

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

CHAIM (HENRY) FERSTER

Interviewed by Rosalyn Lishvin

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F788 - Side A

Now, I've not heard of the word "Shiebers".

Shiebers.

Which you say was a kapo?

Well, it's below the kapo. Below. Below the kapo.

And what kind of work did they carry out?

Well, they supervised, they supervised the men.

Yes.

They supervised the men, yes, and the kapo was above them, but they were supervising.

So were they allocated to each barrack?

Yes, they were allocated to each barracks. The Shiebers were allocated to each barracks, one or two, I can't remember exactly. So many men. And then a kapo above them, yes.

And was it one kapo to each barrack?

Something like that, I can't remember exactly, yes, something like that.

Do you remember any of the names of these people?

One of them was called Szerer, in fact, he also came from Sosnowice, and he, he, Szerer was his name, in fact, he lived, actually, in the same street where I used to live, but he was one of those who, who came from an extremely poor family, a very poor family, and he was one of the lads, you know, in the streets, knocking about, and pinching here, pinching there. Was always, one of those, you just didn't bother talking to, you see, because he, there was nothing, well, you, if my father would have seen me with him, he would have because, never mind about religion, it was nothing about religion, but at the same time, he was one of them, be ashamed to be seen with. He was always very thin, torn shoes, torn clothes, and everything. And all of a sudden, when he was there, he remembered me. But he, all of a sudden, has grown very very big, dressed in most luxurious boots, and with riding, with breeches of riding trousers, and breeches, and waving a stick around, and he was shouting and screaming about. He was one of those kapos, but he wasn't a bad fellow, actually, over there. Now and then he tried to help me. He remembered me, he remembered quite well.

In what way would he try and help?

Well, now and then from food, or direct me to easier jobs or something like that. Now and then, times, yes.

What were the other kapos and shiebers like?

Well, they were very very rough, they were very very rough. Yes. You see, they picked on the type of people who, with extremely low mentality. This fellow, I don't think he could write, that Szerer, he was a very very low mentality type of person, and this is the type of person they would pick to, who pushed themselves, and they picked, showing that they can use quite ruthless methods, to get the people to behave, or to do whatever the Germans wanted to be carried out.

So what kind of jobs did you do there? You spoke about learning to lay bricks.

Yes, well, I was laying bricks there for about, they took us a certain building plots, and they were showing, they had a German master, showing how to put, there was a dozen of us, showing how to put bricks, and then, now and then, laying the, well, that was, we were labouring the railway lines, but I was there in that camp for about, only about a month, couple of months. Wasn't long from there. And from there ...

Just before we move on, if I can just ask a little bit more about that. Was that the only work in that camp, then? The bricklaying and

Yes, yes. Was mainly the majority that were doing, they were laying railway lines. The majority of the men were doing railway lines.

And was it, were there non-Jewish prisoners in that camp?

No, no, no, it was purely,

Purely Jewish?

Purely a camp for Jewish, for Jewish inmates. Was purely.

How many days a week did you work?

Was all seven days a week. Seven days a week. Probably every third week they stopped for a Sunday.

And what did you do on that day?

Well, on that day, you, you washed yourself, you cleaned yourself, you mended the shoes or the socks, or whatever it is. Also, now and then there were some various concerts in the camp, they had quite a few talents there. And there were some various concerts there.

On a Sunday?

On a Sunday, yes.

And did you used to take part in that?

No. No.

So what kind of things would be done?

Well, there were some, you know, there was, now and then, the various Music Hall songs they were singing, or playing music, playing, one fellow was very good at, an excellent clarinetist. He was absolutely, a very talented man. He was supposed to have been a decorator and painter. Very big fellow he was.

Did he have a clarinet?

Yes, yes, he had a clarinet with him, yes. Yes, quite often, the Germans, when somebody had some talent, they had all their musical instruments with them, and they were allowed to be kept, yes. Because now and then they even went across to entertain the Germans as well, the German soldiers, as well, in their barracks, now and then.

Do you remember his name? The man who played the clarinet?

No. No. No.

And the Germans were happy to allow ...

Oh yes, yes, yes.

What was the toilet facilities like there?

Well, toilet facilities were primitive, outside toilets, of course. Toilets were outside.

And the washing facilities?

The washing facilities, we had a wash barracks, yes, a barrack, a wooden barrack, which, all it was, it was just a row with about dozens of, of taps, because there was no warm water, of course. They were just taps, and you got a bit of soap. In this particular barracks, you had to go to that barrack to get yourself washed.

So did you used to have an Appel every morning there?

Oh yes. Every morning you had Appel every morning, first thing in the morning, and also when you came back after work, before, that was also twice, in the morning and in the evening.

And how long would they take?

Well, can take an hour or two. This particular camp wasn't bad, it was only about an hour or so.

Were there any killings or executions in that camp?

No. No. There were no executions in that camp at all. But now and then, somebody got very ill, he was sent off.

And what happened, did people die from illness?

Well, they didn't let them go that far. They didn't go that far to die, but if they were very ill, or a lot of them which went down the drain, which couldn't keep it up, were sent off.

Did you have any friends with you at this point, or anyone that you knew?

No.

Did you make any friends at all?

Well, yes, we tried to make some friends, but I wasn't there long enough, you see. You see. Very very difficult there, to make friends in the camps, because everybody was, everybody was hungry all the time, and thinking of oneself more or less all the time. Not many made absolutely close friends between one another.

So how were you moved on from there? You know, what was the next ...

So from there, we were sent, I can't remember whether it was the whole camp, or 100 or so. We went to a camp called Faulbrück, Faulbrück.

Was that far away? How did you get there?

Oh we got there by cattle trains, it wasn't very far. I don't know exactly where it is, but it wasn't very far, I don't remember. But in there, we ...

Do you remember arriving there, do you remember the journey, and when you arrived there?

Vaguely, not very much no, not very much, vaguely. Vaguely. Well, this was a, this wasn't a built camp, as such, like Klettendorf was, or Markstadt, this was some old building was there, while they were bricklaying or something, and it was adapted for that particular purpose, Faulbrück was. From there ...

What happened when you arrived there? And how big a place was it?

Well, it was a far bigger place than Klettendorf was. Must have been about 2,000 inmates, there must have been there.

So you were going to join an already established camp?

Oh yes it was, it was already an established camp, when we were there, it was already an established camp. It was, and in that camp, we, from there, in that camp, there must have been roundabout, well, quite a few, well, about four or five months in that camp. And from there, we were walking out, we were travelling from the camp, to work in a Krupps factory.

You would walk to, where was it?

We, from there, they took us to work, to work. When I say they took us to work, we were going by cattle train to, to work. We had to walk quite a few miles, about an hour, and by cattle train, it took us to a factory of, of Krupps, Krupps factory, from there.

And what were you doing?

I was working in the inside of the factory, I was working, because I was supposed to have been, somehow, I was supposed to be a bit of a tradesman and engineer. So inside, in that factory, we were, in that factory, we were, at the time, I was handed over to a German master, and I was with him, working together, helping to put on the blinds, the, the dark blinds, to make it light-proof, for shades, I was doing, and well, the others were working outside, and making the concrete. We were a team of about 100, or 200, or something like that. And we would walk out, and there was about, there must have been about 40 or 50 soldiers with us, with machine guns, which walked round. And I was inside, because I myself had one coming with me anywhere, guarding me inside, in the work inside.

So what was the factory making?

The factory was making, was making ammunition, you know, ammunition they were making. The factory were making ammunition.

And were any of the others from your camp working in the factory, making ammunition? Or were they all ...

There were a few as well, yes, there were about, must have been about a dozen who were working inside, in the factory.

Who else was working in the factory?

I can't remember their names.

No, I don't mean names, but I mean, what kind of people? Were they all Jews, or were they non-Jews?

No, no, no, no, no. There were a lot of, well, most of them, the others were a lot of non-Jews, but they were all, most of them were foreign labour, there were some Frenchmen, the Czech people, a lot of Czech people, women. And some French foreign labour they had. They had to work there, but they were free, if you follow

me, they were free. They were living in some places there, not far off, but they were free. A lot of Frenchmen, a lot of Italians, a lot of Czechs working in that factory. Very big place.

Did you have any contact with them?

Well, not, not a lot. Now and then they handed, the Czechs particularly, the Czech girls handed us parcels of sandwiches, to me, yes. Now and then. And also that German, now and then, he brought a few potatoes from home. He knew the excuse he can't bring any more because it's on ration. Very nice man he was.

What the man that was guarding you?

That German, no, no, no, the master who I was working with. He watch himself whether the Germans watching him. Very nice man, an elderly fellow he was.

And did he live near the factory?

I think so, yes, I expect so, he must have been living near the factory, yes.

So this wasn't the one that guarded, this is the one that ...

No, the one that guarded me was a soldier, was an SS man, with a machine gun, which guarded me.

Obviously there must have been times when he wasn't watching.

Right, because, you know, they won't just sit on top of me, they were just walking around and ...

Did you ever hear any news about what was happening in the War?

No. Nothing at all, no. Nothing at all. Nothing at all.

So you travelled to that factory every day, did you?

Yes. We, every day, in the morning, it took us, I think we travelled out from that, we started off in the morning, roundabout 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, I think it was roundabout there. Well, we started off when it must have been roundabout there, roundabout May, June, July, it must have been roundabout that time, and we started off roundabout 4 o'clock in the morning, to wake us up from the bunks, 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and then they took about an hour to get ready, to get the rations and washed, and get ready down to the Appel yard, the Appel place, platz. And we were standing there for about, could be standing there a couple of hours, or an hour, a couple of hours, till they start counting us. And then after they counted us, they, they sent us to various groups, and we went, we went to that particular place over there, about 100 or thereabouts, or 200. And we were walking, we were walked to the ... and then after that we walked to the train. It wasn't a station or anything, it was a sort of a siding, railway siding where the cattle wagons were already waiting there for us,

and went in the cattle wagons, and we, cattle trucks, and we travelled then for about an hour. By the time we arrived it must have been about, what, about 7, half past 7, 8 o'clock. And then we went in, everybody went to their own places. And

Did you take food with you?

No, well, it wasn't, well, we got the food in the morning, the bread, the rations, you see, when we, in the camp, everybody got their rations, and a sixth portion of a 2-kilo bread, they gave out bread for six people, in the morning, and with that, a small block of margarine, and black coffee. And, of course, most of us, most of us, I was, anyway, some people couldn't, I was, I finished it off right away when I got it. But there were some, who somehow, they managed to cut it a piece at a time, and in the evening, they still had something left. Some of them managed it. Well, well, when we arrived there, we were straight to work, and about, about lunchtime, they got some watery soup, some beetroot soup.

So you say there was like a watery soup?

Yes, lunchtime, there was a water, sugar beet soup it would be, sugar beet. And a half an hour's break to finish that. And then we went back to work, and by the time it was roundabout 6 o'clock, 7 o'clock, you had to, the whole thing went back to the train, and by the time we got back, oh, we got back about 8 o'clock. We were standing again, to be counted again, to go for about a couple of hours. And then you were back to, aroundabout 10 o'clock, you're standing in a queue, to get you a plate of soup, in the camp. So by the time you got your soup it was about 10, 11 o'clock at night, because there were very very long queues. So by the time you got, it was about 11, 12 o'clock, and about 3, 4 o'clock, you had to be back up again, back up again.

Gosh, a very long day, yes.

Mmmm.

And how many days did you do that?

Oh, for like, seven days a week. But every third Sunday, it was off. Every third Sunday we were off.

And what were conditions like in that camp for the time that you were actually there?

What were the conditions like? It was very rough. Very rough. I mean, Klettendorf, the first one was a relative palace. It was very rough, and conditions were very very poor. Facilities. Facilities were very very poor. The washing facilities, the toilet facilities were terrible.

Was there a place to wash?

Yes, also they had certain, particular area, where, in the, in the yard, a big courtyard, where there were lots of, of, of taps, water taps, and they, and everybody went to

these barracks to get washed. The facilities were very very poor. The toilets which were outside, were terrible. They were terrible, terrible.

And how were you treated there?

Also very rough, very rough. That was also very rough.

Do you remember any incidents, or anything in particular?

Well, you, you were, it was just generally rough all round, you know. You had to be on the run there, they would knock you about for, not for any excuse, they would just knock you about, and complain, "You should have done that. Why didn't you do it? And why do you stand here? Why don't you go over there?" And if you go over there, he says, "Why do you go over there?" You know, all sorts of things. All sorts of things.

Who would do this? Was this the kapos, or Germans?

Well, they both. The kapos, or the Germans, or the shiebers, or both, yes, both.

Were there any executions in that camp?

No. No.

And again, what would happen if people fell ill?

It was also similar things, similar things. I remember once, once, there was a, they thought about two or three fellows did something wrong, somewhere at work, or something. They just, in the middle of, in a corner, of the Appel, where they were at the Appelplatz, you know, a very large yard, they dig out a hole, and they put them in, and bury them up till there, for about 24 hours.

And then what would happen?

Well, some of them, well two of them died. The other one was alive, they took him out, and it was just punishment.

Was that a rare occurrence, or did that happen frequently?

Well, it happened twice, I've seen it twice, yes.

Was anybody shot?

No. No. No. No.

How big were the barracks there? How many to a barrack?

Well, this was like an old building, as well, it wasn't like a conventional one. Also there wasn't, there weren't, in this particular camp, it wasn't like you had double

bunks, there was sort of a long, long, continuous, like a platform, shelf, three of them, were ground, first second, and third, and you see, you have all along them, was quite a large, large hall like, and they put the bunks on here, and on the other side, it wasn't bunks, it was built like shelves, just, and we were lying there.

And was there anything on the boards?

Yes, there were some straw mattresses, there were some straw mattresses, and they gave you a couple of blankets, they gave you.

Which level did you lie on?

I think it was the middle one, it was the middle one, it was.

Did you know any of the people there?

No. No. I didn't know, just the part which you, you see them there, and you just become acquainted, you see, just become acquainted. But no, didn't know anybody already.

You'd come there, though, with some people from the previous camp?

Yes. Yes.

Did you stay together at all?

Not particularly. We just dispersed. No, no, no.

How long were you there?

So we were there, must have been there about three or four months, and then they sent us to a camp which was very close to it, which was called Gräditz, Gräditz. And they also continued to send us, the same procedure, to work in the same place.

Still on the cattle train?

Oh, we still travelling the same system, which I described before, still going to the cattle train, and ...

So why had they changed the camp?

I don't know. I'm not quite sure. I think they converted it for a women's camp, or what, I don't know. But, there was already a camp there, and this increased to about 3,000 or 4,000, it increased to a larger camp.

And what kind of a place was it?

It was also some, an old factory it must have been, or something, because it was similar, in a way.

What, like a big building?

Like a big old building, yes. It was similar.

The same kind of three-tier?

Yes, the same thing. A similar lay-out, yes. A similar lay-out, and conditions were quite similar, and also the same, the same procedure, you had to get up at similar times, working at the same time, and then, and ...

Were you hassled as much there as in the previous place?

Yes. yes, yes. But I had quite a good contact, a good contact, which the German master gave quite a bit of food, because I felt quite fit. I felt quite fit. I was in a very good condition. I was very very fit this time, I remember. Then all of a sudden the whole camp brought, they broke down with typhus, the whole camp. They close it up. It was a camp, I don't know, roundabout three or four thousand or something.

When would you say you went to that camp, what part of the year would it have been?

This was the latter part of, of 1943. Was the latter part of 1943.

And how long were you there?

Well, in that camp, in that camp in Gräditz, I was there for about, I think, I was there about April, I think, roundabout March, April, '44. March, April, '44. But in the previous camps, where I did meet one, a cousin of mine. It was Michael Bornstein, Michael Bornstein, a cousin of mine, which, in the camp, in, it was in Gräditz, I think it was. And also I met a brother-in-law of mine, Yankel Szpiegler, a brother-in-law of mine, Yankel Szpiegler, in these camps.

Were they doing similar work to you?

No. No, they were really labouring. They really had it tough. They were really, they were labouring outside, digging in concrete, more physical then. They, they, well, their faces were always, in the morning, swollen. You could hardly recognise them, you know, for hunger, the faces go swollen, their faces, you know. And they really had it tough. They really had it tough. And somehow, they didn't survive. I've seen them for a weeks, or a few months, or something. I think, whether they, the typhus, they had the typhus as well. For some reason, while we were in the camp, although they were cousins or brother-in-law, you were not as close as here, for some reason, I don't know what it was, because everybody's trying to fight for survival. Everybody was hungry, or something. Of course, you see them every day, and you say hallo, and that's it. The same as your brother-in-law as well.

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Everyone was, like, preoccupied?

Right, with, that's absolutely right, preoccupied, how to find a little extra food, or what to do, things. What for, that's exactly right. Preoccupied, yes.

So while you were at Gräditz, you were still working in the factory,

Yes.

And still doing the same kind of work?

Similar work, until the camp was closed down. The camp was closed down, that's it.

You weren't still doing the blackouts, and the blinds?

Yes.

All the time, doing that?

