

NATIONAL

Life stories

**LIVING MEMORY OF THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY**

SAMUEL WALSHAW

Interviewed by Rosalyn Livshin

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F2924 Side A

If you could tell me first, where you were born, and when.

I was born in a little place called, not far from Wachak. It was between Skarzysko Kamienna and a place called Wiezbnik, a little village. In it, maybe there were three or four hundred families. We lived, in that particular village, in a square. Most of the Yiddish people lived in that square. My father, God rest his soul, was a Shochet and a Dayan. There were three shops in that particular village, and one Rov - Rabbi. And my family, we were five boys and three girls. I was the youngest of the family.

When were you born? What year?

I was born approximately, I don't know the date exactly, except the date, January, 1928. And I remember the first day, I'll give you the story, I went to school, State school, Skola Powszeczna it was called. And my older sister, Esther, God rest her soul, she took me to school. The school was only about 10 minutes walk from where I lived, we lived. A small school. And we used to go to school from about 9 till about 1. After one o'clock, we came home, we had something to eat, and went to Cheder from about 2 till about 7, 8 o'clock in the evening. And that's how, that's how it was my life, till the War started, really. I come from a very religious family. I used to wear long payers with a gartel, I don't know whether you know what a gartel means, do you? A special little hat I had to wear. In fact, I shouldn't say it - I was glad when the War started - I had to chop off my payers, I hated them.

Why was that?

Because I went to that school what I just said to you, Skola Powszeczna which was a State school, and I was the only Yiddisher boy amongst the 33 in that particular school. And I used to have fights every day, because of my payers. I was a novelty to all the boys, with payers. And when I came home, and I showed my mother, God rest her soul, I showed her ... "They're pulling my payers out." And she was very proud of the fact that I was fighting them. For me, it was very unpleasant. We had lessons, after each lessons, we had a break, a pause, a break, and had 10 minutes, and during that break, like everybody, you know, all kids, we used to play, we used to slide on the cloister, it was like a paraklow, and all the boys used to attack me, because I couldn't run any further. At the end of the day, I had to surrender, whatever they wanted to do, 10, 15 boys. I used to fight every day, but you can't fight. One particular incidence I must tell you here. There was, there used to be a boy's name was Kaleczynski, we called him "the horse", because he wasn't clever enough to pass to the second class, so he stayed a few years in that particular class. When I was 11, he was only 13, 12, he was a big boy, Kaleczynski, and one day, he says to me, he showed me some treifus, wursh sausage, schinka it was called, he is going to smother my lips with it. And, of course, I used to fight it. And I came home, and I told my mother, and my father, God rest his soul, that Kaleczynski you know, tried to force me with a schinka, and I resisted. And they were very happy, they're bringing up a lovely, a lovely typical Yiddisher boy, a future, a future Yeshiva boy. Anyway, one day, I got fed up. I was cold. And I says to Kaleczynski, "Kaleczynski, come here, give it to

me - tabai, tabai", and I ate the lot, that was his dinner. And since that day, never, never did he, in fact, I used to tease him, "Have you got some more?" the following day. Anyway, but still, I have still a lot of trouble have, a lot of trouble, going to that school, really, every day I have trouble with that, because they used to fight me, many many things. Life at school for me wasn't very pleasant. Life at school in the, in the, in the, in the, life in the what you call wasn't very pleasant then, as a child. Nobody likes school, but - cheder. Cheder in Poland wasn't like here. Terrible. For every mistake I have made when I was 9, even, the Rabbi, the Rebbe, the Rebbe we used to call him, used to pull down my trousers, and used to smack my bottom with a belt, or whatever. If I made three mistakes, I got three. If I got four mistakes, four. So I'm shivering when it came Friday, you know, we have to pass, you know, he usually ask us, Chumash Rashi, certain questions, and if you made a half a dozen mistakes, half a dozen in one particular day, and you have got to go into the cheder, and the cheder was next to the synagogue, and my father, God rest his soul, arrived, and he said, "What are you doing here?" And I told him, "I'm scared to go in. I'm scared to go in. I've made about three, eight mistakes, three or four, a lot of mistakes. I know the Rabbi's going to hit me, and I'm scared." So he took me in, and he said something ... Rabbi, that particular day, no belts. Until the War started we were, life was, for us, for us, especially, as a family, the nicest part for us, I would say, was Friday, because my mother, God rest her soul, was very proud, naturally like a mother to see her five sons going to shul, all dressed up, and in the, in the, in the special, I forgot even the name of the coat, you know, the, the silky, silky ...

Kapota?

Kapota, with the hats, with the gartel, and everybody walked with the special shoes - Ginzobba, boots, little boots we had. And, of course, she looked forward when we take back from, from, from the prayers, from synagogue. That was the nicest part of Friday, that it took us, the dinner, about three or four hours. It wasn't like today, we have one meal, you know.

What did you used to eat, can you remember?

Pardon?

Can you remember the meal?

Not really, not really. You know, well, you see, my mother, God rest her soul, for Shabbath, she used to cook three days. It wasn't just going to open a tin. Once that she started and she finished up Friday night. She made a lot of meals, a lot of, a lot of dishes there. A very hard way of doing it, wasn't like here, put something up there, the switch, and you've got light, she had to make physical a light. She had to go to a well, getting water. When, most of the women, we used to work very very hard, when I look back at it now, they worked extremely hard. Whatever they wanted, even chopping the woods, men used to help a little bit, but used to have to chopping the wood, then making a fire, go for here, every little bit, nothing was prepared. Nothing. So you had to work, knowing to prepare for Friday night or Saturday, yes? Meals for the whole family, she had to work two days for three days. Life for my mother with great regrets, wasn't very pleasant. And I think the only part she liked

was, in her way, to see her children on Friday night, and she watched them, I remember, she watched them, they were going to shul and coming back. And there's sort of carried on like that till the War started.

Can I ask you a few things ...

Please do.

... about life, just, you know, before we get on to the War.

Yes. Yes, to the War, yes.

First of all you were telling me a little bit about school.

Yes.

And the trouble that you had in school.

Yes.

Now, what kind of reception did you get from the teachers at school? What were they like?

Her name was Pani Pajenczkowska. She was neutral. In fact, she was very nice to me, because I was a clean-looking boy. Because I was agile, clean-looking, I was good in sport, I was here, she gave me privileges, such as, she gave me her own bag to go and fetch her breakfast, you know, to her home. She was neutral. The Korognik, the Korognik, I'm solemn, but even when complained, they just left it. She knew I have got trouble, she told them, the boys, "Don't do that again", and "Don't do that again." But they did it, because they were 30 boys. And that's about all, you know, I mean.

Were there any of the boys that were friendly with you? Were any of the boys friendly, at all?

Any of the boys friendly? No. No. With great regrets, no. No. I can go a bit further than that. A Yiddisher boy was not allowed to have non-Jewish friends. So I couldn't have run a friendship, I couldn't bring anybody home, you know. I was friendly at school with two or three boys because I stood up against them, if they fought me, I could take a punch, and I could punch them back. So, but again, you know, one against 30, 35 I think it was, 33. So most of the boys, with great regrets, they were brought up, or conditioned to dislike a Jewish boy. Finished. They were brought up, because it was, I told you, in the State school, yes? In the State school, yes? Where I went. It was a cloister, a Catholic cloister, and on many occasions, I stayed behind for another religion, Catholic religion. And the religion was, I would say 50% of it, taught they should hate, dislike the Jews, the Jewish people, finish. And I was listening to that to myself. So you didn't expect even the boys he was friendly with me, he just was taught to dislike me, so when we went, we were let out

from school, he used to call me, "Zid, Zid, Parszywy Zid", you know, and so forth, you know? So he was conditioned. Finished.

Did you have to stay in, in that hour's lesson?

Sometimes I did, because what happened, most of the time, let's say if it was the lesson between 12 and 1, I went off. Let's say the lesson was between 11 and 12, yes? So I stayed. Yes? I could have alternative stayed outside if I wanted to. But I stayed inside, my seat, I sat down and listened, you know. Sometimes the priest, if he notice me sometimes, he ask me to go out. He did. He did. But the priest himself, when I saw him after school, many times I remember so, he said "Hallo" to me, I said, "Hallo", he was quite polite. Yes. There were three of them, I think. Three priests, Catholic priests.

Were there other Jewish boys in the school?

There were. Not in my class.

Not in your class.

There were, I remember, in that particular school, must have been about four, five hundred children. In my class, none. There were one or two, yes, Jewish boys, yes, there were, there were. But not in my class.

And what happened when it came to, you know, the Jewish festivals? Were you allowed to take time off?

Oh yes, yes, yes, yes.

There was no trouble about that?

No trouble. No. Oh, they knew about that. Yes, we didn't go. No.

And Friday, Friday afternoons ...

No, there was no, because I told you, here it's a different story, we only finish one o'clock.

Yes.

Yes. There it was different, kind of different, because the afternoon ... here we've got school from 9 till 4, there 9 till 1, or 9 till 12. Nine till one was when there was no religious prayers, religious teaching, yes.

Right. Also, I wanted to know a little bit more about, well, first of all about your father. I mean, had he been born in the same place, your father?

Yes. He has been ...

What was his name?

He has been born, as I told you earlier on, I lived between Wiezbnik and Skarzysko. His family came from Skarzysko, you see, his name was Shlomo, God rest his soul.

The same surname? Walshaw?

My name, yeh, Warszauer, but, of course, I've changed it. The original name was Warszauer.

Yes.

My father, God rest his soul, does not come from a very religious background. My mother does. My father, no. Well, there were, one sister she had, Hester, in this Skarzysko, that was not, according to our family, very nice. That's how it was classed. In Poland was classed what they looked for, "bizchus", the word "Yichus". The background did not fit in, that my father's sister should have a restaurant - not nice. It wasn't accepted, you know?

What did his father do? Did you know your grandparents, your father's parents?

No. I met them once. I met them once. Chaim Warszauer his name was, he lived in Radom, and he was, I believe, I believe, wholesale shoes, he was involved, though they had shops of shoes. I only met them once. I don't know how old I was. But that's what I believe. My father, I don't know, he made it, he wanted to be, well, well, a Shochet and ... what you call? But my sister's got a story, it's a long story, why, what. So, for my mother's side, it's a different kettle of fish. The whole, Gebernum, and they were very religious people on my mother's side.

Staying with your father for the moment, how many brothers and sisters did he have?

My father, God rest his soul, had one brother, if I remember. I never met him. He had one sister, Hinda, I remember her. And the other sister I don't remember, I've never met her. The, the sister who had the restaurant, I never met her in my life. Hinda, Hinda, I did, during the War, yes. He had one brother and two sisters.

But he didn't see much of his father?

You see, the communication, wasn't like here, get in the car and you travel. We lived, I told you, in that little village. To get to Skarzysko, there were trains, there were trains, but I don't know whether we could afford to go by train there and back, simple as that. The grown up boys, they'd go, if they had a, a bicycle. It wasn't very far. I would say, in a bike, at the time, maybe a half an hour, maybe 30 kilometres it was, you know, 30 kilometres. So I didn't go, no. I, before the War, I didn't. The only time I remember I went to Yeshiva and I looked forward for travelling, because I'd never been on a train, or, or a, or a droshke "on a droshke" means, "a horse with a cart." I was a naughty boy at school, and my father, God rest his soul, decided to send me to the yeshiva. And this was just before the War. And I says, "Okay, I'll go to yeshiva." Only because of one thing, because I want a ride, to have a ride on a

droshke. And before he send me to the, to the, my father always said yeshiva taught me a lesson, I was there only two weeks, and he sent me to yeshiva where my sister used to live, God rest her soul, my sister used to live in that ... she was married before the War, you see. My sister got married when I was five, you see, because I was the youngest. There's 15, 16 years difference between my, me and my older sister. So the day arrived, and I was delighted to go on that droshke, I don't know how I caught ... but I got there, it was at night, lovely. Never seen a bigger town than our village.

Where was this?

Szydlowecz, a place called Szydlowecz, that's where my sister lived. And I came into the yeshiva, it was terrible, with great regrets. Terrible. Terrible, terrible conditions. Twenty times worse than what I left. I left also bad conditions, but the yeshiva 20 times worse. Must have been over a hundred boys, my age, a bit older, and davening and praying from morning till night. And there was the, the, the, the, the rabbis, we called them the rabbis, you know, the teachers. We had to get up early morning. I'll tell you the date, the daily routine. Very early in the morning. Before we did anything, it, there was no toilet facilities, nothing. We were living, oh, while I'm talking to you, I've got the whole picture here, four up, in bunk beds, or five up, you know, terrible little mattresses made of straw, you know, little blanket! Merck, terrible! There was no heating, because the heating was from our bodies, you know. Everybody up, and whoever didn't go up got water in, in his eyes. Very early morning. And from right away we had to wash, whatever we did, clean ourselves up a bit. And we had to go into another room, and start davening. We davened the whole lot, and then we had to do Chumash Rashi, a bit of Gemorrah, and then eventually, after two hours, we had a bit of breakfast. And after breakfast, back again. Chumash Rashi and Gemorrah back again. It was all day, till dark. But I couldn't stand it. I just couldn't stand it, and I think I was there just under a fortnight, and I decided to run away. And I did. And you know, I've got a sister there. And I managed to get to her house. And when she saw me, she didn't know what to do for me, because I was dirty, neglected, ugh! She washed me and cleaned me and put me to bed. Anyway, eventually those two rabbis found out, you see, that the only place I could run was logic, for my sister, and they came to collect me. Then, of course, I wouldn't go. I begged my sister, "Please, please protect me. I don't wanna go back to that yeshiva. Never. I'll do anything, but not in that yeshiva." And, of course, my sister always, always told the story to certain people, I think I was about 10, maybe 9 or 10, that even at 9 or 10, I, I knew what I wanted. But the Rabbi says to me, "Listen, after all, you're Shlome Shochet's son, you're going to be a Yeshiva bochur, follow the oldest brother for me, your father is going to be disappointed that, that, that, that, that, that the youngest son, you know, who she is very proud of, is not going to be a Yeshiva bochur." So I said to him, "My father will be, has got to be, my father will have to be satisfied to have four Yeshiva Bochorim, not me, I'm not going." (LAUGHS) And with that, I stayed, and my sister kept me, and I went back to my, to home. And when I went back, of course, I was a different boy, because whatever my father said to me, I obeyed because I was scared he would send me back.

Do you remember any of the rabbis, or the rebbes at that yeshiva? Who ran the ...

Not really, no. Not really, no, no. No, I, no, I wouldn't say I remember, no, no. I remember, no, not from there, from the yeshiva, no. There were three of them, I remember, and then there was the Rosh Yeshivah the Rosh, the chief, the chief of the yeshiva. They were three young boys in the early 20s, I should imagine, you know.

Was it a big, a big yeshiva, was it about 100 boys?

Yes, over a hundred boys, yes. When I say "big", but they were cramped in, you see, a room like that, you see, and a room like that, most probably would be 50. (LAUGHS) You see, they were cramped in. There were a hundred boys, maybe more.

And had your brothers gone to the same place?

No, no, no. My brothers went to different yeshivas. One of my brothers, God rest his soul, Leibel, Leo. He went to the Vilna yeshiva, Kletz, he went Baronavitch yeshiva, he went to all these yeshivas. He had had to move when he was 18. He was a very clever boy. A very clever boy. In fact, I remember Leo, before the War, that he delivered a beautiful drosha, do you know what a "drosha" is? Now a synagogue on a Shabbath. And he was complimented by our Rov, after which he, they had a debate, my father, the Rov, and my brother, because there were a whole lot of questions he asked, I remember, you could call it today, a bit of a rebel. You could, because after the Vilna yeshiva, when he came back, he did not want to wear payers, and this was a disgrace. A disgrace. He did not want to wear long kapotas, he wanted to wear a jacket, a normal jacket. This was another disgrace. Then, of course, he wanted, started shaving, cutting off, this was a third disgrace. He became a bit of a rebel in a nice way. He explained, I remember it, to my father, why he does it, you know? And I remember, rightly, my father, God rest his soul, could not give him a complete satisfactory answer, because he was learned them so right. He knew all the, he knew the answers, he knew the quest ... he knew the answers, because they learnt Vilna yeshiva, you see. Maybe he was 18, 19, 18, 19, thereabouts he was. So he became a bit of a rebel.

What was the reason? You say you remember him talking about it to your father, why, why did he do this?

Why he became a rebel?

Yes.

