

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

MORRIS FRENKEL

Interviewed by Michel Negin

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



IMPORTANT

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Fl54 Side A

I think the logical thing is to start with your name.

My name is, the English name is Morris Frenkel. The Jewish name is Morris Czedowicz Frenkel.

Did you have any other names? Polish names?

No, I used that name in Poland.

When were you born, the date of your birth, please?

24th November, 1925.

Where were you born? Which country? And which town?

I was born in Lodz, in Poland. Lodz, Poland.

What sort of a place was that?

Lodz? Lodz was the second biggest town in Poland. The capital was Warsaw, and Lodz was the second biggest.

Were there many Jews in Lodz?

I was told there were a quarter of a million Jews in Poland, in Lodz.

Out of,

Out of 750,000 people.

And is this where you were brought up as a child?

Yes.

To what age?

Till the War started, September '39. I was about 14, yes, not quite 14.

Right. Now, these are just the basic details of your family. Can I have your father's name please?

My father's name was Zelig.

Did he have any other names? Polish names?

No, they used the same.

Where did your father come from? Was he also from Linburg?

From Poland, from Lodz, you mean.

Well, sorry, Lodz.

Lodz, as far as I know, yes.

And was he with you all the time?

Well, he was away, he was away, we were all together, we were all together until just before, it was in September, just, as the Germans arrived, the Polish Government ordered all the men to go and defend the capital, Warsaw. And especially the Jewish men went, because they were afraid that they will be the first ones to suffer under the Nazis, so they left their families behind.

In Lodz?

In Lodz. And they went, running, with the soldiers, which were retreating back from the Front, to Lodz, towards Warsaw.

And so your father went with them?

Yes, my father went to it, and when the, when the Germans, when the Poles surrendered, the Germans occupied the whole of Poland, then it must have been already by October 1939, November, something like these months. People start coming back.

From Warsaw?

From, gradually they kind of start coming back to their families. A lot of them went further than Warsaw, which the Russians occupied, part of Poland.

Can I just ask you where Lodz and Warsaw were in relationship to each other? Which is East of which?

Lodz was near the German, Lodz was near Germany, towards Germany, because the Germans integrated, divided Poland, and the integrated part of Poland into the Third Reich, they called it.

So, your father, we really understand now that he went to Warsaw with the other members, male members of the population,

Yes, that's right, but he did not, he did not, he was killed on the way.

He was killed on the way.

Because the Germans saw the people running, and they were actually more running than walking, there was no time to go on the roads, like refugees, and they bombed,

the aeroplanes bombed them, as they were running. How did they know, they didn't know where he was until a neighbour came back sometime, maybe October or November, I don't know exactly. A neighbour from us, and he told my mother that he is dead, and he went to a little place where there was a Rabbi there, I don't, I don't remember the place, the village, and they buried him there. The Rabbi buried him, and he came back, and he told my mother to sit Shiva, we should sit Shiva. That's how I lost my father.

What was his occupation? What did he do?

He had a business in the town, and an uncle of mine, producing woollies, wool sweaters, manufacture, manufacture.

That was the major industry of Lodz, was it?

It was a textile town, yes.

Would you say he was comfortably off, or poor, or rich?

Well... I mean, even if somebody was poor or rich, we all lived somehow together, and it didn't, there was no such places like houses, they are mostly in Poland, apartments, unless in the villages there are little houses. A town like Lodz, was mostly blocks of flats, mostly as far as I remember. And we were living in one of those as well.

Now, I'd like to ask you about the religious affiliation of your late father, in terms of his observance?

We all, almost 90% of Jews observed the Jewish Laws. Nobody worked on Shabbat, on the holidays, and we went to the Shul mostly every Saturday. There was kosher in the house as far as I know, I remember. And that applies to, as I say, 90%, or more, maybe even more, I don't know. I don't know, not like here now.

Well, here we have Orthodox, Reform, Liberal, was that in Lodz?

I don't think so. It was mostly Orthodox, and there was Hasidim and there was Stibos in each area. But we, when it came a holiday, we walked, no, my father was not a Hasid, we walked, we had one of the biggest Synagogue in Lodz, they say the biggest in Europe, I can't confirm that.

What was it called, do you remember?

No. It was the one place,

It was the main Synagogue?

The main Synagogue, and people used, on holidays, especially Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, we walked to that Synagogue. It was a few miles, it was a few miles to walk. To get in, you couldn't get in, because people who lived nearby, they had the privilege

to be in the Synagogue. But I don't think there was such a thing as United, or, or Liberal. There was, well, there were the Rabbis, I remember in Lodz, the Rabbi of the whole Jews.

Did he, did he wear a beard? Did your father have a beard?

No. No.

Did he attend every day, would you say?

No, he would pray in the morning, and I don't think he had time to go to the Shtiebl, the Synagogue was a long way, the bigger Synagogue, and there was a, Shtiebls were in the summer, used to sit in the garden and pray. There was, in our like a shtiebl, and I should imagine every Shtiebl had a Rabbi or somebody in charge.

You used the word "Shtiebl" quite a few times. Could you describe what a "Shtiebl" is? Is this a special Polish ...

That's the expression we used for, the Shtiebl, they used to use the expression, to go and pray. Not like here, they say they go to the Synagogue, United Synagogue, or you go to the Reform Synagogue, there they used to, if they want to pray, or to see a Rabbi, you went to the Shtiebl.

What languages did you speak, both at home and outside? Let's start at home, what language did you speak at home?

Yiddish. And Polish, because we went to Polish school, and also taught, the Rabbi taught us Hebrew.

And both your parents,

Mostly, mostly Yiddish, I would say.

Did any of your parents speak to you in Polish as well?

Sometimes, yes, they spoke Polish when we discussed something Polish, but mostly was, was Yiddish, mostly Yiddish, yes.

And would you say your dress was a specifically Jewish dress, or was it the ordinary modern clothes?

It was a, as well, the Jews they dress, the man, he used to dress suits, of course, on the Shabbat especially, all used to wear, during the week, but they didn't wear the clothes, they didn't wear the, what you see, except if you were, if you were Orthodox, everybody was what I call Orthodox, everybody was kosher, kosher in the house. Whether it was davening every day is another question, but Shabbat, everybody went Friday night, everybody went anyway.

Your father was part of this?

Yes, my father was,

What did he do in his leisure activities? His interests? Apart from the fact that he would be occupied in his business, what other things would he like to do, or be interested in?

Well, he used, he used, it was the custom that Saturday evening, everybody got together, friends of families, and they had at each other's places, socially, and the children, like us, we used to go out Saturday after Shabat, we used to go in the streets, we used to meet up, and we used to, well, this is the, although the time of pogroms and bad times in Poland, I would say was before my time, I was 14, but I remember this year just before the War, it was a happy time, time, except we hear about the War, the Germans broadcast on the radio, we heard all the speeches from Hitler, and the threatening and everything.

So you had a radio at home, home language?

Yes, through the radio. Yes, yes.

What sort of newspapers would you have?

They were Yiddish newspapers and Polish newspapers.

And do you remember the names of the newspapers?

They were newspapers?

Were they Jewish Polish?

Yiddish newspapers, Post. Maybe you're right, maybe there was a Yiddish Times, maybe, yes, in Seider, maybe, yes.

There was Yiddish Tag, and Yiddish Lattice, was in Hebrew Lattice?

Hebrew Lattice, yes, yes, we used to read that.

Daily, or weekly, or what?

I can't remember.

So,

I can read Yiddish even now, after all these years.

So, apart from these social activities, did your late father, alvaha shalom, have any political affiliations or interests, or activities? Did he belong to any political party?

I think, I think there was a Bund Party, a Bund. That was a very famous Party, I remember hearing him talking.

Did you know anything about the Bund?

I don't know.

What's the word mean?

I don't remember much about it, political aspects.

It's a Yiddish word, "Bund"?

"Bund", Yiddish, "Bund".

What does it mean?

I don't know, I couldn't tell you. I do remember, though, Jabatinski came to Poland once, I think it was 1939, or '38, an he's supposed to, was a Zionist, whether he belonged to the Bund, I don't know, I don't know. Too young to remember that.

But in terms of the general society, was there any experience of anti-Semitism? In those days that,

Well, prior to the War,

that you were aware of?

Yes, prior to the War, we had all the living Germans, they used to call them "Volks Deutsche", it means they were Germans living in Poland, their nationality was German. And the Jewish, although we were, I don't know if we had a nationality really, in Poland, I don't know, I was too young to know how the system was. Now here, if you're naturalised, you're an English subject, but in Poland, I don't know whether you were a Polish subject. I don't know, I've understood that. Although we lived there, all right?

How long were the Jews living in Poland, do you know?

Hundreds of years I should imagine. I was told in schools, there was, the Poles, there was one king, so many years ago, maybe three hundred, four hundred years, he asked the Jews to come and live there, asked them back, I was told in school, because there was all pogroms then, years back.

Yes, I understand the Jews came to Poland over 1,000 years ago, so they've been there a very long time. In fact, it's interesting the relationship you had with the non-Jewish people. How about your father, did he have anything to do with non-Jewish workers?

We had neighbours, we had neighbours, non-Jewish, living nearby, but there were, as I say, there were the "Volks Deutsche" there, they were afraid of the Poles, because the Germans were threatening Poland. They kept a low profile. The Poles, again, were against the Jews, just before the War, when they were putting up signs, "Don't buy in Jewish shops", you know, signs like that.

Who put that up? The Poles or the Germans?

The Poles, the Poles, maybe together with these Volks Deutsche, some Poles maybe were friendly with those. I also remember,

This you saw yourself in Lodz, then?

Yes. "Don't buy by the Jews".

Were the signs up in Polish?

In Polish.

Where were they displayed?

Right outside the Jewish shops. And also, as youngsters, we were also aware of this anti-Semitism in Poland, as well. Now, this must, if I,

But did your father work with Jews or non-Jews?

Well, they provided this, mostly Jewish, I think the textiles was mostly in Jewish hands, and Poles used to work for the Jews. In other words, in other words, the Jews were better off in, in business, than the Poles, there was a jealousy.

Can I come to your mother's life details, please. First of all, I start again with her name. What was your mother's name?

Rivka.

Rivka. This, of course, is a famous Biblical name. Did she have any other names? Yiddish, or Polish?

No, Rivka, she was called Rivka.

Did she too come from Lodz?

I'm not sure, but she had six sisters living in Lodz, so ... So she must have come from there.

Would you say she was born there too?

Yeh, only by a while.

And, well, you mentioned that your father, tragically, was killed when he left Lodz. Now, your mother, was she with you all the time?

Yes.

Before she was married to your father, did she have any profession or occupation?

Women haven't had, I don't think, any, not many, any occupations like now, or, or in England. She had a family to look after.

That was a full-time occupation?

There was three of us, three children.

There were three of you, that is to say, yourself and?

My sister.

Younger or older?

And a brother, two years different on each side.

So your sister was younger, and your brother was older?

Two years younger than me, and my brother's the youngest, two years younger.

Would your mother have had the same religious inclination as your father?

Yes, yes, yes.

Did she come from a Hasidic, or non-Hasidic?

Also not Hasidic, not, comparing the people in Poland, not being Hasidic were more religious than the people here, the United, in a way, you see, or they were formal, they, you, 'cos you can imagine, there was a lot of Hasidum in Poland, maybe more than in London, I don't know the statistics.

But you are saying then, that the people who were non-Hasidic were also very religious and observant?

They knew, they knew, but probably the circumstances didn't allow them to be a Hasid. But the Rabbis accepted the people the same, the Rabbis, anything you wanted to advise, or you didn't go to counselling or anywhere, you went to the Rabbi, the local Rabbi, you had a District Rabbi.

Did she wear a sheitel? You know what a sheitel is?

I know the sheitel is. I don't know. I don't remember that, probably, maybe not, I can't tell you. She wore a scarf and came to, she wore head cover the ears, but whether she wore a sheitel, I don't remember.

When did she put on a scarf?

For Shabbat, Yomtov, sort of light the candles.

This was a special scarf that she wore for religious activities?

Yes. Yes.

Before, I think you mentioned that she spoke Yiddish and Polish, is that correct?

Yes. Yes.

Was she fluent in both, or was it one more natural than the other?

Well, well, they were well-fluent, because my parents were young at the time, they weren't old, you see. The elder people probably couldn't even write Polish or Yiddish, elderly, like, say, my grandmother, because, you know.

They couldn't write?

Some of them, the elderly, because there was no compulsive school in them days, I mean, I'm going back the years, the years before the First World War, even.

But your mother,

Could, yes, sure, yes, she went to school.

And she read, would she have been reading as well? Newspapers?

Oh yes, there was the Jewish books, the Jewish Library, the Jewish books.

A Jewish Library, was it a Public Library?

No, I don't think from, not from the Polish Government, I don't think so, no.

Her dress, was this a specifically Jewish style?

Yes, yes. Everybody was, everybody was there, clothed in Jewish dress.

How would you describe that?

In them days, in them days, there was long clothes, the style, long clothes, and there was also, with big sleeves, this is as far as I remember.

Was this very different from, say, their mothers?

And everybody was wearing tsitsis, as far as the men concerned.

The men wore tsitsis?

Yes, even if it wasn't considered tefillin. It was the custom, the Jewish custom, they didn't know any different.

Was this very different from the way the non-Jews dressed?

What, for the woman?

Yes.

Definitely, because the Jewish, non-Jewish, you could see involved, like here, you see, you know, the short sleeves, or cut out, or ...

So there was, in fact, a more modest Jewish.

Jewish life, Jewish life, yes.