Well, not all the time. Not quite all the time, because they, they also, once they put me in a place where they were building machinery to manufacture, to manufacture a new invention, which they had invented, of Widia. Widia, it is, it's called Widia, this is a material which was made from a powder. It is compressed. It is a powder, for mixture, powder, black powder, various stuff. And that was compressed into shapes, like, it's in a shape like the tip of the bullet, you know, just on the tip of the bullet. It was compressed into that shape, and then it was, it was baked under high temperatures, on a conveyor belt, which was an oven-type conveyor belt, with some very very high temperatures, and after a while, that stuff was brazed on, onto the bullet, on to the tip on the bullet, and this penetration, they were one of the first, was enormous. Penetrated hard steel about ten times deeper into armoured vehicles than the ordinary bullet. And I was transferred there for a bit, for quite a short while, to help to produce the machine which was a vibrating machine, which helped it to mix the materials, for a time.

So you were, like, on the engineering side.

It was sort of engineering side, yes.

Rather than labouring?

Yes. Which, that probably helped me to survive.

Yes.

Being under cover.

And it wasn't so physically ...

It wasn't so physically demanding, that's right.

Were there others in your position?

Oh yes, there were quite a few. They were, well, there were quite a few. There was one of them who were in the same camp. There were two brothers from Bendzin, so they were, Greengrass, his name. Greengrass, there were two brothers. And one of them is in America, the older brother. And the younger one is in Israel now. Greengrass. And they were also, at the same time, in that camp, also helping equipment. But his brother, the older brother, they originally came from Germany, in about, just before the War, they went to live in Bendzin. So, the elder brother was a very good tradesman, he was a very good tradesman, very good engineer. A good turner, a precision, a highly-precision turner, which they needed for this particular job. And they were, he was treated exceptionally, you know. He got all sorts of benefits, and all sorts of things. And the younger brother was just sticking to him, because, he helped him because, they thought very very highly of them. Greengrass was his name.

And he was in, going through the same routine as you each day?

Oh yes. The routine, oh yes. The routine was the same, you see. But in the factory, he was treated with kid gloves. They all had high respect for ... he also spoke quite good German, you see, as well. And, and he was an exceptionally good tradesman. They had a high regard for him. And he got some special treatment, and they also survived.

In the factory, was it mainly just normal German workers that told you what to do? And, I mean, you were saying like the man with you was

Well, he was an elderly man, being an elderly man, you see, he wasn't in the War. You see, they usually, what usually they had, they usually had the German supervisors, and most of them were elderly. German supervisors, but they were old, and they had, they had these foreign workers, they had in this factory.

So the others who were working, say, doing labouring jobs, were they also looked over, supervised by German supervisors?

Yes, yes, they were also supervised by a German. Outside, the people who were the outside, the concreting, and building bunkers, air raid shelters, and all that sort of thing, they were also supervised by the German. Well, the German gave orders to the shieber, or to the kapo, you see, and they in turn, made sure that this and that has been done.

So, and you say, was there anything else you wanted to tell me about the work that you did, or the factory?

Nothing special any more.

So you didn't hear any news about the War?

No, nothing at all. Nothing at all.

Were you ever able to speak to any of the non-Jewish, the foreign labour?

No, very difficult, because you were guarded all the time. No, very difficult. No, I remember just one incident. For some reason, one day, I was, for one day, or a week, it was winter time, and I was taken outside, to help the others. And there were those, helping the others, building outside, or shipping, shipping, shipping soil which had been dug out from the concrete, and they were shipped on trolleys which were tipping over, tipped over the material, and there were about 60 of us, must have been below 25°, -25°C, and the Germans start shouting, "You're not loading fast enough. You're not loading fast enough." And keep chasing all of us with sticks. "I'll make you work faster. Take everything off." Because we had to wear, just naked, just half naked, and then obviously, it was cold, we had to, we were loading and loading and loading. And two or three days, a lot of them got pneumonia and they died, and never came again.

And these were the German SS, or just the German supervisors?

They were, they weren't the supervisors, the German SS, the soldiers, they were not just, there were some bad soldiers, there were amongst them, not just the SS. Not just the SS. There were a lot of Germans in the Army, in the ordinary Wehrmacht, which were also bastards.

So you were just there for ...

I was fortunate, I was just there for about, I can't remember, three or four days.

What kind of thing were you wearing at that point?

Was just an overcoat, and trousers, and some boots which they gave when you went to the camp, they gave some, some, a blanket type of coat, and some, a wooden shoes, with wooden soles, you know. And a lot of us, in winter time, wrapped ourselves round, we had plenty of, of cement sacks, we had, because this was a very big thing, and it kept really, the cold out. Wrapped yourself round with the cement sacks.

What round,

Round the legs, yes.

Had you been given any sort of identification, any numbers in these camps?

No. Everybody had a number. Everybody had a number, yes. Everybody had a number.

Were you given different numbers at the different camps? Or did you have one,

No, you have the one number, you continued with the number.

Where had you first been given the number?

I was given in Markstadt, in the first camp.

Yes, yes. And do you remember what yours was?

No.

And was that on your clothing?

On the clothing yes, on the front of the clothing.

Did you ever speak to one another about, about things? I mean, did you ever talk to each other?

What, in the camp?

In the camp.

Now and then, yes, now and then, but not very often, now and then, now and then. The only time, probably, when we had a break on the Sundays, and we were probably talking.

Did you still have concerts in this place?

Yes, yes, yes, still had concerts, yes. In that particular camp, Gräditz, there were some fantastic, highly talented people. There was one who was a violinist from, from Vienna. He was fantastic. There was also, also an actor, which was a friend of his, and they did duets, singing, and they were absolutely fantastic. Absolutely marvellous, marvellous.

Incredible.

Was this, was Gräditz still just for Jews?

Oh yes, all of them were just Jews. All of these were just for Jews, yes.

Did the others in the camps sing at any point?

Yes, yes, they helped to sing when the popular music came along, which everybody knew. Yes, they sang as well, yes. Yes, you got yourself carried away.

How long would a concert last for?

Three hours, four hours. And the Germans were also listening and watching.

Did you ever sing at any other times?

No.

And the food, was that also ...

Was very very similar to previous ones, yeh, very similar.

And then typhus broke out?

Yes. The typhus broke out, yes, and the whole camp was closed up. And they were dying, about 200 or 300 a day. And you know, typhus was, there were a few which were immune from the camp, because once they had it before, they were immune, so there were a few who helped. There was no medication. And there were one or two probably, inmates, who were doctors, but they didn't have anything.

How long were you in the camp while typhus raged?

I had, I had, also had typhus in that camp. Yes, yes, I caught it, and I must have been knocked out for about two or three weeks, and I, you know, typhus, you get a very high temperature, and, because you've a high temperature, you just, you just knock out, you just, you, you're hallucinations you get, when you're knocked out, sort of thing. And ...

What happened to you during this time? Were you just left in the ...

I can't remember, actually. I was knocked out and I can't remember. I can't remember, but I remember having various hallucinations. I remember, then all of a sudden, I just begun to, I must have passed already the crisis, must have passed, and I tried to waken up, and I happened to be on the top bunk at the time, and I tried to get myself down, and I just couldn't lift myself, because my bones were out. There was nothing they could see, only like a skeleton or what. And I just didn't have the strength to get myself out. It must have been when I was knocked out, the other people who, who were immune, or the doctor, they must have fed me with something, with water or something, otherwise I wouldn't have survived. So eventually, I did manage to get myself down, I thought, "I can't, I've got to do something. I can't just lie there on top of the cushion, and filthy dirty and everything." Eventually, I managed to get myself down. Eventually I managed to get myself down, and got myself down and tried to get myself straight, and I thought, "I'll have to wash myself a little bit", so I went down to the wash barracks, and they were stacked up, that high, dead people. Six this way and six the other way and, all they were, skeletons, skeletons, and on top of it, I've never seen it yet. The bodies were brown, like they were, on cinders, burnt, you know, they were brown, like, from high temperature, or something like that. So, and hunger was exceptionally great then. I was hungry before, but this time, when I got myself together, the hunger was absolutely, I could eat stones. I remember that, I could eat, the hunger was so great. You see, and all the camp was closed up. All they did, the Germans were frightened to come in, you see, so you were, they were relying on internal organisation, you know, the shiebers

and the doctors, and the people who were, the people who survived, because there was only a few hundred who survived, from a camp of about 3,000 or 4,000. So, so, but you see, the food was just put in through the door, through the fence, gates, just left, and then had to be distributed. And all the,

Did you manage to get food?

I managed to get somehow a bit of food, yes. I managed to get some, some. And the camp was, stayed closed for about a month or two after that three months, and the people who survived were sent to, to another camp. I think they closed that camp, Gräditz.

So what did you do in that period of time? Before they moved you on.

Just nothing. Just nothing. Just walked about. Just nothing. Just left you alone, you know what I mean? They just left you alone, they just walked round, like, how can I say? Like, it reminds me of Lowrey's pictures, you've seen those Lowrey pictures, you've got people, you know, like shadows walking about. It was about, so it was about March, April, and the weather was very nice, I remember. So you managed to stay outside quite a lot, without being pushed about by anybody, because the Germans were frightened to come inside. So you were just left alone.

Did anybody organise you at all?

A little, to a degree. There must have been some organisation, because we got food. Well, they sent it to the shiebers, the kapos inside. And there were some people, some administrators, there was, it was also, you had, you also had a Judeneltester, a Judeneltester. In every camp you had a Judeneltester. The Judeneltester, he is the top man from the Jewish people, from the inmates, and, and, any orders or everything, from the Germans, from their top people, top orders from the Germans goes to him, and he then directs further the instructions. He is called the Judeneltester.

Do you remember any of them?

I remember, I remember, but I can't remember their names.

What were they generally like?

They were, they were quite, very clever, intelligent people, and they tried, to a degree, they weren't all bad, you know, these type of people. But they had, they had a very line, thin line to walk on, to keep everybody happy. Well, these type, these people, this person must have been the organiser inside, he was also inside.

Did you get food as regularly as you had got food beforehand? You know, sort of like mornings?

Yes, I think they did, yes, yes.

You say it was pushed through the fence?

Well, you had, well, it was double doors, well, you've seen those concentration camps, fences, they've got gates, which look also like fences, but you open the gates, and push everything, they opened one door, and they pushed everything through into it, and they said, "You help yourselves." This sort of thing.

So it was completely surrounded by a fence?

Oh, the whole camp was surrounded by a fence with wires, yes, the whole camp.

Were there any watch towers?

Oh yes, yes, all around, oh yes. This was going on all the time.

So were you still being guarded?

Oh yes. Oh yes, this was, yes, but this, the watch towers were outside of it, you see, we were guarded, but they wouldn't have any contact with us.

And what happened to those that died? What happened to the bodies?

Well, they were buried properly, in a communal, communal grave. Somebody must have digged some graves, and there must have been some of the inmates which may have been involved with that, digging the place, and then taking them out and burying them.

You say you just did nothing from day to day?

That's right, we did nothing at the time, we did nothing.

And then, did you hear, I suppose you had no outside contact at all, so you wouldn't have heard anything?

No. No outside contact.

So then what, what happened next?

Then we were, we were shipped, we were sent to a place called Annaberg. Annaberg. That must have been roundabout April, roundabout April, we were sent to Annaberg. We arrived at Annaberg, and Annaberg was already, also, was a camp, like made, a built camp, for a camp. It wasn't, there wasn't like an old building being utilised, it was a built camp, a purpose-built camp, which was already an existing camp.

How did you get there? How had they transported you?

Oh, by, also by cattle trains.

And was it the whole, all survivors of the camp?

All the survivors, yes, they went to that camp. Not all survivors, I'm not quite sure whether it was just 100, it may have been just 100. I think it may have been just 100 sent there, and 100 somewhere else, and 100 somewhere else. I think they were spread, not all there. Yes, must have been not all of them, because the Greengrass, and after that, I didn't see him at all, he must have been somewhere else. And there, I did meet an uncle of mine, his name was Yossef Mendel Oderberg, my mother's brother, which, well, then we stayed fairly close with him. He was, he was, I think I mentioned to you earlier, that is how I came to be a sewing machine mechanic. He was a watchmaker. Well, you see, in camp, he managed to help himself, he looked after well, because he was a very smart man, and he was repairing all the watches for the, for the soldiers, for the guards, and everybody, so he was quite in a good condition, he was quite in good state. He was.

So what was this camp like?

He was, he didn't go out to work. He was inside, in the camp, repairing these watches for them. So he was, once he did that, if you were fixed like he was, the Army, the soldiers, they always brought you something, you know. But if you did something, from private or something, he always managed to get something. He was quite in good state.

And did he used to help you?

Yes. He did, he did now and then, yes.

So, I mean, if you can describe the conditions of this camp, and the routine and what you did.

Well, the conditions, the conditions weren't as, as extreme, weren't as bad as they were in the last camps. No, you got up about, about 7 o'clock, you had a double bunk. And the rations were reasonable, also bread, a similar portion. But they were reasonable, they weren't as rough, we weren't chased as bad as previous camp. And there we got, they also camped for Appel, and we went to work, I think it was in Reichenbach, a place called Reichenbach, and I was also working inside. I was also working, also building some machinery, helping to build, and there was also, lots of women, Czech women. And the Czech women, they brought me some marvellous sandwiches every day. There was, in particular, two girls, not far away, they just put this on the side.

Did they do it for the others as well?

I don't, I don't know, well, they were also on rations, but I don't know. The others may have done for the others as well, I don't know. But these two girls, all the time, there was some sandwiches, yeh. So I was quite lucky there.

You were never caught?

Somehow, no. No, we were never caught, no. Oh, they would make sure we would never be caught, no.

So what exactly was the work that you were doing?

They were making some aluminium parts for, for ammunition, and, and I was helping to assemble various equipment, machinery, I was.

Did you again have a German overseer?

Oh yes, oh yes. Yes. It was also, we were dispersed on a similar basis as before. We had a German, I was handed over to this German, this German kept an eye on me, working with him, and he, and I also had a guard with me, walking around with me, also similar.

How was the German overseer this time? What was he like?

He was neutral, completely neutral. He was completely neutral, he just couldn't care less either way. Never made any comment or anything.

Did you ever manage to speak to any of the other workers?

No. No. No.

And did you ever hear anything about the War here?

No, not at all, nothing at all. Nothing at all.

What kind of work were the others doing, from the camp?

Well, the ones which worked inside, also did similar work which I did, but also a lot of them did on the outside again, building, concrete, clearing bombs, things which had been bombed, they were clearing it up.

Did you hear any bombing? Did you hear any of the air raids?

No, not at the time, no. Not at the time.

How far away was the factory from where you were staying?

Don't think it was very far. I think we just walked to there. I don't think it was very, it may have been half an hour walk, thereabouts. I don't know exactly, but I don't think it was very far. No, I don't think it was very far.

And whilst you walked, did you speak to one another, or did you have to sing a marching tune?

Yes, now and then they sung, they sung, they were, for some reason, there were some Dutch people with us as well, Dutch inmates, Jewish people. And they always used to sing to the tune when we walked to work, it was some Dutch tune. They did.

Were there any executions or shootings in this place?

No. No.

And punishment?

Oh punishment there were. I can't remember any particular one. It was reasonable, it wasn't too bad that camp at all, Annaberg. It wasn't too bad at all there.

How often would you manage to speak to your uncle?

Oh every day. When I came back home from work, yes. Yes. He must have been at the time, was about 45 or 50, 45, 50, I think. I was very close to that particular uncle, because he had no children. He had no children, and, and he always kept an eye on me, was always learning with me, and teaching and showing me all the time. I was very close to this uncle.

What, you mean, in the camp?

No, before, even before the War. Before the War. I spent quite a lot of time with him.

In what way was he able to help you in the camp?

Well, a little bit of guidance, a little bit of food, and tell me, "Don't do this." Or ...

Do you remember anything in particular he told you?

No, I remember, he gave, every day, he always had a little bit of food for me, a bit of soup left, or something like that.

Did you have one Sunday in three off in this place as well?

Mmmm.

And concerts again?

No, there were no concerts in that particular one, no, there were no concerts in that particular one.

In any of these places, do you remember any incidents of piety, people trying to keep any kind of religious ...

Yes. There were, there were some who kept up their religion. For some reason they managed to get tallis and tephilin through, and they were davening every day. There were some who, they were davening every day.

Were they allowed to do that?

No, they weren't allowed, but somehow they managed, they managed to get through, and they managed to put in a corner, they knew all these angles how you can get away and do things. And they managed to do it. There were quite a few of them, who managed to daven every day, and pray every day.

Was that in every one of the camps you went in?

In every one of the camps. They were in every one of the camps.

What kind, how many, what kind of proportion would you say managed to ...

Oh, a small proportion, a small proportion.

Were they ever caught? Do you remember them ever getting caught?

No. No, I don't remember ever being caught, no, I can't remember ever being caught.

F788 - End of Side B

F789 - Side A

Were you aware of any of the Jewish, you know, Yom Tovim?

Oh yes, we were aware, and we usually, always in every camp, they tried to organise to say some prayers. In every camp, somehow, there was always somebody knew exactly what the day was. Yes. And then rumour got round that we are davening there, we doing it round there, you see, all that time we are doing it. And one particular, there were prayers going on, but we didn't have any books, but there was always somebody who knew the prayers by heart, and everybody followed.

And would, I mean, how big a part of the camp would take part in that?

Only about 10%, 15%.

And did you yourself?

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Which Yom Tavin would you do that?

