service, that I could go out from the ghetto if it's needed, which was very helpful. And we lived again in the ghetto. And this was the 28th of April, the 28th of April, 1942, we were sitting home and we had dinner cause dinner was not at night, but dinner was around 12, 1 o'clock. And what the dinner was, probably a tomato soup, a potato soup, something very austere. So we were sitting, and then we hear somebody knocking on the door downstairs, and from the knocking we right away knew it's Germans because this was their knocking. Not knocking, banging. And somebody looked through the window. They saw two Gestapo men standing, because their uniforms, the Gestapo had uniforms with SS, and we knew their banging. So the first thing my sisters bolted the door from the inside, and the first thing was to hide the men, because in this time we thought the men are most vulnerable. So my brother and I we were home, so we ran out through the back door through the yard. We run out to a neighbor, and we run to the attic. We thought maybe they come to us, they will not go to them. My sister took my father and they put him in the outhouse in the yard and put in a padlock on the

door to make believe that nobody is there because the padlock is on the outside. And he was there. They were banging and banging. When they saw that not nobody opens and they cannot break down the door, one of the Gestapo went around the houses to see to go from the back entrance. And then my sister was afraid that maybe it's not a good place for my father to be there because they keep banging. Maybe he should go where I am hiding, so she went and she opened the

02:14:

outhouse and let out my father. In this moment, the other Gestapo came from the back and he faced my father. He first thing, he had a list and he asked my father, "What's your name?" My father knew that if somebody would be on the list, he would be on the list. So he said, "My name is Salich." Was Salsitz, but Salich. He looked. He didn't see no Salich. Meanwhile, they dragged out the other...you know when that men from the front broke down the door, he took out the other man with him. His name was Hoofer. He was not on the list. And he took him to the yard, and he asked this Hoofer, "What is this man's name?" And he said, "Salsitz." He didn't know why, what, so he said, "Salsitz." Well, so they had him on the list, so they told the other man to go back and they took my father and started to push him towards a wood shed which was in the yard. And, naturally, we knew, they took out the revolvers, we knew what it is. So my two sisters, my single two sisters were with him. They started to scream and they runned to the Gestapo men to try to take out their revolvers. Why they didn't shoot them I don't understand til now. So one [sister], the older one, Maddle, went to one and she grabbed his hand and she tried to pull out the revolver from him so he took the revolver and hit her over the head and the head started to bleed and she fell down. When my second sister, the youngest sister, she was 3 years older than I, saw this. She run to the second one and started to twist his hand and take out the revolver. He did the same thing. He hit her til she fell down. And they took my father and they pushed him in this wood shed and I could hear two shots. Now those shots were the loudest shots I ever heard in my life. They were something so loud that til today, I hear them. Til today when I wake up at night, I could hear those two shots. It was something, and I saw them going in the woodshed from this attic window, but I didn't see what they're doing. And when they shot and my sisters were there, and they ran in and the two Gestapo men walked out from the wood shed after the two shots. Then you could hear the screams of my father. But the screams were not human screams. They were screams like they would come from heaven or from an unnatural animal. Something...not a human scream. He started to scream so loud I could hear it in the attic. The first thing he screamed, he said...he started to say Vidui. Vidui is a prayer when religious Jews say before death. And then he ended with Shema Yisrael. He said the Shema so loud that I could...it rings in my...in my ears. Then later he started to yell Nekuma, nemt Nekuma. It means revenge, revenge. Take revenge. And he didn't stop yelling this word revenge and when this...when he started to yell this, the two men, the two Gestapo heard it because they were in the next yard. They came back because they heard him still yelling. They came back and they shot him five times more and he became quiet. During all the time I was in this attic, I...I couldn't...I said to hear my father's being shot....I see it. I hear it. I don't do anything? Why don't you do anything. Now what could I do? I wanted to say something. I

couldn't. I wanted to move. I couldn't. I was like a piece of stone. After it was quiet I said to my brother, "I'm going down." And when I came down, so the two Gestapo men and I remember, they were young, tall, blond, handsome, and one's name...I remember his name...because I saw him before. His name was Norman. Norman. I'm trying to get now his picture. And they were still standing with their revolvers in their hand. And when they saw me and they saw my head was all full of with bandages because this was from the operation, so they thought maybe I was wounded today because there was so much shooting. And usually somebody was wounded, they finished him off. So they came...one came into me, took out his revolver. And with him was a young Jewish policeman. So he asked him, "Where was he wounded?" He said, "No, he wasn't wounded. He just came back from the hospital. He had an operation on his head." So he put back his revolver, and I went back to see where my father was shot. And then I saw my mother, with the sister, and those little babies, 3 years old, my nieces, beautiful babies like angels were sitting there and crying. They probably didn't know what the crying is for, but everybody is crying, they were crying. And I could see my mother, my sisters laying over my father and kissing his face and caressing him and he was dead. One hand was ripped, broken off because when they shot him they hit the hand and the bullets hit the bones and the hand was...you could see the hand laying in the side.

02:20:20:

And he was laying there and they were crying and kissing him. One thing I want to tell you before...before this day. About a week before, this Pasha Rappaport, the new president from the Judenrat came, to the Judenrat and he had a list of about 15 Jews who had long beards and he gave a note that the Jews should cut off their beards, that Farding, the Landkommissar told him that when he brings his friends to visit the ghetto, he's very much embarrassed to see so many Jews with beards. So he wants the beards should be cut off. And my father was on the list that they had to cut off the beard. For my father to cut off the beard was the worse thing because since his beard started to grow, he never touched a hair, even in the first world war in the army, he never touched the beard. So we called a young boy a barber to our home to cut his beard. So he begged him to leave him a little bit here. And when he cut it, my father was sitting, he was pale like it was white, and after he finished he got up and in Yiddish he said, "Jetzt hob Ich gefielt dem Ta'am miesse".. It means now I felt the taste of death when he cut this beard. And when we looked on my father we didn't recognize him. He looked like a strange person because we were always used to seeing him with a full grey beard. And here he's shaven. It looked like a different person. This a week before he was shot. After he was shot, the Gestapo came back and they told me with this young Jewish policeman and they said, "We want you should go and gather together all the dead people and bring them to the cemetery, to the Jewish cemetery to be buried." So he took me and we went to somebody who had a wagon, and the men were shot, and you could hear from different houses screaming, yelling. This day they came and they had a list of 20 Jews. Because they said they're going to kill one percent of the Jews. There were two thousand Jews. So they had a list of 20 Jews, the most prominent Jews from before the war to be shot. But the end was they they killed 22. I don't know by mistake or just for good

measure. You know, when you buy something, you add...but they killed 22. So we went and we started to get together those dead people on the wagons to take them to the Jewish cemetery. I went alone. I didn't feel anything in this time even my father was shot. But my father always had a reserved place on the cemetery near his father. Now we are Kohanim. I don't know if you know, Kohanim means from the priestly family. And this goes over from father to son from father to son, father son. Because the Kohanim cannot go on the cemetery, so usually the Kohanim, the priests were buried right by the road. There was a big road in the middle of the cemetery. On both sides the Kohanim were buried. Why? So their children could come closer to their graves. So my father's father which I am named after him was buried there, and my father always had a reserved place to be buried next to him. We knew about it. So we decided, my brother and I that we would bury my father next to him. Even[though] the general said to make one common grave. So what we did, when we came a few times to pick up the people. So then later we put our father so that his leg should stick out and I told my brother, my brother-in-law that when we will go through with the wagon, they should wait by my grandfather's grave and pull him out and we'll make a grave near his father, at least this to do for him that he should be buried near his father. We came. They waited. We pulled him out. We started to make the common grave for everybody, but my father was buried near my grandfather. The grave for all the people were made next to the common grave from the pogrom. As I told you, May the 6th, 1919, nine Jews were killed and all the nine were buried in a common grave. So we made the grave next to them for all the rest of people. We didn't make a deep grave because it started to be dark so we just made a shallow grave. We covered them, and we said we'll come back tomorrow to bury them. We came home. I came home and my home. And my mother started...was sitting and crying. She said, "They took away my crown...my crown," because he was the crown of the family. And we were sitting a whole night, and the next day my brother, my brother-in-law and I and other people went back to make the proper burial. Everybody brought in for the parents a tallit. It means a prayer shawl. We brought in like shrouds. Now we didn't prepare shrouds, but every Jew had a kittel, a white coat that he wore three times...twice a year. He wore it on Yom Kippur. He wore it Passover to the Seder, and he was buried in it. So we brought it for my father to put him in in it. Also, we took a sack with wood because the wood where we was shot in the wood shed was sprinkled, soaked with blood and we believe in the Jewish tradition, we believe that the blood is the soul of the person and we wanted this should be buried, so we took the wood and we put it in the grave. We opened the grave and made it deep. We put in the kittel. We put in the prayer shawl, and we buried him next to my grandfather. We did the same thing with the other people. Also there is a tradition that if somebody is killed, when he is buried to put in a

02:27:

knife in his right hand. The belief is that this is for revenge. He should revenge his death. So we brought knives and we put in everybody's hand a knife. We also put in a knife in my father's hand. And we buried them, and when we came back I stopped by a tree. I didn't cry all the time. And I burst out and crying. I couldn't stop. And I with a such a loud a voice said, "Why? Why? Why?" And for about a half hour I was standing near a tree crying and crying.

Well, I stopped. I couldn't cry anymore. We came home, and we sat down to Shivah, which is 7 days of mourning. Now when I sat down, my father he believed in Jahrzeit. Jahrzeit means that we on the day of the death we commemorate the dead person, and as we have this commemoration we say Kaddish and other prayers. Also we light a candle, a Jahrzeit lamp, a candle in a glass which lasted 24 hours. Now in the ghetto you couldn't buy candles for Jahrzeit. Here you go in a supermarket, you can buy as many candles as you want. In a ghetto, you cannot buy candles. My father had Jahrzeit after his father 13 days in the month of Ijar. This was in the spring. This was in the spring...13 days, and he prepared a whole year pieces of wax, pieces of paraffin, paraffin and he collected it and he wanted to make for his day to commemorate his death, this 24 hour glass with paraffin for his father 13 days in Ijar. It took him a whole year to collect this paraffin. He never did it because he was shot 11 days of the month of Ijar, 2 days earlier. So when I came back, he was shot 11 days[in the month of Ijar]. When I came back from the cemetery, it was 12 days in the month of Ijar. I went and I made a wick, I melted the paraffin and I made this Yahrzeit candle for 24 hours, and when I lit it, I lit it for both of them. For my father who prepared it for his father, which was a day later. And after my father was shot, the whole situation in our home changed. Because even he was not active during the war, he was 60 years old, and the Germans made the list, because he was 60 years old, that means that he was unproductive. Because til 60 you were productive. You could do something, where[as] by 60 you were not any more productive. So you had to be killed. He was 60 years old. And the life changed completely. Our life, we had to go every day to pray. Well, there was no prayers, but in somebody's basement a few people came together to have Minyan, to have 10 people, and we pray for it. So this was the first victim of my family that was killed. Now my brother, who was in the Judenrat in the first Judenrat, he was arrested also. And all of them were killed. My father was let out. He wasn't killed. Now I don't know if you want to know the reason why he wasn't killed. It...it's not necessary. Okay. So this he was, my father was the first victim from our family. After this killing when they killed the 22 Jews in the ghetto, every day, every day something new....and we felt in the air that something...the Germans are pushing too much, with too much orders...one order after the other that we couldn't finish the first one, a new order came in. Two weeks later, the Judenrat, the whole community...the leaders, were called to Rzeszow who was the capitol of the state seat the Germans called it the Gauleihter. Gau was like a state. And this...we belonged to them. They called all the presidents and all the members of the Judenrat to this town and there was a Dr.Ehrhaus. He was the Kreishauptmann. Kreishauptmann was like head of state. And Dr. Ehrhaus was a major in the SS, and he got together all the Jews...their leaders from all the State and he came in. He had a paper and he read, "As the Jews are filthy. Full of lice. And because they are so filthy, there is an epidemic of a typhus in our state. I am putting in Polish . Kontributsia, means they have to pay so much money. And he gave out Rzeszow a million zlotys. This town so many...200,000 zlotys. Kolbuszowa 360,000 zlotys. And each town had to pay so much money. He said, "In a week, you bring the money. If you will not bring the money, how much money you will be short, so much percent people who will take from your Judenrat, from your council, and we will shoot them. If there is 10 percent less, we will shoot 10 percent. Twenty percent, we shoot twenty percent." Pashek Rappaport who was the Aelteste, who was the president with all the members of the Judenrat came back to our town and they

told this, that they need 360,000 zlotys. Three hundred and sixty thousand zlotys after being in the war and the ghetto, people starved because at this time people started to starve. And every day we find, did you hear this man starved...this man starved...this. Started to starve. They didn't have what to eat. So to get together 360,000 slotas is impossible. We started to collect. The next day they had to go back with the whole member[ship] and everybody from the Judenrat knew that there is a shortage so much, so many will be killed. Again, they took them in the same room and everybody had a burlap sack with money and asked them, "How much you have? How much you have?" Only our town, only Kolbuszowa, had the full amount, 360,000 zlotys. All the other towns were missing. Like for instance, Rzeszow needed a million zlotys. They only had 750,000. It means 25 percent was missing. Right away, he took out 25 percent from their members of the Jewish council, put them in aside. The other town, the same thing. And I had a list, exactly Rzeszow, Barzava. I remember all the names, and in the book I have every amount and they took out so many people, they took them out in the yard, and in the yard they took out the machine gun and they shot them...25 percent or how much was this. After they were shot, they got together what was remaining. Ehrenhaus came back again with a new list and he said, "Within a week, you go back. Every community has to pay taxes from 1914 til today, if some Jew owes taxes." Now there were Jews who were killed in the first world war fighting for their fatherland. There were Jews who left for America. There were Jews who died, didn't leave no nobody. The community was responsible. Every Jew...the Jewish community

