

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

JOSEF PERL

Interviewed by David Soetendorp

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



IMPORTANT

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F216 Side A

What is your name?

My name is Josef Perl. I was born in 1930. April 27 1930. I was born - I was the only son. And I had eight sisters. And I was the only son. I was the seventh child. So you can imagine, we had six - six sisters and then I came and then I had two other younger sisters than myself. So I was a child one of nine. And we were a working family.

Where was it?

That was in what you would call - Ukraine, White Russia. The place was called Bitchkiv. It's not far away - if you come down from - Hurst(ph), Moonkav, Salotvinner(ph) and Bitchkiv used to be Kleinbitchkiv, and small Bitchkiv and big Bitchkiv. There was a big village, but one was sort of as you would say Boscombe and Bournemouth. One was lower and one was higher.

Was this a reasonably large Jewish community?

Well, where we were we must have been about - I would think about 500 families. We lived - more or less within the radius of - a mile, a mile and a half away from the Shul. The Shul was the centre. We had a beautiful Shul. We had - we had - a big Shul.

Shul means synagogue?

Synagogue. I beg your pardon. A synagogue. And which was attended during the week. It was attended all through Shabbath, all the Yomtovim. Very religious community. Not fanatics, but very religious. So much so that - the people who were - who were well-off - had their own - Sefer Torahs, which - which obviously was handed down to them or they bought themselves. Because also especially at this time of the year, around Rosh Hashana - Yom Kippur and so forth, the Gods actually said that one should write his own Sefer Torah. But - if you can't write your own Sefer Torah, but if you buy one and - and write in your name in order to be presented at the Shul, it is counted as if you have written your Sefer Torah. But I'll go on further, I will only tell my own story, but I just add this thing in by and by. As we were - we personally lived about - 20 yards away from the synagogue.

Would you say you were an observant family?

Very observant family. But again, not fanatics. But very observant. Very religious. If something had to be done on Rosh Hashana - for example, my sister got ill with appendicitis, there was not a question of well, wait till Shabbath goes out. My father picked up - my sister, and hitched up the - we had a horse and buggy, we hitched it up and she was taken to the doctor. So in that particular sense when I say we were religious, but not fanatically, this is the point in case. That if life was - in danger, Shabbath - come Shabbath or no Shabbath the act was done to save lives. Which as we all know, all religious Jews, when it comes to life you can break any law.

Did you go to a religious school?

Absolutely. I started haydim when I was three years old. I mean - I again want to point out although it was called small Bitchkiv and big Bitchkiv, even in a small town I can remember myself, we had six haydas, six rabbis who had their own hayda in their own homes.

Six religious schools?

Six religious schools. Which were - taught the children. Now - and each Cheder consisted of - I won't exaggerate - eighteen to twenty two pupils. And there were - what I call, real rabbi teachers. Trained to be rabbi teachers. So it wasn't just a question of learning just to read out of base? or it wasn't just a matter of reading chumash. It wasn't just a question of reading Russia? It wasn't just a question of reading gumura? That rabbi was conversed of teaching from the beginning to the cabbalistic. To the cabbalistic. And - but us, we in the ...? to be taught in hayda, wasn't sort of - shall I say, two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. We started off before I went to school. I used to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning.

So you went to a religion school, but you also went to a secular school?

Absolutely. That was - that was - that was State school, you had to go. So my day - and - I'm going strictly through the years from 3 to starting school. My school day was every morning at 6 o'clock, first of all I had to - to go to the synagogue. Then at the Cheder from 6 to 8. From 8 o'clock - half past 8 was my school with the - the - the State school. I went there. Came back at 4. Didn't go home for a meal. We were fortunate enough we were not poor, but we were not millionaires neither, but we were comfortable people. We - I used to go to a Jewish - what we called a business, which used to sell bread and - and various other things. And I used to buy something there on tick. Go to Cheder. Go to Cheder from say about half past 4, till davaning Mincha Maariv. Used to go to the synagogue and davaning Mincha Maariv. Go home and have a meal and then go back to Cheder till 9 or half past 9 in the evening. And that went through summer and winter. I was fortunate enough, as I say, the synagogue was about 20 yards away. And my Cheder - my rabbi who taught me, was about say a hundred yards away from us, so it was near to me to go to Cheder so there was no difficulty in coming back.

Did all Jewish boys go through that?

Absolutely. Everybody.

In spite of the fact that it was in part of Russia?

Well, it was called Byellorussia. White Russia. Russia really had got nothing to do with it. When I was born in 1930 the Czech - Czechoslovakia was called - the Czechs ruled there. And Czech ruled there til 1938. At the end of 1938. But then Hungary pushed out the Czechs to their borders and Hungary ruled us. And then of course, as you know, in 1939 - or thereabout, Hungary and Germany signed a treaty, so of course

it was - the Germans came in in 1940, that part, and in 1940 they just cleared out the Jews, and that's - that's how it all started.

But let's go back for a moment to the 1930's. Was there evidence of anti-Semitism?

Well, I can honestly say till about - 1938 - end of - '37,'38 - I have never - I never knew there was any - personally - there was any difference between Jew and Gentile. I was, as you know, I was brought up in a religious family, I had payas and I went to school. I was never taunted by - by - you know, you having curly hair or - or having a kapel on my head, which I wore in those days. In the house my kapel was worn and so forth. And before you sat down you said prayers and washed your hands and so forth. As a religious family, as a religious family. I never heard any anti-Semitism. But as soon as the Czech - the Czech - have lost the control of the power of White Russia where we lived - within a week - within a week, the teachers was changed in the school. I'm talking about State school. They started to teach us to speak - to read and speak Hungarian. And really and truthfully it stemmed from the teachers themselves, that started the anti-Semitism.

That is Hungarian teachers?

Hungarian teachers. Absolutely - within a fortnight. You felt that the taunting, the belittling of the Jews, the - the harrassment, instigated by the teachers through the pupils and it vibrated to the Jewish people.

How did your classmates in the State school, who had not been anti-semitic before, how were they affected by the teaching and by the teachers?

Human nature is so - so frail, like a Sukkah. And - and although I was young, I'm talking about I was 8 years old - even then I - I looked at my friends who had never, ever uttered a word, they started to change to that attitude. For no apparent reason. For no apparent reason. I - we had them in our home and we used to feed them. And - after '38 everything changed. You felt even in the company of them, even in the street walking with them home, which you had to walk, you were never at ease. You were never at ease. And that was the same people who, as I say, before 1938, you never saw that - you never even - surfaced, never even occurred to them, until - it was starting to penetrate the instigation, and - and to feel that they are a little bit more superior than you. Why they thought that I don't know. Because we - we had - you know in our part of the country we had a Shabbas goy who used to come, they used to light the fire or - or stoke up the fire with the wood, and so forth. They used to come and clean your house and you fed them. I mean - we Jewish people have always - always had a frailty, we open up our hearts to every stranger. And to a goy as well. And - you let them in the house, they know everything about you. They know where everything lays. They know what you've got. And all of a sudden - the feeling that the Jews have got everything and I've got nothing. That's - that unfortunately is the frailty with the Jewish people because they - first of all they boast about it. And second they want to open up their doors to all Tom, Dick and Harry. They teach them Yiddish. They teach them Yiddish hokhmahs, Yiddisher jokes. And - and all of a sudden a goy, it doesn't matter how dumb he is, know and again he picks up a few words - a few words here, a few words there. And by the time the Germans came -

they can - they could actually taunt you with your own Yiddisher words. That was the sad - And even to this day, to this day, I say even now, I mean I've met people who are in business, I'm talking about - my wife's parents and my in-laws. They used to have a - Christian person and - and - they thought the world of him, he was - I don't know what he - I don't know what he actually was, whether he was an accountant or whether he - or - dealing with books. I used to say them that he knows too much of your business. He knows too much Jewish way of thinking. Jews romance. I said and you are creating a - a situation where he'll twist you round his finger. You know sometimes comes a time you teach a people something and in the end the pupil beats the master. And it has happened.

At what point did you as a family find out what was happening in Nazi Germany?

Well - first of all I must point out I was - very young. I was - say, about nine years old - talk about 1939. And 1940. We started to hear rumours, or my parents started to hear rumours. And of course like parents a lot of things were kept away from the children. But as we were a big family - we had three sisters in Budapest. They were sent away to be trained, to - to university. One trained herself to be a sister in a hospital. Again, I want to point out again, years ago this was frowned upon by Jewish - A Jewish girl to go to be a - a nurse or a sister in hospital was unheard of. But there again my father was a travelled man, he was - he was highly respected. I remember people from the banks, the bank manager used to come and he used to teach him mathematics at home. But rumours started to circulate to say that - Jews have been picked up at such and such areas, in such and such area, because they had got no proof who they belonged to and they said, "Well, if you can prove you are Hungarian citizens", they won't touch Hungarian citizen. And in the First World War my father was an officer in the Hungarian army. And he won medals. So he went to Budapest, I remember it as - very well indeed. And we were - my mother was - was - crying. And I said "What's all this?" And, well, Dad went away, we got to pray that - we got to say tillet(ph); tillet(ph) that we should be successful on his journey. And I remember she said "Well, as you are the only son, sit down and - and - and say a few pussits(ph) of - what they call it - pages of tellit(ph)" which I did. And my father came back with all the papers to say that we are Hungarian citizens. And that we will be safe. Like we all thought we will be safe.

The situation in Hungary carried on until 1940?

Yes. And then the Germans - it was one day a German column drove through our village.

It just happened that quick, that suddenly?

That suddenly.

No announcement, just ..?

No, just a German - German column went through. And - and I well remember, I was at Cheder. And the Cheder was right on the main highway, main road. And we saw these - these - a column of Jeeps going through. And about - fifteen or twenty yards

away there was a - a family lived, a Jewish family there. On one side of the road was the - the - Jewish butcher. And the other side was a family, a very comfortable family, they had a nice big house. And two German officers came out. And I never forget, at Cheder - at Cheder all the boys ran out to see what's happening, like - inquisitive. And they went there and they said "Who is the owner of this house?" And they - the man came out, he said "This is my house". He said - "Where - where is the family?" He said "Well, this is all my family". And they just said "Well, the family - we've taken over this - this house". And the family was picked up and - just disappeared. The whole family disappeared. And then the following day was again, we heard further down - and - and at big Bitchkin, that they had taken over three or four houses there and the people just disappeared. All of a sudden there was a different kind of air. The Jewish people were - were afraid to go out, to breathe, to discuss, but life went on artificially. The synagogue was still attended too, like nothing has happened.

Life carried on as much as possible in the same way?

The same way.

What about the rabbi's reactions to the situation?

The rabbi's reaction was - I am afraid - after a week of this - he said, "I'm afraid for you to come to my - to my house, to be taught Cheder". And - actually - even so, I'm talking about - going back a little bit to 1938. Although it was - forbidden, but we still went to Cheder. It wasn't really forbidden, but it wasn't - not too many people in one room. You know what I mean. So - it was played down a little bit. It was - say - people used to go, say, from 4 to 6, or half past 4 to 6. And then the other half used to go, so instead of being a full room, it used to be half a room. But life still went on, life still went on like - like - Jewish people, we've got a tenacity, we - we sort of - the frailty of life is such that although you are afraid to do it, but you still do it. Because it's the same to do, you've got to carry on.

Can you tell me how gradually the Germans established themselves in your town and how this progressed?

Well - that - I can't even begin to tell you. Because one morning, I'll never forget - it was Pesach time. And I think it was hallamoyt(ph) time, Pesach time. We had Seder night. And one day - there was an order given out by - by - God knows who - I certainly don't know, that all the Jews - have got to report themselves at big Bitchkiv. There was a big synagogue there. Got to report themselves, they are going to make a census of the Jews. And I - looking back now - it was very cleverly done. It was very cleverly done. And they also said - "Take food with yourself, for yourself, and a change of clothing - in case you will be delayed, because there will be a big - a lot of people will be coming and they are very short of - of - staff to - to do all the work in one day". It will probably be several days before we'll - we'll come back to our own home. "You don't have to worry, just lock up the houses, everything will be all right. There's nothing to worry at all". Like obedient people as we always are, we - we have - the rabbi was - they gave us all day to - to - to go to a synagogue. And I remember the Shochet was very busy of Shocheting - chickens, you know, killing the chickens.

Young lambs and killing them and cooking and preparing food for - for how much they can carry and so forth and so forth. And we all ended up - I remember - when we arrived there - with our horse and wagon - buggy. We just took our clothes. And they said "Just go in there". And we all went in. They said "Leave those here", somebody would look after them. And - "Somebody will feed them, so you don't have to worry about it", and so forth and so forth. Really we were looking round there and I remember my father saying, "I wonder if the animals have been fed and watered?" But where the hell. We didn't see any hay anywhere. Again looking back now there was no hay, there was no grass, there was no - troughs where to - water the animals. Looking back at it now, you know, everybody is wise, but at that particular time everybody was thinking is my family all right, is my family all here, you know, are they distressed, can we comfort them and so forth and so forth. And of course after three days we realised that we would never go home again. Because - there was nobody taking any census, there was nobody asking any names. And - one morning, I think it was on the third day - or the fourth day, I can't remember - we were loaded in the wagons - and - everything 'quick, quick, quick, quick, quick'. And - you know, we hadn't got the facilities, you see you had got to take your place - where we got it - all organised. And I think we travelled for about - two days. I think it was - a day and a night, two days and one night. And we came to a place out of - out - nowhere. Just get out. And it wasn't - it wasn't only - Kleinbitchkiv and Grosbitchkiv And I also want to point out to you about - about the area, because from Grosbitchkiv, from big Bitchkiv, there was a - there was a - a bridge, we used to go across the Siggitt(ph), which was what I called the Rumanian side. So there was a lot of people who - who used to - come over to this area, first of all to see families and the fact they were all over. People used to go over to that side to - to Siggitt(ph) and they used to buy - material there, food there, you know, it was a free - free access. And as you also know there was the great rabbi, the Siggiter(ph) rabbi and - there used to be a very - big Jewish community and very religious and the rabonnim used to come from those areas. So it was - it was a vibrant Jewish life. Vibrant Jewish life. When we got out, I remember it was evening. It was in a field. It was a gorgeous day. And - we were - herded out and said - "Well, put up whatever you've got and you're going to sleep here tonight".

I should have asked before. What year was that?

That was 1940. 1940. That was, I think, in the middle of 1940. Pesach time. It must have been - I don't know whether it was April or May.

Pesach 1940?

Yeh, Pesach 1940. And because I know we didn't have any bread, we still had matzos, so that was that. And when we got up in the morning we were surrounded by - what shall I say, Polish people - dressed up in German uniform. Polish thugs dressed up as - as - We had no wire round us. But - we were sort of - we must have been there, I don't know how many people. It is very hard to judge. But I would reckon - now with hindsight - I would reckon about - a thousand, a thousand five hundred people. And eventually, I don't know how, how it all came about, we had - tents, given tents, so each family had a tent. A bigger family had a bigger tent. And then there was some kind of - organisatons with - without - if you know what I mean, people

coming along and saying "I've got a farm, I would like to have some workers". Whether these Polish guards, these German guards took money from these people - for hiring out us as slaves to work for them, that I don't know, I can't say that, but - there were groups of people going out to work on fields. And they used to come back in the evening. And some of them brought back potatoes and somebody brought back carrots and somebody brought back whatever. And a kitchen was set up and we were - we were sort of - cooking ourselves and feeding ourselves. Spontaneous, there was nothing organised, but - but - it became - it became like a - like a - like a - what shall I say - a picnic camp. A picnic camp. Instead of everybody cooking for themselves, it was organised with a big pot and they queued up and - everybody used to get their - their - ration. Morning and evening. And this went on for about - six weeks. And - but the thing about - having said about six weeks, for about four - four - four or five days before that there was a tension in the - in the - camp, in that area. What it was, as children, we didn't know.

So perhaps a rumour had spread or somebody had found out something?

Yes. Something, found out something, and - The people - the grownup people, you could feel the vibration, you could feel it. And my father came - and for these three or four days nobody went out. Nobody came in and nobody went out. We had to have some food. So my father said "Well, as you are a - you are a boy, you're - more agile..."

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"Maybe you can slip out". As I said, we had no - no wires. "Maybe you can bring in some food". And there was about, say, twelve of us. We used to slip out during the night, everybody used to go out at different angles. We went out and we went to the farms and - and yes, we pinched, we were stealing - we brought back eggs and potatoes. And unfortunately, I must say that - we couldn't - we didn't bring back enough - for - for - for the whole camp, but the immediate family, not only the family but immediate friends - we shared. We shared. And those people who didn't have - who didn't have, say, young children, couldn't go out - you had to risk your - your - your life in order to go out and - fend for yourself. And, as I say, after the six week period, which - was a lifetime. We went out one evening and - I don't know what the reason was - we heard noises - and altogether we were twelve of us, twelve boys - and we - as we came over the hill -

So you were saying one night you heard noises, when the twelve of you, the boys, were out in the field?