There were, particularly Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, yes, yes.

What part of the day would you do that?

Well, you did it when you came home.

After work?

After work, when you came home.

Was there ever any, were you ever aware of any underground activities in any of these camps?

No. No.

No, nothing at all ever?

Nothing ever, I'm afraid. No.

And you had no idea, as you say, about the War, or what was happening?

No idea, no. No, at one time I did hear somebody came in and they told us that, I can't remember exactly where it was, it may have been in Annaberg, that, they told me about the news of Sosnowice, and that in Sosnowice that they, they liquidated the ghetto, around about, close towards the end of '43, and were liquidated, and there was some shooting and killing. Murdering. The majority were sent to Auschwitz, and

that, so I knew that was where my family went, to Auschwitz, were left over in Auschwitz. They went to Auschwitz, when they were left over in the ghetto.

Did you know what Auschwitz was, at that point?

No. No, I really, we heard the rumours, but I really didn't believe, no, I didn't know what Auschwitz meant, really, at the time, no.

So how long were you in this camp for?

Well, in this camp, in this Annaberg camp, I was for about, roundabout September, and in September, we were sent to Auschwitz.

Have you any idea why you were sent away at that time?

For some reason they, I think they liquidated this camp, because I heard that, a later date, while I was sent to Auschwitz, my uncle was sent to Gross Rosen, to another camp, for some reason. And he actually, I heard that he died there, in Gross Rosen, funnily enough.

So was the whole camp disbanded?

That's what I heard later, and that the whole camp, you know, you take a few hundred people, you send them out, and that's it, you don't know what happened. But I later heard that that may have happened.

How many were sent to Auschwitz?

About 100, or 200 people.

And how had you been selected? You know,

No, they just take a group and they sent out to Auschwitz, something like that. These and these barracks, and that's it.

And how did you travel there? And what was the journey ...

The journey was quite, was quite, it took us about, I think, about a day or two, a day, 24 hours, something like that. In cattle trucks.

Did you receive any drink or ...

Well, they just give you a slice of bread and a drink and that's it. And on the way, now and then, they dropped in some soup, or some drinks, which you drunk.

And what is your memory on arrival?

Well, on arrival, they, the memory was, arrived in Auschwitz in the middle of the night. And we were in trucks, cattle trucks, cramped, you know. Then all of a

sudden, the doors slide open, and you see a huge place. Enormous. As far as the eye can carry, you can see bulbs, lights, fences, lit up, and camps, and barracks. And the place is dead silent. Just absolutely silent. You could hear anything move. Dead quiet. And then all of a sudden, the doors slid open, there is the SS with dogs, quite a few machine guns, and shouting, "Raus! Raus! Raus! Get out. Get out." And there was also a carbolic smell in the air. This was roundabout September, a carbolic smell. And you see from four corners of the earth, you see four flames. You look round, and four huge flames. You never realise these were the concentration camps. This was, not concentration, this was the, the crematoriums, these were. And eventually, we

How soon did you find out what those flames were?

At a later date, after a few days later.

So what happened when you got out of the trucks?

Well, when we got out of the trucks, they, they, somehow, they sorted us out. Must be older people, younger people, whatever, they sorted us out. Because we were all men at the time, already, all men. And we were put in a barrack, in a room which was empty, just empty, they put us in a room which was empty. And later on they, I think it was the following day, or something, the SS man came in, and with some inmates as well, a few of them came in and started sorting out, one to the left, one to the right.

Another sort of selection?

A sort of a selection. And we didn't realise what it was all about. And they, the ones which were going to one side, we never see them, they went one side, and we never see them again. And the ones who went to the other side, were like we, and I went to that side, which I was put in, into the wash barracks right away, and we washed ourselves in the wash barracks. Also not knowing that this was the, where they gassed, they gassed people as well, the ones which they wanted to be gassed. And we were, then were were tattooed, and put in the, in the barrack on quarantine, I can't remember the name, the number of the barrack. We were put in the barrack as quarantine. And there we were doing nothing.

Had you been given special clothes?

Yeh, they changed the clothes, yes. But I still didn't have any striped clothes. Again, it was different clothes, a change of clothes. We were put into the, into the barracks, and, and we stayed, supposed to be quarantine barracks. One day, I was standing outside the barrack, one SS man comes, "Why do you stand outside the barracks?" They take me aside, they gave me a very good hiding, so I couldn't stand up, straighten myself. Put my head into, there was, there was an oven, a long oven, somehow. Put my head into the oven, in the opening of the oven, with my head pushed in the side, and gave me a good hiding with a stick, and I couldn't straighten up for quite a few days.

How many were in this quarantine barracks?

In that, there must have been, well, 100, 180 people. Also the same shelf, the long shelf, three-tier.

And what did you do during the day?

We just, nothing at all. Nothing at all. Just hanging about. Nothing at all.

And what kind of food did you receive?

The food wasn't so bad really. The food was quite good, better than the previous camp. You got a little bit more bread, you got a bit more substantial soup, for some reason. But one day, I was called. I was picked, and they took me into a doctor or somebody, into a, a doctor or something. They started measuring, and photographs, and that and the other. Measuring my legs, measuring my feet, measuring everything. I did not realise the point. I somehow wasn't called again, for some reason.

What kind of a place had you been taken to for that?

Well, into a particular administrative block area, administrative area, it was. I got friendly one day with, with one of the, one of the inmates, an old inmate. They were talking with people who were here, from Sosnowice, and other people, and he was there for two years, he was there. But somehow he was sorting clothing, and mixing, and sorting.

You mean in this quarantine?

No, not in the quarantine, in another barrack completely.

You were able to speak to him?

Yeh, yeh. And he says, "Chaim," he says "over there, you see, there is the camp. There is a barrack with small children", he says. "They've been here about a few months. They give them everything. Toys, food, everything. Marvellous." I says, "Why? Why? What's it all about? Why do they do, why are they being all of a sudden, so charitable?" A week later, we see the same children on lorries, taking, taking them to the gas chambers. Lovely smiling kids.

Were you able to freely talk to others in the camp?

Not very often. You had to be very careful, not very often.

So this older man that you, you managed to speak to, how had you come into contact with him?

I can't remember how I'm managing contact, I don't, I can't remember. Whether he was also from Sosnowice, from that area, I can't remember.

When you say he was older, how old ...

No, I don't mean older, he may have been the same age as me, but I mean a person who has already been there for a while.

An older resident?

An older resident, yes, that's right, an older resident.

So I mean, you say you were never called again.

No.

What did you do?

I didn't do anything. No, well, I was one of those, I'm one of those who I do everything which I'm being told. I'm not very brave. I just behave, I try to behave, and that's why I didn't do anything.

And did you live in the quarantine barracks all that time?

Yes, yes, we were in the barracks all the time.

And were others called out for work, from there?

No, from that barrack, in quarantine, nobody went to work from that quarantine. And it was, at the time, I remember, it was Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, it was, and this barrack, most of them fasted.

Did they try and say prayers?

Yes, and said prayers, and said prayers. They fasted and said prayers.

And you weren't stopped?

Well, they didn't know. Somebody was on guard outside, you weren't allowed to. They said prayers, and fasted, and said prayers, and Kol Nidrei, the lot, all by heart. Somebody, somebody remembered everything. Always found somebody who knew the prayers by heart.

And that would have been Yom Kippur '44?

That was Yom Kippur, '44, October, '44.

And you say most of the barracks, most of that quarantine barrack took part in that?

Took part in that, yes, yes.

I suppose no one had managed to smuggle into Auschwitz, any tephilin or tallis?

Nobody managed to.

Did anybody manage to smuggle into Auschwitz, any tephilin or ...

I don't know, I didn't see anybody putting on tephilin, or anything like that. No, Auschwitz they were very very tight, because they stripped you. They stripped you. Auschwitz was very, you couldn't get anything through at all. Because they really stripped you naked, when you went in the bathroom, your clothes was away, and they gave you other clothes. They stripped you in Auschwitz. When I say Auschwitz, this must have Birkenau, this must have been, because Auschwitz was a working camp, where they were working in the chemical factory over there. Birkenau that must have been, but we call it the same as Auschwitz.

Who was in charge of your barrack?

I can't remember.

Were there kapos still?

Kapos, yes, there was a kapo. They were very strict. They were very very strict, very very strict, the kapos. For no reason at all. They were really tough. They killed everyday people, just by beating them.

What, the kapos?

These kapos, yes. Very very strict. They went round with very thick sticks. They were very tough.

And you say people were actually killed every day?

Yes, actually killed by these kapos, every day, yes, in Auschwitz.

Were there any, any Germans also ...

Oh yes, there were Germans walking around all the time, on guard, and Auschwitz was a very well-guarded place. Where they have normal camps, where they have single fences, they had the fences on top of another fence, and another fence, you know, in triplicate and all that sort of thing, in Auschwitz, very very tough.

Were there any executions, actual executions as opposed to being taken,

No, no, no. No. But I remember a case, there was a, there was a, for some reason, an alsatian got lost into our barrack. We carved him up, and we ate him. It was beautiful. It was an alsatian, I remember.

Was anybody punished for that?

Nobody knew about, nobody knew, nobody knew. Nobody knew, they didn't know, there was lots of dogs thereabouts, in Auschwitz, they were all the time walking about with dogs, and all of a sudden, one dog got lost into the barrack. He was caught, killed, and carved up and cooked, and made soup, one or two, we all had quite a bit of a portion of it.

Did you have facilities to do that?

Well, there were people that did have, they had some, I don't know, paper or some wood which they've stolen, or they put something, they've found it. Somehow they did have some facilities.

Did you have to keep the barracks clean?

Oh yes. Oh yes, because they came in every day, twice a day, or three times a day, they came in to have a look round, particularly in Auschwitz, they were very very strict. Very strict.

What kind of things did you have to do?

Well, keep everything, absolutely everything is spotless, you see, spotless. Everything is straight, the bed, or the blankets, there mustn't be any, any bits of, bits of dirt or bits of straw, or things like this, it's got to be 100% spotless, 100%.

Did you have to clean up other barracks in the other camps you were in?

No, they were all, oh yes, yes, but they weren't, not as strict as here in Auschwitz.

And what would happen if it wasn't quite up to standard?

Well, you got plenty of good hiding from the kapo, or the man in charge in the room.

And did you have Appels, roll calls?

Oh yes. Oh yes. That was twice a day. Oh yes. Oh yes. I always remember waking up in Auschwitz, and it always gave me the shudders. It was only about 7 o'clock, but they had a, like a gong, just like they've got on the Ranks, you know, you see it on the, what's it called? Well, they had something similar, a big thing like this, and it gave such a shudder when those gongs came up in the morning, absolutely went to wake you up. Just absolutely gave you the shudders. When that sound came along, it truly gave you the shudders, I remember that, every morning. It's like calling to hell, you know what I mean? Just like calling to hell.

How long did you have to get up?

Oh, about half an hour or so, something like that.

And then was it straight out into the roll call?

Oh yes, straight out into roll call, yes, yes.

And how long would that take?

Oh, about another half an hour, another half hour, yes.

What would happen to you next? You say you did nothing during the day.

No, we did nothing during the day. Then about, after about four or five weeks there, they, the rumour got round, that they always had various instructions handed out, and they said, "Oh, we're looking for engineers." So I immediately volunteered, because I thought, I realised by then, what Auschwitz was, what Birkenau/Auschwitz was, I realised by then what, I says, "I've got somehow to get out of here". I don't know whether this was to get out, so I volunteered for an engineer. So they gave me some various tests, whether I am an engineer, and they've chosen me, and quite a few hundred of us, and sent us out of Auschwitz. From there it took us about, they gave us very large portions, so we knew it's going to be a very long time. This was about October, it must have been. October it must have been, yes. So we were, went into cattle trucks, really cramped. We were on those cattle trucks for three days and three nights. It was absolutely impossible. Absolutely impossible. And

You were given no other sort of refreshment?

Well, no, very rarely. They stopped now and then to let us have a little bit of water for somehow. They stopped on time, and they, in fact, a lot of them died. The business in the train, it was absolutely terrible. I remember one Hungarian man, who, after travelling about two days, he says, the train stopped. He said, "I need to go out, I've got to do my business." So he went out, and he, a soldier went out with him. A man went out with him. So he found this stick outside that, he went to the soldier, hit him on the head, so immediately the soldier turned round and shot him right away. He couldn't take it any more. He couldn't take it any more. We were, at the time, we were that scared that they shoot the lot of us. They will shoot the lot of us.

Were you still all Jews together?

This was all Jews.

So in the barrack, in Birkenau, were you all Jews there?

In this barrack was all Jews, although there were some other barracks which were Poles, and other nationalities, but we were all Jews, yes, yes. And, of course, over there, they had a triangle with "Jude" on, a yellow one, with the triangle. But from the train, so we were there, about three days we were travelling. Eventually we, after three days, we arrived into a camp called Nieder-Orshel, and that was in Tieringen. Tieringen, at that time, they had a, a sort of motto, a saying, about Tieringen, "Tieringen land is Hitler land." This was their motto. And beautiful countryside there. This was, this was comparatively, it was a marvellous camp. It was like a holiday camp. Unbelievable, it was like a holiday camp. The kapo was a German. He was a Communist, a Left. He was in charge. He was a marvellous man. He was

a marvellous man, he was. The life was a little bit reasonable, you got up only about 7 o'clock, the food was reasonable, the rations were reasonable. You only walked about 10 minutes to work. This camp was, the whole camp was working. We were building Messerschmidt aeroplanes, and we were walking to, about five minutes from the camp, into that factory, which was, I think the whole were inmates, who were building these planes.

All from this camp?

All from this camp. We were building the wings, we were assembling the wings for the Messerschmidt planes. And there were quite a few from Sosnowice, which I didn't know. Quite a few from Sosnowice. The atmosphere was a little bit more relaxed. The supervision of the SS, most of them were elderly Austrian SS men, and they were, they, we've heard, then we get some various rumours that the War's going against them already. And you could see the kapos singing, the kapo, he had a very big sway in that camp, with the Germans, he had a very good influence with them. And he got, he always made sure you got reasonable treatment. And we did get, because of him, whether it was towards the latter part, I'm talking roundabout October, November '44, 1944, but the atmosphere was completely relaxed. You could hardly see any beatings or anything like that, in that camp.

Was it a totally Jewish camp?

Totally Jewish camp, yes. It wasn't a very big camp.

And the kapo wasn't?

The kapo, he wasn't, no. He was already in concentration camp, I believe, for about five years. You see, being a Communist, they sent him to Buchenwald. So he was already in Buchenwald, he's been a professional, he's been around, and he was a professional, he knew what went on. He knew the ins and outs and all that sort of thing.

What were the barracks like?

The barracks were very very fair. Purpose-built barracks they were, and they were fair. It was quite clean, it was quite ... it was.

What did you sleep on?

A double bunk. There was a double bank, and we also had a straw cushion, we had two or three blankets, we had cushions, and we had fairly good, the food was quite good.

How big a camp was it?

I think it was only about 300 or 400 people, it was, 300 or 400 people.

And the factory as well?

The factory was only about five or IO minutes walk from the camp, and there, we did experience bombing. Tremendous bombing. Tremendous bombing. And then, when the air raids were, there were lots of forests round that area. That Nieder-Orschel was a village, beautiful area, beautiful, the scenery was absolutely fantastic. And when the air raids were on, which, we run out, you run more or less where you wanted, because the Germans was all scared, and there were lots of forests, and we were running into the forest. And while we were in the forest, we were picking bilberries, and blueberries, and enjoyed ourselves, because the Germans were busy, and didn't have anything. And it lasted for about two or three hours. I don't think anybody, anybody did run away. No, nobody did run away. And this happened about, a few times, once or twice a week. We enjoyed ourselves while this was happening.

Were you all doing the same kind of work in the factory, assembling these wings?

Yes. I was assembling this, the steering, I remember, into the wings. And there were lots of aluminium, the planes were built from aluminium, a special type of aluminium. And I remember one day, I had a German master behind me, so all of a sudden, a number, one or two of us were making, from these offcuts of the aluminium, we made, I made a snuff box. I was quite handy, it was a beautiful egg-shaped snuff box, and I'd made that. And when the German has seen it, he says, "You made that?" I says, "Yes, I made that."

F789 - End of Side A

F789 - Side B

So, somehow, they let us go, and they punish us for food for a couple of days, or something like that, I didn't know who it was until I found out about a year ago, from a friend of mine, from Hershel Tobiash, it was a boy from Sosnowice, we were also together in cheder, Shelom Szweicer, which I've seen a few times in Israel. He died last year. He has done it. He is the one who's cut the, who's cut the wire, sabotaged the plane.

And no one was punished, except for the,

Except for the ones, nobody was punished.

So how many days a week did you do this?

There we did this only roundabout six days a week. Six days a week we did. And we had, Sunday, we had rest. We did.

And what did you do on Sundays?

Clean things, also some various concerts they had also going, you know, just lying, lying about. The scenery was marvellous, lying outside, in the yard, in the courtyard, in the field. It was also surrounded by, by watch towers as well. It was a completely relaxed atmosphere.

Were there Jewish kapos as well as the Communist one?

No. They had some Jewish shiebers, some Jewish under him, yes.

So what were they like?