Because he realised that whatever he does gets him nowhere, it doesn't give him a living. Sitting and learning gemorrah all the time, there is no end to it. He needs a living. He couldn't make a living out of it. The hours that he put in and instead, he probably will not only become a medicine, or dentist, or lawyer, he could have been a lawyer the hours which he put in to become a Yeshiva bochur. He says, "Where am I going from here? What have I achieved? What have I got?" And the usual procedure at that particular time was a boy like that, marries into a religious family, and they keep him. He didn't know that. He didn't want what they call "kest", yes? Two years kest, and then be kept by the in-laws, he want to support himself. So he

said, "I worked so hard, so many hours, and what have I got at the end of day? Nothing." Then my father, of course, so I think in the heart of heart my father agreed with him in a way. But he did not have a full permission, yes, you're quite right. I don't think that, he, I don't think he had that permission. So if I remember, before the War, he decided to leave our village and go to Warsaw, to Warsaw. And he worked in Warsaw, at a factory, making socks, if I remember, making socks and, oh, gloves, and gloves. Socks and gloves. Wool. We were not a rich family, we were a poor family. A Shochet in Poland did not make enough, there were many times we didn't have enough food in the house, nothing new about it, but we didn't have food. And I remember, Leibel, God rest his soul, he came sometimes for a visit from, from the factory, and he says, "Listen, you wouldn't be such a disgrace of that, to bring in one of those little machines, I could show you, and make gloves or socks." But people like us don't do this sort of thing. Or rather, starting at that time, it was the mentality probably, unfortunately. A very narrow, very narrow mentality. When I look at it back now, people, they believed in Yichus, yes? Certain people don't do certain things, and that's all there is to it, finished, you see.

So that was, was he your eldest brother?

No. No. He was not my eldest brother. Zysman was my eldest brother.

And what did he do?

Zysman went to yeshiva, but he went to yeshiva.

Which one did he go to?

He went to various yeshivas. He didn't go to Vilna, no, he was one that didn't go. But I remember him, he went to a few yeshivas. He was the joker in the family, I would say, was always happy and joking, you know, full with jokes. He used to start with people joking, he was that type of a boy, you know. No, he stayed at home. He stayed at home. He was there from, until the right come, the right, when he grows up a bit older, they'll find him a wife to suit him, and that's about all, you see. And then I had my other brother, Berek. Berek also didn't, he went to yeshiva, but he didn't wanna go. He didn't wanna go. He was older than me. He was ...

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F2924 Side B

... then not, he went to, he went to the yeshiva, but he hated it. Didn't like it. So he said he's going to take a job. Any job. Any job to make a living, to make a few, you know, a young boy, he wanted to buy a pair of shoes, he wanted to buy this. We couldn't afford to give him what he wanted. I mean, I used to go to school in the summer, with no shoes. Only in the winter they put them a pair of shoes. Not only me, there were the whole village. All the Polish boys were the same. Very poor. The whole, the whole system was poor. Eventually, we had some relatives not far from us, Starachowicie, relatives, who were in the jewellery business, repairing watches and jewellery. So he went there, against my father's wish. But then I think my father got used to the idea. He used to walk, every morning, it took about an hour to walk to Starachowicie, to learn how to become a jeweller. And he worked there, actually, till the War broke out. You know, I don't know how much he earned, but he used to work, used to work there. And then my younger brother, Moishele, he was the cleverest from the lot. I wasn't. But he was. And I remember the remark the Korognik from the school told my father, God rest his soul, that my, that "that boy shall one day, he'll end up ..." He was very clever, he was very clever. Very clever. And he was going to become an accountant, but he couldn't make it because the War broke out. But that was set for him to become an accountant. Yes. Which, in Poland, to become a professional man was something, not like here. I mean, to study, the Poles wouldn't let us study. I don't know whether you know, whether somebody has told you that? They wouldn't accept Jewish boys, only one from a hundred maybe, maybe. And you had separate seats at university I believe, you couldn't sit together. At university, a Jewish boy have to sit in the back somehow. But he was going to be an accountant. So if the War wouldn't broke out, I think our standard of living would have gone up, because the boys have grown up already, you know?

Your father didn't mind?

No, my father didn't mind, I think, I would say to you, my mother, God rest her soul, she was more, my father, God rest his soul was a logical man, a very logical man. He was a man, a humane human being, a very humane human being. I'll give you one example, I think I told ... my son. He was a Shochet, he could make a decision whether a cow should be treife or kosher. But a butcher there, a katzeff, wasn't like here. A katzeff there, remember, we had about eight or ten katzevim in our village, you know? What they used to do, used to save up X amount of money, go out to a farmer and buy a cow, and have it slaughtered. If the cow was treife the family would starve, because the cow would bring in less money. If it was kosher, they make a lovely part, a good shabbas. And in the procedure was, if I remember, I used to run about with my father, you know, to the, where they used to kill - the slaughterhouse. And he used to take out the lungs, and used to what they call, badchan it, examine it. And he used to blow in it, you see. And sometimes on the lungs, there was a "bakina" (ph) what they call, a little mark. If that mark could be taken off with his two nails, and if you put it in water, no air would come through, it is kosher, but if air comes through, it means it went right through, that was treife. If my father saw the katzeff, he realised the whole thing what's happening, if that family can't pay, all his family,

kosher, finished. Certain occasions, people used to come, it wasn't like here, with chickens, you know, for, for what do you call. And he looked at the family first.

What, they'd come to your father?

Yes. Well, the chicken is treife or kosher, you know? You know. And my father first realised, looked at the family. Can they afford another chicken? If they couldn't, he looked at the chickens kosher. He was that kind of man. My mother, God rest her soul, she would look different, and she did not want my brother to become a jeweller, jeweller. Jeweller, you know? She wanted him to come, she would go her, a Rabbi, you know, something like that. My father was, well, I dunno, I'd call it modern, more understanding. He had a balanced mind on things, as simple as that. And people used to come to him for advice, I remember, and he used to sit down and talk with them, and he advised them to his best ability, you see.

So tell me a little bit about your mother's family. You say that she came from a religious family. What was her father?

Her father was also the same thing, a Shochet. Reb Ya'acel.

And where was he from?

Radoszycie, a place called Radoszycie. And she had two brothers and one sister. One brother was also a Shochet in Telz, his name was Teitelbaum, one brother who run away, he was also a Shochet, but he run away and he carried himself, mind you, he had, his father gave him some money, and he became a doctor. His name Abba Teitelbaum, and he lived in Lodz. Her sister lived and worked at my grandfather, that's my mother's father. They lived there, they had a big house in Radoszycie. Her sister was married, she had three daughters and one son, Berel, and they lived together, and start off with gas, but then they were in textile. Her sister's husband was in textile, and there were, they were religious people, very religious. On my mother's side, they were all very religious. Even the doctor was very religious, very religious man. Intellectually, he became a very intellectual, and he became a doctor to Usher Cohen. Usher Cohen, I don't know, Usher Cohen in Poland was like here, the Burtons family, Marks and Spencers family. Usher Cohen was well-known in Poland, very well-known. They have their own hospitals, they have their own, Usher Cohen, there were a father, with five sons, they had. And they were very religious, Gerer Rebbe.

Was that your mother's family belonged to that?

No. My, my uncle belonged to them, the Gerer Rebbe. No. My, my grandfather, God rest his soul, as I said earlier on, he come from Radoszycie, and Radoszycie had it's own rabbi, well, a lot of followers, a lot of followers, even today, you know, you ask certain people, they remember the old, the Radoszycie Rebbe, yes. So my grandfather used to go, I remember, I went to see him once, you know, and you'd walk, you'd walk, and he had two sons, I don't know what happened to them, I don't know what happened to the rabbi neither, but he was very well-protected during the War, you know, the best they could. So my grandfather was a rabbi follower, because

he was 20 minutes walk from where he lived, you know. So my, Dr. Teitelbaum, Abba Teitelbaum, he lived in Lodz, a different thing altogether, you see.

But did you ever, I mean, did you see your mother's parents, you know, before ...

Before the War, no.

So you didn't really see either ...

No. Before the War, no. No, no, no, no. I met, I lived later on, during the War, I'll tell you later. I lived, in 1939, I lived for a year with my grandfather, but we can come to that. But before the War, no. No, never met neither of them.

Have you any idea how your parents met? I mean, they came from different places.

Yes. My sister's writing a book about that.

Oh!

Really. And it's a very funny story. I don't remember, I was told that. My father's grandparents, grandmother, my father's, my father's mother, and my mother's mother met when they were just got married. And they were very good friends, the two girls. And they made agreement if she has a boy, and if she has a girl, they should be later on married. That's how it started, anyway! That's how it started. That's, that's, that's what I was told. Yes. Later on, they married. And that's how, you see, in Poland it was most, most of the time, Shadchans, you know?

Yes. Yes.

It wasn't like here, you know, you meet a girl, you know, and if you did, if you went out with a girl without my parents' knowledge, och, it was terrible. It was terrible. The girl, the boys, the girls had to obey their parents, what their parents said, you know, that's what they had to do.

What kind of an education had your parents had? Do you know, your mother and father, what kind of education had they had?

Education, the women had in Poland is to how to cook. My father, God rest his soul, when you say "education", he was self-educated. They, the education that the Yiddisher people had, as far as I know, from my part, is the more you learn Gemorrah, the more educated you are. The better you can remember this and this and this, what he says, what Tosefus says, what Rashi said, Rambam said, the more you can, the more ... that's what you call education. Because of that, my father, God rest his soul, from early morning, he used to get up, he used to get up early morning, 4 o'clock in the morning, he used to, not daven, I'm not talking davening, he used learn Gemorrah all the time, all the time, for hours. You see, for us, even for me, maybe at times, it is very strange, or very hard to understand those very dedicated religious Jewish people. Their beliefs are entirely different to what we believe. They are not looking for material things. They believe here, it's only here, we're only here for a

certain time, we are only here for a test, we must prepare ourselves here for hereafter, and into preparing was the following, the longer, the more days you fasted, you know, fast, torture yourself, that this, what they call, in my way of thinking at the time, this is what they call education. "Learn, learn, educate yourself." Finish.

Had he attended a State school like you did?

Yes. I think he did, yes, because he wrote nicely, you know, spoke nicely Polish, you know, yes he did. He went to the State school. And my mother too, yes, they both ...

And your mother as well?

Yes. They both went to the State school, yes. And, of course, in my area, when I, when my sisters even, it was forced, you had to go.

Yes.

Skola Powszechna, the State school, you had to go, like here. You were forced to.

What about cheder? Had your mother attended any kind of religious school?

Oh yeh. Oh yes. My mother, God rest her soul, could read Chumash and Rashi, like a book here, even though it was, a girl even, had to even, she was prepared, she was taught how to cook, but she still had to read, special backupaman (?? ph). Oh, she had to learn properly. Even my sister had to learn a bit. Oh yes, my sister was, know it, she knew, I mean, she can read Hebrew very fluently. She may not understand what she's reading because that's what we were taught, "Read first and go and learn the ... what you call", but she could read when she was five. Yes.

So the girls did have an education, then?

Oh yes, yes, the girls yes. The boys a bit more, but ...

What age were you when you started cheder, how old were you?

I would say to you this. I know, I don't know. When I started school, Skola Powszechna, I was seven, but, at seven, I could read Hebrew fluent. So I must have started when I was three, or four, or five, I could, by seven I could read Chumash and Rashi, you know, so at a very early age, a very very early age, I could read Hebrew quicker, earlier than, than Polish.

And you said it was very strict there, and the rabbi was, you know, he was quick with his punishments. Do you remember who the rabbi was? Do you remember any of the persons ...

No. No, no, no.

... you don't remember any of the names?

Listen. What can kids remember? I know one thing, he used to walk about with a stick. He had a big book, and that's all, really. He used to hit the boys. We were scared of him. Oh, we were scared! Knock knock here, knock knock there. Och, it wasn't like here, no.

And would you go every day?

I had to. I had to. I had to go every day. Every day. The only way is shabbas. Shabbos it was like that. We had to go shul, and then we came home, we had dinner. And then, as I said, several times if I'm right, it didn't take us a minute. Let's say, for arguments sake, we came home from shul, 12 o'clock. Dinner could last from 12 till about three, you know, it wasn't, or maybe sometimes longer. And after three, when I was a little child, I had to go to bed, because everybody went to bed after dinner. Shabbos afternoon, everybody goes to bed. But as soon as I went to bed, I used to crawl out from bed, because I slept with my father, God rest his soul, and I used to go swimming with the boys, or play football, you know. Yes, my father didn't know, God rest his soul, well, it was that, it was that. He says, "the child, look I brought up, what did I bring up? A shegitz. A shegitz. The guy, he is going swimming, after the lunch." Obviously it was a beautiful day. I wasn't allowed. I wasn't allowed to play with a football, you know, I wasn't. I wasn't, well, I didn't have a bicycle. I wasn't allowed to to have a bicycle, first we couldn't afford to have a bicycle, but the only way I, I got myself on a bicycle, is because I knew somebody, two older boys have got a bicycle, I used to clean it for them. So in return for cleaning it properly, they gave me a bit of ride. But God rest his soul, my father, the time when I had a bicycle, oh, in fact, he used to cry, "Oh, a shegitz." That's how I was brought up, unfortunately. Unfortunately, I look back at it now, you know. It's sad. It's sad. People were very narrow-minded, very.

How did, how does the meal on shabbas take such a long time?

Ah! Because we used to sing zemiros, you know zemiros? We had one dish, the first dish, whatever it was. Then we had zemiros singing, the whole family. We had to sing, zemiros. Not like here, but do it properly, you know. So five minutes eating, an hour's zemiros, and ten minutes, that's how it was.

Wht are your earliest memories of, you know, as a child, what is the earliest memory you've got, looking back?

Are you referring me now, you mean? When I think about it now?

Yes. Looking back, what is the earliest memory you have?

Very sad, as far as I'm concerned. Yes, when I look at it back now, and I get the picture from the whole family, and I pity, I pity now, the whole family, I feel sorry for the whole family, and especially my mother, how she worked, very very hard, terrible. Worked very very hard. The whole system, och, it was a poor system. For me, as a child, at the time, of course, I didn't know any better, but when I look at it back now, it's a different thing altogether. I look at the, the sadness, the sadness. Many times, yes. And I say to myself, "I wish my mother could have lived real, like

here, people live here, even 12 month, to see what life is all about." Because she was tortured, when I look at her back, you know? She could not have what a person deserves to have. She had a very sad life, a very bad life. But then people tell me before the War it was here the same, in England.

Did she have any help at all in the house?

Ach! Help? Help? There wasn't such a thing. Certain people had help, not our group, not our, not our background, no, we did not have any help, no. Not at all.

Did the children help? I mean, did you help?

They were very little. We were all little. The boys didn't help. They were all little. You see, when my youngest sister was 16, 17, she already married, you see, Tobcia, God rest her soul, she was 16, 17, married off. And the other sister the same. So she was left, really, with five brothers, four boys, yes, a husband, and Ray was now in America. She was about, I think, three years older than me. So if I would be ten, she helped a little bit, Ray did help, yes, a little bit.

But the boys didn't?

The boys didn't, no. I don't think I did, no. The only thing I did is fetch the water, I remember that. Fetch the water, and, you see, the worst part of what it was, if I remember rightly, you see, here, if you want to change the linen it is very simple. You change the linen, you've got a washing machine, you've got a press iron, and bang, bang, bang, it's done. Imagine there. They change the linen. You could only change twice a year. You couldn't, there was no other way. Even twice a year was hard. How, why, you may ask why. You have to take off the sheets and go to the lake, we had a little river. In the winter, the lake was frozen. That was very hard. So sometimes she brought in the house, we only lived, the whole family, maybe the whole house was as big as this room, two rooms like that, half of it was beds in the house that we lived. And we used to wash, I remember, banke, I don't know whether you know what a banke is? A banke is like a wooden round thing, a barrel, like a round thing, and you used to wash in there, yes? And you used to wash the, what do you call, the linen there, and then how do you dry it in the winter? So we used to go, I remember, into the attic, we had a little attic, and because I was agile, I used to climb in the attic, and we used to put it on string. And remember, in Poland, it was cold. And this thing would dry out, it would stay stiff, frozen stiff, sheets, you know, like ice. It was very hard, very very hard. Very hard, a very hard life for the, for the people there. Not only me, the whole, the whole, everybody lived the same way, very hard life. Very very hard life. There were families, I remember, there was a family not far from us, didn't have a husband. Didn't have a husband. She had a few kids. And whatever we could afford, we couldn't afford, we used to give it to her to feed the kids, you know. People are, where I come from, I don't know about Warsaw, I don't the big cities how people lived, but there was a lot of, in Poland, a lot, there was poverty, a lot, a lot, a lot.

Were there any wealthy families in your ...

In our town? There was one, Bitte, he was called Bitte, who had a store. Yes, I would say yes, because he sold many things, which we can only look, I could only look at. Yes, he sold to the Poles, you know, he had a store, a store. Here would be called, I don't know, a little shop here, but there it was called a store. So when I say "wealthy family", he had enough food. I wouldn't say very wealthy, no, he had enough food. And at the time, to have enough food was reasonably wealthy, to have enough food. We didn't have motor cars or anything like that, or, you know. I don't think in our town, maybe, there were two boys, three boys, who had bicycles, that's all. Couldn't afford bicycles, could not, no.

What did other Jewish people do for a living? What kind of jobs did they do?

