

NATIONAL

Life stories

LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY

Arek Hersh

Interviewed by Ros Livshin

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My name was originally Arek Herszlikowicz. It was shortened to Eric Hersh after I was naturalised. I was born in Sieradz, Poland, in Central Poland, in 1929 (8).

My father's family originated from Russia. They came to Poland presumably because of anti-semitism. There was a large family and they came to Sieradz. My mother came from Konin, Western Poland. Her ancestors were from Spain after the Spanish Inquisition. One of her ancestors went to South America and then to Poland. They supposedly originated from Toledo.

I had two sisters and another brother. My father specialised in making boots for officers of the army. He had a couple of workers. He worked in his own shop. It was difficult to do a lot in Poland because Jews were restricted from working in banks etc. They could be artisans.

I had a normal life and life went on normally.

My father had another brother and many cousins. There were four sisters and two brothers. Some lived in Pabianice, Zdunska Wola, Lvov. I did not know my father's parents. I knew my mother's mother, grandma Flora, who lived in Konin. I had a great grandmother who lived to 107. My grandmother was 89. We lived for about two and a half years there because we had family there. Most of mother's family lived there. I was between five and seven and a half when we lived there.

We moved there and then back to Sieradz because there was more work there because of the army garrison. We moved to Konin because my mother wanted to look after her mother. My mother had a sister and a lot of cousins and uncles. Mother was called Bluma Natal and father Shmuel Herszlikowicz. I do not know what my grandfathers did for a living. I wasn't interested to ask that then.

Jews mostly went into artisan work. Father's brother had a grocery shop. Difficult for Jews to get into professions.

I remember anti-semitism in Poland before the war. In 1939 Sieradz had a market day on Tuesday and Friday. Peasants would come to sell their farm produce and then go to buy from the shops. The Andekis were anti-semitic and would stand on the doors of Jewish shops and not allow the peasants to shop there. I remember this. There was a lot of anti-semitism. When I came out of school youths would shout "Jews go back to Palestine", or "Dirty Jews". This has always stayed in my mind. Jews were in the army but were like second class citizens. There were several fights. The children were reared on anti-semitism.

When the Germans arrived I was with a 12 year old boy. We went to a square near the Gymnasium. Two Poles about 20 passed and said they were sorry the Germans came in because they would have killed us. We knew them from the neighbourhood. This was their mentality. The Andekis started end of 1938.

We did have some Polish friends. Father had a Pole working for him who was all right, but there was an element of anti-semites. The church stirred it up. Hitler had a lot of helpers in Poland.

When it came to Easter or especially Whitsun, some of my family who had butchers shops had to close them because of processions then. The Jewish shops closed and Jews kept away. They had to be very careful then. My mother had two brothers and one sister. One brother had five boys and one daughter. One boy was 21 and when the Germans came in they said a Jewish fellow had shot at a Jewish soldier and they took the men from the town and beat and kicked them between two lines of soldiers. My cousin was kicked to death. He had twin brothers who were killed. One brother survived. He was the eldest and lives in Australia. They lived in Sieradz. My other uncle had three sons who were killed.

My uncles were both butchers in Sieradz. One uncle lived in the same flat as the mayor. He had two sons and when the Germans came all three put on Swastikas. They were ethnic Germans and did not want to know us anymore. Up to then they had been all right. Sieradz had 11,000 people - 6,000 Christians and 5,000 Jews. Very few survived, maybe 40 or 50.

There was the main shul and two smaller ones. The life was wonderful. We lived in a Jewish quarter and everyone was happy. I went to a Jewish school. I lived on Zamkowa Street; meaning Castle Street. The Polish Queen Jadwiga lived on the outskirts of the town. One could go underground from the town to the castle, but the castle was no longer there, only ruins.

In the Jewish area ninety percent were Jewish and ten percent non-Jewish. We had no problem with our Christian neighbours. The Poles though did not want to mix with the Jews. It was you and us, different.

I was a very happy child with a normal upbringing until war broke out. My parents were middle of the road religious. We went to synagogue Friday nights and Saturday and everything was kosher. Parents kept a Jewish home. They went to the main synagogue. The Chassidim were more orthodox. We were more the norm of Polish Jewish people. There were the middle of the road and the ultra-orthodox and they were completely different. The Chassidim had their own stiebel and they did not mix with us. They had payot and beards. They followed the Gerer Rebbe outside Lodz. There were not many in our town, but they kept to themselves.

We were a garrison town and would see the army pass on manouvres. Our street was the way out of the city. Father made boots for the high ranking officers. They would come to the shop or father would go to them. There were army parades in the square and it was wonderful to watch. There was no trouble. Jews were also in the army. They could only reach rank of major. At age of 21 everyone had to spend two years in the army. Many Jews served in Sieradz. My relations from another city served in the army at Sieradz. But anti-semitism did rear its head often.

Immediate neighbours were all right. We were friendly with one or two but the rest no. They did not want to know you. I used to go to the home of my father's worker.

I would go to the market square with my mother on a Tuesday and Friday to buy butter, eggs, ducks, chickens etc. I would take them to the slaughter house and bring them home.

I would watch the peasants in their colourful dresses, it was lovely to watch. Life was wonderful. I did not take much notice of the rest. I played and went to school. We played hopscotch and p.....? which was like a cricket bat and a piece of wood which you would hit in the air. We made a hole in the ground and threw walnuts towards it - the closest won.

Every day we went to Cheder. The Cheder was on the first floor of the building where Myer Hersh lived on the second floor. There were about 15 boys. The Rabbi was quite strict and you would be hit over the hand with a ruler. It taught us discipline. I don't regret anything. I had a wonderful life.

I used to love to go with my father to see my relatives in Pabianice and in Lodz. My father had relations in Lodz. It was a big industrial/textile city. We went by train. The main line from Posnan to Warsaw ran through Sieradz. Lodz was a completely different world. It was not a nice city but it was vibrant. It was wonderful visiting it. Everything was different and new. The food seemed different - someone else's is always better.

I belonged to Hashomer Hatzair. We wore grey shirts and shorts. We walked with drums and trumpets sometimes at the weekend. It was wonderful. We went to summer school in the countryside and learnt survival techniques. They gave us potatoes and sent us into the country to feed ourselves and find things around of use. We went in groups. It was wonderful. It gave me strength for later years.

My father was Zionist minded. He belonged to a Zionist club. He was a socialist. He would go to meetings and tell the speaker his point of view. Eric would go with him. It taught Eric how to stand up for himself. This was a great lesson. Father was a very determined person. I took a lot from him. There was a socialist group in town and he liked us to go there to the Zionist group. He did not hold any positions. He kept out of? When German Jews started coming in of Polish extraction from Germany he helped on the synagogue committee to find rooms for them to stay and food etc. Sieradz was about 60 miles from German border. When these Jews came they told us horrific stories - but what you did not see you can't believe. Nobody thought it could happen.

My father remembered the Germans from the First World War when they lived and traded peacefully with them. Nobody could believe that the Germans could have altered that much and become such savages.

Father was born in 1897. He was not in the army in the First World War. He spoke Yiddish, Polish and German, as did mother. We spoke Yiddish and Polish at home, but I understood German. In Sieradz one third of the population were ethnic Germans. When Germans came they became Germans automatically. In 1939 the Poles took a lot of Germans into the prison in Sieradz, but they were released by the Germans.

Mother had normal schooling. Finished at 14. Not easy to better yourself in Poland. At 14 had to leave school and start work. Mother did not work outside the home. She worked during the war selling greengroceries and lemonade to the soldiers. This was at the beginning of the war. Father gave up making boots and he started selling fruit. It was difficult to get the raw materials so he sold fruit. Before the war there was a leather factory in Sieradz. Could not get leather once war broke out.

Mother had a Jewish education. She looked very Spanish. She was very dark with dark eyes and thin cheekbones. She was a very pretty woman. She read with Ashkenazi pronunciation. Her family had been in Poland for generations.

Parents wore modern clothing. They were very good ballroom dancers. They won one or two cups for dancing. They were very modern in their ways. They kept the Jewish traditions, yet they were modern in outlook. It rubbed off on us children. They went ballroom dancing in the town. My mother came to see her brothers in Sieradz and my father was a friend of theirs and so they met.

Father went through the normal school system. He read a lot. Always reading a book. Interested in politics. Got the Yiddish papers. Got Der Zeit and others. He loved reading books - history books etc. He bought books and borrowed from the library. Some were in Polish and some in Yiddish. He loved Sholem Aleichen and Zangwill's books. They wrote about the life of Jews in Poland and Russia.

We had no pumped water in our home. Used to go to a pump and bring water home. There was no electricity until just before the war. Used paraffin lamps. The heating there was a tiled oven in the wall. That gave out marvellous heat. In the winter the frost settled like flowers on the windows and you could not see out. Sometimes you could not go to school because of the snow. Horse drawn sleighs were used. We had a sleigh, we would slide down the hill, tearing our shoes. We went ice skating on the river Warta. We would get bumps from falling. We had ice skates which tied on to our boots. You screwed them on to your boots. It was a wonderful life. We wore a fur coat, fur hat, gloves, ear muffs.

We had a forecourt through a gate. Our door was on the right. This took you into a room. On the left were two bedrooms and at the front was the lounge. In front of that was the shop. Underneath was the cellar. Before winter started parents bought potatoes, beetroot, cabbage, carrots etc. and stored them in the cellar and did not need to buy in winter. We lived on this through the winter. My mother made challa for Shabbos. It was a wonderful thing to sit down on Friday for Shabbos. The food was wonderful. We got changed, went to Shul, washed our hands, father made kiddish, said a brocho over the challa and ate. We had gefilte fish. We had carp and lescht. Mother would stuff the carp with carrots etc. It was sweet fish in Poland. Then we had chicken soup and knaidlach and then roast potatoes, meat or chicken and vegetables and then a sweet. We would sing and we would go for a walk.

For Seder we would invite family or some Jewish soldiers serving in our town. Many families did this. Loved Passover because got a new suit and shoes. The same

happened for Rosh Hashannah. Life was wonderful. For Passover I used to bring special stones which were burnt on the fire and placed in the pans. Water was poured on them and they used to burn the chametz out of the pans so they could be used for Passover.

Would burn the chametz before Passover. I loved to watch them baking the matzo for Pesach. Ladies would roll out the dough. A man would make little holes in it with a round instrument with teeth and they would be baked in the oven. The smell was wonderful. This was at the local bakery. The Rabbi made sure everything was all right. The holidays were wonderful.

Shavuot etc. went to Shul. Had a flag with a red apple on top. Purim we would turn the greger when the Rabbi said Hanani name. The greger was like a football rattle. Hanan was Persian and everyone would stamp their feet on the ground. We dressed up in costumes. Had flags for Purim. Every holiday we had something different. It was a marvellous childhood.

Dad, my brother and me would build a succah outside of timber and cover the roof with green branches. Would string up conkers.

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We built our succah outside in the long courtyard. Most people did this. We ate all our meals in the succah. I looked forward to this.

In the bedrooms were beds and wardrobes and a big chest of drawers. My parents slept in one room and my brother and myself in the other. My dad built a special place on the side of the bedroom. My older sister lived in Pabianice with my father's sister. She learnt a trade in textiles. My uncle had a textile mill. She worked in the office and learnt weaving and the business. This was my eldest sister Mania.

The furniture was in old style. The chairs were wicker seats. They were round chairs with interwoven reed seats. There was a large table and five chairs, a sideboard and pictures of my grandparents, very proud, on the wall. They were oval pictures. One grandfather had a beard and a very big moustache, and the other had a beard and a small moustache. My grandmothers were dressed in pretty long dresses. Their hair was worn high up. I think it was their own hair. My family were not so frum to wear sheitels.

There was a passage leading to the shop. The shop had a front door so there was the choice of going out the front or back. The forecourt was very long and people lived in flats. In the back there was the toilet - at the back of the forecourt. In the yard there were chickens walking around and ducks. People kept them for eggs. The courtyard had a large gate so they could not get out. It was completely closed at the front and at the back.

I had a cousin living at the back of the forecourt, he had four daughters. He had two droshkes and that was his profession. About six families lived in the back apartments. They were all on the ground floor. There was no attic, but a cellar. The six families were Jewish. As children we played in the yard.

On the way back from school we used to stop at an unfinished school and play there. It was a three storey building and we would jump from the joists. We had no fear. We used to go down to the river and to Cheder for an hour or two.

Only learnt to swim when nearly drowned. One day went to watch a football match between a Jewish and non-Jewish team. Nearby there was a river and after the match a lot of people jumped into the river and swam across. I did the same and someone had to pull me out by the hair. I was told off by father. My brother taught me how to swim.

In the winter we used to make snowmen and put a broom in for the arms, coal for the eyes and a stick for a pipe. We would throw snowballs etc. I enjoyed my childhood. I played football. We would make goal posts using our sweaters and shirts.

In the apartment there was an old metal oven in the wall. It was black. In the night you could cook things inside a door. The fire would heat both sides. The oven was

on the side of the lounge. It was a little kitchen area. The heating oven was built in the wall and tiled.

On the floor, which was wooden, there was an oblong carpet in the middle, the rest was wood. There were candlesticks and pieces of china for ornaments; there was a metal menorah, like wrought iron. There were books on the shelf. On the floor were straw plaited mats, also at the entrance. For washing there was a bath between the lounge and shop. It was a metal bath and it was fitted with big water jugs. On Friday we went to the mikveh, me, my brother and dad. We used to bring the water. It was worse in the winter when the roads were thick with ice. You would slip and fall.

The pump in the winter was covered with plaited straw, but even this got frozen up. You had to pump water into the bucket and as you walked away you could easily slip in the ice. You could fall many times. An old Jewish man would carry two buckets of water in a wooden yoke. He would bring it for you if you paid. My friend and I would help him if he fell. He was called Mordche the Wassertrager, the water-carrier. Everyone had a name, like Moishe the Katzev, the butcher - that was my uncle, as was Pesach the Katzev.

My mother used to make a cholent in a metal pan with potatoes, meat, butter beans etc. This went to the baker's until Saturday lunchtime. We would carry it home after shul. The smell was fantastic. I used to look forward to the cholent every Saturday. Other favourite dishes were helzel - stuffed neck, tzimmes of carrots, flour and meat, kasha, like rice with meat. It was wonderful. We enjoyed life and the family way of living.

Up to age of 11 Jewish children went to a Jewish school. Our school was near the river on the outskirts of town. It was an old building. At the back was the river Warta. We had a pond with fish and we would go and watch it. There were about 300 children and all teachers were Jewish. The headmaster was Mr Perkal. I sang in the choir, solo. I loved everything. School was quite strict. Discipline was very good. You were smacked with a ruler on your palm or taken by your ear out of the door or made to stand outside until the lesson finished. You were shamed in front of the class. You knew how far you could go as children.

When we came home we would climb on the roofs. Someone had pigeons and I would like to watch them lay their eggs. Some of us after school would climb trees for walnuts near the prison. We were a garrison town and would often see parades and the different uniforms and swords, boots and horses. It was lovely to watch.

Our classes were mixed. We learnt no Hebrew at school, just Polish. Outside school we spoke Yiddish. We received reports from school.

At Cheder the Rabbi was a heavy man with glasses, a small hump and a little pointed beard. He made us repeat every passage about four times.

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You got a bit fed-up doing this after coming from school and would talk and would get a smack on your hand from a ruler. He was very strict. Learnt Chumash and Rashi (Five Books of Moses). Had to translate from Hebrew into Yiddish. After Cheder we played and went home. My sister did not go to Cheder. Boys were the important factor for Cheder. Girls learnt to daven from parents. Boys had to learn for their barmitzvah.

My father was a disciplinarian. One look and you knew the situation. My mother was softer. My father was very strict. If he told me to do something he meant me to do it. If I would moan and he looked at me that was sufficient. He didn't need to hit me. I had to go for milk and eggs to the farm and I wanted to play. Why shouldn't my brother go? But if my father said go, I went. I did more than my share and I resented that. Some boys would play cards after school at the unfinished school. Father once caught me and he took me home and gave me a lecture and I have never forgotten it. He was quite right. He didn't want me to gamble. I'm happy he did that.