Well, they couldn't be too bad, because he kept an eye on them, that they shouldn't be too bad, you see, this German kapo, kept an eye on them that they should be fair, reasonable.

Was the general routine very similar to ...

Yes, except, except you got a better, the general, the system was the same. You got up in the morning, you got your ration, you washed yourself, you got your rations. The washing facilities were better, and, and you got up at 7 o'clock in the morning, and then you walked a short distance. You were at work about 8 o'clock, and you got back to the barracks about, and also at lunch time you got a little bit better soup as well. You had a break for half an hour. And we got back, and was counting again, to see whether, that you were all there. We got back about 6 o'clock or something, about 6 o'clock, and we got our rations, and we all washed ourselves, and then we just relaxed, sit about and relaxed.

Did you get much news about the way the War was going?

Well, the feeling, he had a lot of news, but he was a bit, this kapo, he had a lot of news, because he was a political inmate, and he had a lot of news, he had. And the way he was singing, going about, and his mood, you could see he, he mentioned a few times that the War is going against them, and it won't be very long now. It won't be.

Did you ever see any civilians, you know, when you walked to work?

Well, they had seen us, the odd civilians, yes, we did see some civilians, but they didn't take any notice, either way. Couldn't care less.

And you said there was no one else working in the factory except for ...

Except for inmates, yes. From the camps, yes. Apart from the supervisors, German supervisors.

So how long were you in this camp for?

What? In this camp, we were for about, roundabout, towards the end of March. All of a sudden, I believe the Allies were coming closer, somehow, and they're going to evacuate the camp. So they evacuated, so we left the camp, and we started walking, and walking. And we stopped in various open places, just lying about, with a guard being about, guarding us, all that sort of thing.

How many of you were there?

About 300-400. And we were walking and walking, and walking, and walked towards Buchenwald. And the 10th April, in the evening, we arrived in Buchenwald, after walking for about, roundabout two weeks. Lots of them couldn't, died on the way, they just couldn't make it. And a lot of them ran away, one or two ran away. Yes, they hid themselves, and survived, a lot of them. And eventually we arrived in Buchenwald.

How did you find it? I mean, did you find it tough going?

Oh, very tough going. Oh, just sheer sheer walking, and walking, and staying overnight, and not knowing, and just was tough, was really a struggle. I don't know how much progress we made every day, whether it's 3, 4, or 5 miles, I think it might have been 10 miles.

And where would you sleep overnight?

Just overnight, sometimes, we sleep in various farms, farm places, in the outside, in the open, on open places. Just lie down.

What would happen for food?

Somehow, the food, they, they still gave us a certain amount of rations every day. They still gave us a certain amount of rations every day. Just bread and water. Now and then, the odd times, they managed to organise something in a farm, something, they give us a bit of soup or water, or something like that. They did.

Did you walk together with any friends, or just on your own?

No, I can't remember exactly now, just on my own, I think.

And what would happen to people who, you know, felt they couldn't walk any further?

They just let them lie, they gave them a bang, and now and then they were shot as well, now and then, by the Germans, by the Austrians, now and then.

How many do you think made it to Buchenwald out of the original ...

Probably about 80%, 75%, made it. 75% or 80% made it. And we arrived in Buchenwald, and all sorts of rumours went round in Buchenwald. They'd seen, Buchenwald didn't know quite a bit, it seems that every day, before we arrived, Buchenwald was a fairly big camp, and every day they walked out people from the camp, because the Allies were coming closer, they wanted to push them further somewhere else. And on the way, they shot every transport out, on the way, they shot everyone out from the previous week, previous days. We arrived there on, at night, in the evening, in the afternoon, the evening, about 10th April, and the ones which were left, the camp wasn't full, wasn't full, it was fairly empty, must have been a few hundred there, or something like that. Because it was a big camp, it held thousands. And they told us that they've heard that all of them were shot out on the way, and a lot of them had hid themselves, various places, not be, because before the walk, they had taken Appel, they call Appel and start counting, so they march, a lot of them had money somehow, for some ways, to hide themselves in various areas.

What, inside the camp?

Inside the camp, yes. Toilets, let themselves down there, and various places, managed to hide, and they couldn't be found. But this must have been very odd ones. Mustn't have been very many. So, the following day, about 11 o'clock, or 12 o'clock, I don't remember exactly the time, they were calling again, Appel, to, they call again Appel to be counted, want to send to another camp. While the Appel was, while they were counting, all they were shouting was, "Air raid", and everyone ran away. After we ran back into our barracks, you see, it seemed that the Germans already disappeared, from the watch towers, and I believe, inside, in Buchenwald, they had some resistance. Some of the inmates were political, and non-Jewish as well. They already had guns and took out and they chased off Germans, and the Germans they went away. And then, then a camp, an American camp drove in, about 2 or 3 o'clock, and this was the end of it. They collected a lot of the SS, the inmates collected all the Germans, which they managed to chase after, and collect a lot of them, many hundreds of them, put them in a barrack, and they took guard over them.

What happened to them?

Well, the, the Americans, when they came, the black fellows, they really gave them a tough time. Oh, they knocked them about, the black people. They really knocked them about. And eventually, they were there for quite a while, I don't know what happened at the time, exactly what they did with them eventually.

So you were really only in Buchenwald for a day, before you were Liberated?

That's right. Only a day before it was Liberated, which I was lucky, yes.

You say that the date of your Liberation was?

11th April.

11th April. I just wanted to ask you, actually, have you any idea what happened to the German kapo that you had spoken about?

Who was so kind, who was so, well, no, don't know.

Did he go with you to Buchenwald?

Oh yes, yes. No, he also went to Buchenwald, yes, but don't know what happened to him.

And you say that the, a lot of the Germans were gathered together and put into a barrack?

A lot of the, they caught, the Germans, the officers, the Gestapo, the guards and all of them, started to run away. And, and inmates from the camp, for some reason, they got, they had ammunition, and they rounded most of them up. They rounded them up and put them in a barrack, in Buchenwald, and when the Americans came in, and they really went, they really gave them a very tough time, particularly the black people.

Do you know what happened to them after that point?

No. No.

So what happened to you at this point?

Well, at this point, me, about a week after, well, we were just trying to find, we were just lying around like lost sheep. We were, the, there was a train which was free, the Americans put on a train, because it wasn't very far from Weimar, and we were travelling there and back, Weimar, and going into the shops, taking out food and all that sort of thing, and the Americans didn't mind at all.

And you were still living in ...

In the camp, yes. But the camp was completely free now, open. And they gave us everything we wanted.

What kind of things?

Well, say, blocks of chocolate, they gave us, which was a bad thing. I took a block of chocolate, which must have been about 2lbs, and I just finished it off within half an hour, an hour, and for the next two or three days I was just, couldn't eat anything, you see, I just had the runs and couldn't eat anything.

So what happened to you during that time? Were you ill, or were you still ...

No, I was still wandering around, but I couldn't eat anything, I didn't eat anything. I was still wandering around.

Were you drinking?

No, when you say drinking, whisky or anything like that, strong drink.

No, no, like you say weren't eating anything.

I wasn't eating anything, and I don't think I was drinking, probably water or anything. But, somehow, after two or three days I got over that.

What kind of other provisions did they give you?

Well, they gave us more or less everything we wanted. You see, once we got everything we wanted, we weren't so hungry any more, after a week.

How was it organised? How did they organise this?

Well, they organised still under rations, under the old system, although you had somebody in charge in the barracks, and they still distributed food, but it was food, as much as you want. And a week later, I remember also, there was an American Rabbi came in, and he brought matzo, because at the time, somehow it was Pesach sheni, it was. An American rabbi, and in uniform he was, and brought, I've forgotten his name, and he brought matzos at the time. And after about a week or 10 days, my sister found me. Because, you see, when, when the Liberation came, after a week or two, they interchanged lists of survivors, and she was in Bergen-Belsen with a cousin of mine, Regina Bornstein. And she came, and she found me, on that list. And one day, I was called that I'm wanted, and she was there. And she stayed for a few days, because I'd heard rumours, she stayed a few days there with us, and then we decided to go back, because Regina wasn't well, and we thought we might as well stay together. And also I heard the rumours that over there, there's a shortage of food, they're living just under similar conditions that they were, like, under the Germans. Although they were liberated already. And they were still under guard, and they were still on rations, the people were still starving. They wouldn't let them out of the camps, and in fact, they were shooting people, actually shooting, the English guards, the English guards were there, they were actually shooting people who were found

outside. But, so we decided to go back, and we got back, and the Americans had anything you wanted, so they just put on a transport, on a lorry, I remember, went back from Buchenwald to Bergen-Belsen. And obviously we took quite a lot of provision with us, because there was no shortage where we were. We went over there, and it was shocking. Anyway, after a week or two, we, well, over there, they were living just like, I mean, they were still on rations, and very restricted.

Where did you stay?

In one of the barracks. Yes. One of the barracks. And after a week or two, Regina was chosen, she was ill, and she was chosen to be sent, you see, they organised groups who weren't well, for recuperating, to Sweden. So, at the time, she was chosen to be sent to Sweden, and she could take with her, relatives who were with her. So at the time, we went to Sweden.

So how long were you in Bergen-Belsen?

I think roundabout two weeks, roundabout that.

And were conditions bad there still?

They were, yes, they were. Conditions were very bad.

Can you describe them?

Well, the food was limited. You weren't free to walk out of the camp, and please yourself what you want to do. They had to stay in the camp, and, and people were very very upset about it.

How did the guards, or the soldiers I should say ...

Well, internally, they didn't do, they weren't particularly bad. Inside, they weren't particularly bad. But there were also lots of various activities of people from all over the world, trying to help, who managed to get in there.

And what did you do during the two weeks you were there? What did you do during the day?

Just wandering about in the camp, and talking to various people, and chattering various things. Planning or scheming, or what.

Was there any sort of activity going on?

No, nothing at all. Nothing at all.

Did you have many outside visitors coming in?

Yes, yes, but I wasn't, we weren't personally involved in any of the outside visitors. Probably there must have been quite a lot of visitors trying to help, organising, and being very busy with various things.

But you weren't involved in that?

We weren't involved in anything like that, no.

How had your sister survived? What had happened to her?

Well, she was also in camp, in various camps.

Do you know ...

I don't know exactly the names of the camps.

How long had she been in Bergen-Belsen?

A few months, I think. A few months, I think.

Had she been on a forced march?

I don't know. We never talked about it. I don't know.

So you say that you were taken to Sweden?

Yes. We went to Sweden from Lubeck, on a boat. And we came to Sweden, we arrived in Malmo, we arrived, and in Malmo, they, everybody was examined, and my cousin was sent away to a recuperating place, to a sort of a sanatorium, in Sweden. And we were put in, on quarantine, into the Malmo Museum. They have reorganised it, they roomed the place, and made space, and reorganised it, in Malmo Museum, they've put us in. We stayed, and we were examined daily, by doctors they put us on a ration. In fact, the first time, the first time I have ever seen those biscuits, those diet biscuits, they look corrugated, brown, what are they called?

Oh, like crisp bread?

Crisp bread, the first time I ever seen those. And this is what they're going to give us, two or three in the morning. Never seen that, it was nice, I never seen it before. Those crisp bread, they were brown. They put us in, this we were allowed to have for a week.

Just that?

Well, I can't remember, it started with that, and maybe that increased. And they checked us over, and we are staying there, in that museum.

How did they treat you?

Very well. Very well. They took us out to, in a warehouse, a clothing warehouse, and everybody picked their own suits, and underwear and coats.

How many were there of you in this museum?

There must have been about, about 300. About 300.

And then you said there were more that were taken to sanatoriums?

Some were already taken to sanatorium, yes, yes.

So how many had the Swedes taken over? Do you know how many had actually gone to Sweden?

I don't know, probably about 5,000 or 10,000. There were quite a few camps like ours, yes.

And what did you do during the day there?

We weren't allowed to go out. We were on quarantine, in quarantine, weren't allowed to go out. So various activities inside, you know. You were reading, or they had some concerts now and then. They tried to keep us busy. It was rather difficult, actually! Very very difficult. Three weeks it lasted.

Did you know anyone else there?

Yes, we, yes, some various people. I can't remember exactly who. Yes, we met over there, also, a distant, a distant relation, Cesia Diamond, a young girl, also from Bendzin, from Bendzin she was. We got friendly with, a distant relation of us, we got friendly with. And we stayed there for about three weeks, and then they sent us to, to like a hostel, to a place called Dio, it was like a little village, a lovely little village, a beautiful little village, and there must have been 50 or 100 inhabitants in that village. And we stayed there for, we stayed there, roundabout June or July it was, and stayed there.

So where did you stay, in that village?

In that hostel.

In a hostel?

Well, it was, really it was a small, it was a largish house, very largish house, it may have been a hotel once upon a time, it may have been a hotel. And they kept us, probably, there was only about 100 of us. One hundred of us there were. Men and women as well.

What kind of age?

About, about 20, 21, 22. There was one lady which, she was there with her daughter, and she must have been somewhere about 45, or 50. She was there with her daughter. Oldish one. They were from various different camps, and various different backgrounds of the people. There were people we'd never met before. We'd never met.

Was there someone in charge of the hostel?

Well, a Swede. He was sort of the governor, who looked after the administration, and everything else.

Were there any Jewish people in organisation?

No. No. No, we didn't have any Jewish people who were in the organisation, trying to help to organise that.

Were any Jewish activities organised whilst you were there?

Also not. Also not. Just now and then they'd take us to, to a show, to a concert, took us to a town called Vaxjo, a university city, and concerts. And then after a few weeks, they tried to get people working. I, I was employed in that place where he was making, he was making, repairing sewing machines. So I happened to work there, for the last three months while being there.

You lived in the hostel?

I lived in the hostel, yes. And then I got out to work, out to work.

And how many days a week did you work?

Five days a week, eight hours a day.

And were you paid for that?

Yes, yes, yes. I can't remember exactly what it was, but I was paid, some minimum wage, or something like that.

Did they find you that job?

Yes. Yes. They asked people their various capabilities, what one can do. They found that job, yes.

And what did Manya do?

I don't think she did anything, I don't think. I can't remember. I don't think she did anything then.

And how was your cousin? Did you have contact with her?

Yes, contact. In fact, I visit her once or twice.

What was the matter with her?

She had something on the lung, she had something. They found something on the lung, but she is all right now. Nothing serious. A certain amount of TB I think it was.

So how long were you there for?

Where, in Sweden?

Yes. Well, or working in the factory, working in the sewing machine place.

Well, until we left. Until I left for England.

Did you have any contact with Jews, with the Jewish community in Sweden?

No. No. No.

And how did you come to go to England? How did that come about?

Well, I was, we were in correspondence with my uncle, Bernard Ferster, my father's brother, he was living in Manchester. And we found him, and we were in correspondence with him.

Had you known his address?

Yes. Yes. Well, the way I've written it, it's a miracle. I happened to know very roughly his address, and it arrived.

Do you remember what you put on the envelope?

Well, the envelope was Bernrose, I remember he was called Bernrose, B. Ferster, Broom Lane, Manchester. And somehow it arrived, and he got it.

And when did you receive your first letter from him?

Roundabout the July, August, while we were in, in that Swedish place. And then he decide, he asked us what we would like to do. We said we would like to come to England.

Had you ever thought of going anywhere else?

No. No. As he was the only relative who survived, or, one of the relatives that survived, we thought we'd go to him. Well, England, before the War, was like the golden Medina, you know! Abroad!

How was this arranged, that you came to England?

Well, he, he managed to get permission from the Government in this country, asked to visit the survivors, to come on a visit first of all, a three month visit. So we came at the time, 5th February, in 1946, when we arrived here, to England.

And how did you travel?

By plane. Yes. It was a small Dakota. By plane we travelled, from, from Sweden.

And who came? How many of you came?

Three of us.

The three of you came together?

Yes, the three of us came together, yes.

Had your cousin recovered by then?

Yes, yes, she had recovered by then. She was quite well, yes.

And where did you land?

It was a military airport, outside London, a military airport. I don't think it's active now. Outside London, there was an airport.

And how did you,

Well, my Uncle Bernard, who waited for us. He waited for us. And

F789 - End of Side B

BRITISH LIBRARY NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Ref. No.: C410/O80

Playback Nos: F786-791 inc.

Collection Title: Living Memory of the Jewish Community

Interviewee's surname: FERSTER

Title: Mr.

Interviewee's forenames: Chaim (Henry)

Date of Birth: 18.7.1922

Sex: M

Date(s) of recording: April/May, 1990

Location of interview: Interviewee's home

Name of interviewer: Rosalyn Livshin

Type of recorder: UHER

Total no. of tapes: 6 reels

Speed:

Type of tape: Agfa – reels

Noise Reduction: None

Mono or stereo: Mono

Original or copy: Original

Additional material: Photographs to be collected

Copyright/clearance: Full clearance given

F786 - Side A

I was born in Sosnowice, Poland, near Katowice, on 18th July, 1922. My father was born in Sosnowice. His father died during the War in about 1940. He had a grocery shop in Sosnowice. It was a smallish store and he worked in it with a son of his. My grandfather was called Shmelke or Shmuel Ferster. He was married twice and his second wife helped him in the store. My father was the eldest from his first wife. He was one of seven children, five to the first wife and two to the second. Of the five, there was one girl, and of the two to the second wife, there was a boy and a girl.