All sorts. In our village, in our village, there was a family called, and if my memory serves me right, Mandel, Mandel. And Mandel had a sawmill, a tartak, a tartak, it was called. Well, one of their boys was the same age as me. The other boy was the same age as Moshe, my brother. They had a tartak and they had quite a few people working there, cutting the woods. And, of course, they were better off than me. Better off than me. But they lived more or less the same as I did, you know. Maybe they had better food, or more food. But the same clothing, the same, you know, you know. Maybe the summer they wore shoes, I didn't, they did. We went to the same cheder, the same what do you call? ... the same shul, you know, the same ... you know. Then everybody was different, you see, some people have little stores here, there was one had a little farm. There would be a trading in all sorts. Then you'd have tailors, the Yiddisher trades, shoe people making shoes, tailoring, making bits and pieces, you know. That was the Jewish trade. There was factories not far from us where Jewish people weren't allowed to work in. Yes. Yes.

What kind of factories were those?

Ammunition, mainly ammunition factories, which the Poles used to work there, and they used to earn good money. But Jews were never allowed to work, you know, it was called Hassak. One was in Skarzysko and Starachowicie, there were a few where good salaries was earned, only by the Poles.

So, just going back to the, your home, and where you lived, can you actually describe it, you started to say something about it. I mean, what was it made of? And what did it look like? Can you describe it to me?

What was it made of? I don't know what it was made of. But it was all single-storey. It was, first of all imagine there was a square, a square, that's how it was built. And from this square, you couldn't see our house. From the square, you could see only a big huge door. And you went through that door, yes, you find then a house, what they called, a few little houses, yes? No garden, but a few little houses. And people, from the outside, you couldn't see, it was, certain people, our house you couldn't see, it was a half. At the bottom there was a few neighbours. And our half there used to be about two or three people living in our half. They were all single-storey. Single-storey.

Were they attached to each other?

Yes. Yes. They were attached. Little houses, little, I would say they were made of wood, mostly were made of wood, wood, just ... wasn't bricks and mortar. Well, wooden, wooden little houses, like huts. Finished. At the bottom, it wasn't our house, at the bottom, the landlord lived. The landlord lived. Also, I don't know, I think it was also made of wood, a single-storey, a single-storey. He lived at the bottom there.

Was he Polish?

He was Polish, yes. Yes, he was Polish.

And your neighbours in the sort of half, were they Jewish or non-Jewish?

Yes, they were Jewish. Next door to us was a neighbour, and I was friendly with the boys, I'm just thinking ... they used to sell, Shine, family Shine they were called, four boys and one girl. Her husband died young, but they had mines which they ... clay, clay, clay, that's right, clay, they shipped it to Germany, yes, clay. They shipped, they had quite a lot of people working for them with wagons and horses. They loaded these little wagons, they were only little wagons, with a horse, clay, and they went into the railway, and a big wagon, yes, a railway wagon, it was shipped to Germany. And that's how they made a living. They made a good living, as it happens, from clay. They shipped clay from our village to Germany, clay. The Shine family. They were reasonable well-off. Yes, I would say they were reasonable well-off, better than us. Yes.

And that was without a husband?

Without a husband, but he left the business. I remember this, her oldest son, yes, the oldest son was older than about 20 in those days, 20-odd, you see. The baby was about two or three, two or three years older than me, I used to be friendly with him. They used to call us "father and son", because he was bigger than me, you see, he was, "the son and father's coming", Shlomo his name was. You know, I was small, he was tall, because he was four years, three years older than me, you know. The village knew, "father and son." The older son was grown up, so the older son took over the business. The Shine family, yes.

You were going to tell me about the house. You mentioned there was about two rooms. What, you all, all the children slept together in one room? How did it, how did you sort of divide up this space? What was it like?

In one room, first of all, in every bed, yes, I think we slept either two boys or three boys in a single bed. In the kitchen we had one little bed, in the kitchen, and I think two of us slept there. My mother and father, God rest his soul, had two twin beds. I slept in between. And then there was another ...

End of F2924 Side B

F2925 Side A

... did you have your own bed between them?

No.

But you said they had two single beds. You said,

I never slept, most of the time I slept between, in my father's bed, let me put it that way.

Yes.

My other brother, no. They had, they slept two in a bed. My sisters slept two in a bed. So you had altogether, like, let's say, four beds.

Was this all in the same room?

No. There was, as soon as you came, very important to you, as soon as you come in, yes, you came in. On the right, there was another family lived, yes? Family. You came in, and there was a little kitchen. On the left was a window, when I say the kitchen, I tell you, maybe 7 x 10, no, seven foot by ten, very small it was. Just a stove, yes, which you had to light it, yes. In the back of that, you had a little bit of space, where they keep the potatoes. And then you had a bed, which I said. And then you carried through, there was a door, I don't know whether it was a door, or just a hole, I can't remember, it was actually a door to, I don't think there was a door, just a curtain, I think a curtain, so. When you got inside, there was, on the left, as soon as you come in, another bed. On the right, there was two single beds, and I think there was another bed there. In the middle, a table. Finished. A table in the middle. Well, let me put it this way. Fifty per cent of the space was used up by beds, 25% the table, and the rest walking space. Nothing else. Finished. So, when people used to get up, yes, of course, there was no toilet, you had to go outside, you see, there was no toilet facilities at all. There was walking distance about 10 minutes to the toilet, maybe, maybe eight minutes. There was no water, nothing. And that's how we lived. Finished. And when we are ready for dinner, we all went into that table, and we sat down. Finished.

There was no other furniture?

Maybe there were bits and pieces, you know, to accommodate, an old cabinet here, and old cabinets here, that's about all, that accommodated dishes I should imagine. You know, I'm trying to recollect. No, yes, there was a wardrobe, sorry, there was also the wardrobe, a wardrobe, yes, a wardrobe, to keep the clothing in, you know, a wardrobe, you know, a wardrobe.

And you mentioned an attic?

And that it was in the top, a bit of an attic, yes, a bit of an attic, yes, where we used to dry the linen for the winter.

And that was it's only use?

The attic, yes. That was it's only use. I don't think anything else, no. I went, maybe as a kid, playing on it, but there was nothing there, no, no. Mainly on the attic was, yes, I remember, yes, was dusty and all that.

Were there any cellars?

No. No cellars where we had, no. No cellars. No cellars at all, no. No cellars. My grandfather got us, I'll tell you later, he had cellars, yes, he had cellars, yes.

Was your father active in any way, in either, things in the community, besides being a Shochet?

Very. Very. My father, very active in the Jewish community. I told you earlier on, whoever have any trouble, or anything, take it to my father. And my father invited them in, we had to go out, you know, because there wasn't any space, you see. He only had that little space. So we knew we'd gotta go out. So we went out and he talked to people. Most of the time he was involved either helping people if he could, yes, that was his time involved. Prayers and davening, and helping people, and finished, and do a bit of work. Nothing else.

What was the shul? Was there a building, a shul building? Or ...

There was, there was two. There was two. There was a small building, which was used, the reason it was small because it was easy to keep it warm. A small shul, and there was a big one next to it. The shul, during the day, the small one, was used as a cheder. And most of the time I spent there a lot, even my father, my brother. Why? I'll tell you why. There was always a fire going in the winter. People did not use it as a shul, not only as a shul, but also like a club, if you like. They congregated there. They'd talk, they'd make politics there, they solved all their problems there, everybody had their own idea, they debated, they were sitting and smoking there, at the table, when it was not used for, for the cheder. That's what, that's what doing. I don't know whether they have coffee or tea, but I know they were smoking there. You know, sitting, half learning, half debating, and there's, they solved all the world's problems, it was solved there, all day long. Talk, everybody talked, you see. Especially in the winter, because in our house, you couldn't keep it very warm, the women didn't have such a good time, because the women had to keep in the house cooking, and the men disappeared into that little shul. The big shul was only opened on Shabbos, in the summer, because you couldn't keep it warm. Because in Poland, it wasn't like here, it was very very cold, very very cold. So it was there, next to one another, you know, then the mikvah next to it. There was a mikvah next to it. And there was a little river going through, you know. And the reason why they built the mikvah there, and the shul next to it, is because of that little river. That's how they got the water into the mikvah, you see, because how could they fill the mikvah? There was no water, they haven't got a tap. So they made it in such a way, you know,

that from the river, if they wanted to, whenever they wanted to change the water, they got it at, to the mikvah, you see.

Did the men used to use the mikvah?

Yes. I will tell you how the men, the women used to use it, if I remember, Friday morning. Up to one o'clock women were allowed to use it, yes? After one o'clock, or 12 o'clock, no, the men then came in. But it was, not just a mikvah, when I say mikvah, not just a mikvah, it was quite a nice place, and they used to use little special things. You don't see it today, like a ... first of all it had also a steam bath, in the one part, steam. You know steam? And then they used to have a, before they used to use the mikvah, they used to be, wash themselves with special, you know, little buckets made of wood, yes? And they used to dip it into the mikvah, yes, little buckets, imagine little buckets, and they went in first to the steam bath, and they stayed there for about, well, an hour or whatever, yes. I used to go in there too. And then they wash themselves with soap, and then they used to do put that bucket of cold water over themselves, and then they used to use ... you didn't go to the mikvah just like that, you had to clean yourself first before you, you went in the mikvah.

And you used to go?

I used to go every Friday, and that's how I learned how to swim! (LAUGHS) In the mikvah! Because I couldn't get from A to Z, you know, across, like from here to there, I couldn't get, it was too deep for me. So somebody used to stand there, and used to catch me, and that's how I used to learn. And that's how I learned to swim in the mikvah.

But was there, you know you were talking about the shuls, was there a Rov??

Oh yes. Oh yes. But of course there was a Rov.

Do you remember who that was?

I remember his son's name - Uher, Uher, Uher, Uher. He had one son and one daughter. The son was a man, Moshele, my oldest brother's best friend. Uher his name was. And I remember, the rabbi, I used to go there quite a lot, twice a week, three times a week I used to go into his house. Yes, because my father, that's where they spend the time. They spend the time either, most of the time was spent in the shul, or the Rov already had a nicer house, if I remember, a nicer house, he had one room which was reasonable good, he could accommodate my father, God rest his soul, another two or three people, yes, used to come in there, they had a bit of a schnapps, you know, during the day, and a little bit of a drink too. And I used to go with my father many times, and I used to watch it, you know. The Rebbitzin was there, and the two children. One boy and one girl. He was a very tall, slim man, I remember, the Rov, the Rov you know.

Did he belong to any Hassidic group?

That I don't know. Really, I don't know. But in Poland, most of them belonged somewhere, followers.

Did your father?

Did my father? Yes. The Rudomer Rebbe, he followed the Rudomer Rebbe, because, you see, in Poland, they have so many rabbis. You know, every city, every big city ... he followed the Rudome Rebbe, but he wasn't such a great follower. A follower. Most of the people in Poland, the Yiddisher people, I would say the Gerer Rebbe had the most followers, the Gerer Rebbe most, the Gerer Rebbe yes, I would say. If my memory serves me right, I would say 50, 60 per cent were Gerer Rebbe.

Were there any followers of the Gerer Rebbe in your town?

Only those people who could afford to. When I say "afford to" is two things. The Gerer Rebbe, the followers have little outfits, like the Gerer Rebbe shoes, they have little boots, Gimsowy shoes, boots, which, they're very dear. Gimsowy, the leather was very dear, very soft, very very soft, and they were up to here. And you could recognise a Gerer Chossid by the way they would dress. So if people, you had to be reasonable well-off, to have a dress even, an outfit, the Gerer Rebbe's outfit. Even the kapota had to be nice, made of (silk - in Polish) every little bit matching, Gerer Chossid when you were that, yes.

Did your father ever have any dealings with non-Jewish people in the little town?

In our town?

Mmmm.

No, village.

Village.

Eighty per cent were Jewish people. You must realise, in Poland, that certain places, they were all Jewish people. If you couldn't speak Jewish you couldn't get anywhere, because everybody was Jewish, even the porters at the station were Jewish.

Wherever you moved, the fellow who was driving the, the, the, the wagon, the horse and was, droshke, he was Jewish. Everybody, from A to Z was Jewish, you see. So my father, he had no need, no need at all, to be involved with non-Jewish people, because all the surroundings were Jewish, all his friends, wherever he moved, they were all Jews.

But your landlord wasn't a Jew.

The landlord wasn't a Jew. Sharofsky his name was. No, I remember, I remember him, he wasn't Jewish, no. But he was a very quiet man. He lived in the corner there, at the end, and, by himself there, never had any family. He had a dog which was my favourite. I used to play with him, I used to feed him, his name was Lonka (?? ph), he used to look after it, he didn't, I did. And you never heard of him very much, you

know, no. He was living on his own, finished, there, finished. So he was the only man there, Polish. You had one or two, but scattered, you know.

But how was it? I mean, if there were so many Jewish people in the village, how was it that there were so few Jewish children at school?

Now, when I say there were few, in my class where, where, where I was the only one. There were quite a few, I should imagine, but I didn't see them. That's all there is to it. There were quite a few. But that school would serve at, serve the whole district. You see, from all round there, about five miles, all came to that, I was lucky enough to live at that particular corner, it was only five minutes going to school. Okay. So it served all, let me explain to you this. I said to you earlier on, the mark in the square we lived, the Jewish people lived in the square. Outside the square, all the Christians lived, thousands of them, you see. We congregated in that square. That's where the Jewish people lived. And if anyone lived outside, he was a little bit dodgy, they were scared, they were scared. They were scared for the Poles. Simple as that. They were scared, because they attacked many things. So they felt safer to live, to live in the square, they felt safer.

Do you remember any incidents between the Poles and ...

Not really. Not really, no. Not really. I heard stories, pogroms, but I never saw any, you know. There were instances like, I'll tell you another instance. My father, God rest his soul, he came home from school, from shul, and he was attacked with a *szczynka*, what they call a *szczynka*, a cane, and at the end of the canes, some of the Poles, young boys, had razor blades. You know, razor blades at the top. *Szczynka* it was called, and they used to walk about hitting the Jews, as simple as that. And my father was found with blood all over, yes, on the gutter he was found, they knew who it was, but the Poles wouldn't do anything. They wouldn't do a thing. The police. They only came out, they asked, "Any dead? Anybody dead?" And even then they were reluctant to come. That was the system. And ...

What would happen, I mean, when someone like you, you mentioned your father being hit, I mean, when someone was ill or someone needed medical attention?

There was a doctor.

There was a doctor?

Yes. Yes. There was a doctor, I remember him. There was a doctor, a Yiddisher doctor. He was already half, when I say Yiddisher, you know, he was only ... there were two doctors. Two doctors. No dentists in our place, but two doctors. If anybody was ill, you went to the doctor, yes, you went to the doctor.

And would you have to pay, pay for him to ...

You would have to pay, yes. But you could belong to a, what do you call, to like an insurance. You could. Yes. I remember. I forget the name, Casahora, it was called Casahora or something like that. Like a, yes, you had to, yes, you could, yes, yes,

yes. If not, you have to pay. Like a local insurance, yes. If not, you had to pay. No dentists. Now, if you had trouble with your teeth, you had trouble, you had to ... I remember one particular, my brother, I dunno, he was 18, he had suffer one tooth. He tried to pull it out with a string himself, and he couldn't. And he was in terrible agony, terrible, terrible agony. I was 18, and, anyway, I managed to run to Starachowicie, which was about 12, 15 kilometres away. Anyway, they got him out the tooth, finished. So he was happy. But he suffer for it, you know. No dentist.

Now, what about the sort of games that you played, as a child, and where would you play, and what kind of things would you do? You mentioned you went swimming. Where was that? Was that in the river?

There was a river, yes. There was a river not far from us, where, as I told you earlier on, after the mikvah, I went to the river. And I learnt to swim there. It was beautiful, beautiful, very nice. Games? We played games, yes, certain games in Poland, but it was different. Yeh, football I didn't play, maybe I was too young, I don't know. Shadke we used to play, you know, basketballs, you know. A few games we played. But me, because as I told you earlier on, I come from this background, it wasn't so easy to play games. You weren't allowed to play games. Finished. And that's all there is to it. I wanted to play games, but ... but, at school I played games, at school, yes, at school I played games, yes, at school. Oh yes, I was very keen, playing all sorts of, at school I did, yes. Shadke, all sorts of little games we had. But after that, no. After that I didn't have time to go playing. I had to get up in the morning at, say, 8 o'clock, go to shul, to school, from 9 till 1. Come home for 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and then go to cheder until bedtime. You see, I had to work very hard, seven days a week. There was no time for games. No time.

What about clubs, or societies? I mean, first of all did your parents belong to ... were there any clubs of any description?

No.

Any social groups?

No. Not in our village.

No.

If you want to hear anything, know anything, or go to a club, you had to go, as I told you earlier, that shul.

That shul. And that was it?

Everybody congregated there. Not the women. The women had a terrible life. Yes. Men there, the boys there. The girls at home, learn how to cook.

Were there any Zionist groups at all?