02:36:

had to pay up the taxes from 1914. Not only this, every Pole can put in a claim that a Jew owes him money without any documentation that he owes him money and the Jewish community has to pay him within a week. And again what percentage will be missing, so much will be shot. They come back and this was a terrible thing. Here we got 360,000 zlotys. We didn't know how it was collected. People are starving, and here they want we should pay off taxes from 1914 til today for people who don't exist anymore. Right away the Director of Internal Revenue was notified. He had to dig out books who were laying, covered with dusk and he started to add and to add. We figured out, I say we the Jews figured out that we will have a half a million slotas to pay for those things which was impossible to collect. But this we figured. And the Poles were notified that everybody can claim their debt what the Jews owed them. Imagine if they had a free hand to claim money and the way they loved us, imagine how many claims came in, without documentation. One episode I remember. There was a man. His name was Fritz. Jan Fritz. He had a small store in the village and he used to buy by my father. He always used to owe my father money. I remember when the war broke out he owed us thousand zlotys. He never paid it. He came in and had a claim that my father owed him 5,000 slotas. As I could go out from the ghetto and I knew him, I went to him. And I said, "Fritz, you owed us money. How could you come in and to say that my father owes you 5,000 zlotys. You know this is a lie." He said, "If you will not go out this minute, I will raise it to 10,000 slotas." And he could do it. I didn't say anything. I went out. Well, anyway, the claims from the Poles with the taxes came out to a million zlotys. Now how can you collect from the poor, wretched Jews who are in the ghetto,

who are already in the war 2 years, starving, to get a million slots. Again, got together and this time they used force. They beat up some people, but anyway, in a week it had to be done. In a week they went back. Only Kolbuszowa, only our town, had a million slots. The rest didn't have. Again the same story. How much it was missing, they were shot. We came back. After

02:39:

they paid, and they were shot, he came out a house, again, with a new list. He said, "This time, within 7 days, every Jew had to leave the ghetto to Rzeszow. I'm sorry, not 7 days, 3 days." After 3 days, within 3 days, you have time 3 days, to leave Kolbuszowa to the town of Rzeszow to the ghetto. And then all the towns from all the sections had to be relocated to Rzeszow and to clear out of our ghettos. Of course, later we find out this was their methods. They wanted to have the Jews in one place. So when they came back, this was the worst thing. The money somehow they sold the last thing, and we sold it to the Polish people for nothing. Like everything what we had, we sold it just to get money. And they got everything for nothing. But the last order was the worst order. We will leave our town. In our town somehow, everybody had somebody, acquaintances. Some people who could smuggle in. We even had peasants we knew. Here we'll go to some place. Nobody knows nobody. How will we survive with the children? And this was the worst thing that would happen til now. We had to leave our home. And we started to leave. The peasants were notified that they should come the next day with wagons, line up outside the ghetto. Eight in the morning the doors of the ghetto were opened. They came in, and everybody could pick up a peasant. They said you can take along anything you want. And they gave us wagons. The reason why, they wanted we should take along anything...only not furniture, because they wanted to accumulate, to assemble all the things that Jews have in one place, to be easier for them to take it away. So the peasants were lined up and we started to load the people the merchandise. Now I went out and I picked out two wagons with two horses each, peasants that I knew from my family to load everything what we had. Now we decided to go the first day because my brother when he was released from jail, he became friendly with one German policeman. And this German policeman helped him to get out of jail. So he asked him, "What should we do? Should we go with the last day or the first day?" He said, "Go with the first day, because it's in the hands of the Gestapo, and you never know what they will do. Maybe there will be too many people in the other ghetto. They will come and they will kill everybody. So go the first day." So my family went the first day. We loaded the sacks with everything we had. And there was a line, and they moved, we went 31 kilometers to Rzeszow. Now nobody could sit on their wagon. Old people, children, everybody had to walk on the right side of the wagon. Walk the 31 kilometers to Rzeszow. You want me to stop now?

Q: No. That's okay.

A: Okay. So this how we were chased out from our town. There was one episode that I have to tell you. There was a man. He actually was from Germany. He was a Jew from Germany. He

came back to our town, and he walked with his wife, with his son, and with his mother-in-law, and father-in-law, after the wagon. But in one moment he made a mistake. Instead to be on the right side, he was on the left side. A German policeman which was from our town. I remember even his name, Barthelmus, took a rifle and shot him. He fell down. His wife and his child, he had a 12 year old child, couldn't even stop for a moment to go and to see what happened with him. He was left laying on the street. They had to go forward. Now I went to the third day, not the first day. The reason I went the third day because we still had things and merchandise and I wanted to be there two days to give it out during the night to friendly Poles. Maybe we'll come back. Maybe we'll retrieve it. So after the Jews went out with their wagons, we went and we took this men on the hand wagon and we brought him to the cemetery and we buried him. And I remembered he wore a grey suit, a grey suit with blue stripes, and he had yellow shoes. Usually by us, Jews didn't wear this kind of clothing, but he was from Germany. He had modern clothes. So I remember the grey suit with blue, not stripes, blue squares. And we buried him. About a week later or 2 weeks later when we came back, I had to go to the cemetery because they killed somebody and I went to bury them. You see, before my father was killed, I never saw a dead person. The minute my father was killed, I don't know, every time they had to bury somebody, it pulled me. I wanted to do it. I wanted to do it. And before I never saw it. So somebody was killed, so I took him to the cemetery. When I took him to the cemetery, the caretaker of the cemetery, he was an old Polish man, I saw him wearing a grey suit with blue squares with yellow shoes. So we buried him. I knew that he wouldn't let it go. He uncovered him and he took it out and he wore it. Now we were in Rzeszow. They brought into Rzeszow Jews. In Rzeszow were in this time about 30,000 Jews. They brought into Rzeszow from this town maybe other 40,000 Jews from all the little towns. There was not enough place...I'm not talking about apartments or to have a roof over your head. There was not enough place in the alley ways, on the streets, for all the Jews to put some place. And they came with those wagons. They brought their things, some better, some worse. Every peasant who came to do the service was told that if he brings the Jews to Rzeszow, if he has two horses the Jew must pay him 200 zlotys for transportation. If he has one horse, the Jew must pay him 100 zlotys for the transportation. In case the Jew doesn't have the money or doesn't give him the money, because sometimes they didn't have, he shouldn't let unload the sacks. This was his pay. He can go home what they put on the wagon and take it for himself because they didn't pay him. So a lot of people didn't have the 200 slotas so they took away right away which didn't make a difference. The Germans took it away later. So I came to Rzeszow the third day, and Rzeszow was...sometimes if you talk about tower of Babel how the people couldn't understand [one another]. This was the tower of Babel. People were running around like crazy. Children lost their parents. Parents lost their

02:47:

children. They tried to find themselves. Imagine to bring in so many people from different places. And on the way so many people were killed. Like this woman lost her husband. And then a woman with children, the husband was killed because he did something wrong. He went on the left side instead of the right side. Everybody was lost. And then to feed those

people. It was impossible to feed so many people who came in in one day. Because they all had to come in within 3 days from all the towns around. To have places, I'm not talking sanitary places, but for anything, it was impossible. It was the worst sight that a person can ever imagine; some horror story, some horror picture, the people were put together. This was it. When they were there, came out an order that the 7th of July and this was a week later, the people from this and this section have to assemble in this and this place, and they will be relocated. Nobody knew that there are death camps. Nobody knew in this time that there are crematoriums. Would the people know that they are death camps, like my family and my sisters, we could run away. We had peasants that we knew. I don't know if we would succeed to survive, but at least we would try. Like those Jews I later joined them in the woods, what they never went with this transport. We didn't know. We figured they would send us in camps to work or something. The rumor was they're going to send us to the east to the Ukraine to work in camps. We didn't know about it. They assembled...in one day, they assembled 30,000 Jews or 25,000 Jews. This was the first day on the Umschlagplatz be taken to the railroad station. Jews could take only one bundle with them. Now everything they told them to take along to Rzeszow they were allowed...this was a calculated thing, so if they had to leave in their house. Now, what they did, there was a big ghetto. In every town, there was a big ghetto, and later made it a small ghetto. This was a big ghetto. So they took the people from this and this streets. They cleaned them out. They left everything home. This way they had a chance to go in and to clean out everything. The people came to the Umschlagplatz. The Umschlagplatz was a terrible, a terrible scene. I wasn't there, but later I was told. Before the Jews came in, they had to leave their bundle. Then later they took 2 girls, 3 girls, beautiful girls and they told them to go around and collect all valuables from the people, to collect money, to collect gold, to collect watches, and they did baskets. They brought them over where the Gestapo was standing, where the SS were standing. They were SS men, all drunk. Later, they still didn't believe that Jews gave everything. So they went and they pointed out young girls. It so happens that they pointed out one of my friends. A beautiful girl. Her name was Susza Fein, and they put her and they undressed her and they started to look in every place if she didn't conceal something. She was in this time 19 years old. And they did it so cruel that they used instruments that they cut open her belly. And they looked that the Jews didn't hide something. The Kolbuszowa Rabbi, an old man of about 75 years was standing and he was blind. So they came to him and they asked him something and he couldn't understand. So they took out a revolver and they went to shoot him. He had two granddaughters. One was 16 and one was 18. Beautiful girls. They started to beg this SS men. He's our grandfather. He was the Rabbi of the town. Please don't shoot him. He will go with us. So they shot him, and they shot the two girls in the same time. Well, anyway, they took away 6,000 Jews, elderly, crippled, children and they took them away and they had to walk to a town near 22, They had prepared ditches in the woods, and those people were killed in those ditches. The rest they took to the railroad and they were transported to Belzec. On the way to the railroad, they were shooting in the columns that a few hundred people remained dead on the street laying where they were shooting. They put in the people in the railroad trains. In the trains before they put in the people, they put on the floor untreated lime. I don't know...lime if it is not treated and if it's mixed with water, it starts to boil and it start to give out gas. So those were untreated lime, because they knew that soon the floor will

be wet and then the gases will come out and then people will choke. Instead to take from Rzeszow to Belzec by train would take 3 hours, it took them 3 days. When the people came to Belzec, they opened the railroad cars. More than 50 percent were dead. And then they had to wait. We find this out later. We, at this time we didn't know...we...well, I jumped a little bit. I...I will tell you

Q: I need you to stick to what you saw.

A: Okay. Alright. Okay. So when we came to Rzeszow...when I came the third day, and when I saw those things what's going on there with the people. So Farding gave out an order that he needs...you see, our town...there were four towns belonged to our town...our county...that he needs hundred young boys for each town to go back, and he will make a camp, a labor camp. The reason...we should destroy, taking apart the ghetto. To Sokolov, Glogov, ?? , and ?? . I volunteered with my brother to go back. The reason I volunteered because I thought I will be back. I have peasants that I know. I will be able to buy food somehow to send it to our family to the ghetto, Rzeszow, because in Rzeszow they would starve. But without sending them somehow, we would. So we went back. We walked a whole night back. In the morning we were taken into the Shul, to the temple, to the Houses of Study, and this became our barracks, and this became our new life to be in a labor camp in Kolbuszowa. Meanwhile the people were taken to Belzec, and they were made four transports from the people. In the four transports within every week two transports, and they cleared up the big ghetto, the large ghetto and everybody was left who had a card to work, they put in the small ghetto. And the small ghetto, and they liquidated the big ghetto, and we were in this time in the camp. And we started to work as a labor camp. What we did in the beginning we started to destroy the houses, taking apart. We saved everything for the Germans. For the Germans was very important to have old material, scrap, because they could make new material. So we picked out one house, and one room was paper, and one was brass and lead and so on and so on. And we destroyed this ghetto. Destroying the ghetto was a very painful thing because we knew the people. And we destroyed 300 years of a continuation of people who lived in this town for 300 years, they were conceived in those houses. They died in those houses. They were married in those houses. And now the people are gone, and the houses are being destroyed. We threw down from the attics things that you would never believe that people saved those things. And you could see the poverty of the people. They never throw out anything. Old iron beds, old iron stoves, barrels. Everything we threw it out. And then later the house came down. We knocked it down. You could see the dust, and the dust went up and then you could see 300 years of life in this little Stetl, that it was destroyed. We cleared the ghetto. We made a field out of it. And we still didn't know what happened to our people. So we sent...we took a Pole. We paid him money, and we send him to go with the road where the trains went and then he came back and he told us the story. That they were taken to Belzec, and then we find out that they are death camps. This was the first time that they sent to death camps, which Belzec was. They tried out how to do it, so Belzec...it was not a crema...it was not gas chambers like in Auschwitz, sophisticated with Zyklon. In Belzec, they had old motors, and then with the gas, with the carbon monoxide and then later they buried the people. They burned them. This how we find out that our people are dead. We

worked in this camp, and we knew that the end will be soon because we almost destroyed the ghetto and there was not any more work. Why would they keep us. So they get us...we had a river in our town. So he get us to regulate the river, to make it straight the banks. So we worked there. But soon we knew that we will what will they need? Farding played around with us. We were like his small army. We had between our people a man. His name was Lampel. He was a sergeant in the Austrian army. He was a drill sergeant. So he told them to drill us, and we used to march like soldiers.