You mentioned that there was this political activity, in the Bund, was your mother particularly interested in politics?

I don't think my mother was, no. No.

And did she herself have any specific experiences of anti-Semitism? What was her relationship with her non-Jewish neighbours?

Well, there was, you could not, there were neighbours living there, because they lived there, you see. But we did hear, everybody heard, first of all, everybody was occupied for what's going on in Germany at the time, in 1938, I mean, in 1938, when, when Hitler did not threaten Poland at the time, and there was, there was only had to do with the Jews, it, it, they threw out of Germany, those Jews who had connection with Poland, going back, it can be 50 years back. If somebody had relations, or born in Poland, or his father was born in Poland, so those Jews were thrown out of Poland, and the Polish Government didn't want them in, because they were so many years living in Germany, they didn't class them as Poles, Hitler classed them as Polish citizens. So they were on the, on the border, on the no-man's land, for about, from '38 when they had this Kristalnacht, then, I remember the Volks Deutsche, and the Poles, started on the Jews, on us. So there was fighting, especially young people, fighting, especially that year, 1938. But, when he started threatening Poland, at that time he didn't threaten Poland, when he started threatening Poland, then the Poles were starting with this, with the Germans, you see.

Your parents, in what way would you say that, I'd like to discuss, ask you, rather, who would you say made most of the decisions at home, regarding household matters?

I'd say my mother would.

She'd decide, for example, what to buy?

Yes.

Who decided that?

I think my mother would.

And your father, was he the one, in what way was he, would you say he participated in the running of the home? Was he the one who decided on certain things?

He was, mmm, I suppose they decided together, but my mother was running the house. My father was, showing us, the children, the way to, the way to live.

In this way, how did he do that? Would he spank you?

He would explain the, we used to come from school, I was, as far as I'm concerned, because my sister was younger, I was the oldest, I was talking about the days when I was 13, and he used to explain to me, and I used to ask him questions, all sorts, from school, from cheder, to explain, you see.

What was his response to your questions? How did he take to you asking about his diet, if you would say a person should live in a certain way?

Well, we, we, we all, not just us, we, all the Jews, we had our guidance even from, not from what you saw at home, they saw our friends the same.

End of F154 Side A

F154 Side B

Up until now we have covered a basic outline of your family background. Now let us carry on and hear about your early life, that is, up until the time you were an adolescent, say, 15 or so, you could tell me your early adolescence?

Not now, because when I was 14, that's when the War started. That's why my school was not completed.

So let's talk about your life up until that point in time when the War broke out. So from your recollections, let's hear about the sort of house that you lived in, the environment, and so on. For example, did you live in a house or a flat?

Well, mostly, as I mentioned before, in Lodz, it was apartments, flats, most of the, in town.

How many floors were there?

Well, there was, you can compare, you can compare like council flats, blocks, blocks, blocks of flats. And then there were shops and flats above shops. You didn't see much, as I remember, houses like we have here.

Private houses? Terraces?

No. No, no, no. Maybe in the suburbs, yes, but not, I don't recollect, we were living mostly in the centre of town, in Lodz.

Were these flats by the town council, or were they private-owned?

I believe it was private, private. And there might have been houses, say, if I remember, an uncle of mine, there was about four houses, altogether, in, in, and it looked like a complex block of flats.

So your uncle owned these?

Yes, that's right, yeh. Well, then when my father had a business with them, they were both in in that complex there, so I know from that.

How many rooms did your flat have?

There were three rooms.

Bedrooms?

There was one large room which we used, and there was, there was two bedrooms, three bedrooms, two bedrooms I should imagine, two bedrooms, and a large room too.

Do you have a recollection of the appearance of the ...

Well, they lived, we lived on the second floor, I know, we had to walk up, there were no lifts to, like now. Not very high, maybe four. I recollect walking up and down the two floors, yes, all the time. And, and there was such a, built such a way, that it was like on a square, where the blocks were facing each other, and there was a playground in the centre.

An enclosed playground?

Like a playground for children, for children who lived there, that's right. Other people could come. Each complex was like that, each few who, and that particular state, yeh.

Were there trees? Were there gardens?

No. No. No, no lawns or trees, no. No, not like here.

Did you have your own running water, electricity?

Yes.

Gas?

Yes. There was modern times then. There was, I believe there was electricity, not gas, I'm not quite sure. Water, yes, sink, water.

So who used to keep these places clean? Was there a janitor there?

There was a caretaker, but being so young, I can't tell you exactly. It was clean, there was a caretaker. I believe there were some doors that were locked at night, I believe, you know. Like, big, big doors, steel doors.

Gates?

Gates, that's right, more definition, yeh, they were locked at night. At a certain time, the entrance, yes.

To the flats?

Yeh.

Were most of the people living in these flats Jewish, or was it?

No, mostly Jews, but there were some Poles there, yeh, mixed, but not many Poles did mix with the Jews, they like, lived separate, like the Poles lived separate.

So,

But in the street you could find Poles and Jews, in the same street, long streets, yes.

Did the houses have mezuzah on?

Yes. The Jewish ones.

In some part of the world, it's sort of universal, every Jew has a mezuzah.

Yes, no, there were, we had mezuzahs.

Would you say this was a pleasant place to live, in this flat? I mean, did you feel ... were you satisfied?

As I remember,

Were people,

Well, we didn't know any other way, any other, they didn't know any other way of living. They lived there, and people lived there, people could have lived in there for the past, my time, I was only 13, they could've lived there 20 years previously, who knows? And the other thing I do remember is, in the summer, the most of the Jewish people went to the country, so what they did,

Really?

Yeh, what they did, is they hired, they hired, what you call,

Cottage?

A sort of, a farm, a cottage, estate, but you rented the whole complex, the trees with the fruits, how you call, the orchard? The orchard. That was [inaudible]. So in the, after the school, this is the year from before the War, which I do remember, a couple of years before the War, my father stayed at Lodz, and we, the mother and the children, and other friends and families, packed their things, on a horse and cart, and we travelled, maybe, I don't now, how many miles to, not very far, a couple of hours travelling, and we stayed there, and my father came home for Shabbat, Friday. And we stayed there while we had holidays from school. We stayed there, we picked the orchard, the orchard belonged to, while my father rented it, it belonged to us.

Really?

Yes.

Including the fruit and everything?

The fruit, yes. You know, small, small [inaudible]. That was the custom.

How long was the holiday for?

I would say about two months.

Two months?

Yeh. We started school at 7, in Poland, in Lodz, in Poland, till 14, that was the school. And from then on, you clever, continued until 18, it was, we called it the University, here probably it is the High School.

Sixth form?

Sixth form. From there, some who was clever, but unfortunately, I only just managed, I never even got the results of the last year.

Why?

Because of the War.

The War broke out, and you didn't get your Finals?

The Court closed all the schools.

So, I'm not sure if I asked you this before, but excuse me if I repeat. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes, I got one sister and a brother.

Did, what were their names, and their dates of birth?

There was three years different, I can't tell you the dates, I don't remember.

What were their names?

The names, I remember. Freda, that was my sister, Freda, and Yitzchok was my brother.

Were you sort of, you were in between them? Did you feel a special relationship with your younger brother?

Well, my,

Did you feel any distinctive relationship with your brother or sister?

We had a good relationship while before the War, yes. But as I mentioned before, when my father was killed, my mother made me the head of the house, you see. She said, "You're the oldest, and you look after the children. And you have the responsibility of, of the house."

That was quite a big order, wasn't it, that was a tall order.

That's the order she gave me.

For a young boy of 14.

14, not quite. And that's the order she has given me.

So that was, at the outbreak of War, but until that time, you were,

We were a happy family, like anyone in the house, yes, apart from the odd, the odd disturbances that went on, about the kitchens and the Jews, the

You mean in your personal family relationships?

Oh everything was fine, yes.

Did your sister work?

No, she was younger, she was still in school.

She also went?

Sure, and my brother the same.

Did they like school?

Did they like school? Well, like, compared with children, like today, I mean, compare it to my sons.

What comparison, how would they stand up?

Well, they went to school all day, you know, and at night they had to do their homework, they had to

Did they have a lot of homework?

No, they had, we had, we was, learning, don't forget, we were learning, half the day was in Polish, history, maths, whatever, and the next half the day was Jewish.

What, in a separate place?

In the same place.

In the same school?

The same school, but, for the Jewish lessons, came a Rabbi to teach us, you see.

Well, that's very interesting indeed.

Yes, because, I don't remember quite a lot about the schooling, I don't know why, but I do know that there was, this particular school, whether it was a 100% Jewish school I can't tell you, because, you remember, I think the schools did belong to the

Government, sort of like here, but there wasn't, there was some schools which were completely Jewish, I believe, mostly,

Would you say they were private schools?

Yes. That's right. But it was mostly religious ones, you can say like a Yeshiva, but they didn't teach Polish.

The Sheever is,

Well, for youngsters. I wouldn't say Yeshiva all day, you go to Yeshiva at a certain age.

Yes, that's called, I believe Yeshiva is translated today in two different ways, one is like for young children, meaning really a religious, Jewish,

Well, that's the one I'm talking about, yes.

Of course, it would have been a Rabbinical seminary for adult education?
You mean the ordinary,

The ordinary, the young, that's right, there was mostly, there, I believe they didn't teach no Polish history at all. Language probably yes, but not, mostly Jewish, Cheder, and all this, but we had, I know we had the Polish school, read and write and all other things, but we had in the afternoon, we had Jewish lessons, you see.

What subjects were you taught in the Jewish lessons?

Cheder.

The Cheder.

What does Cheder mean?

Well, Cheder's a Hebrew, the Hebrew reading of the books, the beginning of, I learn the Aleph Baiz, and

The Hebrew Alphabet?

The Hebrew Alphabet, and the Torah.

Yes, what's the Torah?

The Torah is from the time of Moses, and the time of, this history, the Jewish history, that's right. So therefore, we were, we had half a day of this, and a few hours of the other. In a way, it was, it was confusing, you see, when you get home, when you got home.

Oh, that's interesting.

It was a lot to think, a lot to think, the next day, for the exams, it was a lot to think.

Was there a lot of emphasis put on exams? To achieve a certain amount?

Well, when they starting to become more difficult, then the War broke out, so I didn't go no further, you see. But what we learned, what I learnt from Cheder, when you went to Cheder, five years old we was. There was Khaider as well.

What is the word, "Cheder", mean, actually, in English?

When you were five years, every Jewish child is sent to, you can call here, nursery, but there it was a Cheder, only the Jews,

Do you know what it means, the word "Cheder"?

Translated,

Well, is room.

So we called the Cheder, from five years on, from five years old, that the children went. But seven years, you had to go to school, so you knew already a little bit of the Jewish, as Aleph Baiz, there, and you was taught a bit higher in the school.

Who were the teachers? Were they men or women? In the Cheder I'm talking about.

Men. Men.

Even in the infants school?

Men.

Were the girls and boys mixed or separate?

No, no, separate.

And all levels, from when they very first came in, from the babies?

Yeh, yeh.

And you went through this system, you went to Cheder?

After I was five, yes, at five until seven, and then I went to this proper school where you learned alphabet, not before seven, well, here in England, they start at five, school. My son started at five, and also as it happens, they started at Cheder in the United Synagogue here, in, in Egerton Road, yeh, all at five.

Were you impressed by the building? Was the school building something very special, or was it rather dull? Was there anything notable about it, would you say?

Well, it wasn't, it was, it was supposed, it was clean, I mean, it was clean, it was a big building, there was, I don't know how many children were in a row.

How many children were in your class, throughout, you know, if, if

Maybe, I couldn't remember, maybe 15 or 20, it wasn't very big. Because there was many, many schools, in the Jewish community, there were quite many.

Were you happy in school? Did you find,

Yes, yes, you had friends, but, then them days, going back, if you don't mind me, I know I keep on going back.

I want you to do that!

It's not like now, children go to school, they got facilities like toytime, or PT, or other activities.

There was no PT?

There was no such things in them days. It was just learning, and we had a break, and learning.

What did you do in the break?

I just played in the, football, yes, football yes, kicking the ball.

Did you have your own ball?

Yes we had our own balls, and the school had balls. That's the only activity I would say, in them days.

So you had no sport activity organised by the school?

No.

Were you aware of any other schools that did have, say, football?

I'm not aware whether maybe the High Schools, the High Schools probably had more, maybe, yes, but not in my age, I don't remember anything like that. Don't forget that this is 50 years ago.

We've spoken about the school, I wonder if there are any particular memories you have of one of the teachers, let's say, that stands out in your mind?

Yes, I have. I have one good memories. Of the teacher, of one teacher, I, I was bright in school, as they call it. I was quite clever, and whenever the teacher had to go somewhere, or he didn't,

He would leave the class?

Yes. He picked me to sit on the, on the above, at the high table, there was a high table there, a desk, and I should control the other boys.

Oh, that's interesting.

This is a memory. I was, well, you could call that like the Head Boy here, that's right. Yeh well that, I do remember that, and I used to come home and tell my parents, and they were very proud of that.

Yes, I'm sure, that's very interesting. Did you have any problems with the children, when the teacher left?

Yes. Of course! They didn't behave, they were shouting, you know, they didn't want to take a lot of notice of me, but ...! Somehow the teacher picked me for it.

And this was a mixed school of boys and girls?

No, just boys.

Did your sister get on at school as well? In her school?

Well, I suppose so, I suppose so. I mean, we haven't discussed when we came home from, a lot from the schooling, she was young, she was still young.

She was what, three years, three years younger?

She was younger, she was about 10 years you see, 9.