It wasn't noises, it wasn't noises that - that - it came from our people. It was noise in German. Sort of - just shouting, "Quick, quick, los, los, quick". And we knew something was up. And as we - this - this - big field was just under a forest. We came over the hill and we saw them being loaded into wagons and being taken away. The whole camp. And then we realised we were left on our own. Because - even though you were young, even so you - you - you saw your parents being taken away. The instinct for survival is such that you think to yourself 'now - I'll stay back and I'll see where - where they're going - '. It's very hard to explain, it's very hard to explain. Instinct for survival, you knew that you can't run forwards calling out mum and daddy, I want to come with you, because the danger was there. So we - all twelve of us - we decided to stick together. But one thing which I've forgotten to - to - to mention. Is when we were - when we were in - in the synagogue - each family - had a - had a discussion about themselves in case something happened. Each family gave each others - they had signals, if you were in danger and you want to say you're okay, or don't come or - or don't - don't - interfere - Well - at that particular time I had my two youngest sisters. And - four - four bigger ones. So I had the two younger ones and four above me. And the others who were in Budapest. Because they were studying there. And - me and my father, as I was the only son - I made my father promise - and the same goes the other way round - that if there was any danger - if there was any danger - that - if life would be at risk to the other, we shouldn't - we shouldn't go to each others help. And also - I also made my father promise that he should never worry about me. Never worry about me. And I also gave him assurance that I would never worry about him. Because my father was fit, he was a tall man, he was - he was used to hard work and - and - he was - he done military service. He knew all the hardship, all the marches, all - whatever - whatever befell people. So we - we - my father and I had a bond, where we knew that each one is all right. You know what I mean. The hope was - it doesn't matter what's happened to me, it doesn't matter what - but I am sure that Joe can look after himself. And vice versa. I said I'm sure - even - even when I was married - and - and - all my - time of release from the camps, I never - yes, I've seen my mother and four of my sisters being shot in front of my eyes. Which I'll come to later, explain how that happened. I never accepted that

my father didn't survive camp. And in the end I was proven right. Because as you know, my father survived. And I - I didn't see him for thirty odd years, I didn't know he was alive. But in the end I found out that he was alive in 1964 or - it was 1965. And I went to Budapest and seen him there, met up with him. This is another story. But I'll carry on now with this - with this - The time when I was actually - left on my own. We decided to lay low. And - as already mentioned, we had food enough because we were coming back to the - to - to the people who we left behind. So we had eggs and we had potatoes and we lived on this for - a good three weeks. In the forest. Nobody - we didn't go to anybody, nobody bothered us, and so forth. Till one night we heard again a lot of German being spoken. And - we climbed up in the trees and we saw a lot of German soldiers coming to this particular field. Setting up camp and - and come what may. Now you had a choice. Do you act - dumb and a fool and come into the camp for food, or do you move on and - and hide yourself. I decided not on the latter part. Because - I questioned myself, what am I so different than anybody else. The pain I have already lost. Hair was already going down above my - my - my ears. The language I know. A little bit of German I know. - Two hands and a mouth and two feet, two pair of eyes I've got. No, I'll - I'll - I'll be dumb, I'll be a skivvy. I'll go in. And - during the day once there was - there was two of us. We all started singing, us two started singing. And whistling. And we were marching in. Into the camp, you know, brazen as - as can be. And also make promise to one another we don't know one another. We just met up. And never - if we remained there, never to speak to one another. Never to speak to one another. We walked in. "What are you doing here?" "We went for a walk, we picked a few mushrooms. Do you want some mushrooms?" They took the mushrooms. And - and I saw - they had horses there, which I was very conversant with horses because we had horses at home. I stroked the horse and there was a soldier who was cleaning it, so I said "I will clean it". Being used from my own home. And - I stayed with them. And we started learning a few things, what is happening to the Jewish people. That people have been - taken away from home, some have been killed at random.

How did you find out?

From the - from the - from the German soldiers who were talking.

They were conversing amongst each other?

Each others yes, you know - another lot of - of - of - Jews had been picked up and - they are going to be dealt with tomorrow, you know - so we knew, we heard shooting, but we didn't know what it was and - who is being shot and how they are being shot and so forth. That lasted for about eight months in this camp. And then there came in S.S. These people actually who were there at the beginning they were not S.S. There were - ordinary soldiers, military unit who - for families, they had to clear up areas, whether it was partisan or whether it was - people who - who - who didn't believe in their way of thinking, or Jews or so on. As I say, we were - we were youngsters. But we knew what was happening. But at the end of 1941 - the S.S. was started to come in. I decided - it was also everybody was afraid - even the - the own German officers, the military German officers, were afraid of them. So I decided to clear off.

You found out from the soldiers what was happening. And you also discovered the Wehrmacht, the ordinary German soldiers, were frightened of the S.S.?

Petrified.

What sort of numbers, what are we talking about, how large was the German camp and how large was the S.S.?

There must have been about three hundred people there. They had lorries, they had - Jeeps, they had - heavy machine guns. No - no - no tanks or anything like that. But when the S.S. came in they have taken over - I can remember it well - they were completely taken over, in charge of the whole camp. First of all they wanted to know everything, who everybody was. And it was like a black cloud hung over us, and I decided to - clear off. One evening I picked myself up and - out I went. And in the morning - I was picked up. You know, "What are you doing here? Why are you alone? Who are you?", so forth and so forth. By an ordinary soldier. But by an ordinary soldier who obviously - knew about sadism. He started to knock me about. I was - a bit dirty - not to say the least. He said "Well", he said, "I'll take you", he said, "You are a Jew, aren't you?" I said to him "Yes". He said "Well, I'll take you where there is - plenty of Jews - about". Which he took me to a very, very - large camp. And I came in there. And - it's a strange thing to say - although it was a camp and it was - run by the Germans and so forth, but - there wasn't a thing that went on in the camp that the whole camp didn't know. Not rumours, facts. This is happening, that's happening, people came in, this was captured, this was taken out, he didn't come back. Everybody knew - everybody knew what's going on in the camp.

Was this all Jewish people in that camp?

All Jewish people. All Jewish people.

How many?

Oh - very hard to say. I would reckon in thousands. But what a different those camps was I soon found out. Yes, I must point out I found out that my mother and sister were there. In the camp. So I made a beehive for my - not only did I know where they are there, but I also knew in which barrack they were. Although it was semi-separated men from women, but you could still make contact, if you know what I mean. Well I crawled underneath the wire which internally they were not electrified. The wire was only electrified outside. But they were wired for segregation. Which were - scorned upon, because people were going in and out through the wires like nobody's business. And I caught up with my - with my mother and my sisters. Of course the reunion was great, as you can imagine. "Where is Dad?" "Dad was taken out to a works - one day was taken out to work, and he never came back". And of course there was tears. "What has happened? Why didn't he come back? And he must have been killed", and so forth and so forth. But I couldn't stay with my parents. I couldn't stay with my mother and my sisters, because I had to go and report, because every evening they were counting - the people. What they were counting for - even now - I've got no idea. Because there were taken out so many - so many during the daytime. What I used to do, which I found out, seeing -

seeing it myself. They used to take out people during the day. Very early in the morning. They used to dig their own graves. And they used to kill them - at - dawn. Or in the evening, before evening came in. And by the time the morning came they were covered over, there was no trace that - anybody was there. There was - as if anything happened. It was like - like the - the earth opened up and the people disappeared. The people disappeared. They used to come in, they used to say - "Strip, you're going to de-lousing", - this is how they called it - "And we'll go round and then you come back. And you will strip naked". There was no - that camp was already dehumanised. You know what I mean. This year which I am talking about, '40 to '41, beginning of 1942 - life was - life was nothing. They become zombies. You could see it in their faces. And - it's - I will not try to dwell on this thing, to be quite honest, because you will say to me, "You were such a child, how the hell do you know the difference between - between shining eyes, dim eyes and sad eyes?" And this - you know - you grew up so quickly. You grew up so quickly. That instinctively you become an animal. And instinctively you feel danger. You feel threatened. You feel it in the air. You - you - you pull yourself in. And - that is the only thing I can explain to you. And that particular morning - I saw my - mother and my two sisters being marched out. It was very, very early in the morning. And there was another barracks being - stripped and marched out. And my area was - me included - stripped and marched out. But - it was in sections. This was the first line and we all lined up in a sort of - a line. And - a line was like that. Fired, in they fell. The line lined up. But what I noticed - it was a terrible smell of - of earth. Terrible smell of earth, and like painters - I can't explain. And what it was, it was - the - the - this - this - huge grave was dug and it was - half filled - with - with - it looked like boiling lime, boiling - white - it was boiling. To me it reminded me - as a child I used to go to hayda, I used to have carbide, carbide. You remember there used to be - lamps where you used to have - put a little bit of water in and it used to burn. And we used to have a sort of a little pump and we used to pump it up in order for it to burn. And I saw my mother and my four sisters being shot, and fell in. Now I don't know whether you would call this a miracle or would you call this God intervention or - what - or what you may call it, I don't know. There was another line taken, and there was about seven or eight people in front of me. Which we would have been the next line. Having said this - and that line went forward. Having said this - you also notice I dismissed the whole question of my mother and four sisters, that they were shot and the next line was taken. It's very hard to explain the feeling. A - a son to see his mother and four sisters being shot. But you know there was no tears in my eyes. There was no breakdown of - of - of the mechanical works of your body. Because - you knew you were going to be next. It wasn't a question they got killed and you are - you are - you somehow will be - will survive. There were - it was - it was no feeling, it was no - no pain, no - no - reaction. And the line was - things were happening so fast, the line went forward - and before they were all shot - there was an air-raid. There was somehow planes, foreign planes penetrated and there was an air-raid. The sirens went. And everybody had to lay down face downwards. And in those - in those - probably must have been minutes, seconds - the whole people, those who were not shot yet, started running higgledy-piggledy. Including myself. So that we are all naked. We are all naked. And we all somehow think that we are going to survive. And some of us survived because - we run and run and run - this was all in a forest don't forget. This has all taken part in a forest. Till I saw a farm. I went into the farm. The people were at work, and whoever was at - was at - at the farm, was in

the house, and took a sack, put a sack over me, upside down, made a hole in the bottom part and just put my arms out. And really I truthfully I walked in and I said, "You know I'm - I've just run away from - from the killing". Didn't say I was a Jew. Just said I'd run away from the killings and would they - could they please - you know, I am naked - could they please give me something to put on and something to eat. They said yes. They gave me to eat. It was all women there, the men were in the field. And they gave me something to eat. For my age, although I was ten, I was - I was well built and a big fella. And when the men come home in the evening. Obviously they were told that - I came in and I ran away from - from the killings and so forth. He said "Well, you can stay here until the Germans come. And when the Germans come we will let you know". "We'll let you know so it will give you a chance to - to - to run away". Because they didn't want me there because they would have killed them in any case. So they didn't want to have the responsibility to have somebody there which would threaten their lives. Which I quite understood. I was there about - a couple of months. We were already coming up to 1942. And - one evening the man came back and they said, "Well, we have a rumour that - that they're going from farm to farm to collect the people who escaped". And he said, "We want you out". I thanked him. And - they gave me bread, and I'll never forget, a little bit of - of pig meat. And I said - and I went. I - hid for about - in the forest - from pillar to post, for about - two weeks. And there was - there was no point, because I was by myself. And - and you had to have some shelter somewhere. And I went into town. I was picked up very quickly. The rumour went round, a stranger, and I was picked up. And I was taken in to an area which I found out was Krakow. Where they lived - they were all herded in the one area, it was like - like - Warsaw, no, Krakow.

The ghetto?

A ghetto. All Jewish people. But - run by the Jews. By the Jewish organisation. They organised themselves in the camp. Organised themselves in the camp. And - then - again, they took our people to work. People volunteered for work. People who worked inside. But you could - you could go outside. They had a kind of - kind of - I don't know what to say - some piece of paper which allowed you to go out and come back. It was - although it was a ghetto it wasn't - and it was run, as I say, by the Jewish people themselves. But somehow I - you could go out. I can't explain. You could go out and come back. And - one - one day, I don't know what reason it was, I was out and I was picked up - and - and I was taken to a camp. I was taken to a camp.

Do you know what camp it was?

It was - that camp was starting to be built in Krakow Plashow, it's actually called Krakow. Krakow. Where there was a big, big - Krakow must have been a big Jewish community, because there was a huge, huge cemetery. Huge cemetery. And they were smashing down all the stones. And they were - building this camp. And I was to go there. They already had - buildings up, they had sections, people who were - who were shoemakers had - there was a section of all shoemakers, making shoes for the.....

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They had sections, people who were - who were shoemakers, there was a section of all shoemakers, they were making shoes for the - for the German soldiers and repairing. They had sections for clothes making, they had sections of - everything you can think of. It was already run as a camp. But this - this - I don't know - how I should call them in English without being rude - the - the - the head of this camp, he - he was a fanatical person. He - he used to like to sit in his - in his house which he had built on top of the hill. And for fun he used to shoot people - just - for kicks. For kicks. That was only sitting on his balcony. If he used to go out on his white horse for a ride - he used to have two dalmations he had, which he would train to kill people at one jump. For him - for him to - to leave behind him forty, fifty, sixty people dead, was - was a day's outing. You know, if somebody goes out pheasant shooting or something like that.

Did you find out his name?

No. But I - but having after the war, I have read - a book - the - the - Shindlers Ark(ph). It must have been this bastard who - who was - who was -

Yes, Shindlers Ark(ph), it was about Plashow?

Krakow Plashow, yes. It must have been him, because why didn't I - didn't I - know his name. I tell you the truth. I was always of self preservation. I never wanted to be in the open. Never wanted to be in the open. So I used to - one day I hid myself in this barrack where there used to be shoes. One day I hid myself in another barrack who used to make clothes. I was never in the same time. Or I used to - I used to hide myself during the day underneath the barracks. Although I was counted, but I never used to go out to work. Why do I say 'go out to work'. They would actually be throwing the synagogue - the synagogue, a beautiful synagogue - it was like this; the synagogue - the house of - of the burial where you had taken the bodies, and then the burial ground, so they got a way of destroying the house where they had taken the dead bodies, the Jewish people when they were free to do it, and then they started on the house, on the synagogue itself. It was such a beautiful thing. I went out once, and there actually - they were building a - a - wagon lines, the camp - actually to the gates of the camp. As you know, Krakow Plashow was the biggest intersection - I think at that particular time, in Europe. It was the intersection to the world, that had so many life, it was huge. And they were bringing in - these - building this line to come into the camps, to make it easier for transportation. And I went out once, once I went out and I said never again, if I can possibly not go out, because - it was - it was whipping - even people who were working hard, they were being whipped for no reason at all. So you - you - you didn't stand a chance of survival. You know what I mean. You just didn't stand a chance of survival. So my - my motto had been 'never be in the open'. Never be in the open. And if you get caught when you are hidden, just too bad, it was bad luck. And one day low and behold - it was already - '43 - I think I was in Krakow, Plashow that year, '43. In the middle of '43, coming at the end of '43. The train pulled up and wagons were there and - not all the camp was emptied, a good half was emptied. And I was one of the first ones to go on this - on this trip. And we also knew that we are going to Auschwitz. We knew that we are going to Auschwitz.

Did you know what Auschwitz meant?

Oh yes, we already heard about Auschwitz, we already heard about the ovens, we already - we - in the camps, I don't know how the world didn't know. But it doesn't matter where you were - don't forget in Poland they - they - they had - in 1941 they had wagons which was - which have packed in people and gassed, by their - by their own exhaust. And we knew all about this. But you see what it was in all these things, although things were run by the Jews, they had to give up quarters. So many people had to be picked out and - Those people knew they were going to their death. But you see, with the Jewish nature as it is, as long as the whole family is together, they didn't - death - death was an accepted part of life. It's - it may be ridiculous to accept, but death was part - an accepted part. As long as the family was together. We died together. You know what I mean. It's very hard to explain. But - they knew they were going to their deaths. And somehow there was not much resistance. Some of them were even glad - in some areas they were living in such squalors, so - they were dehumanised, it was - You were walking about and you saw bodies in the street - it - I'll be dead tomorrow. You know what I mean. This is how it was. So we knew, I knew, and we knew we were going to Auschwitz. But a funny thing has happened. We came into Auschwitz - and it was 'quick, quick, quick, quick, quick, out, out, out, los, out'. You've probably heard all these stories before. But I'll tell you the important part that happened to me. I was picked and I was chucked with a group of people on the right. And we were taken in - things were happening so fast - that - you know - with - with - a relatively few minutes, like everything disappeared. As I say, the earth opened and people were in there. And I found myself with this group, we were marched to a big - a big - place, a big barrack, which was empty. And there was - there was everything. Also I want to point out in Krakow, in the camp, we still had our own shoes. Because - we had different clothes on, but we had our own shoes. Which was repaired in the camps. So - when we - in Auschwitz, when we were taken into this big - warehouse place - there was clothes, there was - cases. Luggages, which was - you know - a big heap. And we were told to strip. And my mind straight away said to me well I'll strip - and my mother and four sisters had been shot, well - and it was not panic in me, it was - I didn't - you know it was - no - no feeling. And we stripped and the last thing they said - "Keep your shoes". Somehow the word "keep your shoes on" I knew - I am safe. Instantly I knew that I was safe. We were taken to be - to be washed. We had our shower. We were given new clothes. And straight from there we were taken to a barrack, which held a thousand people, that barrack was full. The following morning at 6 o'clock they put us into a - to a - wagons. Wagons. Not train wagons. Lorries. And the next thing I knew I was in Dachau. In Dachau. And it was - hell. It was hell. It was the stench. Bodies just heaped up without - buried. And we were herded into - into a barrack. We didn't have - all day we didn't have any food. The following day we were counted. And then we had the task of - of burning - our task was of burning - and get rid of some of these - Well, to tell you the truth I was there six - six weeks in Dachau. And all of a sudden there was a rumour that there is a transport going. Where to, I don't know. I thought to myself if I can get myself on this transport - there can't be - it can't be worse than this. Because you were picking up bodies and bodies were coming apart in your hand. There was no - there was no - I can't begin to explain - there was no - it was like handling - it was like handling rotten marrow. And there was no - no

feeling, you know, your mind was nothing, your body was nothing. Because this - this is what it is. Well, I pushed myself into that transport. Also in lorries. And lo and behold two days later we end up, where are we, in Bergen Belsen. At that time I was already - looked very bad. What must have happened I must have fainted when we were taken off the lorries. Some of them were - were - were dead on the lorries, but I - I must have fainted in the camp. And they took me in the part where they called the revere(ph) where the ill people - were - or - or - hospital people there. Of course when I recovered I realised that you can't afford the luxury of being ill, because they'll get rid of you. So I became a - I immediately pulled myself together and I said now - I am not ill. Because it was run by the Jewish people. I said "No, I want to work. And I want you to give me something to do, because while I am doing I'll - I'll keep my - my - my brain together, I'll keep my - my - my - soul together". And then I was there again about - and again even before we had reached Bergen Belsen, the stench, the stench of human carcasses was - But you get used to it. I was there again about three months. I must say I - because working in hospital I had a little bit - better standard. I - I knew what was going on in the rest, but I'm not going to cover the - other aspect of life, I'm only covering my own life. And - after three months I heard again there's a rumour there is going to be a transport. It was already - in '44, yes '44. And - also it must have been about - summertime, and I went on that transport, and that transport was taken to Grossrosen. Took us down to Grossrosen. That wasn't very far away from Auschwitz. But - got into Grossrosen again. There again we were asked to be stripped. And - our shoes was taken away. Everything - we already had clogs.