On Saturday afternoon he would sit down with me and tell me to read from the Chumash and Rashi. I had to say it and translate it after the meal.

One time I got German measles and went off cooked food. Since then I used to hold the food in my mouth and wouldn't swallow it. We had a dog called Zlata, and as my father turned away I would give it to the dog under the table. Every Saturday afternoon I had to translate Chumash with my father for about an hour and then go to play.

Some families had dogs. The man who worked for father had a farm and his dog had pups and we got one. Eventually it was run over. That was a tragedy for me. There were not many cats around then.

If someone was ill the doctor was called. Mainly you stayed in bed. Until the war I hated anything cooked after German measles. There were several doctors in the town. You had to pay for them. I don't remember having flu or colds in the winter. The cold killed off the germs. There were banke - it was an oblong glass closed in with an opening underneath. You put cotton wool on a wire, dipped it in meths, lit it and put it into the glass, heated it and put it onto your back. About 10 on your back would draw your temperature from you. That was the remedy for a bad cold or flu. It worked. My parents did this. It was a small round glass. It was round with an opening underneath. It hurt when it was taken off because it draws your temperature out.

I went with my eldest sister to the cinema and there was a war film on with cavalry. I could see the horses almost jumping over me. I was terrified and when I came home I took ill and nobody knew what it was. I had a high temperature. Someone knew a lady who was a bit of a fortune teller. My grandmother brought her. She told my mother to bring some wax and she melted it in a pan. She held her hand over my forehead and said certain words. Eventually there was a sign of a horse in the wax. This gradually hardened, and over the next few days I got better. It worked. I don't believe in it today, but there you are.

They used a certain leaf to draw out a boil. It was a broad leaf. There were old remedies which worked. When the old lady came I was in a bad way, with a high temperature and shivering, and when she did her things I recuperated. This lady was Jewish. She was called Golda.

For toothache there were dentists. Mother took me when I was six with a terrible toothache. When I saw the dentist in a white coat and smelt the smell I screamed. I was all right, but he took it out all the same. Two people had to take me in.

Life was primitive compared to today. There was no electricity or inside toilets. Mother washed clothing in a big wash tub made of timber. It was very wide and big. She had a ribbed metal wash board and used this with soap. A few doors from us was a place where they used to mangle the washing. There used to be a machine. On top it was loaded up with stones with a roller underneath. You put your sheets underneath. It was like a round wooden roller. You would wind it by hand and it would go the whole length of the machine and then back. When you took it out it was like ironed. This was done for you for money.

Mother was helped by my sister at home. She was five to six years older than me. I had one younger sister who died when we still lived in Konin. She was about four and she died of whooping cough.

Would go to the cinema once every three weeks. Went to the theatre also with my parents. There wasn't a lot of money. You had no luxuries, you coped, made a living. Most of the people were on a similar level. Some were richer - there was a flour mill owner and people in timber. These were the rich ones, but they weren't many. Most were artisans. Life was quite hard for most people. People worked long hours and life was primitive. You were used to it and that's how life was. You did the best you could.

Parents went to the cinema and theatre. There was Charlie Chaplin, talkies, cowboy films, Roy Rogers. They were in English. There were also several Polish films. The theatre was not the Yiddish theatre. I loved it all. Sometimes I couldn't afford to go but we went and stood at the side of the door, and if it had started they let us in. Sometimes I paid. I loved all these things.

We made our own toys to play with. We had a sling like David and Goliath. We made that ourselves. We built a little wooden house. We made most of our games. Made things out of wood. We used to play with a dreidle at chanukah. We played for money. Some had bikes. A friend of mine had one and I used to have a go. I couldn't reach the pedals and used to put my feet under the frame. We went fishing in the river. There were many forests around Sieradz. Would make a stick and a fishing hook with a fly. I would catch fish and mum would clean them and fry them. I loved them fresh from the river.

Our town was like a holiday town because it was countryside. We went to Pabianice once or twice and Zdunska Wola, where we had family, but we didn't have holidays like these days. We didn't need a holiday because we had open country, rivers and

forests. People would come from Lodz to our town for holidays. It is a holiday place even now.

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Where we lived was originally my grandfather's and the other people had a landlord. It belonged to my father's father. He had lived there with a shop and we eventually took it over. Grandfather sold groceries. He died before I was born. The apartment was made of bricks with a fascia of timber. It was a good building. We didn't live in huts.

I would watch my father work. He had one man working for him when I remember, but before that he had two. He would cut pieces from a large piece of leather. He cut out for the soles, the soft leather for the high boots. He gave it to a person to sew up, to stitch the leather part of the boot and he did the bottom part. He gave the boots out for someone to do the stitching. High boots were popular in Poland. Army boots were different to private boots. He did both, but specialised in officers' boots. He also did some shoes. He had all the different tools for it. It was very interesting to watch. It took him one to one and a half days to make. He would do a certain part and his helpers would do another part. Each one could do the whole lot themselves, but for speed they each did different jobs.

He worked Sunday to Thursday and an hour Friday morning. He only worked Sunday if it was a necessity. He worked 9 to 5 o'clock.

Many Jews came from Germany of Polish extraction. They were thrown out and many came to our town. They were very smartly dressed. Some wouldn't speak Polish. We conversed in Yiddish or German. We helped find them places to live and the shul helped and collected money to settle them in. The children went to school and they were quickly absorbed into the system. They told us what was happening in Germany, but people couldn't believe it. It's very hard to believe when you hear different stories. They told us Jews were being taken to Dachau and 'Jude' was written on the shops and the synagogues were burnt. We knew what it was all about. Also we saw the newsreels in the cinema and the Polish army marching. In our town we saw new recruits coming in and we knew something was going on. You could see an odd 'plane in the sky. On the newsreels it was saying we Poles wouldn't allow the Germans to cross our borders etc. We heard Hitler ranting on the radio often. We had a small wooden radio. I understood a lot of the German.

Some people left to go to the bigger cities and some who could get out went, but not many because it was still unbelievable that anything like that could happen. We still went to school. I remember walking down the street and seeing a crowd of people listening to the radio with Hitler ranting about the Jews and the Poles who took Danzig. More and more troops were on our street and it was obvious something was happening.

The beginning of September, on Friday night we could hear one or two 'planes passing. We were sitting outside because it was still warm. The next day I went to shul with my father and brother. We came back and ate and I could hear a small

aeroplane pass by and machine guns firing at it. He cruised round and disappeared. The next day we were told that the whole town should leave because the Polish army were going to make a stand on the river Warta. We took what we could. We were selling fruit then and we took it down to the cellar. We took a few items and we went towards Zdunska Wola to cross the bridge over the river Warta. We went by foot. Most horses and carts were taken by the army. Zdunska Wola was about 14 kilometres. Everyone carried something. To the bridge was about three kilometres. We marched on with hundreds of others towards Zdunska Wola and Lodz. We thought we'd be safer in a big city. When we crossed the bridge we saw soldiers on horses preparing.

My father decided to go on the back roads because it was safer. We shopped at a village and got some drinks and milk from them. There were many ethnic Germans in the villages because we were living where there were many. They spoke Polish and German. We rested and then carried on. We walked through some forests.

We arrived in Zdunska Wola very late at night. We could see the lights from a distance. My uncle and cousins lived there so we had somewhere to stay. We stayed there about two days on the floor. We had some bedding with us. They were delighted to see us.

In the morning I went outside and could see one or two German 'planes and the Polish double-winged planes, which weren't a match. You could hear shooting and then it went quiet. I was in the yard at about 10.30 a.m. and I could hear suddenly 'planes coming from all sides. They were very fast and made a terrible noise and they started firing machine guns and dropping bombs. I panicked and ran forward towards the railway station. I ran over a field of corn and hid in the corn. The 'planes were coming from all sides and firing and creating panic in the population. Windows were falling out. I ran towards the railway station and they started coming towards that, so I ran back to the house. As I ran back I noticed my parents shouting for me and we hid together amongst the high corn. It was pandemonium. The 'planes were shtukas and they are made to make chaos amongst the civilian population. That lasted about half an hour and everything went quiet. We went back to my cousins, ate and then my father decided to leave for Lodz. We collected our belongings and went on side roads and villages which were safer.

Before we had left Sieradz my father had received his call-up papers to assemble at an army garrison in a few days. When we left Zdunska Wola two military police stopped us and asked father for his papers. He told them we had had to leave Sieradz - we had been told to leave. They decided to let him go. He couldn't report to the garrison because the Germans had occupied the town. They let us go. As we walked we saw a farm and knocked on the door. The farmer and his wife were Germans. Father asked if we could stay overnight. They were more terrified than us because they didn't know what the Poles would do to them. We bought food from them and stayed in the farm. It wasn't comfortable, but better than the street. We slept on the floor.

Next morning we had breakfast with them and dad paid them something. They were happy and wished us well. We continued on side roads. Not far from Lask we came to a railway line with wagons. There were some Polish cavalry with horses pulling

guns. We stopped and rested and suddenly German ' planes came and started machine gunning and bombing. The goods wagons on that line were with ammunition and it all exploded and bullets fired everywhere. It was pandemonium. Polish cavalry men were dashing away, hitting trees and people were killed. Father dashed over to help one or two but they were dead. Everything was falling apart. More 'planes came and they strafed the civilian population and we didn't know where to run first. We hid in a ditch near trees, terrified.

Then we were on the move again. It was a nightmare. Many civilians were on the move. The 'planes caused havoc. Many were bandaged and the Polish army was disarrayed. I soon discovered what war was about. Could see Polish troops on the retreat, wounded. We carried on walking on the side roads. There weren't as many here. We arrived towards evening in Lask. We stopped a religious Jew and asked for somewhere to stay. He took us to his house. It was very poor. It had two rooms. He had three children who were giggly. There were photos on the wall of elderly people with beards and the grandmother sitting proud. The man was a tailor. We stayed overnight and in the morning my brother and I queued for bread. Nothing happened in Lask. It was a very small town and the Germans didn't bother with it.

The next day we continued on. We had brought with us bedding, food, pans, clothing. We couldn't take much. We went towards Pabianice where my auntie lived. We were aiming for Lodz and Pabianice was not far from Lodz. We moved towards the main road. We saw pounded and demoralised Polish soldiers and 'planes were still coming. The Polish airforce did not put up much of a fight against the German might. We got a bus in one place.

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We arrived in Pabianice, where I had been before. We went straight to Auntie Hela's (or Hinda) house and Uncle Benjamin. My sister was delighted to see us. We washed and ate and stopped there for one and a half days. Our destination was Lodz where we had cousins. We thought a big city was safer. My elder sister stayed in Pabianice and we went on to Lodz. Pabianice was very quiet. They were amazed at what had happened. We took a tram to Lodz and went to my cousins in Punotzna Street. They had a dairy. They were related on my father's side. They gave us one room. We rested and my mother and sister cooked.

For a day or two things went back to normal. We heard talk that the Germans had broken through the river Warta and were heading to Lodz. The first night there there was terrible bombing. Everyone awoke in a panic and some went towards Bzezin and Warsaw. The Germans machine gunned them and many got killed. Father didn't want to go any further.

The next day I went for a walk and I walked towards the square, Koszczusko Plac, I saw people standing and I saw motorcycles with German soldiers. They went round the square and stopped. I dashed home to tell my parents. We stayed with our cousins. The next day I went to Freedom Square - Platz Wolnosci, to watch the German army coming in. They had very heavy guns and were very motorized. For hours the army crossed Lodz on the way to Warsaw. You could see 'planes passing above you. On the way home I noticed some Chassidim and German soldiers taking photographs and cutting off their beards. I got very upset and scared about this. The Germans were laughing and the Jews were terrified. I told my parents and they just hoped for the best. That was my first look at the German soldiers and their might.

You could soon see Germans with swastikas on their armbands. The ethnic Germans soon put these on. No one bothered me then, but after two days father decided we'd go back to Sieradz. There was no reason to stay in Lodz. We left Sieradz to get away from the Germans, but now they were in Lodz. At home we had everything. So we went back on a coach.

When we arrived back home the town was very quiet. There were German soldiers walking around. Our door was still locked and the fruit downstairs was still okay. We took this out and my parents started selling it. More Jews started coming back and slowly life became normal, sort of.

The Germans settled into the Polish army garrison and new army barracks. Life slowly went back to normality. We bought things and the Jewish community started coming back.

There was no school for me. Jewish children were not allowed to go to school. I read a bit and played every day. We couldn't go to cheder because it was forbidden. There were notices on the walls. The Jewish area was like a ghetto. When they needed people for work they would catch them on the street and take them to work - Jews in particular. My father was caught once or twice and then allowed to work at his trade.

Father sold shoes and other things. When picked up by the Germans he unloaded coal wagons, carted potatoes from wagons for the soldiers etc. He was sometimes kicked. At that time it was still the Wehrmacht who took them and brought them back.

Eventually a Jewish committee was set up and orders went through them. The committee had to supply so many men for work.

Slowly different laws came out. Jews had to wear the Star of David in front and on the back. It was yellow and said 'Jude'. Jews were not allowed to walk on the pavement - only in the middle of the street. More restrictions came and they decided to make a ghetto.

Jews gathered for prayers secretly in houses, not synagogues. The Germans made a warehouse out of the synagogue. To a certain extent life went on normally. The committee had to supply so many men for work. Sometimes they were beaten and sometimes not. Mr Gertler was on the Jewish committee. He dealt in timber and lived outside the town before the war. He was well-to-do so he was more prominent.

Then the Germans collected doctors and elders of the Jewish community and they told some men to dig a grave at the Jewish cemetery and they shot them all. I remember a doctor who was shot at that time. All the well-to-do people were shot. The people who buried them were told not to say anything about it. About 20 were machine gunned. These were Jews. They took Poles afterwards.

Life went on and suddenly I was caught in the street and taken for work. I had to unload goods trains with bryketz - bricquettes - compressed coal dust. The spade was bigger than me. I was caught a few times to do other jobs as well. I was shouted at - 'sweinhund' and other things. I just took it as a daily thing. Different laws came in all the time.

Jews were not allowed to go out of the ghetto. Jewish policemen wore armbands and they were on the street vantage points. There was no wire around the ghetto. Jews could not go in and out, but Poles could pass by because they were still living there also. The ghetto was a bit smaller than it was before the war.

We could still buy food and do most things, but we couldn't go out at night. We could only go out if we were taken for work. Peasants would come in to buy from Jewish shops in the ghetto.

Cigarettes were in very short supply so I fell on an idea to make cigarettes. My father was not doing much at work, so I would collect the dimps, cut the burnt stuff away and mix the tobacco out. I bought filters with a little machine. You pushed this against your stomach and the tobacco went in the filter and you had cigarettes. Every Tuesday and Friday I secretly met the peasants and sold as many as I could make. I did marvellous business. I collected many ends because it was a big garrison town with many Germans. For the filters I had to go to Zdunska Wola, about 14 kilometres away. I would take my Star of David off and go down the main highway. Being small no one noticed. Sometimes I got a lift from a peasant and sometimes I got a

hiding. I would hang onto their vehicles and if they noticed they would hit out at me. Otherwise it was a long way to walk.

I would know every spot on the street and gardens where I could get out of the ghetto. I went through the back streets. All the children knew. Other children didn't do this business. I would go to Zdunska Wola and stay with my family. I bought the filters and wrapped them round my stomach under my shirt and returned to Sieradz. I could sell more than I could make. With the money we could buy eggs, ducks and hens. We exchanged also. I did very well.

As time went on there was not enough tobacco. Since it was autumn I picked and dried leaves in a special metal container and mixed them with tobacco. This worked well. I took leaves from oak trees. I mixed them with other tobacco. The peasants loved it and could tell the difference. Anything was better than nothing.