02:58

Q: Excuse me. This is a good place for us to stop and change tapes.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: Okay.

A: We worked in this camp. And we had [it] quite good. The reason why? We didn't have no German guards. All the towns around us were Judenrein. There were no Jews around anymore because all the Jews were taken away. We had in our section, we had a few labor camps, which the German organized. One was in Breshatka, and one was in Hutta Komarovska, and one was in Mielec. Mielec was quite known, because this was the second place that they tattooed people. They didn't give numbers, but they had on their head a KL. KL it means Konzentrations Lager. Now if some people had the KL, I know they were in Mielec. And this was very close to us. And we didn't have no guards. It means that we were on our own. But Farding got us together, and he said, "If one of us will escape, 10 of us...10 will be hanged." He made us responsible for everybody, to make sure nobody will escape. And every day we went to work. Then later, suddenly, I became friendly with Farding, and it was very...there was one town, Sokolow. Sokolow belonged to us....to our county. The night of the expulsion of the Jews in Sokolow, when they told them to go to Rzeszow ghetto, Farding came to Sokolow drunk. And he said he wants Jews. So they started to bring him old Jews, because they figured the old Jews will not survive the trips or something. He wanted and so they brought them...and he started to kill them. And he killed in this night...he killed 49 Jews by himself with his own hand. He was drunk. He had a bottle of vodka. He drank Vodka, and he killed. They brought him Jews and he killed. There was a pile of Jews. But he was such a sadist, and he knew everything about Jewish religion because they...like I told you before he spoke Polish. He said, "He's going to kill the Jews to make them kosher. They should go straight to heaven because they will be kosher." And he told them he's going to do with the Jews the same thing as Jews did with chickens before the war. If a chicken had to be made kosher, and if it had to be soaked in water, then later put in salt on all sides, and then later this had to be done in the night with candles, two candles...had to be held near the chicken to see if everything is correct. So he got the two Jews holding candles. He had there a bag of salt. And every time he shot a Jew, he took salt and he put it on the wound and he said, "You see, now I make it kosher, and now the Jew go straight to Heaven." Those were the things to add to all that terrible things they did. They played with us, like a cat plays with a mouse before...before it [kills]... So this Farding suddenly became friendly with me. Now the reason why he became friendly with me...I knew why. Because he liked to have somebody who should confident...who should get confident and later to find out all kind of stories that he wants to know. Like he had there a young boy and I write about him a lot...a boy from 16 years, and he promoted him in the Rzeszow ghetto to be the assistant commandant of the Police. A 16 year old boy...his name was Isaac Silber. He was from our town. And if you speak to a Rzeszow Jew about Issac Silber, you will know a lot. Issac Silber was from my town. He was born by my town. And before the war, his mother...he didn't have a father...his mother used to be the one...she wished to work in the public baths. Very low people. And this Isaac Silber was very smart, and he started to be a friend with Farding. Farding kept him, and he found out from him everything he wanted, and for this reason when the Jews were sent to Belzec, he promoted him. And he make him the assistant

commandant in Rzeszow. A young boy from 16 years old. So he became the famous Isaac Silber. We used to call him Itschele. Itschele was his name. So he became friendly ... Probably he thought that becoming friendly with me, maybe he would get a second Itschele or something. Now the reason how I got together with him is when we came back, he found a warehouse with hundreds of crates with all kind of merchandise. And on the crates was written Isaac Salsitz. I don't know if you remember, when my father...in the beginning of the war, somebody squealed, and the Germans came and took away all the merchandise. It took them three days to take out everything we had. This was never used. They put in a warehouse, and it was laying there. Now Earding finds out...they found it, so he needed somebody who knew about this merchandise. So he came to our commandant of our camp, which was a Jewish man from Krakow. His name was Henry Mundt, and he said, Mundt I need somebody to clear out this warehouse. So he said what you need better. I have here a son from Isaac Salsitz. Who knows better? So he went...took me. He sent me home with him, and I come in and I see our merchandise was laying there. And what he wanted...I should make packages...to unpack everything, and make packages from soap, from coffee, from chocolate, from tea, from cacao. All those things what they don't have in Germany, I made packages and I send it away. I made ready to send it to his home. So I worked there. And while I was working there every day in the morning they took me in this room. I worked there, and then in the afternoon, they let me out for lunch. They let me out. They searched me if I don't steal anything. Steal my own stuff. And they let me back for lunch. And this I went every day. The other boys worked to demolishing the houses or regulating the river, and I worked there. He used to come in every time, and he used to discuss with me things. And his biggest pleasure was to speak to me about girls. And somehow he told me stories that since he was a young boy he was with girls. And he wanted to hear stories from me, and I had invent stories to tell him what womanizer I was. I didn't know her, but I had to tell him because he loved it. He even taught me all kind of expressions. He said do you remember Martin Luther famous saying, not the Martin Luther King, but Martin Luther, so his famous saying was (in German). It means twice a week it wouldn't hurt him, it wouldn't her, and it makes in a year 102, what is right. This was his famous saying. And then every time he talked different things and he asked me... One time he came in and he said to me, "Do you know what happened to your family?" We knew already in this time that our family is dead. So I said, "No, I would like to know." He said, "Yes, I saw your family last week in the Ukraine." They were already dead 3, 4 months. He said, "If you want, I can take you...if I have my few days off, I go to Lwow with my car. I will take you along and I will take you to your family where they work in a Kolkhoz. They work on a farm." So I knew the family is dead. I said, "This would be nice." He said, "I will do it." This...I don't know...he played around like this. One day we came out, 12 o'clock from this warehouse. I had a other man working with me. And we stopped in a place where they used to distribute milk for free. There was a milk factory, but they got the skim milk. They brought it over there, and the Poles used to stand in line and get milk for their family. So we made out that they gave for our kitchen...we had a kitchen there in our camp...that they gave for our kitchen every day 50 quarts of milk. We made sour milk, other things. But we didn't have time to stand in line because there was always a long line. So I made up with a person who was in charge. So in the morning we went to work. On the way I left the container. And when we came, lunch

time, I took the container, brought it to the kitchen and went back to work. One day I come for the milk . There was a big line. There was one woman from our town. She was pretty girl...but she was not the nicest person. She was a very loose woman, and during the war she had a lot of German lovers. Anyway. So she said to me, "You cannot go and take the milk without standing in line. You're not better than we. You have to stand in line." So I explained to her...I knew her from before the war...so I explained to her I cannot stay in line because only I have is a half hour to go and eat and go back. She said, "I don't care. If you don't stand in line, I will take the milk and I will pour it out." I didn't think she would do it, so I took the milk without, and she run to me, took the milk, and she poured it out. So we came back without milk. So I told her something. I said, "You shouldn't do it. And don't worry the war will not last forever. I will remember you this." And...and that's it. And I went back to work. When I came home about 6, 7 o'clock a Polish commandant from the Polish police with a mustache going up like a typical Pole, he stands there and waits for me. And he says to me, "You're Naftali Salsitz?" I said, "Yes." "I want to tell you something. Tomorrow morning, we'll have to shoot you. We got orders from Farding to shoot you. So what should I do? "You run away." I thought he maked a joke. I said, "Why?" He said, "Don't ask questions. I want you should live." And he was known not to be a very tremendous Jew lover, so why does he tell it to me? So he said to me and I came and I told it to my friends what he told me. And everybody thought that I will escape and people were afraid because if I will escape, 10 others will be shot. So I said to my brother, I told him. He says, "You know what' go speak to the Mayor." The Mayor was a very good friend of my father, because my father was assistant mayor before the war. So I went to him and I told him this. Go to Farding and see if you can see he shouldn't. He said, "I cannot go. I can't intervene for a Jew." So what should I do? Escape. Everybody... Then he said to me, "You know what? There is a man. His name is Halitski. He is the commandant of the Kripo, criminal policei, and he was a Ukrainian, but the Germans made his this. "Are you on good terms with Hailitski?" I said, "Very good terms." Now Halitski we were on good terms. Why? Because before the war, he was like a plain detective. And every holiday, he used to come to my father and he used to give him flour and sugar. You know just to be on good terms. So we were good to him. So I went to Hailitzski, and I said to Halitzski, if I can...you see, I could work. I had a pass to work. So I came to Halitzski, and he was a commandant of the Kripo, and I said to him, "Can I talk to you?" He said, "Yes." "I have to tell you something." He said, "What do you want to tell me? That tomorrow you will be shot?" I said, "Yes." "I know about it." He already knew about it. So I said, "I came to you. Maybe you can help me. You were a friend with my father." He said, "Look, I cannot help you. You are a Jew. I cannot help you. But I want you should live." "So what should I do?" "Run away." I said, "You're the commandant of the Kripo should tell me to run away." He said, "Yes." I said, "They will hang 10 others." He said, "What do you care. You will save your life." I said, "What it is this, I have my brother here." So he said, "Take your brother and run away. I don't want to know about it. You run away." And he cannot help. I came back. Everybody was afraid that I run away and then whose turn will be to be shot. Well, I didn't run away. I told them I will not because I don't want they should kill 10 for 1. The next day they went to work. I said goodbye to everybody. I put on very torn clothing. I took it from my friend, and I gave him my good clothing because if I be shot, let them have good shoes, good pants. And I came to my work, where I

work in the warehouse. Like nothing happened. Two policeman standing there, two Polish policeman and they said to me, "You come with me." I said, "Why?" And I already knew what it is so I came to them. They took me to the Polish police. I come in to the Polish police. By the desk is sitting Patik was his name, the commandant who told me this. When he saw me, he got pale. He saw me that I didn't run away. And there in the corner was standing a shovel and they said, "Take the shovel." So I took the shovel and he looked at me and I walked out. They took me about 200 yards away and they...one of them with the rifle, the other with a rifle. They said, "Start to dig." "Dig for what?" "Don't ask questions? Dig." So I started to dig. It was already a foot high. I said, "Well, I'm digging, but tell me why am I digging?" "Don't ask questions? Dig." And I dug...I was already til here. "What it was already quite deep, so I said, "Tell me the truth. Who you going to shoot here?" "Don't ask." "It's me?" They said, "Yes." There were two. I said, "Why?" He said, "Don't ask questions." So standing there two policemen with rifles, I am digging my own grave. Now what went through my mind? My whole life from the first minute I remember to the family this and that went through. People ask, "What is the taste of death?" Does somebody know the taste of death? Nobody knows the taste, because if somebody is dead he cannot tell you the story the taste of death. But I know the taste of death. But usually the taste of death takes a second, two seconds, and somebody's shot. But me the taste of death took more than an hour because I had to stay there in the grave and I knew I will be killed. This was the taste of death. I can tell you how the taste of death feels. Not only once, I can tell you seven times how the taste of death is from other episodes. So what should I do? Should I throw sand? How can I throw? One stands in this side, one stands in this side, with the rifles. So if I throw the other one, so I told the one, one was very vicious, so I said to him, "You know I ask you one favor. If you know how to shoot. You're teaching me how to shoot. If you will shoot me, please kill me with one bullet. Shoot me through the head. I don't want...because I was thinking...I was afraid I will be buried alive. Until today when I have dreams, I have dreams from this day, and they shot me. They didn't kill me. I was buried alive. And then takes a long time to suffocate. What can I do? And I had an idea. And I said to that man, "You're going to shoot me anyway. Why don't you go to bring Farding to tell Farding I want to see him. Farding was very shrewd. And I knew on every little thing, he wants to make out something of it. They said, "I don't want to go to Farding. If I got to Farding, I don't shoot you. He will kill me. He's a vicious man. He was very bad for the Poles too. I said, "Go and tell him. You have nothing to lose." "You run away." I said, "How can I run away? The other man stands here?" He didn't want to do it. Farding had a secretary. Her name was Shusa Kotaleska. She was a girl from my town, and I knew her from before the war. So I told him, "Go and tell Shusa Kotaleska, I want to talk to her." They didn't want and one agree. He said, "I will bring Shusa Kotaleska." They brought Shusa Kotaleska. She was Polish. When she saw me, she started to cross herself and said, "Oh Jesus, What's going on?" I said, "I don't know. They're going to shoot me." She says, "Why?" I said, "I don't know." I said, "I need a favor. Go tell Farding, is Farding in the office?" She said, "Yes." "Go tell Farding I want to see him. I have very important things to tell him." And I knew this would be the very...uh...things he will..." "I cannot go to Farding. You know him..." I said, "Go." She went. Comes back in a few mnutes, and she told Farding...she said I want to tell him something very important. So she comes back and she said he wants to see you. I went back,