This school then, you mentioned, the Jewish school, now in those days, actually, they were, I don't know if you know this, different to ideological groupings, for example, there was the Bund, and there was the Zionists, and there was the Hasidim, and everything, there was a general Jewish type school. Do you remember which type of school you went to?

No. No, there was, I know it was the nearest school where we lived, the nearest to go to, like, not to travel far. But I don't know to which Party, or which Organisation the school belonged to.

Did you have to wear head covering in the school?

Yes. And I believe all the time, definitely for the Hebrew classes, definitely. This I do remember, I remember in the morning session, like half the day was in Polish lectures.

Were there school services? School worship, like a religious assembly?

No.

That's interesting. That means they expected you to, did they expect you to have prayed at home?

I believe they expected it, because everybody was davening at home, in the mornings, and they expected that everybody did. I mean, maybe some, some people didn't. But very rarely, I think everybody did daven in the morning, when you get up, because they taught you Hebrew to get up, before you open your eyes, wash your hands etc., to say a prayer.

Do you remember?

Yes I do. I don't remember the prayer, but this was the custom really, that was the right, and you went to the school, and they accepted it, there was no assembly like we've got here now.

Did the boys have any special Jewish ritual objects that were their own private possessions? You know what I mean? Like Tsitsis or Tefillin?

Tsitsis you had, you were wearing Tsitsis. But before the Barmitzvah, probably yes, you see, they were learning Barmitzvah before they were 13, so you had then, to have Tefillin.

So was your Barmitzvah before the outbreak of War?

I don't quite remember my Barmitzvah to tell you the truth, I don't quite remember.

Well,

I do remember one occasion, I must say that, we had a neighbour, and he was, I believe, a butcher, he had a butcher's shop. He had, I think, one son. And the son was not clever, in, in anything, it will always stick in my mind this, this little thing, an incident. So when he made a Barmitzvah, he called me, I should say the prayers for him. I should say the brocha, and everything, he couldn't say it.

So where was this said, at home?

In the Synagogue, in the Shtiebl, in a big Shtiebl.

What do you call, how would you distinguish between a Shtiebl and a regular Synagogue?

A Shtiebl was more a smaller type of prayer room, where you had a certain few people there, at least a minimum of 10 people, at least 10, 12, that was a small Shtiebl, that was a close-knit, like a group. Then they had a more variety of other ones, and those, in this particular Shtiebl, were more religious people.

In what way were they more religious, were you say?

Well, the clothes were in this, the clothes, you could tell, and the beards, and the beards.

The same clothes. The Hasidic...?

A bit more religious, where the bigger Shtiebl, because the bigger you call the Shul, like here, the bigger Shtiebl you had, also the people in it, mixed, the one with beards, without beards, or without, wearing just a suit, or wearing the long clothes. That was very tolerant, the Hasidum, they got on very well, the tolerant, very very tolerant.

They never fought each other?

No, no, no, not, not when you, maybe, maybe from different places they didn't like each other, like, you have a Rabbi there, you have a different Rabbi, who comes from Poland or whatever, and they didn't have the same ideas about the, the Jewishness, there were different opinions, you see, but to say, where we lived, there should be, a big town, there should be a big difference between Hasid and a more liberal person, although he was keeping as much as you can, the religious side of your Jewishness, they did tolerate, they did not go against.

Were you aware of any Jews that were, what we call secularist Jews? Like, say, they were completely different,

I never,

And they had any sort of impact on your life there?

We had, there were some Jews that didn't belong to, they didn't go to the services, but different type of, well, I wasn't aware of what we have now, Liberals, Reforms, United.

Were there any youth groups, like say, Zionist groups?

Not in the school, not in this school. I know the elder boys from the, you know, my age, the elder boys, 17, 18, there were some clubs, there were youth clubs, they had the Hallusin (? spelling) and there was the Bund.

What was the Bund?

There was a Party for Israel. And there was another one, the elder boys used to meet up, there was Clubs for them, Clubs, yeh.

Well, on the whole I think you were kept very busy, by the sound of it, throughout the day, you didn't have much time to.

There wasn't much time for, for other things. Of course, there was no television to watch!

And that's interesting, but was there anything else? Did you have radio?

A radio, yes.

Newspapers in your house?

Yes, newspapers, Yiddish newspapers, Polish newspapers, and radio. Radio yes.

And what was the radio, was there any Jewish programmes on the radio?

End of F154 Side B

Fl55 Side A

Early years up until the time you were, aged 14, was it?

Not quite, 13, 13, 14, 13.

I'd just like to ask you about one or two points in your home life. Such as the sort of food you had at home. What sort of, was it, did you have separate meat and milk, for example?

Yes. Yes.

Was there any particular food that you liked that you sort of have special memories of, or that you particularly disliked, and that you've got special memories of?

While I didn't dislike the Jewish food, we had the old traditional food, what we call now.

What would that be, how would you say, traditional Polish, Jewish food?

Well, in the morning, when you had breakfast, you had a egg, and you had a herring.

Egg and herring?

Yes. Well, you had a boiled egg, or you had a herring to give you appetite to eat.

Was it fried?

The herring, sometimes, cooked, or boiled, yes. And then you had herring also with onions, raw onions cut up.

What sort of herring was this?

Salted herring, salted. Schmaltz herring, that's right. And you had, some people had soup, actually, in the morning, like, milk, milky soup, from, a milky diet soup. And that was breakfast. And in the evening we had, well, during the day, in the school, we had all sorts of school dinners.

Did you take school dinners with you, like sandwiches, or did they provide you with them?

I think sometimes we took sandwiches, some days, and some days they had, the provided some food there. But the most important was Friday. Friday was the most important day. Friday, the Shabbat, with the food.

What was special?

Well, you had a, you had a, Friday night, you had a evening meal, it consisted, like, like the tradition goes on now, you had chicken soup, and lockschen soup, and this

type, and chicken, and, well, the compote they had. You know compote. That is boiled apples and sort of afters. Saturday you had Cholent, every Saturday.

What was the main thing in the Cholent, what was the main ingredient?

You had to go to the baker to collect it. To a baker's oven to collect it. Or some places, we had an oven in the wall built in, like.

Sorry, I don't understand, didn't you have your own oven?

There was, not everybody had ovens, so they had to go to collect the Cholent, the Cholent to the baker.

Did you do that?

We had an oven, but sometimes it didn't work out, because in the winter, we had the oven because it was cold, but in the summer, you had to, you go to the baker, it was more convenience to go Friday, take it there Friday, and bring it.

Was it far to go?

No. No. Because it was local, people went to the baker. Well, we had ovens, but of course the oven was built in tiles, the tiles, in the room, in the corner, in the middle of the room, like a fireplace, right up to the ceiling, and coming out like a chimney breast with tiles. And a opening in the middle, and the coal in the bottom was there.

What fired this oven?

Coal. Coal, in the bottom, you filled up this huge ...

How did you get the coal?

Well, we had coal, coal we had.

How did you get the coal?

Coal, sellers in coal, there was in the yard, there was cellars, each one had a cellar, each apartment, you didn't keep it in the flat, you kept it in the, you took up enough for the day, or.

Was this every day you had to fill it up?

I don't know how often, but there was like, like a chimney breast, it used to come out of the wall, and this was covered in tiles, white tiles, and there was an opening in the top for the Cholent to put in, to keep the thing warm, or for Shabbat, or to keep the thing, the water, the kettle boiling all the time, and underneath, below, near the skirting, was this, to fill up with coal, that's how it was.

Was it smokey, or was it clean?

Clean, not smokey.

No problem with the coal?

No.

So Friday night was your main meal. And what about Saturday?

And Saturday after Shul, the kiddish, in the, the kiddish, went to Shul,

What's kiddish?

In the Shul, and you made kiddish at home.

You had both then?

In the Shul, well, they made kiddish in the Shul, and Father made kiddish at home. It was a day of rest, we went for walks, until after Shabbat, you, you travelled from one place to visit families, in the evening.

And what did you do on Shabbat? I mean, it's a long day. You had from morning,

Well, by the time you came home from Shul, was dinner time, it was only the afternoon, the day.

What did you do in the afternoon?

We went for walks mostly, yes.

You had no, did you have any Club activities in the afternoon?

Not in our age, not in our age. The elder, yes.

Now, from what you tell me, I understand this way of life was changed drastically, at the outbreak of War.

Yes.

When you were about 13/14 years old.

Yes.

Now, tell me, what actually happened then?

We already knew in 1938 that the Jewish were suffering in Germany, as I mentioned before. So we were afraid, already, of the Germans, but nothing we could do. We heard on the radio, of the speeches that Hitler has given, threatening speeches. He didn't, he didn't mention specifically the Jews, but he was hating the Poles. The

Polish Nation. He compared them to animals. He compared, speeches that he made, a Pole, a Pole cannot count more than till up to IO. He has got no brain.

This was on the radio?

On the radio. We heard the speeches, yes, on the radio.

You heard this, did you understand what ...

Well, they're translating in Polish, of course. You heard him talking, and it's translated in Polish. And naturally, the elderly people, like my father, they always discussed this future, what is coming, what is gonna happen. We didn't, was not aware that things like the Holocaust gonna happen. This they were not aware. But we were aware that the Germans are coming, and that they throw out all the German Jews, the Jews which had, a third generation living in Poland, and they were living in Germany for say, 30 or 40 years, these are the Jews he has thrown out in 1938.

What about yourself in 1938? Did you see any of this?

Yes, yes, that's what the people are talking. Did I see these Jews? We saw them in the War, because they were, the Polish Government did not let them in, because they did not classify them as Poles, and the Germans didn't classify them as Germans.

So they were in no-man's land?

They were in between the Polish border and the German border, there was a [inaudible], and they were living there since 1938, I think, for at least a year. And when the Germans arrived in 1939, then those same Jews, they came with, you see. They somehow accommodated them into towns.

Really? So they came across the border?

They in between the border, and when the Germans occupied, there was only one, you see, so they already find places, not in Germany, but in, in Poland.

In Poland, occupied by the Germans?

That's right. In Lodz was actually integrated into Greater Germany. Also was a province, they called a province, and Lodz was integrated as, as a German town called Litschmanstadt, in German.

So when you, you learned of your father's death.

That was in '39. And the Germans arrived, and they tell us, the neighbour came and told us the bad news, so we were, my mother was sitting Shiva, and I was sitting Shiva. So we were all sitting Shiva.

The whole family?

Yes. And the neighbours helped out.

The Rabbi came and he,

I don't know whether, I don't remember about the Rabbi, because the Germans did not allow to practice religion. We had a German neighbour, which as I mentioned before, they were Volks Deutsche, in other words, they were Germans living in Poland. And they, they brought the German Gestapo or SS into the house, to us, and they show them these are Jews, they're sitting, lost their father. So he said, "You mustn't do this. After today, you don't sit no more. You don't practice no religion." So, that's why we were, we stopped that.

They had actually occupied,

Already. They occupied, and every day, there was, on the walls in the town, there were new regulations. For example, if you saw a German walking on the pavement 100 yards away, you should get off the pavement. And if you wore a hat, as you see the Germans, you take the hat off.

These were all on posters stuck on the wall?

That's right. New rules and regulations.

What language were they in?

In Yiddish and Polish, and in German.

Three languages. And you read these, I suppose?

Yes. We knew. And also we had to wear yellow bands.

Who gave you these yellow bands?

We had to make it, find it material, to have yellow band, I think, after that there was yellow, yellow stars.

So that seems remarkably rapid for them to,

Right away, this was done right away. The laws came in right away, and they snatched people off the streets, and send them away.

When they were sent away, did you know why they were sent away?

No. They just picked up people, because they knew they were Jews, by wearing their armbands, yellow. They just sent them, they just picked them off the street, and sent them somewhere, we didn't know where. And I remember they snatched me, as well, off the street.

Who did that? A German?

A German. And other people, a full lorry, about, maybe 20, and took us into a big building, and, into a big building, and we were locked up overnight. I was there three days, and over this three days, I was only, there wasn't many my age, they were mostly men, and they were, there were beatings going on, in that big room, all night they were beating people, the SS, and also in, they took, the next morning, we stayed in that room, it was crowded, we couldn't even sleep. I don't know the reason for it. The next day came another lot of SS, different ones, and they tried, like playing games, like you play games with, with animals, they cut up slices of little crumbs of bread, and stood on the table, and threw it in the air, and whoever could, whoever could find a piece, had to eat. It was going on for two nights, I think it was the third day, came a whole officer, another team of SS, they put up tables, and they start, one by one, to register people, asking them names, where they live, and when it came my turn, and I told them, they told me to go, go home. And another few boys. So after three days, not being at home, my mother didn't know where I was, she was glad to see me back home. And then the posters came out again, there's going to be a ghetto, and it's going to be closed in 1940, January 1940, and this was already, I should imagine, it was October/November, the time. And all the Jews who did not live in this part, have to be in the ghetto by that day.

So you mean, if they were living in a different area?

And of course, not everybody was living in this area, this smaller part was the ghetto, and they had to, they had to get there, not only by themselves, because the Germans went into these people, and they said to them, "You got 10 minutes to take your things, and leave everything behind."

Did you have any relatives or friends outside the area?

Yes, we had some, I think, my father had something to, very good friends living outside, more like suburbs, you know, and they told him, they told my mother at the time, what happened, they came in, "You've got 10 minutes to leave everything. Take what you can." They took anything, little things what they could, to carry, and left everything behind. And this was going on like that.

Did you have telephone communications at that time?

No. No. No, we never had a telephone, no. But there was telephones, probably not

But, I mean, you communicated directly with people who came and told you these things?