In our town, no. Maybe, when I say no, I come to think, maybe. I was not old enough. I know one thing. I remember they were people coming to our village, recruiting, what do you call them, you know, to go to Israel to work?

Chalutzim?

Chalutzim. Now, before you became a Chalutz, you had to do some training in Poland. Yes? Hard work on the farm. But really hard work, before they send you to Israel to become a Chalutz. Yes. And, of course, and even if you became a Chalutz, and even, you remember I mentioned the, the, the, the, the Shine family next door who, who's son, one of the boys became a Chalutz he wanted to go to Israel, but they wouldn't let him in. He went for 12 months training, 18 months, yes, and work on a farm, for nothing, for nothing, just to toughen himself up to know when he goes to Israel. But there was no passes to go, England wouldn't let them in. X, X amount could go. That's what it was. They came from the Zionist, and they called them Chalutzim. There were many volunteers. But what's the good of it? They couldn't get them to England, they couldn't, they worked on the farm and finished.

What did your, your father, and your parents think about, you know, that sort of Movement?

In fact, they were, they were for it. In fact, I remember my father's brother, before the War, they were talking, "It wouldn't be a bad idea to go to Israel." A lot of people talked about Israel/Palestina, but they only talked, they couldn't go. They didn't have enough money to go, first of all they didn't have enough money, you see. And that's all there is to it. But it's how do you go? I mean, how do you go? You see, they didn't have enough money, and even the people who had money, they had to bribe to get a pass, you know? When my father managed to get a pass to go to Israel, and he was, he was like he won the pools, you see. From our town, as I remember, nobody went to Israel. They all wanted to, they all, the young boys went to work on the farm, but they never reached Israel, no, none of them. There was no passes.

Was your father interested in politics? I mean, you said they talked a lot, did they ... very much with politics, or take much interest in it?

Not much. Not much. They made their own politics. They always said at the time that I remember, Pilsudski when he died, he was the Prime Minister of Poland, that when Smigly-Rydz, he was a bit of a Fascist already, and he tried to pass laws, like, for instance, no slaughter, you see, I don't know whether you know ... there was a woman, Madam, I forget her name, Madam something, she was in the Government. And they tried to pass a law, no kosher food. And that's the politics they talk about, that they have been cursed, they've got a new Prime Minister, his name is Smigly-Rydz, who is like an agent for the Germans, because, you know, it was feeding through, what the Germans did today, they did the following day, you see. The Poles followed, whatever the Germans do today, we'll do the same. So they would talk the politics, Pilsudski was a good man to the Jewish people, now we've got a, the man's a, Smigly-Rydz, you know, and they've been cursed, you know. And finished. Their only hope was, they wish they could go to Israel, but that's about all, to Palestina, at the time it was called Palestina. And that's about all, a little talk, as I said, a little talk

really. They had the papers, Yiddisher papers they've had, you know, they read the papers, Polish papers, Yiddisher papers they read, you know, they made their own politics, you know. But they were happy, they were happy in their own way, if you know what I mean, because they didn't know any better, and that's all there is to it.

Did you speak Yiddish together in the town?

All the time.

And could you speak Polish?

Mmm, mmm. You had to, because at school you spoke Polish.

Yes. Did you know Polish before you went to school?

Yes. Cos I probably spoke two languages, Polish and Yiddish, yes.

Where were you when War broke out?

In that village.

You'd come back from yeshiva?

Well, I came back earlier, before the War broke out. I told you, I was only there two weeks. Yes, and I stayed there until the War broke out in 1939.

So were you still at school at that point? Or what were you doing?

When the War broke out?

Mmm.

We were broken, we broke up, just school, if you remember. Yes, September the War broke out, so we had about like here, 10 weeks or 12 weeks off school, you see. So we, I was at home, yes. Everybody was at home. And I was then, I think, about, just about 10, 10, 10, when the War broke, when the War came in, because I finished only three classes, you know. Skola Powszechna. Skola Powszechna children had six classes. I managed to, to finish off three. Total and finished. I didn't go back, there was finished. Then the War broke out on a Friday, if you remember, yes? As a child, I looked for excitement, when I saw the bombers coming I liked it, the planes coming, throwing bombs. And the funniest part is, we used to run on the roof! (LAUGHS) We thought the roof was protection - it was the opposite, you know! Everybody was going on the roof, a flat roof, lie yourself on the flat roof instead of the ground, on the roof. And I remember, we were lying on the roof, and I was laughing, you know, at planes. And one particular plane came down, very low, very low, with machine guns. But it never got anybody, you know, anyway. The War broke out on a Friday, and we saw the Polish Army were going to the Front, with horses, with chinska cavalaria (ph) they called it, heavy cavalry, like you see in the cowboys, with horses. And they were running for the Front, and they were shouting,

"We shall fight to the last drop of blood." And ... three or four days later, Friday, the Army was going to the Front, and three or four days later, the whole Army coming back. Ah, cannot, is ... they're hungry, never had any food, terrible, terrible. The soldiers, the terrible soldiers, didn't know how to fight, backwards. Didn't know how to fight. They were disorganised, simple, disorganised, no leadership, nothing. The bullets didn't even fit their guns. And then, of course, the following Friday, only a week, the German Army has arrived. And I remember looking out through my square, the first patrol came in, from Skarzysko - that way, down the hill, down ... one road, there was only one road coming through, and one road going out. With a patrol, came in, they looked round, they came into the square, circled round and went back. Ten minutes later, the whole army came in, the town's equipped, you know, motorised, and the Poles weren't motorised, they were on horses, they had no, no earthly chance. Like bows and arrows. And that's when trouble was started. So. This was Friday ... and ... they went through our village ... in an hour later, or two hours later, they poured petrol over the square, and burnt the whole thing down. We managed to run out to the back, and we hid, hid ourselves in a field. And we saw the whole smoke from a distance. We all later, all night, and the following morning for shabbas, I went to have a look what's happening, since I was the smallest and youngest, I have a look what's happening. The whole village, flat, nothing. Nothing remained. I remember, I think they were all made of wood, you know. Luckily, luckily, if I remember rightly, nobody got killed. Nobody. Even there was one man, a neighbour there, a very nice man, a very nice man, but he became paralysed, and the two daughters managed to shlepp him out into the field.

End of F2925 Side A

F2925 Side B

... try and picture in your mind, the whole village now, has been burnt down, and all the people managed to run to the field. The only ... because I was little, my parents suggest that I should go and have a look what's happening, because we didn't know what happened to the village. We know we are safe, other people, our neighbours, one or two. What happened to the rest of the village, we didn't know. I went down to the village to have a look, and the Poles told me that the Germans are killing the Jews. We shouldn't go out, we should stay where we are. You know? And I came back, and I came back to tell my parents what I, what I'd been told. Now you must almost imagine, how long can you lie in a field? They've rescued very very little. Luckily, the weather was good. Nice weather. It was September, nice weather. However, I think my other sister, or my brother, my older brother, decided also to go and have a look to see what's happening. And they came back to say that the shul has not been damaged, of course, the rabbi called it a, a what do you call? A ness, you know, a miracle, a ness, I don't think it was a ness, it was a miracle, I think because we had a little river, if you remember, I told you earlier on, and that river, that little river saved it. And there was not far from the shul, another house, his name, his first name was Moishe, he was dealing in seeds, and seeds, he was a very respected man in our community. His house was standing. We, my sister and my brother, my brother came back with the news that most of the villagers, most of our, from the village, are now congregated in shul. That's where they are. So we have decided to go ourselves. And imagine, you've got now the whole village in the shul, the whole village. But nobody's got any belongings now, everything burned, lost, and everything. Not even pots, not even dishes, nothing. Just as you stood, whatever you had, now you find yourself in the village, in the shul, sorry, in the shul. Now, people must eat. Remember we didn't eat now for 48 hours. We had made a little bit of food. My mother, God rest her soul, I think she managed, that when it was, when the, Friday when they start to burn our village, the candles that she shlepped and some challahs. But this was already Sunday. How long does the challahs last? The only thing so we, so since I was little, and I think my sister too, and my brother, we went to the farmers, but the Poles weren't very helpful. I'm sorry, they weren't very helpful. They wouldn't give us any food, anything. The only thing even then they didn't like, the Poles, and remember, this was September, the corn was cut, but the fields where they grew, and I remember cabbages, cabbages, you know, when cabbages grow, the root is very thick. They cut off the cabbages, the roots were still there in the fields. So I dugged out these cabbages, I also dugged out certain parts of field, where the Poles had left the potatoes, you see. And now the question was, how I'm going to cook? You've got no pots. Everything was burnt. So I went to a, and my brother, God rest his soul, we looked where the stores were, and we, in the ashes, and the what do you call, all the burnt pots, somehow, you know, you're young, and you're hungry, you find ways. So all these potatoes and the end of the cabbages, the root of the cabbages, we chopped it up with water, and we made some, some sort of a food. It was very bad, the whole, not only ourselves, everyone were laying on the floor, sanit..., och, it, it, it was hell. It was hell.

So you took this into a bit of the, into the shul?

Yes. Oh yes, out of the shul, because the weather was also nice, in, whoever had managed to have small children like me and my sister, the older people were in trouble, yes? Because they couldn't feed themselves, they couldn't do anything, they were helpless, just helpless. But even ourselves, it was bad. But my father, God rest his soul, was very well-known in our community, and respected. And if you remember, I told you earlier on, there was that fellow Moishe, who had one house left, he invited my, our family to stay with him, in the roof, that's all. That's all he had room for. The rabbi and our family. But he could not supply us food, he did his best, you know. I remember he dealt in seeds, you know, seeds. Whatever seeds they have, he ate it. So we were a little bit better off than the other people. But my mother, God rest her soul, says, "Now, look. This is no good." But I was lucky to have two sisters married somewhere else, different villages. Remember I told you earlier on I went to yeshiva. So after a few weeks living like that, my mother decided that one daughter, Ray, who's now in America, who was about three years older than me, should go and live with my other sister, in another village, Sychodniuv. She was already married with two little children. And when I say to go there, it was very complicated to get her there, you know, there's only horses and, and wagons. And you have to wait for the horse, we didn't have any money to give to the fellow with the horse. The only way was to say, "Look, if you deliver her to my sister, my sister will pay you." But he says, "Supposing she is not there?" You know, she, you know, how ... my, eventually we managed to persuade, he took her, so she was okay. Now, there was now my other brother, Moishele, so we went to my other sister, the older sister, Tobcia, God rest her soul. And we stayed there. We were a hotel, we were all right there, you know, because their villages wasn't burned down. And my father still stayed with that Moishe in that, in the community. And then I came back to the village. We came because we were a bit homesick, you know, wanted to see our parents. And my mother, God rest her soul, decided to go and visit her parents in Radoszycie, and she took me. Me and my mother, we went there.

How did you get there?

Also by wagon, by wagon. It took us a long time, but we got there. I don't know, my mother must have been then, God rest her soul, then, I don't know, about 40, 40 odd, and I was then 10, 11, maybe. And I followed my mother, I went with a little cap, and my grandfather said, "Who is that shegitzel? He said, oh, to me, he said I look like a shegitzel. Anyway, what did she come for? For some help, because we haven't had any money, my, my grandfather was reasonably well-off. Told him the whole story, so, of course, my grandfather helped, and the decision was made that my mother goes back to her husband, and to the other two boys, yes? And I would stay, till they, till they find some accommodation, yes? I should stay with my grandfather. Which I did do.

Is that the first time you'd met your grandfather?

First time.

That was the first time.

First time. And it's the first time I met my grandfather, yes? My auntie, and her children. Berek was my age, approximately, maybe two weeks difference. And I stayed there. I stayed there for about, I would say, maybe a year, in Radoszycie, maybe a year. Also at the time, if you remember earlier on, I told you I had an uncle, Abba Teitelbaum, who lived in Lodz. And Lodz, the Germans made the Third Reich, and they said they're going to make a ghetto. Where they lived there was no ghetto yet. So my uncle, yes, and certain people who, influential people, who had some money, tried to get away from the Third Reich, which they did do, and they came to our, he lived, he came to live with his, with my grandfather who was his father. Abba Teitelbaum and Geta, Gina, something like that, with his wife, and his grandmother, and his mother-in-law. Three of them. And some of his patients, Usher Cohen, I remember Usher, remember I told you, Usher Cohen, like, well-known, like Marks and Spencers, he came to live in our town too. And that's why I met him. I remember five boys, all Gerer Rebbes students, they were very well-known. And they lived there ...

What was your, I mean, your grandfather, you said he'd been a, he was a Shochet.

Yes.

I mean, how was he getting money during this time? Was he, how was he managing?

He was well-off.

He was already well-off?

Very well-off. He was very well-off. Very well-off. He had money, yes. Also his daughter had plenty of money, because you remember, I told you, they were living, they had, they were in textile, and I remember they were in textile. I know one thing, he, he had the shach, you know what the shach is called? You know what the shach, the Gemorrah, the 24 books. He didn't have just one shach, he had a few shachs, a case, a full case of books, my grandfather. All religious books, all sorts of books. One wall, full of books. Every book you picked up, there was a gurel in it. A gurel was 500 zloties, you know! He kept them in the books, you know! And I used to pick, anyway, there was a, you know, you would pick this up, every book you picked up there was a gurel, he had, he had plenty of money. Plenty of money. They lived well, they were brought up well. They had plenty of food, lived well. Yeh, they could not, they afford to buy new shoes. So what they did do is they took with the shoemaker, because I've grown, the shoes were good, you see, but I've grown out of them, you see. So what he told the shoemaker to do, just make the frontish longer. That's what they did. They left the back part intact, yes, the shoemaker, and they made me the, the foot, about an inch longer, just in the top. They undid it, and they made it longer. Yes. Or he could, he had boots, from his own boots, he gave the shoemaker to make me a pair of shoes. I lived there for about 12 months. It wasn't bad.

What did you do during that time?

Learn all the time. Learn all the time. All the time. They taught me how to play chess, chess I played. In fact, I made my own chess, if I remember. I, by hand. I carved out a beautiful chess, the whole 32 pieces, I carved out, special wood, soft wood, I made them, and then this wood became hard.

What did you learn where? I mean, did you go to ...

No, no. I didn't go to cheder. No. My grandfather used to teach me, and my uncle used to teach me, because I had a cousin the same age as me, also IO, Berek, and we used to learn together, every day. That's what we did most of the time. And then we chopped wood, yes. And then my uncle came from Lodz, he came. And he looked upon me like his own son. He never had any children, so he took a liking to me, you know? And he went for a little walk, he also learned, and he went to see a few patients, you know. Most of the time we spent like that. But there was also very unpleasantness. Very unpleasantness. One particular day, when I was there ... the Germans came in. I mean, there were all the time Germans, but this was a special unit, a unit, where they wanted to take away the belongings from the Jewish people, the valuables, gold and ... all the valuables. Since I was a little boy, there was no ghetto, I was not in the ghetto at the time. But again, the Jewish people lived like, more or less in a ghetto, even that, wherever they live, Jewish people live, congregate. And I remember four lorries arrived, with a SS, young SS, and they've driven all the Jews out into a field, but before anybody could, they had like, they made themselves a little gate, one SS here, one SS here, "Show me your hands, show me your watches", everything had to be dropped. And if you'd, God help you if you didn't. I had nothing. For me, I mean, at the time, I had no rings, no watches, nothing, just ... but for those who had, it was bad. They tried to, to, to, to what do you call ... and they made us stay, this was baddocksbeards (?? ph) again. They made everybody stay a full day, you know. And we thought when we come back, you know, evening, there will be nothing in the house, burnt down again, you know, because, luckily nothing, they've done damage, they've broken many things in the house, you know, but we managed to clean it up. My grandfather then was about, I would say, I don't know, I guess between 75 and 80, at a guess. And ... the man had a bad leg. And this bad leg was created, because he used to tell me many things, that he didn't want to go to the Russian Army, and the only way to stop going to the Army, is do yourself damage, like my ... Dr. Teitelbaum showed me the right hand, the last two fingers, he couldn't straighten it out. He damaged them in such a way, yes, so they wouldn't take him in the Army, couldn't shoot, couldn't pull the trigger. He damaged the two little fingers specially. And my grandfather, one leg he damaged. He hopped. Anyway, to cut the story short, for some reason or another, I remember, I look, the Gendarmerie, the German police found out that he did some kosher killing, chickens or something, and they came in, and I was there, they were all shaking, and I remember this man, I remember, was a very well-made man, tall, very well-made, but he had a bad leg. He walked with a bad leg, all his life he suffered from his leg, I remember. And there were four of them come in, with, also with the Polish police, together. And they accused him, and he denied it. And they said, "Where are your knives?" You know, they had this special knife. They've taken all that away, and they says, "What's the matter with your leg? You've got a bad leg. Show me your leg." And they started kicking, a man of 75, 80, you know. But he had started, you know, and the daughters all screaming, I mean ... and they were laughing. The Germans were having a good

time with the Poles, they were laughing, and he, all my family, the bobba, remember, the bobba's a little woman, she was crying, screaming, hysterical, and they, "grown up people, grown up people, you're supposed to be humane, you're worse than animals, kicking a man with a bad leg." My father, my grandfather never said anything. They took him away. They did some damage to the house. But, luckily, at that particular time, the following day, they sent him back home, with a warning, if this happens, they shoot him on sight, they shoot everybody. But my grandfather still took chances, because he says, "Well, I've got to do it. I cannot see Yiddisher people eating treife." Then eventually, I heard, there was no post, but I heard through the grapevine, that my family has moved now to the next town, Skarzysko Kamienna, and they've got a flat, and they're doing reasonable good, come home. Okay. So I come home. Now how do I come home? I mean, travel wasn't so easy, especially for Yiddisher people. I never wore a Star of David, I was too young. Never, never, never wore one. And, of course, at the time, I did not have any payers, I only look like a shagitz, because I couldn't, I shave off the payers and I dressed myself over like a shagitz little boy, like a Christian boy.