so the policeman didn't have a choice, and they with the rifles on both side, go up to Fardring. Fardring comes out of the office. In the office there were about 10 girls. He said, "Hey, verfluchter Jude, you there. You're crazy. He wasn't my friend anymore. You, what you coming to see me? So I said, "I have something very important to tell you." "Alright, what is it?" I said, "Well, I cannot speak to you when all the people are here. I want to go in the other room." He took out his revolver and he started to curse me. He said, "Jude. Turn around. Going to shoot you like a dog." So I started to...you see, in this time, I was very calm. You see by me, if I am very scared, I will become very calm. And I was...and I started to smile. I said, "You threaten me to shoot in there. I dug my own grave. And you tell me...so here at least I'll be shot under a roof." So he . Alright. He took me to the other room. And he said, "What do you want to tell me? Want to tell me that the Jews have money? What you tell me?" I said, "No." Said, "What do you want to tell me?" "You're going to shoot me. I know you like Bohnenkaffee. You like coffee beans." You see my brother who was with me...he was known. He was specialist in roasting coffee beans. And before the war we used to roast our own coffee beans, and it was the best coffee beans we made. And he knew about it. And he didn't have too much coffee beans in the warehouse, and he needed it. And by Germans, coffee beans was everything. I had hidden by a peasant 100 kilo coffee beans before the war. Not roasted, green coffee beans. And if my brother will roast it, it is fresh. It's very good. I had it hidden. We never took it out. Figured maybe someday we'll need it. I said, "If you let me go, I give you coffee beans." As I told him this, he got red. He started to squeak with his squeaky voice. His...his shaved head started to perspire and looked at me with his eyes like a pig and he...he went to me. He slapped me in the face. He said, "You are bribing me?" I said, "Who's bribing you? I don't bribe you. I will give you coffee. You can shoot me later. What's the difference. You can always shoot me." So then later he quieted down. He said, "Where will you take the coffee beans? You want to say that the Jews in Rzeszow have coffee beans because there were still 2,000 Jews. I said, "No, I don't even know the Jews in Rzeszow. I know peasants I know storekeepers. They used to buy from me before the war. They're in the stores. I will go and buy." "Okay. How much coffee beans will you give me?" I said, "How much is my life worth?" So he said, "50 kilo." I said, "50 kilo. In the whole general government you cannot have 50 kilo coffee beans. From where?" So I said, "I'll give you 5 kilo" "10 Kilo" Well, we bargained and bargained. Then we agreed on 25 kilo. I said, "25 kilo." "When can you bring it to me? Tomorrow?" "What do you mean, tomorrow? Where can I buy 25 kilo?" Then later I spoke to him like an equal because he already made a deal with me. So I said, I have to go and buy. I will buy 10 here, I will buy 10 here. I will put it together. I need a Passierschein signed. I need a pass to go." He called in Shusha Koteleska, "Make him out a pass." And this pass I have. "How long you want the pass? For a week?" I said, "Oh, No. I need the pass at least for 6 months." So he started to jump again. Well, anyway, he gave me a pass for a month. Then he said to go out from the ghetto. I said, "No. I need a pass to Rzeszow." Because I had to go to Rzeszow to other stores. And then later when he agreed to Rzeszow. I said, "Rzeszow and the whole state." Because I wanted to be free. So he wrote down in the whole state. And this Passieschein I have. He gave it to me and he wrote down in the book 25 kilo coffee beans. Then I asked him...yes...sorry.....he said to me, "I hope you will not escape before you give me the coffee beans." So I told him, "I will not escape because if I would lie to escape I would have

escaped yesterday. I knew yesterday I'll be shot." So he said, "You knew this. Who told you this?" "Well, if somebody wanted to save my life, I wouldn't tell you now who told me this." "You knew yesterday and you didn't escape? Why didn't you escape, he asked. So I said, "How can I escape when I know that if I escape you will kill 10 others. So why should you kill 10 Jews when you had only 1 Jew. He said, "You want to say you didn't escape because you wanted to save the other nine?" So I said, "Tell me, Herr Landkommissar, wouldn't you do this for your friends?" I said, "You would do this for your friends too. I did it for my friends." He didn't say anything. So he said, "Okay, okay, okay." Then later I asked him another thing. I said, "Now, if we made a deal, tell me why did you tell the police to shoot me." So he said, "Yesterday, you went for milk." I said, "Yes." "And you had an argument with this woman." I said, "Yes." "And you threatened a woman, said 'You are a communist and when the Russians will come in, you will be the first one to shoot her. You told her this.' Because this what she told her boyfriend, and they told him. So I asked him, Herr Landkommissar, Do you think that I am so stupid that I should, in a public place, even if I would think of it, do you think I would be so stupid to tell it openly?" So he said, "No, I don't think so you so stupid," and he laughed. And I walked home. But the main thing is after this, and I told you the story about the coffee beans. The main thing when older people...yal...so...the Germans if there was a grave open, the grave could never be left open without killing somebody, so he went out to the policeman. They were waiting with the secretaries. He said, "You know Vinoski" There was a Pole Vinoski. "You go and bring him and shoot him and bury him there." And he said to me, "You wait because you'll be the one to bury him. So they went and brought Vinoski. Why? And they shot him, and I covered him. The shots were heard. Vinoski he shot because the day before Farding had a little dog. And Vinoski went through and the dog bit him. So Vinoski complained, said the dog bit him. Because the dog bit him and he complained, he had to be killed. So they brought Vinoski. They killed him, and I covered him. And I went back with the shovel to the office, and there was sitting this Pappek, this commander. And when he saw me putting back this...uh...shovel, he looked at me. He couldn't understand it. Here he hears a shot. I had to be killed and here I am but knew he knew I wasn't shot. All the boys who worked heard the shots, so they were sure I was shot. So there happened a thing that I cannot forget this thing. So I was waiting til they will come back from work. And when they came back from work, this drill sergeant drilled them that they walked like a army with the shovels on their back, and when I was standing there on the steps and they saw me from a distance standing, they were so thrilled, so happy that I'm alive that this Lampel gave an order to them and they say Achtung which means attention, and they told him...it's like a review, and they start...and he told them to march with their feet like the Germans, you know, like the , and they started to march through me and everybody looked at me that I'm alive. And then later everybody started to hug me and they kissed me that I'm alive. This moment every time I tell this story, I break down because you cannot imagine that they knew that I was shot and I'm alive. So this is the story from the coffee beans. We worked in the camp, and I went every day to work. And there were episodes and episodes and episodes.

03:25:40

Q: Talk about how you escaped.

A: We don't have time. Okay. So. Escape. Okay. So I will not tell you those episodes because they killed once 400 people. We were there, but this is not for now. We were there till the 18th of November. And it started to be cold. And we knew that we will be liquidated. The reason why we knew that we will be liquidated when we took apart the houses, the houses were from logs...from beams. So we cut the beams, and he always told us, "Well, you better put them in a safe place because for the winter you will need them for fuel." Then later one day he came and he said, "There will come Poles with papers and we should give them out the wood." And when we saw that the wood has to be given away, so we knew that we will not be there in the winter. So I started to prepare the escape. As I had papers to go out. So I started to speak to each one to convince him to escape. Some wanted, some didn't have money, some didn't have a place; some were afraid. Somehow I went to their acquaintances, and I made contacts and I tried to have...and I wanted to live the day when Farding will come in and to take us away, and from the hundred, not one will be left. And this what I wanted. Later, we will be shot. But to see him that we run away. Well anyway, I tried and I went and I convinced and the commandant was very much against me...the Jewish commandant, because he couldn't escape. And he didn't want to make a commotion because he knew that the rest will be killed if somebody will escape. So we were there until November and I was close...I already had 55 people to escape. I needed 45 more to escape. This was the 18th of November. It started to be cold. I come home from work. Who waits outside? Poppek. This polish commandant with the long mustache. He waits outside. He calls me out back, he says, "Listen, you didn't listen to me last time. But you were lucky." Later, he find out how I told him how I saved myself. "You were lucky. This night we got orders to surround the ghetto with the German police and to take you away." And I didn't know to kill on the spot, but to take you way. This was enough. I said, "I hope.... He said, "I hope this time you will listen to me, and you will save yourself." So I said, "Yes, I believe you." I went in and I started to tell it to our people. The one who wanted to escape believed me. The other didn't believe me. There started to be a commotion and this and that. And I begged them, and you could see everybody prepared a knapsack ready to escape. Meanwhile, this commandant took two policeman, put them by the doors, not to let out nobody. But so happens that the two policemen were my friends who we were together and they were one of the escapees...who wanted to escape. So they said to him, "Don't put us in because we gonna to escape." They went out and I went to see. "Go, go, go, go," and I said, "I will be the last one." I was waiting there til about...uh...2, 3 o'clock in the morning. Nothing happened. And I started to think, "Maybe it's not true, and maybe they went away and the rest will be shot." But I waited. And about 3 in the morning one of our boys came in and they said, "Well, it's bad. We are surrounded." But I didn't escape. I was there. I go out. Two Polish policemen were standing. The German policemen were on the other side. And I go into one...I go next to one and I...I knew him. His name was Yashemik. And I go to him and I said, "What...what you doing here?" He said, "Well, we surround the camp." I said, "You mean I cannot go out." He said, "No." I said, "But I can go out." He said, "How?" "If you turn around, I can go away." Before this there was a fence. I went and I loosened a few boards from the fence because I wanted to be ready. So he turns around the way I said it. And I was there with my friend. I pulled my friend, and we jumped through the road into the fence. He didn't say anything. I was there in

this yard and later we had to go over the road. There were German with lights. But anyway, I escaped. From the 100, 55 escaped. From the 55, 30 were caught the next 2, 3 days by

03:30:

Poles, and they were killed. Twenty-five of us reached the woods. We had two other camps in our section. I told you when they made our camp, Sokolov. Before I escaped I had a messenger...a Polish guy on a bicycle to go to both camps to notify them that we going to be taken away. He reached one camp, that 18 escaped. The other camp I don't know and I didn't find out even today, because I didn't find nobody alive from them. But from this camp, they joined me in the woods. One was the Charlie what I want this..... So we came and we escaped. When we came to the woods, I found there about 35 Jews. We had there three women, and those were Jews from the villages when they had to go to the ghetto, they never came to the ghetto, and they were in the woods. They had peasants, food and everything. We joined them, and little by little, we got more Jews coming to us, who escaped from the camp, who escaped from hiding. They find out about us. In the height of our strength, we were 125 Jews. And we started to buy guns. We had a few revolvers. We had two rifles. We had hand grenades. And we paid a lot of money for it. Like, for instance, my gun I bought, I paid 3,000 zlotys. The going rate was 300 slotas, but because I wanted it, but we were happy to get it. And little by little we started to melt. The Polish peasants started to kill us. When we went for food, when we want...they made man hunts, and one time we lost lost 29 people. And there was a little boy even born in the woods. And we named him Tarzan, because he never wore anything, and the father and the mother were there, and he wasn't their boy. He was our boy. Everybody considered this boy as his. And we loved him so much because we saw a continuation through this boy. And one night the peasants made a manhunt and they were in a bunker. They were underground. He and his mother, his father was out with me and there we had a 70 year old woman, and one night they killed all the inhabitants of the bunker. They took them out and they all hacked them with axes, and they killed them all. And we come, I saw the mother laying there with her...with the little baby with the split head in her arms. And her father came with me. So little by little, we saw that we cannot survive this way because we didn't have no connections with Russia, no connections with anybody outside, and then the AK started to become stronger and stronger and stronger because the minute Stalingrad changed, the whole fortune of war and the Germans started to lose, they became big big, they went into the woods and once they were in the woods, they started to hunt Jews. If they find out that there is a Jew, Jews are hiding, them came in and they killed them. No Jew could join them. They didn't accept Jews. And if somebody would come to them, they say, "I want to join you," they would kill them right away. They were very, very anti-Jewish. And even they were Polish patriots, and I can never understand. We had the same enemy. We fight the same enemy. Instead to join,

03:34:

instead to be together, when it came to Jews, they would kill faster than the German.

Q: Take it easy.

A: Okay. So. You know, you say slow down, it reminds me a story. My mother used to knit, to make sweaters, with a needle...uh...

Q: Crochet.

A: Crochet. She didn't have too much wool then. So she crocheted it very fast. So they asked her, "Why you rushing things?" She said, "I wanted to finish before I'm out of wool." So the same thing. I want to tell you the story before we're out of time.

Q: We have time.

A: Well, anyway. Okay. So we started to be in very bad [shape]. Instead of go[ing] together to do something against the Germans, to destroy something, to blow up trains, our most energy was to be on the watch for the peasants and for the AK. In the book, I'm describing episodes practically from so many who were killed, but now it's no time..

Q: I would like to hear it. No, I would like an episode.