Only by coming and going. There was a lot of coming and going, because people didn't know what is going to happen. All they knew is they're going to live in a ghetto. So those who got first into this place, where the ghetto is supposed to be had a place to live, and those who left it till later, couldn't manage, had to take, live in, if there wasn't enough room, live in the outside or somewhere, and taken, and going with families to live.

Where was your flat? Was that in the ghetto area?

That was just in the, just outside, just inside the ghetto area. So we didn't have to move.

How long did you live in this ghetto?

Five years. Since, four years. When they shut the ghetto in 1940.

So the ghetto was opened in?

They established, it was opened as soon as the Germans came in, they started, in 1939, a few months after, a couple of months after. They, they were, they had their plan for to make a Jewish ghetto in a small area, which they did, so when they, before they closed the ghetto, they established a Jewish Police, Jewish money, currency, only Jewish, and a Jewish Police Force, there was one, the leader of the Jewish Community, before the War, by the Germans, they picked him. He, what I heard, was supposed to be, before the War, there was a Jewish Community, there was a leader there, a Kahila, there was of the nation, there was a Kahila, they used to call it. Anything to do with only Jewishness, the Kahila was representing the Government. And this particular person, his name was Rumkowski (? spelling).

Rumkowski.

Yes.

He had been appointed by the Jewish Community?

No. No. He was, for some reason, the Jewish Community did not like him, but when the Germans came in, whether he volunteered, or whether the Germans picked him to be in, like, the leader, representative of the, of the Jews, but nevertheless he was the representative, like, for the Germans. And he organised the Police, and money, and on the one hand, [inaudible] was to get into the ghetto, this was the entrance that they established a factory to work, and when we sent out the goods, they sent in food. And for this money you had, the Jewish money, you bought the food, on ration books, whatever. Very little food, but that's how it was, the system. And, and that's how life was going on, as far as I remember.

How did you feel at that time, in, in regard to your, your prospects for survival?

Well, we didn't know, from day to day, how we're gonna survive. There was many, many things, we were afraid. First, people were taken away every day, and secondly there was an outbreak of diphtheria, illnesses, all sorts of things, illnesses, and people died every day.

Were there any, what sort of medical or hospital facilities were there?

Not very good. People, there was no hospitals, people were dying in their own homes. You find them dead every, neighbours, streets, streets. The original people

who went to the ghetto, which were born in the town, Lodz, after, I was told after a one year, being in the ghetto, more than half died, so the ghetto became not full with people, so the Germans brought in, from the surrounding towns and villages, into the ghetto, to fill up again, with people. On top of that, they brought in people from Czechoslovakia and Germany, all Jews, every time to fill it, to fill up. They took people out, the strongest people they took out, and other people came in, and the strongest survived.

What sense were you making of this, you were a young boy of about 15, 16, how was it then?

14, yes, 15.

What sort of information did you get?

I was working at,

... and your seniors,

We lost most of them, we lost, they died, they were taken away, but we worked.

I mean, what sort of information, how did you understand what was happening? Was there any ...

We didn't ...

... meetings where you came together?

Only at work, only at work, and the news was in the workplace.

What, by word of mouth you passed things around?

That's right.

Were you allowed to publish anything?

No. I mean, no. No, not at all. We only had this posters put up, the new regulations on the walls. But the elderly people, the men, the more, married men, or elderly people knew more of what was going on than my generation, really, we just followed what the instructions were.

So, were there a lot of boys your age then? Were you in company with people of your own age group, or were you isolated? Or with older people?

Mostly with older people.

What happened to your classmates?

Well, as I said before, people did not survive. The weakest, the weakest died from starvation, from not enough food, and from illnesses. So, in actual fact, I don't recollect any of my close friends to be with me, I just worked at one place where there was mostly women working, and we, as men, I was classed as a man, we just did the hard work, the loading, unloading, whatever.

What were you unloading?

This particular factory was making boots for the German soldiers who went to Russia, made from, the women were plaiting from straw, plaiting straw, and then others, women, were putting it together, and we were just loading up, bringing the straw, taking back the boots, and so on.

So you saw these finished boots going out to the Front?

Like exporting, yes, to Russia. And there were other industries, but I'm not aware, there were other places of work, other things. As long as the ghetto was productive for the Germans, they kept the ghetto going.

So that was the purpose of the ghetto then? I just couldn't understand why they were bringing people into the ghetto,

To work, because they established, as I said before, they established this place of work, and we were classed as belonging to the German Reich, they called it, the German, we belonged to Germany, this part of Poland, and we had to work there, to get food, I told you that.

How was this food distributed?

Ration book. Ration book. Weekly or monthly, I don't know quite how.

It was at home, or in a cafeteria?

No, you had to, there were some shops, with the ration books, you'd give your coupons in, and you'd get your slice, a few slices of bread, or for so many people.

Was your mother still alive then?

Yes.

And you were at home?

At home, we lived in that one room, more or less the same.

It was the same flat?

Not exactly, we had to move slightly, there was the border, we had to have, get another room.

At that stage, did you know much about the War?

I personally did not know what's going on outside the ghetto. But I was, people were telling, I didn't know if anybody did know what was going on. We were quite cut off from anybody, or places of news. You couldn't smuggle out, you couldn't smuggle out of the ghetto and coming back.

Was there any, there was no smuggling in or out, or secret radios, or ...

Not as such things. But people used to go out to work, into the town, and sometimes they picked up some news and brought in, but very limited.

What year is this?

That is already 1940/'41, '42, yes.

And in those years, the Germans were actually

They were going onto, winning, yes, winning, we knew that.

You knew that they were winning. And you were actually, in your situation, then, sort of almost like slaves to the,

That is correct. Well, next to our ghetto, there was another ghetto which was for gipsies. Gipsies.

We have, of course, we have gipsies in England, and I think all over the world, but when you say gipsies, were there some

Yes, in Poland as well. Gipsies were treated the same as us Jews.

Did you have any previous contact with gipsies?

No, but we knew there were gipsies from all over Europe to put in.

From all over Europe?

Yes, from over there, next to our ghetto, there was another boarded ghetto, but what they done with them, we don't know, but they were treated badly, the same.

Of course, after the War, we know that they killed them.

End of Fl55 Side A

F155 Side B

Please give me your full name?

What, Yiddish name, Polish name. Yiddish Name. Well, Polish name, Moyshek David Frenkel.

A Polish name?

Moyshek is Polish. David, David in Polish, Frenkel. And the Jewish name is Moyshek Davitz Frenkel.

And when you were born, as far as I remember, that is the birthday I have, 24th November, 1925.

And which country were you born in?

Poland.

I see, I think it had quite a lot of border changes?

This was Central Poland as far as I remember, in the centre of Poland, in a town called Lodz. There was, as far as I recollect, a town of which I got to know of recently, actually, 750,000 people. Out of those there was 250,000 Jews.

Was that,

The second biggest town, the second to Warsaw. Warsaw was the capital, and Lodz was the second biggest.

Right, that makes the population, I would say, about a third Jewish?

A third. That's what I was told, in my asking questions, as a child I didn't know at the time, but since.

Well, when did you actually leave Lodz?

1939, and the Germans arrived, the War started in September, as I remember, two weeks later, the Germans, not even two weeks, arrived, and by 1940, they have closed the ghetto. All the Jewish, from the whole town, from all over the place, went to a small area of Lodz.

So you mean you were actually brought up in the town of Lodz?

Yes, in Lodz, yes.

End of F155 Side B

F156 Side A

The treatment of other nations, apart from the Jewish people, of course, is one of the issues of the Holocaust, and understandably since you didn't know what was happening to your fellow Jews in the various camps, one can understand that you didn't know what was happening to, to other groups as well. But, could you just tell me what, to what extent did you know of the treatment of other people? I think you mentioned before that the Germans had tensions with the Poles and so on. Were there any Poles in your Camp? In the Concentration Camp?

Yes, all nationalities were there, from all over Europe. At my time, I came there, it was already established, but mostly Jews.

Was there a segregation of the different groups? I mean, when you refer to gipsies or Poles, or other nationalities,

I don't remember, I don't remember gipsies being in the Camp, they were taken somewhere else to be Liquidated, as you say.

[Inaudible]

Some sign on the chest, for instance, each nationality had their national flag, so called, a little, like a little emblem, like the Polish had the red and white, so we had red and white, a little.

What shape?

It was a triangle, red and white.

Everybody had it?

Everybody was wearing a triangle and the number next to it. The Jews had a yellow triangle, the new yellow for Jews, so in other words, although we were Poles, we had no nationality, just Jews, the triangle, so he is a Jew.

Where were these emblems used? Was this in Auschwitz, did you say, or in the ghetto?

That was in Auschwitz. No. In the ghetto we had, before the ghetto we had yellow stars, and then they had armbands, but once we were in the ghetto, I can't remember, I think we did wear yellow stars, we were all together in that.

So in the ghettos, there were no non-Jews living in the ghetto?

No, all Jews, only Jews.

And these distinguishing badges which you had on, who made these, the Germans?

They are not badge, they give you the uniform, and the black and white, blue and white striped uniform.

Yeh, that was in the Camps?

In the Camps, yes.

We really hadn't got up to that stage in your experience, we were still in the ghetto.

Yeh, in the ghetto we wore ordinary clothes. Ordinary clothes, but you had to before the ghetto, I know we were wearing yellow stars, in the quite correct way, in the ghetto we didn't wear any other identification, I don't think.

These armbands that you mentioned?

Everybody had to fight for material of yellow to wear round the arms, and then they had the [inaudible] on the stars, back and front, the yellow stars.

Who provided you with this?

We had to find, to find, to make it ourself. Like a fixed [inaudible]

So if a person wanted to evade this,

You could evade it.

Would you have to be carrying some kind of identification with you, like an identity card?

We had no identification whatsoever.

So if a person wanted to escape from the ghetto and go to the Polish side of Lodz, was this ever ..

We had no papers, we had no papers whatever, we had no papers, I don't remember any papers.

Do you know of anybody who did that? Who got,

No, after the War I heard people used to have Polish papers which they got from some Poles, but they were elderly people already, but I was only a youngster.

So, what, what, what actually happened between the time when you were in the ghetto, and the time when you were transferred to the Camp? Was this something that, a fate that you knew was waiting for you, in the ghetto? Did anybody know it was going to happen?

Nobody knew what's going to happen. I don't know if I tell you before. It was done in such a way that we were ignorant of what is gonna happen to us when the Germans

retreated back from Russia in 1944, or before that, when they were losing the War. So we didn't know at all, we were so closed in that we didn't know what happens. Very few people did know what's happening outside in other places. Very few. We didn't. The majority didn't know at all. Until the German, the German who was in charge of Lodz, of the town, he was in charge, like, well, Burgermeister, or whoever he was, he was in charge there.

The Head of the City?

The Head of the Gestapo, who, he was in charge of Poland, and specially another one over Lodz, each town. He personally came into the ghetto, the officers of the SS and they went round to the factories, and told people, we're going to be evacuated soon, and we're going to Germany, and take all your belongings, as much as you can. Street by street, we had to report in to go. That was 1944, beginning, and we didn't know till we arrived to the Camp, into the Camp. As far as we knew, what we were told by the Germans, they were very, very polite, speaking, every day they were making speeches that we shouldn't be afraid, and we should take as much as we can, we'll be better off in Germany, working for the Germans, we have better facilities than here. In other words, he gave us the wrong picture, just to, we shouldn't have any, any repetition of what was happening in Warsaw, which we didn't know at the time. There was the uprising.

Yes. It's quite, I don't know the correct word, how to describe it. It's indescribable how they managed to.

Convince people.

All form of communications between you and anybody else in the outside world. I mean, how they sort of cut you off and isolated you. Did you know anything about any attempts to, say, make radio contact? Do you know of...

I personally didn't, but there were, there were some people, I think, did have some information from outside, because some groups did go out to work, into town, and come back in the evening, some, not many. And they probably did bring news in. As I say, again, I was only a youngster at the time, you see.

What was your mother doing in this time?

Well, she was working as well. Doing something or other. I can't remember what. But she had to go to do some work.

And you came home every day?

Yes, and we went to work every day. That's right. And ..

Were there any kind of community activities?

No.

Communal worship, social, religious, cultural activities?

Not as far as I know, but people wanted to pray, I suppose they prayed in their houses.

Just privately.

Yes. But there was, the Synagogues were burnt down.

The Synagogues were burnt down?

When they arrived.

What, the Germans burnt them down on their arrival?

Mmmm.

Was there any attempt to fight when they did that?

Not as far as I know. Not as far as I know. Anyway, they used to bring in more people from each country, from all over Europe. In other words, we started off with the Jewish from Lodz, and the population was so bad, treated at the beginning, that illnesses, they died, half of the population died, then they brought in from, people from most, from German Jews, all Jews, mostly from France, or from Germany, or all the surrounding areas, small villages, to fill up, always they brought in, brought in people, to fill up in bulk, until the time came when, on the same time they had to, they had to send people out. Old people, the people, so many people a day had to go out, and we didn't know where they went. Eventually, we find out they went to camps, and been, been, well, been liquidated in some way.

So at this stage in Lodz, how would you describe your feeling towards the Germans? I mean, to me it seems as if the mild contrast between the situation in the ghetto, where you were isolated but carrying a working life, it sounds very unreal to me, but, it was a life which had some focus, let's say. So, from what I can make out, it seems that you must have been provided with things like food and clothing, and services. What about the electricity, the gas, and water, sewage?