When had you started to do that?

I started to do that, as soon the Germans came in, I shaved my payers off. I did do. As soon as they came in, yes. Anyway, I said to my grandparents, God rest their souls, that I intend to go home. They said, "How are you going to go home?" Because from Radoszycie there was no trains. I had to go to another village, another town, next town. Skarzysko was on the trains to go to. Anyway, to cut the story short, they said to me I should go from Konisk, a place called Konisk. Now, they gave me an address in Konisk, where I had an auntie there, I'd never met her in my life, but I had an auntie in Konisk. From where I, from my grandfather to, to Konisk, I dunno, maybe it was about five hours, six hours, by horse and, you know, by horse and cart. Anyway, I got a few zloties, it was cold, I remember. I got a bit of a rucksack, whatever I could, and I went to Konisk with her address. And I walked about Konisk until I found my auntie. Told her who I was, she took me in, she fed me, and she arranged for me, a ticket, from Konisk to Skarzysko. But, of course, I travelled as an alien, like a Christian, because no Jews were allowed to use the trains. The only enemies I had were the Poles. The Germans could not recognise me, whether I am Jewish or not, only the Poles could. My accent. Also my Polish was reasonable good, but they could detect my accent, that I'm Jewish. But they could, the Poles could pick me out, not the Jews, not the, not the, not the Germans. The funny thing I was worried. But I got myself on the train, and I was sitting in the corner, and I managed to camouflage myself, I managed safely to get home to Skarzysko. I got off the train, yes, and the Jews already lived, like, in a ghetto, in one street, Ulica Zgo Maja. And it was winter, very cold. I came and I walked, I knew Ulica Zgo Maja 65, I knew 65, that's where we lived. And I walked that road, that street. And I remember, I did not see my family now for approximately 18 months, and during 18 months, everybody changes, especially me. I am not any more 10, I'm now 12. Different. So I go up to a boy, I said, "Excuse me, do you know where Shlomo Shochet lives?" So he looks at me, and he says, "Who are you?" I says, "I am his son." He says, "You're not." I says, "I am." He says, "What's your name?" I says, "Shmuel". He says, "I'm your brother!" (LAUGHS) This man. And I couldn't believe it. I says, "here's this man", we both, everybody changed. And, of course,

we started hugging and kissing one another. He says, "Here, come on, I'll show you over here, over here, over here. And, of course, I came in, I couldn't tell you he was my brother, Moishe, especially, he grew up, big tall thin fellow, I remember, I couldn't recognise him. A stranger, in the 18 months he was a stranger completely. I came home, but he, he did some work, and when he came home, my mother said, "This is Moishe", I couldn't recognise him, it was 18 months. And, of course, they were all delighted, they were all delighted to see me. And I was delighted to see, you know, my parents.

Had you corresponded with them while you were away?

No.

You hadn't written or anything?

No. Nothing at all. There was no communication. You could send a little, a little, a little, "He have seen your son." Or, you know, something. No. I don't think I sent, there was no communication, nothing at all. Maybe if somebody left, if somebody's going to Konsk, "If you're going to Konsk, if you know somebody there, who's going to Skarzysko, a message, a message", like guards or grease (ph), you know. So when I came to Skarzysko, right away they tried to dress me up properly. I remember they bought me a pair of boots, a pair of boots, I also had, in that town, two cousins, you know, older than me, they were about 17, 18, and I wanted their old lisvus, skates, skates, skates. We lived reasonable well. My father did stop, he were not allowed to kill any animals, or anything, or chickens or whatever, for kosher, but he did it discreetly. We could manage to survive in the ghetto. The Poles were allowed to come in, but the Jews were not allowed to go out. And ...

Were all the Jews congregated?

In the ghetto, yes. In one particular street, Ulica Zgo Maja, right through. Yeh. And people did some business with the Poles, and the Poles brought in some food, only, only those, not because they were goody goodies, only because they drawing benefits, simple as that. They could, because certain trades was still made in the ghetto. If the Poles even wanted a pair of boots, they had to come into the ghetto, because all the shoemakers, all the tailors, all of these were made there. The only thing which was short of, is leather. Leather. They couldn't get leather, because leather you need tanneries, and our town was not a tannery town. There was a leather town, where my sister used to live, that was a town known for tanneries.

Which one was that?

Szydlowecz, where my sister used to live. So they came to me, since I'm the smallest, and since I'm not recognisable, I should smuggle the skins. Now, first, I had to smuggle the skin. When I say the skin, not the leather itself, from the animal, from a calf, you know. When you take off from a calf, the skin, I have to get it there. So but just me, remember, it was, I had to carry it on my body, the animal. It was still with blood, you know. So they put him too round me, you see, and with that, I used to run to Szydlowecz which was, while I'm talking to you, I can still remember, if I went

through the forest, a little forest, like a little ... I cut through, would take me, if I run, you see, three hours. If I go through the major road, you know, the asphalt road, it take me a long time. And then also I can pass Germans. And then they say why am I so fat? So the advice was to go through here. And I used to smuggle two-way traffic. I used to bring in the skins there, from the, from the, from the calfs, and I brought back two calfs, already made, already made into skins. You can make now, what do you call? Or sometimes I brought mineral, you know.

End of F2925 Side B

F2928 Side B

So there were appels. I mean, even when you were working, after you'd been ...

Oh yes, there was, appels, it was like that. People worked 12 hour shift. Let's say they came home from work, seven o'clock in the morning, that's how they did it, from seven to seven. And let's say they managed to go to sleep 10 o'clock. All of a sudden, an appel, everybody out. What is it? That, either there was a killing, and we would have to watch, or a flogging, yes. You had to stay there for two hours, three hours, to witness what they're doing, that you shouldn't do this. So everyday something happened, you know? Either a flogging, somebody got, hanging up there with his hands, and we had to watch for how long he last, you know? Or, and then there was a fella called, funny name, a funny name, his name was Killerman, a cripple. A cripple. He was not, he was half German, and half, a Volks-Deutsch, you know. And he had always an alsatian with him. He was, I would say, a cripple, little tough fella he was, crippled, he had a limp, a limp. I saw him later asleep. He was a sadist. A natural sadist. He enjoyed killing. He enjoyed killing, in Work A. And he stood at the gates every morning, with a cane, with a dog, and watching people, laughing in their faces, spitting in their faces. One day he called out a girl, she was working with her mother, young girl, 16, her mother was 30, 35, and he called out the girl, "Come here!" She wouldn't go. "Come here!" And he got her out, and the mother knew what's going to happen. The next thing I know, he took her away, and when the mother came home six o'clock, he gave her her dress, soaked in her blood. "That is from your daughter, here." And the mother collapsed, you know, she didn't want to live without her daughter. Then, remember I told you earlier on, if you remember, with the belt business, leather. There was one fella caught, bringing into the camp, a leather belt, and he was caught, because every day was searches. So he, Killerman just wouldn't kill him, just like that, he, a roll call. Everybody must watch. In that camp was women and men. One side was the women, and one side was the men. Everybody out, night shift, don't care. Everybody out. First of all, made everybody stand for about two hours, specially did it, especially if it was a bad day, that everybody got soaked through, or whatever. And I remember, you know, talking here, standing with his arms, like here, or asphalt, you've got, in mud you were standing, you could stand in six inches mud, you know. Even if you had shoes, it did penetrate to your feet. They made you stand an hour or two, and he was laughing his head off, you know. He's looking at the faces, who's collapsing, who's not? And then he got that fella, and he says, "Undress." And he had to undress. And he stood, and everybody was watching, and he stood nude, in the circle. And then he let loose the dog, for his sex part, to tear it off, you know. The boy tried to fight with him, he tried to go for the dog. And the dog made a mess of him, you know, efficient, made a mess of him. And Killerman was standing there and he kicked him, and he was, well, 90% dead. And the dog finished him off slowly, we were have, all that we have to watch. So incidents like that happened quite often. Quite often. And if I remember rightly, I told you when I run away from Work C an appel was called for me, you know. And that boy now, is, one of them is in America, because I thought "I'm gonna get killed", when the two workschutz marched me to that space where people got killed. Then Albert came in, and he called me back. And people said to me later, I was smiling. Why was I ...? I didn't know what's happening, because my mind was

confused. You see, when you know you're going to die, your mind becomes blank, completely. You know. I wasn't here, and I wasn't there. I was, I was neutralised, in a way. When Albert called me back, I didn't know really, you know, what it's all about, you know. So at the time there was also an appel called.

They called an appel to ...

For every little bit an appel was called, twice a day, three times a day, four times a day, so people sometimes could not sleep. Sometimes people could stand five hours on the appel, or six hours, and go to work, straight from the appel, you see. You had to be strong. You had to ... all those people who survived the camp will tell you that the humans are stronger than steel. What a human body can take is unbelievable - at the right age. If I would have been, let's say, 30 or 40, I don't think I could survive, simple as that. Simple as that. And many people who were that age, collapsed, died, heart attack. God knows. And some people, many people committed suicide, those who had guts, committed suicide. Lots of people committed suicide, in Skarzysko, lots of people. They didn't want to live any more. There was a father and son there, he, he talked to the father, to the son, and the father strangled his own son, and then he killed himself. They didn't wanna go through it, because it was torture right through, you see. When I say, "work hard", Work C was 20 times worse. Work C was hell, hell, whatever hell God designed, Work C was ten times worse. Work C was unbelievable, how people collapsed, died. You walked on people, you know, you couldn't, you couldn't help it. Everybody wants to live, you see. You see.

Where was that? In the factory, or in the barracks?

Work C, this was during the day, when we, when you were working. Because when you worked there, in Work C, certain Zonderkommando, you had to run, not, not walk, run. "A, B, schlepp this and schlepp that," and if you couldn't lift it, you had to. And if you couldn't lift it, you were killed. There was two things. Some people couldn't lift it, and if they couldn't lift it, he stayed there on the ground forever. And two days later, or three days later, they collected the bodies. And so every day was all this sort of things. Appels, Work C, in the barracks was, was, was appels, first of all before you went in the morning. You were supposed to go seven o'clock, you had to be there five o'clock on the roll-call, two hours, they counted you, you know? You stood there first off for an hour, in the winter, the rain, every morning, you stood. And they took a pleasure watching you standing, in the mud, in the rain, you know. So appels took quite a lot, yes, and people, those couldn't make it, couldn't make it, and that's all there is to it. Finished.

Was there any kind of treatment for people who did become sick?

Yeh, I told you earlier on. There was the little hospital. No treatment. They put you in the hospital, and you laid there, finished. If, let's say you got a beating, you could not get up, yes? You were 50% dead, if they put you in the hospital, and if you managed to recuperate within three or four days, by yourself, you went back to work. But if, let's say, you had to stay there for two weeks, you were finished, because every week they emptied the hospital. There was no treatment, you know. What treatment? There was no bandages. You went in, if, if they cleaned up the blood,

and you lay there on the floor, and finished, and that's all there is to it. And if you had to wait, lay there a week, a week, or two weeks, you knew, you knew that you ... But some people didn't care, you know, they didn't care. They said, "Let me finish off, I've had enough. Let them finish me off." You know. So that's how it was. There was a hospital in Work C, Work C was one room, I remember, one room. And in the morning, in Work C every day, were, you had, not showers, just cold water, sinks, just cold water, and toilets. And it was a big huge barrack. And in the morning, every morning, there must have been, every morning, a hundred dead bodies lying on top of another, you know, like your merchandise, like bricks. Thrown, thrown here, women, men, girls, appalling. Took off the clothing, all nude, lying there. So every morning when you came in, when I came in, a hundred bodies, 50 bodies, 150 bodies, yes? And then the Zonderkommand, you see, took them away. You know, buried them in the woods. And every day there was bodies. First they moved them in the wash-house, stack them up, you know, all sorts of bodies. And then the Zonderkommando, there was a group, I don't know, eight, ten men, yes? And they had to move them away. Make space for the new ones, the new lot, you see.

And that was in Works C?

That was the, Works C. Yes, yes. And Work A they had a similar thing, a similar thing. A similar thing. And Work A, they have first of all the hospitals, Work A was a little bit better, well, a lot better compared to Work C. A little bit better, but Work C, I don't know whether you have any survivors, maybe two or three. Maybe two or three. Work A you got quite a few. Work A you may have 2,000. Work B too. Work B also got some survivors. Work C, I have never, I've never met anybody yet from Work C, really. Work C was the worst, the worst camp.

How long, I mean, you weren't there long, were you, in Work C?

In Work C, let me think. In 1942 I went in. In 1942 I went in. After, after, after, after, after the Visherminia (?? ph), after they evacuated the ghetto, yes?

Mmm.

I worked on the Work A for, I dunno, a few days, then they moved me to Work C. And I was there, wait a minute, I'll tell you, I run away in '43. A year. A year I was there. A year. Over a year. Work C was a year.

So your job on the hothouses, that was in Work C?

Work C, oh yes.

That wasn't, I see.

Oh yes, that was in Work C, yes. Making the hothouses.

So the different jobs you had were in Work C?

Yes. Yes. And the reason why I survived that long in Work C, yes, because I was in the hothouses. The hothouses was the best job. Then, and while I'm talking to you, reminds me of something. In the hothouses, when I was working in the hothouses in Work C, we, our group was a privileged group. We had to go, one day, to deliver either straw or hay, I don't know which, to a prison, to a war prison, of the Russian prisoners, a place not far, Ilrza, it was called. I went in a wagon, about four of us, and I was picked to go. While I'm talking to you, I can remember the camp. It was a huge camp, made of barracks, and I only saw about three Russians, soldiers, walking about. And these were, I remember, they have tools with them, like hammers, and all that, maintenance people. I then, I dunno, I think I brought in some hay to the barracks, then I saw those prisoners, and I would say to you that they were in worse conditions what we were, treated. Each one was caged up. You could only see his head, all barbed wire round him. He could not move. And I, myself, was, felt sorry for them. How these young boys, they were all young boys, they were also under-nourished, also 70% dead, big eyes, looking at us. They didn't know who we were, and I looked at them. And then I was told that's how they die, they keep them here for, till long, as long as they can last, you know, all caged up, wired, can't move. Can't even go to the toilet. And whoever is dead, they pull them out and they bury them. Yes? In all these camps, even the prisoner-of-war camps, the Germans build them in the woods. Poland have plenty of woods, you see. And then they buried them, buried them, and buried them, but I remember Ilrza as the Russian, a Russian, a Russian prisoner camp, you know. And during the War, while we were in the ghetto, the only place the Russians would run, is to the Jews, to the ghetto, because the Poles hated them, and they give them away to the, to the Germans. If some prisoners-of-war managed to run away, because they brought them into Poland, the Poles would give them away, just like a Jew. They were then treated worse than a Jew, the Ruskies, yes? But the only people they knew they were safe with, were the Jews in the ghetto. And they used to run to the Jews, yes.

What did the Jews used to do with them?

They used to hide them wherever they could, the Russian boys, they were young boys, they used to hide them. And they knew, you know, they knew. A few run away, yes, a few run away, you know. Because, remember, the War started with Russia in 1941, you know, I mean. But that camp, it's still in my mind today, Ilrza, not far from Works C. Yes, they were very very, they were very badly treated. Even in Buchenwald they were they were badly treated, but I come back to that later.

Now. It was when you were moved to the ammunition work, in Works C, that you decided that, that was when you were working with the powder, that you decided you had to escape?

Yes. To run away.

Yes.

Yes.

And how long were you actually working with the powder? Was it just a matter of days?