A: So I will give you for instance one episode. I find out that one of my friends who went with me to school for seven years. His name was Fascick Augustin. His father was a very good friend of my father. They were very wealthy peasants. They had an estate. But his father was the president of all kinds of monopoly from the Polish government. Like kerosene, salt, matches. This was Polish monopoly, and we had to buy it through him. So they became very friendly. Even he was on the board of the same bank as my father was, and they became very friendly. And with this boy I was friendly. We went to school, was sitting next to each other. I find out that this boy...this Fascick Augustin became commandant from the AK in our section. Now, I don't have to explain now the AK. You know it, but if there it needs some explanation, this was the underground which was directed from the London government in exile. And AK means in Polish "Armia Krajowa". It means the home army. So when I find out, here the Ak is killing us and Fascick is my friend and he's the commandant, the best thing would be to go to him to see if he wouldn't take me in with my group. This was the time when our leader was killed, and I became the commandant from our group. So I said I will come to him and maybe I can convince him to take us in. Not only that we will be able to fight the Germans, but we will be safe from them that they shouldn't kill us. I sent over a girl who belonged to the organization. This is the woman whom I brought over last year. And we made an appointment, and he wanted to see me. He prepared there a place, a meeting place. We came to the meeting place. This is complicated, how and what, when. But, anyway, I came there with my brother. And he was very happy to see me. The meeting place was made in a stable between the section of cows and the section of horses and there where the animals ate the hay, this was removable. We could go in that nobody could see. They cut the locks and this was a small place about, I would say about 8 by 12. And then we came in, and they were very happy to see us. He grabbed me and kissed me. He said we will

kill Germans. We'll survive the war. And the next day he went to...so he said right away...we were infested with lice. In the woods, we didn't have no changes. So he said, "Take off those rags." And he brought me fresh underwear. I put on the fresh underwear. My brother put on the fresh underwear. And then they brought us food. Then we made plans. And then his...he had an older brother. The older brother was Yashik was his name. It was a little complicated. Stashik and Yashik. There were two brothers. And his brothers also was in the underground, so he came in and he said to me, "You know what? There is somebody who wants to sell a revolver. You want to buy it?" I said, "Sure, Fred." Because I was ready to buy. "Go and buy it." And he went and he came back about an hour later, and he said, "He doesn't want money. He wants to have a suit or two suits." I said, "No problem. I have two suits still left by somebody in town. I will send for it, and I will give him. Bring me the revolver." He went. He came back. He said, "Oh, he's not home." And when he came in, I saw him holding the hand in his right pocket. And I had there a knapsack that I brought, and I had there shoes, not boots, shoes and short, half shoes. And I didn't need in the woods. I said to him, "You know what? I have those shoes," and I dragged them, "I don't need. It's the same size as you. Why don't you take the shoes?" So he went and he opened the knapsack with the left hand. And his hand was filled in the pack...I didn't suspect him, but some intuition...I don't know. Then I asked him...he used to be contributor to the Polish underground newspaper and every Tuesday the newspaper came out, and this was a Tuesday. I asked him, "Tell me, Yasha, today the newspaper came out. What is there news." Because from the underground newspaper, we could find out more than from the German newspaper. "What is the news." He said, "I forgot." To me, it was something. He is a contributor and I ask him about the news, but he says I forgot. He opens the knapsack with the left hand. He doesn't take...so intuition, and I was in this time already in a bundle of straw with my brother covered with a military blanket because we want to rest. Something told me and I lifted up the blanket and I took out my revolver. I always had my revolver with me even if I slept. I had a belt, and on the belt I had a revolver, a hatchet, hand grenades, a flashlight, the whole arsenal I had around me. So I took out the revolver, and I lifted the blanket and I had a long barrel revolver, and I lifted it he shouldn't see that I'm holding and I cocked the revolver. I held it straight to him. In this moment and he was still standing in front of me holding his hand in the package, in this moment, my brother didn't know what I'm doing. He wanted to go down. He opened the blanket. And he saw and he left me exposed with my revolver pointed to him. The minute he saw it he walked out. Then I said to my brother, "What did you do?" And he couldn't...he said to me, "Why didn't you trust them. Those are people want to save us." "Well, it was done. It's too late." About 10 minutes after he left, we heard knocks on the wall. Later, we find out, those knocks were a signal for him to do something. Because this was near the road, and on the road was a German patrol. So they had to let them and this later we found out, to let them know that the German patrol was far away that he could start to shoot. But we didn't know about it. But when he saw me ready, he walked out. The next day we didn't know what to do, how to face them. We were embarrassed. But they didn't mention anything. I didn't mention anything. They went to town. He brought me

medicine. He brought me this. About 5 o'clock, they came in and he brought a German newspaper and he wanted I should translate him about the front, where the front is. We looked, we had a little kerosene lamp. My brother started to eat, and I looked in the paper and he said to me, "Well, I lost something. Why don't you lend me your flashlight." I took off the flashlight, and I gave it to him. Soon as I gave him the flashlight it became dark. He turned off the kerosene lamp. And as it became dark, I hear a shots. One, two, three, four. I didn't know what, when. And I fell down. I fell down. I was [old you see??], and my head started to spin around. In this moment...you see, I am telling you this...this takes a few seconds, a few minutes maybe. But this took a split of a second and I fell. And I fell down. I said, "This is it." They took us in to be shot. But I'm glad that somebody shot me from behind because I was always afraid to be caught by the Germans alive. I didn't want they should torture me. So we always had a rule in our unit that if the last bullet we cannot shoot, the last bullet we had to leave for ourself. But here, I fell down. I said, "Fine, this is it. We went through so much. The whole family doesn't live. Everybody I loved doesn't live. It's enough." And while I was laying there, I was thinking...but I'm still alive. Why should he shoot me? Why shouldn't I kill him? Laying on the floor, somehow I took out my revolver, and it was dark, and I wanted to put in my index finger to pull the trigger, it was like a piece of wood. I got a bullet, he shot me, I got three bullets in my neck and went through. I...then when I caught myself I got a bullet here, and the bullet traveled through the finger, ripped the finger apart, but didn't touch the bone. So when I wanted to put in this finger, I couldn't because it didn't move. Now [i.e. today] in winter, I cannot move this finger. In winter, it gets stiff. But during the day ?? Right away, I had enough. I put in the other finger. I put in this finger. And it was dark. I shot once in the air, and I had a big caliber. So from the shot, I could see from the glare of it, and I could see this brother standing in the doorway because it was very small where they made the extension the door to go in. So I still saw him. It went so fast that I still saw him standing pointing at his revolver to me. It went so fast. So when I shot once, I saw him. Right away, I shot him the third to him and right the third time. By the third time because I didn't know that I will hit him with the first bullet. When I shot him the first time I saw him already laying stretched out. With my second bullet, one I shot in the air, with the second bullet, I pierced his heart and I killed him. And by the third bullet, I saw him stretched out. When his brother saw what happened because he saw by the glare the same thing as I and his brother start to shot to my brother. When he saw what happened he ran out. And this was an emergency door. When he run out I shot after him, and I hit him in the spine, and he fell down. Now we are naked. My brother didn't know what's going on. So he started to yell to them, "What you playing with firecrackers? Because he couldn't understand, it went so fast. So I said to him, "No." And we had our things on the attic, and there was no ladder to the attic. But we had to climb through the beams. Took the revolver in my teeth, I started to climb and I wanted to take boots. I wanted to take the medicine, and also the most important thing I wanted to take, I had a diary what my sister started the first day of the war. And every day she wrote in the diary. But because we came to him, I figured I will be able to sit and I will enter for a few days. So I wanted to get the diary. But in the dark, scared, you [are] hit, I don't know where I'm hit. So when I took one boot out of the ?? I took this and that. I left everything. I jumped out. I called my brother. He wasn't there anymore. What happened? He find a door. He ran out the door. And his friends, there

03:46:

were about 6 friends waiting outside. They grabbed him. When I came in, I remember I stepped on this dead body. It was so soft. So I came in...in the openings. I saw a few guys. And I knew the guys. They were my school friends. They're holding my brother. And a few, standing...laying over this other brother was wounded. So I was standing in the doorway. I still had three bullets in my revolver, and I said to them, "If you don't let him go this minute, three of you will be killed." I said, "I never miss. I have three bullets left in the revolver. Three will be killed." And the minute I said it they let him go and they run away. I remember I even still had enough brain, I went back and I took out from the hand of this dead guy his revolver. And I said to my brother let's run we ran, it was the 18th of January. Two yards high snow. All we had is our underwear. No shoes. Nothing! And we run and we didn't know where. We had to run up the hill. We had to cross a river. And in a village, and this was about 6 o'clock in the afternoon. In the village when one dog starts to bark, all dogs bark, so you could hear not one, the whole village barking. And you could [see] lights and naturally, we are running. We don't know where we are. We're going up the hill. The snow was so frozen. From the moon you could see millions of diamonds in the snow. Everything was so sparkling. We run. We didn't stop. And we run, I would say about a kilometer to the first house. We stopped at a house. I look at my brother. My brother looks at me. And here it was, blood running from my neck, and the blood was, we didn't know what happened because the blood from the cold, it got thick and it became clustered, but it still was running. The hand was swollen. We could see a trail in the snow from our walking from drops of bloods. I said, "Well, if somebody will come, they will come and they will catch us." Well, and if it's a snowy terrain in the winter, you don't know where you are, because everything looks the same. I said, "Where are we?" We don't know. This was 6 o'clock. But one thing, I knew that every 6 o'clock a autobus a bus came from Rzeszow to Kolbuszova at 6 o'clock. I said, "If we would be lucky, and if we would see the bus coming I will know the direction where to go." And as I said it, we saw from a distance two reflectors from the bus. It's not like here you have thousands of cars. There was only one bus that came only once a day. And so, more or less I figured out that I will go this way and there was a house that I knew this house, and this peasant was friendly. I said, "If we would be lucky, and if I would hit this house, we would be saved." Now imagine if peasants will see us in the middle of the winter, two people naked without shoes. Well, anyway, we started to go down, so I had my two revolvers. I had everything on me. I said to my brother, "If something will happen, you should know I will open the hand grenade and we're killing each other." He had his revolver. And we went down and it so happens that I hit the house I wanted to hit. Exactly it was, this was a sure thing. We run up here, and this house was here. So I had to go like this. I hit it exactly and I knew the house. And from there I knew exactly how to go back to the woods. It took me a whole night. I reached our friends about 5 in the morning. Now on the way, we stopped...but this is not for now...I was wounded. I didn't know what. I went to a doctor. The doctor, you see, the doctor I went to [was from] a different section because I didn't...and I had to go right away he shouldn't find out that something happened to those two guys. I went to him and he checked me. He said, "Here the bullets went through. It was a small caliber.

By here the bullets went through. He gave me an injection against blood poison. I came back to our group. The Germans heard the shots. And this was the patrol. When the patrol came, they shot. So they told them a story that bandits came. They wanted money, and they didn't give them the money, so they shot them. And they took it for an answer. The next day they made a report to the police. When the police came to investigate. And the police didn't take this answer. They started to search. And they find this little room, and they find the wall covered with blood when I tried to climb. And they went upstairs and they found then my boots, they find there the...the case with the medicines, with

03:51:

the instruments. And they find my sister's diary. And they knew it is not bandits. And they took out the second boy, and they shot him right there. So the second boy was also shot. The Germans finished him off. This was an episode. Now this happened. Then later it was very well known. Then later they caught me. They gave me poison. This is a long story. But this episode, I couldn't show my face. Everybody knew about it, they gave a price on my head in the underground paper. So once I went to a peasant to a different village. And he knew that I'm Jewish because the other Jew took me over to buy something. So he said in the papers it was that they will pay 100,000 zlotys for my head. So he said to me, "Listen, there is that boy here." He said the name Salsitz. "I would like to help him because I knew his father. Maybe you know where he is. Tell him to come to me. I will give him bread. I will give him butter. I would like to help him. I want to save this boy." And I knew the reason why he tells me. So I said, "Listen, if I would know where he is, I could get the 100,000 zlotys. Why should I tell you? I want to know myself." He asked me about me because he wanted to make and to get this money. So this went on for a few weeks til I joined the Ak. Well I saw I couldn't, so I joined the AK in a different section, and I had papers and they accepted me when everything was healed.

Q: Slow down. What kind of papers? How did you get papers?

A: Okay. Alright. Before I left this camp. The first day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, no, the second day of Rosh Hashanah. The Jews in 1942, they killed in our town and(?) Novasans they got together people from Rzeszow who wanted to run away to Hungary. There was a place, Bokhnia, that they made false papers for Jews and Poles, and they went to Hungary, and Hungary was easier to survive. And they caught those people, they didn't catch those people. They caught this girl who was their runner, and but once I'm telling you this, I want to tell you about this girl. I think she should be remembered.

Q: We may not have much time, so if you can condense it a little.

A: See, this girl was the runner, and she was caught on the list of 45 people with false papers, that they should run away to Romania, and she was caught. And she was tortured. She was killed. The Germans knew those people because they had the documents. And they arrested those people, and they brought them to us in jail when we were in the camp. During the night

I find out about it, and I went to the jail, and through a window, they told me those things what happened to them, that this girl was caught. But there is a other list of 200 that she had to prepare documents. They didn't know if they got the list. But if they got the list, they will pick up the 200 too. What was necessary is to go to Rzeszow which was 31 kilometers and go to Rzeszow and to warn the people that they are arrested and they should do something and to hide. So soon as they told me, I told...I took the wagon with the horse what Farding gave me to bring the old junk to Rzeszow and I always had it ready packed because I never knew when I will have to go in a hurry. This was at night, and I took the horse and I went to Rzeszow, 31 kilometers, because even if the Germans would catch me, I had a pass to go and I went officially because I had to bring those things. So I went to Rzeszow and I came into the ghetto with these things, and I had to notify someone I know to notify that they were arrested. And they are worrying about the 200 other people. And they told me who to contact. I contact this person, and he notified the 200 people they should go into hiding who were on the list. But what the Germans did, they came and they couldn't find nobody from the 200, so they took 200 other Jews, and they brought them to us with them and in this day, the second day of Rosh Hashanah, they killed in Novasans(?). this village not far from us, they killed 400 Jews. They brought Jews from Hutta Kaminski (?), from ?? . Young girls, beautiful girls, Jews who had scabs, cuts, and they reported they cannot go to work, so they took them and they killed them. Now there are so many details, but it is not for now. But you ask me about the other details.