I went to Zdunska Wola quite often - once a week. My parents worried about me getting caught. I didn't take much notice. I knew the German police, especially one called Arthur, who was a horror. One day I was arriving back and I could see him. I diverted but he noticed me and started running after me, shouting for me to stop or he'd shoot. I was faster than him and I ran fast and turned off and dashed into a stable. I hid and there were rats and I was terrified. He searched but didn't catch me. He had high officer boots and couldn't run fast. He was a shocker.

After resting for a couple of hours I returned home, but my parents wouldn't allow me to go again to Zdunska Wola, so my business died out. I had done this for a few months and it had worked well. Everyone was happy. But since the policeman chasing me, I gave it up.

There was no schooling. And then one evening after going to sleep there was a knock on the door and it was the German police with the Jewish police. They took my father. They often did this in the night, taking people to work in Posnan. Previous to this young men, up to 35, were taken to Posnan for work. One transport went and they needed more. My father's name was on the list. So they took my father to the assembly place around the corner to our house. But in the dark my father escaped. Twenty minutes later there was another bang on the door. The police were looking for my father.

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We were all terrified. The German policeman saw my brother and told him to come instead. My brother got dressed and went. Half an hour later the door was banging again. My father and brother had both disappeared. We were all terrified. So they took me instead. I wasn't worried because I knew I was too young and small to be taken. I went to save my brother and father. A young boy had a better chance. I was marched off to the police station.

Three of us were put in a cell. I was terrified. Then they took us to the German army camp. At 10 a.m. a German doctor checked us over. You had to get undressed. The doctor asked my age and was hesitant. He asked Gertler from the Jewish committee

why I'd been taken. Gertler told him I was replacing my father and brother, so the doctor told me to go. My fate was sealed.

We were marched towards evening to the railway station. There we waited for about one and a half hours. There were only two German policemen and we could walk around. Suddenly I heard a whistle and noticed my brother with a suitcase. He wanted to take my place, but I felt I had more chance than him. He begged and cried, but I wouldn't listen.

We were loaded on to a passenger train and travelled two nights. I was very worried and upset. We were going towards Posnan because we passed Kutno. In the morning we arrived at Otoczno. We had never heard of it. We disembarked and 100 of us stood with our things. An elderly man with glasses and walking with a stoop came later with three others and some in black uniforms. These had a skull on their cap. We hadn't seen this before. The old man, a civilian, was the camp commandant. He asked if any wanted to go back home. A few elderly and children, including me, said yes. We left our luggage on the side. Everyone who wanted to go home had to go to the left. I was one of the youngest. There were about 20 youngsters and they all went to the left. The rest stayed.

We were left alone and the others were marched off leaving their belongings. They were marched to barracks and we could see them being hit on the way. The screams were terrible. The black uniforms, SS, were beating them. They were ethnic Germans. As they got towards the camp there was clay soil across which was planks of wood. They had to walk across the planks. They started chasing the people at the back and those at the front started falling off - it was pandemonium. Then came our turn. We got a good hiding. The beatings were terrible.

They put us into another barrack and we stayed there groaning the first night. The next day there was no pumped water. You had to go to a long metal container on four wheels. We had to cart this towards the village, fill it with water and cart it back. A black uniformed man guarded us and hit us if we didn't go fast enough. They were very brutal.

There were about 2,500 people in the camp and they were laying railway lines between Poznan through Warsaw. We helped there also. Sometimes we were taken out in the middle of the day and told to do all sorts of work. We carted water from the village daily. This was our job for a while and then we would be taken to work on railway lines as well. Eight people carried clamps to lay the railway lines. Civilian ethnic Germans, one a Czechoslovakian, were terrible. They beat you with sticks. People couldn't stand up from beatings and they starved you. It was dreadful.

Received bread and black coffee in the morning and mid-day some water with a bit of leaf in it. The work was 14 hours a day. People got thinner and started swelling from starvation. There was no hospital, just one room. You dare not go to a doctor. Every so often after work there was a ramp and if you didn't ask permission from the foreman to go to the toilet then you were beaten terribly. We had to watch this. We watched many hangings. This happened once a week. Three, two, one would be

hanged. You were hanged for asking a peasant on a farm for a potato. You had no rights.

The barracks were one storey wooden barracks. We slept on straw next to each other. There were about 300 per barrack. People threw themselves on the railway lines because life wasn't worth living. The ethnic Germans were savages, horrible people. They had no human feelings. The 2,500 were all Jewish.

One day a civilian German came - a tall fellow. He told us youngsters we should stay here and he would give us good jobs, there was no need to go home. But we all wanted to go home - us youngsters and the elderly, who were in a separate barrack. The elderly were maybe 55-60. We wanted to go home. Nobody stood forward in agreement with him, everyone wanted to go home. We went back to the barracks. A week later he came again and we had to stand outside the barrack again. He told us we had a week to think about it. He needed some for the kitchen and jobs around the camp. He said we were better off staying. He picked out some of us, about six, I included, and we were sent to work in the kitchen and to bring water. The others were sent back to the barrack. After several days I was peeling potatoes in the kitchen and I could see a lorry and SS men with sticks. They drove these people out of the barrack, told them to undress to their underpants and get onto the lorry. The beatings and screams were terrible. They shut the lorry and drove away. I was very upset about this, but obviously they killed them all.

I met someone who had come to the camp before us from Konin. One was a foreman. He said they had been taken away and killed.

I carried on working in the kitchen. One of the SS men, as we were dragging the water containers, picked me out and told me to walk next to him. He took me to the camp commandant. I was given the job of cleaning his office and the rooms of some of the soldiers instead. Life was easier for me. I used to clean his place but still watch people being hanged. I was the only one doing this work.

Whilst working in the kitchen on the odd occasion you could put some food in your mouth while no one watched. One day someone from Sieradz, called Hildersheim, begged for some potatoes from a German farmer. The farmer told the officer and two days later we had to watch him being hanged. He was 21 years old. The rope broke twice, but they succeeded the third time. It was dreadful. I will never forget what these savages would do as long as I live.

Our job also was to take the dead bodies of those who died during the night and bury them in big holes near a village without any sign. As time went on there were less and less people as people died. There was just one transport to Otczno after us.

One day I noticed an ethnic German, who was a painter in Sieradz, walking to the office. I asked him what he was doing here. I knew him. He had come to collect a boy called Kuba Blum. He was about 22 and he had come to take him back to the ghetto which was still there. My father had been taken out 6-8 months after me and he'd been taken to another camp in Poznan. I had been taken to Otczno towards the end of 1940. It was a most horrible severe winter. Then another winter.

When this ethnic German came in 1942 to take this boy home, the ghetto was still going. As I was clearing up in the office the ethnic German was there. The camp commandant with bifocals said to me, in German, "Do you want to go home?" I said, "I would love to go if you would let me". And he told me to get my things from the barrack and to be there for 2.45. Kuba Blum and I were in civilian clothes. The camp commandant gave the ethnic German some papers and he took us out. I couldn't believe it. He walked us to the station. I looked back at the hell I'd been in. A passenger train arrived. The German gave us some of his sandwiches. There were other Germans on the train and we didn't speak much. We passed (inaudible) and arrived at Sieradz. I was so happy to see my mother.

I didn't know what had happened. I thought my father was still at home. We stopped at Zankowa Ulica, the street where we lived. Kuba Blum got off and I dashed home. My brother opened the door and he was shocked. He thought I had escaped. My mother was crying and everybody who had sons and husbands in the camp came round quickly. I was terrified to talk in case they found out we had talked. I was back home. That was a miracle.

In Otoczno I don't remember the camp commandant's name. Everyone was a savage. There were 2,500 people and I survived. There were about 15 SS and civilian ethnic Germans. Each morning we were counted and marched off to work. I was in the camp so I didn't have to march off to work. They were guarded by the SS.

In the camp we brought the water from the village etc. When people came back from work some had swollen legs, some looked like skeletons with wild eyes. People slowly gave up. They got such beatings that life wasn't worth living. When they came back to the camp, if they fancied, they'd put you on a special rack and beat you till blood came out. They would beat you with sticks - they were savages. We were very scared to have contact with civilians when going for water.

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We saw the peasants. The SS took food from the village and talked to people and then they would march us off. We did this several times a day. You were strapped whenever they fancied. Life was living hell.

After the camp finished the camp and barracks were obliterated. In the middle of the camp was a wooden hut with holes made out for toilets. There was a washing place of metal troughs. We wore ordinary civilian clothes. There was no camp uniform. Every month we went to Bzezin, quite a large city, for delousing. We undressed and put our clothes for steaming. We had to go into showers and steaming. You couldn't keep clean because you were lying on the straw with 100 others. Some people tried to hide some bread at night. But we only got a small bit.

We worked every day except Sunday. You still had to get up early to be counted. Everyone stayed in the camp that day. There were many small camps which were later eliminated.

There was no incident of kindness amongst the Germans. I went up once to a German in the village and asked if I could pick something up. He screamed at me so I just walked away. We were with the SS and they were savages. I experienced no kindness. Amongst the inmates it was very difficult. We were all in the same situation - starving and beaten. It's like dog eats dog. Some people talked to you and advised, but they had nothing.

I had friends there from Sieradz. Quite a few were killed whilst I was there. I knew the foreman, the kapo from Konin. He was there with his brother. They got better food because they were foremen. He was a kind man. He warned me not to be with the boys who wanted to go home. He knew where they were going. I didn't take much notice, but in the end I realised he was right. They killed them all.

The camp commandant used to love hangings. He would run with the rope when people were going to be hanged. That was his real pleasure. He was a shocking man. He was about 68. To me he called me 'You'. I polished his shoes and cleaned his office and room, but he never gave me extra bread. Once or twice an SS man gave me a piece of bread or cake from one of our confiscated parcels which we never received. Kindness no.

In their rooms were photos. They were all family men. One had two children. He was a peasant because the photo was taken outside a farm with his wife and two children, a boy and a girl. He didn't have much intelligence. These were special volunteers and the place was terrible. I will never forget it. As I cleaned he told me what to do and left me to it. The camp commandander had plenty of food, but I daren't touch anything.

I was the smallest in that camp and I was lucky because they gave me lighter work. I couldn't carry the railway lines because people were taller than me and I could just touch it. I did this only for a short time. I was lucky that way. Myer Hersh went out on the working commandos. I knew him from Sieradz because my cheder was below where he lived. He came on the same transport as me. One transport came from Sieradz.

I was not home for long. After I was at home for two days I was told I had to work. It felt like coming back to paradise. I had a bed, normal food and was with my family. People kept coming round asking about their family. I said they were all right because I was scared. I said it was very hard work. Then I was picked by a German policeman and taken out of the ghetto to do his housework. He had a wife but no children. He was in his forties. He would take me to shops and I had to carry things home with him. I worked for him about 12 days.

Every morning and evening we had to go to a square, all the Jews in the ghetto, to be counted.

A Polish friend of ours, about 25, used to bring poultry and other things and sell it to my parents. He came to the ghetto. His father did some work for my father and when he grew up he brought food into the ghetto. Poles were not restricted. He was called Stasiak. My father was already in a camp in Posnan. My brother was working

outside for the Germans, somewhere in the army garrison, doing menial jobs. Stasiak used to come and see us three or four times a week.

One morning there was a knock at 5 a.m. He told my mother the ghetto was going to be liquidated. He offered to hide her. She wouldn't leave the family. She thought we would be taken last. At 8 a.m. we were told to go to the Appelplatz with whatever we could carry. We were counted. There were about 12,000 Jews then. We were then marched off to a church. We called it a Klasztor. Everyone was together. We were there about one and a half hours. Then everyone was told to leave their things in the church and march outside. As they came out there was a German SS man. He asked each their profession. He asked certain people to go on the side. I said I was a schneider, a tailor, and he told me to go to the left with all my family. On the other side were fit people in their twenties and thirties standing outside on the square. The rest were told to go back into the church.

After an hour I was very thirsty and I took one of my mother's pans and I went to the door of the church for water. The SS man called me forward and he told some others to come out. He asked me my profession and I said sneider. He told me to join the others outside. I was terrified. My mother didn't know where I was. He picked out about 20-30 people with me. There were about 180 people outside. We were marched off to the police station. I was crying. I never saw my brother and mother again. I was very depressed. All the town Jews in the church were gassed and killed in Chelmno. This was about June/July 1942. The whole ghetto was liquidated. We only heard afterwards.

From the police station we were marched to the station, put on wagons and taken to Lodz ghetto by train. The people with me reassured me that my family would probably follow. When I got to Lodz I looked for the next transport to arrive. All the people from Sieradz were taken into a big building and were given mattresses to sleep on the floor. There were about 10 people to a room. Every day I looked for a transport from Sieradz, but nothing came.

I stayed there for a while. It was September. I heard all children from the ghetto had to assemble at certain places. Not many did, so the Germans went from house to house getting them out. I was terrified what would happen. At the back of the yard was a wall into the Jewish cemetery. I looked for a spot where I could get across. I heard shooting and screaming from the next building and I jumped over the high wall. I twisted my ankle and I hopped in pain behind a gravestone. I lay there and prayed for help. I was terrified. I could hear shouts and screams. Eventually it quietened down and I jumped back in pain. The people from Sieradz thought I had been taken with the children. I had saved myself.

We did no work for the time being. We received a small ration - some bread and soup. No one was in charge. I got more dejected. I had no one. I walked into the street and walked on and eventually sat down on the pavement and cried. A lady asked me what was wrong. I told her I had no one. She told me to go with her. She had a daughter. She was quite smartly dressed and she took me home. She lived on the top floor. Her daughter was about 13-14, a solemn girl. She offered that I stay with them. She had another room with a mattress and a bucket, but no heating. So I

stopped with her. She worked in a kitchen which made soup for the workers at mid-day. She gave me a pan and I would collect the soup for her. No one knew me so she would get extra for themselves. She worked for the fire brigade.

People worked in factories of textiles, leather goods, timber etc. for the German army. You did not have to work at the beginning to get the coupons. The lady made me carry the briquettes of oval dust. It was nearing winter and getting cold. Her daughter did not work. They were called? The briquettes were heavy and I could barely carry them. I fell over with them. The room was freezing and I got cold and a chill on my bladder. I started weeing in my sleep.

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I was about 11 when I was taken to Otoczno in about 1940. The ethnic German who came for Kuba Blum knew his parents very well. He knew some higher up Germans and he got some papers, maybe for money, and he came for Kuba Blum. Through him going back I was taken back also. I don't know why to this day.

Whilst staying with the lady in Lodz I caught a chill on my bladder and was wetting the mattress. I got very ill and had no medical help. One day I was walking home with something heavy on my back and I fell over. A boy offered to help me. I told him I was on my own in the ghetto. He asked me to go with him to the orphanage where he was. He told me to come next day. Without saying anything to the people I lived with I went down. The place looked wonderful. He took me to see the headmistress and I was accepted because I had nobody. I went back two days later and told the lady that I was leaving. She didn't say much. She was a bit upset but said it was okay.

I was much happier in the orphanage. Secretly we had one or two lessons. The children met and had a theatre with songs in the evenings. Most went out to work and I was found a job in a textile factory called Kaszuba, about 20 minutes from the orphanage. The work was hard. I helped a man to put weft into the machines for weaving. The man was good to me. The rations were meagre, but in the orphanage we were slightly better off than others. We received bread and soup, margarine and mostly artificial stuff that they made coffee from, like wheat. But I was happy being with children of my own age. There were about 190 children. I made friends. The children were from about four or five to 16. They hadn't been taken. Children from another orphanage had been taken. These in this orphanage still survived. The orphanage was on Ulica Poznanska. It was a small street. A husband and wife were in charge. They had been in charge before the war. They were wonderful. She had a humped back and was small.