If in Bergen Belsen you were, relatively speaking, surviving. Why did you want to go somewhere else?

Because nobody was secure. They used to come and say - once a fortnight - "We'll clear this lot out". You know what I mean. Not "Are they better?" or - or "Can they go out to work?" "We'll clear this lot out".

So it was better to keep on the move?

Sooner or later they say "We'll take this out". And I'm not talking about patients. I'm talking about the workers and doctors. Workers and doctors. No discrimination, no difference. They didn't pick - you know, "You are a doctor, you want to stay?" "This area you've got to clear out, finish". Doctors, nurses - nurses. But you learnt from - from sheer experience yourself, you weren't a trained nurse, and you weren't a trained doctor neither. Anyway, I went to this -

Grossrosen?

Grossrosen. New clothes given. Or new clothes, probably it was washed from somebody else and I was given those. The following day - the following day - they just - as we were sitting - I'll never forget. It was a lovely day, we were all sitting outside. Sitting like this, one between the legs of the other, like this, to take up less room.

Sitting in rows?

Rows, rows, between the legs, you know, you open up your legs and a person sits in your legs, he opens up his legs and another person sits in his legs. For - for room-wise, otherwise - you know, there was no room. And about 4 o'clock in the afternoon - there came a group of S.S. There came a load of S.S. and they just said "This lot here, enter the wagons". And there came a load of S.S. and they said "This section and that section and that section, they've all got to be loaded on a lorry. And I know specifically that we must have fifteen thousand people". So you can imagine how big that - Grossrosen was. That fifteen thousand people were just picked up within half an hour. We were actually - shut on the - on the - on the wagons and we - they actually built a new camp, it was called Buchenheim. Buchenheim. Also in the middle of nowhere. But that was already in Germany. Buchenheim. And there was a factory. They had, I think, a mustard(ph) and a crab(ph) factory. Which they were - were repairing and building planes. We were all taken there and we were put to work on - on - engineering, on - on - on machines. And there we were about thirty youngsters of my age, who were - we also worked the machines. Where actually I was in - they put me in charge because they tried me out on a bicycle to see whether I could take it to pieces and put it together again, which I did. So they thought that I am knowledgeable enough to know what a screw is and - and so forth. And I must say in that particular camp I was - I was - what shall I say - a little bit more at ease, because they needed us. We were doing valuable work. And somehow the soldiers, because we were youngsters, because I don't know what it was, if anything was left over from the S.S. I used to be called out and told to - to - to clear the trestles. What they call it - where they carried the food. And I used to share it with the youngsters. And from that camp - I'll go very quickly through - from that camp I went to Heersbach(ph). From Heersbach(ph) I went to Buchenwald. But once I went to Buchenwald it was such a vast camp Buchenwald. Which I - was also in the forest. It was right up in the forest. The town below, you could see the Weimar below. And various other towns. And - there was - more contact between the people. It was all divided. And I was taken to the section - where all the youngsters - a whole - block, which was all youngsters. There was one block which was special. One was Polaks, Polish and the other one was Czech. So I was in the Czech part of - of - a big block. There must have been two thousand people. One thousand on one side and one thousand on the other side. And - I also learned something while I was there. There were factories they were building, ammunition, guns and - hand grenades, guns, rifles and so forth. But when we arrived there, they were already - stopped working in the factories because they were bombed once or twice by the Americans, you know, all the way round. And - that was already beginning of 1945, and I thought to myself well - I have got a feeling that I'll stay here as long as I possibly can. And - on April the 17th we were released from Buchenwald. You can see I didn't go into details about transport and - how we got from one camp to another and how long it took and how we suffered and how many people were lost, because it's only academic, the brain won't take it. Even if I would really stop, really go into details, I'll go mad myself. Because even so I am sitting here and I'm - I'm telling you a little bit of my life story, it's - I - I look back and many times I have nightmares and I wake up, nightmares, and - subconsciously I know I'm safe and I know I'm alive and I know it's not now, but you still go through the nightmares and the horrors. And when you wake up you think to yourself did I really go through all that. Was it really me. Did I really see all that. It's very - it's very hard to accept. Very hard to accept.

Yes, it is very difficult to take in?

It's very hard to explain to people for them to believe it. This is why I didn't go into details. But - on the other hand - I had - many - tight corners even after the war, after I was released. You can imagine, we were released - I was released at Buchenwald. And the unfortunate thing - first of all, before they - they released Buchenwald, the Americans, for four days they were hanging about and they knew the bloody camp was there. And they didn't make an effort to rescue us, because Eisenhower had decided he is going to wait for the Russians to reach a certain point or something like that. But that four days a hundred and 20,000 people were shot. Shot. And the blood was running through the camp. 120,000 people. How can you ever imagine a figure of 120,000 people being shot. In four days. This is exactly what happened. And on top of that, when they did come in they did really release us. First of all for a week, for a whole week, we couldn't eat or drink because we had no food, no water. Because the water was - was - was - you couldn't drink the water. Contaminated. I had a jacket which - which - which - for my uniform, for the striped jacket. I actually chewed that whole jacket for a week to make saliva in my mouth. I actually chewed it and ate it.

When did you know that you were quite safe?

When I was safe? An hour after I saw the tank. One of the tanks go through the wire. American tank. I knew that they're here. After that - after that - it took about an hour. After I've seen it. Not an hour before, an hour after I've seen it. Because all the wars - by the commandant of - of Buchenwald - wars - that before - they had planes and they sprayed the whole camp with petrol and in all the wars, was setting the whole camp alight. They couldn't kill us - all. Couldn't kill us. So all the wars of burning the whole camp. But luckily enough, as I say, there was factories making guns, so more or less about three quarters of the camp was armed, they had guns, they had hand grenades. This was all from partisans people who - they were all positioned. When that order came through it was never carried out because - the people themselves have already taken over the - the running of - of the camp. So people who really were in the know, they were there already years and they knew exactly the movement and everything else. But the tragic part was that when the Americans came in the first meal that they gave us - how stupid and illogical - they gave us pork and beans. People who didn't eat for a week. People who had - who had malnutrition even before they started eating anything. That alone must have killed about twenty or thirty thousand people. And I am not exaggerating. I am already speaking quantitatively of people - if I say 50,000 people, I already had the idea how big the camp was. And what it means 50,000. I say 50,000. You take my word, I already know what I'm talking about. And - a lot - a lot of people. Luckily for me, still having my wits about, I thought I - I - how weak I was, how weak I was. I had a gun in my hand, I didn't even have the strength to - to - to lift it. It was loaded.

When did you find out that the war was over and how did it affect you?

Oh, that was - is actually very easy to - to say, but very hard to describe. As I mentioned at the end of the tape - we actually - up to the last - up to the last second

the S.S., or the guards, were still in their - high towers guarding us. And I don't know whether I mentioned it. That for four days the Americans were holding up in order to link up with the Russians before they came - to liberate us. And that in itself, I can assure you, was - very, very dramatic in the camp itself. Why so dramatic? We had no food. We couldn't drink the water. And in those four days twenty one thousand people were taken out from Buchenwald and killed, shot.

Where did that happen?

That was - 1945, there was - April - we were actually released on the 17th of April 1945.

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And as I also mentioned - three quarters of the camp was armed. We knew that the war was nearly over. And we could not understand why it took them so long to come and liberate Buchenwald. They knew - shall I say the allies knew that we were there. They knew what the camp was all about, and yet those four days were lost. Were absolutely lost. And - what shall I say - when did I know that we were actually free. We actually started to break out of the camps before any military person - before we saw any military personnel from the Americans. Because the Americans released us. So we actually had quite - quite a number of people - already out of the camp. What shall I say. They were armed. But no strength in their - in their heads to lift the arms. Why do I say that. Because it was my own experience. I can't even put it bluntly to you. For no reason at all even for where it came from, I found myself with a Luger in my hand. And there I was with a Luger in my hand. Doing like everybody else. Starting - to go out of the camp, because where our block was situated, which was a block specially for young - people, for young kids, and I'm sure that I pointed out to you also that this block was half and half. Half was Polish children. Talking about children up to about - 14, 15, 16. And the other half was Czech. And below - below the camp was Weimark. Weimark, the - the whole world knows Weimark, the - the - more or less the - the capital of Prussia. One of these - greatest I think Germany ever possessed. And - so - you see that Weimark was very, very important. And that camp Buchenwald, after the war I found out that Buchenwald has existed for many, many, many years, even before Hitler came into power. I think. So a lot of German prisoners were kept there, but eventually of course it was taken for different purposes. Now - saying when did I actually know I was free. When I saw a tank - bursting through - the wires. And I must also add that was - and that the second tank stopped and the top opened and this is the first time I've ever seen a black person.

It was an American tank?

It was an American tank and it was manned by negros. I'm sorry to use this word. This is how I can - First black person. They stop and they pick me up, which - I was - they could have picked me up - with a half a finger if they had wanted to. And they started kissing me. I thought they were going to eat me up. And they gave me a piece of chocolate. And they put me on top of the tank and we came through the wire. Oblivious whatever was going around me, because hungry I was, weak I was, because as I say for a week, a whole week, we didn't have any food. And the jacket that I wore, which was part of my uniform, I actually devoured. I ate it by sucking it. To have saliva in my mouth I sucked the jacket. But I got off the tank and I started to walk down to Weimark. Which was about - I don't know how long - say about 7 kilometres or 6 kilometres away. I was given a lift in a jeep into Weimark. And the soldiers who gave me a lift in the jeep - were actually a Jewish rabbi in the Jeep.

An American rabbi?

An American rabbi. We immediately started to talk in Yiddish. Which - I was - absolutely surprised. He didn't press me for any explanation. I just said, "I just want to go on a farm and I want to get myself - a chicken". I got to the farm. Caught a chicken. Brought it back to the camp. Killed the chicken, brought it back to the

camp. And when I arrived - to my - astonishment - and the horrifying sight that they were actually already given food to eat. And the first meal they'd given to these starving - people, was pork and beans.

They didn't know?

They didn't know, but surely any medical or even not medical, any person with any sense, any - worthy of a human being, wouldn't give that kind of - to this kind of people who hadn't had food for a - for so long. All they had to do just to give them a glass of fresh water to drink would have been enough. Those people ate themselves - to death. There were people actually their stomachs were bursting. But they were still alive, because they thought they were not going to get another meal, or when would the other meal come along. So I've got a lot of things to blame America, or American foresight of - of releasing a camp with such devastation. But I will not go into details about the whole camp. I'll just deal specifically with my own experience. I had this chicken and I - although I was - not 15 yet. Because my birthday was on the 27th of April. I was born 1930 on the 4th of the 27th - of April. So I was not quite 15. And even then I had the presence of mind, thank God, that the only way I would survive was to look after myself. And that has proven, and I must say up to this date. Why do I say that. Because it took a helluva long time before I got myself on my feet. How? By cooking this chicken and just having a spoonful of soup every two hours. Until I started to have a taste in my mouth. When I - when I started to have a taste in my mouth I realised I am getting better. And I was getting better, I was getting stronger. And I waited and waited to see that anybody would approach us, to start asking questions. How did you get here? How you going to survive? Where are you going? Have you got anybody? Nothing of the sort. We were released and we were left to our own devices.

Do you mean to say that the American troops came and went?

They came there and they stayed to sort themselves out. And what they were sorting themselves out, I certainly don't know. But I can tell you one thing. Nobody came to sort us youngsters. Or us people who were in the camps all these years. Not for counselling. Not for any sympathy. But just to talk, to find out where are you going from here. What are you going to do. After all is said and done we were - we were - we were - we - we were animals, absolutely animals with wide eyes - weak - shattered. Without any thought, you had to start to think all over again.

How many of you were there?

Well, when we were released. I've got no idea, but it must have been at least - 40,000 people.

40,000 people from all over the world?

From - from all over Europe. From all over Europe. And not only Jewish people. There were Russians prisoners and there were - there were - various kinds there.

Were they all not dealt with?

As far as I know nobody was dealt with. Anyway, I - they make - they - they - they made a service for Pesach. I never forget. And the same rabbi whom I met in the jeep took the service in Buchenwald, in this hole where we had the meals before, during the - during the camps. And we had Passover. Again I just had a Mutza(ph) and a drop of soup. I didn't even want to participate in anything else. After the service he came along to me again, he recognised me. And he said to me, "Would you like to come back with me to America?" I said, "No way. I have got a home and I know where it is, I am going to find it again. And what's more", I said, "I come from a - a big family". I had eight sisters and I was the only son. Although I mentioned in the last tape that I have seen my mother and four of my sisters being shot, nevertheless there was other sisters still - hoping they were still alive. I had three married sisters. And the others were single. So - and - my father, whom I always believed that if I survived he surely would have survived. Because I had - a very strong bond between my father and myself. And I knew that if I'm all right, he's all right. And after about - two and a half months - I - a Russian - a Russian - lorry came in. Into the camp. Into - Buchenwald. And as I could speak Russian I went up to him and I started talking. I asked him where he came from. He said he came from - Prague. Stationed at Prague. He said in about two or three days time he's going back to Prague. So I asked him if he was kind enough to - get a few of us a hitch into Prague. He said "Yes", he said, "The lorry is empty. And whoever wants to come you can - you can - speak to whoever you want to. And how many I can get into the lorry, jump on and we'll take you to Prague". Which - thank God -

That was the first positive direction you had?

My direction was home sweet home. I've got my acquaintances and the friends which you've made over the years in - in - this block, which we laid for about 7 months. And we all jumped on the lorry and we came into Prague. We came into Prague I must say - it was like a spectacle - not - not in a bad taste, I must point this thing out. They welcomed us back - oh, wait a minute, I forgot to say. After quite a while, I think after about a month. There came a census. They asked that everybody should report themselves and they asked questions. 'What's your full name?' 'How old are you?' 'Where were you born?' 'And what religion are you?' And so forth and so forth.

So that was the first contact?

That was the first contact - I should be one of a number in this world again. And I got this piece of paper - and they'd written down 'Jew'. But they'd written down like sort of in Russian. 'Geet'(ph). I can tell you one thing, that word 'Geet'(ph) - it was like taking a pointed sharp knife and going right through my heart. So much so - that - I walked away and I took - a - a piece of rubber from a bottom of a - of a shoe, from a military shoe. I cut away the rubber from underneath and I rubbed this word out. 'Geet'(ph). And -

So 'Geet'(ph) is a negative word?

'Geet'(ph) was a Jew. That word Jew - 'Geet'(ph) in Poland - in Russia. It was sort of a venom. But venom. I rubbed it out and I put down Czech. And that piece of paper I even got it now. I brought it with me now. And this piece of paper was like sort of a little hardish paper which - which - with this piece of paper wherever I went - there used to be certain kitchens set up at stations. And with this piece of paper I could have a meal a day, which it was stamped every time you had a meal. So - and also, they told us to - to - they give us a red - a red piece of ribbon, which we put on our - on our - on our - sleeve, which said 'Buchenwald'. So wherever you went to the kitchens and they saw that - you wore that and you had this piece of paper, you deserve a meal - a - a - a bowl of soup. Which, believe you me, it was heaven. Nothing was organised. Nothing was - I don't know how to - how to put to you - you were left to your own devices. Nevertheless - the thing that happened afterwards to me - around me - not to me, around me - it was sort of - not only shattering, but heart breaking. Of thinking back - that you have survived, now you've survived and you're free, you're on your way home - and I give you a little incidence - what happened. We were going from - as I told you I came from Bitchkiv, which was a long way away from Prague. And we jumped a train, we really didn't know where the trains are going, they'd say "Oh, the train is going that way". And you took pot-luck and you just jumped in and you went. And rumours, rumours were rife. You met people who were in Belsen, who were in Dachau, who were in Grossrosen, who were in Auschwitz, who were in - in - Hirshberg(ph) Who was in Buchenheim? and who was in - And - "What's your name? where do you come from?" "Yes, I saw your brother, he survived. I saw your father, he survived. I saw your sister and she survived". Or - or - it was - the whole thing was like a melting pot. So much so that - you gathered from them a lot of informations. But at the same time sometimes you were getting absolutely the wrong information. Why do I say that? I have always been fortunate enough, somehow I don't know even to this day, wherever I go I always find a few people they sort of - they come up to me, they start talking to me and all of a sudden I've got them for the rest of - if I go on holiday I've got them for the rest of my holiday. If I go anywhere to - to - even to a - to a private home, somehow they start talking to me and the conversation is like - even so I don't want to carry on with conversation, like the conversation's always directed to me. This is not paranoia, but this is what happens.