Q: The papers

A: So when they killed the 400 people, I became very hysterical and I went into a Polish woman, was very friendly with my father. This was the woman I gave all the merchandise when I was left, when they took away our people to Rzeszow, so I gave her the merchandise over the fence. So I went to her and started to cry very hysterical. I said, "I want to live. I want to live. Do something. Do something." She said, "What can I do." She said, "What can I do?" I said, "I need papers. I want to run away." She said, "I can help you out with it. I am a very good friend of the Monseigneur, from the Catholic Church...in Polish Dekan (dean). I will ask him if he can give you papers." So I told her, "You know, I had a friend who went with me to school. His name was 2. He looked a little like me. And he went me to school. And he was killed in 1939. He was in the Polish army. He was killed. Maybe he can give me his paper, and then if there would be a picture we look very much alike." She went to the Monseigneur, and the Monseigneur gave me a birth certificate which I have with me, which they made a copy of it. And he gave me this birth certificate. With this birth certificate, I could show that that I was 2. So through this girl, she was a runner between two groups. So she went to the group which was farther away from my town and she made a contact and with her I went and I was accepted and she introduced me to their commandant, she was very friendly with and he liked me. He took me in, and so then I became a member of this group. And this was a very important group because this group was not like from people who belonged to the underground, and they were staying in their homes. This was a group who was a combat group in the woods. And I was very happy to be with them because with them, we destroyed police stations, we blew up trains. We did so many things because they

were a force. You see when I was in the woods as a Jew, I only could go out when there was a blizzard, when there was a rain. I was a fugitive. Everybody would give me out. I have to hide the gun. But when I was with them, I was a hero. I came out to the village with the rifle open. I put in a beret with a Polish eagle. I put on a band with a white and red as a Polish patriot. The girls even waited for us, to kiss us. The people used to bring us vodka and food. I was the same man, fighting the same enemy. But here because I was a Jew, I was fugitive. And here because I was Pole, I was a hero. So with them, it gave me the opportunity to take, and every night there was some action because they were so strong and they could do it. And with them I had the opportunity to do it.

03:59

Q: Okay. We're going to have to change tapes and make a decision.

A: Okay. But this way if you can make a decision that is a few from the woods, I would like to tell you a few episodes how we made...uh...a

Q: Let me ask you a question.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

Q: Okay. The tape is started. You wanted to take us back.

A: Right. I want to go back when we were quite strong yet in the woods with our Jewish group. Now, our leader was a Jew who was forester, which is very unusual for a Jew to be this profession. Was a very intelligent man, but mostly he was a forester because he specialized in artificial raising [of] fish. He had artificial lakes...not artificial...had man made lakes, and they raised carps, and this belonged to a very rich Jew in Rzeszow and his name was Bank, and the forester's name was Pinya. Well, anyway, and Froelich, Pinya Froelich, and he was the organizer of this group who was there before I came and he still was our leader. Then later he was killed, and also it was a very unfortunate thing how he was killed. Uh...He could be saved, but...uh... because the men who surrounded the house were peasants from his village, and he didn't to use his gun, he didn't want to shoot, because they were his friends. They were people who he knew all his life, so he didn't want to harm them. But nevertheless, they took him with his wife, and they took him to a barn and they killed him. After this I became, I took over his place, and I became the leader. Now, we wanted to do something against the Germans. It was very hard for us because our main thing was to protect ourselves from the Poles who were so hostile towards us. There was, as I told you before, the Poles used to get skim milk for free, but there was a factory not far from the woods when in, a milk factory, and all the peasants used to bring their milk and there they produced cheese, butter, and this was sent to Germany. And from the whole section, all the Poles used to bring their milk there. So we thought that we want to disrupt these things. I had there a man that I knew, and he was working there. And he gave me all the information when the work starts, stops, who is the guard, and how. So one dark night six of us went over there and we disarmed the guard, and we went in and we destroyed the whole place. It took us about an hour. We broke all the equipment, and there was special equipment brought from Germany, and all the machines where they used to produce the cheese and the butter, and everything was destroyed. After everything was destroyed we packed our knapsacks full of cheese, that we had it enough for about 2, 3 months and we left. The next day the Germans came and they surrounded the village, and they arrested some Poles. They accused them that they did some sabotage, but then later they let them out because they had proof that some partisans, they didn't know that we did it, but some partisans came and they did the damage. And it was quite a big damage. It was a big help for the peasants, because for months they didn't have to give the milk. They didn't know what to do with the milk because there was not a facility to manufacture the cheese and the butter. But then later, they rebuilt it and it by them 3 months and they started again. But this was a very big satisfaction what we did. Also, once a week they collected the cows from the peasants. Each calf when it was born, they put in a ear ring on the calf, and this was registered. And eventually they had to give over the cow to the Germans and they also had an evidence how much milk the peasant has to bring in from the cow. They delivered the cows, once a week they were driven or they were taken to the railroad station so we always waited when they were taken to the railroad station they chased...not by cars, but on foot. So we waited on the edge of the forest and we lured always one or two or three cows into the woods, and we took them away. So this was a very big help

for us because in the winter, usually, we sold some cows and then we we killed one so we had meat enough for weeks. So this was also a way of trying to do some damage. And, there was an other case that we were in a place that there was a search for Poles, but not for Jews anymore, but the search for Poles for taking the Poles to Germany. And we were in the attic and we were hidden in the hay, and they searched even the attic, but they didn't find us, and they left the house and they took the owner from this place that we were hiding. He didn't know we were there. And then he escaped, so in the evening a Polish policeman came to take him back. And we saw it, so we waited for him outside, and we killed him. We took away his gun, his rifle, his bicycle. So those were things that we tried to do as much as possible. But when I joined the AK, then it was a different story because the Ak was openly more loyal, in the village they were open and they could do a lot of things. They were very strong. They received drops from planes, ammunition, money, medicine, and guns, everything, from England. They used to drop in special assigned places in the woods, and they had all those things. So we did other things like there was a police station in Glogel for instance. So we surrounded the police station one night and we disarmed the policemen. They were not killed, but we took away everything they had there, rifles and guns, revolvers. We took it away, and we completely demolished the police station. Then there was a very important railroad line which went from Rzeszow to Senjisuv (?). This was not far from the forest what I described you before. So a few times those railroad tracks

04:07:30

were blown up, and the supplies... It was not so much the supplies, but in this time the Germans started to pull out a large quantity of soldiers in the army from the eastern part in Poland. And the railroads were blown up with the soldiers, and this we did about 5, 6 times, those railroad lines, which was easy to do because the railroad lines were not actually guarded so much and we were not afraid for peasants. There was once an ammunition dump and not far from Rzeszow...before Rzeszow...were big forest, dense forests. So once we went over there and this was everything with the Polish AK and we blew up one ammunition depot there. The Germans later retaliated, but this group we knew we did it, so the same night we disappeared in the other section and actually, they didn't catch nobody. But they retaliated towards the local population. They didn't know exactly who did it. Now one episode I want to tell you this is what we did on our own. But I have to go back to that camp where we were after the destruction, after taking away our people from our town when we were in this labor camp in Kolbuszowa when we destroyed the houses of the ghetto. So we were working there, a Sharfuehrer came from the SS with a Polish boy, which he was his adjutant, his helper. And this Sharfuehrer was very vicious and we knew about him that he killed and he beat and always he was always drunk. He always was red in his face and nose was like...from a drunkard. And he came to us while we were working, and it so happened that I loaded in this time some furniture. And I had a mirror in my hand, a big large mirror. He said to me, "Look in this mirror." So I looked in his mirror. He said, "Look what good cannon fodder you are, because this what you will be." And I didn't answer, because you couldn't answer this man. And he came to see what we are doing, and there was one of my friends. His name was Motek Weiss. He was from Krakow, a very nice boy, fragile boy. And

he said to his adjutant, his name was Volstick, a Polish boy from the neighboring village and he said to him to take a 2 by 4 and to start to beat this boy. And he started to beat him. He fell down. We put him on his feet. He beat him again. And he beat him so that he just was a piece of black flesh lying on the floor. And later we brought him back to our barracks, and the same day he died. And just he did it for fun. Uh...Later, he pointed out I should go with him. So I thought he was going to give me the same treatment as with this boy, but I couldn't say anything so I went with them and he said to me that he wants to get some brass. He needs brass. And we had brass from the old houses, from old candlesticks, and in one room in this warehouse we kept only brass. I took him to show him the brass. While we went there to see the brass, we went through a room where there was paper collected. Now they were mostly old books. You know, by Jews, we don't throw away books. Books were always saved. We put them on the attic of the synagogue and if it was full, so we took the books into the cemetery and we wrapped them in prayer shawls, and they were buried like human beings. So in this time when we cleaned out the attic from the synagogue, there was full of old books. Books that were hundred, two hundred years old. They were yellow. We piled them (up). We put them in this room. It was stacks till the attic. And he came in and he start, he always had such a hoarse voice like a drunkard, and he asked me what's here. I told him paper, books. "What kind of books?" I told him, "Religious books. Jewish books." And the books were stacked on both sides of the room that in the middle was just a passageway. And from the top there was a little window. And the window, through the window, rays of the sun came in. And because there were books, old books there was a lot of dust, and the rays...the ray illuminated the dust that you could see through this window came like a column of light on the one spot. And in this moment, it reminded me that this column is the same column as God showed to the Israelites when they left Egypt so they should know their way in the desert. So in the evening, in the night, he had a column of light; in the day a column of dust. And this was to show them the way how to go. So in this moment, I remembered from the Bible, and I said, "This is the same column as God had it when the Israelites left Egypt." And this Scharfuehrer s, did everything what God forbid probably the way he killed and he saw the spot from the ray on the floor, and he stood in the spot and he looked up and he started to yell with his hoarse voice. And he said, "Yehovah, Yehovah. Wo bist Du." Means, "Yehovah, Yehovah, Where are you? Yehovah, Warum hilfst Du nicht Deine Kinder?". "Yehovah, why don't you help your children?" And he looked at me, and he said to me, "You see, Your Yehovah is old. Your Yehovah is dead. He cannot even hear what I am saying. Now, here you are. What we are doing to the Jews, and he doesn't do anything." And he spat on the floor, and he walked out. In this moment, I was sure that God would punish him. That God will make him lame or something will kill him. After all, he said something bad about my God. Maybe I had doubts of my God in this time that he didn't help us, but I think I had a right to have doubts because I was a Jew and I believed in God. But he was a stranger, and he had no right to insult my God, and I was very angry. And I said to myself, "I have to survive the war. Even if I have to kill this guy, because he insulted my God." This was in this time when I was in the camp. Naturally, there was a thing that I knew that it could never happen. How could I do it? But..still I had in my mind. Two years later...was it two years later?...almost two years later, a year and a half later I was in the woods, I found out that this man., this Sharfuehrer, is in charge of Polish farms in the section where it was

Przeworsk (?). Przeworsk, the section I described before, belonged to the SS and he was in charge of the farms. Because they didn't want to have Poles in this section, so they chased out all the Poles because this was where they perfected the V-1, V-2 rockets. But they wanted to have something from the farms, so the farmers used to go over there to work, and at night they went away. And he was in charge of it. And I found out about it, and I was told also that every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, they have like drinkings with girls, playing cards, dancing in the substation from this Przeworsk camp. Now we had in our group two Jews who came from this vicinity. One was a manager in an estate, which knew very well the village and there was another one from this vicinity. And also the father of the girl who helped me join the A, her name was Stashka Hodora. She married later and her married...marriage name is Bargike. She lives now in Warsaw, and 2 years ago I brought her over for a visit. So this Stashka's father used to go and he used to work in the house where they had those gatherings every Saturday and every Sunday. And he was like a worker there. He took care of the horses. He took care of... So through him I find out that he takes care on all those things on this farm. And he told me and I had in my mind that something has to be done. And I approached our group a few times and I said, this was an obsession with me that I had to do something towards him, but always my friends told me, "We cannot do it. We're not strong enough and to go and make a raid on SS group and we will be killed." And I gave up the idea. When I left the AK and I came back, I still find out that through this Hodora, that he works there and this man is still there in charge. Then I find out that not far from us there was a group of Russian partisans. You see, the front came closer to us, so also the partisans came closer to us. I find out where they are, and I went over to them, and I introduced myself that I am a leader from a partisan group. I didn't tell them that we were Jews because we never knew how they will accept us, and there were a lot between the Russians...there were a lot of Ukrainians also. And so I didn't say that we were Jews, but we were group and I have an idea that I want they should help us. And I told them that I want to make a raid on