Not many days. I wouldn't like to say how many days, it wasn't many, because I knew, in the back of my mind, that after, after two weeks, or three weeks, I would get very yellow, because the whole skin, including the nails, became yellow. So I knew, I have got to run, to do something. I knew I can't survive here, finished. I knew, I've got to, I've got a death sentence. Here I'm finished. It's only a matter of time. And I knew the turnover there is approximately, they were talking, as I came in the first day, between six weeks and six months. That's how it was. The weaker ones six weeks, the stronger ones six months. But you had to go. So I could see, even if I've got six months, I've got a death ... you know. "I'm gonna die here", I didn't want that. And I could see all the boys and girls, my age, approximately, I was still powerful, because I came away from, from, from the ogradnia, I was pretty strong, looked healthy. And that's the reason they took me away, really, in the first place. So I had still plenty of flesh on me, and I want to live, that's all. If I, I'm going to die, "I'm not going to die like that", I thought to myself, "No. Let them shoot me by bullet, but I ..." please, I want to die, and I'm still healthy. Not slowly. I don't want a slow death. So after the second day, I think, I already started planning. I was lucky because the ogradnia, I told you, the hothouses where I ... they were built next to the fence, and I knew my, my way, how to go about. So I started to plan, and finished. And I met that boy from Piatrikow, and we decided that we will run to Piatrikow, together, we will both run to Piatrikow.

What happened to him?

He got killed, I told you.

He was actually killed. Was he killed on the spot?

No. You remember, I told you, when we run the fence, the Poles caught him. The Poles. Because the night shift came, you know? And they heard something in the dark, you know? By the time I reached them, I could see them coming towards me, the night shift. I was very agile, and I managed to run through them. And then the said, in Polish, "Udzko, Udzko. There's a Jew there, he's from the camp", so they caught the other one, you see, and they brought him in, into the camp, and they shot him the following day.

Had somebody got in your way when you were trying to escape?

There were four, four or five Poles, yes. They tried catching me, but they couldn't, you know, because if you're fighting for life, you're very fast. You do things no normal person would do, and that's all there is to it, finished, you see. So they couldn't catch me. Finished. And I hid myself, you know, into the woods, and then I had to swim the, I told you, the river across. Yes.

Had another incident happened at that time? Was there something that you hadn't said, regarding that incident when you were escaping?

No. Don't remember. I don't think I remember any incidents. I mean, I could describe the whole thing, but it would take a long time.

Yes. All right. Now, Buchenwald. You went eventually, from there, when they dismantled that, the factory in Work A.

Yes.

You went to Buchenwald?

Yes.

Now, you just mentioned, just as I came in, something about Leo, Leo Blaum?

Oh, Leo Blume.

Leo Blume. When we were in Buchenwald, there were also English prisoners-of-war, only about 200. They were treated pretty good. They were treated pretty good. They got the parcels, Red Cross parcels. We saw them sometimes, yes. They were pretty good, pretty good, I mean, they were, they, they were well-off. Nobody interfered with them, they were sunbathing, they got Red Cross parcels. Now, Leo Blume, I did not see him, but I was told he is a little bit further away, on his own. The Germans gave him a barrack on his own. Yes, that he was on his own. That's what I was, I never saw him, no, no. Leo Blume, yes.

So, were the English prisoners separate? Were they in a separate part?

Of course. They weren't together with us, they were separate, yes, yes. Yes.

You also said there were German criminals?

In the camp?

In the camp.

Yes.

That was also a separate part again?

Yes. Yes.

Separate different camps?

Yes. We were, I told you earlier on, we were what they called, in "Cygoiner Lager", the gipsy camp. The main camp, which was build before the War, this was built of mortar, bricks. We were not in these, in these barracks, because they were good barracks, compared to ours. We had to lay on the floor, you know. Huts, just laying on the floor. And in the winter it was bad, because it was damp, and this and that, and if you were lucky, you got a bit of straw, you see. But they had critches (ph),

like, you know, like bunks, yes, yes. We never had that. So in the big camp, no Jews was allowed to go in there, they were fenced off. You know, there was a guard between our camp. And the, the same applied with the each, with the British prisoners. You couldn't go near them. They were a different department, you know? Fenced off, you know.

Right, now. And that brought us on, from there you went to Szliben?

From there I went to Szliben, yes.

Now, something that you just mentioned before, you said that that, that sadist, that cripple, you met him again at, at Szliben?

In Szliben. His name was Killerman.

And was he still active?

He was still active. He was still active, that little fella. Little fat fella he was. He was still active in Szliben. Then all of a sudden I saw him, in fact, he did not last long. They removed him. I worked in the gleisbahn in Sliben, the railway lines. For some reason or another, he came along, to supervise. But he was there only for a week or two, or maybe three, because most of the time, there were only two or three German civilians, yes, who were our bosses. He came along and he tried to speed things up, you see. And he tried to flog us, and we said, "Bloody Hell! He's here again", you know. But he was there, he was still active, still painful. But, thankfully, it wasn't for very long. Two or three weeks, maybe four weeks, he was there, then he, we didn't see him again. Killerman. But he was a natural sadist, Killerman. A natural sadist. I remember one particular day, before we were evacuated, before we were evacuated, in Skarzysko, he was still there. He went with the last group. In the camp, there were always, even Works A, I experienced, strong guys, powerful guys, they liked to show off, they've got big chest, and even in the winter, they never wore a shirt, they just wore trousers. Well, shall I tell her? Shall I? This was before our evacuation, and this fella walked about the camp, even in the winter, he was a very powerful, strong man, and he tried to show that he's, in the winter even, with no shirt, walking about in the camp. He was a very tall man, very powerful man, and Infling, that was two days, three days maybe, before we took, and he was, he was supposed to come with us. And that fella, Killerman, came along, "Come here!" And that fella started throwing punches, hitting him, lay down on the floor, his dog used to bite him, it took him about five, six hours, before he destroyed him. That Killerman. Och, if I would get my hands on this fella, I would give half my life away. I would do exactly, I would, I'm not a sadist, I'm not a sadist, I couldn't kill anybody, but this man I wouldn't kill, there was two or three I wouldn't kill, I would just give them what they did to, to, to some of them. Killerman was a little ... he enjoyed, he enjoyed killing. But listen, you get that in society. He was a reject from the society, a seconds, and took it out on nice human beings. A second, I call him a second. The man was a, a second, a reject. And unfortunately, the Germans have employed seconds to do the dirty work. Normal people wouldn't do the, couldn't do these things. Only rejects, seconds, you know, like, you can find them here, with the greatest respect, seconds. I would call them rejects. I mean, if I want to organise rejects here, to, to, to, to do a bit

of, sorry to say, Pakistani killing, I could get, even here today. Seconds, from the human race. I say to myself, of my experience, out of a hundred, you get ten seconds. Human, they may look nice outside, but inwardly, they are seconds. They can be educated, still seconds - sadists.

What makes them a second?

I think they're born seconds. You see, whatever you produce in this world, you get seconds. If you produce motor cars, full automation, you still get seconds. Some, why? That's how it is. Seconds. Human people, too many parts to go wrong. Too complicated. No person can understand the human brain today. "Something in his brain, something gone ..." He's a sadist. He enjoys killing. Finished. I hate killing. And the Nazi Party consisted of those sadists. There were some who were educated, but inwardly, they enjoyed killing. Finished. Let's face the facts. Some people couldn't do it, and some people enjoy it. Some people couldn't watch, and some people love it. And that's all there is to it. I don't think they're ... they're born like that, seconds, finished. And the, the German Army, all the killers, all the sadists, were seconds, in my opinion, the rejects from the human race. Normally, you couldn't recognise them. They look from outside very nicely, but when they had the chance, they did it. They are here similar, you get in every race, seconds, with great regrets. Amongst the Jews, there are also seconds. I have seen Jews also doing horrible things. Seconds. Here, you must realise was a law, an official law. You could do to certain people, whatever you want. No prison. On the contrary, you can get promoted. If you're a corporal, you become sergeant. If you're a sergeant, you become this. But you must prove yourself. The only way to promote, for promotion, is kill a few people. Even Poles, even Poles they killed. So one, I wouldn't like to think what could happen in any country today, today, even here, in this country, England, if the law would be, you could kill Indians. It wouldn't take them long to destroy them. If official law is "Kill", you would have thousands, volunteers, and that's what in Germany was, simple as that. See? In the camps, I mean, you were at their mercy. I mean, some of these fellas that were in the camp, like you are having coffee in the morning for breakfast, they have to have a human being. And then, you know, what you say in Hebrew, "aveiros geravos aveiro." "One sin follows another one." Once, when they've done two killings, the third one comes easy, and the fourth easier, and so forth, so it then becomes enjoyment to it. Killerman, I remember, used to come out every morning, after breakfast, with his cane, him and somebody else, used to enjoy killing people. Whoever was, "Ah!" Click. "Come here!" Finished. Boy or girl, whoever. Finished. And they tortured them, they messed about, destroyed them. And to them it was a good day. Finished. And that's how it was. That's the human race, with great regrets. With great regrets. That's why you've got to have laws. You cannot kill. You've got to have laws. But here, here Jews, there was no laws. On the contrary, you were encouraged to kill. Simple.

Were there any sort of resistance movements in the camps?

No. Not in the camps. Not in the camps, no. No. There weren't. No. As far as I know there weren't. I remember, in the camps, I would say 90% of the people, or maybe more, weren't any more normal-thinking people, because of the conditions. It dated, could not have a logical thinking mind any more. First of all, food played a

major part. And if that person is starved all the time, he cannot think logic, impossible. The only logic which he's thinking is, "Give me that piece of bread." That's all. "I'll do anything for a piece of bread, or a bit of food."

End of F2928 Side B

F2929 Side A

One of the people in the camp knew about the gas chambers.

Yes. You mentioned that some people had escaped on the way to Treblinka and come back.

And come back.

And told you.

And told us.

Yeh.

There was also, there was also a song, in camp, designed or composed in Treblinka. No, For Treblinka, in Yiddish, and it went, in Yiddish.

Say it in Yiddish, then.

Yes. "Treblinka dot, dos is for yedenyid, the skita old. Ver tintilin for blitche dold. For blide of albig dold." (PH) Now, what does it mean? It's a melody with a tune.

Do you remember the tune?

Yes.

Can you sing it?

Yes. (SINGS THE ABOVE) ... and then it carried on. What it meant, it was this. Treblinka dot - there is Treblinka; for yeden yid, the skita old - for every Jew the graveyard, whoever gets there stays there forever. Then it goes on further, you know, it's a long song. The words are very sad, it's a sad song. It's a sad song.

And when was that song composed?

I don't know. That I don't know. But I got it first in Buchenwald, yes, I think in Buchenwald.

On your first visit to Buchenwald?

On my first visit to Buchenwald. Because, remember, there were prisoners before me, and some of them stayed behind, you see. Even from our group, people stayed behind. We were moved, most of us, but maybe two, three hundred stayed behind. And I think I picked up that song there, you know. So, because I said earlier on I wasn't sure, you know. But, it was a song composed during the War, during the War, about Treblinka, yeh.

Now, we were on, we were talking about Szliben.

Yeh.

Were there any, was there a hospital or anything there?

No.

For sick people?

No. Again, a barrack, you know, a barrack. And, and people laid there, and the same thing, if you ... there was one particular boy, I remember, a young boy, a very lovely boy, a likeable boy, and he managed to get himself a very good job in Szliben. On the gleisbahn. Not with my group. In fact, some of them envied his job. He was a boy about 20, 18, 19, a lovely boy. His job was to connect the carriages together, you know, you know the carriage has got two plates - (CLAPS HIS HANDS) and in the middle you've got the connector. But he had to connect them while the train was running. He had to be fast. But he was pretty fast, but one day, and that's what happened, the plates got him on the shoulder, you know. And they brought him into the camp, but he was lying there till he died, took him about six months. No medical, nothing. He was just lying there, you know. Lovely boy. I went to see him, in fact. He was lying here, you know, slowly, couldn't do anything, couldn't do anything for him. No bandages, nothing. Infection set in, and it finished him off. Infection. If they had put me some bandages, some iodine, or something like, I could have, but the infection got set in, they couldn't do it. They had nothing. The Germans wouldn't give nothing. So he lied there for six months, pain, and, and, and until he died. So in Szliben was a sad thing. If you were ill, if you were ill, but at least in Szliben, there was no shooting, such as shooting. There was torture, you know. And if you couldn't survive the, finished. But not actually shooting, you know, one, two, three, ten, out. Ten out. Shot at with the, five people, three people, whatever. Szliben, no. There was not actually shooting. People died, but not from shooting, you know. The only thing, I told you that woman, the SS woman was a, evil, evil. Also one of the seconds, you know, reject from the human race. She enjoyed flogging men. She used to walk about flogging men. She liked, men. They were all young boys, men, a man couldn't survive, if you were over 30, finito, ta ta. All the groups in the camps is under 30. So she used to pick out two or three fellas, every day, also flog, hit, ba pe, kick. And the boy couldn't do a thing. He knew one thing, if he lives, finished. And everybody wants to live. On one particular instance, on one particular instance, I remember, in Work C, I'm going back here a little bit, Work C, there were twin boys, twin boys, and Kotlenga the killer. We were working with that group. Ginger boys they were, two brothers, twins. And they were about 20, 21, and Kotlenga says, "Come here!" to one of them, you see. And he had a spade, you know, not a shovel, a spade, and he hit him right here, and he killed him instantly. So his brother went for him. His brother went for him. But, you see, those two, those killers never went by themselves, they always walked with two of them, three of them, never one, you see. And the fella was, the Greener Monake we called him, took out a revolver, and bang. But the brother knew he's going to get a hiding, he didn't care any more, when he saw what happened to his brother. So they, not many cases like that did happen, you know. But it did, now and then, you know. What do you call? But, as I said earlier

on, even that woman, yes? in Szliben, when she did the flogging, there was always a corporal, or a soldier, SS, walking right with her, watched, if anything, he's got, he's got you, finished. All of those killers never walked by themselves, never. Never. And that's what happened. Finished.

What was the food like at Szliben?

Szliben? You couldn't survive on the rations, again. You couldn't. Maybe you could. I doubt it. I doubt it, whether you could. At least, I would say I couldn't, if I remember. But in Szliben, I tell you what I used to do. Again, I was lucky. Wherever I was, I was lucky, that's why I'm here. In Szliben, I used to organise food from the kitchen, how did I organise? Imagine the kitchen, and every day we got our soups. And the soups in every camp, more or less, was the same. It's like a dustbin with two handles that people had to carry. Now, these dustbins, when it was finished with the soup, they were left near the barracks. That barrack, that barrack, you know, all the way. Now the, there was ... nobody, there wasn't any particular job, anybody's job, to take, to collect, the kitchen people had to collect these bins, food bins, from outside, wherever they saw them. Their job was to collect them, clean them for the following day. But, if I managed, yes, if I managed to help them out, and I got a little, and I got one of those tins on my back, and I came in the kitchens, "I've got a tin. I've got a tin." Once, when I was in the kitchen, it's a kitchen, they've got all sorts, they've got carrots, potatoes, and, grab, put them out, "I'll get you another one." So carrots, you could, you could eat, you see. Cabbage you eat. I managed to get a cabbage, I was okay. Now, in the summer, when I worked in the gleisbahn, there were fields not far from the gleisbahn, so we could all do with a little bit of food, pinching, from the field, whatever we could, whatever we saw. That's how I managed to survive. I remember, one day, a wagon came along, into the camp, with carrots. And me and Abram was working, to help to unload, we volunteered, you know, we said, "Come on, we'll help you", and they wanted that. But there were two of us at a thing. So, he was, took more chances than me, and every five minutes he run away, like, pretends to go to toilet, but he had carrots, and he hid them into the ground, you see, we hid them in the ground - made a little hole, we hid them, and to, to be able to eat the following day, you know. So this lasted, you know. We managed. But certain people couldn't. And I tell you one particular instance. I didn't want to tell to my sister, but I'll tell it. My sister Ray, whose now in America, she's now married, but if you remember, I told you earlier on, during the War, 1941, she was three years older than me, four years older than me, three or four years. So she was about 14, 15. She knew that boy. She met, well, my sister introduced him. He was about, he was only also 16, 17. And they used to write to each other. And the funniest part was, he arrived also, in Work A, Work A, in Skarzysko, on the, you know, on the side with the men. And he used to see her, you know. And she liked him a lot. His brother was a policeman in Work A. In fact, his brother wasn't too bad. Leibel, his name was. Do you remember I told you later on, that when the, all the police got killed, he, two or three, and he was one of them, his brother, no, Leibel they left. Albert they left, Leibel they left, and two or three they left, because they weren't bad. And I think that boy was called Yeshua or something like that. Anyway, he was older than me. That was in Szliben. And one day, remember I told you, when I was looking for these empty cans to bring into the kitchen, the food cans, and I saw there, I saw a can, and inside the cans, they were pretty big, you know, I

could see a fella licking, and licking, and licking, who was it - him. And I knew him, came from a lovely family. He was only 50% gone, more, more, let himself go. I couldn't, I couldn't, I says, "Och, there's nothing to lick," all metal, you know, there was nothing there any more. And he says, "I'm hungry. I'm so hungry." He kept, these people, only one thing kept saying, "I'm hungry", all day, all day. Anyway, I says, "When you've finished, I'll go." And he says, anyway, I try to explain him, I'm, I'm quicker, I'll go with him. He wouldn't, he wouldn't. He wasn't the type, too proud, or I don't know, rather die, you know, there were people like that, what they call in Yiddish, I don't know, they called the bekovede people, I don't, I don't know, in Yiddish they call them "bekovede", but for me I've got no word for them. If people want to live, anything, I will do anything to survive. Anyway, I managed to get in with that what do you call, and I managed to get some food. Exactly what kind of food, I don't know, but I didn't want any of it, and I gave him the whole lot. I said, "Here, go back to your bunk, eat it up." And I think that's the last time I saw him, you know, in Szliben. I didn't want to tell my sister, you know, because she even now talks about him, what happened to him? I know what happened to him. But anyway ... So I, she, she knew he was in Szliben, because he was with my transport. I says, "I tell the truth, I haven't seen him, I don't know." You know. But that's how it was. You had to be lucky, you had to be this, you had to, you had to have a combination of a few things to survive, you know. On the what do you call, on the whole, Szliben, maybe 50%, no, maybe less, perished. Perished. This was a good percentage, because, in Work C, the turnover was, och, terrible, terrible, terrible. The turnover was, every week new people.