Actually the Lodz ghetto was run on a system, like you would have in your own country. You had the Jewish Police, you had people working in the sewers, you had people working in the other, like electricity, or coal, there wasn't such a lot of electricity fires, coal fires, supplied, providing that we produced, when they did not produce enough, they only got so much for producing for the Germans, their needs. They knew, I mean, who knew? The ordinary people didn't know that we had to produce. And the fact there was police, there was like a, like a Government, a Committee who was in charge.

Were there any organised activities like concerts?

Nothing like that. There was no, the atmosphere wasn't set for these type of things, the atmosphere was set to survive each day. How to survive, it was up to individual

people. People who were weak became ill, and became ill there was no treatment, and they died, you found them dead in their houses, in their bed, the next day, the neighbours who, that's how you found the people. Because there was no, nothing to.

Was there starvation?

Yes. Some from hunger, yes, starvation.

People who worked.

You had so much, I don't quite remember what we got for each month. You'd take coupons to get some bread each week, something each month, sometimes each week. You had in Jewish money, printed on, printed money, and with the coupons you bought, with the coupons, you paid, and you got back the regular amount, I wouldn't know now, after all these years, what each one got. But you could survive, if you were strong, without food, as long as you had something to drink, you could survive many many days, many weeks, and a little bit of food, a little bit of bread.

And this went on for about three years?

This came in 1940, they closed the ghetto, that was the worst part was 1940. The worst part was when they arrived. They arrived in such a manner, that the population was very much afraid, I don't know the definition, how you say. The, you hear there were Germans, you were shaking, and that, the Lodz, the population in Lodz, that's how we felt, like sheep going to the slaughter, you know, and no resistance against. All of us.

Yes, well, this is what they aimed at.

Yeh, they came in with such a strong force, that the population lost their resistance, and then they could do everything they wanted, what they wanted to. Everybody respond to it.

So did you know why they closed the ghetto?

Why? I couldn't tell you why, but, well, they wanted to keep all the Jewish in one place, where they can do what they want to do, or, you know, not dispersed. Why did they make ghettos altogether? They didn't have no ghettos in Germany. I believe they didn't. It was only Eastern Europe. And all the Camps was in Eastern Europe, except for a couple which were in Germany, built before the War, when Hitler came to power.

But you did explain that you were actually a sort of forced labour venture, really.

It was. That's what it was, yes, that's what it was.

So does this mean that in 1944, that stopped?

As the Germans started retreating from Russia, which was, I don't know what year it was, perhaps you know more, in history, 1943, I mean there was an uprising in 1943 in Warsaw.

That was the Ghetto Uprising, was it?

Right. And there was an uprising.

And what about later on?

There was another uprising which took Poles, the Poles uprising, also.

Yes, but that was later.

Yes, in other words, in 1943, it starts going downhill for them, the end of 1943.

The Ghetto Uprising was really a hopeless uprising, if you don't mind me saying. Because there was a distinction, from what I understand, the Jewish uprising was without any, it was,

Any hope to win anything, except to kill some Germans. To kill Germans.

Yes, that's right. Now, the Polish Uprising which took place, had the Russian Army within a few miles.

Yes, that time, that was in 1944.

That's right, the Russians had made the advances.

But the Russians were already, that's what I'm saying. The Germans were losing. The Germans were retreating, and the Russians came forward, so that must have been happening in 1943.

The Polish one?

Well, that one, the Polish,

Rather than the Jewish one?

The Jewish ones maybe started it, and then when they losing, then, I dunno, they lost actually, the Uprising didn't happen till the retreat to Germany, till the Germans were losing the War anyway.

The Ghetto uprising had

Nothing, except the people didn't, they're gonna die anyway, so they had a fight.

That's right. So now, in Lodz, there was no such organisation.

Not at all, not at all, no. We were cut off completely.

Yes. So this is quite a remarkable situation, then, totally different from that in Warsaw. The situation in Warsaw was such that, as you said, there was this uprising, now, at some stage, which, it appears, took place when the Germans were losing the battle, or it was started, stopped advancing, the advance was stopped. They then closed the Lodz ghetto, or something like that. Is that what you're saying happened?

No, only the Lodz ghetto. They were taking the Jews with them, the forced labour. The active Army was retreating, they were taking the people with, into Germany.

What was the purpose of taking them into Germany?

I couldn't tell you that. It could be they destroyed things, the people shouldn't know what's happening, what they done.

Why should they want to destroy the Jews, why would they organise all these camps to kill them all?

Yes. They started, they start killing Jews from years before, from even before the War. Before the official War. But they are killing Jews, for the difference, the mass extermination which came in in these years, '43, '42, '42, '43, '44, mass extermination, where they built the gas chambers, or other pits, or other ways of killing. There was a difference when they killed Jews before the War in Germany, because he is a Jew, or he was a Kristlenacht, or whatever.

Why being a Jew, why?

Why did they hate the Jews? And I ask that question.

Did, I mean, you mentioned before that there was tension between the Jews and the Poles in Poland.

This was normal anti-Semitic outbreaks, Poland was an anti-Semitic country, although there was 4,000,000 Jews living there, 5,000,000 Jews, it was between us, an anti-Semitic country, people lived, people were used to being insulted, but not killing. I mean, we wouldn't say, in my time, pogroms, like years ago in Russia, it wasn't like that.

It wasn't?

Not like that.

So when you, when you closed the, when the ghetto in Lodz was closed, then what happened then? I think we have to, I think we sort of basically covered that period in the ghetto in Lodz. Now, you say that in 1944, suddenly Germans came in,

Well, it started in the beginning of 1944, where they start evacuating, gradually, each industry, first streets, they went by streets, yeh, until they evacuated all.

Were you one of the first? Were there a...

No,

Were there a lot of people evacuated before you?

Yes. Yes. Yes. About the middle, I'm not quite the end, more towards the middle time of, say, yeh, the spring or summer. Because 1944, the Liberation was, about a year before the Liberation I would say.

The Liberation?

The ending of the War.

Was when? '45?

Well,

In the middle of the summer?

I personally was liberated 5th May, '45, but there were people who were liberated before in Poland, and Russia, 19, end of '44. So that's what I call the Liberation. For some people, yes, some people were liberated before.

So in fact you were inside Germany?

I was already, after two more Camps, my liberation came.

So what was the first Camp you went to?

As I said before, Birkenau, which is, that's the arrival camp in Auschwitz, Birkenau, and then I was in Birkenau, when they evacuated, I went to Auschwitz, other people went to some other camps.

So you were in Birkenau, how did you get there, by train?

From Lodz, from Lodz, by train, of course.

What sort of a trip was that?

Well, it was locked up cattle train, cattle wagon, you know, locked up, closed in.

Did anybody try to get out, or break away?

I mean, we were told we were going to have a good time in Germany, nobody thought of anything. We just looked forward to, to arrive there. We were brainwashed to think that way.

I see, yes, the brainwashing,

That was the whole object of the Germans, they brainwashed people, that you believed, after all the things they'd done, then you realised you were needed for work, so you felt secure, and they brainwashed you, at the same time, you see. What they planned, we didn't know.

So in Birkenau, were they actually killing?

No, that was the arrival place. There was a crematorium there as well. But from there they picked people to different camps, in Poland, most the camps were in Poland, and to Germany. In my case they took me to Auschwitz, the main Auschwitz camp.

A lot of people died in Birkenau?

Of course. You had, it wasn't really an organised camp. It was huts, there were some there, luckily. I slept on the, on the, on the sand. And every day people came, every day from different selections to pick, to pick the most able bodies to work, and take them out, and send them to work.

So were you with any friends? Did you have any people that you could have constant companionship with?

We didn't, nobody made friends, because each one was brainwashed to look after yourself first, Number One. You could not help another person, you were trained that, you were ground that way, you could not, even if you saw somebody is dying, you could not go and be involved there. You couldn't. I mean, there was nothing to help, there was no facilities, so you couldn't, you just stood by. Therefore you couldn't have any friends.

And then after Birkenau, you went to Auschwitz?

Auschwitz, yes.

How long were you in Birkenau after you got there, approximately?

I think about two weeks, I should imagine, yes.

So it was quite a short,

Well, it was, people arrived there, and you done some work, you didn't do much there. There wasn't much, just huts you slept on.

Was it surrounded by barbed wire?

Wire, electric, electric barbed wire. A lot of people committed suicide, they couldn't stand this, the atmosphere, what we were told you were gonna have, and what, you

arrived there, and what you got, they couldn't stand any more. A lot of them committed suicide on the, on the wire.

Did a lot of people, did many people commit suicide in Lodz?

Well, I couldn't tell, I didn't, we didn't know that. All you knew, if you, if you went next door, or you went next street, you saw somebody, this one was dying, that's what you got to hear all the time, this one died, what illness or whatever it was, disease, you know, we had disease in Lodz.

So there was no way of knowing, really? But on the other hand, in Birkenau, there was this actual, deliberate,

People, yeh, they ran to the wall, they just ran to the wall.

So after this two weeks, you were,

I was taken to Auschwitz, yes. I was taken to Auschwitz, and carried on in Auschwitz until that was evacuated in 1945.

So what was that, a year?

Nearly a year, about nearly a year. And they took us to another camp, as the Russians advanced towards Auschwitz, they liberated, from there, I should say they took us to another camp, which I ended up in, in Dachau, which is in Germany, Bavaria.

That was actually in Germany itself?

Itself, in Germany proper, yeh.

So in which camp did you spend the longest time?

In Auschwitz, nine, ten months, I should imagine, in Auschwitz.

And what were you doing there for 10 months?

Well, we had to go out to work. I mean, there were so many camps within camps, you could not escape. You just went out from one camp to the other, in different industries. I was only young, so they put me in to, elder two men, who they were elderly, they were working ...

End of FI56 Side A

F156 Side B

For soldiers, everything was for Jews, was for the Army.

Were there any other, sort of, factories, or production units?

Yes, they were tailoring uniforms for the soldiers, tailoring for people who were experienced before the War, they had industries.

Did you have any idea how many people were in this Camp?

No. Not at all. Blocks and blocks, blocks of buildings, they were called Block 1 to Block 20, I don't know.

And what was the surrounding perimeters you said were,

All electric wires, yes. And towers, towers with people in. The towers the soldiers looking over.

Sounds terribly grim. Did anybody ever talk to these people, in the towers? Did they ever show any humility, or any

Not at all.

interest?

Not at all. They were just out to kill, with dogs, whichever, anything wrong they think you've done, it was the end.

What about on the other side of the fence, did anybody ever come to look and see who the people were?

No.

Were you ever aware of anybody on the outside?

Well, you did not see anything. You did not see anything, except wiring, and barbed wire, all the way, everywhere, such a big complex. Very big complex.

And you couldn't see any villages or town nearby?

Nothing at all. It was, as I say, a very big complex.

Were you aware of which place you were in, did you know what it was called?

In Polish, in Polish, there, no, it was called Auschwitz in German, or Oswiecim in Poland, in Polish language.

Did you know of this place before, when you were in Lodz?

No. No. No. No. Afterwards we knew where it was, near Czechoslovakia, actually. And there was supposed to be a nice, before the War, not far from there, there was supposed to be a nice resort, a health resort, you know.

So, this couldn't have been so near Oswiecim itself, if you couldn't see it?

It was a small town, Oswiecim, which is, this was most probably outside this town, in the hills, hills, surrounded by hills. It was a very big, very big complex, very big. I remember when we marched, evacuated, and we had to march out, it took us about a day, or a day and a half, to leave that camp, to walk, to go to a station, to get a train.

So, it sounds like the size of a little town itself, then?

Could be, yes, could be.

It's so hard to visualise.

It is hard, it is. I mean, as a prisoner you couldn't see anything, you can't see not much, you wasn't allowed to see anything. I mean, it was so, they had the crematoriums, you didn't even see it in the forests. Covered up.

Crematoriums were for burning the bodies?

For people who could not work any more. Not just dead bodies. Alive people, who could not work any more. Selections for that purpose.

In Auschwitz, was it similar to the previous situation? Where you had no organisation of any kind whatsoever? Were there any groups, for example, if you had different nationalities, Jews, or Russian Jews, or Polish Jews, were they still wearing their national identification mark?

Yes. The only, the Jews, all the Jews wore the yellow mark, but, by meeting someone, speaking the language, you knew from where they come from, whether it was a Russian Jew, or a Polish Jew, or, or a German Jew, by talking.

So where did you get the opportunity to talk?

Well, you didn't talk, only when you went to sleep, because the barracks were so many hundreds, or say, 15 sleeping in one of those big like barracks, it's like Army camp, or something like that, and you slept on, on wooden boards, and that way you met the people who you were with. They didn't distinguish, but you knew, if you spoke the language, you knew who you're speaking to, where he is from. Yiddish, you knew he was a Jew, no matter whether he was a Rumanian Jew, Hungarian Jew, Polish Jew. Then again, you spoke to Poles, Polish, you know that he is a Pole. Actually, they brought in, at that same time, they brought in Poles from Warsaw, from the Warsaw Uprising, they brought them into, they caught some, the Germans caught some Poles, not Jews, Poles, they made the Uprising. Going.

Non-Jews?

Non-Jews. And when they made the Uprising in Warsaw, they caught some, and they brought them to Auschwitz. They told us it was an uprising.

What effect did this information have on your ...

The only thing we knew is, it's getting near the end of the War.

And that's the first inkling you had of the way the War was taking?

Yeh. Yeh.

Was there any plans then made, to, to consider the possibilities, in the light of the fact that the Germans, you'd learned that the Germans were losing, did this give you any sort of hope?

You couldn't do anything about it. You just waited. You couldn't do anything about it. We just tried to be alive and wait for the day.

When, when, these conversations took place in the bunks, from what I understand, you'd have a large room, with rows and rows of bunks. How many layers was there?