04:18:

this substation, and I explained to him why and that this man is there in charge. He was very bad. He killed a lot of people, and we can have a good job killing SS men. And the head, the commandant of this group liked the idea, and it took us about two weeks. He gave me two from his group, and I went over with...with them at night to see the roads, to see the topography, and to have the preparations how to do it. And when we came back, we picked out a dark night and we had all the information from this Jan Hodora. Him I told what we're going to do. I wasn't afraid that he would betray us because this was against the Germans, and he hated the Germans. And this night, it was a Saturday night, we didn't have horses. They had horses. So I took from my group, I took five people. And they gave us 15 people and 5 of them took us as passengers on their horses, and everything was planned and we came over. Now five of us wore German uniforms. I wore a German uniform, and four from the Russian partisans, and they gave me a submachine guns for us, and we came to the place. And we cut the telephone wires, and we sneaked through the front, they were illuminated, the windows where they were sitting, playing, dancing. They had girls. And we started to

throw in grenades through the front windows. And meanwhile, the other people came from both sides and from the rear. Now in the beginning it was a resistance. They started to shoot back from revolvers because they didn't expect something like this. And later their firing got less and less and after it stopped, we burned the house where they were, and then later we took away the horses. They had horses. There was a car in the front, and there were a few motorcycles. We burned the car. We burned the motorcycles. We took the horses, and we left. Not one of them, we estimated that were about 35 SS men in this time. When we

04:20:30

looked in the windows, more or less we estimated so many, not one escaped. Because it was such a surprise attack. And from us, we came back. All of us came back and nothing happened to us. Now when we came back and it was a wonderful feeling when I was there, and they gave me a submachine gun and I could shoot and shoot and shoot and I didn't feel anymore in this time like a fugitive. I felt very, very good about myself, but we knew that something will happen that they would be seeking reprisals. Right away the Russian group left. They went to an other place. They went more north. We disappeared. We were in this time...our group...with the five...we disappeared. The next day the Germans came and they knew that this Russian group, Russian partisan group did it, and they surrounded the forest, and they searched and searched, but they didn't find nobody. They didn't suspect the native Poles of helping us, so this was a very good feeling to do something now in this time and when I came back, so I said to myself I didn't do it so much for myself as I did it for insulting my God and this was a very, very good feeling. Then later the rumors, not the rumors, the talk between the people, they told the story that this guy was killed in this raid, which we saw him through the window anyway. But he was well known also. Also this Scharfuehrer, who was so vicious, he also spoke Polish. For this reason, if

04:22:30

they were like mixtures, they were even more vicious. And the reason they used him because he spoke Polish. He could hire the peasants. He could work with them. They should work in the fields, and he was in charge of this. So those were the things that we did that it was very gratifying. We wanted to do more, but we were hampered by the Polish population. And I have to tell you what happened the last night. This was the last night before the liberation. Now people ask you survived; it's a miracle or you are lucky or something. A thousand times you could be lucky. Somehow you outwitted the Germans. Sometimes you made the right decision. Instead to go left, you went right. You had to be quick. But if one time it didn't work, you didn't have a second chance. The one time didn't work and that's it. Now we don't know from all the people who were hiding and hiding and how many times they did things to the Germans. We don't know because they are not here to tell the story. Now, if I will not be here now from the whole group that we were, hundred twenty five people, from the whole group when we were liberated, only six were alive, from the hundred twenty five. And the rest were killed, very few by the Germans, mostly were killed by the Poles. Because the Germans didn't venture into the woods. And mostly by the end six were alive. Now from the

six, two from my people before the war, they were Rabbinical students and they were very nice boys and they were very capable, went back to our town, to Kolbuszowa, because they said we are now free. We are liberated. We'll come back. We'll be considered heroes. We survived the war. So they went back 3 days after the liberation. Two were very prominent people from my town Poles, one was a Director of Internal Revenue. His name was Kissel. The other one had a bus company...had buses going. His name was Shilenski. Took them to the cemetery and they killed them. Three days after the liberation! So imagine going through so much, going through camps and ghettos, losing the whole family, starvation, and torture, being 2 years in the woods, and somehow they made it. They survived the war. And the Germans were gone. Here we are. There is already liberty. Now the Poles supposed to be our.....we lived with them for thousand years. Now they took the two boys and they killed them. Why I will never know. Why? What did they harm somebody? And they were killed. So from all our group, there were four left. My brother and I and two brothers who were also from the village, and they survived. Six months later, one of them was poisoned so he died. My brother died here about 15 years ago. The second brother went to Israel and he died there. So I'm the only one who survived from the whole group. Now I have to speak in the name of all of them because nobody can tell any stories. They are dead. So my responsibility is to tell their stories. Now I'm preparing episodes of everybody, the circumstances how he was killed. And I remember more or less about everyone who was killed, how he was killed and when and by whom. So I'm preparing stories for each one how he was killed from the hundred twenty six people. Looking back on all those things, we cannot understand how a people like Polish people could do a thing like this. I want to tell you then the last night and I went through so many things. I didn't tell you how I was poisoned because there is not too much time about it.

04:26:30

Q: No. No. No. Let's hear how you were poisoned.

A: So I want to tell you...I want to tell you about this last night. If we will have time, we'll come back. The last night I was back with my with my group. There were only six left of us. So I went to the same peasant Hodora what he gave me the information, and his daughter was... So I went to see how the situation is. Because the front was already by us. The Germans went back and back, and we knew that we could hear the detonations and the shootings and came closer and closer. When we came to Hodora that night nobody was home. The house was empty. It was open. It was empty. The cows were not there. So we understood. Because they are afraid, the front comes close...near, so they went into the woods because to be safer. Nobody was there, so we decided to stay over the next day and the next night we'll see what to do. Now there was in

04:27:30

the barn was full with hay because this was after the harvest, so we buried ourselves in the hay. During the night we could hear that a unit of calvary is going through the road, and the

road was very close to the house because you could hear horses, the chains ringing. And then a few came in the yard and they came into the barn where we were hiding. And they started to take out hay for the horses. Now we didn't know how much hay they would take out because if there could be a lot of horses, they could empty the barn, and then later we'll be exposed, but as they took out the hay, we buried ourselves more and more and more. Then later we heard them speaking that this night they will go. Then later we came out and they were already gone, so I said to my friend, Leiba, I said, "We cannot stay here because this is the territory that the German front is establishing. We have to go over to the east and to cross over probably the Russians

04:28:30

are on the side." So we went to a place where there was a clearing. This side the Germans were, and the other side the Russians. And we were...this was a clearing. So I said, "We have to move through the clearing." So he found a little brook and with this brook we started to crawl to go over to the other side. But somebody spotted us and they started to shoot on us from both sides. You see when one side started to shoot, so the other side started to shoot. So we knew here are the Germans, and here are the Russians and we're on the middle. We jumped out from this little brook and they were haystacks and we buried ourselves in the haystacks. Then from a distance we saw a horse with two riders on it galloping, going about 200 yards away from us, coming from one side of the forest to the other. Now this man, he was from a village, and he said to me, "I cannot go out and ask him what's going on because they know me. But they don't know you. Go and ask them. And I know those peasants." He even told me the name. His name is Poslusne. He said, "I know them because they are from my village. I even recognize the horse because I sold them the horse before I left the village." And he recognized. Well, I thought he knows. I came out from the haystack and I run after them, and I started to yell, Panie Poslusne. And this was at night and they, finally, they heard me. And they slowed down. When they slowed I came closer to them. Now I saw it wasn't Poslusne. It was two SS man, on one horse. And this was from this unit of the horses what they sent them over as a patrol to go to the other side to find out what's going on. Here I'm standing there close to them. The liberation is almost here. Freedom is almost here. And I am standing. And they jumped out from the horse, both of them, took out their revolvers, pointing at me, and I looked like a peasant. I was barefoot. And I had a jacket, a long jacket covered, and underneath the jacket I had my arsenal. I had two revolvers, with a bayonet, with a hatchet, with a flashlight, bullets, everything I had underneath, but it was covered. And when they jumped down, I didn't know what to say...what to start. I couldn't show them I speak German, because Polish people didn't speak German. So I started to yell and to cry in Polish and I told them what will I do. My wife and my children went to the woods with the cows. Now they say the Russians are coming and there are rumors the Russians are raping the women and killing the children, taking away the cows. What will I do? What will I do? Please help me. Help me. And I said to them, "We are four or five years with the Germans. Nothing happened to us.

04:31:

Now the Russians are coming, and there are so many rumors. And then I figured I'm yelling to them. I'm crying, but they don't understand. They are Germans. Then one of them started to translate in German to the other one what I am saying. You see, you say luck, you say miracles. Everything had to be, otherwise... So he started to translate. When I see that he's translating, so I started to yell a little louder and cry a little more and tell him a little story because he understood. And then he stopped me and he spoke to me in a very, very broken Polish. Probably he was from Silesia, from Posen, something. So he in very broken Polish, he ask me if I am from this village. I said, "Yes." So he said to the other one in German, which I understood, he said, "Good, we don't have to go to the other side," because they were afraid to go deeper because they will be killed because they knew the Russians are there. So he said, "We will take him to our commandant, and let him question him. Maybe he can give us the information we want to know. So he told me in Polish not to worry. They will take me for questioning and then later they will go with me to find my wife and the children. Well, he said it. So then they said to me to go in front of them. And I went in front of them. And they both put back their revolvers. And they had rifles on their back and they climbed on their horse. They went back on the horse and I started to walk slowly in front of them and they behind me. Now I started to realize, ...here the whole war I went through. Here the liberation coming. Now I have to be shot, because if they will take me over there. Now listen, if they will open my vest, they will see. How can I survive? So what...what should I do? I have to do something. I always

04:33

had a long barrel revolver in my belt. I never had it in my holster. I had it always ready. So by going in the front so a little, I put in my hand and I cocked the revolver. I pulled it out slowly, and suddenly I turned around. In a split second I emptied it and I shot seven bullets in them and they fell down dead from the horse. Because I knew I had to. And they fell down. The minute I started to shoot on them so bullets, millions of bullets from both sides came in my direction because the Germans were here. The Russians were here. They didn't know what's going on. So they started to shoot. So I took the horse as a shield and I started to walk slowly toward the Russian side, and I call...yal...I bent down, and first thing I took out the revolvers again. This was very important. I put them in my belt to take away, and I went to the side from the Russians. I was about hundred feet away from the forest. A few jumped out and they surrounded me and they said in Russian I should lift my hands. So they spoke to me in Russian. I was very relieved and I came in and they asked me what happened. So I told them what happened, that the two Germans and I shot them and the revolvers. First thing they relieved me...they took away everything I had, and they said, "Let's wait til our commandant comes." About a half a hour later, the commandant came, a young fellow on a horse and he asked me, so I told him. He asked me, "Who are you." I said to him, "I have a group of partisans in the other side. Again I didn't say Polish or Jewish because you never knew because even then they killed a lot of Jews. And those I didn't know they're Ukrainian or Russians, so they and I spoke a little Russian because I was in Russia a few months. He was very surprised that I speak Russian. So when I told him the whole story except ,first they

took the horses. Oh, I like the horse. This will be my horse. They took away. So I said, "I'm going back for my group. I have there a group about 60 people." He said, "Don't go back to the group, because if you will come back they will probably shoot you, all of you on the way coming out from the German line." He said, "You are already here. Stay with us. We are...we accepting you. We will take you in. Come with me." So I even told them, "When I go back to show the people that that I met Russian partisans, why don't you give me your submachine guns." It's called in Russian papetsha. "Why don't you give me your papetsha, and I will go up and I will show them that I have met the Russians." He said, "Oh, no. When you come back to me, you get it from me. But to make sure, to show them that you met the Russians, he took off his hat and he took off the star with the sickle and and hammer and said, "Show them this and this will be proof enough." And he said, "Go and bring them. We will wait til morning for you." He asked me, "How long will it take to bring them over." I said, "Maybe 2 hours." He said, "That will be enough time. Bring them over." Now when he told me this and when I walked away I was sure he doesn't believe me the story. Because he was too lenient and he let me go. Now why should I go back? Why should I be so stupid go back to the German line and bring over people? He probably thought that I am sent out from the German side to find out if there are people, how many, and I was sure that the minute I would turn around, when I went away, he took away my two revolvers from the two Germans but he gave me back mine. And I was sure that I would turn around that in the back I will be shot. So when I started I walk like I was walking like on air. I couldn't move my legs, but I start and farther I went I was more sure for myself and when I was already about 200 feet so I figured well now maybe, I'm safe. They will not shoot me. And then I started to run. I run back to the haystack where my friend was lying there. Naturally, he grabbed me. He kissed me. He was sorry. He thought that I am dead, that I'm shot. He didn't know that I killed the Germans. So I said, "Let's go. This is not for us." So we went the same way and we went where the two Germans were laying dead. So going through...so then we helped ourselves to their two rifles because...we took off the two rifles, and we went over the other side. We went there to a peasant hut, and we were waiting there a whole night. In the morning somebody opened the barn door and I see a Russian soldier comes in with some pot and he came in. He wanted to milk a cow to get some milk. I jumped down and I asked him, "What's going on?" He said, "Well, we liberated this village this night." I grabbed him and I hugged him and I danced around and this was my liberation. So the reason why I told you this story, this was the last night. Now the last night I would if I wouldn't have the quick mind to turn around to kill them or something like this, I would be dead. It so happens that every day something else happened and every day, oh, you had to outsmart somebody or you had to be quick about something. And this is the way that mostly survivors survived. See, if somebody survived in a camp, he couldn't do anything. If he didn't die of typhus, and he didn't die of starvation, he wasn't picked out in a selection to be gassed, he survived because he didn't have to fight himself...by himself to outwit...to do something. He had to be strong to wait and not to be gassed. But when you were on your own in the woods or like my wife on illegal papers, every day was a challenge. Every day you had to do something to live another day. Now you were asking me a question. I didn't tell you this before. Why do I tell all those stories? There are people, survivors who don't want to open their mouths, and they will shut up and they don't tell because the pains come back and they cannot sleep nights. You don't

sleep nights. You dream about it. The next day you think about it. And this is a vicious circle. It goes day after day after night. I think every survivor survived for a reason. I survived for two reasons. I had two legacies why I survived. And this gave me strength. One legacy was when my father was shot (I told you this before) the last words was, "Revenge, revenge, revenge. Take revenge." And I wanted to survive. I wanted to join a special unit. For this reason, I joined right away the army, and I wanted to join a unit that could give me the possibility of revenge. I took revenge as much as I could. Looking back, some people say well revenge is not sweet because it doesn't bring anybody to life. But if you will ask a person who went through so much and you will say if you have a chance to take revenge maybe not so much for me because I'm alive and this what I went through doesn't mean anything, but for the people who are not alive, the people who are killed. And if I took revenge for my father, I did it gladly. Now after so many years, we live in America. It's a normal life. We have to live like human beings, not to be like animals. Like in this time everybody was an animal. This gave me strength. The second strength gave me when my mother was