You get involved in conversations?

Even without - not only conversation, even if I don't even want to participate I get pulled in for no reason at all. And with this particular - on this particular journey on my way home there were two or three - people who were - weakish. You know. Somehow they stuck with me and I felt sort of - they felt with me they were protected and I felt that I was protecting them, because - they were younger than me and I already felt what, I am the cock of the north, I had a gun and I felt strong and - and - and confident about going - I am going the right way. And a fella came in, into our - into our - cabin. And we started talking and say "Where are going?" He said he is going to Hest? And I said "Oh, I know Hest? very well" and blah, blah, blah. And he saw one of these fellas and he said "Aye", he said - I told them his name. He said "Well his name is very familiar". He said "Oh", he says - "I was with your father in such and such a camp". I can't even recall the camp he was in. And immediately the - the boy jumped up. "You mean you've been with my father?" You know, "He was

such and such an age". And he was telling the fella to make sure that it was his father he was talking about. And with the following breath the fella said, "But I'm sorry to say - he died in the camp". That boy fell back. Not in a faint that he was fainting, that you could feel his soul was leaving his body. And I said to him "Now hold on, hold on". No good getting into a panic. And I got up, I have never liked - to do things, to give orders to people to do something for me. I went out and ordered to get a glass of water to give to this boy. And by the time I came back he'd cut his throat. He had no - he felt he had nothing to live for. And he cut his throat. How he did it I just don't know, because there were people in this cabin. There must have been about eight or ten people in this - in this - cabin. And yet he managed to cut his throat. That hurt me very much. That hurt me very much. After all what he's gone through. But just - like sort of - to send somebody in to finish his life before he went any further, that was very, very shattering. It was shattering to me. I don't know whether a waste to him, probably - his time was up. I don't know. I believe that when we are all born our life is mapped out. And that must have been his date. Anyway, we cleared - we - we - somebody took charge of the body. We just called some people who - who - who - who were more competent than I was, they took the body away and that was finished. Well after about - after leaving Prague, after about five days, I have reached my place of birth. I arrive to our house which was still standing. And it was occupied. And it was occupied by the person who used to be our Shabbes goy. I don't know how to explain this. You know - in a Jewish house on Saturday you're not allowed to - to stoke the fire, you're not allowed to - to - to switch on lights and so forth. He was the person who used to come and he used to put logs on the fire. Make sure the fire is lit. And he - they more or less lived in our house. He was there before even I was born.

Was he a friend of the family?

He was more or less like a friend of the family. Never - never would I have thought that there would be animosity towards me. Why do I say that? Because when I approached our house, he came to the door. I knocked at the door, this fella came out with a gun, with a shotgun in his hand. And he said to me, "If you don't go away from here", he said, "I'll shoot you down like a dog". I said to him "Look at me. I am the son of Yitilizer(ph). I am the son of the owner of this place. You know me". I said, "I have played with your sons. I have given you, personally given you bread to eat. And now you are pointing a gun at me?" He said "I will not repeat myself. If you don't go away", he said, "I'll kill you". I said "You know something?" I said, "You may kill me, but if I go you're coming with me". I said "I don't mind being dead", I said, "But I'll make sure you come with me". And I begged him I should be able to sleep in the stables, on top of the stable where the hay was kept for the animals. He said, "Just away from this house". And believe it or not I had to walk out of my own gate, once again - not to be able to return. And as I walked out of my own gate again I thought to myself - is that really true what is happening to me. As I was standing outside my gate I just felt every drop of strength, every drop of blood - running away from me. And I sat down and I cried. I cried and I cried. The realisation that I've come back home ..

To no home?

Not only to no home - nobody was there.

Nobody was there?

None of my family was there.

Did you realise this at that moment?

Only at that moment.

So you felt a bit like that young man in the camp when he heard his father was dead?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. As I say, I just cried. And strangely enough - I had my hand on the gun, as I say I had a gun on me. And I looked down on the gun - and I pulled it out from the holster - and I looked at it. And I thought to myself - a human being is as strong as a lion and yet as weak as a fly. But one bullet - you can take away a human life. And I put the gun back into the holster. And I thought to myself oh God - I said, not I thought to myself, I said oh God, you brought me so far - be with me for the rest of my life. And I walked away from my house, from our house, never to see it again. And I started to make myself - my way back. Not back, first of all I went deeper into Poland. Meeting up with various other people, to meet other Jews, and then there was nothing - I felt there was nothing - nothing there who could offer - any - kind of - kind of life for a Jewish person.

Did you know where you were going?

Yes, I knew the places and I knew where I was going.

Did you know where you hoped to go to?

No, no way, nowhere. I was just drifting from one place to another, just to make up time. And - but then I started to make myself - on my way back into - back to Czechoslovakia. So there again I crossed over from my town. I went into Poland because I met up with some people at the station they said they are going to Poland, come with us, and you be with us and so forth. So you felt sort of companionship so you went into Poland. But inwardly I felt that was not for me and I left this - this whole group of people and I started to make my way back into Bitchkiv. But I didn't go as far as my house, I went as far as you remember right at the beginning of the tape I told you, there was a bridge which we crossed over and we were in Rumania. And I went to that bridge and I crossed over to Rumania. At that particular time there was no problems of crossing over borders. What borders? Everything belonged to Russia in any case. But it was called the border. So I crossed over to Rumania. And as I said my mother actually came from relations from Rumania.....

End of F2I7 Side B

F218 Side A

So I crossed over to Rumania. As I said, my mother actually came from relations from Rumania and my father was on the Hungarian side. And - so I thought maybe I'd find somebody there or hear some rumours or - come what may. And slowly, slowly, slowly I found myself in Bucharest. In Bucharest was a very interesting set-up there. There was a set-up whereby - everybody, and I mean everybody who came out of camps and went back to Eastern Europe, somehow or other they ended up in Bucharest, and this particular - it was like a - like a documentation centre. You got there - you could stay over one night. They gave you - a pair of trousers. A pair of shoes. Jacket. A shirt. A pair of socks. And a meal. And enough money - to the next station. For the next - well, to the next stop.

Who provided all that?

It must have been the Jewish - I - I wasn't there long enough in order to start finding out things. And they didn't even let you stop there long enough for you to settle down. They wanted you to be on the move. But that was the melting pot. And they took a photograph of you. They put it up on the - on a board. Where you could recognise your - if you had any relations or you - with all the information there, you could - it was like - it was like - it was like if you're going out of Yad Hashem, you see the pictures of various people from the camps. This is how it was there, but as an individual. Your name and your birth place and where you come from. So for - hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people it must have been a God-send, because there were their sisters and their brothers and their uncles and their fathers, and so forth and so forth. I got there, but unfortunately I didn't see anybody that I even recognised. Even if there would have been relations of mine I wouldn't have realised them - I wouldn't have recognised them in any case. Because first of all, as I pointed out to you, when I was 10 I went into the camps. And more or less we kept - I was kept at home, I wasn't travelling about the world. And my life was full with - with Cheder and so forth, so therefore even if a relation would have been there, I wouldn't have recognised him. So I found myself at that place as well and away. I had a suit which I was very grateful for. A clean shirt which I was very grateful for. A pair of shoes which I was very grateful for. And I started to make my way - back - to Czechoslovakia. To Prague. Well, I had to cross back from Bucharest over a bridge. Well it wasn't so much as a bridge - but I had to cross over from Rumania back into Hungary. It was like a triangle thing. I don't know - I can't explain. I had to come - this way - out of Rumania into - into Ukraine, into White Russia, in order to come this way. Come into Hungary.

You had to cross two borders to get back into Hungary?

All of a sudden, without any reason, things were getting tighter. All of a sudden you couldn't just cross over borders willy-nilly any more. This only happened within a few days. And I found myself - I came to this - to this crossing point in order to go over to - to - Ukraine, to White Russia. There were hundreds and thousands of people waiting to cross over. And the people who could cross over were people who were paying the guards. Paying. If you got the money you ruled the world. I'm there, I haven't got a penny to my name. What am I going to bribe with. Who am I going to

talk to. Crossing over, I want to cross over. But I felt I had an inner strength, it's very hard to - it's very hard to explain. I felt an inner strength. And I felt - Joe, if you really want to do it, do it. I took off my jacket which I was given a few days before. Because I was a few days in - in - in Bucharest. Not staying - I couldn't stay at the place where I had mentioned before, with the documentation papers and so forth. But I stayed around and I slept here and I slept there. And I took off my jacket, it was a beautiful day, I took my jacket off and I swung it over my shoulder, just swung it over my shoulder - and I started going to the guards and I just went past them. And I crossed over the border. And there was - there were guards on the other side - I crossed through the other side. And nobody - nobody asked me any questions. Who are you? Where are you going? What do you think you're doing? Where do you come from? It's like I never existed. It's like I never existed. And this to me was the proof that I'd been asking that God should be with me. I didn't need any proof because I survived the camps. But there was another proof. Here I was, already crossed over one border, I've got to cross over another border. So you had to start to think ..

Why was it necessary for you to go back to Prague. Because your home had gone. Why specifically Prague?

Prague to me - Czech was still to me the most civilised country in the world. I felt secure. When I came from Buchenwald to Czechoslovakia there was a warmth from the people. They also suffered - very badly. I somehow felt - I met up with a lot of people who were - Czech - Czech - resistance, with uniforms, Yiddisher people. Not only - I also met - my - he was my brother-in-law, because he was married to one of my sisters, but after the war I heard that this sister was - was - was dead, with the children, they had two children. But my brother-in-law survived. He was - I don't know how he got himself into the Czech army, but he was an officer in the Czech army. So he was in Czechoslovakia, so I - I felt - I probably had an affinity, I know somebody there. You know ..

That was the nearest you came to home?

Yes. Yes. Yes. At least I thought I would feel that way. I thought I would feel that way. So one makes a tremendous effort to - to - to reach that point.

So there you were in the Ukraine?

Ukraine.

[INAUDIBLE QUESTION]

No good. No. Couldn't get to Hungary first before I get in. I had to go into Hungary first to Budapest. In order to find myself again to cross over the border to - to Czechoslovakia. And that was a different kettle of fish. I had to think all over again completely different. You know if people would hear me talk, I don't know how people can ever believe what I'm going to say. But this is facts. You know you will say, "Oh, you were only 15, how can you think of things like this? And how can you think up of things? And how can you - take things in your hands?" You know, like

these - like sort of wild dreams. And this is just one of these little stories I'm going to tell you. In this particular place I felt that the only way I can cross over to Hungary was to go in through the forest. Through the forest. And there were many people who were - sort of - incursing into the forest to find a farm, to find shelter, some were finding - everybody had different ideas. But I thought if I go in deep enough into the forest and then cut across into Hungary, I will be able to cross over into Hungary. I must have walked for about - oh - 6 hours. It was just - the afternoon, about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I was deep in the forest. Out of nowhere there came a band of partisans. Armed to the teeth with machine guns and what have you. And - the fella who was leading this band of people - must have been about thirty of them - he looked at me, and as I said I had this red piece of material which was written 'Buchenwald', which I pinned back on this jacket. And he looked down at me, he said "Oh", he said, "I can see you've been at Buchenwald". So obviously I realised that he's not a - an ignorant man or - he's a - because he already knew of Buchenwald, so obviously he must have - known about things. And he said to me, "Oh so you are a Jew". I said to him "Yes". "No", he said "you are a Jew boy". I said to him "Yes, I am". He said "Well", he said, "then I'll finish off the job that Hitler didn't - didn't finish off". I had no fear, but I looked with astonishment at him. And I said, "What satisfaction will you get personally if you kill me?" He said "Well", he said, "go on, pray to your god. I'll give you thirty minutes", he said, "pray to your god and let him help you". So I said to him "You know", I said to him, "We've got the same god". "No", he said, "I believe in Jesus Christ and - and - " I said to him, "You know", I said "You are a very intelligent man". He said, "Oh", he said, "you are trying to talk to me to make me feel soft". I said "No", I said "all right, you want to pick up Jesus. Jesus. All right, let's talk about Jesus". I said, "To these men here whom you are in charge of, you are Jesus to them. You are their leader. They've got all the confidence and all the faith in you". "And", I said, "Jesus himself he was born like you were born, like I was born and like your men were born there. We were all born in exactly the same way. We were conceived in exactly the same way". He looked down at me. He said to me, "Well go on". I said, "The only thing I can go on - Jesus couldn't make this grass grow. It's only God's will that this grows. Jesus couldn't make these trees grow, only God makes these trees grow. But if you feel that it will give you satisfaction of killing me, to show in front of your people what kind of a person you really are, then it's up to you. Then I'm willing to die for my religion". He said to me, "Oh", he said "but you are different", he said, "the Jews are different, they don't eat the way we eat". So I thought to myself I am starving. And if you would give me whatever you give me I'll eat. He sat down. Ordered the men off the horses. We were talking while he was sitting on the horse. They all came up, we all sat down, we made a fire, we started eating. Pork and bread and onion. I - I enjoyed the meal. And when we finished the meal he says to me, "What are we going to do with you?" I said to him, "Take me across the border to Hungary - will you?" He saddled me up on a horse, he took me over to the border to Hungary and I was already in Hungary within - by 9 o'clock in the evening I was in Budapest. Who before the war - as I said before one of my sisters was trained in Budapest to be a sister. So I went up to the hospital there, I slept over the night. And then I also found out that there was a hostel of all the - the boys and the girls from the camps were sort of staying there. I went to the hostel. Slept over the night. The second night - the second night I slept over there. And naturally we started asking questions, "What did you do with yourself?" "How long have you been here and where did you come from?" "Where are you

going from here?" And everybody was in the black market. Everybody was in the black market. And they said to me, "If you want to go over to Czechoslovakia you have got to be in the black market because you have to bribe the guards". My dear sir, what shall I say about guards and what shall I say about black market? I thought to myself I've got to use my wits. As I'd used my wits so far, I've got to use my wits. And I was given the name of one officer who changes the guards. And if you promised them cigarettes - he would take you over the border. But you have to give him a lot of cigarettes. In the meantime I also found out that one of the boys who I was in the camps with - he - was also in the black market and he was going backwards and forwards. So I said the only thing I can do now is to wait for this boy to come back into Hungary and to find out the tricks that he's using and whom he's using, to be able to be so free to come backwards and forwards. And that boy arrived, the same evening we met up, we had a long talk and I said to him "What am I going to do?" He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do". He said - he said, "I'm so well involved - so highly involved in black market - that I can more or less pick and choose when I come and go". He said, "But - I'll go across and at such and such a time". He said, "If you go there about 12 o'clock lunchtime, this guard will take you across. And I'll be on the other side with Czech police. And if you call out to say - make a noise, and put it in such a way that, you know, they're trying to pull you over to the other side, I'll send in the police - the Czech police, to take you across". Not offering - not offering to take me across. And not offering to - to - to schmeer, to pay for the Czech police to come and rescue me.

Just to add support?

Just support.

He could go freely backwards and forwards?

Yes, he knew so many people he could go backwards and forwards. I mean guards.

Did you have the feeling that this was something that happened quite regularly?

Yes. Yes. People risked their lives. People risked their lives. They were in the black market and they risked their life. If they got caught they got shot. No doubt about it.

[INAUDIBLE QUESTION]

If not they were put in a prison and never to come out again. Not only this, I have known people who were caught by the Russians. Well, it was Russian guards more or less. Although the different uniform, but they were - they were more or less - the Russian guards were involved in that, taking money. They used to send them to Siberia.

[INAUDIBLE QUESTION]

That's right. Exactly. They were sent to Siberia. So you would believe it, but that it was. I was given this particular name of this particular fella. I spent in - in Hungary a fortnight. Found out many, many tricks. Mainly because - more or less I was

thinking how - will - I'm going to make a - a living. And if he can do it I can do it. And I went and I promised this particular fella 4,000 cigarettes. 4,000 cigarettes. This is a sum of cigarettes to promise somebody. These people were so used to getting these bribes that they didn't - I arrived in the evening. And I told them I want to go over tomorrow at 10 o'clock in the morning - whatever it was, I can't remember the time now. And when you come to such and such a point on that side I'm going to give you 4,000 cigarettes, who in his right mind when you've got the power, you've got the strength, he says "No, you give it to me and I'll take you across. I'm not taking a chance on that side". But they were so blase, so confident, somebody must have copped out in the end, but as long as it wasn't me. And when I went to the other side I started saying "What do you want from me, where are you pulling me? You are trying to drag me over. What have I done to you?" And the police, the Czech police came. "Hey". They caught hold of me and immediately I started to - because I speak Hungarian. I spoke Russian, I spoke Hungarian, I spoke Czech. So therefore there was no - there was no difficulty for me to jump from one language to another and I was begging, and the police came along, the Czech police, "What's happened?" I said, "Oh, I was picking mushrooms here and he caught hold of me and he - doesn't believe me and - and wanted to drag me back. I don't want to go back".

And all that without cigarettes?