Two.

From the top to the,

Two.

What, one on top of the other?

One on top of the other, like bunk beds, you know. Three, it was brought, in

So how many tiers were there?

Three. Bottom, middle and up top, three.

And what happened if someone had a medical problem, or was there any case of this?

There was a hospital there, in Auschwitz. There was a hospital. Actually, that hospital, he was in charge, Mengele, if you ever.

Yes, I have heard of him, he did experiments.

Oh yeh, he had experiments, but there was a hospital for minor things, well, what the Germans considered minor things, otherwise it was no use to keep you, a sick patient.

Who were these, were these Jewish doctors, or German doctors?

Well, I don't know.

Did you yourself go for any hospital,

I did once go for, once for treatment, when I had an accident on my toe, but I don't remember what kind of doctors they were, I was a few days only in there, just a bandage, so I couldn't walk. Luckily, I never come out, but luckily they did let me out after a few days in. But I don't remember whether there was Jewish doctors, or German doctors in there. Maybe there was inmate doctors, some Jews, Poles or Germans, or whatever, I don't know.

Were any friendships made in the bunks?

Not at all.

You mentioned that people were talking to each other.

Just talking. I mean, not, you could not talk, it was not the atmosphere, it wasn't for talking. As I said, the atmosphere was, each one had to try to live another day.

What was your health like?

Health myself was all right. It was all right.

And food, what sort of food were you having?

Food, you, you only got once, once a day, you had food. You had when you got up in the morning, and you had to wait for the roll call, for so many hours, and so all you got was a black coffee. It wasn't a coffee, they called it coffee, but it was imitation coffee. That's all you had.

It was

That's right. That's right, and that's what you ... And then after the roll call, you, each one column marched out to work, with the guard.

What time of day was that?

That's in the morning? You're talking about 5.

Did you know what the time was?

About five o'clock.

How did you know?

It was dark. There was, I think, there was a clock somewhere in the building.

Did you have a watch?

No, nothing, never had nothing. But I think there was no clocks either, it was bells ringing, if I remember correctly, in the morning. There was the Capos, the Capos, they were the inmates in charge.

What was a Capo?

A Capo was a inmate, under the Germans. He was in charge of, of the block, or two of them, in charge of the, of all the inmates. I think they rang a bell about five in the morning, everybody said it was five, or half past. And the Germans came about half past seven to count up each, that nobody had disappeared, or escaped. Then we marched out to work, and when we come back, we got this cup of coffee when we come back, on the way in, you got some soup, whatever it was, and a slice of bread, a small piece. Most of the people left, I myself, left the slice of bread for the morning, have a bite, instead of in the evening.

So this was your diet, then?

That's right.

What was the soup?

Oh, potato peels, God knows!

And what was the bread like?

Well, you know, they had this Polish bread, I think, seed in, you know, like a Jewish bread.

And when you went out to work, was this far away? Or in the same place?

Well, another camp, a perimeter, you had to cross wire, you had to cross gates somewhere else, with the guards, and with the dogs, you know, they marched.

And what work did you do?

As I say, I helped somebody, they were teaching me to make this with leather, some boots, shoes, like an apprentice I was.

And you were taught?

Yes.

Did you have to sign any work docket?

I didn't.

How much work you did?

I didn't. But the Germans came, the soldiers to the elderly men there, to repair heels on the boots, right away they used to do that. Like, like a shoemaker, he was like a shoemaker, you know.

So who taught you this? Was he friendly to you?

The two, two men. Yeh, they were quite friendly.

Did you know where they came from?

No, no. Rather not.

Were they Poles, Polish?

Jews.

Were they Polish Jews?

Polish Jews, yes.

Were they from the same town?

Not from Lodz, no. There were some people in there in Auschwitz before we came, it started in 1942, I believe, building it. They were the eldest, they were there a long time, they were building the camp really, in a way.

Did you see any examples of attempts to escape in Auschwitz?

Somebody said they did escape, some people, but they didn't, they were caught, they were caught afterwards, they couldn't escape.

What about any religious activity? Was there anything of sort of secret or open attempts to keep some kind of Jewish activity?

Well, we didn't know, as I say, we didn't know, we never had a calendar, it wasn't necessary, we didn't know what day it was really, each week. I mean, you went from day to day, where you didn't know.

You didn't even know when it was Shabas?

No. But I believe there were some religious people there. Somehow they did celebrate Yom Kippur one day, one knew, Yom Kippur, they didn't celebrate it in a way, but they knew it was, so they didn't eat this piece of bread and the soup, but there.

You mean, they actually didn't eat something?

That's right. But to know exactly, I don't know, we didn't, I mean, your religion, it didn't come into it, unless somebody who did put his mind to it, and he was a

religious man, perhaps he was taught today's so and so, today's so and so, but the ordinary, the ordinary people, didn't worry, just went from day to day.

But to stop eating, wouldn't that endanger his life? I mean, surely, that's what you survived on?

Well, very little food, yes. We survived. How I survived I can't tell you. It's a miracle, you put it down, it's a miracle from God, that's all, the way I survived. You didn't survive because you done something to survive, in my case. Maybe other people survived, they done something to survive, you see. You know, they had a chance to do something to survive.

From your youth, your own adolescence, you had acquaintances or relatives, who were more inventive, or physically stronger and so on, were any of these factors helpful in surviving?

If you were physically strong, yes, you could, you had more of a chance to survive. If you were beaten up, or tortured, for some reason, you must, say a German saw you doing something which he didn't like, he could torture you, and you could have been physically fit for everything, and yet he tortured you, so you couldn't survive afterwards.

Was there any mass shootings or killings in the camp?

Not shooting. Mass gassing. Mass exterminating, yes, because they had the selections every night, almost every night. They came in to see how your body is, whether there's too many bones sticking out, they consider you not fit enough to work, they took you away.

Did people know that was the purpose of the selection?

Yes. Yes. There was a special block in that camp there, those people went, from there they took them.

How did you react to this knowledge when you first discovered it? From what you've told me so far, you had no knowledge of such a,

Well, it was difficult.

... a diabolical thing in Lodz, or even in Birkenau. What was your feeling when you learned about this?

You, you were programmed, to suffer, how can I say? You were programmed to suffer. So if you didn't suffer, you were normal. You see, you were prepared to be, like a little child, to play to get a smack sometimes. You were prepared to suffer, in your mind, in my case, I was a youngster, where elderly people probably took it more to heart what they, they knew more what's happening round them, and they prepared different ways to try to avoid, if they could. But younger people, you just, you were

programmed to, to this situation. You couldn't do nothing about it even if, even if you knew.

Between this stage, when you were in Auschwitz and Dachau, to what extent did you know the progress of the War then? Did it mean anything when you left Auschwitz?

Yes, we knew that, because when we went out, we knew that the Russians are coming close by, they are close by. We heard shooting, big artillery guns, which you could hear for miles back, which we, this time we heard them. Why? Because we were evacuated, we were taken back more into Germany.

Did you see any signs of bombing or warfare?

In Dachau. Not in my journey. In Dachau we did in 1945. We saw aeroplanes bombing. Near Dachau was a military camps, round, the SS, the SS, and every time the aeroplanes came, we had the sirens going, when the SS were running to hide, in the bunkers, and we were sitting outside, you see. We were not in the bunkers.

How did you feel when you heard this?

Well, we felt happy, we felt happy, although the bombs could have fallen in the camp as well, but still you felt happy, yeh. That's the only time we did hear the sirens go. The Germans were hiding while this was going on.

Was there any attempt to take advantage of this, in Dachau?

Advantage of what?

Well, if the Germans sort of ran into hiding,

Well, we saw them running into the bunkers, but you couldn't, we couldn't do nothing, we were sitting in our camp, to the wires, you could see, to the internments.

You couldn't get out?

You couldn't get out. We couldn't get out. You were just out in the open anyway. You didn't hide. Fortunately, they didn't bomb the camp.

Well, that brings us up to the actual Liberation, then. 'Cos having survived the awful experiences of the concentration camps, eventually the Allies defeated the Germans. Now can you tell me how you affected the day to day life, in your last days in your experiences in the concentration camp, in Dachau? What was your first experience at the end of your concentration camp?

When, when we were free, we just, went, we opened our arms wide open, and breathed fresh air.

How did this happen? Was it during the morning, or at night, when you were Liberated? Do you remember the time of day?

We were liberated actually, actually, they, not in Dachau, we were liberated, they took us out of Dachau, and we were liberated on the way, on the way to Austria, where during the night, the SS ran away and changed their clothes, to civilian clothes, and left us, just like that.

You were, where were you left?

In Germany.

Was this inside a concentration camp?

No, no, on the road, on the road.

So you,

And the Americans, the Americans were close by, in, in, from one side the French were coming, from a different direction, they could not take us anywhere, they were supposed to take us somewhere. They just left us.

On the road.

On the high road, off a high road, yes.

You were off the high road?

Yeh, there was a little forest there.

And,

And during the night they left. And in the morning when we find we have no guards, we were free, but the War wasn't ended yet, you see.

So you were not, you were not actually liberated by a particular Force, say.

No, no, no.

Americans or British coming into your camp,

No, not at all, no. No. And we wasn't in the camp, no.

You were being marched from one point to another?

We were taken somewhere else, and on the way.

Did a lot of people die in that march?

No. Because it wasn't in such a, we went partly by train, then the train couldn't go any further over the bombs, the lines were bombed, bombed, the train stopped.

Was the train bombed?

Yes, only one wagon left, part of it was bombed.

Were people killed?

No. It was an, the train was, instead of having loads of wagons, there was only one wagon, and it must've been bombed before that, and we were on that train, and they ferried us, gradually, you see, they couldn't get all the people in, on that one particular wagon, so they took one part out, and then they left us there, and they went for another part, and in the end, we are on our way. So we were,

So you were in the middle of nowhere?

Yeh, then we tried to find, yeh, we find our place in Germany, we look for, for, for shelter, the War wasn't ended yet, you see.

How many people were there?

Oh hundreds of them.

There must've been hundreds?

Hundreds, yes. And we dispersed, right away, everybody dispersed into two, three, and they find a village, somebody find a village, and we find a little town, where we were staying.

[Inaudible]

Yes, and then we,

[Inaudible]

Yes, yes, in Garmisch, Garmisch, yes. And then when the Americans arrived, the Americans.

The Americans arrived, where, in Garmisch?

On the high road, yes, they saw us, you see.

Were you all in a group on the high road, then?

Yes. We stood in the middle of the road.

What were you wearing at the time?

That camp uniform, and the soldiers didn't even know who we were, but they stopped. Until one of the higher rank officers came along, and asked who we were, and what

we were doing and that, and they put us in a school. There was, they could, those that they found, put us in a school, they gave us food. And then came along, and they went on, because this was the Army fighting, still, and came along the other, the other people, who organised UNRA, UNRA, at the time.

What's UNRA?

United Nations Relief something.

Relief and Welfare Organisation, or something?

Whatever, yes, they gave us parcels and looked after us.

But since you had no identity, no organisation, how did all this happen?

Well, then we had, they had to, they took our names, we had to give our names,

Who did you do this to, the Americans?

The Americans, no, the Americans, yes, everything to the Americans. Who else came along? The Jewish Organisations came, because they had got in touch with the Jewish Organisations, like the Jewish HIAS, HIAS? Was it? HIAS?

Yes. It stands for Hebrew Immigration Aid Society.

Right. Right. That's HIAS, I came to over here, HIAS, and then it was JOINT.

Jewish,

That's right, these are the people who took over.

So these are organisations from America, I think?

Both from America, yes. Because I was liberated in the American Zone. There was four zones, French, English, American, and Russian. They're divided even now, Germany, four zones. And I happened to be in the American Zone.

Right. Now when you were, in the course of events, there took place, after you were liberated, the immediate period then, because what is, the way I see it, everything must've been so chaotic, how was it that ...

End of FI56 Side B

Fl57 Side A

With those men, they were qualified, their trade, in this. I was just doing odd things. And that's,

I know this is extremely difficult to put on records, these events which took place a long ago, and yet it's imperative that it should be recorded. There are so many different ways that one can try to go back in the past.

Well, it's not very easy for me to remember every little detail, and all the, to remember the bad times, to talk about the bad times. Remember I do, but to talk about. A typical day at work, I don't know if I already said it, was, early call in the morning, it didn't matter if it was in the summer or winter, you had, you had to go out, get up, quick wash, in the wash room, there was a wash room, and you wore a [inaudible] and the shoes, like, like Hollandisch, from Holland.

Clogs, clogs.

That's right. And the same uniform, no overcoats, just the same uniform. How we survived, I wonder myself, how. But nevertheless, that's how it as. In the morning, and you got your cup of coffee, and you had to stay outside, and to line up for several hours, up to three hours, until they came and counted. And block by block, marched out of the camp, while the music was playing, a band.

What music was that?

A band, a band of the inmates were playing, as you, next to the gate, as you walked out, with the SS and their dogs. In each, each, each block, there were so many different people, were doing different jobs, they knew where to go, they were taken to their work of place. And that lasted till, didn't get any food all day. That lasted till in the evening, the time, I couldn't tell you the time. As we marched in, the same band was playing music, and we were counted again, as each person knew which number block you went to, so you could, outside you got a plate of soup, not a plate, just a cup, some soup and a slice of bread. And most of the people left their little slice of bread for the morning, the first thing to eat. One more thing I do remember, distinction, was that some people, there were so many people in a block, you could say like a prison cell, I dunno how it was, that people put their slice of bread, like myself, underneath the pillow, until the morning. And some people, you could hear, during the night, shouting, "You stole my bread. You stole my..." He caught him. And somebody stole each other's slice of bread, you knew of some people. So the caught person, now that person, the law was, the unofficial law was, had to be killed, by strangling. Who done it? Either the people themselves, or if there was a nice man, a Capo, which he was a Jew, or sympathetic, he done it, strangled, and put them down in the washroom, where the toilets were, and that's how, every morning when we came down to have a wash, we can see somebody is laying dead from different places. Because, if you took somebody's slice of bread away, you took his, they considered you took almost your life away, that was your living. So they had to be, he had to be done away with. And that law, that unofficial law. The Germans didn't know about it.