The President of the ghetto, Chaim Rumkowski, looked after the orphanage before the war and he had a great affinity for orphans. He came to see us once and he used to send us a little more food than others. Life was much better for me. We all dressed in our best when he came. We were very happy to a point. There were some children from Czechoslovakia there also. Life went on as normal as possible. Secretly we had some lessons. People came every so often and gave us a concert. Secretly we were taught Polish and maths just for a short time. We also learnt certain things in Yiddish. We also sang songs which I knew from being a child, about Palestine, and one was called 'Around The Fire', 'Arum Dem Fire'. I met one or two boys. One had a sister and I was very close with them. They were from Lodz or outside Lodz, e.g. Pabianice or Wadz. There were several others in charge of us as well as the headmaster and mistress. One, a nurse, was grey but only about 35.

Sometimes I went to my bedroom and the fence of the ghetto was just beside my window. Now and then I saw a German policeman with a gun walking there and back. Opposite was a yard and a boy of my age would make signs to me. I made signs back, but if I had been caught it was dangerous. I envied him. Eventually we

sent messages by writing on a board and I would send messages back. It was very dangerous. Eventually my friend saw me and warned me not to because I would get shot. So I stopped.

At a meeting the headmistress got me to stand up and gave me the job of weighing the bread. Some children had to weigh and cut the bread each day. She told the children to take example from me because I was very obedient. This embarrassed me. I worked hard for the orphanage because that was my home. I helped with everything, menial jobs etc. I fixed tables up for meetings after work etc.

Work was very hard but I didn't mind. The factory was very large. There were a lot of weavers, weaving for the German army. There was also a spinnery. It was a large pre-war textile factory with a large chimney. The workers were very thin. You got watery soup at lunchtime. People looked like skeletons with swollen eyes. People died in the streets. You would see people pulling flour for bakers. They were strapped into the vehicle like horses pulling the carts. Others pulled containers of excrement. Life was getting worse. Rations went down all the time. The suffering was terrible and every so often selections took people to Chelmno.

Notices went up in the streets. The Jewish committee would post names of people to meet at a certain place. If they didn't the Jewish police would come. They were slightly better than the Germans. In 1942 the Germans went into the hospitals and threw the sick people into lorries. They threw them out of the first and second floor windows. The German SS beat and killed people and took them away. After that people were afraid to go into hospital because they knew what would happen.

About May/June 1944 notices went up that the ghetto was being liquidated. We heard the Russians were not far away. Everyone prayed for liberation, but transports from the ghetto started.

At work I worked with Yaacov. He tried to help me because I was thin and small and couldn't lift the bales to go in the back of the loom. He was the tattler and he used to repair the machines also. About 300-400 worked in that factory. A Jewish person was in charge. He had been in textiles before the war. He received extra food. One or two others were also in charge. A lot of weavers knew the business from before the war. The people were like skeletons.

No one stood round with a whip, but you had a quota which had to be done. Each week they wanted more. The Lodz ghetto was a nightmare. I got to a point where my shoulder and neck bones were sticking out a long way. There were times I couldn't walk over the wooden bridge to cross from one side of the ghetto to the other. I was very run down.

Several times Germans came into the ghetto. One day I was walking to the square and saw 10 Jewish men who had been hanged. They were left hanging for about two days. I don't know why.

It was very degrading, uncivilised and fearful that you would be sent out of the ghetto. I went back several times to the lady to see her and show her I was clean and

well looked after. She wasn't tremendously good to me but I had that feeling that I was thankful that she helped me out at that time.

I once or twice met people I had come to Lodz with from Sieradz. They worked in a leather factory, the two people I met but I met none others. I knew Benny Hildersheim, the brother of the boy who was hanged. He was adopted by Chaim Rumkowski and stayed with him.

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Many people were against Rumkowski because he sent Jews to death on the German's orders. If he didn't deliver the Jews then the SS would come in and things would be much worse. So he handed over thousands of Jews. People did not know for certain, but there was a rumour that they were taken to their deaths.

Rumkowski was a hard man. He was a businessman before the war in textiles. He wasn't liked by many. He went round like the king. He was an elderly man. He wore glasses and was very grey and had a lot of hair. He had a Jewish police force. His face was on the ghetto money. Whatever you bought you had to buy in ghetto money and you were paid in ghetto money, which was worthless. You had to pay for your rations with the money.

The ghetto was fenced and guarded by German police outside and Jewish police inside. Many say Rumkowski did not have to do what he did for the Germans. My point of view is that if he didn't do it the German SS would have come in and there would have been more atrocities. The Germans wanted more and more people. They were running down the ghetto. It was only there while they needed work for the German army - uniforms, shoes etc. When they didn't need them they went. Certain Germans made a lot of money out of it. One called? dealt with Rumkowski. He was paid in German marks and became a rich man. Other high ranking officers also became rich. The ghetto was there while it was useful. When they were no longer needed they slowly sent more Jews out from the ghetto to Chelmno, an extermination camp.

The Jewish police kept order. There was a Jewish fire brigade. The Germans gave the orders and the Jewish committee had to abide by it. Rumkowski was above everybody. The Jewish police did not do anything to me.

If you were caught with a radio you were shot.

Rumkowski, I think, did a very good job. Not many would have survived otherwise. He kept the ghetto going for as long as possible. We heard the Russians weren't far away. It is true he handed over thousands of Jews, but the Germans would have taken them out just the same. As a man he was extremely good to the children and very helpful. He was a necessity and many Jews in the Lodz ghetto can thank him for surviving the war, because he delayed their official end. Lodz ghetto was liquidated in 1943(?) (Means 1944). It was kept going because they were doing work for the German army.

One heard certain things underground but I heard little. We were fenced in and no one went out. Maybe things were smuggled in. Lodz ghetto was a nightmare, it was dreadful.

The orphanage was a pebble-dashed, grey building. It was two floors and had a courtyard. The building went round the courtyard. The street of the orphanage also had a ghetto court. Opposite was a place where people got a meal, Kolacje, an evening meal. When my turn came it was closed. Once in three months workers got this extra meal in a special hall. If they worked hard they got this as a bonus. You got a three course meal, but I never got it.

Several boys shared a room. Girls and boys were separate. Downstairs was a large hall where we met. There was a separate room where the food was weighed out. There was a machine for cutting bread. On occasion Rumkowski sent down bones for the children. That was our extra ration. We made soup or actually ate the bone and got a bone to suck. We ate in the hall where we gathered.

At least in the ghetto the SS weren't on top of me, beating or guarding me. But they starved you. Every few weeks the rations went down and people died in the street. There was a lot of TB. Everything was ersatz, artificial.

In the orphanage one or two died from measles. By the time the ghetto was liquidated there were very few smaller children left. Only from eight to nine onwards. Maybe the younger ones had been sent out. There were more boys than girls. There were some brothers and sisters, but they were separated for sleeping. I had a very good friend who had a sister. I fell in love with her. We walked to work together. She was wonderful. I had something to look forward to. Sometimes we would look at bread in a bakery. We hoped and talked about the past and future - that maybe we would find our parents. We heard the Russians were not far away and that kept us going.

I was in the Lodz ghetto about two years. Slowly it was liquidated and certain people had to gather at the Appelplatz to meet a quota. We thought the orphanage would be last with Rumkowski having an affinity to us. One day in July the order came to get ready, to put our best clothes on and to meet in the street. We were to take what we could carry. We went out and about 190 children marched off to a place where we were put on a lorry and brought to the railway station. At the station I could see Jews being driven onto the train by the SS. There was screaming and shouting. They were cattle trucks. Our turn came. I was separated from some of the children. When the wagons were closed we were packed like sardines. I noticed my friend and his sister and another child. At least I had someone to talk to.

People were moaning. It was dreadful. There was one small window with a wire on it. You could look out if you stood on something. It was summer and breathing was bad. After an hour the train moved. People were moaning and crying - there was no food. We went through the night. A lot of people had to stand. There was no toilet. Someone had a bucket and we used that with a cloth. You can imagine the stench during the night.

Early morning my friend lifted me up to see out. I could see the guards on top of the train. We passed forests, but I couldn't see a station. I was afraid because I knew what transports meant from Otoczno. I was resigned to this because you get to a stage where you give up. You can only take so much.

Suddenly an elderly lady died. Children were crying. I only wanted to see where we were going but I couldn't see a station. We had another night which was torture. We had received nothing. The suffering was dreadful. I wanted to get it over with - whatever was to happen. Early morning the train slowed and I could see towers, a wire fence and SS on a concrete ramp in front of the train. The SS had alsation dogs. We stayed in the wagon half to three quarters of an hour and I could hear screams as wagons were opened up. Our transport had about 5,000 people. As we went out we were told to take nothing. I had a few photos and I took them with me. The SS was not interested in the dead body. We were told to stand in rows. I noticed some orphans from the next wagon, so we got together with them and with the staff.

We were told slowly to move forward and the selection started. We could see people walking left and right. It didn't mean much. The only fear I had was the SS men. They were screaming and shouting and people were being beaten with rifles and dogs were going for people. SS were shouting for mothers to put their children down and they were crying. It was pandemonium, dreadful. I didn't like the whole situation.

We moved forward slowly and we came to two high ranking officers. One could have been Mengele. There were two or three other officers also. They were high ranking by their insignias. I could see he was sending elderly people and children on one side and fitter people on the other. I learnt from before not to go on the side of children and old people, but the orphanage were sent on to the side of the old people and I was one of them. I walked along and I noticed the fit men and women walking in the other direction. As the commotion of screams and pandemonium was going on I stopped.

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Something pushed me to go to the other side. I started walking fearfully towards the fit people. As we walked on we saw prisoners in striped suits. One or two Jews said to us in Yiddish that we were on the right side. That's all I heard. We were marched off to a certain point. Then I noticed one more boy from the orphanage. I don't know how he got through. He was about 15. We marched to a square where we stood in rows with a few hundred men. We stood about an hour and suddenly two doors opened in front of us and naked women with shaven heads were driven into the street by SS men. The SS were screaming and shouting at them. Husbands and fathers were watching their daughters and wives. It was a most terrible, soul destroying thing I have ever witnessed in my life. They made them run to a certain point. Some had clothes in their hands.

After this they told us to go in there, take our clothes off and put them in front of us. My photos of my parents and family had to be left there. Someone told us we were going to have a shower and then go to a work camp. After half an hour the same high ranking officer came in and looked through the group. He noticed one or two boys,

including me, and spoke to the sergeant. The sergeant went out and we were told to take our clothes and wait outside in the yard. We stood there about 20 minutes. The sergeant came back and told us to rejoin the group of men. My clothes were taken away. A Jewish kapo came up and said I was very lucky. He said there was no lorry to take me to the crematorium, which was belching out smoke. They were too busy with the 5,000 that had just come in. So I was sent back to the working men. That was the first time I heard of gas chambers and crematoriums. This was Birkenau.

After that we were taken to a shower and our hair was cut off. The boys were selected to another part. Towards evening we were taken to a different barrack and tattooed. I was given the number B7608. This was what I was known by. We were given striped clothing with a pair of boots. Eventually we were marched off to Cygoiner lager, the gypsy camp. We could see high wires and towers with machine guns.

We were put into a barrack with about 800 people. We were given some boxes and crammed about six to a box. By then we were completely starving. We had nothing until next morning. Couldn't sleep all night. During the night people told us where we were and what was happening. About selections of the unfit, the gas chambers and being burnt. We could see smoke and smell the stench of burning flesh. We were in Birkenau, not far from the gas chambers and crematoria. We slept on straw on bunks, three high. We were very cramped. During the night people were moaning, groaning, gnashing, snoring. It was a nightmare to me. To be once again confronted with this. I prayed for daylight.

In the morning we were driven onto the Appelplatz to be counted. We stood for about two hours, cold and hungry. There were more boys in that barrack. Then we were driven back into the barrack. The whole place was surrounded by electrified wires. Then we got a very small piece of bread and lunchtime very watery soup. That was the food for the day. They gave us a metal container, but no spoon. I found a piece of metal and rubbed it out on a stone and ate up the few leaves and potato in my soup. Then the night came again. It was a dreadful place - there was no hope.

From there they selected people to take to different camps into Germany, or into the gas chambers. Our kapo was a hard, brutal man. He kicked and beat people. He was a German criminal. Maybe a murderer from a prison. These people could beat people to death. He was in charge of our barrack. We were mostly Jews in our barrack - Polish, Hungarian, German, Czechoslovakian. These people were selected for work and as the days went by you looked worse. Every so often there was another selection. All the young people were told to go out for a selection for work. I went into the second row because I wasn't tall enough. The SS man chose so many and I wasn't chosen. I stood on my toes to look taller and he picked me and two more.

We were marched off, 30 of us. We could see buildings surrounded by electrified wire. We came to the gate and a siren started. Allied bombers were passing by and the SS who guarded us ran into a ditch and we were left standing in front of the gate, which said 'Arbeit macht frei'. We were still guarded by the SS on the towers. When the all clear sounded we were marched into the central camp of Auschwitz. It was like army barracks, big buildings. Buildings were numbered and we were marched into one - maybe building 8 or 10. We were taken through some corridors. I was

fearful of the unknown. We were given a shower and disinfectant powder was put under our arms and where our hair had been shaved. From there we were put into rooms with beds. We got a blanket.

Towards evening someone took our number, names and profession. I said I was a schloser, locksmith. I said I was older than I was. We stayed there for several days. We were counted every morning and received very little food. We were taken to see a hanging of two people the next day - a Jew and a Pole. I don't know what they did. The Pole, about 20, shouted "Death to Hitler. The day of reckoning will come". The Jewish fellow was a young man and he said the Shema.

I have seen so many hangings and atrocities and each time I think how these savages acted - worse than animals, because animals kill for food and they killed for lust. We had a few selections and I passed. We were told we would be taken to a camp in about four days - 20 of us. We did nothing for these four days. We could walk about Auschwitz camp. We were told of certain blocks where they kept people in dungeons and eventually shot them. This was maybe block II. You never got out of there. There was a wall where they took prisoners and shot them in the back of the neck. The atrocities were unbelievable.

In the central Auschwitz camp some political prisoners gave us a bit more food. They couldn't believe that we children got through the net. After several days we were marched to a camp called Budy. It was an agricultural camp in the vicinity of Auschwitz. Auschwitz was about 30 kilometres in diameter.

There we were taken into a wooden barrack with about 1,000 people. Bunk beds and a metal oven in the centre to heat the place in the winter. We were locked in most of the time. We were shown the toilets and washplace. The toilets were holes in wooden planks. The washplace was above, with taps and a narrow gully. Cold water. In central Auschwitz the toilet facilities were better because it had been an army garrison place before the war. Originally it was Austrian, then Polish, then German. Auschwitz was a very damp place. The river Wistula ran past and it was always misty in the morning. It was out of the beaten track. It was a horrible place. Very few villages were around.

In Budy I was put to work with some horses, feeding them and ploughing. It was hard work ploughing with two horses. An SS man on a horse would whip you if you didn't work fast enough. After several weeks he was sent on the Russian front and I was delighted. The boys were sent to a pig sty, some looked after horses, and to different agricultural places working for the SS. Some went to the fishery. There were the boys and about another 100 people. There was a Jewish man who gave me an odd potato. He had been there quite a while. I reminded him of a boy who he came with, who went to the gas chambers at 13. He helped me with a bit of extra food because he was stealing food every so often. He boiled potatoes for the pigs and he would steal one. One day I was very hungry.....

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When you had a chance you could grab a potato, put it in your mouth and swallow it quickly. Once I did this so quickly I broke my front tooth with it. Eventually I had it done after the war. You ate it with the soil on. I ploughed fields growing potatoes, wheat, vegetables. When you are thin and can hardly walk you work because you know you will be beaten. We had all kinds of work. We had to empty a big place for hay for the winter for animals. These were for the SS. Just because we were on agricultural work didn't mean we had more to eat. We were still under the SS. I got beaten many times and selections were quite often. If you looked bad you were taken. Then six boys were taken to work in the fishery commando. We had to catch fish in the river Wistula wearing high rubber boots and with nets. We used to bring the fish - carp, pike, lescht - and sort them out. We had to walk four miles each way each day.

Lunchtime we got soup which was a bit better there. There were 40 people working but the boys there were catching and sorting fish. We had different jobs. If you didn't do it fast enough you were still hit. We had a German kapo who was a murderer. He was full of tattoos and he was imprisoned by the Germans for murder. He was brought to Auschwitz as a kapo.