How many people would you say were in Szliben? How big was it?

Szliben also had a camp, a womens camp, French, all French, all French. I don't know. I don't know, honest, because they filled it up, you know. When they're there a few weeks, they brought another group. I don't know, offhand, I don't know, maybe 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, I don't know.

And what were the toilet facilities like there? Did they have ...

In the camp there was no toilet facility as such. You had a barrack, yes, yes. And you went to the barrack, and finished like that, finished. There was no proper toilet facilities. People went outside the barrack, outside, because I remember, when they built the barracks, they have plenty of land. They have also wood, you know, in the forest, you know, here a barrack, here a barrack. Work C, for instance, the barracks, a barrack, 20 trees, another barrack, 20 trees, you know. So, there were toilet facilities, toilet facilities, but they were not very usable, obviously ... neglected, you know. I myself went into the forest, every time I wanted to go to toilet, I went in the forest, I knew where it was, and I run there, thank you very much, finished. And also there was, there was a wash house, yes, a wash house. But the wash house, when I came in the morning, everywhere you look, dead bodies glaring at you from, you know, you know.

In Szliben as well?

No, not in Szliben, that was in Work C, no. No, in Szliben, in Szliben, as soon as somebody got killed they moved it quickly, away, out. Yes. Szliben, yes, quickly. You didn't see, you didn't see, a body didn't last more than two hours, three hours.

And so, I mean, how, when did you leave Szliben?

When did I leave Szliben? Do you remember I told you when, when Szliben was bombed? Then all of a sudden, we hear that Szliben's going to be evacuated. And we knew from past experiences that the leftover from any camp, they finished them off in the camps. You know, if they've got no more jobs, you know, if they've got left, let's say, a thousand people, and they've got to close the camp, the last few they finished them off. So when we heard there's other jobs to go to, you know, they're looking for people, other places, I wanted to be, I wanted to go there, because I didn't want to be left behind. So they asked for people, volunteers, there is work. I arrive, I volunteer, me and Abram. And they lined us up. I don't know how many people, maybe a thousand, maybe 800, I don't know. But the German, I remember, came up to me, because again, I was the smallest, and he told me, "very hard work", and I pointed out to him I'm still fit, you know, I want, I'm a good worker, I don't mind hard work. And he says, "Are you sure you wanna go?" I says, "Yes, sir", you know, "Ja wohl." And I volunteered. And they took us to a place called Flisburg. What happened was this. The Germans tried, Flisberg was a place where they tried to rebuild Szliben, if you like, into the mountains, that they couldn't get bombed. When we arrived the first night in Flisberg, a very cold night, we were standing outside in the mud for about four or five hours, or maybe longer, before the German, the Kommander, came out to greet us, to tell us. Eventually we were all tired, oh, och, terrible! Conditions, we could see here, is 20 times worse than Szliben, because you're trying now, here, we could see, it's the beginning of a new camp, into the mountains. The following day, when we got up there in Szliben, in Flisberg, sorry, Flosberg, this was another hell camp, hell, hell on earth, similar to Works C, similar. But here they have many SS chasing us to work. I went back, they picked me out, they said, "Who work on the gleisbahn?" I volunteered to work in the railway. So I went, with Abram, went to build the railway. We had to carry a piece of rail, up to the waist of water. You know, the wooden sleepers, two of us had to carry, which is very hard, in the mud, running. You had to run, not walk, run! And whoever left behind, stayed in the mud. The mud covered them. I would say to every five prisoners, there was a German, with a, with a whip, which was, because they tried to build it as quick as possible. They were now desperate. They blew it with explosive, into the mountains, and there it was hell. After a day's work I could see, you know, there was an expression in the camp, what do they say? In other words, "Don't give up your ration book." It was, I forget the expression they used, you know, "Fight it, keep the ration book." You know, in other words, "if you give up the ration book, you're finished." But, after two days, I myself, was prepared to surrender, because I could see I can't. Hard work, very hard work. Young boys died like rubbish, and every few days they brought in new ones. Because, remember, round there they have plenty of camps, plenty of camps. Like Szliben, they had plenty of Szlibens, the Germans had. So they brought in, from every camp, another two thousand, and two thousand, the people died, och! Terrible. The food again, wasn't good, but here you could not organise nothing. You did not work near the fields, just in mountains. It was, as I said, hell on earth. Every day, to survive there, it was a miracle, just a

miracle. Anyway, I think I stayed there for about three weeks. What happened was this. We knew that not far from us, there were also prisoners, Italian prisoners-of-war, they had lighter jobs, not far from us, we knew about them, because some of us are prepared to die, even if they caught, they didn't care any more. Some people didn't care, because they knew if they go to the Italians, they'll help them, a bit of bread, you know, they would, because the Italians knew our conditions. Anybody who managed to run away to the Italians, he couldn't stay there, but he came back, he had a loaf of bread the Italians gave him. One day, my friend, Abram, run there, and he came back with some bread, and also eight cigarettes. Now, cigarettes, even in the camp, was more valuable than bread. You may ask me why? Very simple. There were many people who would give you, for a half a cigarette, his full day of rations, or his full weeks of rations, because he said, "I'm going in any case, let me have a few puffs, because I want to die with a ... " You know, there were people who surrendered, and they said, "You can have my rations for a week." And the only way to have his rations for a week, is to keep his body somewhere for a few days, and you claim his rations. But if you were caught, you also had to, you were finished. But people took chances, you know. Now, when he brought back those cigarettes, we both knew that those eight cigarettes is worth a, a lot. How small, naive we were, we knew that we would, we don't want to give them just for a piece of bread, too valuable. So my friend suggested very simple, he said, "Shmulak, listen. You won't survive here. You're not strong enough. I may survive. Why, with these cigarettes, I think I can get you back to Buchenwald." There was a doctor there, from the, from the prisoners, you know, who could put you on the, on the, on the krank list, on the A list, on the sick list, yes? On the sick list, to go, because they moved back people, there was, every week, a transport, people who were 50% gone, yes? They moved back to Buchenwald.

They didn't kill them there?

They killed, if you were too bad, they finished you off, yes. But people who were, they, they looked at you, you see, and every week they made a selection, like. "Yeh, you can go back to Buchenwald." "Stay here." "You can go back to Buchenwald." And the rest who stayed behind, they took you away, and finished you off. So, we went back to the doctor, told him we've got eight cigarettes, but, on one condition, I want to go back. So he looked at me, and he says, "They won't take you back, the Germans, you're too healthy. You're too good. You look too good yet. Show me the cigarettes", he says, "let me have a look at the cigarettes." We showed him the cigarettes. But that's all. "Be dead." And I says, "No. If you manage to get me on the train, on the sick list." He said, "Impossible, I can't." He says, "My life is at risk."

Who was that doctor?

He was a Yiddishe doctor.

Do you know his name?

No. No. And there were two doctors, in fact. And he says, "Come and see me in a day or two." So I kept contact with that one, I went daily to see him. And he says,

one day, "there is a transport going back on that particular day. Now, I haven't made a list yet. I don't want you to put them on the list. What I want you to do is come twenty minutes or a half an hour before the people march off, and I may, I may push you in, I may suggest you're fit to go back to Buchenwald, I may do." I says, "Okay." And I did that every day, er, when that day arrived. And he managed to get me, and Abram gave him the cigarettes. And I arrived in Buchenwald.

But Abram got nothing else for the cigarettes for himself?

No. No. He gave his life for me. He gave his life for me, yes, Abram. Right through the War he was like that to me. Yes. He was, yes, he gave his life for me. In fact, in Flisberg when he organised, when he got a piece of bread, first he gave it to me. Would you believe it? He was that kind of a boy. Even today I think about him, you know, he was, he was, he looked after me, like, like, like, like gold. You know. He knew I'm weaker than him. He was a very powerful boy. Whatever he managed to grab, whatever he got, "Here is some. Here." First time, first, every time. I couldn't say that, with great regrets, about my friend who is now in London, Benny, no. I would like to say that, but I can't. He was just the opposite, I'm sorry to say. But Abram, no. I know he died. I know he died. Abram, you know. Someone told me he died in Flisberg, yes, he died. He died. He, they finished him off. And, but he did right through, from Work A, I got to know him in Work A, Work A to Buchenwald, from Buchenwald to Szliben, you know, I was with him about two or three years. It was like in Szliben and Flisberg, Flisberg, and in Flisberg, the turnover was great, great, great, great, great, great. I don't know whether you hear anybody from Flisberg, survivors neither, no. Terrible. The turnover was terrible. And luck was run out on him. He was very lucky, even in Szliben. Very lucky. He took chances, a lot of chances, he'd run here to the field, to this field, and this field, you know. And one day he managed, in Schlieden, believe it or not, to run into a German house, you know, and he got some food and he run out. Yes. He risked his life, naturally, you see. And he did that. He did that a few occasions, you know. He managed, whatever he managed to grab, he gave me the first option, before he touched it. He was, for me, I would say, like a mother, you know, a mother and child, when a mother, when the child is hungry, the mother will always give the child the first bite, he was to me like that. He was to me like that. And those eight cigarettes saved my life. Saved my life. And I came back to Buchenwald. The journey took two weeks, three weeks, or whatever, you know. But I came back to Buchenwald. This was already, in Buchenwald, I would say ... the end of 1944.

End of F2929 Side A

F2929 Side B

Now, where was I? That's right, the journey. [Are you on?]

[Yeh, I'm okay, I'm just watching.]

[Are you on, Brendon?]

Right. When I gave the doctor those cigarettes early one morning, I remember it was a very very cold, it must have been the end of 1944, very cold. I arrived there after a pin class (ph), where all the sick gathered together. In fact, we all took a chance. We didn't know really whether we're going back to Buchenwald, or whether they will take us somewhere else. Anyway, we were marched out from the camp, to the train. When I say a train, I mean a cattle train. We were allocated 80, approximately 80 to a wagon. Very very cold, not enough clothing on, and we started to travel. We didn't know where we travel, because it was all dark. After a few days with no food and no water, this train stopped, and they've opened the doors, and they just threw in some bread, and pieces of meat. Now, from the sick people, maybe, I was healthy, reasonable, even if I didn't eat, also I didn't eat for about a few days, but people there were already 50, 60 per cent gone, maybe more. And I remember one particular boy, a Hungarian boy, a Magyar, I called him, he caught the whole lot, and he kept it to himself, all the food, and all the pieces of wurst. Next to me, there were three brothers, lovely people. They were from the age group between 18 and 24, and they were very weak, very weak indeed, and they begged for a piece of bread, and that swine wouldn't give it to them. He was sitting. We couldn't shout to the Germans, because if they would, they would come and they shoot a few, 20 or whatever. And besides, the train started to move already. They didn't care. I'm saying this, because I feel like I'm, I've got to say it. Because I was brought up morally, justice, and I knew it was wrong. And I remember, that particular boy was older than me. I was then only about 15. Still weak, and I was looking at him, and I begged him, "Give those three brothers some bread." He wouldn't answer. He wouldn't answer. Till my patience has gone, just gone, and I went for him, and I had a fight with him. But then he bit me, he bit my finger, and I started to scream, and I had to let go. He bit me really really hard. And I let go. But I still wasn't very happy. I recovered the following day, and he still kept all that food. I managed to gather one more boy, I think, with me, but by this time, he didn't have the whole lot, because he already ate, during the night, he ate the lot by himself. He was about 19 I think, 20. Anyway, I made him, I made him, whatever he had, to distribute, and the first were the three brothers. The journey was a very very bad one. It was winter, very cold. Eventually we arrived in Buchenwald.

How did you force him to do that?

By force, simple as that. He was sitting on it. He made himself a little seat out of the food. And he wouldn't just part with it. Eighty per cent of the people didn't care any more, they didn't know they're coming or going. They didn't want no fight, no, like, "let me die in peace, let me die in wagon already." They didn't care, they gave up. I didn't give up. I was fighting all the time. How weak I was right through the War, I

would not, to the last minute, I would not give up. So I forced him. I said, "Get up. Come on." You know. And I started to want to fight again. He knew that yesterday, he was lucky, he bit me, so I left alone. But I recuperated. I start another attack. So eventually, I made him, what do you call, and he did. Anyway, we arrived in Buchenwald, also similar, like it was, I can remember, I thought Buchenwald would be now, when I first went to Buchenwald, it wasn't so bad. The conditions the first time when I arrived in Buchenwald was much better than Poland, much better. From my experience, as I told you, the Polish camp was the worst, worst. So I thought, when I come back here, it was 1944, I'll have similar conditions what I've left. But things have changed. It wasn't as nice. First of all, when I left, when I arrived, the rations were now cut by a quarter from what I had the first time. We arrived, and I also noticed they've changed a little bit the camps. When I was there the first time, they had the big camp, and then they had the smaller camp, which we called "Cygoiner lager", which we took it over, I think I told you, from the, from the, from the gipsies, the Cygoiner lager. And now they've had, between the big camp and the Cygoiner lager, another fence. They had two fences. So when you came into the camp, yes, from the main gate, you had to go right through the main camp, a fence, yes, and then there were three blocks - Block 59, 60 and 61 - another fence, and then more barracks. We arrived there, and they walked us through, we are delighted that we're going to the major camp, we could see, you know, we're not going to be done in. And we were allocated Block 59, which was the krank block, the sick block. I came in that Block 59, it was the end of the, next to the wire, like, there were all sorts of nationalities, all sorts - Poles, all sorts. All sorts, all, all European nationalities. Very few Jewish people. Maybe 50, maybe 75, I don't know. But I soon got to know two or three boys there, my age group, 15, 16. Two boys, one from Warsaw, and one another boy. The Warsaw boy was intellectual boy, he couldn't speak a word of Jewish, no Jewish at all. But, of course, I detected he was Jewish, Jewish manners, Jewish ways, and he spoke to me all the time in Polish. He couldn't, didn't understand Jewish at all. The other boy was a slim boy, very slim, slim, tall boy, spoke Jewish, and we were three together.

Can I just ask you, I mean, how did you detect he was Jewish? You know you said Jewish manners, but what was it that you could detect? How could you tell?

Oh, you could detect. Look, okay. You can detect, here you can detect ways and ... the Polish Jewish people have different ... like, some, same like here. In five minutes you could detect. The thin one, especially, he looked Jewish. He looked typical Jewish, you know, the thin one. I forget his name. The other one also looked Jewish, I think. Also there weren't many boys, you must realise too, there weren't many boys my age group, unless he was Jewish, Polish boys had to be 25, 30. In the camps, you did not see young boys, my age group, who were Aryan, only the Jewish boys, naturally. So in that camp, in that block, whoever you saw a boy of 15, 16, 17, must be Jewish, simple as that. I'll come back to you later, and I'll explain to you why it was. So we became friends, and, and I remember, in one of the blocks, half the blocks, there was the Russians, the Russians. They put in a few Russians, I think Block 61. And in the camp, you had categories, categories. Now here, that particular time, we were Category 2, because the Ruskies were Category 1, they were treated the worst, you see. The first time now I've experienced that I'm a little better than human

beings, the Russians, they had stages, you see. Anyway, we talked to the Russians, we didn't do any work at all. We just walked about in that vicinity.

Was there a Category 3, then?