Bluff. Absolutely bluff. But - I came across, so the Czech police said to me, "Actually, now where actually are you going to go?" I said "Well, I actually have got a brother-in-law of mine who last time I saw him was in Prague". But, I say, I know for a fact that he's living in Teplitzershabov(ph), which was about - ooh - a day's ride by train from Prague. So they said to me, "We want you to find your brother-in-law as soon as possible". And they took the number of my card, this particular card I had. Which, thank God, as I told you, it was written - instead of written 'Geet'(ph), Jew, the Russian, was written in Czech, which I had written, so I was a little bit - proof that I am Czechoslovakian. This piece of paper was actually very, very powerful and also they realised that I was in the camps, and they were very - very, very sympathetic, very sympathetic. They said "Well as soon as you find your brother-in-law you must report yourself so we can keep - a check on you". I said "I give you my word". I went to Teplitzershavob(ph), I found my brother-in-law. I reported myself and I was given another piece of paper which I've still got here, more or less giving me like you would say the British - the British - naturalisation papers are, piece of paper to state that I am - a Czech citizen, blah, blah, blah. But - I started getting - with all these through journeys, back to home and starting coming back, I already had trouble with my knee. I was shot - at my last - my last - tape which I made on the 1st of May, I never mentioned that I run away from the concentration camp at one particular time and I got shot in my leg and so forth. But my leg was getting bad. And - I also want to point out that although I met up with my brother-in-law - I knew instantly - that I couldn't stay with him. I couldn't stay with him.

You seem to have developed a kind of intuitive ability for situations and for people. And you realise that with your brother-in-law as well. There was something that got over you?

No I - I - somehow - the ingenuity, the perception of - of reaction of people was so strong with me. I only had to be in presence of people and I knew the kind of situation I was in.

But had you expected to feel that way with your brother-in-law?

No.

What did he tell you when you got there?

I give you exactly - and I'm sure - I'm sure now that you would listen you would find - you would get the same reaction. I met up with some people, "Oh" they said, "your brother-in-law is number so and so and so and so". I came to that door and he - got himself together - It's very hard to explain, that he got himself together with a woman - who was my - not my uncle, but my cousin's uncle wife, who also survived the camp. This is my cousin's uncle's wife, that he got together in this house. They were living together. And when I rung the bell - the door was opened and he said "Oh, hello Joe. Where you going?" What more do you want me to say? Not to say "Joe, come in". You know. "Fancy seeing you" and - and - all that warmth and all that - human - human feeling, human touch - it wasn't there. And I said "Well", I said, "I've only just arrived", I said, "but I'm going there and there, I'll see". "Oh", he said, "I wish you luck". The door was shut. There I was. Like a - like a - like a - the skin taken off, you're in the flesh and - you're on your own again. Which didn't bother me at all. It did not bother me at all. And I didn't know even where I was going. I didn't even know where I was going. Where am I going to sleep? Where am I going...? So many things one has got to think of finding themselves in a situation that... What am I going to do? Well, it just shows you the faith that I had in Czechoslovakia. I went into a restaurant without any money in my pocket. Yes. And I said to him - at the receptionist, "Can you give me a meal? I'm hungry". She called the manager. He said, "Come with me". He sat me down. I said to him, "I haven't got any money". He said, "That's all right. First eat. And then you'll talk to me". I sat down. I ate a meal. And he came over to me just before I finished my meal. He said to me, "What's your name?" I told him. He said to me, "Where do you live?" I told him. He said, "When are you going there?" I said to him, "I have just come back", I said, "there is nothing there. I am on my own". And he says to me, "Pepicoof" (because in Czechoslovakia the name Josef is Pepicoof), "Don't worry, you come back with me tonight and you sleep at my place tonight". Which is what happened. In the evening before I went to sleep I asked him - various things, like where can one find a job, and I was talking about my father, and what my dreams were. But in the end I thought to myself I want to make a - a - to learn a trade. That's the first thing my father always said, "The first thing you do you learn a trade". Although when I was young I wanted to be a doctor and all kinds of dreams, but this time I wanted to learn - a - locksmiths. Because I felt even with the limited amount of education that I had, there's nothing clever in bending a metal or - or learning how to file down a key or to - or to climb a ladder to open a window and so forth and so forth. I thought to myself I want to - I want to - learn to be a locksmith. So they directed me - he directed me to a place where - it has been there for about - a few years. But somebody came in and said, "You personally go there and talk it over and maybe he'll expand, he'll take you on". And lo and behold I go there and I ask to be

taken on and the fella himself was a Jewish fella. Jewish fella. Also a fella who was not in the camps, but he was in the Czech army. And he came out - he was wounded, and because he was wounded he took over a - a - a little workshop which belonged to a German.

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And of course the German was chucked out back to - to - to Germany. And they gave him this - this - workhouse to run. He said, "Yes", he said, "I'll take you on". And he said, "Where are you staying?" I said "I'm not staying anywhere". He said "Well", he said, "I'll - I've got here a - a fella who runs a - a sort of a boarding house". He said "I'll pay him the - the - for the food. The - and the living accommodations. And I give you a little bit of - of money in your pocket. But only a little bit. And the rest", he said, "You'll earn on jobs that I'm going to send you out to do".

Commission?

Commission. A commission. Not only a commission. For example - give you a little example. A person would come, "I've locked myself out". So my boss, he said to me "Joe, take the bunch of keys", which was - keys - they were not really keys, they were metal - they were sort of hard - nails, which were bent over to various different degrees of length. He said, "You fiddle so long until you turn it and the lock will open", blah, blah. And she used to give me a few coppers. "Thank you very much". Or she would give me a piece of bread. Sweets or whatever. Don't forget - in my eyes I was big and I was strong, but probably in somebody's eyes I was still a little child - and so forth. But I was big for my size. And - one - morning I wake up with my leg and I find myself that I am paralysed, all the left side is paralysed. My leg - the pain from my leg was so strong that it went right up my shoulder. That gave me a shock. But I was only paralysed for about two or three hours. Until I made myself walk and so forth. And I walked into hospital. Into hospital. And they had a look at my knee and they said, "Oh, you've got to stay in hospital. You've got some - water on your knee", or whatever, "some metal in your knee, and we'll keep you in a few days and we'll suck it out and you'll be better", and blah, blah, blah. Anyway, I came into this hospital. And I was there for a few weeks. And it was neither here nor there. They neither put my leg into a plaster, I didn't get any treatment, I - I just found myself - an inmate of a hospital. I don't know how else to put it. More or less - like an institution. I found myself after a few weeks you feel you are in an institution. You don't have to think for yourself, you get fed and you're in the warmth. And really if one is made that way that's the way you stayed. And - I'm not that kind of person who wants that charity from anybody. And you get to know different patients. All of a sudden somebody says, "Oh - there is a Jewish woman here and - what's more she's different". That word 'different' is to my brains shattering. "What do you mean she's different? Isn't she a human being like anybody else? Doesn't she get hurt like anybody else? Isn't she as ill as anybody else? What's she in hospital for?" So I went to the door naturally - knock at the door, "Come in", and I said to her, "I heard you are a Yiddish woman". "Yes". We started speaking Yiddish. Oh, a Hungarian woman. A Hungarian woman in Czechoslovakia in that hospital. So - and she was getting her meals private - private. Because the person who kept on taking her her meals was telling me these things. Because if I wanted something else to eat - with me, wherever I have been, the first thing I make sure that I know the cook. First thing. So I already know the cook in the kitchen and if I wanted anything, yes. I used to go down in the kitchen and eat in the kitchen with the workers. In spite of already having had my meal, the same as the other patients. So she said, "Ah", she said, "The Yiddisher Gemeinder". The Jewish organisation, giving us so much money a week.

And here I was in hospital, I didn't have nothing. Because if I didn't work I didn't get paid. And the fella who I started work with - out of sight, out of mind. He didn't have time to come and see what happened to me. You didn't come into work, you didn't come into work, so what. So this woman tells me that there's the - an organisation in this town, who come and visit her. And buy her things and pay for the - for the - for - her cure. I don't know, I think she had some TB of the spine, or whatever it was, I don't know. So - having heard her side of the story, I said to her "How about sending these people to me?" You know. She said, "By all means, he's coming in in two days time. Be here in my room and you talk to him". Which I did. Which I did. And he said to me, "The best thing for you to be", he said, "not to be stuck away here where there are not many Jewish people". Although they were quite a community I found out. He said, "You go back to Prague". Because the hospital were also saying that they suspect I've also got TB lungs. So he said, "You go back and from there they'll probably send you to the Tatras". Have you heard of the Tatras? "Into the mountains, the Czech mountains, for fresh air, for - for the people who have TB we have sent them", you know, very wealthy people used to go there. World renowned, world renowned. So I said to him, "Well, if this is the advice you give me I'll take your advice" I said, "but I haven't got any money to get to Prague. I don't know who I'm going to meet on the other side who is going to put me in this hospital for tuberculosis. And somebody has got to introduce me, somebody's got to take me there". He said, "No" he said, "I'll make all the arrangements". And within a week he made all the arrangements and I was sent to Prague Nine - we got different stations at Prague. I went to Prague Nine and there was a big hospital which was all TB cases. TB cases. And there I found a load - a load of - of - of people from the camps. People - who survived the camps and they're coming. They're being slowly, slowly cared for and cured.

Like yourself?

But I felt - I felt I was - as I said before, I felt I was fit. I could turn the world over.

Until that day?

Anyway - again I went with my knee and with my lungs. And it wasn't sort of hoity-toity. They said, "Ah, it's not so bad, although you have got a patch and I don't think it's active. But if you stay here - where will you go? You've got nobody". Again, the way they talk, they want to institutionalise you. That's not - that's not my way of life. That's not my way of life.

When you went to the hospital, for the first time you realised that it was a possibility that you could be institutionalised. Or enmeshed by the system?

No. No. I felt that I want to go over there just to give me tablets or injections. To cure me. But when they took me in they didn't say to me, "You're going to stay here for a week, two weeks, three weeks". They just took me in and - and - two or three later somebody came to see me and - "Oh yes, oh yes, that's nothing, that's nothing, we'll just..."

But they didn't tell you when you could go?

No.

Did it frighten you?

No, no, no. I didn't - who was there to frighten me. I wasn't afraid of anything. I wasn't frightened. I knew I walked in, I could walk out. It was nothing - nothing - there was no fear in me. Because I was getting my way - if I wanted something I got it.

It was just disagreeable to become institutionalised?

That's right. Not only disagreeable. I felt ashamed of myself to let myself feel institutionalised. That was a different thing. It was hard, I thought what the hell am I doing here, I'm becoming one of the zombies here.

This all happened in 1945?

'45, coming up to '46.

So just coming out of the camp in itself is a more elaborate story than all those years in the war time?

Shall I tell you something.

And in certain respects, as frightening and disturbing?

You know when I look back - when I look back now sitting here in my comfortable chair in my own home speaking to you. Those years in the camps - you were - you were - you were afloat. I don't know how else to put it.

But after, you came down. Gradually?

You were afloat. You - you were a nothing. You were like a leaf falling off the tree. And just slowly, slowly sinking. And this took years.

Using a poetic expression, 'like a driven leaf'?

That's right. That's right. But thank God when I was released from the camp the leaf reached the ground. I don't know how else to put it. But this is the only thing I can - this is the only way I can put it over. So you see, there was a level - I actually lived through - I feel - three lives. Three lives. My - my years from birth to 10. And then when I went into the camps I died. Came out of the camps - is like what we call - 'treesamitem'(ph), I came back from the dead.

[INAUDIBLE QUESTION]

That's right. And there was my second life. And I'm living my third life. Now. Now, I'm still living my third life.

You know an author who you would find interesting is the author Primo Levi, who wrote also very much about his camp experiences, but also the experiences afterwards. But he himself became very successful. Unfortunately, there was sadness and he committed suicide at the end of his life and it's a mystery to many people. But the thing is that he wrote as warmly, with as much detail about the days coming out of the war, travelling backwards and forwards in the Ukraine, Russia and he wrote about those terrible months in camps. It makes you think. People think the war was over and that is it. But the war wasn't over when the war was over?

No, it isn't over. Did you know - but I must tell you something. You know I have - I have read Elay Weisel's(ph) - some of his books. And I've heard other people's reaction - everybody's got a different kind of reaction - what one - sees in a book or reads in a book. You know in my opinion - I actually feel very, very sorry for Elay Weisel(ph). Because I think - with him writing so much and being so much involved, he has - he has destroyed his own life. He - he is not at peace with himself. He - he's letting these things rule him instead of - I don't know how to put it - I actually feel very sorry for him.

He's got too involved?

Very much involved. And it actually is destroying - I feel that he is - he is destroying his own life. Although he's become famous and he's become very well known.

Very famous, very successful?

Very successful, but - but - I feel different, I feel I am the most luckiest man in the world. Luckiest man in the world. Because - I - that I feel that I've survived all these horrors, and I've seen a lot, that I've come out - with a - with my brain intact.

You mean you've come out of it in one piece?

In one piece. You know what I mean. I didn't let - I didn't let my mind to be scrambled, to be embittered, to be - to feel sorry for myself.

Let us now go back about 43 odd years. To the hospital in the mountains?

No, actually it wasn't in the mountains, it was in Prague. And after I was there for about - 6 months. 6 months. There was a rumour, a very rife rumour that the - the Jewish Refugee Committee are taking up all the young people - from Czechoslovakia. They are sending them to America, they are sending them to England. They are sending them to France. But out of Czechoslovakia. And - not only was it a rumour, but it was a fact. And all of a sudden I found myself - all my acquaintances who I've already met and who - who - who came to visit me in hospital, they were - they were all going on transport. What am I going to do? So I got myself dressed. It was a hospital - it wasn't a hospital which, shall I say - that it was guarded and you couldn't go out. You got yourself dressed and you walked out and you came back - as I mentioned that word 'institutionalised', you can go out but you came back to your own little nest, to your own little ward. To your own bed, warmth and - and - and looking

back now it was like sort of a - a - the hen coming back to the nest and just chatter over the eggs and so forth. I walked out and I went to the Jewish Refugee Committee and I said to him, "Now look here, I - all my friends have gone now to - on a transport. I want to go on a transport". So they said to me, "I'm afraid that - the people that we are sending on a transport are healthy people. We can't send a person who is not well, who is not healthy". So what does one do? I went back to hospital. And I signed myself out. I signed myself out. But in that hospital - for my knee, they put a plaster, from my ankle up to my hip. Plaster. And I signed myself out of hospital that I am healthy. And I went back two days later. I went back. And I said to him "I'm no longer in hospital. I have signed myself out now. I'm fully fit. And - I want to go on a transport". But the mistake that I made is I spoke to the same person who I spoke to about four days before. He said, "Come off, I know you were in hospital and I don't believe you". So I said to him, "Well, then - that doctor has come and examined me and let them find out themselves" I said, "you're not a doctor". So he said to me, "I'll tell you something which may help". Didn't suggest doctors. He said, "That's something which will help you. If you can bring me a letter to say that you've got to get out - that you've got to get out from Czechoslovakia, I'll put you on the next transport". So I - in the meantime I've already made friends with the police, because I went in to report myself - if you remember in the beginning I told you I reported myself and I made sure that they got - let the other police know that I have reported here and so forth. So - I came back and I - to the police station and to the same fella who - I said, "You remember me? You know, such and such a time I came in, that you want to keep tabs on me and here I am". Showed him the piece of paper, you know. "I need you to do me a favour". He said, "What is this?" I said to him, "Look here. I'll - I'll pay you. I want you to give me a letter that the Russians are after me and I've got to get out of Czechoslovakia". I said, "Give it a stamp and make it look official". He said, "Yes". And which he did. And I come back to the - to - to - to the Jewish Refugee house. There's another fella there. Another fella. Not the same fella I spoke to, another fella. I show him this letter. He says "Ooh", he says, "Oh, we can't touch you". "Oh" he said, "if I do something about this and they're after you and they find out" - the Russians - "it will jeopardise all our organisation". I immediately took the letter, in front of him I tore it up into pieces and I put it in the bin. I said "What kind of letter?" I said, "I didn't show you any letter. It doesn't exist". "Doesn't exist". He says to me "No, no". And I got myself - this is the first time I felt rage in me.

The first time you felt ..?

Rage.

Things weren't going ..?

Things were not working out exactly what I wanted. And in the continent, in all the - the - the - in the bureau they used to have - I'm sure it must have been in Poland as well - they used to have these glass - glass inkpots. Remember?

Inkwells?

Inkwells. They used to be about 4 inches wide. And about ten inches long.

We had them in school in fact?

That's right. That's right. But - and the top solid, remember? And I looked at him and I thought to myself, "You - hopeless - arse". Pardon my expression. I picked it up and I hit it with such force on the - on the table - and it smashed to pieces. Smashed to pieces. And I said to him, "When I was in the hospital he didn't take me on the transport because I'm not well. That policeman gave me a letter because I'm all right and now I can't go, and now you want to send me to this post and to that post. I've stopped running. I want you to give me an examination and I want to be on the next transport. Now pull your bloody socks up to do something". He said "All right, come tomorrow and we'll have some doctors examining you". Now - my dear sir - everything what was happening to me and everything I'm telling you now is like fairy tales. But when you stop and think - it hurts. It's no fairy tales.

Did you know that you were better at the time. Did you feel ...?

I didn't think about better, I didn't feel about better, I didn't think that I was not well, I am fit. And here I've got a plaster from my ankle to my hip. And they're going to send me to doctors to examine me. Now look at this. Miracles, miracles happening with me every day. How am I going to face doctors when I've got a plaster on my leg? Yeh. I was confident. Take the doctor to the waiting room. They said to me, "Go in there and strip to your waist". I stripped to my waist. They examined me. Bend down, bend here, bend there. Took X-rays. Yes. He said, "All right, get dressed, out you go". I went out. So they said to me - four days later - I went into the office again, I said to him "Well". He said "Well" he said, "they've found a - a patch on your lung and - we may send you to - we may be able to send you to Switzerland". I said "I don't care where you send me. Out - out of Czechoslovakia". He said "Well come back two days later", because another expert was going to offer me a choice. Yes. "And they give you another examination". I said "Fair enough. As long as I don't have to drop my trousers, that's - that's - good enough for me". Thinking to myself. The other expert comes along, he - gives me a look at my chest and examines me, he listens, lots of X-rays. He said "You can't go to Switzerland" he said, "you're not ill enough to go to Switzerland; this is not so bad that you get to Switzerland". Back I go to the office and I said to this fella, I said, "Now look here. First of all I was too ill to go. Now you want to send me to Switzerland, but now I'm not ill enough, I'm not ill enough to go to Switzerland", I said. "Make up your bloody mind. I know you are sending a transport in two days time" I said, "I'll be there. And I am not going to get off. I'll be the first one on the plane". "All right". Went to the plane. I will not tell you in the meantime, in this six months when I was in the hospital, that I was involved in black market for cigarettes and with various things. This was only - only by and by things. And I came to the plane. And the boys were arriving. I was the first one there. I was the first one there. The boys were arriving, they were calling out names. And the last one, my name came up. I went on this plane. This plane - was - they stripped out the - the - the seats. And - and they put - benches in the - the - the - in the plane. You know, benches. And it was like when you see during the war these people were jumping out of the plane, where they were sitting there. This is exactly how it was. It was - benches.