There were a few buildings in a village where no civilians but only SS lived. They built small lakes to keep and breed fish. There were water channels. From there we used to take the fish and put them into transport, train wagons and big containers, and the fish were sent to Germany, to Berlin. They had big lakes there. I worked there for a few months. It was nothing to be kicked about and kicked into the water. If the SS wanted they shot you. He could kill you or let you live. The atrocities were terrible. Nothing can describe what they did.

We had little food and were dejected, and selections. In the fisheries there were all Jews, but in the camps were Poles, Greek Jews, Germans etc. Other nationalities were not sent to the gas chambers, only Jews. There were a lot of Jews from Salonica. Towards the end Italian P.O.W's were brought in from the Russian front. They were in the bunks above us. We still had to be counted every day.

Just before Xmas the kapo Arthur told five of us to put a bucket of fish down our trousers and boots so no one would see. We didn't know the SS officer had put this bucket aside for himself. He came back and saw the fish had gone. He asked who had taken them. We said nothing because we knew the kapo would murder us. He told us to take the fish out from where we had hidden them. One or two started taking them out. He said he wouldn't do anything to us if we told him who had told us to do it, but we said nothing. I had three, but I only took two out. They were still alive. He told two boys to step forward and he hit them with a branch from a tree. He hit very hard, about eight to ten lashes. The screams were terrible.

My turn came and I still had one fish in my trousers. I bent down - I was the last. He started beating me and I started running because it hurt terribly. I ran towards the lake and at the lake I turned and he ran into the lake. He screamed at me like mad. I walked back to the table of fish terrified. The pain was terrible. I started sorting out

the fish at the table and he called me over. He asked if I had taken out all the fish. He had noticed the tail of a fish hanging outside my trousers. He took his revolver out and told me to sit by the stream. He put his gun at my temple and told me that since I had stolen it alive I would eat it alive. I started eating and eating. It was full of blood and I came to the bones, but he said I had to eat the lot.

Luckily a major arrived in a hansom cab and he shouted over to him. He went over and while away I threw away the bones and head. I had eaten about three quarters of the fish. When he came back he asked if I had eaten it all and I said, "Yes sir". I went back to the table, full of blood but alive. He could have shot me easily. Then we were marched back to the village where the fishery was. We were called into the SS major but we wouldn't tell him who told us to steal the fish. A Jewish boy with one arm, called Peter from Berlin, worked in his office and he tried to persuade us, but we wouldn't say. The major kicked me in the stomach saying he would finish us off if we didn't say, but we didn't. We were marched back to Budy and we could hardly walk the four miles.

Next morning we couldn't walk and we stayed in the camp. After two days the high ranking officer came and told us to go back to work the next day or we would be shot or gassed. It was never heard of to stay behind in camp. So we went back to work. I was left at the camp to repair some rubber boots. As I was repairing them I could see the sergeant call the kapo out and beat him with a stick. I was delighted because he was a savage kapo with no mercy, but he got it. The kapo had thanked us for not saying anything. The sergeant came from Konigsberg. The high ranking officer was caught after the war and I think was hanged. He was a colonel or major. He was grey and wore glasses. I saw his picture in a book of Auschwitz after the war.

We carried on working in Budy. We were weak and life was dreadful. There was no hope. From the underground we heard that the Russians were not far. Xmas 1944 was coming up and one of the SS sergeants, an Austrian, came into our barrack, blind drunk, late at night, and made us all sing 'heilige nacht', holy night. Some had to sing with him. He was a brute. Everyone was terrified.

Several days after Xmas an order came and the boys from the fishery were transferred to another camp in the district of Auschwitz, called Plawy. We worked there just a few days. I was left behind with another person to clean the barrack out.

One day I was cleaning and the camp commandant came in with a woman, maybe Erma Grise, with blonde hair, boots and a whip, and another low ranking officer. They walked down and the camp commander, called Bear, asked if the food was good and we said "Jawohl", "Yes sir". He said in the next few days they were going to set up a film unit, a cinema to show films every night. We knew this was talk. We could hear the Russian guns in the distance and planes pass by. This was January 15th. We could see the German army on the retreat when we went out. At night the sky was red from bombardment. This was wonderful. We knew it wouldn't be long, we were nearly there. I had a friend and we shared things. He was from Lodz. He worked in an SS warehouse and they were liquidating it. He found a bag of semolina and he hid it. He brought it back to the barrack and we hid it.

On 18th January we were brought onto the Appelplatz to be counted and we were told to go back to the barrack and to take what we could carry. We were marching off to Germany. That was the start of the death march. The German SS were in front, at the side and behind us. All we had was the semolina. They gave us no food. The frost would squidge under your feet. It was deep snow. I had a pair of Dutch wooden clogs, no socks, striped uniform. It was freezing cold. The frost was so severe. The uniform was striped trousers, striped jacket and underneath a shirt. It was 25 to 30 degrees below freezing and in howling wind. Nothing can describe it. We marched off in the morning and towards the evening we reached a certain place, but were driven on by the SS. People started fainting and falling behind. The SS just shot them behind the head and that was it. There were hundreds of bodies lying dead.

They marched us on and on and everyone was terribly tired. We walked through a very quiet place with no traffic and they told us to sit down. It was about midnight and we heard a very heavy plane pass. It let off flares lighting the sky. Within minutes bombers came and the bombardment started. There must have been a munitions factory near. I thought how wonderful to see it - the more the better. They let us rest for about half an hour and then we were off again. This was in the middle of the night, with no food, in deep snow. My foot started rubbing on the wood and it started to bleed.

We arrived in a small town before Katowice, still in Poland. There was an empty school and they told our column to lie down on the floor. Everyone collapsed. They gave us about two hours to sleep there with no food. My friend and I had some raw semolina every so often.

I have eaten raw leather just heated up on fire, and grass; anything just to keep alive - previously and after that. When we started marching again the Poles just looked at us. One or two people escaped during the night. The problem was that you were in a striped uniform with a shaven head. Your chances of escape were remote. All the way there were columns of dead bodies. You were sleeping and walking. Your mind didn't work, everything was blurred. You were just driven like cattle.

Eventually, after a few days, not many survived. We were taken to a goods station in Katowice, not far from the German border, and we were loaded into cattle trucks. People collapsed and fell asleep. Thousands started out. My column was about.....

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There were about 3,000 in our column, but by Katowice there were only about half that number alive. We had received no food or water. We just ate snow to keep going. I was in a terrible state. On that wagon I said, "If there is any God, why should we suffer so much? What have I done? Never done anybody any harm in my life. I'm a child. I am left on my own and all these horrors..." You lay back and wonder what it is all about. You get to a stage when you don't care whether you live or die. You keep going because you know the Russians are not far away and you hope to be liberated at the last moment.

We were shunted in the wagons here and there and we arrived in middle Germany. We stopped at Weimar and from there we were marched to Buchenwald. My foot

was raw from bleeding, you can imagine what we looked like. It took about one and a half hours. People were shot who couldn't walk. Eventually we arrived and were told to stand naked. We went through a shower.

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I said schloser was my profession to give myself a chance. I just thought of that, although I had no idea what to do. It just came to my mind.

In Lodz transports left, but we didn't know then where they were going. People had an idea about extermination because there was tremendous fear of the transports. People talked. The Germans said they were sending people to the East. We heard of Chelmno, but didn't know what was happening there.

In Auschwitz Italian P.O.W's were brought in towards the end. One or two I communicated with in our barracks, although we couldn't speak each other's language - we used our hands. They were singing all the time, dreaming of Italy. They were not as badly treated as us. They had better food and the odd day off from work. We made gestures to each other. They worked on the farm. They wore their uniforms without insignias, and belts. Russian P.O.W's were with us all the time. They were treated the same as us. We got on well with them.

I met one in Buchenwald. He was about 19 and he told me about Russia. I could speak with him because Russian is similar to Polish. After a while he was taken to another camp. He was a nice boy. The Russian P.O.W's were treated terribly with no rights, just like us. Some wore uniforms (in Buchenwald) and some camp clothing. In Buchenwald we did not wear the same as Auschwitz. Some wore civilian clothing and different clothes like that.

When we were caught stealing the fish the officer knew Arthur had told us to take it, even though we were too afraid to say. We couldn't win. We got a beating from the SS officer or we would have been beaten by Arthur. At the camp of Puawy (Plawy) we still worked at the fishery. For a while we did agricultural work as well. Don't know why they transferred us.

In Auschwitz when you came out early morning, about 5.30 a.m., you could see people electrocuted on the electric fence. You would see maybe two to six hanging onto the wire most mornings. Some people like skeletons we called the Muzelmen. Their eyes were swollen and their ankles would swell with water. Once they got into such a state they died on the boxes or were selected for the gas chambers. Many went like this. They would die in the barracks at night. Many times people next to me would die. Their chest would pant. It was terrible to watch. They died of starvation. We could hear it in the night, but no one could do anything for them. They just died. People gave up. There was nothing to live for. But those who could still work kept going, and we heard the news from the underground that the Russians weren't far and we hoped it wouldn't be long. We heard of partisans around the forests of Auschwitz. We never saw them.

We were still in Budy when the crematorium was blown up. I was working in the fishery at Hermeze. We could hear the sirens and we knew something was

happening. 20 minutes later the SS with dogs came into the fishery and asked our officer if he had seen any prisoners running past. They were screaming and shouting. They left. We knew something had happened. That was the end of 1944. We were marched back to our camp. We had to stand outside and we were counted several times and told to sit down and jump like kangaroos. Who didn't was whipped. It is difficult to do when you are weak. This lasted about two hours and then we went into the barracks. Everyone was worn out. We only found out next day that some prisoners who worked in the crematorium brought in guns and shot some SS and blew up the crematorium. We heard through the underground somehow, because Poles used to come into the camp to work. The men of the Sondercommando, many were caught and shot. After that we heard nothing. The SS were very hard on us after that and then it died down. We knew the gas chambers and crematorium were blown up and that many were caught and shot.

After that we were transferred to Puawy and we got a little more soup. People in the kitchen gave us extra on a few occasions if no one could see. They were Russian, Polish or Hungarian. We worked in the fishery. Among the prisoners some kindness was shown, especially to the children. They couldn't do a lot, although there were underground committees in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. They helped the children to a point. On odd occasions I met people from the kitchen who gave me more soup and everyone said it won't be long because the Russians aren't far away. We lived on hope.

The Germans were just as cruel to us as to the others. The winter was coming and Auschwitz is very damp and misty. In Budy there was a women's camp. It was very strict there. Men who did maintenance there brought news from there. We saw them march to and from work. Many women were Jewish, Ukrainian, Polish etc. They worked in agriculture also. We weren't allowed to communicate. The SS women were very cruel and badly treated them. They had whips. You just had to take it. There was no running away. It is impossible to describe the cruelty that went on. You were thin, degraded and your mind was only on getting more food and surviving till the liberation. After the crematorium and gas chambers were blown up gassing and burning came to an end as far as I know. Some worked in the munitions factory of Buna and smuggled arms into the Sondercommando. They were killed every three months. So it was better to fight and take some Germans with you.

No one could be brave enclosed by an electric fence and towers and machine guns and starving and dejected. Your mind is not on bravery but on trying to survive. People prayed. Even I prayed when selections were on. Certain people who were religious prayed, although you couldn't tell them apart from the others. You lived on hope.

We heard about medical experiments when we were in the central camp of Auschwitz. We were told by established camp inmates. There was a special block for it. I didn't know what and how, but I knew there were.

We arrived in Buchenwald and were taken into a shower. As we came out there were SS men with powder pumping it onto our bodies. On the other side we got clothing.

We were full of lice because there had been no washing on the death march etc. They gave us new clothes and we had to wait outside. We were eventually marched into the camp and distributed into different barracks. I was taken to a barrack with sixty percent Russian P.O.W's. There I met Sacha. We were given food and in the evening the counting on the Appelplatz took one to one and a quarter hours. Then we went back to the barrack, which had about 1,000 people.

Next morning we were counted again and some were selected for work and some were transported to different camps in Germany for work. I was left in the barrack and taken on odd days to work in Weimar. We cleared bombed buildings.

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Every fourth to fifth day they took us into Weimar to clear up the bombed places. You could hear the air attacks regularly. When we were in Buchenwald one night bombers went heavily through the night because Erfurt was not far from Buchenwald. As the bombers approached they came down low to bomb Erfurt. All the barracks shook. I was scared but happy. We could hear the explosions in the distance. The bombers went past many nights. I made good friends with the Russian P.O.W and we spoke about our lives at home as children. Then he was taken away to another camp in Germany about March 1945.

One day I was told I was being transferred to a children's block number 66. The kapo was a Jewish fellow from Czechoslovakia called Gustav. There were only children in that barrack. There were 300-400. Eli Weisel was above my bunk. We were better looked after there. We got a couple of potatoes extra there. We didn't work but we did different things in the block. We heard the bombardments and knew it was near. There was an underground committee and we knew the Americans were not far away. It was the beginning of April. The children were not transferred to other camps. Some Hungarian Jews would come to our block on a Sunday and we used to get two boiled potatoes 'in their jackets'. I couldn't eat the peels because they burned my stomach. As I peeled off the skin the Hungarians would stretch out their hands under the barrack for the skins. The Hungarians had only been in the camp less than a year and couldn't stand the starvation as much as the Poles etc., who had been there maybe five years. It was pathetic how they held their hands under for the peels.

The barracks were made of timber. The washing facilities were a row of taps with a metal trough underneath. The toilets were open wooden things. In Buchenwald I felt a little easier. There wasn't the same tension. We knew it can't be long. Leon Blum, the French P.M. was in a different part of Buchenwald. We knew he was there. Norwegian P.O.W's were there also, well looked after. They got Red Cross parcels. They were still sending people to different camps in Germany. In Buchenwald the kapos were in charge. Occasionally the SS came to count us. It wasn't as bad as Auschwitz. Gustav made sure everything was all right. He worked in conjunction with the underground committee. There were some beatings, but that was all. Trucks would go from block to block collecting the dead. Two fellows pushed it along and threw the dead skeletons onto the cart. They were bones and the skulls had no flesh on them. They took them away each day. Many died daily and they threw them one on top of the other in a heap. Tens of hundreds died each day. There were tens on each truck, but the trucks were collecting many times a day. Buchenwald had a small crematorium, but I don't think it had gas chambers.

My friend Monek was still with me. He was also in block 66. In the beginning of April we heard rumours that the camp was to be liquidated. We could hear the shooting coming nearer. Then we heard block 66 and other blocks one morning had to come outside to be transported. I couldn't believe it. They did not take us away that morning. We were counted, but the next morning Gustav told us we were being transported to Germany.

Some of our block got away by going to different blocks. We were counted and marched off with several thousand more people. We marched in columns. The end was so near but so far. This was the beginning of April. We walked towards Weimar with no food, nothing - so near to liberation. The SS marched us with dogs. We got to the station of Weimar. There was a very long train of open wagons. A long goods train. We were about 5,000 people. The dogs were barking and the SS screaming - it was terrible.

At about 4 p.m. we were told to get on the wagons, about 100 to a wagon depending on the size of the wagon. I had a blanket and so had Moniek. All the boys from block 66 were together. We were all squashed together so that we could hardly sit down, some stood up the first night. We had no food and were open to the elements. In April there is a lot of rain. The first night was dry and the train was going. The SS were sitting in the wagon with SS, but they had coats and food. We were cold and tired, it was dreadful. You couldn't sit down. There were one or two elderly people with us also. On the first night about two died and as people died there was more room for us. We were just bones.