My father was the eldest. He was called Wolf. The second was Yankel, then Shifra, then Bernard, then Srulek or Yisroel and then Yossef. From the second wife there was Esther and a boy. Bernard emigrated to Manchester in about 1912 and lived there. Yankel lived in Cracow and he was a flour merchant. Yossef went to Israel in 1933 or '34. He was married but had no children. Srulek dealt in cigarettes in Sosnowice. My father had a brush factory. He must have had an apprenticeship before he started his business in 1910. He was probably just married then. My father was a craftsman. He had a small factory employing 10-12 people. They made scrubbing brushes, and sweeping brushes. He sold them to various shops, out of town as well. He travelled also. He was mostly involved on the selling side, his wife supervised and kept the books. The workers were mostly non-Jewish.

The factory was in the same apartment block where we lived. It was a very big apartment block. We lived on the second floor, and the factory was a bit to the right on the ground floor. About 90 families lived in this apartment block.

My grandfather's first wife must have died and he remarried. His first wife was called Yocheved. Grandfather didn't hold any communal position. He was a very Orthodox man and spent his time in the stiebel. He was a Gerer Chassid. In Sosnowice there were about 33,000 families and about 15-20 stieblach. There was one shul but most davened in a stiebel. There were many Chassidim there. The Gerer were very strong in Poland but there were also Radomsker stieblach. The Radomesker Rabbi lived in Sosnowice. There were Alexander stieblach, Chenciner, Mozhcer stieblach. There were two Gerer stieblach.

There was, now and then, quite a bit of friction between the Chassidim, such as between the Alexander and Radomsker Chassidim. On Shabbath and Yom Tov they would smash up each others' tables. I didn't know what they were fighting over. My father and grandfather would occasionally visit the Gerer Rabbi in Ger but I never went.

My father wore a bekeshes and a long coat. He had a beard and he wore a small cap. He wore a long black coat, a kapote. For Shabbath he wore a silk long frock. This was black. On Shabbos the cap was a velvet one.

I didn't know my mother's parents. My grandfather died before I was born and I was named after him. He was married twice. My mother had two brothers and three

sisters. Four children were from the first wife and two from the second wife. I think my mother was born in Chenciner. From the second wife, the children may have been born in Sosnowice. I was named Leib after my grandfather. I don't know who my other name, Chaim, was after. My grandfather seemed to be quite popular because they called him Leibel Chenciner. He was a Melammed. He was a bit short-tempered. One of his sons from his first wife ran away from home at about 16 because of that. He ended up in Paris. My mother always told us she had a brother in Paris. We contacted him after the War. He was called Mottel Oderberg. My mother's eldest sister lived in Warsaw. She was called Chaya. Her husband struggled to make a living. He made soap. Then came Martel and she lived in Sosnowice. She had five children, four daughters and a son. Her husband was a Sochatshiver Chassid and he sat and learnt. His wife ran a wholesale underwear business and it was quite successful. The children helped her run this. Then came my mother, Naomi. To the second wife there were Chaya Gittel and Yossef Mendel. Chaya Gittel lived in Sosnowice, and they struggled for a living. They collected washing and mangled it. Yossef Mendel learnt to be a watchmaker with his brother in Paris. Then he started repairing and dealing in sewing machines in Sosnowice.

I don't know where my parents met but they probably married in Sosnowice. There were four in our family, three girls and myself. I was the third. My mother's father was a Chenciner Chassid. Mottel who went to Paris, was not Orthodox, and Yossef Mendel only slightly followed that Rabbi. He was friendly with another Rabbi in Sosnowice.

My uncle used to tell us that he learnt with my grandfather, the Melammed. He used to tell us how bad tempered he was. He had no patience. He was a very clever Baal Tephilla but he was very impatient.

Our apartment consisted of three rooms - a fair sized kitchen, a very large dining room and a bedroom. My sisters slept in a bed in the dining room. Now and then I slept with my father in the bedroom. We also had a maid and her bed was in the kitchen. We had her for many years. We had washing facilities in the kitchen and we built a toilet off the kitchen in our last 5-6 years there. In the latter years, we had running water. In earlier years there was a hand pump in the yard and people were paid to carry the water up.

Everyone had a coal locker in the basement and the coal was stored in this over winter in case the weather stopped deliveries. You bought a wagonful and kept it through the winter. We had a large tiled oven in the corner. In the dining room, bedroom, there was lino and just a bare floor in the kitchen. This was kept very clean. It was scrubbed and you could almost eat off it. In the kitchen there were cabinets to hold the dishes, etc.. They were called "Credence". This has open shelves and cupboards with sliding doors. In the dining room there was a dining room suite. The furniture was very big and heavy. In the bedroom there were bold wide wardrobes, and there was a chaise longue in the dining room with very heavy velvet curtains. On the bedroom wall was a photograph of my grandmother, Yocheved. We ate together at lunchtime and in the evening.

F786 - End of Side A

F786 - Side B

The maid was a Polish girl called Stacha, about 35 years old. Mother was very strict that everyone ate together. Lunchtime was the main meal of the day. We always had meat at lunchtime. On Shabbos we had fish, mainly carp, then lockschen soup and chicken. Chicken before the War was quite a delicacy in Poland, more so than meat. Chicken you always had for Shabbos because it was something special. For Shabbos lunch we had cholent. This was put into the baker's oven on Friday. In Sosnowice you were allowed to carry. There was an eruv and so everybody brought it home on Shabbos. You had a ticket to claim your cholent.

On Shabbos you went to the stiebel from about 9 a.m. until 11 a.m., then you ate at about 12 until 1 p.m., and then my father would learn with me to see what I had studied during the week. We learnt Perek and then went to sleep. He used to want me to sleep also but I would go and play with the boys downstairs. He was against this. He felt I didn't play with the right type of people. These were Agudos Yisroel groups but I was too young to join. During the week my time was full.

I started cheder at about 7.30 a.m. and learnt until 6 p.m. with an hour's break at lunchtime. This was six days a week. In the evening I had other lessons, so I didn't have time for groups. I went to cheder until I was 15 or 16. We were learning Gemorrah and Tosephos by then. There were only six or seven of us with a special Rabbi. His name was Mordche Pariser. He taught boys from about 12. He taught in his house. We learnt secular subjects only for about an hour a week, because of the law. We learnt in Yiddish. The secular subjects we learnt were Polish, Maths, etc..

The first cheder I attended was when I was 5 or 6. I went to Yossef the Melammed. This must have been a shorter day. There were about 20-30 children. This was in his home also. He taught siddur, then another Rabbi would teach chumash. The second Rabbi was called Moshe. He belonged to a bigger organisation called Yesodei Hatorah. This was a new set up. They taught from 8 or 9 till maybe 15. There were 30 in a class and this was in a special cheder, rented for the purpose. My parents weren't happy with my progress there so at the age of 10, they sent me to another Yesodei Hatorah in Bendzin, which was meant to be a higher standard. I stayed there about two years, and then they brought me back and put me with the Rabbi who only had six or seven in the class. My sisters went to secular schools. They belonged to the active Beis Yaacov. This was an Agudah Organisation.

My parents would speak Polish although they weren't good at writing it. They spoke Polish perfectly well. They also spoke German because a lot of the customers were from Katowice, Upper Silesia. This belonged to Germany before the First World War. They would come to Sosnowice to buy. Sosnowice was a place for buying. There were many shopkeepers within a radius of 30 miles who would come to Sosnowice to stock up for their shops. It was quite a busy place. The shopkeepers would come to buy cloth, pots and pans, brushes, etc.. Many spoke German so my parents could answer in this. I picked up a smattering also.

I spoke Polish. At home we spoke Yiddish but I heard Polish around. I can read and write Polish with difficulty. About 25% of the town was Jewish, about 30,000 Jewish families. Many were shopkeepers. The commerce in Sosnowice was in Jewish hands. Sosnowice had quite smart shops on the main streets. It was not a backwards place.

Our apartment was about five minutes away from the smart shopping area. It was called Ulica Dekerta 14. The stiebels were also about 5 or 10 minutes away.

Relationships between Jews and non-Jews were reasonably well. Now and again there were pogroms. The apartments were built round a courtyard. At Sukkos there would be about 14 Sukkas in the yard. Families joined together to build one Sukka. Now and then the Sukkas were knocked down by the Poles. The apartment block had a gate and this was locked at 10 p.m. The people didn't feel safe otherwise. If anyone was late, after 10 p.m., your parents worried. When the apartment gate was locked, you had to ring a bell, and the caretaker would open the door, for which he was given money. The caretaker was non-Jewish, and the families got on with him fairly well on the face of it.

The apartment block was fully Jewish. Certain areas were fully Jewish. I had no non-Jewish friends, because I had no contact with them. The caretaker acted as the Shabbos guy. He switched off the lights in the Sukka. We had electricity.

Father met hostility on his travels. He usually wore a jacket then and a hat. He met now and then with anti-semitism. I heard him tell my mother now and then. He would be pulled by his beard. My mother wore a sheitel and my older two sisters who were married. The oldest was called Yocheved, the next Sarah. They lived in Sosnowice. Yocheved's husband had a wholesale business with brushes and accessories and the other had a tailors' accessory business in silks and linings, etc..

Zionism was a bad word for us. We were frum - on the right side. Anyone who was a Zionist was already a little bit to the left - a little off course. There was an active Mizrachi but they were considered not religious enough. They were a little bit more modern and maybe did a bit of compromising.

The Sosnowice community was very religious. About 60-70% were very Orthodox. They were Chassidim. There was one shul next to where we lived but the majority went to stiebels. I never daverned at the shul on the shabbos although it was next door. There were lots of Rabbonim with their followers. There was lots of in-fighting especially at elections. Father was not particularly interested in communal politics. He voted for the Aguda and Gerer Chassidim candidates.

We would go to the Dayan, Reb Sheallo. I went to cheder with his son. He had his own stiebel.

There were very few Reform Jews or non-religious Jews in Sosnowice. Jews were reasonably comfortable. There were a few who were quite rich and they were quite active. They established an old peoples' home and a Jewish hospital. They were

quite Orthodox people. One family was called Ostry, another Estreicher and another Tobiasz.

There were Jewish doctors in Sosnowice and there were Felchers. The Felchers often knew more than the doctors. One called Taichner attended our family. He had sons who were doctors. His usual treatment was bankes - the glasses that they put on your back. This was done for most illnesses but usually for a bad cough or a bad chest.

I remember my sisters' weddings. Firstly the Chuppas were late at night, at 11 p.m. or thereabouts. They were outside in the courtyard. There were Marshaleks, the jesters, who entertained the people. There would be candles right round. The Marshaleks were talented people. They sang, played violins, and were very capable people. The meal would go on until about 5 in the morning. This would be in one of the special halls for such occasions. For my sisters' weddings, all the food was prepared by the caterers in our house. Then it was taken to the hall where there were 200-300 people. The meal must have started at 11 or 12 o'clock at night.

F786 - End of Side B

F787 - Side A

Men and women sat separately. There was a band, a four or five piece band and the Chassidim danced. All the family went to weddings, even babies in prams.

When a child was born, the children would go to say part of the Shema in front of the baby for the first six to seven days. This was called Krishma lehning. For doing this, the children got a packet of sweets. The children did this for a baby boy until its bris. Just little boys did this for the first seven days.

For my Bar Mitzvah we had a Melava Malka at our house. Rabbis and family from the stiebel came. I gave a pshetel, a little speech. We were not bothered to say the Haftorah with a tune, we just said it. We made a kiddush in the stiebel and Melava Malka at home. We also got various presents, as one does here.

The songs we sang were zemiros on Shabbos. The Mozher Rabbis tunes were very popular. He was a world famous composer of tunes.

We went away for a holiday every year for two weeks. My father never went but my mother and sister went. We went to Olkush, about 40 miles away from Sosnowice, and to Piskiden, or not far from the Czech border to Milowka. Once we went to Raicza in Galicia. Often Jewish people let out a room or you stayed in a Pensionat, which was like a Jewish hotel. We walked a lot on these holidays and tried to get sunburnt. We went to these places by train or coach as to Olkush.

After cheder I learnt Ivrit in the evening. There was private tutors for 3 or 4 francs and we had it in everyone's house. We learnt this for 3-4 years. I also learnt to play

the violin and I had a private teacher to teach me some secular subjects. My father did not mind me learning Ivrit.

There was little time for playing. The only time was three days before Pesach when we were let off cheder to help at home to bake the matzos. Then we had time to play and we had a wonderful time. The matzos were all hand-made, and it was quite an exciting time. We used to disappear to play. We played football and I would ride someone else's bicycle. I wasn't allowed a bike - "Frum boys don't ride bikes." In the winter we would go sledging and skating. I would borrow someone's skates. On Pesach we played games with nuts.

I didn't help at home nor did my father. He just checked that the books were clear of chametz. My mother, sisters and maid did the work at home. My mother took the lead in disciplining the children. We were fairly strictly disciplined. If we stepped out of line, my father would step in. They were strict about Yiddishkeit - that we shouldn't miss Mincha, and we had to be on time for the meal, and to do our homework. We were told off if we had a bad report from the Rabbi. My parents would see him maybe once a month. He was also very strict and would give the stick. He had a piece of wood half an inch thick and two-and-a-half inches wide, and 18" long, and he would hit it across your hand. My father would smack you across your face or punish you through your pocket money. My mother was the first contact. If it was something more serious then it came to my father. Then it was trouble. He was more feared than my mother. He was very strict.

We did not read books. Books weren't allowed. Father did read the Yiddish newspapers. I read no books. I didn't have the time anyway. We didn't have a radio. We knew about world events from the newspapers. There were lots of discussions in the stiebels. My mother went to the stiebel on Yomtov more than Shabbos.

We were in contact with Bernard Ferster by letter every six or so months. He usually sent quite substantial presents for simchas. For my oldest sister's wedding he sent a large canteen of cutlery with about 100 pieces in it. The box itself was a beautiful piece of mahogany. He also helped a brother of his who was struggling by sending him parcels and he sent his father money monthly.

There was no leisure time. The only leisure was to visit relatives. Visiting was common, especially on a Friday night. My sisters probably visited their own friends. There was a Yiddish theatre but we weren't allowed there. There were two cinemas, but we weren't allowed there. I once went to an American Jewish film, "Yidel Mitten Fiddel".

I was 17 when War broke out. When I was about fifteen and a half to sixteen, I went to work in my father's factory. In the evening I still had a nightly shiur with a Rabbi. I helped to manufacture, to work on a machine. My father taught me this. I had picked things up over the years.

My sisters also helped in the factory with the books, etc.. I didn't help father with the selling. I was in the factory for about 12-18 months before the War broke out and I was there for about six months after the War started.

War broke out on Friday, 1st September. We listened to a wireless which told us about the War. One of my aunts had a relative in Pilc about 13 miles away. We thought it would be safer there, so we walked there. My father wouldn't go because he had to look after things. I went with my mother and sisters and aunts and uncles, etc.. We went with some extra clothes and a horse and truck. We stayed in Pilc about 2-3 days then we came back. My father didn't have his beard anymore, because the Germans started cutting off beards. We soon heard what the Germans were doing. They had destroyed the shul next door.

The Germans came into Pilc as we left. Our apartment in Sosnowice was still intact. Rations started. Often there wasn't enough food. There were queues. I would often queue for food. Now and then there was trouble. Germans would just shoot people or pull them out.

Within a month or two, the Germans sent a German to take over the factory. He made my father do all sorts of menial tasks. I still worked there under the German. He was a man of about 50 and he would bully us and knock things about. He was probably from Upper Silesia. He would travel daily from there. The same staff still worked there.

We could no longer daven at the stiebels. You were not allowed to congregate. People would daven in their own rooms within the apartment block. They did it more secretly.

It was difficult to get fuel. You had to skimp, and stretch what you had. This lasted until my uncle, the sewing machine mechanic, got me a job with him. The Germans confiscated all the sewing machines in town and a very big apartment block. They turned this into a factory with a few thousand sewing machines. People went to work there, and this was safer work. Now and then the Germans would take people from the streets and send them to camps, but if you worked for such a concern, then you were supposedly more secure because you were producing army uniforms. This factory was on Ulica Modrzejowska. The building belonged to Fawel Ostry.

F787 - End of Side A

F787 - Side B

Six to 12 months after the War started, they set up this factory and it worked night and day, seven days a week with 12 hour shifts. My uncle, the sewing machine mechanic, told me he would teach me to be a mechanic because it was safer there. I worked there about 18 months. Conditions were not too bad there.

We worked 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. There were about five or six mechanics looking after the sewing machines. We had no contact with the Germans at all. The factory was totally run by Jews. There was a lunch break and you ate

what you took with you from your rations. We had to make sure the machines ran properly because a certain quota of production had to be met.

We were stopped on the street going to work now and then, and questioned. I had to have a pass to walk out at night because I was sometimes called out when they needed someone to help repair machines. This factory was called "Held's Shop".

My father still looked after the brush factory. I knew many who were taken off the streets and sent away, but not members of the family. A friend of mine, called Moshe Silbsztein, was taken off the street, 6-12 months after the War started. He was sent to a camp. His parents had quite a bit of influence somewhere, and after 12 months they managed to get him out of the camp and sent home. But the boy was no longer there in his mind. He was unable to speak at all. He sat like a dummy and never recovered. He was reduced to a vegetable. It was a greater shock to his parents to bring him back.