What make was it?

A Dakota. I thought actually it was a Dakota because it had - it had four engines. Two and two. This is what happened. We got off. We were just going out from Prague - one engine packed up. So we are not going like this, we are going like this. To one side. We reach over Belgium. Another engine packs up. Now listen to this. So we're not going this way or this way, we are going this way. They were getting in touch with people in Belgium. There was - there was - the organisation was fantastic. Fantastic. We had to make a - a - a landing, because we couldn't carry on. And as we were coming in to land - the undercarriage didn't want to open. Couldn't open. So we had to make a belly landing. So we had to get off the benches, sit on the floor and - the people had to sit in between the legs. And that took me back to the year 1943, where I was in Grossrosen, where if you remember, we were sitting - and everybody was sitting, in order for room-wise, they had to sit between the legs. So your arms went round the person who was sitting between your legs, went round his chest. They said you have to have your head down. And when we stop everybody to jump out - from the plane, in case of fire. And get away from the plane as quickly as possible. Now - here am I sitting on the floor, with a person in between my legs, leaning like this on my - on my legs. Yeh. This is my two legs and I'm sitting like this, with my plaster on my foot. Don't forget I've got a plaster on my foot. And then we belly landed. 'Bump'. And he broke my plaster. See, here, you can still see - cut right across here. Cut in. I thought he broke my leg. Soon as the plane stopped everybody was jumping out. I can't jump. I got a plaster on my leg. And not only a plaster, I've got a broken plaster on my leg. I got myself out and hopped away from the plane. That nobody should see me. Why? Because as I say, I've got a plaster. I'm - I'm not a healthy person. They won't accept me. So I've got to keep it quiet. And I turned - turned away from the older people and I was standing on the side. And as they - they collected all the youngsters, they already had downstairs people with hot tea and hot coffee, sandwiches, from the Jewish Refugee Organisation. Which I was convinced that's who they were. Because it was too - it was too neat. It was too - too well organised. And I stayed way back, way back. And they said "Ah, come, come, come". And I felt the blood from the cut on my leg was running into my shoe. And there is nothing I could do about it. Afraid to move. Afraid to confess. Afraid to tell anybody. And I saw a young couple - who were coming towards me, and I pulled them more or less over. I said to them "Look here, I want you to do me a favour. Can you please take me back to your - to your place? Because I have got a bad leg and my shoe is full of blood, and I want your help". They said "Yes. Absolutely. You can - we'll - we can do that". They put me in - in their car. And they took me back home. And they took the shoe off, we washed off the blood. Told them exactly what has happened and everything else. And I said to them "Let me just - I don't want any food. I just want to sleep. And - you go and find out what's happening with the youngsters. And you take me back and I'll carry on with the youngsters".

It was a home near to the airport?

Yes. Or whatever they're going to do with - what - what they were going to do with the youngsters. But what has transpired was, that from the airport they took the youngsters to the

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.... journey, which I didn't know. Nobody else also didn't know. But I found out afterwards. But what happened to me was that as soon as they had their tea they took them down to the - to the - station. They put them in wagons and on their way they went. On their way they went. When this fella came along to find out what had happened, I told him that the transport has already gone. He comes back, he says "Oh", he said "the transport - they put them on a train?" I said "They're going to Paris". He said to me - he said "I'm afraid they're already gone". Now what am I going to do? He said to me "Don't worry" he said, "I've got a friend of mine who is a doctor, he's coming over from Switzerland. And when he comes and when he goes back he'll take you in his car and he'll take you into Switzerland". He said "Don't worry, he'll look after you". I thought to myself - oh - there is nothing I can do about it. And this doctor turned up. He saw what happened to my leg. He said, "First of all", he said, "we'll just patch up the plaster. Just patch up the plaster from the outside, make it look - make it all one piece, so it shouldn't give", he said. And - he took me to Switzerland. He took me to a hospital, and he said, "There's a lot of people here from the camps". He said, "See whether you can recognise anybody". And he said to me, "If you do recognise anybody", he said, "I'll make sure that you stay here in the hospital with them. And if not" he says, "we'll have to think - what will happen further". I didn't recognise anybody. I didn't know anybody. So he said "I tell you what", he says, -

Joe, when did you get married. And can you tell me about the circumstances in which you got married?

The circumstances I got married is - rather very strange. I lived in Brighton for quite a while. As I mentioned in the previous tape, that I met some tremendous, nice, kind and very interesting people. Particularly one person I would like to point out, was a man called Mr Ha'levy(ph), who was a headmaster of his own college, it was called the Whittingham College(ph). It was a Jewish college. And - there actually my life started with them - in 1946. But I'll skip all these years, because - all those people were kind to me, they looked after me. I spent quite a time in hospital. And then I came out of hospital, I trained myself as a cutter and designer. And - then the time came I met up with my friends from Brighton again and they talked me into coming to live in Brighton. Which I did. I worked for - in Brighton for quite a while. And naturally you get to know a lot of people. And - everybody wanted to marry me off. But while I was in hospital I've - I have found out that I have got two people who are living in Israel. Two sisters. And my aim - the most important thing in my life was of going to Israel to meet my sisters. To reacquaint ourselves, because many, many years have passed. And also to meet your own flesh and blood, which - that was my aim. And in 1954, '55, I - saved up enough money. And I told all those people who wanted to get - to marry me off, I just told them plainly. "When I come back from Israel after seeing my sisters, who have went through hell like myself, I will be ready to get married. And the first Jewish girl which will ask me to marry her - I will marry her". And this is what happened. I saved up and I went to see my sisters in Israel. Came back penniless. But we were having a charity dance which I was very much involved. And - this young lady who is now my wife, came along to see what kind of a band is playing. Because we made sort of a dance, 1984 dance, which was on

television, you know, like big brother is watching you. And we put on a dance for the Norwood children. And at that particular evening I was - in a very, very bad shape. I had the flu. And - but I had to get up to be at the door to collect the money. And this lady came along and she stuck with me during the evening, didn't want to leave me alone, she wanted to help me, she saw what kind of condition I was in. And also she stayed right til the end - because as we hired the hall we had to leave the hall in the same condition as we found it. So therefore it had to be clean and left in tip-top condition. And I begged this lady to leave me, to go, so we can get cracking to clear up the room. No, she stayed behind. She helped us. And also invited me to her 21st birthday party. It was - from then on it's just academic. We just - saw one another. And within a short period - we were married. Within about 8 weeks we were engaged. And - married.

We have got something in common. My circumstances of marriage are more or less the same?

Didn't hang about. Because, I'll be quite honest - I have done my running about. And the time has come that I should have a home of my own. And - although, to be honest, my wife I didn't know her, she didn't even belong to my circle. Let me be quite clear, everybody has got a clique of people - a certain circle which one keeps. And here you are, she's a Yiddisher girl, I've never seen her before, I've never heard of her before, but she did come along. And she was lovely then, she is more lovely now. There was nothing to hang about. We - we got engaged and we married within a short, short period.

Did you discuss, when you first met, or in the early days of your marriage, your war background?

Not really - I - one evening we met and - we talked - I talked a lot. One evening - she phoned me through and it was a bitter cold evening, bitter cold. We went for a walk at Brighton seafront. And if you know Brighton, it's - the seafront, you know, sometimes ..

Very breezy?

Very, very breezy. And we walked from Hove all the way - to - Palace Pier. And I must admit I talked - I must have talked all the way along the seafront, and she didn't say a word, just listened. And I felt that before she - decides to marry me or decides to go out with me, I want to point out what kind of a person - and what kind of a background - I come from. And I told her all about my past, about the camps, and everything. And we had a cup of coffee. And we went home. And that was all there was - talked, and never talked about it again. That evening was the beginning and the end. I was never asked about any aspects of my background or whatever. The more important thing was the future. And naturally we were planning for the future. She was working, I was working and we decided that we would live from her wages and save my wages. It wasn't a lot, but it was something.

You are talking about in the middle 50's?

Yeh, we are talking about '56. We are talking now. I came to Brighton in - to live in Brighton actually in 1952. So there was a gap - as I say, between - between - actually working in Brighton and getting married. And - we got married, as I say, and we were planning for the future. For me was the most important - stage in my life. Because up to then - let's be quite honest - I was just floating about. And also to me was also an aspect where, as I pointed out before - floating. What do I mean by floating? It was like a - like - like - like a leaf falling off a tree. I was floating about. My youth, this is one life. My camp, concentration camp, was another aspect of my life. Then it was the release - of the camps. And finding my way, where do I belong. Until I met my present wife. There was another aspect of my life. This is actually my fourth life. I feel - I felt then, but as soon as I got married that - my - the leaf has reached the ground and I have - I am now - beginning to grow. The leaf has taken root and is beginning to grow. I've got another person and we were planning for the future. We were planning about children, we were planning what we were going to do and so forth. And - after a short period, I would say about 8 months, we decided that we would like to have our children whilst we were young. Because I wanted the children to grow up with us together. And not to feel in the later years oh, you are too old for this or you're too old for that. And my wife felt like that. And we were in a flat, rather a very shabby - and a very high up in a house, about the fifth floor, an attic, that was our flat, that was our first dwelling. But as soon as my wife was pregnant I tried, or we tried, our damndest to find - a ground floor flat somewhere, because it was - we knew that it would not be good for my wife to keep on coming up and down the stairs. And when I say an attic, it was an attic, because when you wanted to go - excuse the expression - when you wanted to go to the bathroom we had to come down - down a flight of steps in order to share the toilet and the bathroom with the people downstairs. So you can imagine the conditions that we were living in. I will not go into details how eventually we found - the - a flat. A ground floor flat. But we did. The circumstances were not very tasteful and I will not also go into details on that, because it - it involves my wife's parents and they are dead now. It was a painful experience for me, because what I went through I - I thought that I - I deserved a little bit - not I deserved -

Could have expected something better?

Yes, yes. And I - I did not, but nevertheless I'm not - I'm not bitter about it, it was a good experience. And when my wife was about five months pregnant - my wife one evening said to me "Darling, something is very, very strange", she said, "here I know I've got a child in my stomach and I don't feel any movement". We went to see the specialist. And unfortunately he confirmed that the baby - is dead. One cannot imagine - and I don't think I can put it into words how one felt. I can only say how I felt. And I imagined it - ten to twenty times worse for my wife, because she was carrying the child. And what's more, she knew it was dead, but she had to go through until the end with the baby inside, because they didn't want to remove it in case there was some complication would set in and it would be bad for her health. So she had to carry through - carry a dead child for another four months in her. That must have been a torment. Must have been - But nevertheless, our love was strong enough and we will carry it through until the end. The child was born. Came away nice and clean. She was healthy. The doctor called me in and he said "Now look Mr Perl, I know this is a terrible thing" - Of course it was terrible because it was the first thing

that I could have called my own, my - something which belonged to me, from me. And it wasn't forthcoming.

And not having a family of your own?

And not having a family of my own. But I still didn't feel bitter because I thought to myself - God probably was good to me, because maybe the child would have been born - disfigured or - or an ill child. So God - probably done me a favour. I accept that. And the specialist said to me - and to my wife, he said "Now as soon as your wife gets over the period of - of - the loss of blood, gets a little bit stronger, as soon as you two feel that you are strong enough, you want to start a family again, go in for a family as soon as possible". And we did. And as you probably know - you yourself, about my children, we have a lovely, beautiful daughter for my second child. Beautiful, brilliant, good mind, went through university. Did extremely well at school, did extremely well at university. She's now 31. She's doing extremely well in her work. As soon as my daughter was about two and a half years old we went in for our - we went in for another child, and we had a son. You met him. He's now maybe 28. He's done very well at school. He's done very well at college. He was trained to be a - in hotel management. Which he's doing extremely well now. He worked for very big companies. And he worked in South Africa. And he came back. And he's working now in London and is doing extremely well. Very well, happy. And - the first child, even now, I must say, many times my - for no reason at all my wife calls out, she says "Oh, our first son would have been - this and this age".

She still speaks about that?

Even to this day, even to this day. And I don't know why, because I - my - my philosophy is - if I - I can understand her, because as I say, she - she carried the child. As far as I was concerned I didn't - I didn't even see it. So therefore it was not - something that I held in my arms, something that I saw in front of me. It's - it's - I know it happened, but it - it has not played a part in my life. It has not played a part in my life.

Actually it happens very often when, for whatever reason, hasn't been able to grieve properly about the death of a child. And I must say that in my experience very often even if the child is days old, the parents can go through very sort of prolonged grief.

Absolutely, absolutely.

It is always complicated. There are always complications.

Why is it complicated? Because you've seen it and you've held it and you've heard the cries and so forth and so forth. It is already a part of you. But a thing that you haven't seen - like myself. My wife went in. The child was born. It was taken away straight away to be - it was dead, it was taken away to be - to be - analysed, whatever, post mort - whatever you call it. My wife didn't see it and I didn't see it, but she carried it. She felt it. I didn't carry it and I didn't feel it. Although I know it was part of me, but it - I didn't - things that you don't hold, you don't have and you don't miss. This is my philosophy.

Don't forget that you had seen so much loss. And you had seen so much death. That in a sense you had become trained almost, had become more philosophical.

Absolutely.

You saw all the time people who were not as strong. Sometimes the better ones, but who were not as strong and died.

That's right, that's right.

For Sylvia of course it was completely new.

Yes.

In a way it probably made her more conscious of the suffering that you went through. But in a way she has sort of opted not to discuss it with you.

Shall I tell you something? No, I'll put it the other way round. I've always - right from the beginning with my wife - I always talked - about God. Because - because I felt myself that God has been with me all the time, he has guided me, he's protected me. I don't know how and why, but it was there. I've pointed it out - I'm sure, in the tapes before. When I crossed over the borders between Rumania, Ukraine. I walked over a bridge where - there was guards and I walked past like I was - I was a ghost, I didn't even exist.

Yes, in the very early tapes. When you were first alone. And you also felt you wouldn't be forsaken.

That's right. So therefore - but in many, many, many cases, many cases, even in the camps - I didn't bring them up in the tapes because one doesn't want to talk about - horrific things you've already heard about and you've read about it. You don't want to go all over this again. But my wife came from a background where - she was one of six children. And God didn't play a - too much - too much in their lives. And - and I talked so much about God that she became to believe in me and in God. And in such a way that if I said something, she did not rebuke me or she did not - put me down. And strangely enough, and this was exactly the same with the children. That I talked so much about God to the children that I always talked to them that I've got a direct line to God. And I can give you a little instance what - what - the way even to this day the children are still believing the same way in me, and they still - if they want something they always say "Daddy, have a word with God". And I give you one little instance. My children were - I was - I was organising an outing for my club, I was running a club in Brighton. I was organising a club. To take on a farm - it was like sort of a kibbutz, run like a kibbutz the farm. And I wanted to show them another way of life. About Israel and about kibbutz and that particular farm was training people before they went to Israel, that farm was training the people how to live off the land. And I thought for the club this will be an extremely interesting day. Which naturally you've got to organise it - a month or six weeks beforehand. And I did. It wasn't so much only the club, but the parents of the children also wanted to come. So

I hired a coach. Now - we were going there on a Sunday. On a Wednesday evening it started to rain. But I mean rain. It rained all night Wednesday. Thursday. Friday. My wife said to me "Joe, phone through the company and cancel the outing". I said to her "Don't worry darling" - Friday night at the table, the children were there. And my child remembers it, specially Frances. I said to my wife "I've already spoken to God and on Sunday we are going to have a beautiful day". And my wife laughed, she said "Listen". And it was pouring. We got up Saturday morning, it was pelting down with rain. She said "Joe", she said, "it's going to be a disaster". I said "Darling", I said, "have faith in me; I've told you, I've already spoken to God". When we got up on Sunday morning it was the most perfect day you ever wished to have seen. Beautiful sunshine. Warm. And the people were turning up in cars and the coach was full, we didn't even know where to put the people. We went to this farm and we had the most fabulous day. And they put on a most fabulous tea. And from that day to this day I don't think my daughter ever forgot it. And when she was going to school and when they used to have school outings, a day outing from school as children, many times my little daughter used to come, "Daddy will you pray that we should have - our school should have a lovely day when we go out". So it was that kind of love and upbringing and understanding - that we installed in our children to believe in us.

At what time did you speak to your children about your war experiences? It was not a very happy background.

This I must confess. I - feel now - very guilty. I never - spoke - to my children about my experiences. They knew I was in the camps, because I think my wife told them. But never about my experiences. They knew my background from home. That they knew about. The happy background, about my sisters, about my father and mother. But nothing about the war. And that was brought out - that was brought out - when I came to live in Bournemouth. Why do I point out this about Bournemouth? Because my wife she's got a very good perceptive mind. Where she - first of all she could see that if I was working for somebody else I would be working for the rest of my life at the bench. As a designer and cutter.