04:40:30

taken to Belzec. She somehow sent to somebody a letter to me when I was in the Kolbuszowa camp. And she wrote me in the letter and she said, "You are the youngest. You are young. You are my youngest. You are young. You are healthy, and you are a witness." "So go on," and she said, "Let the thing that you are an orphan and let it not break you. You go on and live. Live. Go to Palestine and tell it to David." David was my brother. "Go to America and tell it to Albert." Albert was my brother. "Go in the world and tell it to the world what the Germans did to us. How they murdered us. What they did to us." And this is a legacy that my mother gave me. Not to be quiet. To go out and tell and retell everybody the story, and not to let it die. Because this what the Germans did, we can talk as much as want. We will not even scratch the surface

04:41:30

because the cruelty, the barbarism (of) what they did. Not only the killing. To kill a Jew was a salvation for the Jew. This was the best thing they did, because they relieved him from the misery. But if you take a town like Warsaw, like other big towns, starvation day after day, the children who are left without their parents, and they had to go out and beg for a crumb of bread and they couldn't get and they died from hunger. The cruelties. Take a tree. You start to cut branches. The tree will die. Here you took a family. You killed a daughter. You killed a son. You killed a son-in-law. You killed a grandchild. Now the parent, even if he was alive, he was dead because everything was chopped up. So the people have to know about the cruelties, and for this reason the Museum, the books, the telling, the testimonies, everything is important because everybody has to tell a different story. And a different story about the cruelties what a human being can do, what a German can do. I will never call them Nazi because I don't know who was Nazi. A Nazi belonged to the party. There were only, not even 2 million, but the whole nation, 99 and a half percent did it. And they with their

helpers, with their collaborators. So for this reason, I will never say the Nazis did it. I say the Germans did it. With their helpers. Helpers, the Poles, the Ukrainians, the Latvians, the Lithuanians. They were helping. The Hungarians. Some countries more, some countries less. But the worse thing was in Poland. I can never understand how people who lived with us for so many years and were an underdog by the Germans could be so helpful even the Jew who somehow sneaked through the Germans' finger, run away from a transport. Run away to a sewer in Warsaw by the opening, a Pole was waiting. This I could never understand and I will not understand. Sure, there were people who helped. But a very small percentage. If in Poland there was 1 percent in Poland who helped Jews, it was a lot.

04:44

Q: Alright. Thank you.

A: Well, I don't know...

Q: Let's go back a little.

A: I beg your pardon.

Q: I want to go back. Just for a moment. I need to ask a couple of questions.

A: Okay.

Q: Because I'm not always clear on the groups you were with. You were with the Jewish group first?

A: First, we had the Jewish group. Right?

Q: Then the second group was AK?

A: The AK. Yes. With the AK, I was quite long. I was a few months with AK.

Q: And the third group?

A: Was the Russian. But you see, with the Russians I didn't stay. The Russians I only came to them and I asked them for help. I asked them for help to do this thing with this Scharfuehrer, which they agreed. So I was with them altogether about 2 weeks. Til we prepared those things. And then later after, they wanted me to stay with them. But I figured the war is closing and closing and I had enough and I wanted to be liberated. Then I said to myself I will join the army. I don't want to be in the woods anymore. But the main thing, the longest time I was with the Jewish group, but unfortunately, there was very, very few left of us.

Q: Okay. If you can, tell me about when you were poisoned.

04:45:

A: Okay. This was after we were shot by...when I was shot by the Agustins by the two brothers what I killed them. And I went to the AK. But my brother, as we run away from them, it was a very high snow. We stopped on the way by a friendly peasant and he gave us some old clothing and also he gave me a pair of shoes which fitted me. But for my brother he didn't have shoes because they didn't fit my brother...the too large foot. So we had to run away. And we went through a meadow which was low and it was covered with snow and underneath it was water, but was it covered with a very thin layer of ice. And as we walked, he broke the ice and the ice was so sharp that it cut his feet and it cut off the skin. He didn't feel it because it was very cold. When we came to our group, we saw that his feet are without skin. Naturally, we washed. We couldn't go to a doctor. We washed, and we put in some bandages. And he had to put some place to recuperate. So we brought him back to the same village where this shooting went on, but to a peasant. His name was Avisha...that he used to work for my father. He used to bring merchandise to my father. And we trusted him. And I didn't want to show that I am there. Because even my brother would be there, they would be afraid to do something to him I should remain as a witness. So my brother...I left him on the roof [attic?] in the stable and when he came to milk the cows he told them he's there. And he used to bring him every day about 5, 6 o'clock a quart of soup. And this was his food that he ate, that he brought him. Every evening he brought him a hot quart of soup. One day I came over there. And he noticed me. And I was afraid that he should see me there. Even I trusted him, but I figured those two boys were his friends and they belonged to the same group. When he noticed me, the same day, he didn't bring us food. And I told him, "I am here, but I want to tell you one thing." I asked him, "what's going on in this village?" He said, "Nothing, Nothing." And I didn't believe him because it was not nothing. I killed two of the best boys in this village.

04:48:

How could be nothing nothing? He didn't tell me this. And everybody knew that I did it. So when it was dark he didn't bring the food like every evening. Usually he brought the food about 5, 6 o'clock. It was 7 o'clock. He didn't bring the food. It was 8 o'clock. He came over and he brought a quart, he brought a pot with soup. Usually, it was hot. This time it was cold. And he left. Usually, he waited til my brother would finish the soup, and he would take back the pot. This time he gave it and he run away. He went away. So I said to my brother, I said, "Don't eat it because I don't trust it for a few reasons. The first thing I'm here with you. They know they got us both together. The second thing he usually brought it between 5 and 6. Now it's already 8. Why so different? Always, it was hot. Now it's cold. He always waited for the empty pot. Now he didn't wait. He went away. So he said, "Oh, we can trust him. Don't think that he will do something." I said, "No, I will not eat it. And you don't eat it. I advise you." He started to eat it. And when he start to eat, after a while he started to scream...he said, "I don't feel good. I have pains. I have cramps. I think I'm poisoned." So I poured out the soup. I said, "Wait." And I jumped on downstairs the stable, and I started to

milk the cow. And I milked a full pot of milk and I came up and I said to him, "Drink the milk, the whole thing and then later, try to throw up." So he drink the milk, put in his finger in his mouth and his throat and he threw up. I said, "Now, let's go." Now he still had trouble with his feet, but we went down. I said, "I want to wait. I want to see who is coming for our bodies." So we were waiting there on the opposite side. Was very cold. And this I remember how cold it was. And it took about 20 minutes. Four guys came in with flashlights and I saw them going in in the stable and there was a loft, came up the ladder with a flashlight, took a second there. They came down and they started to run. They run away, and then said to him, "Now, we can go." But I knew...I knew who came so I said to him, "We will wait about a week or two and we will burn their houses." This, Franek Zavishes house I didn't touch. Because he really was nice, and maybe they forced him to do it. But others I said, "After a few weeks, we will burn their houses." See they were afraid to come and to shoot because I told them, "Anybody who will come up on the attic and he will show his head, I will blow

04:51:

his head off." So after the war, after the liberation, I invited this Franek when I was a big shot in Krakow, so I invited Franek to come to Krakow, and he came. And I asked him in this time, I said, "Tell me the truth. What happened this night?" So he tells me there was a doctor who belonged to his group. His name was Vosna Volski. After they told him that I am coming there, he gave them four pills of poison. And the four pills he suppose to put in in our food, but he didn't want to kill us. This what he told me. He didn't want to kill us. He only wanted to threaten us. So he only put in one pill. And later I find out that one pill could kill 25 people, not two. But he wanted to scare us we should run away so he put in only one pill and three he didn't put in. This he told me after we were liberated and he came. And my wife

04:52:

was sitting there because I knew her in this time. And then then I knew which doctor and how it was.

Q: Very briefly in about three minutes.

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me. After liberation, you joined the Polish Army. Tell me about that.

A: After the liberation, the same week, I joined the Polish Army.

Q: Okay.

A: I went and I joined. I didn't have to go, but I joined and I wanted to be a part of the Polish Army, and I volunteered to join the air force. Because I wanted they should teach me and I

should be a pilot and maybe I will be able to bomb Germany. And the school for officers for the air force was in Kuibichov. This was in Siberia in Russia. So when I waited for a transport, then I met a young Polish officer. She was a beautiful, nice girl in that uniform. She went through us, and we waited for the transport for the train to come. And we started to talk. And she said, "What're you doing here?" And I told this. She said, "Well, you're going to be a pilot. It takes 2 years." The war wouldn't last 2 years anymore. So why don't you come with me and you join our unit. We have a special unit, and if you want to take revenge, you will take plenty of revenge." And I said, "How can I do it. I have already the orders to go." She said, "Don't worry." And she took me to her colonel and she showed him the orders. He took the orders and he ripped them up and he said, "From now on, you will be with us." And I joined them, and this is how I joined, this is how I met my wife. Because after six months, when we had to liberate Krakow, so I was already a big shot in this time and I came to Krakow and then when I find out about my wife and I came to have her killed. And this is a different story and this my wife probably will tell the story. Because Krakow had to be destroyed completely. And my wife was the secretary of the company who made the barricades and before we entered Krakow, we had to find somebody to get the plans to dismantle those barricades and through channels and channels we find out that it's her and three were sent out to get those plans. And I was one of the three. This was one day before Krakow was liberated. So I entered Krakow January the 18th 1945 and officially Krakow was liberated January the 19th. And my wife will tell you the rest story. I thought she's German. I hated her. She was beautiful. I saw my five sisters in here and we made up that after we get the plans, we'd kill her. And then she looked at me. When I came in, I started to interrogate her. She thought I am the biggest anti-Semitic Pole. She said, "You're a snob," but later she told me, "You're a snub nose and you're slavic, slavic face features." But anyway I find out that she's Jewish. She find out I am Jewish. She was very happy. And this was our meeting. And we had to still go through in the war...January, February, March, April, May...This was still war. And then later in November, we got married.

04:55:30

Q: When did you come to the United States?

A: We came to the United States January 1947. After I was transferred I escaped. I was in the German zone in Germany about 6 months, and then we came to the United States. We wanted to go to Palestine in this time, but it was impossible. So we came to the United States with the thought of going from here to Palestine. And this is other story. This is the other chapter and another book. But we are here, and we are very happy to be in America. America did for me more than I expected. I never dreamed that American can do this for me what actually I achieved. And now we had a daughter. We are very happy. My daughter has three little boys. And this is the most important thing is to show that Hitler didn't

04:56:30

completely succeed. He wanted to erase every European Jew in the Jewish race, and we are a

continuation. Now one I want to tell you. After the war, we contemplated...we didn't know what to do. I was already a Pole. I had established position. My wife was Polish, an established position. And we didn't know. She started to study medicine in Poland after the war. So we didn't know what should we do. Should we become Jews and run away or should we stay and be Poles and maybe to save our future generations the heartache and the problems that we had. And we started to think about it. What should we do? And we decided no. Because we cannot do it. For two reasons. My wife couldn't do it because she had her family and her grandmother, uncles and her sister in Palestine. I couldn't do it because, it so happens we spoke yesterday about Kohanim. I am from the line of Kohanim. Now we know by Jews are very strict to follow male after male, and our lineage goes back til Aaron the high priest, the brother of Moses. And I said, "Who am I to cut this chain. My father was killed because he was a Jew. Maybe his forefathers were killed because they were Jews. I have no right to come to me...it reached me after 2...after three and and a half thousand years. Because since Aaron is between three and and half thousand years and four thousand. Who am I that I should cut this line? So I said, "For this reason, we have to remain Jews, and we shouldn't be the one to say this is it." If we would do it, it means that Hitler succeeded. We will resign from being Jews. For this reason, we had to continue."

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You're welcome.

Conclusion of Interview