Rations consisted of black bread. Normally in Poland, there were 2 kilo breads. Six people had to share one for a day. There was a little bit of margarine and jam. I can't remember anything else. Maybe there were a few potatoes. My mother helped in the factory and tried to run the house and organise some food.

At this time, the Jews from the town of Auschwitz were evacuated. We had some distant relations there. This was before the camp was built. These relations came to live with us. They had a family of 4-6 and they stayed with us in our apartment. So we were quite cramped. One of my sisters and her children also lived with us. After about 6-12 months one of the husbands were sent off to one of the camps.

I worked as a sewing machine mechanic until March 1943. My father still worked at the brush factory. At this time, they started to create a ghetto outside Sosnowice, in a place called Shrodula, a little village. This started January 1943, or late 1942.

In March 1942, they gave out an order to all the Jews in the town that everyone should come to a large field. There were about 20,000 Jews who came to that field. Many had already been taken away or shot. It was raining hard and we had to stand in the field for 24 hours or more. Then a selection started. Older people were shoved to one side and families were split, completely broken up - mothers from fathers. There were selections, "You go here, you go there." Then they sent everybody home, but half or more were missing - mothers, fathers were missing, children were running around the streets without anybody. My mother was taken away then. That was the day she was taken away. My father came home and my sisters as well.

At a later date I heard those selected were taken to Auschwitz. I heard this when I later went to Auschwitz. At the time, we didn't know. We came back to the same apartment and my elder sister to her apartment. One sister, Sara, whose husband had been taken away, lived with us.

The Jews didn't have any opportunity to organise anything. Everyone was reduced to nothing. There was a Communal Council but they only carried out the Germans' orders to supply so many Jews. They had no control over anything. There was a

Jewish police, a Jewish militia, but they were carrying out their job. People thought they were trying to save themselves, but none of them did. There were some good Jewish police, some terrible ones. They policed the Jewish area and delivered the Jews the Germans asked for. They had a white cap with blue on it. It was a peaked cap, with an armband.

We had to wear a white armband with a blue star at first, then after 6-12 months we had to wear a yellow star on the front and back. There were restrictions after 3-6 months on trains or trams, which you weren't allowed to go on, or certain streets, which were forbidden. There was little contact with non-Jewish Poles. I remember when the Jews had to assemble on the field, you could see the Poles walking into the houses with sacks on their backs and clearing the houses out.

There must have been a black market but I wasn't involved. I was too young. I wasn't aware of underground activity. At the beginning of 1943 we moved into the ghetto. Before then, my younger sister Manya Stern, who lives in Manchester, was taken away. She was taken from Sosnowice to a camp. This must have been late 1942.

When we were moved into the ghetto, we took everything we could carry. Some hired a horse and cart, and you moved what you could. We were given certain notice to move. This was late 1942, early 1943. The Jewish Community Council allowed each family a room. The ghetto was about 4-6 miles away from Sosnowice. Each room was for so many people. My memory of it is hazy because I wasn't there long. I continued working at Held's factory and walked in a group there each day. We were not guarded on the way. I had a pass on me. At times I had to show it. My father was still working in the brush factory.

In March 1943 I was taken away from work. A few hundred were taken and put in an assembly centre in Sosnowice for a couple of days. Then I was sent to camp. There were a few hundred men there. We were taken to a place called Marktsatadt, by cattle train. It only took a few hours. It was quite a big camp. We were put into a barrack on arrival and given some rations. We were given a talk by the Judeneltester in charge and by the lagereltester in charge of the camp, telling you you would be shot if you didn't behave.

I didn't do anything for 2-3 days and then we were sent to a camp called Klettendorf, not far away. The first day or two I couldn't eat the food. They gave a large plant pot type container thick with food like sugar beet. I couldn't eat it. The fellow next to me ate it. I didn't know anyone could eat so much.

There they started teaching me to be a bricklayer for a few weeks. Then we started to lay railway lines. This camp was not so big. There were about 500-600 Jews. The first one housed about 2-3,000 Jews. I met some friends who had been there a year or two. They told me it was a terrible camp. You were constantly chased and worked and punished. People died daily. They were digging and building. They built bunkers, and people died daily from the knocking about they got from the shiebers (kapos) who were line kapos, all Jews. I recognised a few there from home. I was only there 2-3 days and didn't do any work.

In Klettendorf I went to sleep on my bunk and they called an Appel. I still slept and when they counted up, one was missing. I was found and given such a hiding I couldn't walk for the next few weeks. I didn't realise what it was all about. I didn't sleep in again. The barracks had double bunks and there were about 50 in a barrack. They were timber and were quite reasonable. There were straw mattresses, and blankets. We had no special clothing, just our clothes from home. We received food in the morning and evening. We had bread and margarine in the morning and soup in the evening.

F787 - End of Side B

F788 - Side A

Shiebers were below the kapo. They supervised the men and the kapo was above them. They were allocated to each barracks. One was called Sherrer - he came from Sosnowice and lived in the same street as myself. He came from a very poor family and was one of the lads knocking about the streets, pinching here and there. He was someone you didn't bother talking to. He was someone you would be ashamed to be seen with. He had torn shoes and torn clothes. When he was in Klettendorf he seemed very big. He was dressed in luxurious boots and riding breeches. He had a stick and he was shouting and screaming. He was one of those kapos. He remembered me and now and then tried to help me. He helped me now and then with food and directed me to easier jobs on odd occasions.

The other kapos and shiebers were very rough. They picked the type of people with very low mentality. This Sherrer, I don't think he could write. This was the type of person who pushed themselves and was picked. They showed they could use quite ruthless methods to get people to behave.

They took us to certain building plots and a German master showed us how to put bricks. Now and then we had to labour, laying railway lines. I was only in the camp for one or two months. The majority laid railway lines. This was a purely Jewish camp. We worked seven days a week and every third week we stopped for a Sunday.

On Sunday you washed yourself and mended your socks and shoes. Now and then there were concerts. The camp had a few talents. They played and sang songs. One fellow was an excellent clarinetist. He was supposed to be a decorator there. He was a very big fellow. He was allowed to keep his clarinet. Now and then these talented people went to entertain the Germans in their barracks.

The toilet facilities were primitive outside toilets. There was a wooden wash barracks with rows of taps with cold water. You got a bit of soap. In those barracks you went to the wash barracks to get washed.

Every morning there was an Appel or after work another one. They took about an hour. There were no executions in that camp. If someone became ill they were sent off.

I wasn't at the camp long enough to have friends. It was very difficult to make friends in the camps because everybody was hungry and looking after themselves all the time. Not many made close friends.

From there we were sent, maybe only 100 of us, to a camp called Faulbrück. We got there by cattle train. It wasn't far. This wasn't a purpose-built camp. There was an old building there which had been adapted for that purpose. This was much bigger than Klettendorf. There were about 2000 inmates. I was in that camp for about 4-5 months.

From there we travelled to work in a Krupps factory. We were taken by cattle train to work. We had to walk for about an hour, then we were put into cattle trains which took us to a Krupps factory. I was working inside the factory because I was supposed to be a bit of a tradesman/engineer. In that factory I was supervised by a German master, helping him to put on the blackouts. A lot of the others worked outside, making concrete. We were a team of 100-200. There must have been 40-50 soldiers with us, with machine guns. I had a guard watching me inside the factory.

The factory was making ammunition. A few of us, maybe a dozen, worked inside the factory. The other workers were non-Jewish foreign labour. There were French and Czechs - a lot of Czechs there, and women. They were free but had to work there. There were French, Italians, Czechs working there. We didn't have a lot of contact with them. Now and then a Czech girl would hand over a parcel of sandwiches to me. Also my German master would bring me a few potatoes now and then from home. He would give the excuse he couldn't bring more because it was on ration. He was a nice man. He would watch to see if the guard was watching him. He was an elderly man and lived probably near the factory.

We never heard any news of the War. We travelled to that factory every day. We started in the morning at about 3-4 a.m.. This was around May, June, July. We were woken up and it took us about an hour to get ready, washed and rations, down to the Appelplatz. We stood maybe 1-2 hours before they started counting us. Then, after counting us, they sent us off in various groups. We were walked to the train which was in a railway siding. We went in the cattle wagons, and travelled for about an hour. We arrived at about 7 or 8 a.m.. We went to our work places.

We got our rations in the camp in the morning. We got a sixth portion of a 2 kilo bread, with some margarine and black coffee. I finished this off right away when I got it, some cut a piece off at a time, and still had some left for the evening.

When we arrived we went straight to work and at lunchtime we got some watery soup - with sugar beets. We had half an hour's break for this. At 6 or 7 p.m. we travelled back to the camp the way we had come. When we got back at maybe 8 p.m. we had to be counted and this took a couple of hours and then we had to queue for soup. This was maybe 10 p.m. By the time you got your soup it would be 11 p.m. because there were long queues. By the time you got to bed it would be 11 or 12 o'clock and at 3 or 4 a.m. you had to be back up again.

We worked seven days a week but every third Sunday we were off. Conditions were very rough here. Klettendorf was a palace in comparison. Conditions and facilities were very poor. Washing and toilet facilities were terrible. There was a particular area in the courtyard where there were lots of taps but the toilets were terrible outside.

We were treated very rough there. You had to be on the run. They would knock you about for any excuse. Whatever you did was wrong. If you stand here, go over there. If you went over there, he'd say, "Why did you go over there?" This was from the kapos, the shiebers, the Germans.

Once two or three men did something wrong at work and they took them to the Appelplatz, buried them to their necks in the soil for about 24 hours. Two died. The other lived. This was just a punishment. This happened twice whilst I was there. No one was shot.

We lived in an old building with long shelves for beds on three layers. It was in a large hall, we all slept there. We had some straw mattresses and a couple of blankets. I lay on the middle level. I didn't know the people there - I just became acquainted with a few. We did not stay together from the previous camp.

I was there for 3-4 months and then they sent us to a camp close to it, called Gräditz. We continued to work in the same place. We still had to travel by cattle train as before. The old camp was maybe converted into a women's camp, I'm not sure. The Gräditz camp was already established and this increased to about 3 or 4,000. This was also an old building, maybe an old factory. It was similar to the previous camp. There were the similar three-tier shelves for beds and we followed the same procedure, getting up early, working, etc.. We were hassled there also.

I had quite a good contact in the factory, because the German master gave me quite a bit of food and I felt quite fit. I was in a good condition. Then all of a sudden the camp broke out in typhus. They closed it down. We went to this camp the latter part of 1943. We were there until April 1944.

In the previous camps I did meet a cousin - Michael Bornstein in Gräditz, and I also met a brother-in-law there - Yankel Szpiegler. They were really labouring. They really had it tough. They were digging outside. They didn't look well. Their faces were swollen with hunger. They really had it tough. They didn't survive. They may have been in the typhus as well. For one reason while they were in the camps, although they were a cousin and a brother-in-law, you were not as close as home for some reason. Maybe because everybody was trying to fight for survival - everybody was hungry. I saw them every day and said hello, but that was it. Everyone was preoccupied with how to find a little bit of extra food.

I continued to work in the factory whilst at Gräditz.

F788A - End of Side A

F788 - Side B

Once they put me in a place where they were building machinery. They were manufacturing a new invention - Widia. This is a material made from a powder, which is compressed. The powder is compressed into the shape of the tip of a bullet. It is baked at a high temperature on an oven conveyor belt. Then it was brazed onto the tip of the bullet. This caused the bullet to penetrate hard steel ten times deeper into armoured vehicles than an ordinary bullet. I was transferred for a short while to help to produce a vibrating machine to mix the materials. This was also on the

engineering side. This fact probably helped me to survive - being undercover and not being much physically demanding work.

There were quite a few doing similar work. There were two brothers from Bendzin called Greengrass, and one of them is now in America - the older one, and the younger one is in Israel. They also helped with equipment. They originally came from Germany just before the War. The older brother was a very good tradesman and engineer. He was a high precision turner which they needed for this job. He was treated exceptionally. He got all sorts of benefits. The younger brother just stuck to him because they thought very highly of his older brother. They followed the same routine, but in the factory he was treated with kid gloves. They also survived.

There were German supervisors and most of them were elderly and the workers were foreign in the factory. Those labouring outside were also supervised by a German. They were building bunkers and air-raid shelters. The German gave orders to the kapos, and they ensured the work was done.

We heard no news about the War. It was very difficult to speak to the other workers because you were guarded all the time. I remember one incident when, for a week during the winter, I was taken outside to help the others. They were shipping soil on trolleys from where they had been digging. There were about 60 of us, and it was below 25°C. The Germans were shouting we were not loading fast enough and they kept shouting at us. They made us take everything off up to our waist. Obviously it was cold so we had to load and load. Within 2-3 days, people got pneumonia and died. These were German soldiers. There were some bad ones amongst them. Fortunately, I was just there for 3-4 days.

We had an overcoat and trousers. We had a blanket type of coat and wooden shoes with wooden soles. We wrapped ourselves round with cement sacks. These kept the cold out especially round the legs. On entering the work camp, everyone had a number. This was first given in Marktsatadt. This was on the front of our clothing.

Now and then we spoke to each other, maybe, when we had a break on Sundays. We still had concerts in Gräditz. There were some fantastic, highly talented people. There was a violinist from Vienna, who was fantastic. There was also an actor and they did a duet, singing and playing. Gräditz was a Jewish labour camp. We all helped to sing with the popular tunes. You got yourself carried away. The concerts lasted for 3-4 hours and the Germans also listened to them. We didn't sing at other times.

The food was similar to previous camps. When typhus broke out the whole camp was closed up. 200-300 died a day. There were a few who were immune because they'd had it before. There was no medication and the one or two inmates, who were doctors, didn't have anything.

I caught it also and I must have been knocked out for two to three weeks. With typhus you get a very high temperature and you are knocked out. You get hallucinations. I can't remember what happened, but I remember various hallucinations. All of a sudden the crisis must have passed over. I happened to be on

the top bunk at the time and I tried to get down, but my bones were out. There was nothing on me. I was like a skeleton. I didn't have the strength to get up. When I was knocked out, the others who were immune, must have given me water, otherwise I wouldn't have survived. Eventually I got myself down. I couldn't just lie there in the filth and dirt. Eventually, I got myself down. I thought I'd wash myself a bit, so I went to the wash barracks. The dead bodies were stacked up. They were skeletons but the bodies were also brown, like they'd been burnt. They were brown like from the high temperature, or something like that.

The hunger was exceptionally great then. You could eat stones, the hunger was so great. All the camp was closed up. The Germans were frightened to come in. You relied on internal organisation of those who were immune or survived. Only a few hundred survived out of a camp of 3-4,000. The food was just put in through the gates and left. Then it had to be distributed. I managed to get some.

The camp stayed closed for a month or two and then those who survived were sent to another camp. During those months we did nothing. We just walked about. They just left you alone. You just walked around like Lowrey's pictures - shadows walking about. It was March/April, and the weather was nice, and we stayed outside a lot. We were left alone. The Shiebers and kapos must have kept some order.

Every camp had a Judeneltester. He was the top man of the inmates. Any orders from the Germans went through him. He then directed the instructions. They were intelligent people and they were not all bad, but they had a very thin line to walk on to keep everyone happy. He must have organised us. We did get food pushed through the gate. The camp was surrounded by a wire fence and watch towers, and we were being guarded, but the Germans wouldn't come in. The bodies must have been buried in a communal grave.

Then we were sent to Annaberg around April. This was a purpose-built camp, which was already in existence. They transported us by cattle truck. Maybe only 100 were sent there, and others were sent elsewhere. I wasn't sent with the Greengrasses, so they must have been sent somewhere else. There I met an uncle of mine - Yossef Mendel, my mother's brother. He was a watchmaker. In the camp he managed to help himself. He was a smart man, he repaired all the watches for the guards and everyone. He was in quite a good condition. He did not go out to work. He stayed in the camp repairing the watches. Once you were fixed like he was the soldiers always brought you something. He always managed to get something.

He helped me now and then. The conditions were not as bad in this camp. You got up at 7 a.m.. You slept on a double bunk. The rations were reasonable. There was an Appel and then we went to work in Riechenbach. I also worked inside, bulding some machinery. There were lots of Czech women there and they brought me marvellous sandwiches every day. Two girls would just put them on the side. I was quite lucky there. We were making aluminium parts for ammunition, and I was helping to assemble various machinery. We were dispersed on a similar basis as before and worked with a German supervisor. There was also a guard watching me. The German supervisor was completely neutral. He couldn't care less either way. I never spoke to anyone or heard about the War.

The others outside were building concrete and clearing bomb damage. We heard no bombing then. The factory wasn't far from our camp. It was maybe half an hour's walk. Whilst we walked, the Dutch Jews always sang a Dutch tune. There were no executions or shootings, but there were punishments, although none that I can recall. Annaberg wasn't too bad at all. I spoke to my uncle after work every day. He was 45-50 at the time. I was very close to this uncle because he had no children. He was always teaching me things before the War. In the camp, he gave me guidance and food. He always had a little bit of food or soup.

We had one Sunday in three off, but there were no concerts there.