Next morning we stopped near a village. They brought big cannisters of watery soup, maybe of kohlrabi. Then the train went again and the rain started. You were sitting and thinking if there was any chance of life. You were shivering, cold and wet. If there is a God, why doesn't he do something? It was terrible. The next morning we stopped at an open place with the SS guarding and we got off the train. I was looking for corn or wheat. I found one or two bits and ate it just like that. I was very hungry. I had high shoes. They allowed us to cook grass etc because we stopped for about two hours. We picked grass and cooked it in a little aluminium pan to keep us alive. I started cutting my boots off and burning it on the fire and chewing it. You can do it to keep you alive. As time went on I was cutting them lower and lower. I got them in Buchenwald. Fire was made with a few sprigs and people had some matches. You had two bricks etc. They allowed us to do this with the SS guarding. We were near the lines and took water from a river at the side. Then we went back on the wagons.

The train went again through the night. We stopped in the middle of the night at a station and they had soup for us. We all were starving. But it was so salty it burned you. This was deliberate. We ate it because we were starving. People were eating it and then burning, but there was no water - it was terrible. Next morning the train stopped near a stream and they opened the wagons and we got off to drink at the stream. Everyone was panting from the salt. Then the Ukrainian and Hungarian SS started shooting while we were drinking. They shot a few. There was screaming and shouting and we got back onto the wagons. I got some water in my pan and ran back to the wagon. Quite a few were shot. One wagon was empty for the dead bodies. Every so often they buried them in a very large grave. More people died every day. On an odd morning we got a piece of bread. After about three to four days we got bread. After I ate the grass I boiled I couldn't digest it. It lay in my stomach. I used to put two fingers down my throat and bring it back and then I could eat the bread. On odd occasions they gave us some black coffee. Not real coffee - ersatz.

This was the time I sat on the wagon and prayed. Wet, dying, no hope, open to the elements night and day, travelling we didn't know where; no food and every day

hundreds were dying because they had no resistance. One night the rain was very heavy. I had given my blanket to someone else and everyone was huddling up under it in the corner. I was drenched and asked if I could come under it with them. They let me in. You think to yourself - death is better than this, no hope, no life, no thing. I was just like a skeleton, there was nothing left. There comes a time in life when you say to yourself, what is it all about? This was once when I really gave up.

Next morning, wet through, they stopped the train and we got some hot coffee. They brought it in big metal containers and told us to get down for a walk. We got no bread. At that time about 2,000 must have died. We had been going for about two weeks with constant cold and rain. We had a Hungarian SS man, an older man, sitting with us in his army coat and he even grumbled to himself. He was sick of it but we carried on and hoped.

We came outside a station and stopped. They told us to get off and cook grass if we wanted. I picked this with a friend called? and we made a fire between two stones and cooked it in the aluminium container. People had matches. You had to watch your fire so that they wouldn't steal your 'food'. Suddenly out of nowhere two American planes came low and started straffing. We jumped to the side of the road. The planes didn't realise who we were and machine gunned us there and back. Then they realised we were prisoners and stopped firing. They cruised around. When we got back one of the bullets had gone through the pan. If we had stayed there we would have been shot. So we had no pan.

Then we got back on. We knew the war was at the end. This was the third week in April. We were starving and didn't know where we were going. The train was less crowded as people died. A friend of mine ran out trying to get some food and was shot by the SS man. There was no first aid and after a few days he got gangrene and died. He was a nice boy of my age, called Motek.

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After about three weeks the train was still going forward. We passed a few Czechoslovakian names and came to Marienbad. We knew we were around the Sudetenland. Many had died. Then we travelled and stopped at a big railway junction for half a day - cold, dejected, wet with no food. The SS told us to get out and go to the fields for the toilet. Then facing us was another train with prisoners going in a different direction. The SS were not guarding us closely at this point. There was an open truck across the road from us and when we went to look there was a whole wagon with dead women prisoners. They were just skeletons. Some in the nude, just thrown on. This gave me a shudder.

We stopped at this large station which had many lines. Then heard a rumour that the SS were going to take away the Jewish boys. They would identify them by dropping their trousers and seeing who was circumcised. Icek Alterman and the two Weishandler brothers and myself ran to some empty wagons over the lines and hid in one. We stayed there freezing and terrified for two hours. We could see our train standing stationary with nothing happening, so we went back. About two hours later they shut the doors and we started moving again.

One of the Hungarian guards talked to himself a lot that Hitler was dead and that it won't be long. Even he was fed-up and he had a coat and food and everything. This was about 21st April - although I didn't know that then. We could see Czech names on the stations we passed. It was nearly four weeks we had been on open wagons in all weathers with hardly any food. There were hardly 600 left. More than 4,000 had died on the way. We stopped at a station of a small town. I could see Czech policemen with guns and a Czech flag. We were told to get off and we walked amongst the lines. We knew it couldn't be long. Every day we saw American planes and we saw the German trains being bombed. We were bombed several times.

We asked the Czech police to give us food. We hadn't eaten for weeks. One or two went into the building and brought us some food - bread and meat. A younger friend of mine went up to the policeman who was handing out the meat and an SS man saw this. The SS Ukrainian ran up and was going to hit him over the head with his gun. He told him to go away or he'd kill him. Another Czech policeman noticed and said, "If you touch that child I'll kill you". We realised something was happening there and the SS man walked away. Some more Czechs gave us food. That was a turning point. It was four weeks into our journey. We were just skeletons.

Whilst getting onto one of the wagons previously someone had trapped my finger in the door. It was going septic and the pain was terrible. I was crying with pain. Then we were shunted into Theresienstadt. The SS were taken off and we knew something was happening.

A few villages before that a Czech partisan jumped on the trains while stationary and took photos of our transport. Eventually we arrived in Theresienstadt. I was in agony with my finger. Next day we were taken to a building. We were not guarded by the SS. The Red Cross took over and mostly Jewish people came in there. The same night the Germans were retreating and many threw hand grenades into Theresienstadt. We knew it can't be long. The Russians weren't far away. The next morning they put antiseptic on my finger and a bandage and the pain started to go. After a while I lost all the skin and new skin grew - so my finger was saved.

They gave us food. Out of 5,000 leaving Buchenwald, approximately 600 arrived alive in Theresienstadt. After about two days I was put in a room with five more boys. The whole building was boys like us. Early morning, about 6 a.m., I heard shouting and screams. I opened the window of the first floor room and saw Russian tanks. People were jumping on them and singing. It was wonderful. We cried with happiness, and that was our liberation. I could hardly walk.

Some of the boys went to a garrison warehouse of food and took chocolate and meat. Monietz brought back chocolate, cheese etc and everybody started eating. People started getting dysentery from it and the Russians brought rice pudding in big metal containers. I ate that. One or two friends were eating anything and their stomachs were not used to it and they got dysentery and some died. Then typhoid started. From my room all the five boys but me were taken to a Russian hospital with typhoid. My friend Monietz had typhoid and I was lying on the floor on a mattress and getting

food for him and helping to keep him alive. I had a bit of diarrhoea but I kept to rice pudding. This was downstairs in the yard and I used to take a pan of it and eat it.

The day after one or two of my friends went to Leitmeritz in Sudetenland with me. The Russians were everywhere and this was wonderful. Nothing can describe the joy and happiness. I hoped my parents and brother and sister survived.

In Leitmeritz we saw the German army marching to the P.O.W. camp. All their weapons were taken away. We noticed three SS men and we went up to them and we stopped them and told them to take off their rucksacks. One said they had been good. They were French; one was a captain and another was an officer. We took everything off them and told them what we thought of them. I hated every German, especially the SS, because they were the biggest barbarians, there was no compassion. An animal kills for food - they just killed for lust. One who was a bit obstreperous soon handed over when we said we would tell the Russians. They marched off dejected. It was marvellous to see. From the mighty army to rubble walking back. We stopped by the road and picked the food out of the rucksack. A boy of 15-15 and a half, wearing a Hitler youth uniform passed. He had a Hitler youth knife. I held my hand out and he handed it to me. He was a similar age to me. He just walked away. That gave me a marvellous feeling. We walked back to our building and I felt good seeing the Germans defeated. I kept that knife with me and brought it with me to England. I have lost it over the years. That was a very poignant time.

The children were kept in separate buildings. We were free. There were about 300. They were brought from other camps. Prisoners were brought from all over there because they had gas chambers and they were going to kill us at the last moment. But the commandant contacted the Swiss Red Cross to save his own skin and they moved in and so we were saved.

After several weeks we were taken to a British doctor from the embassy. Some Jewish Czech leaders looked after us. They had also been liberated. We went through a medical. Some didn't pass because they had TB or something. We stayed there till August. We were liberated on the 8th May 1945. We walked around during the day, going to the towns, to Prague. We got on the trains free.

German soldiers and SS men came to clean out our place. The Russians brought them in to clean Theresienstadt. In August, about the 6th, we were taken to Prague. We were there for a few days and on the 14th August 1945 we went to Prague airport and were put onto Lancaster bombers. There were 30 boys on each bomber. We were flown to Holland. The pilots gave us long white bread which we thought was cake. We refuelled in Holland and arrived in Crosley on Eden in the afternoon. This was near Carlisle. It was a Polish airforce base. The Poles opened the doors and took us out. We marched to coaches. We were very happy. We were taken through the beautiful lake district to Windermere. They had a special camp there for us.

From Theresienstadt many started going to Palestine. None of the children went there, we had no say where we were going. We were sent to England.

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As a child I was very Zionist minded, as was my father. But here I had no choice. I had terrible nightmares even after liberation and when we came to England. It went on and on and was frightening. I could see everything happening again. It left me with bad nerves. It's impossible to come through such experiences untouched. I don't know if my age helped me survive or luck. I looked after myself saying I was older than I was and watching out not to go to wrong places. Even after liberation you couldn't believe you were free. Some hid bread under their mattresses. I did because I didn't know if I'd have food tomorrow. It took a long time to become stable. With some it took years. Even in England some were still hiding food. I hid food for between nine months and a year. I always had something under the mattress so I was sure there would be something for tomorrow. You were sure of nothing. You couldn't trust anybody. We were very wild. We hadn't seen a book or teacher for five years - five important years. We had to look after ourselves. There was no parental control or discipline. It was a matter of survival, even after the war. All the time you weren't sure of anything, e.g. whether you'd have food tomorrow.

In Theresienstadt as children we didn't know how to trace our families. Only in England we tried to find out. We wrote to Jewish committees in Germany - the Displaced Persons camps. I wrote to Ulm on the Danube to a Jewish committee. It happened that my brother-in-law was wrapping something up with the Jewish committee paper and he saw my name. He told my sister and she couldn't believe it. She had gone back to my town and nobody had survived from any family. From there she went to Germany, to a D.P. camp. This was Mania, my oldest sister. She got over the border to Russia and was sent to Siberia and Tashkent. After the war she went back to our town and then to Germany.

On being shown my name she sent me a letter through the Red Cross to Manchester. She said she had a brother of that name but he was too young to survive. I wrote back so happy. She was the only one who survived of our large family. Everyone was killed. The letter came in 1947. Mania later went to America to Michigan, Detroit, in 1950. I went to see her from here.

In Theresienstadt on certain days there was some activities. But it was only in England we started learning. There was very little activities in Theresienstadt. We saw people going on trains to Palestine. Life slowly became easier. Many died after the war because they couldn't take the food.

One day I went to Leitmeritz with friends. We walked in the square and went past a pharmacy. There in the window were the photos of our transport. The man inside was an officer with the partisans. He promised to make us a set each because we'd been on that transport. How anyone survived that transport I will never know. Many times I thought that was it. Whenever we were nearly liberated we were taken away. It was five years of the most terrible life. I can never forget or forgive the older Germans. The young ones weren't there. I have never seen such savages and barbarians. No compassion, no humanity, no decency. It wasn't the fault of the younger ones, I haven't anything against them, but their parents and grandparents... You cannot forgive animals like that.

I went to Germany to visit my sister. I felt a terrible unease there, wondering what people had done during the war. It left me with a terrible feeling towards the Germans. I have always been a compassionate person, but what I have seen in those five years, there is no words for those people. A nation of culture, music, education who could become followers of such a madman and do such atrocities. Many say they didn't know, but we marched through cities, Weimar etc.. in striped suits as skeletons. German civilians came into the camps to work. A lot knew and went along with it. I don't buy German goods.

I am a bit apprehensive about German reunification. Who can tell if another Hitler will arise? They are in Nato and together with the West, so let's hope things turn out right. I'm apprehensive.

The only crime I've ever committed was that I'm born of Jewish parents. I was a child, went to school. I was a happy child and that's what happens. It left me with a feeling of compassion for my fellow man. I can't see injustice done. Seeing children from Ethiopia suffering malnutrition - I know what it's all about. At least they are free. I was under a gun in a concentration camp with the daily dread of being gassed or beaten.

After being several months in Windermere I was taken to Liverpool with 15 boys, to a hostel under the auspices of a religious organisation called Bachad or Bnei Akivah. We were taught a lot about the religion and to be religious and I went back to being quite orthodox, which I was very glad. It brought me back to being a normal human being.

We started learning English. When we arrived in Windermere we were given some combinations to put on. The Canadian Red Cross had given us suits and other people, and some were too small or too big. Some were without suits. We walked around with combinations and nothing else. It was summer time and we walked around the camp like that. We couldn't speak English. Some girls came to the perimeter with bikes and after several days we borrowed the bikes and started riding onto the road in our combinations. I was riding on the right between Windermere and Ambleside. Luckily there wasn't much traffic. One or two cars hooted but I didn't know why. Eventually I realised and took my bike to the other side.

As days went by we started learning English. There were ammunition workers living in that camp. It had a big hall and restaurant. We got milk and white bread. It was fantastic. I was quite small because I didn't grow during the war. As time went on I started growing. You could feel yourself growing. We went to Bowness, went swimming and recuperated. We had talks and teachers came and taught about kibbutzin etc. We were there about six months. There were 30 girls and 300 boys. Eventually we got suits. Mine had golf trousers with socks to the knees. We went to the cinema. The first film I saw was called Maytime with Janette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. It cost 3d and it was wonderful to see a film. We were given a little spending money.

We started talking to the girls at the perimeter fence and riding their bikes, it was wonderful. We walked to Ambleside. We felt better. We went on tours on a coach.

I used to jump on all coaches. We were in a block of about 70 children. Each had a little bedroom. They were like prefabricated houses. One day I saw a coach and I jumped on. They took us to Kendal and I found myself in the dentist chair with two teeth taken out. I didn't volunteer much after that.

We had a wonderful time, walking etc. We had wonderful teachers who taught us different things. They were very good to us. We started to live. This was our home and our life. One of our teachers had a gallstone operation. She came with us from Theresienstadt and she died during the operation. She was about 39, and we all came to the funeral in Manchester. We arrived in Manchester and it was very dark and foggy. You couldn't see a thing. I never thought I'd come to Manchester one day.

From Windermere nine were taken to Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester.....

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In Winderemere we were told where to go. 15-20 went to Liverpool. That was an orthodox hostel. We were taught English and maths and religious studies. It was Zionist and we were taught about Palestine. It was on Princess Road, opposite the synagogue. On Saturday Rabbi Unterman gave us lectures. He became Chief Rabbi of Israel. I asked him, if there is a God, how could he allow children and Rabbis to be taken to the camps? How could he allow this to happen? He couldn't give an answer. He said nobody could give an answer. What did I do at the age of 10/11 to go through such hell for five years?

We were happy in Liverpool. We went to concerts. Philanthropists bought us all the same hats, suits etc. We went to Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and everyone looked at us wearing the same clothes. It was The New World Symphony by Dvorjak - it was lovely.

English people were very nice, but difficult to mix because we couldn't speak the language. We learnt gradually. After several months we were brought to Manchester to the hostel at 47 Singleton Road. This was also Bachad. There were 20 boys here in Manchester and they decided to amalgamate the two hostels and close the Liverpool one. We met some of our friends here. Walter Hirshberg and his wife were in charge of the Liverpool hostel. They went to Palestine to Kibbutz Lavi.

The hostel in Manchester was the same organisation, so we had the same religious education and English and maths etc. After about six or seven months we were sent to learn a trade. The majority of boys were happy it was a religious hostel because it brought us back to a Jewish way of life, learning the Torah, which was a wonderful thing. We learnt values of life. We still had nightmares. They carried on.