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And she felt that we can do better for ourselves. And we tried - everything to - to start a business of our own. But how can you start a business if you haven't got any money? Well - it came to a stage where my wife and myself, I wasn't very happy where I was working, the atmosphere wasn't - wasn't - conducive, and we decided we'd got to do something about it. But how and - and what was - a tremendous - tremendous battle with ourselves. We thought probably we can borrow money. We looked up a little paper shop and a little sweet shop. Or maybe if we are lucky enough to - to have a little caravan to sell - what do you call it - sweets and - and - ice-creams, you know, on the seafront. Why do I say that? Because through my friends, through my acquaintances, I got to know the judges and I've got to know - because through my club I was asked three times to be a J.P. in Brighton. And I was very much involved with the youth so I knew judges and I knew J.P.'s and I knew police and - There was nobody in Brighton who didn't know me. And I'm talking about from 4 to 104. Between Jews and Christians, they all knew me. And - but eventually, again, - we decided - a friend of ours went for a holiday to Bournemouth. And she was saying "You know what? I've stayed in a place and she was so strict, the landlady, and she had no personality and the food was lousy. And I am sure you can do better than she can. If you come down and find a boarding house, we all go in a partnership". Well, to cut a long story short, my wife one day got herself up, she came down to Bournemouth, had a look round, she saw - she saw the place. On a Friday. She phoned me through on Friday evening. She said "Come down tomorrow". And I came down on a Saturday. I saw the place. Seeing it and finding money to buy it, is two different things. That place was going, don't forget, in 1969, for £20,000, which was millions. Because in 1969 I don't know whether you were here and you can remember. When I went to see people to talk about money, they said "You know Joe, It's easier to go to the moon than borrow money". In 1969 it was - money was very, very, very tight. Very, very tight. But there again - when you said how do you find out who is your best friend. Is when you need him. And I went to a gentleman who knew me right from the beginning when I came down for that first day to Brighton. And this was the same gentleman who gave me the job to start with. I worked for him. And I went to the same gentleman to ask, because at that time he owned three hundred shops, menswear shops, and I thought to myself if a person like that can't lend me any money who else would. And I made an appointment and went to see him. He was very, very - hurt and surprised that I phoned him through and I wanted to make an appointment with him. He said "You don't make appointments with me. You know where my office is. Come along". And I came along with my wife and I gave my proposition. And he was quite frank with me. He said "Joe" he said, "my money", he said, "is tied up in the company", he said. "This is a company", he said, "I haven't got ready money", he said. But nevertheless, do you remember one of the tapes I'm talking about that man had a boy of 8 years old when I came? Well that man - that boy was already grown up and he was a solicitor. He said "Look", he said, "Anthony is in London, he's a solicitor", he said, "I put you through to him and you speak to him". Naturally he put me through to him and I said to him, I said "Look here, I'm phoning you because I want money. A lot of money. Can you find anybody who can lend me money? I've got no security, no nothing", I said, "I want money". He said to me "Give me about four days", he said, "and I'll let you know". After four days he was as good as his word, he phoned me through, he said

"Look here", he said, "I've got you here two names. Two names. If they can't get you money, then nobody else will be able to lend you money". He said "I can't help you as well". He said "But these other two names". And this is the God's truth. I put those two names in a hat. This was - this was - three days before Christmas. Three days before Christmas. And I put them in the hat and I said to my wife "Pull out a name". She pulled out a name. And - we put the other name back into the wallet. And then we were pondering, shall we phone or shan't we. It's before Christmas, who will want to be bothered? And - after that I couldn't sleep. And my wife couldn't sleep as well, we were worried, we already knocked ourselves silly. And here we were phoning this man to say we are going to buy this place and we haven't got any money. Christmas Eve, in the morning, I said to my wife "You know what, phone through this gentleman. Let's phone through this gentleman". We phoned them through and it was about half past 9 in the morning. And he says to me "Oh yes", he said, "I've - you know, Anthony phoned me through, he told me about it". He said "Well", he says, "I'm afraid", he said, "if you can come this morning - or after Christmas". I said "No". I said "I'll come and see you this morning". This is Christmas Eve. In the morning. I was still in my dressing gown. We got ourselves dressed and we caught a train from Brighton. And by half past 11 I was in his office. Everything was packed away, everything was finishing, we walked in there - he was a tall fella - And he said "Ah, Mr Perl", he said, "What's the other name?" I said "Josef". He said "Can I call you Joe?" I said "Yes". And he put his arm round me and he said "You know Joe", he said, "you're three quarters there". So I said to him "What do I do for the last quarter?" He said "Come in and let's discuss it". And he had a big office, a big table and a pencil and a piece of paper. He says to me "Well - talk". What was there to talk. I gave him the figures which I thought I would do on the hotel. What kind of hotel it is. How many people I can book in. And blah, blah, blah. And this fella had a brother who was an accountant. Called him in. He said "Look at these figures". And his brother said to me - the accountant - he said to me "Well", he said, "you're underestimating yourself". I said to him "I didn't come here with lies, I didn't come here with highfalutin ideas, I'm giving you facts. And if you can accept these figures then I'll be very happy". And this fella looked up at us and he said "Well", he said, "you're both looking very tired. What I want you to do now", he said, "Leave all this, all your troubles on this table". And my heart sort of gave a flutter. So I said to him "You mean to say that I'm ninety nine point nine percent there?" He said "Now leave your troubles on this table and - I'll let you know". On New Year's Eve at 8 o'clock at night, we were already on our way - I only came - I took everybody to the dinner and dance. We went to the Metropole in Brighton. And I came back because I had to pick up the - the babysitter. And I bought the babysitter up. And I was just explaining to the babysitter "Here's your food, here's your tea if you want some", and blah, blah, blah. And as I was washing my hands - the phone goes. And this was the gentleman who I saw Christmas Eve. He said "Joe", he said, "have you booked up for New Year's Eve?" I said to him "Yes, I'm going to a dinner and dance". He said "Well", he said, "I want you to go and to eat and drink and be merry", he said, "we've got the money". Well you can imagine what kind of an evening we had that evening. And here I was already - I am going to be in business. We bought the hotel, and after two years we straightened ourselves out, we borrowed the money very heavily, I managed to get rid of the heavy money, and we straightened ourselves out. And then I started to think about my children. For the future. The children were already here. My daughter was 11. My son was about - 8.

And - I felt that I wanted to have a house of my own, because we were living then in the hotel. And I didn't want my children - First of all there was nowhere where the children could relax and study. That was one thing. And the other thing is I didn't want my children - to mix with - with - grown-ups. I wanted them to be children as well. So I was lucky enough, after about 5 years - or 3 years - or maybe 4 years. We bought this house in which we are living now. And so the children can have a home of their own. Because my wife was sleeping here and I was sleeping at the hotel when we were open for business. And then naturally we found ourself that we can afford also to go away on holiday. And I took my two children to Israel.

For the first time you took them on holiday?

That's the first time. Not on holiday, but the first time to Israel. The first time at Israel. We had been to all this - abroad, to Spain, and so forth. But this is the first time to Israel.

This was about 1974?

Yes. And - that was a very - I don't know how to put it - We went to Israel, we went on a trip - and we went to Israel - we went to Israel - my wife and I first. Because the children were still - the school didn't finish and they were old enough, you know - they were already been travelled and I trusted them to go on the plane on their own. And we were there meeting them at the airport. My brother-in-law, he had actually worked in Ben Gurion Airport, so there was no problem, he went to the plane - to - to - to bring down the children, so there was no problem. And - before the children came out I went - my wife and I went for a trip, and we went to this Yad Vashem. And - we've seen it.

Yad Vashem. The Holocaust?

The Holocaust, yes. And when the children came out I didn't like to go all over it again, because there were certain things, sometimes you go through and you said "Ah, I'll see it again next time I'm going to have a meal instead of going to go there". So you had certain things that I didn't see. So I went on this trip all over again, with the children. When we came to the Yad Vashem I said to the children to go on themselves. Because I didn't want to go in there again because I've seen it. And as soon as they went through the door to go inside - I said to my wife "Oh God - I haven't prepared the children".

And what did she say?

She said "Well - it's too late now. But I am sure that they have already read books about the camps and so forth. They're not as raw as you think". Well after about an hour, an hour and a half, the two children came out. Not a word was spoken. They came over to me and they put - each one - one on one side and one on the other side - and they put their arms through my arms - and we were just walking. And I looked at my wife and I thought to myself what kind of a strength my wife has. Because she stood back - she stood back - in order the children should come near to me. And comfort themselves through me. And she didn't want to interfere. This just shows

you the kind of strength of character that my wife has. And for quite a while we were talking about everything else - but not about - Yad Hashem. Not about the Holocaust. And I feel - maybe wrongly, or maybe rightly, I don't know - that that had a profound affect on my children. That I did not - bring it out in the open in the early stage, early stage. And also after - I have - they have been to Yad Hashem also that - I just let it ride, I just let it ride.

And during the journey it wasn't discussed any more?

No.

And did it come up when you came home after the journey. In later years?

No. No. But there was - a lot - a lot of films have been shown on the - on the - on the television. And they have seen it all and - and I - and I actually was - I sat in and watched them - with the children and with my wife. And many times my wife said to me "Shall I switch it off? How can you sit there and watch this?" I said "Darling, to me this is celluloid. It has no affect on me whatsoever. Because here am I sitting, I am seeing it. I've been through it, I've seen it all. It - it's - they don't have to preach to the converted. I've already been there, I've seen it". What I was interested - what affect does it have on other people? What did they think of it? Is it just a film, a celluloid, or do they really believe it? There is people now, even now to this day, after all the things that have been on the pictures and on television and - and wireless and - and plays and everything else, even to this day, the mind cannot absorb - the mind cannot work out what they see in front of their own eyes. It's impossible, it's impossible - to - to understand, to - to absorb. A blotting paper can only also absorb so much and then when it's full it can't take any more.

So did you ask your children how they responded to these problems?

No, I didn't ask, I didn't ask, because - if I would have asked - they would have wanted to know more about me. And I could not - I would not be able to comfort them, because I would have to tell them the horrors that I went through. And I think they would have - they would have - classed me in a different category. They would have classed me - as - as an individual which they couldn't - approach me, and I didn't want that. I didn't want that. And this is - why do I say this? Because even now I feel that my children haven't got a chip on their shoulder. Not because I didn't tell them, because the way - they - they don't want anything from us. They want to do everything themselves. They want to suffer. They - they - because - many times they've said to me "Daddy - we admire you because you came over to this country, you couldn't speak a word of English, you had not a penny in your pocket, you spend years in hospital, you came out and you started and look where you are now, you've got a business, you're successful, you're - you are liked by everybody, everybody likes to be in your company. And we are proud that you are my father - you are our father". But they want to do everything themselves and I feel that they are - they're shutting me out. They're shutting me out - from - their troubled mind. Because - they - they must have troubled mind, there must - there must be a time -

What do you think is going through their minds when it is troubled?

I feel that they're very, very lonely, they have got nobody else to talk to. And they don't want to come to me because - they want to show that I can solve it all - myself. You did it, so can I. So much so, I tell you it's true, many times, unwittingly, sometimes my son comes out and tells me things that happened in South Africa and - and - at work. And he used to be sort of under pressure. And he used to say - and he told me, he told me many times. He used to stand back and say, "Now what would my daddy do now? How will he tackle it?" You - you understand what I am trying to say?

He looks to you for an example?

For an example. Every time.

He will actually rely on your example rather than on his own ...?

That's right, that's right. And he's a very capable boy. But he said "How would dad tackle this now?" Not, "Let's think". And my daughter exactly the same. My daughter exactly the same.

So you say that they are lonely, they can't really talk about it to you and they feel they have to solve all their problems themselves. Do you feel they want to pretend or act out more grown-up than they really are?

Absolutely.

And how long have they been like that?

Quite a while. Quite a while. Quite a while.

That is at the moment a problem?

I don't think it's a problem. It's a problem to them, it's not to me. You see my philosophy has always been like this. Every parents can only do so much for their children. The first thing is to give them a loving home. A secure home. The other is give them if possible a good education. I've always brought up my children - we - we - don't leave out my wife, because she played a most - a more prominent part than - than me. We brought up our children as a mummy and daddy and the inner strength. Because the children grew with us. We are not old. I mean my children were - my child was 31 and I'm still 58. Not 58 yet. So - you can see we grew with our children. Although we were - I brought them up as mummy, daddy, we also brought them up as pals, as friends. And I always told my children - if you do anything wrong, if you find yourself in trouble - don't go to nobody else, speak to me, not only as a mummy and daddy, but as friends. I want to be the first one to know. I don't want to hear things from somebody else. So I've given them that wide, open door, the wide choices they've got. The wide choices they've got. And I hoped it worked, that's all you can do now. I can't tell my children - tell them what to do, what not to do. I've got to - I've got to let go of the reins and I've let go of the reins a long time ago. As soon as my daughter went to university I let go of the reins, because she was away

from me, she was in school. She was at university in London. And although we used to see her very often and we made the point of going up there and taking food there, and she used to come home. I made things easier, I bought her a car and all this, so she had no excuse - of - of - of driving home. And this - this is what I'm trying to tell to you, that she used to come home with the car and I know that she was in university and they didn't pay her a lot of money. We were trying to help her, to say "Well, here's £10 for the petrol". "No, I can afford to. I can manage". But I - I - I know from other people they can't manage. But somehow my daughter always managed. This is what I'm trying to say.

Wanted to be really independent?

Absolutely. They want to do everything themselves.

They want to prove themselves?

To prove themselves. What do they have to prove? I love them. They know the love is there. Look at this house. My wife and I, the rest of the house is empty. Their room is still there. My daughter's room is still there, with her little toys, with her little bunny. This is her room. My son's room we've still got there. He's still got his little - little lion and everything, and that is his room. I feel that - I don't want to move anywhere else, I don't want - because they are still single, this is still their home and this is still their rooms. What else can you say?

You feel sort of a little exasperated, if I can use that word. And in a sense they should, in your view, be able to feel that they can just have confidence in their own ability, without having to prove anything excessively - that you don't see it coming from them and you don't feel that you can do it for them either?

How can you. How can you.

Does Sylvia feel the same way about it?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. You see - you - you can't - you can't ask questions and pull things out of them. If they don't want to - if they don't want to - tell you anything, you can't make them tell you anything. For example, my son - popped in the other evening. Just for two hours, just to see us for two hours. He came back from Cardiff and he was passing - he was passing from Cardiff - just imagine passing through here from Cardiff. He made a detour in order to come just for two hours. In those two hours we kept our mouths shut. But just let him talk. Let him talk - nonsense.

Anything?

Anything. But let him talk, it's his two hours with us. And that's very important. I felt it very important for him. And for us it was a pleasure to see him.

End of F2I9 Side B

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Now, for all it's worth, can I sort of discuss the matter of independence and the standing apart and the not turning for help to you or to Sylvia for that matter, a bit further. I have done a lot of talking to people. And I've read my books, I know their is no substitute for real experience. But one of the things which has sort of come to me is that when somebody has really gone through something absolutely - mind bogglingly and awful. Something so awesomely awful, as the Holocaust. That very often the very awareness that your parents have gone through this experience creates some difficulties for the children. There is nothing you can do about it. They just sort of - they feel they can't put any pressure on their parents. They feel they have to prove that they don't need their parents.

That's right. That's right.

They feel that they must not make any impositions on their parents. Unfortunately, what I am also concerned is that children do need to see their parents as people they can fall back on.

That's right.

So in other words they have got a conflict. On one hand they need a parent and on the other hand they don't want to need a parent.

It cuts both ways, that parents still need their children.

Yes. Could you say something about that. You feel that they are too independent. They don't give you enough?

That's right. That's right. We still need them. We still need them. Why is the nearness of somebody that is part and parcel and your life - you may let go of the reins, but you don't let go of yourself. That is the most important thing, yes. You see my daughter works in Paris. She's been working there for five years. She worked for the New Zealand Embassy for five years and she has changed her job now for a better job. She has got a very responsible job. But the phone calls, doesn't matter how many times she phones through, the phone calls are like a pot of gold pouring down. Just to hear her voice. That everything is well. We don't want anything materially from them. But naturally it comes to a stage, she's 31, we are getting a little bit older now. We have hoped by this time we would have little - grandchildren running about. Or my children will get married. This - this - this is our future now. Is - whether - the children will give us something - before we die. That - what shall I say - something has come - from the children to us. Which I mean a grandchild -

Continuity?

Continuity, yes. Continuity.

Have you discussed it with your children. Does it come up in conversation?

It has come up, but it don't mean a thing. Don't mean a thing. Because - they feel now that we are nagging them of getting married. We are nagging them about this, so we stopped.

You probably are, but you've got your reasons.

Of course we've got our reasons. But they don't see the reason - and on the other hand - many times when we feel low - and there are times we do feel low, and - But when we see the divorces and the unhappy marriages - thank God - we think to ourselves it's no good pushing somebody to marry just for the sake of marrying. And they're happy in what they're doing.

This is another conflict Joe. The point is that you get a situation where for somebody who has lost so much of his family, and for Sylvia who hasn't seen so much of her husband's family. There is an even greater need to have an extended family.

Absolutely. Absolutely.

So in a sense there is a feeling in the back of your mind that it may be right or may not be right, that somehow if there is an extended family then that is going to make up for some of things that are never going to come back.

That's right. Absolutely, hundred per cent right.

And probably your children feel under pressure.

Maybe so.

And there is another thing. It is to do with the war and it isn't. Which is the fact that you are very happily married to a woman who really understands you, and your children look at you and they see this brave man coming over with nothing, no money, nothing. And this relationship, how ever are they going to measure up to this relationship?