There were some who kept up their religion. Somehow they had managed to get tallis and tephilin through, and they were davening every day. They weren't allowed to do this, but they stood in a corner. There were always angles how you can get away and do things. They managed to do it, managing to daven every day. This happened in every one of the camps. A small proportion did this. No-one was caught. We were aware of the Yom Tovim. In every camp they tried to organise to say some prayers. There was always somebody who knew what the day was. Prayers were said by heart. There was always someone who knew the prayers by heart and everyone else followed. About 10-15% would participate in this. I participated for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur particularly. We did this after work in the evening.

F788 - End of Side B

F789 - Side A

I wasn't aware of any underground activities in the camps or of the progress of the War. At one time, maybe in Annaberg, I heard news of Sosnowice, that they had liquidated the ghetto, close to the end of 1943 and that there had been shootings and killings and the majority had been sent to Auschwitz. That's where the remnants of my family went, to Auschwitz. I didn't know what Auschwitz meant then. We heard rumours but I didn't believe.

I was at Annaberg until about September. Then we were sent to Auschwitz. I think they liquidated this camp. While I was sent to Auschwitz my uncle was sent to Gross Rosen. I heard he died there. I heard later that the whole camp had disbanded. About 100-200 were sent to Auschwitz. We travelled for one or two days in cattle trucks. They gave a slice of bread and a drink, and on the way, they gave us some soup.

On arrival, we arrived at Auschwitz in the middle of the night. We were cramped in cattle trucks and all of a sudden the doors slide open and you see a huge place, enormous, as far as the eye could carry. You could see bulbs, lights, fences lit up, and camps and barracks. The place was dead silent, just absolutely silent. You could hear anything move. It was dead quiet. Then all of a sudden, the door slid open and the SS with dogs and machine guns shouted, "Raus, raus, raus, get out." There was also a carbolic smell in the air. This was about September. You could see from four corners of the earth, four flames. You look round and see four huge flames, never realising this was where the crematoria were. We only found out what these flames meant at a later date.

When we got out of the trucks, somehow they sorted us out. We were all men in that transport. We were put in an empty room, and later, perhaps the following day, SS men came in with some inmates and started sorting us out to the right and left. We didn't realise what this was about. The ones that went to one side were never seen again. The ones that went to the other side, like me, were put into wash barracks. We washed ourselves not knowing this was where they gassed the people as well. Then we were tattooed and put in a quarantine barrack.

They changed our clothes but I didn't have striped clothes. We were put into the barracks and we stayed there. One day I was standing outside the barracks and an SS man came and asked me why I was standing there. He took me aside and gave me a good hiding so that I couldn't stand up straight. He put my head into the opening of a long oven and gave me a good hiding with a stick. I couldn't straighten up for quite a few days.

There were 100-150 in the quarantine barracks. There were three-tier shelves there. We did nothing during the day. We just hung about. The food was quite good, better than the previous camp. We had a little bit more bread, a little more substantial soup.

One day I was called, I was picked. They took me to a doctor or somebody and they started measuring and photographing. They measured my legs, my feet, everything. I didn't know what for. Somehow I wasn't called again. I don't know why. I was taken to an administrative area for this.

I got friendly one day with one of the inmates, older inmates and we were talking with people who were there from Sosnowice. This particular man was there for two years. Somehow he was assorting clothing. He was in another barrack. He told me that there was a camp and barrack for small children. They had been there a few months and were given everything, clothes, food, everything. Marvellous but why? Why were they being all of a sudden charitable? Then we saw children on lorries, taking them to the gas chambers, lovely smiling kids

We didn't talk to others in the camp very often. Whilst in quarantine I didn't do anything. Nobody went to work from there. In this barrack for Yom Kippur most of them fasted, and said prayers. Somebody was on guard outside so we weren't discovered. We fasted and said prayers - Kol Nidrei, the lot, all by heart. There was always somebody who remembered everything by heart. This was October 1944. Most of the quarantine barracks took part in this. I don't think anyone had smuggled in tephilin or a tallis. Auschwitz was very tight. They stripped you naked when you went in. You couldn't get anything through at all. Your old clothes were taken away and they gave you new clothes. This was Birkenau. Auschwitz was a working camp where they worked in a chemical factory.

The kapos were very strict for no reason at all. They were really tough. They killed people every day just by beating them. They went round with very thick sticks. They were very tough. The Germans walked around all the time also. Auschwitz was a very guarded place. They had fences in triplicate there. There were no executions there.

I remember once an alsatian got lost into our barrack. We carved it up and ate it. It was beautiful. Nobody knew about this. There were lots of dogs in Auschwitz and one got lost. It was caught, killed and carved up and cooked. It made soup. We all had quite a bit of a portion of it. People got some paper or wood to cook it.

We had to keep the barracks clean because they came in three times a day to have a look round. They were very strict in Auschwitz. Everything had to be absolutely spotless. Everything had to be straight, the bed, the blankets. There mustn't be any bits of dirt or straw. It had to be 100% spotless. The other camps were not as strict as here. If it wasn't up to standard you got a hiding from the kapo or from the man in charge of the room.

We had Appels twice a day. I always remember waking up in Auschwitz. It always gave me the shudders. It was only about 7 o'clock but they had a gong, a big thing. It gave such a shudder when that gong went in the morning. It absolutely gave you the shudders when that sound came along. It was like calling to hell. We had about half an hour to get up, and it was straight out to the roll call. This took about half an hour.

After about 4-5 weeks instructions were handed out and rumour went round that they were looking for engineers. I immediately volunteered because I realised by then what Birkenau/Auschwitz was. I wanted somehow to get out, so I volunteered. They gave me some various tests to see if I am an engineer and they chose me and a few hundred others and took us out of Auschwitz. From there they gave us very large portions, so we knew this would take a long time. This was October. We were put into cramped cattle trucks. We were on them for three days and nights. It was absolutely impossible.

They stopped now and then and gave us some water. A lot of people died and did business in the train, it was absolutely terrible. One Hungarian man, after travelling for two days, the train stopped, and he got out. He said he needed to do his business. The soldier went out with him. He found a stick and he hit the soldier on the head. The soldier turned and shot him immediately. He couldn't take any more. We were dead scared he would shoot the lot of us.

We were all Jews together. In our quarantine barrack we had been only Jews. In other barracks in Auschwitz were other nationalities. We were all Jews. We wore a yellow triangle with "Jude" on it. We were three days on the train and eventually we arrived at a camp called Nieder-Orschel in Tieringen. There they had a saying, "Tieringen land is Hitler land." It was beautiful countryside there. This was comparatively a marvellous camp, it was like a holiday camp. It was unbelievable. The kapo was a German. He was a Communist. He was in charge. He was a marvellous man. Life was a little bit reasonable. You got up at 7 o'clock. The food was reasonable. The rations were reasonable. You only walked about 10 minutes to work.

The whole camp was working, building Messerschmidt aeroplanes. We were walking about 5 minutes from the camp to that factory which was worked by inmates, all from this camp. We were assembling the wings for the Messerschmidt planes. There were quite a few from Sosnowice, which I did know. The atmosphere was a little more relaxed. The supervision of the SS - most of them were elderly, Austrian SS men, and they we've heard, then we get some rumours that the War is going against them already. You can see the kapo was singing. He had a very good influence with the Germans in that camp. He made sure we got reasonable treatment and we did, because of him. Whether it was because it was towards the latter part - October, November 1944, but the atmosphere was completely relaxed. You hardly saw any beatings in that camp. This was a totally Jewish camp. The kapo had been in a concentration camp for five years. Being a Communist, he was sent to Buchenwald. He was a professional and knew what went on.

The barracks were purpose-built and were fair. They were quite clean and quite good. We slept on double bunks, with a straw cushion, and 2-3 blankets. It was quite good. There were 300-400 people. The factory was only 5-10 minutes walk away. There we experienced tremendous bombing. There were lots of forests in that area. That Nieder-Orschel was a village, a beautiful area and when there were air raids, you ran where you wanted. We ran into the forest and picked bilberries and blueberries. The Germans were busy. It lasted about 2-3 hours. I don't think anybody ran away. This happened once or twice a week and we enjoyed ourselves while this was happening.

I was assembling the steering into the wings. Planes are built from aluminium and one day I had a German master behind me, one or two of us were making things from the aluminium. I made a beautiful egg-shaped snuff box. When the German saw it, he asked if I had made it. I said, "Yes" and told him he could have it. The following day, he brought me a two-kilo bread. I finished this in half an hour in one go. It was a longish bread and I cut it into four pieces and stuffed them in my pockets. Within a little time, it was gone.

Another incident happened which I found out later. One day they called an Appel and ran around with machine guns shouting. Germans ran around and special SS men came in. Somebody had cut an electric wire in one of those wings. The electric cabling in the wire you can only do when the wing is dismantled. Once it is joined together and something is cut inside - it seems somebody had sabotaged this wing. They wanted to know who had done it, otherwise we will all be shot. Nobody came out. They threatened us for a few days that we won't get food. They punished us for a bit and they they let us go. That must have been February or March.

End of F789 - Side A

F789 - Side B

They punished us with food for a couple of days, and they let us go. I didn't know who it was, and I found out a year ago from Hershel Tobiasz, a friend, it was the boy from Sosnowice, Sholom Zweicer. I have seen him a few times in Israel. He died last year. Hes done it. He was the one who cut the wire.

We did the work six days a week and rested on Sunday. We cleaned things and had concerts. We lay about in the courtyard - the scenery was marvellous. It was also surrounded by watch towers. It was completely a relaxed atmosphere.

There were some Jewish shiebers under the German kapo. He kept an eye on them that they shouldn't be too bad, that they should be fair and reasonable. The general routine was the same. You got up in the morning, you washed yourself, you got your ration. The washing facilities were better. You got up at 7 a.m. and walked a short distance. You were at work about 8 a.m. You got a little bit better soup at lunchtime in half an hour's break, and then in the evening there was counting again to see you were all there. We got back about 6 p.m. and got our rations, washed ourselves and relaxed. Sat about and relaxed. The kapo had a lot of news because he was a political inmate. The way he was singing, his mood, you could see, he mentioned a few times that the War was going against them, it won't be very long now.

Civilians who saw us didn't take any notice of it. Only inmates of the camp work the factory except for the supervisors. We were in this camp until the end of March. All of a sudden, the Allies came closer and they evacuated the camp. We started walking and walking. We stopped in various open places, just lying about with guards guarding us. There were 300-400 of us. We walked, walked and walked towards

Buchenwald. 10th April in the evening, we arrived in Buchenwald after walking for about two weeks. Lots died on the way. They just couldn't make it. A lot ran away. They hid themselves and survived. It was very rough going. We slept overnight on farms, sometimes in the open. They still gave us a certain amount of rations every day, just bread and water. Sometimes they organised something in a farm and gave us a bit of soup. I walked on my own. People who couldn't walk any further they let them lie, they just gave them a bang and now and then they were shot as well.

Probably about 75-80% made it to Buchenwald. Before we arrived every day people were walked out from the camp. As the Allies came closer so they walked people out to somewhere else. On the way they shot every transport out from the previous days. We arrived there on the evening of 10th April. The camp wasn't full, it was fairly empty. There were about a few hundred there. It was a big camp which held thousands. We were told that a lot had been shot on the way out and many had hid themselves in various places inside the camp - in the toilets, etc.. This must have been odd ones.

The following day, it must have been about 11 or 12 o'clock, they called an Appel to be counted. While they were counting, they started air raid and everyone ran away. After we ran back to our barracks, the Germans disappeared. I believe inside in Buchenwald they had some resistance. Some of the inmates were political, and non-Jewish. They already had guns and they took out and chased the Germans. Then an American camp drove in about 2 p.m. or 3 p.m. and this was the end of it.

The inmates collected a lot of the Germans which they chased after - many hundreds of them. They put them in a barrack and took guard of them. The black Americans really gave them a tough time. They knocked them about. They were there for quite a while. I don't know what they did with them eventually.

I was liberated on the 11th April. I don't know what happened to the German kapo who came with us to Buchenwald. A lot of the officers, the Gestapo and guards started to run away and inmates from the camp got or had ammunition and rounded them up. They put them in a barrack in Buchenwald. When the Americans came in they really gave them a tough time, particularly the black people.

At this time, we just went around like lost sheep. There was a train which was free which the Americans put on. We weren't far from Weimar and we travelled there and back and going into the shops, and taking out food. The Americans didn't mind at all. We still lived in the camp but it was completely free and open now. They gave us everything we wanted.

They gave us blocks of chocolate, which was a bad thing. I took a block of chocolate, about 2lb. and I finished it off in half an hour to an hour. For the next 2-3 days I just couldn't eat anything. I had the runs, and couldn't eat anything. I still wandered around but I couldn't eat anything. I don't think I was drinking but after 2-3 days I got over that.

The Americans gave us everything we wanted and we weren't so hungry any more. They organised the food on the old system. There was somebody in charge of the

barracks, and they still distributed food - but it was food as much as you wanted. I remember also there was an American Rabbi came in and brought matzo because it was Pesach sheni at the time. He was in uniform and he brought matzo.

After about a week or 10 days, my sister found me. After a week or two of liberation lists of survivors were interchanged. She was in Bergen Belsen with a cousin of mine, Regina Bernstein. She came and found me on the list. One day I was called that I was wanted and she was there. She stayed a few days with us and then we decided to go back because Regina wasn't well, and we thought we would stay together.

I had heard rumours that over there, there was a shortage of food and that they were living under similar conditions as they were under the Germans in Bergen Belsen, although they were liberated already. I heard that they were still under guard and they were still on rations and people were still starving. They wouldn't let them out of the camps and that they were actually shooting people who were found outside - the English guards were.

So we decided to go back and we got anything we wanted from the Americans. They just put on a transport on a lorry and we went from Buchenwald to Bergen Belsen. We took quite a lot of provisions with us because there was no shortage where we were, whilst over there was shocking.

Over there they were living still on rations and were very restricted. I stayed in one of the barracks. After a week or two Regina, who was ill, was chosen to be sent to Sweden to recuperate. Different groups were sent for recuperating. Regina could take with her relatives, so we went to Sweden.

We were in Bergen Belsen about two weeks. Conditions were bad there. The food was limited. You weren't free to walk out of the camp, to please yourself what you wanted to do. You had to stay in the camp and people were very upset about it. Internally the soldiers weren't bad but there were various activities from people all over the world trying to help. During the day we just wandered about the camp and talked to people, planning and scheming. There were no activities. Outside visitors came in but I wasn't involved.

My sister had been in various camps but I don't know their names. She had been in Bergen Belsen a few months, I think. I don't know if she had been on a forced march.

We were taken to Sweden from Lübeck on a boat. We arrived in Malmö. There everybody was examined. My cousin was sent to a sort of sanatorium in Sweden and we were put in quarantine into the Malmö museum. They reorganised it, they roomed the place and made space. We were examined daily by doctors and they put us on rations. It was the first time I have ever seen crisp bread. They gave us 2 or 3 of those in the morning. I had never seen them before. We were allowed to have this for a week. We started with this and maybe other things, and they checked us over. We stayed in the museum.

They treated us very well. They took us to a clothing warehouse and everybody picked their own suits, underwear and coats, etc.. There were about 300 of us in the museum. Others went to sanatoria. Maybe 5,000-10,000 were taken over by the Swedes. There were quite a few camps like it. We were not allowed to go out whilst on quarantine so we had various activities inside. We were reading. They had concerts. They tried to keep us busy. It was rather difficult actually, to be locked up again for three weeks. I knew various people there. We met a distant relation, Cesia Diamond, a young girl from Bendzin. We got friendly with her.

We stayed there for three weeks and then they sent us to a hostel, in a place called Dio. It was like a beautiful little village. There were about 50-100 inhabitants in that village. We stayed there for June and July. The hostel was really a largish house, which may have been a hotel at one time. There were about 100 of us, men and women, of 20, 21, 22. One woman of about 45 was there with her daughter. They were from various camps and backgrounds. They were people we hadn't met before. A Swede was the governor who looked after the administration. We didn't come across any Jewish people in the organisation.

There were no Jewish activities organised there. Now and then they took us to a concert to a town called Vaxjo. It was a University city. After a few weeks they tried to get people working. I was employed in a place which made and repaired sewing machines. I worked there for the last three months. I lived in the hostel and went to work five days a week, 8 hours a day. I was paid for that. The Swedes found me that job. They asked what people could do, what were their capabilities.

I don't think Manya worked. I can't remember. I visited my cousin once or twice. She had something on the lung but she is all right. It was nothing serious. It may have been a certain amount of TB. I worked in the sewing machine place until I left for England. We had no contact with Jews in Sweden.

We were in correspondence with my uncle, Bernard Ferster, my father's brother, who was living in Manchester. I happened to know his address very roughly and it was a miracle it arrived. I wrote Benrose Ferster, Broom Lane, Manchester. Somehow it arrived and he got it. We heard from him around July, August, whilst in Sweden. He asked us what we would like to do and we said we would like to come to England. We hadn't thought of going elsewhere. He was our relative so we thought we'd go to him.

England before the War was like the golden medinah, abroad. Bernard manage to get permission from the Government in this country for us to come on a three month visit at first. We came 5th February, 1946. We came by plane, a small Dakota, from Sweden. We all came together. My cousin had recovered by then.

We landed at a military airport outside London. Uncle Bernard waited for us. I immediately recognised him. From the airport I think I took a train to London. I immediately recognised him because he did look like my father, although he was a little bit smaller. My father was much taller.