This was just between the camp inmates themselves?

Apart from other laws which they'd made, which I don't know about.

Were there any groups, identifiable, within the bunks, that communicated with each other? In a certain, say,

You couldn't make, really, friends, you could talk to each other.

[Inaudible]

No, everybody was, everybody's mind was to survive, no matter how. So you had no, no organisation, as far as I know. Maybe, maybe there was in the elderly people, but not in this block where I was.

Well, of course, there were different experiences of different people, and different camps. In fact, yours was the experience of a young man of,

Teenage.

And of course, those people who had got some kind of previous ideological relationship, like, say, they belonged to a political group, like say they were,

You mean, you mean, you mean before the War? Yes, there were those kind of people.

Or had Hasidim Yeshiva.

But on the other hand, these people, the elderly people did not survive very long.

Elderly people didn't survive?

No. It's more the, it's more the younger ones, in the 20s and the 40s. I wouldn't say, maybe they could survive, but they were taken, there were selections so many times a week in each block.

Did you know when these selections were going to take place?

Well, they came, we knew they're coming, one day, one night, well, during the night really.

And you realised the significance of this?

We knew what for it was, yes, because they were put in one special block, and where from there they took them away to Birkenau.

How did you feel, that they were civilised people, selecting another group of people, and selecting them for death?

Well, the feeling was not there. As I say, everybody wanted to survive, so the feeling was not there, how you felt. How you felt.

How did you feel towards the Germans?

Towards the Germans was the same feeling all the time. Hateful. And we couldn't do nothing about it. But to be a, for certain things they done, to have a different feeling, there was no different, the feeling was from the start, bad, against, what, how they treated people. And what we saw, people saw how they treated other people. We escaped one night the selections, you probably thought, "Next time, it'll be my turn." Or, "the next week, it will be the other person's turn."

So you were on a particular bunk, were there many people left?

Well, I don't know every bunk, as I say, we didn't make friends to know exactly how many people living up, how many people were on the block, or in the, in the whole area, we just.

Did you know anybody by names?

Not so much by names, unless you were very very close with the person, otherwise ...

Did you know anybody who was in the orchestra, for example?

No.

You didn't know their names?

No. The orchestra we knew there were people, I believe, German Jews, well educated musicians, and they selected them to play.

What happened to them? Did they survive do you know?

They did not get any different treatment.

No special treatment?

No special treatment. While they were doing their jobs, they were probably better off, not to work very hard, or not to be selected. But as far as they were concerned, as prisoners, because they were Jews, or were the Gentiles mixed together, I don't know, they were musicians.

What, they were forced to play? They had no alternative?

Yes. Yes. Also, there were people, for instance, we knew about them, who worked in the crematoriums. There had to be people to work there. The Germans didn't work, so the Jews worked, and other nationalities, but mostly, I think, Jews, to operate the, the gas chambers, to organise the, the, the liquidation of the people. So many

people came, because, after all, this was a camp where they liquidated people, and they had to have people who done the job. And those people done only the job for a few weeks, and then they were liquidated and other people brought in, changed over, so that they should not survive to tell the story. This we did know.

Weren't there Germans operating the system as well?

They were, well, I wasn't there, so I couldn't tell you. But from what I, we heard, nobody, when you went there, nobody came out, to tell. But I believe, I believe, there was an uprising in one of the crematoriums, before they evacuated the Camp, and some of the people, who, who, who were uprising, and they escaped, some of them, came from the crematorium, there. But unfortunately, they were caught, and brought back to the camp, and they built, what you call, scaffolding, to be hanged. And this incident, I do remember clearly now. We all had to, they picked a day when we didn't go to work, I don't know what day it was. They had the whole camp had to come out and stay, and they build it so high, the scaffolding, that everybody should see, and the Germans, at that, at that, let that be a lesson to anyone who thinks to escape. And they were hung, one by one, some of them incited the Germans, bad language, some of them, some of them, I think it was Poles, they sang the National Anthem, for Poland, and they were hanging there for a few nights, a few days, to people to know. That's one incident I do remember clearly.

Yes, it's, it's inconceivable how people can be so diabolical. I, I don't know how, really, it's possible to ... to bring back these memories, these terrible memories.

It's very difficult for me, although I'm saying it now, it is difficult.

I, I think that we, we'll, we understand how difficult it is, at least, to some extent, if we, if we can actually just go ahead, where you find it easier to talk. At what point do you feel it is, how in your mind feels sort of more relaxed, saying, was it when you were released? Just the last days when you were aware that the Germans were under attack.

We felt happy.

Could you recall those memories?

We felt happy about it coming to an end, but it was always the same problem to survive, whether we will survive the end, and see that we can walk free, and when it did happen, we just stretched our arms, I did, and breathed in, very heavily, fresh air, into the body, and felt nothing matters, there's a freedom. The freedom is just, it's undescrivable how a person can feel. There's no comparison. I mean, this is already over 40 years, and we've been living in a free society, and now, the freedom now we've got, is no comparison with the days after the War, how we felt.

What state of health were you in, when the camp was liberated?

Actually, we wasn't liberated in the camp, we were liberated, as I mentioned, we were out. We were out. But after the liberation, we ...

Let's in fact just check that, you did tell us you had, in fact, been on the way,

We marched, we marched, and we were taken by train, and we finished in

I think we're going over the same ground.

Yes, but then the place I described before, when we were liberated, and we were looked after first by the Americans, and then other organisations, like United Nations Relief, the UNRA, all different nationalities, different Organisations, there were so many refugees, we were called displaced persons. They gave us a card, "Displaced" written on it, "Morris Frenkel, Displaced Person", that's all.

Was there any nationality on your card, from where you originated from?

I don't remember, but they did ask whether you liked to go back to Poland, which I said, "No. I haven't got no one."

Did you know you'd lost everybody?

Yes.

How was that? How did you find out?

Well, as I said before, my father died on the way to Warsaw. And my mother and my brother and sister, we came to Auschwitz, we were in the ghetto, but we came to Auschwitz together, and my mother said, as I said before, She pushed me in the side, "You go with the men." And she put me in long trousers before that, before we came. I was a tall boy, she said, "You go with the men." And that's the last I've seen of them. So I knew I hadn't got any close relations, because other relations were taken before the ghetto, in 1939, they were taken to different, from Lodz somewhere else, and you never heard of them all these years, all the time.

Did you try and make any enquiries?

Yeh, the Red Cross, I put my name down. I was travelling after the War. We were liberated was actually in Austria, belonged to the French Zone, they divided Germany into four zones, French, American, British and Russian. We were in the West, so we were liberated in the, in Austria, which later become the French Zone, and I was living, not far from there, and this was American Zone, in this town I was living, a small town. Then we travelled to Italy.

How large a group did you belong to? You say "We".

We, when we, when we were liberated in such a way, by our luck, that we had a few boys together, that we got together, and they put us in, first we were in a school, all the refugees, then as we went to town, there was houses where the Nazis escaped, and the civilian population, who belonged to the Nazi Party, they were hiding, they were escaping, different places, and the Americans knew who the Nazis were, some

Germans told them "There was a Nazi living here." In that particular place, the one house, they put the five boys, six of us in the house. And we lived, we lived in the house for two years.

For two years?

Yes. And, and,

But why in that house for two years?

Well, we had our food parcels we did get. And then we made like, a little community, a Kahill, for the Jewish boys, in that place, somebody took charge, and they looked after us. We didn't do any work or anything like that, put it this way, there was no facilities for us, it was just, we was free, doing nothing. And we had to build our strength up as well, because when we came out we were very poorly in health as well.

Did you have any doctors attached to your group, or medical assistance?

If you needed, there were. The Germans had to do, the Germans had to do what the Americans told them at the time, because, well, I was two years there, until I came to England.

But when you said that you didn't want to go back to Poland when you were asked, did you have any idea where you did want to go?

Well, while we were living there, we were thinking, I was thinking, I knew I had an uncle in England, in London, and I didn't know his address, so my ambition was to find my uncle, that was my father's brother, a close relation.

Did you know him very well at all?

I didn't know him. I heard about him.

I see. You'd never met him then?

No. I heard about him, because every Pesach he used to send to my father for the children, a gift of two £5, white notes, I don't know if you remember, big pieces of paper.

I do have some vague recollections of those old English,

Yeh, very big white notes, a gift for the children. So I knew I had an uncle. To get, to find an uncle, you see, it's a long story, but I will summarise it. I mean, eventually, I came to England, naturally, after two years. In the meantime, we did go travelling, we went, me and some other boys. We didn't go to Poland. Some people did go back. My wife went back, she went back to Poland after the War, for a while, to look round, and she did find two sisters.

Surviving?

Yes. I knew I hadn't had nothing to go back to, back to the search, yes, we did put my name down in Italy, and in different towns in Germany where they had kept records, that I'm so and so, I'm alive, you know. They gave forms, actually, to fill out, and for two years we were searching and travelling, illegally, actually, travelling, because there was no passport, so once we were imprisoned for 10 days by the French, because we, we crossed the mountain, we shouldn't have done.

Which mountains was that?

In the Alps, the Alps, in the Tyrol, not the French ones.

The Italian Alps?

The Italian and the Austrian.

The Austro/Italian.

Yes, that's right. The Brenner Pass. So we were travelling, we were travelling, it as near Innsbruck, which is in Austria, we got there through the mountains, and then had to climb up, go up the mountains, there were the routes to go up, and there was a camp of prisoners, Italian prisoners, ex-prisoners.

Prisoners of War?

Yes. Going home to Italy. So once we got there, to their camp, we, we joined in the group, as the train left the station, we climbed, we jumped on it. That's the way we arrived to Italy. And then on the way back, we were looking round on the way back, there were trains going back to Germany, with ex-Prisoners of War, German soldiers, which was more, more difficult. We were more afraid to go on this train, but we were standing outside, not in the carriages, outside the carriages, until we arrived back into Germany.

So you went back to?

To where I was living, yes, for two years I was living.

Do you remember the name of that place?

Yes, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, that was in Germany.

So that was where you lived for two years after?

For two years, yes, in 1947, yes, just two years. And I found my uncle in the meantime, while I was living there, you see.

How was that possible?

Well, with a bit of luck, it was possible. I wrote some letters, it was written, like, German Yiddish, if you know what I mean, you write, the alphabet is the same, but when you read it, it will sound like Yiddish, I know that you could read, make it out as German, it wasn't professional, but I picked up the language, of the German language, enough to get to write it well. So I did write to London.

You wrote to London. Who did you write to?

Only knew a Jewish World Congress. It was in London, an office, the Jewish World Congress. It must have been an office in London, there was an American office, American Jewish World Congress.

The World Jewish Congress.

The World Jewish Congress, I say it wrong?

But this is where you wrote to?

This is the place I wrote to. To London.

Did you have a street, address?

Nothing at all.

You addressed it to the World Jewish Congress, London?

That's all.

A shot in the dark?

That's right. I wrote one letter, I waited, in 1945 that was, it took the rest of 1945, because I was liberated in May, May 1st, until, then I wrote again about three or four times, I wrote to them. Then one day, I received a letter from a, from someone. Would I send him a picture and give some information of my family, and so on. So I was already excited, maybe it is an uncle, but it wasn't my name, though, it was a different name. Well, I did that, I wrote him back a letter and send him a photo.

What language was that letter written to you?

In German.

In German, to you?

German, yes. He did not.

Was there an address on it?

Yes. Golden, Golders Green. And the name, if I remember now, it'll come back to me, I know, I know the street, anyway, living so long there now, I know the street, but I can't remember now.

A street in Golders Green, then?

Yes. Again I remember it, I will tell you. If I ...

End of F157 Side A

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Managed to come here, to England, before the War, and he had a niece, living with him, and she worked, and her name was Frenkel, the same as mine. She lived with him. And she worked in the building where the Jewish, the World Jewish Congress had their offices. And someone from the Secretaries, one that worked there, received this letter, and the name was Frenkel, they gave it to.

Because she had the same name?

Because she had the same name. She took it home to the uncle, and he wrote to me. Apparently, I wasn't related to them.

Oh this is amazing! It wasn't your uncle?

No. But he wrote to me, he said,

The same name?

Yes. She was Frenkel, and his name was not at all, his name was Mennel, I believe, but the niece that lived with him was Frenkel. But it wasn't so, I wasn't related, but he promised me that he will try to find my uncle.

I see. So he had, in fact, actually written to you before he had found your uncle?

Yes. What he had done, he has put an advert in a Jewish paper, called, The Yiddish Zeit, if you remember, it was in the East End, printed.

I've never heard of it, I'm afraid! Yiddish Zeit was a Yiddish paper in the East End?

Similar to the Jewish Chronicle.

I really thought you were going to say he put it in the JC, the Jewish Chronicle.

No.