After about a year we learnt a trade. You could be an electrician, mechanic - anything mechanical. I started as an electrician with a private man in George Street. He was demobbed from the 8th Army in Alamein. His name was Monty Brookner. If he didn't get paid, he didn't pay me.

After several months I left because I needed regular payments to pay the hostel. I went to train as an auto electrician in Chester Road. The boss was Swiss. Jacob Bulka and myself worked there. He was a good friend of mine. The firm was Portland Ignition. We worked there a few months repairing dynamos, starters and rewiring cars. It was approaching 1948 and things were going bad in Palestine. There was talk of partition. Then Israel was proclaimed and the Arabs attacked. Jack volunteered and went to fight. This was a great loss to me.

We were living then in digs, in Shirley Road, Manchester. We shared two rooms. We were like lodgers. We were earning 30/- a week and we paid our landlord #1. I used to go to the library to learn to read because we didn't have much spending money. With 10/- we had to buy our clothes etc. We were happy there until Jack volunteered.

In 1948, after the British left, I did go to Palestine myself also. I went to Marseille. Things were very quiet in my firm at that time and with Jack going I decided to go. I sailed from Marseille. I can't describe seeing Haifa from the distance. Seeing the Holy Land was my hope and aspiration. On the boat I met people from Morocco, Algiers, France, America, Switzerland etc.

I cried when we arrived in Haifa. The British had left by then and there was fighting going on. I was taken to the army. All youngsters were taken on a lorry to an army camp. We went through a medical and were in the army. I spoke Yiddish and a few words of Hebrew. Also German, Polish and some English. I had picked up a bit of English. I got by because there were a mixture of languages in use. I was sent with Canadian, American and British boys.

We got some training in Central Israel, not far from Netanya. Then I was sent to Jerusalem. I arrived towards evening. You can imagine my feeling. All my life I prayed that one day I'd be in Jerusalem and there we were. It was a wonderful feeling - indescribable. God had let me live to see Israel. I was taken to a unit and trained. After a while we went on manouvres in the mountains. I learnt to shoot and became a soldier. I was in Jerusalem for six months. We were in Baka Katamon. It used to be the British barracks. Walking to Mount Zion. The Old City was in Jordanian hands and we were sent onto Mount Zion. We had to be there about a week, near Abutor, a village down the valley. They sent us to different places. We did what we had to do.

It was a wonderful feeling to be a Jewish/Israeli soldier, fighting back, not walking with head down, starved, humiliated, feeling worse than a dog. It taught you to walk with your head high. I remember in Auschwitz when an SS man called me to the electric wires and asked me if I wanted to eat. He gave me his metal container and then took it back and threw it to his dog to eat. These are inhuman things which you never forget. Here I felt proud to be a Jewish soldier, to be free and fight back as every other nation. That made me very proud.

We were sent to different places where we were needed. Eventually I was transferred to a different camp. Jacob was in an armoured division near Haifa. We used to meet when he got leave in Haifa. There was a college, the Technion on Mount Carmel. It was an army leave place. I would meet him there. One time we met we went to a cinema in the evening to see a film with Debbie Reynolds. We came home and there were 50-100 soldiers staying the night on 'put-you-up' beds. There were all nationalities. We went to bed and left my uniform etc on the chair next to my bed. Next morning everything had been stolen. I was left with my underpants. I had to go to the police. They gave me trousers. I went back to my army unit but I had no army pass book or pay book. They took everything - all my money. Eventually they found my paying in book near Rehovot, but I got another one.

After a while I was demobbed. My sister was still in Germany and she wanted me to go with her to America.

I was involved in tough fighting. The Arabs had everything, we had very little. There were many casualties, but I got through. Jack found his uncle on a Moshav outside Haifa - on Sde Yaacov. We met there on leave and stayed with his uncle.

Eventually Jack returned to England. He couldn't find a job in Israel. People were living in tents, so he returned to England.

My sister wanted me to go with her to America. I went to Germany. It was very difficult. I didn't have a passport. My laissez passer was no good. That was stolen as well. I had no papers, so the Israeli government gave me a piece of paper with a photograph and a stamp. It was difficult to get a visa on it for Germany. I had to go through Italy, Belgium and then Germany, or Switzerland Belgium and then Germany. Eventually I got a visa to Switzerland, Italy and Belgium. Being volunteers the Israeli government helped us out and paid our fare. I had a lovely time in Israel. It was difficult to get jobs there. I couldn't get anything. I was a wine waiter in the evening in a restaurant in Tel Aviv. The government gave you something to keep you going.

Eventually I got on a Greek boat at Haifa and went to Cyprus, Greece - where I couldn't get off because I didn't have a Greek visa. I met an Australian girl who had been on a kibbutz for a year. She was travelling round the world. She was called Miriam White. She was going to Italy also. We had a wonderful time on the boat, sitting in the moonlight on the Mediterranean. From Greece we went to Naples, then Genoa. There were Greek dancers on the boat. It took six days to get to Genoa, then we went to Milan. I stayed about two weeks in Milan. I met Jewish survivors there. My sister sent me money for the journey and I had some money from Israel. In Milan I parted from Miriam - she went to England. From Milan I went to Zurich. There I was hoping for a visa for Germany, but they wouldn't give me one. I was staying in an hotel and running out of money. My brother-in-law was a jeweller in Germany. They met in Poland before they went away. They got married.

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In Konin my sister Devorah contracted whooping cough and after several weeks they rushed her to hospital, but she died. We were very close and it was difficult for me. I was about five and she was about 3. We were the two youngest. It has always been in my memory since childhood. If she had survived the Germans would have done the job just the same. I remember the funeral. I went to the cemetery. I was very upset. I remember every detail. It is difficult to say much. This was an early bad memory. I remember earlier times but this stood out in my mind.

I visited the power station there with some of my friends. We liked to play and we decided to lift up a heavy metal grate - three of us, and the man noticed and shouted. They let go and left me with it. The grate fell back onto my finger and nearly took it off. I've still got a mark from it. We always looked for new things to do. We used also to go to the park and climb trees for conkers. The park keeper would chase us. This was part of childhood. We made our own entertainment. With my hurt finger I had to go to the doctor and eventually it grew back all right. It nearly took the whole of my thumb off.

One of the characters in Konin was the oil seller. He used to grind oil from sunflower seeds. He had a press and a horse which was blindfolded and it would walk round keeping the machine going. He used to stand outside his place of work. He had a beard and he waited for us. Every time we passed he used to tell us to pull his finger and he would let off wind. That was his game with the children. He was a character.

The winters were severe and snows heavy. I had a sleigh. The peasants brought produce for the markets every week and we used to wait and as they passed on their horse drawn sleighs with bells ringing, we used to hook a long rope from our sleigh onto theirs and be pulled along until noticed. Then he would hit out with his whip. We enjoyed it, although many times we got a good whipping, but wearing heavy fur coats it didn't bother us much. We did it often.

In Sieradz we would march behind the soldiers because it was a garrison town. Many times we followed the soldiers marching. We would follow them onto the plains because they used to go for manoeuvres. When they started these they used to tell us to go back. We used to take a broom or stick and march behind the soldiers. It was great fun. One of the days when we returned from following the soldiers there was a river at the bottom of our street and we saw a kayak and we got hold of it and went out. It turned over and luckily a Jewish fellow, who made leather from hides, saved us. We were fearless. Father wasn't happy. I went to a football match once, followed people into the river thinking I could swim, and went down quickly. I was taken home and told never to go swimming again without my brother or somebody with me. I had no fear about anything.

Zlata, my dog, was caught once by the town dog catcher. My father dashed down, paid something and brought him back. He was a great dog and I was heartbroken. He ate my food when I couldn't eat. I enjoyed my childhood. I had a lot of friends. It was normal to have a dog. Our town was open. Plenty of spaces for walks. He was a great friend. Zlata's death was another horrible episode in my life. I was seven or eight.

We used to go outside the prison and climb on trees and shake the nuts down. One watched while the other shook the tree. It was bravado. We played with the nuts. We took the skins off. We shoved the nuts in a hole in the ground - that was a game. These were walnuts.

There was a lot of fruit around. There were many orchards. There were apples, pears, plums, strawberry fields. We picked strawberries under the wire on the way to school, for bravado.

In Auschwitz, the winter of 1944/45, we caught water rats for the Germans. They were being beaten and wherever they could get fur they took it. We caught them in traps and then we brought them into the fishery and skinned them. The Germans were only interested in the skins and people would eat up the meat - whoever got a chance. They were quite large. I didn't eat any because sometimes I worked repairing the high fishing boots, gluing on rubber patches, and at lunchtime before the cauldrons were taken back, I used to slip in and take what was left. You only got one portion for lunch and the rest was taken back. Before they did this I took a bit extra. The food was near to the room in which I repaired the boots and there was no one around. This happened on an odd occasion. They would rather throw food away than

give it to someone. I was the only one told to repair boots. They gave me emery paper, glue and patches. While I did this I didn't have to go into the water. I did this one day in a fortnight. We didn't catch water rats often. Mostly the boys were separating and sorting fish from the Vistula into lakes which were prepared. Each pool had a different fish. Some had carp, some lescht, some pike. They were kept sorted and were eventually transported to Germany.

That winter the frostbite was shocking on my hands and toes. The winter was very severe. I started getting wounds on the fingers. My fingers went twice as large, red and itchy. There was no medication. Somebody told me to put on liquid paraffin. It helped a bit. But it was very painful.

The kapo who we stole fish for was Alfred. Arthur was the one in Buchenwald. Alfred was the kapo in the fishery. He was a shocking fellow, full of tattoos, a murderer from Germany. He was ruthless and violent.

I used to get a nightmare of being chased by black cats to heaven. I got this before and during Auschwitz. I would see high ranking SS men. It was very frightening. This started in and even before Lodz. The same dream would come back. I was chased down a very narrow street and there was no escape. Everything was closed and you were chased and chased. Then you go up a ladder into the sky. It was frightening. It must have been in my subconscious mind. I used to wake up in a terrible sweat, scared and shouting for my parents. I didn't get this nightmare after the war, but other ones - from the camps, seeing the hangings. Waking up in a sweat. It took many years for them to subdue.

I still get them now. Happened last week. I was taken to Auschwitz and selected to the gas chambers and marched off. I was nearly at the gas chambers. I noticed a wire fence and I tried to escape and dig under the fence. I got so far, terrifying. I could see the SS. Eventually I woke up. So it does come back. Before that I had one three months ago. Just after the war they were very frequent, very. Now it happens - it just comes. I don't know why. I see everything vividly as it happened, it's very frightening. Last weeks was a new one. I get different ones. Sometimes watching people being hanged or shot, or beaten, and I am next in line. I am scared and scream.

Fl664 Side B

You try to be as normal as you can. It must leave you with a nervous disposition. You can't go through atrocities and come out normal. If I see a cat being run over or blood, I can't watch. After all I've seen, today I've gone the opposite way, I can't look at it. I feel very weak - I can't bear anyone being harmed. Shattered nerves make you a different person. Physically it takes a toll, and mentally. I suffered from a nervous stomach a lot. I was X-rayed many times for an ulcer, but it was from nerves. Now I have high blood pressure.

From Switzerland I was running out of money. The Jewish committee gaveme some money and they didn't want repaying. I flew to Belgium and met a friend from the

Israeli army. I stayed with him. He was called Tennenbaum. He was a native of Brussels. Then I stayed in a small bed and breakfast place. I knew I would get easier into Germany from there. He knew someone who could get me across to Germany. He introduced me to an elderly man who would frequent Aachen or Aix la Chapelle. From there it wasn't far to Cologne. He gave me a date and I gave him more or less everything. He met me in Brussels and we went by train to the border. I had been about two weeks in Belgium. I went to the Jewish club in Brussels and my friend took me to Antwerp. It was quite a nice time. I tried to get a visa but to no avail. There were a number of Jews in Brussels and some young people. Most were Belgian and a few survivors.

I met the man and went with him towards the border. We went to a small town and walked through some fields. He asked for my watch and everything I had on me. I hadn't anything except the fare to Munich. He took the watch, which was a present from my sister. It was an Aroma watch. He told me to go towards a house. I would see a guard but should just walk. I walked very fearful. I didn't know what he was up to. I walked on. There was a small house. I saw German soldiers with guns. I walked on a little path in the village until I came to a tram. I got on after asking in German the direction for Aachen. From Aachen I took a train to Cologne. I had sufficient for the fare and I bought a ticket in Cologne for Munich. My sister lived near a D.P. camp called?

I was delighted to see her. We hoped to go to America. My sister had been waiting for a long time. She had a daughter called Bluma, who was about three. She had married just after the Germans came in. She escaped with her husband and my auntie across the border. Auntie Hela and Uncle Benjamin also. They escaped to Russia. They were first taken to Siberia. Before that they went to Moscow. Then Siberia. After being there so long they were sent to Tashkent. They worked hard. It was very difficult but at least they weren't under the gun. My aunt and uncle went somewhere else and my uncle was taken into the Russian army. He fought near Moscow and survived.

My sister went from Tashkent to Poland after the war. No one was in Sieradz so she came to Germany awaiting visas for U.S.A. Her daughter was born in Ulm in 1947. That was also a D.P. camp. I stayed with my sister for a while and I applied to go to Ort school. One part was German and one part Ort. I studied for engineering. After my sister left I decided to leave as well. I was very unhappy in Germany and very apprehensive all the time. So I came back to England.

I didn't go to America because the Korean war was going on and if I had gone to America I might have been called to the army and sent to Korea. I went through enough without this. So my sister went in 1950, 1951. She went to Detroit, Michigan. In America she had another child - Debbie. Bluma was called Barbara.

I stayed in Germany for a while and then came back to Britain. I had difficulty getting a job. I could go into a coalmine or a textile mill. I came back to Manchester. I had a friend from before and she got me back to England. They wouldn't allow me to work in any job because I left the country with a lettre passe and it ran out. Now I was a newcomer again. I had a very difficult time.

So I worked in textiles in a mill in Darwen, Lancs. I got this through the Duveks in Manchester. They were a French/Egyptian family. I worked there for a year doing everything - weaving, learning everything. I travelled back to Manchester each day and earned little. I got up 5.30 a.m. to catch the train. Eventually I stayed there during the week and came back for weekends. I lived in Lasky House. It was very hard because I earned very little. I struggled through. I tried to get another job in Manchester, but still wasn't allowed, so I had to go to another mill in Chorley for six months, owned by the same firm. I had had enough in Darwen. I got on very well with the other workers. I am quite easy going with people. I was the only foreigner amongst 200. Only once was one person shirty and called me a foreigner. Otherwise I had no problems.

Then I went to live in a pub which had four bedrooms. We started 7.30 a.m. You could hear clogs and people being woken up by a stick knocking on the window. The clogs clattered on the cobbles. People were very insulated. Next door to me they were knocked up with a stick. It was an experience. I got to know the pub family quite well. After six months I reapplied for a job and went to Syd Abrams in Manchester, Waterloo Road. That opened a new chapter. I was happy to be in Manchester with my friends.

I lived in Lasky House with Jack Eisenberg, Myer Bomszyk etc., Herbert Elliot. There were about eight or nine of us. It was a club. There were dances etc. We lived upstairs and people came to us. I played football for Springfield club and we went swimming and tried to live a normal life.

I worked five days a week. At weekends there was a lot going on in the club. From there I went to live with four boys in a semi detached in Heywood Street. We shared our expenses. I shared with Sam Laskier, Mike Flasz and a Hungarian boy, Alex, who went to America. They wanted Lasky House for other things. We rented the three bedroom semi. It was Jack Bulka who shared with us, not Alex. He had also returned from Israel.

In the evening we went to the Ritz, or to Springfield. We courted girls. Life was all right. The synagogue was across the road. We could see all the weddings. We belonged to the Central.