It's a very big problem. It's a tremendous big problem. Because they knew - they have met some of the people that I know. And they also know how - I - I - as I say, I am the most luckiest man in the world, but at the same time I think it must also be a very big handicap for my children, because they see I mix with -

Because there is a part of you which has not quite confessed - to yourself - of just how absolutely mind bogglingly awful this experience has been. In a sense you know it, you appreciate it. You see it clearly.

Life must go on. But life must go on.

But that is perhaps never going to be ..

No, because if I stop and think - Rabbi Soetendorp, if I would stop and think - I'll drive myself mad. I would go mad. Because I was saying how the bloody hell am I sane - I must be insane - to be sane. It's - it's -

That probably frightens the children.

Well - no, they've got too much confidence in me in order to - for them to think -

Not you as a person, but your experiences.

Well, one wonders whether they are going in as deeply as that. I see it now, and I'm sure my children have seen it. I see it now because I've heard now from London that there's - you probably are very well aware of - that people who went through the Holocaust, they have had children, the children got married. And - and somehow they lost touch with the children. And those people now find themselves back where they started from. Lonely. And that is the worst curse.

So you know. We are coming back to this loneliness. Because we discussed it very early on. The thing is, very often, you must remember one thing, that on the occasions when these parents who went through the Holocaust where they have lost touch with the children. Very often they made a tragic mistake not to even want to think about sharing anything with the children. And because the children were aware that the parents were not sharing a very important part, they felt a little betrayed.

But the children don't want to share with the parents.

But when the time passes they don't want to know, do they?

That's right. That's right. That's right. That's right.

Because the fact that it is an absolutely awful experience, and for the parents and for the children to recognise this awful experience and to say "Look, we are not going to put it down, because we can't, it's there, it's part of our life, of our history. So let's sort of learn to live with it. Or learn to accept it for what it is. And if necessary, grieve, be mournful". Using the expression, say "Chiver"(ph) over it. It's very difficult, it takes a lot of courage.

It's - it's a very, very debatable question this thing is. You see - as a parent - many times I - I see things - that goes on in the world. And I think to myself - we fought wars to - to - destroy evil. But it's going on in this day and age. And nobody does anything about it. Does anything about it. They'll always point a finger on somebody else. They are the culprit. But nobody's doing anything to halt the culprit. I - I don't know whether this will be relevant on this tape here. Look - look a little thing - even this conflict between Israel and the Arabs. Here you got the Lebanon. They're killing one another in the thousands. Christians and the Moslems, they're killing each other. They're starving each other - out. And nobody says a thing. Nobody lifts a finger. But God forbid - if Israel kill one or hurts one Arab is the Israelis they're killing. What did she do? Israel is only defending herself.

People have strange fantasies about the Jews.

That's right.

Even after the war.

That's right.

They're tied up with Christianity and Christian theology. They're tied up with the diaspora - history of the Jewish people with lots of guilt feelings and lots of projections. But look. And funnily enough it shouldn't be our problem - but it is. It's a fact of life. But in a sense it's their problem.

No, but look - look at the whole thing. What happened came out facts and truth. Everybody keeps on shouting where was God. I kept on saying: where was man?

I remember you once mentioned to me that you went to a symposium, didn't you, to a discussion. And you saw philosophers. Can you tell us more about it. Who were they, the philosophers?

I don't know their names now.

What year was it?

It was 19.. Oh, when I was single. It must have been in 1954 or '53. And we were - I was taken there. It was - very, very famous gathering. It was in London. And - it was - you know, how we should approach - life - and - and a more open society as we are living. And like the things that have been happening in the world, it was sort of - well - humanity to man is such that - collectively they're bullies, but individually they're cowards. And I was sort of listening to this - to this whole debate of these brilliant men. These brilliant men. And they were rabbis. I'm not talking just of philosophers, they were doctors and rabbis and - and - great people. And I was sitting there and I said to my friend "You know you've got to have here a psychiatrist to straighten these psychiatrists out. Because they're crazy mixed up kids". Well, kids, they were grown men. But they were going around - they were going around on a roundabout. There was no core. There was no core to hold them. I found it so - so childish, so mindless, so - so - I thought to myself like a child, you give them toys and because he can't put a - a - a triangle in a round thing he chucks it away, it doesn't matter. It didn't bother him that he can - if he looks around further he finds something which will just fit that - fit that particular piece of - of jigsaw. No, he tried it and it didn't fit so he chucked it away. And this is how I felt with these people. Everybody was passing on the buck to somebody else. But nobody had a root, nobody had a -

Anything to base their words on.

That's right. That's right. To have a beginning and an end. There was not. And I walked away - I walked away and I thought to myself - I am wasting my time, you know, I can - I can start a business as a psychiatrist and then everybody will pour their heart out and I will get paid. I'll be a millionaire.

What you're saying is that that was a very frightening experience?

Very much so.

Very early on?

Very much so.

And it's come up since, it's come up and you spoke to Sylvia on the long walk in Brighton. It came up in a most romantic and fateful event by taking your children to Yad Hashem. It's come up since your children have left home and in fact even left university. And I don't know if I can make any suggestions. The point is that what you are saying is that "Look, I've seen the truth for myself, as far as it affected me. And I haven't really necessarily got an answer and I do not want people to give false answers. Let us at least see what has been happening and perhaps we do not necessarily have answers".

You can't have an answer ..

Because we've got to live with our ...

With our conscience. With our conscience. With our - with our - sad feelings. Because there is only feelings. Memories are hurtful. Memories are very hurtful. But hurt feelings, and we got to suppress our feelings and accept life as it is and - and enjoy - if any enjoyment comes to enjoy it to the full. Everything that comes.

But you can't suppress completely the reality of your situation. [INAUDIBLE QUESTION]

What is there - what is there to share? If I - one cannot put a finger on something. To say "Well, this is what hurts me. This is what hurts me". For an example. My children have worked very hard in our business. I mean we started off the hotel business. And we ran it ourselves. The children helped making beds, the children helped serving the people with dinner. Because - you couldn't get honest - waitresses, they were stealing. And if you steal from a - from a - a customer. If he loses something it's not the waitresses or - or the cleaners, it's the hotel. So you had to be very, very careful who you employed, so my children worked very hard. So they knew the value of money. They knew how hard we worked to achieve what we achieved. So therefore when it came to the stage - this is why I'm talking now about the children - my wife will kill me if she find out I've - I've said this. Because this something which is private. But I just want to point out the way that it hurts. Our daughter is now 31. And it's come to a stage now where we are living in an age where everybody - at a certain age they like to live away from home, have a place of your own. Have a place of your own. We also could see that's she's not going out with a boy serious. So we - we saved up a bit of money for her, please God that she gets married to make a nice wedding, to - to remember the day. Now - we felt that - at 30 - that she should have a home of her own. She has worked, she has saved, she does -

she does all the right things. And we started talking to her about how about buying a flat of your own. Doesn't matter whether it's a flat, but have something of your own.

To be on the property ladder.

Not on the property ladder. To have something of your own. Your own - roof over your head. Why should you lay out so much money to pay for rent, when you can pay off a flat for yourself. So - in order for her not to have any strenuous worry, we said "Now look here darling, we've saved up a certain amount of money for the wedding. We can see you're not going out with a boy seriously. We want you to have this money - while we are still alive. God knows, we can go on the street - we can get killed". I said "I would like you to take this money and have a deposit for a flat. And if you can't manage to - to - pay off, we'll probably help you out a little bit. Eventually the flat will be yours". And we did. We took her the money, we gave her the money, said "Here you are. Now it would be a good idea for you to buy a flat". She took the money - and it's no, no, no, no. She doesn't want to put down roots. She doesn't want to do this. If I say something - you can have your money back. The money is there, I haven't touched it. But doesn't the parents like to see the child have a home? Something of her own. Something she can call of her own.

She seems to demonstrate that she really has got problems about putting down roots?

Yes.

And it is just possible that having seen you cope so well without roots, they feel that, until such time as there is a big improvement, they must not put down roots. There is, however, one thing that I could sort of go into. And that is the following: We have recorded several hours now of discussion about the past. The not so distant past. The present. We haven't really spoken a great deal about the future. But who knows the future?

The only thing I know that I come from a very long - line of - they live very long. My grandmother died when she was - from my father's side - she died when she was 105.

Please God.

Well, listen, I'll tell you something. If I could live to that age with all my marbles, I'll say thank you very much. But if not - you know, I would rather have somebody put a bullet in my head and - I wouldn't want to be a burden to anybody else.

Naked I came from the womb. And naked I will return, said Job.

Absolutely. We all do that.

The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be blessed. I think that that is a philosophical attitude which is not unhelpful. Getting back to the children. Hopefully they will receive a recording of your particular interview. It is possible that they will listen to it. And in a sense a lot of the thinking they will already have done. And in a sense when you start getting a little bit more of a

communication on a level where actually you know you are talking to each other, there is one person talking, the other person listening. They are talking against each other. But in a sense this could be a subject for debate.

Well, actually - I am actually looking forward very much - to the tapes, and also to give to the children to listen. Maybe - maybe, it won't be so hurtful - to listen to the tapes, and let them think deeply about it themselves. Than listening to me - and feeling that I'm trying to put something down their throat. Or I am putting them under pressure, you know what I mean. Or making them feel guilty, through my eyes. You know, face to face. Maybe they'll take it better from the tape.

Shall I share something with you? I'm a little bit younger than you are and I'm a little bit older than your children. So I'm sort of in between. I remember growing up with my parents being Holocaust survivors in Amsterdam. And regularly they would sort of shake their heads and say "You know, we can't tell you what it was like". They tried to tell, but they didn't really pull it off. They would say things like "You will never understand. You don't know what it's like". It made me feel that small. It really made me feel terrible. They weren't actually giving me a chance. Then later on when I had a roof over my own head, I had a job, I had children, I was settled down and I had my own family in England. My mother regularly came to stay with us. She would say things like "You know one day you will have to deal with it". What she was saying was "Look, we couldn't do it for you. But only you will have to do it". And she felt, I think, a little guilty actually about the whole thing. But at the same time she was very conscious of the fact that things couldn't have been any different. Because my father was so difficult after the war and she had her own problems after the war. And bringing up a family in a Rabbinical home wasn't the easiest thing to do. But I think that in the end the children will have to do it themselves.

Absolutely. Absolutely. But as parents - as parents, although the children will have to do it themselves - But we so much wanted to be part of that doing. Helping it, seeing everything is done. The - the doing it. You know what I mean.

As far as that is concerned you may have to ...

Wait. Suffer in patience.

If you love your children ...

We do, we do. Strangely enough, we love our children so much so that it hurts sometimes. Because of the love. It hurts sometimes. See, but - who suffers - you've got to suffer inwardly yourself. Because - love is not a thing that you can - you can - you can push over a phone. You can only make him feel secure over the phone. But - love is to share ideas. Share ideas. Love is to - to - to - to work together. To -

In that case if you love each other then you are still working together.

We are, oh yes we are.

But there is difficulty in finding the words at the moment. And these words will continue, if the relationship is there ...

Oh yes. I hope so, I hope so.

And children cannot stop hurting their parents. And parents can certainly not stop hurting their children. And you live with that. I think that perhaps, you know, when a discussion develops somehow or the other, your children will find the ability to - work with what has been presented to them. They are not unsuccessful, they are quite successful.

Oh, I must say they're - first of all they've got personalities. They're good mixers. And they love responsibility and they accept responsibility. They're good mixers. And - the Jewish tradition is very much with them. But that doesn't - handicap them of mixing with all kinds of religion. And they're well loved. And they're well travelled. And - I - I've got - we put all our trust in them, we know they will not do stupid - things. They will do things that they should be proud of themselves. If they are doing things which we are proud of them, and we keep on telling them you don't have to prove to us one iota. The proof you've already given to us - the children gave to us is when they left home and they stood on their own two feet. And they made a life of their own. They've already proven that. They can look after themselves. They can earn money. They can feed themselves. They can travel by themselves. And they have travelled. And - and I also would want them to feel that still - they've still got their roots here - in our house. And - and - and - come what may - this is secure, the security is there. This is very, very important to them and to us. To feel that - so, so, we are here. Home is here.

One day perhaps, hopefully ...

Please God. We all pray for that. We all pray for that.

Now you are in your late 50's, you've got to be thinking in terms of the future. I believe you are now retired?

Yes, I've already been retired now for the past five years. Unfortunately is - is - my health, which I can't stand on my feet for so long. We worked very hard. We - we live within our means. We've always lived within our means. We've got a lovely house to upkeep and we've got enough money - we hope that will see us through our lifetime. Obviously - whatever will be left over will go to the children. And I think we'll - because the children don't want anything from us now. We tried even to - to - to - to make it easier for the children we thought maybe we'll sell our house now and we go into - into a smaller place and divide the money and let them buy of their own. Something they'll call their own. But unfortunately - they don't want it. They made it very clear to us that they don't want it. Whereby my daughter don't want a flat of her own and my son is talking now of emigrating to Australia. So obviously he doesn't want it. So - for ourselves what do we need to work for. We are very much preoccupied - you know very well, with - helping other people. We help in the day centre. And we help in the friendship club. We help with this or with the charity work. We are very much involved, as you know. And we are very happy with what

we are involved. And we do hard work. And - strangely enough - things - is such that - it's when you have birthdays and when you have an anniversary, like a few years ago, about four years ago, we had our anniversary, and we felt that we wanted to share the anniversary with our daughter. So we got up and we went to Paris, just to have a dinner - we went one day there and we had dinner with our daughter, and we came back. Just that we should have our daughter - at the table to share our - you know, the evening. And this year - this Saturday is our anniversary again. Our 33rd anniversary. And we are planning on Wednesday to go over to France, to Dieppe. She'll come to Dieppe and we'll spend - Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and I'll come back on Saturday. But in the meantime we'll go out and have a couple of dinners, we'll see our daughter and - we'll come back again. So the closeness is there, the love is there.

End of F220 Side A

F220 Side B

We want to be near to one another. And - this is what we're .. you know, this is our life now, but - it would have been much nicer if they would have been married and I could have gone to their house and - have - grandchildren running about and - starting life all over again. But - we have to wait. This will come, please God.

And the future is still open?

Oh yes. Please God they will come and we will have grandchildren. And we do the babysitting and - and that kind of thing. We've got to wait, we've got to wait. We've got to wait. We wished them success as children, and I'm sure they are successful, we will wish them good luck.

And is there any thought that you would like to share for the future. Apart from your children's future and your relationship with your children in the future?

Well, the only thing I - I pray to God - that - if - if human beings would really sit down - and discuss the relation with man. Because really and truthfully we're all praying to one God. And really and truthfully there is nothing between us. But why we should be so - against one another. I - is beyond my comprehension. I - many times I think and I think to myself what have we Jews done so wrong that nobody, nobody wants us. Only for what they can get out of us. And once they've got it out they want to get rid of us. And - because after all's said and done, we have given so much to the world. We have given Christianity to the world. We have given the law to the world. The law for man and behaviour to man.

This is an ironic analogy. Perhaps the world, like your children want to prove that they can be independent of us.

They can't do without the Jews. Like God. Like God, can't do without Jews. Why? Who else will call him God, if we Jews are not on this earth?

That has been said in one or two poems which I could quote.

No, I don't know about that. But I'm telling you what I know. What I have experienced.

I couldn't agree with you more. I remember once I went to a station in London. Only a few weeks ago. And somebody stopped me, he had recognised my kipar(ph). And he shook my hands. And in a moment I was just frightened, I thought I hope he's not a nutcase. And he said to me "You have given us everything precious in the world". He was nearly in tears. And then he walked on. I was deeply moved actually. But at the same time when I went back to Amsterdam for the first time again, by myself, without my family. One night I suddenly felt for the first time frightened. I had read about anti-Semitism in Holland, I had read about difficulties. And I suddenly had this thought which you just shared, which is why - what makes the people hate the Jews so much that they want us dead - rather dead than alive.

Can you just imagine an organisation like the Red Cross - have the guts now to admit it?

They admitted it?

They admitted it.

Many didn't admit anything.

That's right. But fancy - fancy knowing - knowing - and not saying a word. How - how - can a - how can an organisation do a thing like that?

[INAUDIBLE]

What do you think? And then he says that people misunderstood him what he was trying to say. You see - this is why I - I've always said the Jews - now is the time the Jews have got to stand up to be counted. And not to be afraid of anybody.

And you would say that that is more or less your concluding thought after all these many weeks of reflection. That is really the thought that we've got to stand up and be counted?

Absolutely.

And sometimes we don't have the answers.

No. But we've got to - we are Jews and we will remain Jews. And I want to point out that the world can't do without the Jews. Wherever the Jews in the diaspora go, into government or into - into commerce and into culture and to everything else. They make it good, not only for themselves, for humanity. For humanity. And even for that they don't even get a thank you. They get despised, through jealousy.

I think we have got to learn to live with our ...

I think so. Well, I'll - I'll say thank you very much for - having the patience to come and - to come here, to all these hours, to - to - to listen to my thoughts. And I only hope that it will help if somebody listens to it in years to come. It will help them to understand there are individuals - who are prepared to give of themselves to others, at all times. But it's - very much look forward to when it's reciprocated, to say - they have done or he has done something for me. Something - the only precious thing a person leaves behind is not money or wealth or whatever, property. Is the name. A good thought, a good word. If they can say - Joe Perl said such and such a word, and it's remembered by others, this is how I feel one lives on. Not - what I've left behind material. Just to remember that - he did some good or he said such and such a thing. That's all that one looks forward to.

End of F220 Side B

End of Interview