I see,

Then they, they, it wasn't such a popular, the Jewish Chronicle, maybe it was, but the Yiddish Zeit, it was printed, I think, in New Road, I believe, a printers. My uncle was every day, he told me afterwards, he was looking in this paper, to see if anyone looking for, missing people, relatives, so. ... And one day he find an advert that Mr. Memmel put in, so, to get in touch with him, in Golders Green. So he got in touch with him, and they went to see the letters that I wrote, and the photograph I sent. They were so nice people, that they didn't even give him the photograph, they showed him the photograph, but they wouldn't let him have the photograph to keep. So he gave him the address of mine, in Germany, and my uncle wrote, he wrote to me again, who am I? All the history, what I can remember, and then he wrote back, and this was it.

What, did he invite you to come over, or something?

He said, "I try to bring you over." Just a miracle. And I was the first one to emigrate from Germany. I was pleased to get away from all the other friends, and all different people, I left behind.

Yes, you were glad to,

Yes, when I came here, well, it was a shot in the dark, and here I am.

So when you came to England, what year was that?

1947.

What was your impression of England then?

It was bad times in them days.

What month of the year, what season?

June it was, June, the summer. All I had, all I had was my belongings what I was wearing, trousers and jacket. Shirt and tie, trousers and jacket, and that's all.

And what about money, how did you manage for money?

Money. We did get, I believe, we did get some money, we got some food every day, some food parcels, right, and then I think they gave us some spending money. You needed some spending money, they started, you needed some spending money. It was just, well, them days, you didn't, you didn't need a lot. You didn't, as long as you had something to eat, you were very glad, I mean, it's not, just after the War, you can say we were better off than the Germans, because the Germans had nothing, they didn't get anything. I wasn't sorry for them, but we got, the displaced people, there was camps all over Germany, with displaced people, from all over Europe. But we were, where I was living, was just a little town, so it was like a community, maybe 100 or so, you know, people.

What did you fill your days with, from morning till night?

Mostly social, social life, that's all, nothing else, social life. There was sport. Sport, of course, that was in the mountains where they used to ski a lot, it's a famous place there. Maybe if I wouldn't be living there, and there was an organisation, the ORT was coming into Germany, to teach people something, as a trade, or studying, or something like that. But where I was, where we were living, was too small a community for that. There was no...

So what, [inaudible] as you say, to earn a living, what, they were teaching a trade of some kind?

ORT, yes, ORT, you've heard of them? The Organisation? And they were teaching people, looking after teaching them.

They set up schools, or they took you to centres?

It was in big camps in Germany, somewhere, miles away from us, but there was a school there.

I've heard of the ORT,

The ORT Organisation.

They have them in England.

Now, yes.

But I really was trying to picture how they set up things in those days?

Well, they tried, they tried to help, you see, they tried to help, but all the tried people to get them out from Germany, where they was America the most popular place, there was no Israel at the time. No, before, Palestine, yeh, no Israel. But while, when I was here, 1948, 1949, people were already emigrating to Israel from there. The Haganah, the Haganah, already organised the exodus from there. And although it was illegal till 1948, but it did organise it.

From where?

From Germany.

I see. Did they try

Not where I was, no, no. As I say, we were a small community, and we were just, you can say, from coming out of this, you didn't think of anything else, except to rest, and eat and, and meet friends, that's all it was. The whole, even apart from the War, after the War, it was bad times. I mean, when I come to England here, my aunt used to say to me, "See that? One egg a week you're allowed to have, here."

Was that rationing?

Yes.

One egg a week.

Yes. Or one banana a week. She showed me, she told me that. I says, "Why did I come here for that?" "Why did I come here?" It was bad, it was bad till 1955, I believe it was bad.

Well, I don't remember bananas, because we never saw them.

That's right, a shortage of everything, yes. And England won the War, yet, the Germans, after two, three years, they were better off than the English here.

Well, of course, they received a lot of aid from America.

That is right. And, but there was another struggle here, to go on. For me to tell you, would be another story.

I'm interested in that story a bit, I'll tell you why, because this is your life story. It's part of your life.

Yes, the other story. It's the start from nothing, I'll summarise it for you. To start from nothing, coming here, my uncle, he wasn't a rich man. I went to work after two weeks, I couldn't speak the language, but I went to work.

You couldn't speak English then?

No, not at all. I went to evening classes for some time, just to pick up,

So you couldn't read the signs?

Nothing, if I had to go somewhere. First of all, they wouldn't let me go, first, by myself, if I had to go somewhere, he wrote it to me in some kind of German Yiddish, where I could understand what bus to take, where to get off, and once I knew, I went once there, I knew already the number to take, and how much money to pay. They knew exactly what it was, not like now. The bus fare was 2d., 1d., a ride or something.

What, he gave you money, and food, and

Well, I worked, I worked after two weeks, and I was,

You had your own room?

He lived in a council flat, yes, there was one room.

[Inaudible]

With my uncle, yes. Because his son and daughter were married, and they had this council flat. But he put me to work, I went to work, and when I earned I gave my aunty for keep.

What was your work?

And ladies wear, where all the Jews worked, Schmats. Ladies clothing, yes. I didn't know how they, I had to be told to do things, I was not experienced in this. I was getting £1.50 a week, £1, it was not what they called, shillings.

1/6d.?

£1

And a half.

£1.10 shillings. That's right, £1.10 shillings, and then, then, when I worked a few, a couple of months, I, I went for some money, I thought, "I can't make a living. I've got to give my aunty £1, that left me with 10/- for myself." So he didn't want to. You just come here, we're teaching you.

He didn't like that?

He didn't like me to ask for money, so I left, I looked for another place.

Was he sympathetic, or was he angry at you?

He was sympathetic, but he was a small place, and he was teaching me, so he thought, for teaching, you don't have to pay a lot, I should pay him! So, I changed, I changed to another job, and my wages doubled to £3. So naturally I gave my aunty more, which, half I gave her for my keep, food.

What were your working hours? Did you have to work very long hours?

Long days, long days. From 8-6, 8-7, yes.

Did you get paid overtime for that?

No, that was the hours.

That was the regular working hours?

When there was work. But when there was no work, you didn't get nothing, you didn't get anything. They was seasonable.

So was this a large factory that you were working in? Or a small,

No, no, it was in Jewish hands, small rooms, that's right. Well,

One hears about the sweatshops of the East End,

I remember the street where I started,

Were they bad, the working conditions there?

Yes, well, old houses, old warehouses made into factories, and I remember in the street where I started, Artillery Lane, the East End.

How did you feel about getting work like this?

Well, we, I met some other refugees, coming in the night school, and we made friends, because we were learning English. And each one was in this, in this trade, so each one, we picked up, we picked up ideas from each other. They were, mostly those people who came, were, came also to relations somehow, you know, uncles or aunts, whatever, the ones I met. We made friends, for two years, 1947, three years when I met my wife, we got married in 1950.

How did you meet?

We met on a dance place, you know, like a, for youngsters, what they call?

The Palais de Dance?

The dance, there used to be a place in the West End, called the Astoria, all Jewish people, mostly Jewish people used to go there.

What age group was that?

Well, in the twenties, early twenties. Older people used to, up to about 30, I should imagine, yes. But once you met, one met another refugee, right away, you became close to each other, you had a lot in common. I don't say you met, right away, you met a young English person, because you couldn't converse, you couldn't make a discussion. When he wasn't educated, and you wasn't used to the life here, you see, and so it was difficult to make friends with English youngsters, although you met them, at work, you could make friends while you were working, but socially, you could not. You could not, you felt embarrassed somehow, until, naturally, when you had your own children, and you, you learned from your own, you see. Over the years, you learn from your children. But this is another story. This is another struggle when we started again from nothing.

How many children did you have?

I've got two, two sons.

Do they know much about the history?

I did not tell them, we did not tell them while they were young, for the reason, they wouldn't understand the way I would tell it now, that I'm writing this diary for them, one day, for them to have it, or for them, or for their grandchildren. Because when they were young, I did not tell them until they were old enough and came to me, with history books, about the Jewish religion, about the Jewish history, and that's when I started, when they were clever enough for me to tell them a bit, only if they asked me. I did not impose, in case they didn't want to listen to it, it's too difficult, or too emotional for them. But they know.

They saw a lot of, material, things on television, there's been educational material produced as well.

Oh yes, they are aware of all these things. And even now if they ask me some questions, was it so? Was it so? I say yes, some things.

But how does this relate to their existence as Jews? Do they have a Jewish education in which it fits in?

They went to Jewish school. They went to Jewish schools.

Which school was that?

The Jewish Free School. And this tradition starts. I remember from home, the tradition, of Judaism, right? Although I did not study after Cheder, I still do remember the tradition, what should be. And while they're with me, we tried to persuade them to obey all these things.

How successful were you?

I mustn't grumble! It could be worse! But in my opinion, probably, but naturally, when you, if you, if I would go in the field of studying more, it's the same thing as anything else. When I came here, I had to, I had to keep myself, right? So I had no, nobody really, although I had my uncle, they were good to me, they gave me a home to sleep in, my aunty looked after me, but I never had the opportunity to go to, say, to College, full-time, or to study, whether it's English, or whether it's to study religion, or to study anything else, there wasn't, there was no time for it, there was no facilities, then. Maybe now, if somebody, unfortunately comes in, and is alone, and he didn't have to suffer from a Holocaust, but he comes from, say, a different country, from somewhere, and he's alone, there's plenty of Organisations to take him in for nothing, and teach him. But in them days was not so. And when, when it was becoming more popular, the learning, I was too old to, I was too much to committed to making a living.

Have you heard of the Open University? Do you know what that is?

Yes. Yes.

Would you like there to be a Jewish

Well, now, now, now I'm too old for that, actually. Because you've got to have a lot of patience, and the patience is, for studying, I'm afraid the patience of mine is, ... I'm all right, up to a certain degree of learning, or reading, yes, but again, the patience is ... I, I class myself, although I, I done things, I look at my life up till now, I've done things, like any, if you look at me, and any other normal person being here born, generations and generations, I'm not behind in that respect. Right? But that's all I could achieve from nothing, you see. I'm proud that I done it, but I could not undertake, in myself, not, I'm not strong enough, to undertake any, especially now, at all now, but even a few years, well, as I say, it's, it was difficult times in England, since the War. The times ...

Have things improved since you came here?

Things have improved in the sixties. That's, let me summarise it. I can say, it took me 15 years to become a Mensah.

How do you define yourself as a Mensah?

To become, no, to become, 15 years, or 14 years, while my children was growing up, I was learning from them.

What were you learning from them?

For instance, when I first got married, I didn't belong to a Shul, as an example.

A Synagogue.

A Synagogue. I'm a member, right? In them days, there was the United Synagogue, it was more popular, more modern now, but then gradually, when the children was going to start going to Cheder, five years old, I joined the United Synagogue, in the East End.

Yeh, but you sent them to Cheder, didn't you?

That's right, cos I went, cos I went, you see. I remember, I went. What I remember, I tried to put it over. So they went to Cheder, naturally, so I said, "Well, I'll join the Synagogue." So that's already an expense again, to pay for a Synagogue, whatever money you had to pay, the contributions there, every year, even now. So then we came to Barmitzvahs, right? So, in other words, you, you don't mind, normalise yourself with the children growing, and that's how normal you become.

Mensah?

What I call a man who become normal, a normal person, because you can find people in, I call myself normal, but I don't compare myself to a normal person who didn't go through a Holocaust. There is something in us, all of us, that it's disturbed.

Well, perhaps there's something normal people who are not disturbed?

Can also have them, but, but our kind of people more so. Because in England, as I say, it was not, it was not a milk and honey country when you came here, after such a terrible thing. I mean, you got, if people, if it's a bereavement now, I go. We've got a shiva, you see, people sit in shiva, it's a bereavement, people are crying, or people, you think of yourself, you think, I never could sit shiva for someone, for my parents. How can you compare? I don't know how to express it even. I don't know if you're with me. You go, people are crying, people lost someone, it affects them, a year, or two years. But where is this comparison to the Holocaust? Imagine that.

But there isn't any, there can never be.

But that's what's inside us, you see. It's in us.

But how do you think this fits into the sort of history, if you put it like that, you must ask this question. How do you think this fits into the history of mankind? That such a dreadful thing should happen, that there is no comparison to any normal existence? Should happen to a whole nation? How does,

It's not just one, it's just not one nation, the Jews, this happened to a few nations, really. If you look at it, the Jews mostly. To the Jews mostly. There was especially to the Jews. The law was to the, the law was to exterminate the Jews, you can't say otherwise. But also, other nations did suffer, other occupied countries did suffer the similar things. They must admit that. Which I'm not prejudiced. I'm saying what, how it was.

That the Germans themselves suffered?

Also, yes, to a lesser extent, and less, less, less than the Jews. The Jews were the main target for this. I remember as a child, when I was young, before the War, and I went to Cheder, if the Rabbi told you the story about Pesach, about Moses, about bringing out the Jewish from Egypt.

You still remember those stories?

I do. But they, the Haggadah, used to come back, you see, to you, for a few moments, so it was a tragedy what the Jews had to suffer in Egypt. Right? They always knew the Jews was suffering in Egypt. Or the Jews were suffering before Egypt, always the Jews were suffering. And I hope this is the last, what I suffered, and the Jews in my generation, is the last suffering the Jews will have, ever.

I think that this project of the National Life History, is intended, in some way, to contribute to that. How this would be in practice, is somewhat, is invidious, but at least people will have it on record.

That's why I volunteered to say that, to speak that.

Of course, there is the, the problem of distortion of records, and of re-writing history, and so on. But at least, for your own family, and your own people, you feel they, I mean, I wouldn't say they would believe you, I wonder if you feel that the Jews' experience, going back to Egypt as you put it, how this can teach ...

End of Fl57 Side B

End of interview