F789 End of Side B

F790 - Side A

We came straight up to Manchester by train. We arrived at 9 Broom Lane. We lived there for three months. It was February and it was cold and miserable. There was a lovely big English fire. I had never seen this type of fire with a fireplace and a big flame. Everyone was standing around the fire. We stayed in the house for about three months, because we weren't allowed to work or do anything.

We then managed to extend the Visitor's Visa to stay here, and that I could do some work. So I started working. He found me a job with a company, Yoffe, making brass, copper fireplace surrounds, coal buckets, etc.. I worked there for about three months. I worked on a fly press, punching out some lids. It was very hard work. I got a bit fed up. The place was in All Saints somewhere. I worked five days, eight hours a day.

One day when I had the day off, I walked up Bury New Road and I saw a sewing machine place. I could hardly speak English. I walked in and I asked for a job. I told them in Yiddish that I was a sewing machine mechanic. He asked in a bit of Yiddish if I could repair the machine over there and I said "Yes". He told me to repair it and he gave me a few tools. After a few hours he gave me a more complicated machine, a hammer type button-hole machine and told me to repair this. It took me a few hours and I repaired it. He told me to come to work on Monday. So I told them I was leaving the other job.

By that time, Uncle Bernard bought a house in George Street, an oldish house. He furnished it and put us in it. Also he let part of it to other people as well. I lived with my sister and cousin there in George Street. Manya worked in Bernard's factory making blouses. He had a factory in Derby Street. Regina was artistic. She could make various flowers. She took a job with a man called Pearl, making handbags. The firm on Bury New Road, repairing sewing machines was B. Cromwell. It was a Jewish firm. They closed about 10 years ago. Benny Cromwell's firm were second-hand sewing machine dealers - industrial sewing machines. At that time, there was a shortage of machines so they repaired second-hand machines. They were an old established firm. They repaired for various factories and they were quite busy. I was paid about £5.50 a week. It was about £2 more than in the other place.

Uncle Bernard got a teacher to teach us English once or twice a week. This was Mrs. Shlesinger. She was a headmistress. She taught us in her house. She couldn't remember doing this. It lasted about 3-4 months. She taught us English. Somehow we got by. We learnt every day and we are still learning. I spoke to Uncle Bernard in Yiddish and in English.

In George Street, Manya and Regina looked after the house.

I stayed with B. Cromwell for maybe six months. I wasn't very happy. I decided to start by myself. I went round to the clothing factories where I used to repair the

machines to see if they would let me repair their machines. They agreed and this is how I started repairing machines myself from home, from George Street. I did this in a back room. I bought a few tools for this. This was very difficult at the beginning. Somehow it turned round and became more popular. I managed to build up a connection. Eventually people started to recommend me to their friends. it didn't take a lot to keep me busy.

In the meantime I met my wife. Manya had already got engaged. She had met Sam. And Regina also had met somebody. We were in contact with Bachad of Brei Akiva, Singleton Road. There was also a Refugee Club somewhere off Oxford Street. We used to go to that Club. We never went to Springfield. We didn't know of that. The other club was of refugees who came here before the War.

I met some of the 45 Aid at the Bachad, Singleton Road. Some lived there. I used to go there a few times a week. We played various games and various people were teaching Hebrew.

I didn't mix much with English Jews and even less with non-Jews. We thought England was a village in the early days. We saw the little houses. We thought big towns had to have big houses, and big things. The weather was terrible. It was very depressing. People were living inside the houses whereas on the Continent, we lived outside the houses. We didn't realise that on the Continent the flats are so small that they had to live outside, not for pleasure. Here they live inside because the amenities are catered for. We were completely green then. We would say "What a life!, it is raining, miserable, look at the tiny houses, it's like a village" It really was depressing. We thought, how can we get back?

I was still working in Cromwell's, when I met my wife. It was about 1947 and I met her in the Ritz on a Saturday or Sunday night. I went there maybe once or twice a week. I went to cinemas once or twice a week. There was the Plaza, and dance places. I didn't go to cafes.

My wife was the only child. Her father was Halpern, the tailors. She was English and her grandmother was English born. Her grandfather was from Lithuania. She lived in Carrbank Avenue, off Blackely New Road. She was Nan Halpern.

We were engaged where the Rumanian shul in Vine Street is now. We were married on 27th June, 1948. We lived for the first 3-4 months with my wife's parents. The chupah was in Crumpsall shul and the reception was at The Holme, with dancing afterwards.

My uncle was a "macher" at Higher Crumpsall shul. I did not join that. I joined a shul at a later date. Sam, Manya's husband, was best man. He came from Vienna with the children's transport, just before the War. She met him at the Refugee Club or somewhere like that.

I had three sons, Warren, Stuart and Jonathan. Warren was named after my father, Wolf. Stuart was named after Shmelke (Shmuel) my grandfather, and Jonathan was named after Yosef, an uncle. This was the uncle I met in concentration camp.

After a few months my wife and I bought a house at 12 Brookside Drive. I still worked from the back room in George Street. I was getting around to more places. In Brookside Drive, I had a room in our house. Our children were born whilst we were there. Warren went to King David and then to Worsley. Eventually he went to Manchester Business School. Stuart went to King David, then to Carmel College. Jonathan went to King David and then to Bridgewater School, Worsley, the same as Warren.

When the children were growing up I changed my business. First I started manufacturing a sewing machine myself, a patent that I had. Then I started to manufacture for people who wanted a mould for injection moulding for buckets, etc. About 1956-/57 I started manufacturing my own machine. I invented an embroidery machine - a multi-needle, high-speed embroidery machine, which took me 2-3 years. I sold about 100-200 of these machines. About 6 went to Gossards. I tried to establish an agent in America. I went to America with a machine and established an agent there. But it didn't go particularly well. We had an engineering place to make these machines. We made 150-200 machines over two years. Then we started making moulds for plastic injection moulding, which somebody asked me whether we could make.

I didn't know much about this. I asked for a drawing of the bucket for which we needed the mould. He got me a drawing, I gave him a price and he told me to go ahead and make it. Eventually he gave me an order for another mould, and another mould. We made them in the engineering place. We had the equipment to do this. We had some skilled people, although we only employed about three people.

We made the mould and eventually I came to the factory to see what these moulds are doing. I realised what it was and I decided to have a go at that. I was still repairing sewing machines as well. I supplied second-hand sewing machines and reconditioned them. Also we were making the embroidery machine and at the same time, doing these moulds. Eventually I tried to get into the plastic moulding business, not realising the cost and overheads of that. It was very expensive, but I was ignorant about the business. My total net assets were about £2000 and the machine cost £8,5000.

I was given the machine on HP. Then we prepared our own moulds. We started off with buckets and bowls. This didn't go well. There was competition at the time between the firm we were making for, Sharna Ware, and the firm of Crystalware. They sold everything they made, yet they were fighting one another with prices. I was just starting, trying to break through and only having about three lines, nothing attracted them. I was not offering anything special. The other firms had a very big range of 10-15 lines.

Eventually I got friendly with one of the travellers of the firm selling raw materials. I also had a financial problem because these machines had to work night and day, seven days a week, because it is very expensive. The machines have a big mouth and it ate up 10-15 lbs worth an hour. That takes a lot of capital to feed it. Rubin Kay, my Accountant at the time, didn't give me three months. He was a financial wizard.

Fortunately I was lucky. The rep. asked me if I wanted to do some trade moulding. I had told him it wasn't going well. He told me they would give me the mould and the raw material and I would just charge so much an hour. The people doing this were Mettoy. It was a well-known International Jewish firm. They were people from Germany called Katz. They were originally bankers and very sophisticated people. They had a factory employing 500-600 people. They sold everything they made because the standard was so high and the ideas were advanced. He (the rep.) got in touch with these people in Swansea. They were giving out the Winchester Rifle for someone to mould for them and they were being messed about. They couldn't get much production out of them. He told them he knew a Manchester man who has a brand new machine, a bone craven machine, who would like to mould it. They sent down the moulding manager to see us.

When he came to see us, we had only been going for 2-3 weeks, he could see we had no experience at all. We had a marvellous machine but no experience. The moulding manager was called Owen. The mould they wanted to send down was on loan from America and it was insured for £25,000. You can easily damage this and he couldn't see how he could let us have it. I took him out for lunch and talked him round to it. He agreed to send down the mould and the raw material, but he would also come for a week to see what we would do. He came with a huge mould of about 2 tons. We moulded it and after a week, I was practically living there, and I had somebody who was supposed to be an experienced moulder but who knew little. But he could see I was sitting on top of the man learning and after a week he was satisfied and he left with his fingers crossed. He rang us every day.

They supplied the raw materials so we had no worries feeding the machine night and day. There was no worry about selling the stuff. All we charged was about £3.50 or £4.00 an hour for the use of the machine. You had to produce so much an hour. I made sure everything was all right and we built up a relationship. We managed to get through this difficult time. After 6-12 months we made more money. We were also making more moulds for the buckets and bowls. We spread the line. After 12 months, we bought another machine. They also let me have some obsolete moulds from Mettoy. To me this was something new and different. This is how it started.

We had a motor bike rider, a double decker bus, some aeroplanes. We also made some buckets and bowls as well. Then we also did trade moulding for Mettoy as well. We did this for 2-3 years. We built up a very good relationship. Then the other lines gradually took off and after a while, they couldn't give us much work because they put in their own equipment and we stood on our own two feet. We sold toys and buckets and bowls.

We sold all over the country. I had a sales manager and a couple of agents on the road. By 1960 I employed about 80 people in Radcliffe - Pioneer Mills. We moved there when we got our first machine. We rented that place. In 1960 I sold out to Slater Walker. They, in turn, after 18 months, sold it to Judge International. They made pots and pans in the Midlands. There was a Yiddisher fellow, the managing director, Lloyd, who I couldn't get on with. I was under contract and I broke the

contract and walked out. He sued me but eventually I finished with him. When I sold the business, I was under contract and carried on as Managing Director.

When Warren got older, I left that place. I thought I must do something else. In 1960 we moved to 4 Bury Old Road, opposite Singleton Road. Warren and I had to do something so we decided to produce carrier bags. The previous company was called Coral Plastics. We started our business in 1970. The other places were struggling by then and a year or two later they took everything back to Birmingham. They ruined the business. It was a very good business.

We started the polythene carrier bags. We had a factory in Miles Platting. Then Stuart came in and then Jonathan. Three years ago we went public. We employed about 25-30 people. About two years ago Swinton Insurance were buying all sorts of businesses and they bought the business. They bought the majority of the business - about 85%. I was under contract. I left the beginning of August. They were not very nice people. The business was in a terrible state. Warren was Managing Director there. He also left. There was a lot of friction with him. Then Stuart got the push. Jonathan is still there as Sales Director, but I don't think he'll be there long.

Warren does nothing at present. He is not allowed to because he is still fighting a court case. I am trying to find something else for us to do.

We lived in Bury Old Road until about 1982 when we moved to Old Hall Road.

The Holocaust has not had an effect on me physically, but mentally it must have had an effect. The odd times I have nightmares but you get depressions and I cry quite easily. As one gets older, I find it becomes more hurtful.

It may have had an effect on the way I brought up my children, but I am doubtful, I don't know. I can't compare with anything else. To me, what I am doing is the normal thing. I can't evaluate if I'm doing different to others.

The Holocaust did have an effect on my belief for quite a few years. I was rather bitter about it. As one gets older, one begins to accept it and one begins to believe again. I lost my belief for a time. It started to come back in the last 10-12 years. Nothing sparked this off. I didn't bother with anything apart from Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. You did it then because you do it, for the children and family, you do it.

In the house it was always kosher because of my wife, but outside I ate non-kosher food. Today I have changed. I have become more religious and don't eat treife. I keep shabbos and Yom Tov and go regularly to shul now, which I didn't used to. I belong to the Roumanische shul. I always belonged there, through nostalgia because this was nearly how it was in Sosnowice. In the last ten years I have joined the High Crumpsall shul. I am now a full member in two shuls. I tend to go to Higher Crumpsall because it's so beautiful and on the Yomim Tovim I go to Vine Street.

My wife was very good about my come back to religion. As the children got older I thought I have got to give them something more because life is empty without anything. For children to grow up on that basis

Warren was born 1950, Stuart 1955, and Jonathan 1958. They were already grown up when I came back to religion. I didn't want them to grow up without any belief. I didn't want that. That was what more or less pushed me. I didn't want them to grow up without any belief at all. I never spoke to them much about my experiences. They never asked me because they knew it was upsetting. In the last year or two I have spoken about certain incidents. It is important to speak, but it is very difficult.

I feel Israel is very important to us because it is a safety net. Something similar, not to such an extreme, may still happen. So Israel is extremely important because it is a safety net. I have been many times to Israel and it is one of the best holidays I have had. My wife not so much, but I enjoy it very much because I have lots of friends there. My first visit was in the late 50s.

It is a little bit more difficult for me to go to Israel because I am scared of flying. I created a phobia although I flew from Sweden to here without any problem at all. Since then I am scared of flying and I don't fly. My wife flies. At one time they used to have the Israeli boats, the Shalom, the Jerusalem and they were enjoyable. Now the same ships belong to the Greeks and they have made a mess of them, and it is not entirely pleasant on them. I have a phobia about flying because I am very mechanically minded and I can see what silly things people can do. If they do this on a plane what chance have you got? The finality of it on a plane! You just can't stop in the air and repair something they did wrong. This is how I created a phobia.

I am not greatly drawn to living in Israel because I am spoilt by the luxury and easy life here. In Israel life is very tough and I've had my share of toughness. Life is tough over there. I admire the people who stay and live there and who struggle. They are all on tenterhooks. Everybody's short-tempered. You can't blame them. I admire them tremendously for staying there and sticking it out. I am afraid I am taking the easy way out of it.

My children go to Israel very often but I don't think they would like to live over there. All of my sons are married to English girls. I have lovely grandchildren. Warren's wife is from Leeds. She is called Sharon. Stuart's wife is from Manchester, Shelley. Jonathan's wife is Lynne from Manchester. She lives in Sale. Warren has two girls - Michelle and Nicola, and Stuart has two boys - Marc and Aaron.

I am not involved in politics. I am interested but not involved. Stuart's boys go to King David and Warren lives in Hale, and his children go to a school there.

I do not belong to any clubs or societies. I have no hobbies. We have the same friends as 20-30 years ago. They are English Jews, most of them. They are friends of my wife. I go to a shiur once a week for the last 10 years. David Rabinowicz gives this. It is Reb Lipa Rabinowicz's brother from the Roumanian shul. I am not involved in any other activities, nor my wife. We are busy with the family and grandchildren.

I feel very bitter to the Germans. I used to go to Germany on business the odd time. You can see they are so arrogant. I always get the impression that the Germans are not sorry for what happened with the Holocaust during the War. The only reason they are sorry is because they have lost the War. That is the truth. When people say you should forgive the Germans, I haven't come across anybody who asked me I should forgive him. I don't think you've heard many Germans, big politicians say, "We want the people who have suffered, they should forgive us for what we did during the War." When people talk about forgiveness, they are not asking for forgiveness. This is why I feel so bitter about it. They are only sorry they have lost the War.

I used to go at least once or twice a year. I used to buy German equipment. Unfortunately they were extremely advanced in the plastics. I feel very bitter towards the Poles but there is a certain amount of satisfaction with the Poles, how they are suffering. I feel extremely bitter because a lot of the Poles, they think they didn't do anything to the Jews. If the Poles would have been not as anti-semitic as they were, they would have played a normal part as a neighbour should behave to a neighbour or a resident to a resident, there wouldn't have been over three and a half million Jews from Poland alone, put to death. There wouldn't have been that. That is why the Germans built the concentration camps in Germany, because they got the assistance from the Poles. The Poles did it for them and with great satisfaction.

I was thinking of visiting Poland this year or next to see what it is like. My wife is not particular to go but I would like to go to see. My sons would like to go. If I go they will come with me.

I have come across very little anti-semitism in this country. At work.

F790 - End of Sides A and B

F791 - Side A

At my place, I remember one of the managers made mistakes again and again. I warned him and eventually I told him that unless he sorted himself out he would be out. He says, "You people", you see, this is the sort of thing you come across. I can't remember other specific incidents but just some similar.

I don't mix much socially with non-Jews. I have some business acquaintances. I am now on the Council of the 45 Aid Society. I just joined about three months ago. I was a member before, but not on the Council. There are a Council of about five, who make decisions and have meetings.

Stuart and Jonathan are involved in the second generation. I'm not sure about Warren.

Something like the Holocaust could happen again. Maybe not on such a large organised scale. It may not be physically opening a factory like the Germans did and creating an organisational machine just to burn people, but in an economic way this can happen. I doubt whether, physically, the same thing could happen again but in an economic way. Israel is in a very difficult position. Something similar may happen again. If you were to ask people in 1930 if they thought anything like this could happen, they wouldn't believe it, so it makes you wonder really when you come to think of it. So I'm not so quite sure whether it can't happen.

The recent events in Germany are worrying. The reason I think it may not be able to physically happen on such a large scale is because the world is smaller. It has shrunk with television and people flying. But there is concern about East and West Germany.

F791 - End of Side A

END OF SUMMARY