Work at Syd Abrams was all right. They were very good. But it wasn't really what I wanted. The pay wasn't so good. It was a dirty job. We were told to do mechanical jobs when we came to Manchester. I always regretted not going into higher education.

I met a girl who I grew fond of.

Fl665 Side A

I met her in the Ritz. After about a year we got married. One of my house mates, Michael Flasz, got married; then Sam Laskier; and there was Jack Bulka and myself left for one year. Eventually I married. She was from Manchester, in Cedar Street.

Her father was semi-retired. He suffered from asthma. We bought a grocery shop and lived above it. I thought for my wife she could be at home and work and I would go out to work.

I was working for a company in Manchester city centre in textiles. It was a better job. Eventually I was in management and we were bought out by Tootals. I worked for Dickinson in Whitworth Street. They were making typewriter ribbons. The materials went to London to be dyed and made into ribbons. I was in charge of four or five people. I was with them for a few years. Then they were bought out by Tootals. I was transferred to Jarford and worked there two to three years in charge of the place. Then I left.

We had the grocery and greengrocery shop. I had to get up early to bring the greengrocery home. The shop was in Cedar Street. We had had no experience of this. My wife had been a secretary. I used to go to the market early morning, bring the stuff home, get changed, eat breakfast, then off to the office. It was hard going.

Then we had a house built on the Park Lane Estate, Whitefield. The shop was still going. We helped my in-laws because they ate from the shop also. They helped in the shop sometimes. Susan Beverly was born. Susan was Shoshana, after my father Shmuel. My second daughter, Karen, was born. She was after Itke, my sister. My youngest one, Michelle, was named after my brother Tovia. Her name was Torah.

We married in 1959 in the Central Shul. My best man was Alan Saunders and Shirley. My sister couldn't come. We had about 183 people. The ceremony was in Cheetham Assembly Rooms. It was a nice wedding, a dinner catered by Mrs Fruhman.

The house in Whitefield was three bedroomed. The eldest was born in Cedar Street, and Karen in Whitefield. My wife was very beautiful - that's what attracted me, rather than character. All my friends were getting married, so I got married. But it didn't work out. She was the wrong person for me. She was very highly strung and it was a disaster. We couldn't talk. We split up in 1967 approx. It was on my doctor's instructions to finish. I lost a lot of weight. I tried to hold on but it didn't work. That was a disaster. That was the last thing I needed.

She got a house opposite Waterloo Road and I sold the house. I saw to the children - made sure I was around and took them on holidays. They lived with their mother, but I was around all the time. Whilst in Whitefield they went to Cassel-Fox, then King David, and Stand Grammar. The eldest went to university to become a teacher. She teaches in Gibraltar, in charge of the science department. The middle one went to college to do languages, but didn't like it. Then she went into banking, then nursing. She trained in Manchester Royal Hospital. Michelle is a pharmacist.

Two are married - Karen and Michelle. Karen lives in Italy, Michelle in Leeds. Karen has two boys. Karen's mother lives in Italy. She met and married an Italian. I see my daughter in Gibraltar when I visit Spain. She answered an ad in the paper and got a job there. She lives in Spain and teaches in Gibraltar. I made sure they got a good education. What I lost I made sure they had. I was very determined they should have a good profession. Their mother wasn't, but I was.

I remarried. I went to a singles dance in Leeds. A friend took me and I met her there. She is from Leeds. She had her own business. She is also a divorcee. She's a good, kind, hard working person, the kind I should have married in the first place. I made the mistake by wanting to put down roots. I didn't go deep into things. Usually I'm very cautious, but... Now I'm very happy. I remarried in 1983. I was single for a number of years.

I lived in Whitefield, then Bury, in a modern flat. I wasn't lonely. I had a lot of friends and an excellent social life. I belonged to singles groups, went on outings, to dances etc. I really enjoyed it. I married Jean, a very understanding person. We work together.

After I divorced the shop was burnt down. It wasn't worth rebuilding, so we got rid of it. My in-laws were getting too old. This was when I was in Whitefield. The police didn't know - kids pushed paper inside and it caught fire.

I continued with my firm and eventually I went to work in jewellery, selling wholesale jewellery. I wanted a change. I did that for quite a few years. I worked with a firm from Birmingham, until I had a robbery from the car on Bury New Road, Manchester. I went into a shop and when I came out they had stolen the boxes from the boot. I wasn't insured - that was a disaster. Everything went. You are on your knees and where do you go? I had to start again.

I went into letting apartments. I met Jean and I looked to see what was needed in the paper in the city centre. There weren't a lot of accommodation agencies, only one or two. While I had the shop I bought one or two houses in Bignor Street. I let them as flats. I always wanted to get on. It was very important to me. So I was looking around for something after I met Jean. It was hard going because I lost everything and it was hard to start all over again. In the jewellery business you are a marked person. They must have followed me for a time. If I had seen I might have gone for them, so it was good I didn't see it.

So I opened an accommodation business in Leeds. People came to me if they wanted flats. I didn't know Leeds. I put a map on the office wall and I went around advertising that I would let their accommodation. Slowly I got business. I thought it was something different. I let flats for people and then I started buying property and letting it for myself, plus others as well. Slowly I built up a good business and I bought more student houses, and here I am. That's what I do now. I stopped the accommodation business because it got too much for me and I mostly look after my own property. My wife helps me with this. We worked hard, starting from scratch. I used to decorate and lay carpets myself until we could afford to pay people. It was hard going, 12-14 hours a day. I was determined. People said I'd never do it, but I showed them.

Today I'm all right, I've got a nice home, I'm happy. It's very difficult when you haven't got any parents, any relatives, anyone to ask for advice. I am not one for asking people's advice. I like to do it myself without anybody's help and that is difficult. Jean was all the way with me. She helped decorate even.

It was difficult for me in Leeds because I was a stranger, not knowing anyone. Now I've got my own friends. I'm a good mixer and that helped. I knew Manchester and a lot of people there. I was on the J & A and made a lot of friends. With Leeds I had to start again, new. It was a hard climb, but with determination... I was on my knees. When you go to a bank for help they want to know who you are, your accounts etc. So we started from scratch and it worked.

I didn't join organisations in Leeds. I didn't have much time. I go if something is on at the synagogue and so on, but working 12-14 hours every day, except Saturday, it's not easy. You come home tired. I joined Street Lane Synagogue.

F1665 Side B

I wanted to go back to Poland on two occasions and I cancelled at the last minute. I did not think I could go back on my own. I didn't have the nerve. Eventually I asked my wife Jean to go with me and then I went. I was very apprehensive what I would find there. I was very nervous but determined. I had to go to bury that ghost. We went to Warsaw in 1980 and from there we went on a tour to Auschwitz and Birkenau. We went on a coach from Warsaw to Cracow and from Cracow to Auschwitz. Auschwitz was my main place, which was my own thing. I was very apprehensive to go through that gate, but I did. I went to central camp where it says 'Arbeit macht frei'. I went to where I was. It was a shocking experience. Fearful, emotional. I went to have a look where the kitchen was, where they used to hang them on the post and to different barracks. Certain ones have got glasses and hair in. Even going into these buildings I was very nervous and felt bad about it, but I was determined to do it.

Then I went to certain blocks and it showed photos of Polish prisoners. Little was noticeable about Jews. Then I went to Birkenau, which was mostly the extermination place. There was a monument mentioning Jews also. I walked round where the crematoria were blown up and where I had been, the gypsy camp and the barracks I had stayed in. My mind went back. I wept. I felt very emotional. I lit a candle at the monument, said kaddish, Jewish prayer for the dead, walked round in solitude. There were a few Poles cutting grass and coaches came and German youth in central camp cleaning up stones. They were repentant. I spoke to them and told them I was a child in this camp. They found it difficult to comprehend it all and to believe their grandparents were involved in it. I went round Birkenau. I didn't go back to Budy because it was getting dark. I had no transport. There was a car there, a Danish family - husband, wife and son, and they gave us a lift to Cracow. I had a terrible traumatic feeling by going back. Things came back to me. I felt dreadful. I never thought I'd break down as I did.

From Cracow we went to Zakopana, a holiday place, to recuperate after my ordeal. Then we went back to Warsaw and took a train to Chelmno. I knew that's where I would have gone with my family for extermination. As you went through the forest there's a big monument. I was with Jean and we walked through. There were very long graves here. About 300,000 were massacred to these graves. They are as wide as a road and about a quarter of a mile long. It was a terrible feeling. There was nobody but us two and not a bird was singing. It was horrifying for me. I also broke down there as well, knowing most of my family lay in those graves. I stayed there about one and a half hours, said a prayer and went to Kolo. I was very near Konin, but we didn't have the time so went back to Warsaw. I hope one day to go back to Konin. I would love to take my children back to show them what it was all about. At least they might get a good insight what it was all about.

I spoke a little bit to my children when they were younger. They know all my family were killed and that I was in the camps, but when they were little it was difficult to get through. I've written my autobiography and they've each got a copy. I've written up to the age of fifteen and a half. I wrote it a couple of years ago. Susan used to ask questions before this. The other two were too young and didn't know much about it.

To them it was something that happened somewhere else. They didn't realise the enormity of the tragedy. They know now, how I got out and survived. A miracle to a point. They would like to come with me - maybe 1992.

My trip helped me. I had a hidden feeling to go back to see the place. I wanted to see what it was really like - the real thing. I am glad I went back. I went back to my town where I was born. One Jewish person was there. He came from a different town originally. There were no Jews out of a population of 5,000. The synagogue stood empty and the Jewish part of town is slowly being demolished. My house was demolished, but the house I was born in still stands. While in town I went to see the school, the square, and my worst fear was to go down the street where I lived - how I would feel. I went down at the last moment. It wasn't a good experience at all. It was traumatic and empty. Emptiness and nothing. The whole way of life was gone. It was empty. It got it out of my system a bit.

I didn't feel a lot for Poland. I saw much anti-semitism as a child. But I went back. I felt a stranger. To see the cities and towns with no Jews, nothing. Their whole life has gone. It was just emptiness all the time. I left the country feeling very empty. But I was glad I went back. I suppose once I take my children back, this time won't make me feel as bad anymore.

I recognised two people in Sieradz after 38 years. I stopped them in the street near where we lived. I told them their names and my name and they couldn't get over it. After 38 years it was as though I hadn't left. I recognised everything. The half built school is now built. The cloister where they took us for the selection. The open ground where we were counted every morning in the ghetto. All the places I remembered from being a child. They were very surprised I survived because the Jews hadn't survived and I was such a young boy then. They spoke to me and showed me different places - the synagogue which is an empty shell. The Beth Hamidrash and mikvah has been demolished. The cheder was standing, but empty. I took photographs. Something drew me back there all my life. I've seen it and got it out of my system.

I felt no animosity to the Poles while I was there. They spoke to me and were kind. They put their hands up when I tried to take photos because they were still under communist rule. I tried to film some of the houses but the people pulled back from their windows. The fear... The life was finished, there was no hustle and bustle at the market as when I was a child. I told some of the Poles who I was and they were very nice and told me to come back again.

I felt emptiness. It's like walking into a blank wall. There was no life, all that was lost. I went down to my school. It still stands, dilapidated. On the side of it is a holiday place for people to come near the river Warta for a holiday. I walked back to the train station and tried to take a photo, but the policeman stopped me because it was a garrison town. Then we took a train back to Warsaw.

I passed Lodz on the way to Chelmno, but didn't have time to stop. I would go there next time. I visited as much as I could. Cracow was a nice city, a university city, but dilapidated. In the whole of Poland the buildings were shabby and windows were

boarded up because there was no glass or paint. The country itself was very poor and run down. I am glad I went back. It was something very important to me.

My sister, when she came back from Russia, went through Poland to Germany. She didn't return again. She died in 1987/8. She had a stroke. She was President of Bnai Brith in Detroit. I went to my niece's wedding in America. She married a lawyer. My sister came to see me in England and I went to see her three or four times. I also had a cousin in Detroit - David. He also had a rough time during the war.

My uncle went from Poland to Israel and I went to see them there. They were elderly and eventually I got them a place in Bat Yam and they lived there till they died. I have been to Israel quite a few times. My daughter Michelle married there. That was the greatest joy of my life, going under the chuppa with my daughter Michelle. I was very happy. I went with my wife for a holiday and Michelle came out from university. She joined us for three weeks and met a boy in the army in Tel Aviv. They went out and she returned to see him and went on an utpan and within six months she could speak the language. She passed her pharmacist exams there also and she worked for Kupat Cholim and then to a private place in Bat Yam. They married. His parents came originally from Tunisia. They were a very large family - wonderful people. They live in Lod. Her husband came out of the army and couldn't get a job. He was in electronics. So they came to England. He has applied to go to university to do accountancy. They are in Leeds, so I am happy to have one near me. Life is all right.

I don't think I could cope with wars and problems like that. I haven't got the nerve for it. Moving to Israel would depend on the stability there.

Fl666 Side A

If there was peace there I wouldn't have minded. I haven't got the nerve I had when I was younger. It took a toll on the way I think. I've always had a feeling for social justice. I think I am socialist minded. I voted for Labour. I don't like to see wrongs done to anybody. I think most people should live normal lives. I hate seeing poverty. When I came to England things were tough and children walked around with no shoes and torn clothing. I've always had a social conscience. I always like to help my fellow man. I listened to and watched my father as a child, but I've not been active. I vote and that's it. I hate dictatorship of any kind. I watch films from Africa on TV of starving children and I have to look away. I can't look at it. Whether it's because I've been the same. It's made a terrible impact on me. If I see poverty in India, Africa, here or anywhere, I can't look at it and I don't like to see it happening to anybody. Whenever I see dictatorship it makes my blood boil, I detest it. I know what it means to be under a dictatorship.

I believe in God, that there is a God. He helped me a lot through my tribulation. I prayed at certain times and things happened to me. I'm not a very observant person, but I keep to my religion as much as I can and I abide by my religion. I eat kosher food in my home. I go to the synagogue on the high holidays and on an odd Saturday. I have to keep up the Jewish tradition.

Israel is important to the Jewish people. It is our insurance policy against the horrors of discrimination and persecution. It's only a pity its gates weren't open in 1939 and so many millions perished.

I belonged to J.A. in Manchester. I feel very much part of the Jewish people and I believe very much in the Jewish homeland - that the Jews should have their own country, like any other nation. I believe in justice ever since a small boy. I've always been a peaceful person. I only wish that my family and I live in peace and are well.

My autobiography I entitled 'A Detail of History' after what Le Penn wrote. This detail took away six million people. It's only a pity I never met a person like that to tell him my point of view. There are certain people that say it never happened. What happened to the three million Jews of Poland? To my parents and my family? Why was I left on my own as a child to go through Auschwitz, Buchenwald and all the worst camps? What did I do as a boy of 10 or 11? I never harmed anybody. The only crime I committed was that I was born Jewish.

We should leave something to show when we go so that it is never forgotten. If people can't show these things they will say it is just a forgery. We are the witnesses to what happened. So it's very important to take these things down while there is still a few of us.

I don't talk about my experiences much to anybody. Certain people I spoke to, they just listened. It didn't mean much. I was upset that the SS guards and mass murderers - many live in Britain - Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians. I was more fearful of them than the German SS. They were terrible savages and many have lived here for the last 40 years. That is no justice. I would like to see them being brought to justice. Let the world know what these savages did. It was all covered up over the years. They were not humans but savages.

I was very upset by the House of Lords rejection of the War Crimes Bill. These old Lords were around when these things happened. How can you forgive someone who murdered so many people who lived in peace? A mass murderer should never be forgiven even after 50 years. I was very upset to hear from a democratic country, from lawyers in the House of Lords - their rejection. They didn't suffer as us. They should have known better. I'm glad the House of Commons is ensuring that it is being pursued. I hope there is still time to get some of them because there are the people who say it never happened.

I could never forgive the older Germans. They were inhuman and they went along with it. It is not true they never knew about it. We marched through cities. They saw skeletons walking through cities, in Weimar and Leipzig, so there's no excuse. The young generation weren't born, so you can't blame them. This is my testament.

End of interview