No. Yes, you would say, what did I say? The Russians were number 1, the Jews were number 2, the Poles, or the, or the, or the, or the Czechoslovaks was number 3. They were better, they had more, they had more privileges. For instance, the Poles had Red Cross parcels. Not the Jews or the Russians, were not allowed. I'll come back to you on the Red Cross parcel in a minute. We didn't do any work, but then this was the end of 1944, remember, the Germans knew they're losing the War. Work, the gypsy camp was, now existed as Block 66, Block 66. Block 66 was now made only a kinder block, for children. And, of course, they were all Jewish boys. Only boys, no girls. Buchenwald had no women, only men. So, when I heard that Block 66 is a better block, and not only that, Gustav is in charge. Remember I told you Gustav? Gustav is in charge of that block. So I made my way to that block. Also there was a fence, there was a gate, but now it wasn't so, any more, 100%. Sometimes it was open, sometimes it was locked, there was no guard, so we went there. So I went in to there, and Gustav, and I asked him whether he remembered me, I was here only eight, 12 months ago. He remembered me a little bit, and he says, I asked him, and I asked whether I could be transferred, because Block 66, he tried his damndest to give some more for the children. He did his best. The same human being, he hasn't changed. So I asked him, he said he'll do his best. But, in the meantime, he gave me some bread. He said, "Come in tomorrow, when the soup comes, if I've got a bit over, I'll give it to you." And I did do, and he helped me. He did try his best to get me in. But he couldn't. One day, I'm told, rumours were in the camps that they're going to take out all the children from the kinder block, they're taking them away. So now I wasn't so happy to be transferred to the kinder block, because I hear rumours here. Now, then I hear rumours, then when I was there, one day, with my two friends, and they already became friendly with a few other boys, you know, there must have been, I don't know, five or six hundred boys in that block, so I became friendly with a few boys. And we're talking, we didn't work, none of us worked at the time.

What did you do during the ...

Nothing. Nothing.

Were there roll calls?

There were, but two hours. We didn't mind to stay because there's nothing to do. There was no work. Buchenwald, I tell you, there was no, I told you before, work, none of the people worked, only to maintain the camp itself. In that small camp, we just sat and talked, and we talked about the good old days, or how ... when the War finish, stuff like that. One day, Gustav came in, and he gathered all the boys. And he told us, well, I was there too, but I didn't belong to that block, that the Germans will come one day, he doesn't know when, but they will, to collect us, they will come with machine guns, with rifles, maybe 20, or 30, 40, he doesn't know, "But I know they will come." And he gave a speech. And the speech consisted mainly of one

thing, to give us enough strength and courage not to move out from that block. Because once when you go out from that block, you're finished. They'll kill you, they'll destroy you with gas, anything. "But they will not bring the gas in here. They will not shoot you in this block, because they'll have too many witnesses." And he talked for about an hour, two hours, maybe longer, and every day, he kept reminding us. "Let them come in, let them burn the block, if they want, because, because as soon as you move, you're finished."

This was the Block 66?

Block 66, kinder block. Well, now I'm scared to go into Block 66, in case I'm caught in the middle. So I kept to Block 59, to my counting block. One day they came, with the lager fuhrer, from Buchenwald. With, I don't know how many SS, they mounted machine guns. "Aus, heraus!" Not a word. Nobody wanted to move. They were all hiding themselves wherever they could, they wouldn't move. And they threatened Gustav they're gonna kill him. And he says, "Kill me. Because ..." he said, "you're the culprit." "Tell them to get out." He says, "No, I won't. If you wanna kill them, shoot them inside." And they tried to frighten him. He says, "No, I will not allow my children to be killed, to be gassed. I won't allow it. You can take my life if you want, but not my children." And they were arguing, and threatening, he's shooting in the air, a few bullets here, a few bullets there. They walked away. They'll come back. Two or three days later, Gustav came to a clever idea. And what was the idea? Very simple. The kinder block were divided, in some were Hungarian boys, in some were Polish boys. He managed to get from somewhere, for the Polish boys, a red P, means he was a political prisoner. Now, only Aryrians would wear that, not the Jews. And the Hungarians, he managed to get a U, and he told all the boys to sew them on. So now they were not classed as Jews, they were classed as Aryrians, you know, and they could walk about the camp, and nobody touch them, they think they are Poles, all Jews, or Hungarians, you know what I mean?

What did the U stand for?

Hungarian. Ungery. Poles - Polaks. Now, some of them, most of them were pol, pol, pol is red, political. I told you black was for murder, but this was the Germans had that. So as it happens, nobody touched them. Nobody touched them. And that's how they managed to survive till the Americans came in, really, in a way. Now, I was back in 59, Block 59. I knew already that they've got the P's and the U's, and I still wasn't sure of myself whether I was better off in 66. But we have already heard, this was already, this was already in '45, I'm talking about, not '46, '44, I'm talking '45 already. We have already heard a little bit, gunfire from the Americans. Then, if you remember, President Roosevelt died, and there was a cease fire. This cost a lot of, thousands and thousands of lives, because Americans wouldn't move, just stopped. The Germans started to kill, a lot of people killed.

Started to kill in Buchenwald?

Not actual Buchenwald. They moved out groups. Not in the camp itself. They moved them to other camps, and then they finished, half of them are finished, you know, they did all diabolical things. Not in Buchenwald. Sometimes, maybe, I don't

know, I didn't see it. I was told they moved them to the gas chambers, slowly, nobody should see. They didn't want to leave witnesses, even a witness. They did it quietly. Now, one day even, it was so, it was all a little bit disorganised. So me and my friend, three of us, decided now the gates were open, between the little camps and the big camps. One day we hear that the big camps, the magazines are already a little bit open, you know. They're not properly guarded like they were. So we said, we found out which magazine, the food magazine, they had food magazines, clothing magazines, I hear rumours that some Poles managed to get in the food magazine, and got themselves a bread. So I want to do the same thing. There were three young boys, so we managed to get ourselves in a, in a what do you call, in the clothing magazine. And I remember vaguely, I managed to pick myself out a beautiful pair of trousers, you know, those which you go for horse-riding, what do you call?

Breeches?

Breeches. Breeches. And I tell you later, they didn't do me any good, those bloody breeches. And I put them on, you know, tied them on here, lovely. A nice outfit. And now I'm ready to welcome the Americans, in case they come in. I prepared myself. And we managed to get a bread the three of us, between the three of us, managed to get a bread. Okay, I'm ready now. I was reasonable fit, and not only me, there were only those who were, who took chances, only those who were a little bit agile did it. The rest, I was asked, "Do me a favour, I'll give you my ration, but can you get me some clothing?" I says, "No, go and get it yourself." They, you could still be caught, and if you're caught, they'll still kill you, even though it was disorganised, but you took that chance. One day, after I've organised my trousers, my nice outfit, they said the soup, yes, the rations, won't be served here, you'll have to go to another place, they've announced. Okay. So we queued up, all our block, our block, another block, the soup will be collected there. And I go, and as soon as I go, I could see there is a trap. They have brought in about two or three hundred SS and we were all surrounded. We were all surrounded with the dogs, oh, shouting and screaming and ... Jews. So I knew what is happening, because I've heard, which I told you before, every few days they're taking out a group from Buchenwald, and we don't know where to. I'm jumping the gun here a little bit. I'm jumping the gun here a little bit.

Do you want to go back?

Yeh, I want to go back a little bit. Only, only, only a couple of days. Now, I was in Block 59, one day, about, I don't know, about a dozen SS come in, and they keep shouting, "Zemplerin Juden, austraden, austraden." (ph) Zemplerin means, "All the Jews out." And they shout and they scream, from all the three blocks, Block 59. Nobody moves. Maybe, they did, a very few. But they knew that there were more Jews there, but nobody wants to move, everybody's hiding. And I was also hiding. And they shout, screaming and shouting, and screaming and shouting, they've got, I don't know how many, I don't know. They were messing about for about a few hours. They came into the camp, but they couldn't recognise, you know, in the block, I mean, they came in, couldn't recognise. First off, they were scared to go to the back of the, of the critches, of the bunks, you know, came in the camp, they came into the, to the, what do you call, to the barracks. Remember, a normal German, or any young boy

would run out very quickly, because it was terrible inside there. Remember, a barracks, which was fit for 50 people, here is 800 people, just like herrings. The smell, the this, and that, as soon as they came in, "Ah!" They'd be out of here. You know, they wouldn't go any further. So anyway, they had, I dunno, maybe about a hundred people, and that particular day, they said, asked them to go back to the barracks. Okay. Two days later, some more Germans arrive, now this time, they were even cleverer, "Everybody aus." Not Zemplerin juden, alle aus." Everybody out. And they start screaming and shouting, everybody's out, and they make us stand. And then we form a queue, everyone, out, stand. "What are you? What's your name?" Stopped. So they come to me, "What's your name." "Stefan Kovalski." "Religion?" "Katolitski." (ph) Okay, you go in. So I come inside the barracks, as it happens, my two friends who I became very friendly, they also said Catholics, and they also came into the barracks. Maybe 20 said they're not Jews. The rest stayed. And they got together, from all the barracks, round up a few hundred, yes, and they march them away. I don't know really what happened to them. I know one thing, they were not gassed at Buchenwald. They were marched out of Buchenwald, completely. Zemplerin Juden, alle (ph). They were marched out. What their fate? I don't know. So now, as I told you, coming back, I'm now in that Block 59, all Christians. That's the first time, yes, I get myself a Red Cross parcel, between me and a Polish boy, his name was Jusek. He was older than me, he was smoking, I wasn't smoking. And we became friends through that parcel, because he didn't know what I was, he never asked me, I never told me. He thought I'm Polish, naturally, because they were all Poles, not only Poles, there were all nationalities. There were French, there were Hungarians, there were Lithuanians, there were all sorts of nationalities, a lot of Czechs too, Czech boys. Now, I've got those two boys with me, those who I became friendly with, but Jusek is also my friend. When I go for the soup, now Jusek knew I have got, in the parcel, which he wants, cigarettes. So you could not divorce himself from, wherever I went, he was next to me, next to me. And I used to give it, there were, I remember, only tobacco, you could roll it, and also some cigarettes from the Red Cross. And I knew this is my assurity, like, because he was a big strong boy, I need a boy like a bodyguard for me. And now and then I gave Jusek a little bit, okay. So we're going for that soup, and I was with Jusek, and the Germans, now I could see they want us away. They want to take us away. If I remember, some barracks were built on stilts, you know, on stilts. And sometimes they had, from the ground, about a foot space, and I, I run to one of them, those barracks, to go under it, to hide myself, because I didn't want to go, I knew what's happening. But they caught me, the Germans. He said, "Look, if you don't come out, I'll kill you there." Finished. So I came out. And I joined the group. Jusek was next to me, and now they start to march us, you see. I remember, I was in the front of the row, I always want to be in front, because the back always got the worst. (LAUGHS) Either they shot them, always in the front, always pushed myself to the front, and I was with Jusek there. I knew those two friends are also amongst our group, you know. I believe they gathered four and a half thousand people, I believe so. That's what I've been told, four and a half thousand people, but not, none of them are Jews. There were, maybe 50. And we march and we march and we march, and we run and we run, to Weimar, and the train was already there. Again a cattle train. Again 80 people in a carriage. But this time, what they wanted, every carriage had two doors, one in the front, one in the back, that one German was sitting at this door, and another German on the other door. When I say German, they were, I don't know what they

were, they were like guards, they were old men, you know, with the rifles. We had to give them space, what they call, 4O on this side, and 4O on the other side. Now, Jusek was very good to me, that, in a train like that, from my experience, because we were travelling already a few times, the best spot was the corner, near a wall. In the middle you're always in trouble, always. The best seat, Jusek managed to get me a good seat, and we started to move. We don't know where we're going. We're moving.

Can I ask you, how long do you think you were in Buchenwald for, before they moved you out?

The second ...

End of F2929 Side B

F293O Side A

Well, to be precise, I don't know. But, at a guess, I would say to you, between five and six months. Because I arrived there either, either the end of '44, or the beginning of '45. And we were taken away, last, on that train, to, it was, well, it had to be April, March, April, April. Sorry, March, March I would say, between March and April. Anyway, we were on that train. Every day, daily, people died on that train. So what we had to do was this. We stopped, yes, and every morning, early morning, five o'clock in the morning, four o'clock in the morning, the doors were opened, and the Germans would say, "How many dead have you got?" Now, the German who was inside, you know, he knew, because he was guarding us, "eight", "six". "Bring them out." So, from every wagon, they collected the dead. And we stopped in certain remote places, specially, and we had to dig a hole, yes, and we just threw in the dead, and they put them some petrol, they made a fire, and we waited for half an hour or an hour, sometimes two hours, it all depends, and then we carried on. And then we know, then what they did was filled it up again from the next carriage. And now they've got empty carriages, that they let it go somewhere else. So every day too, they had empty carriages, because they filled up to 80, filled up to 80, filled up to 80. And people mainly died of many things. I would say mainly starvation, starvation mainly. Also cold, it was very cold, you know. I remember, as I told you, everybody died, Jusek used to take off the dead bodies, the shoes. And now most of us wore at the time already wooden shoes, and he used to make me a little seat, I remember, a little seat from the shoes. You may laugh, but it's tragic. As soon as he saw a dead corp, he pulled them off, and he looked after me like his kid brother, Jusek. And, but we got used to it, you see, you became like animals, you see, you weren't human any more, you were animals, finished. Maybe we looked like humans, but I don't know. And that's what happened every day.

What happened with food?

Food, as I told you. It all depends how they felt. If they felt, they give us, if they didn't, they didn't. And that's how it was. So, one night, remember I said to you, before, 40 here and 40 here on the wagon, the wagon was divided a free zone. Should anybody cross over during the night, what happened during the night, prisoners themselves used to fight, for many things. "Maybe he's got a piece of bread left, I'll take it off him." If the stronger one managed to push the weak one in the free zone, that guard would shoot him, at night. So we knew that free zone is a dead zone. Anybody managed to get in there, finished. But I was lucky, I was in the corner. Sometimes they tried to push me, oh, I also had trouble, people tried to grab my seat, but I was powerful, also I had Jusek. They used to, "Jusek, come here." And I wouldn't let him. One night, two young German SS came in, they had little machine guns on them, bren guns, and they started, first of all the shooting, hitting us. They wanted, defer the people from this side, into this side. Now, it was impossible to get 80 people on that side. One had to be on top of another, if you know what I mean. Oh, they were fighting and hitting, and shoch! And everybody tried to survive, so one on top of another, you know, the wagon was full with 80 people. And they said, very simple, and I remember, he lit a little candle, and some of them were probably bleeding because, from the hitting, remember, here are weak people, weak people,

and he says, "We have got, I'll be fair", I know they're from Miller, Himmler, Himmler, that all the Heflige, all the prisoners, must be shot. "Ich habe my gefel from Himmler." (ph) And with that, he started to shoot. Next to me, there was a big fella, Polish, kapo, who was a kapo, Polish, and he starts begging, "Look, I was a kapo, I was good for the Germans." Dah. And he dropped. And I'm in the corner, I'm still alive, and he shot, both of them keep shooting, like, just spraying. And I could see people are falling, people are falling, I'm still alive. Then bang, it hit me. It hit me, it's like, to me at the time, it was somebody throwing hot water over you, that's how it felt. And it's not loud. I know one thing, I got up, I woke up in the morning, early morning, and I'm covered with people, remember, who I have been with for at least a week, you have got to know them, all dead. Disfigured their faces, I couldn't recognise their faces. Only yesterday, I spoke to them, next door to me he was, we were talking, you know. The brain shot out, the mouth disfigured, terrible. And I'm all soaked with blood, all my, all my body, all my clothing, soaked with blood. And I don't know, I'm all red, and I don't know whether it's my blood, or their blood, I'm not clever enough. Here, I can't get out, I'm covered, I'm covered with my bodies, and I'm not strong enough to pull myself to the top. And then I hear moans and groans from, from, from the, from that pile of people, from that pile. Remember, there was a pile of dead bodies, finished, including me. Slowly, slowly, I try push away this body, push away this body, I feel my face, whether I've got my nose, whether I can see all right, I could see my face is all right, but I don't know the other part of my body, whether it's okay. Now then. I don't know, it took me about two hours, slowly, slowly, I managed to get myself out. And then I realise, I want to stand up, I can't, I'm shot, little holes I see. I then, remember I told you, when I left Buchenwald, I, I got these trousers, these little trousers with the, I undo them a little bit, and I feel it, my wounds, and I could see where the holes are, but it wasn't so bad the first day. And I thought, "Maybe it'll heal up." And then I thought to myself, "Well, I know urine is a very good anti-, anti-, anti-, you know, like iodine, it works like iodine, so I, with a, you'll excuse my expression, so I weed on the, on the wounds, you know, myself, hopefully, this will heal. In the morning, okay, we were, we were six, six of us survived. Six of us. Two not touched at all. Two not touched at all.

What had happened to your Polish friend?

Jusek, he was still all right. He had some, not a, in his body he had. And there was one boy who had two holes, believe it or not, in the cheek, because when he was hit, the previous night, he was crying. He was crying so, so he had his mouth open when they shot him. (LAUGHS) So it went out (LAUGHS), and another bullet here, here, right here, which he couldn't move, I remember. Anyway.

Where were you hit?

I was hit in my left leg. I had four bullets. The doors opened in the morning. The Germans come up, "How many, not wounded, how many are you alive? And how many are wounded?" That's all he wanted to know. He knew the rest are dead. So I think I said, "Six, two are", I think I was the spokesman. "Two are okay, and the, the rest are all dead." "Good. Okay." And then he made us carry, all the healthy ones, you see, four to a body. Other people were digging holes, and we were supposed to carry the bodies, the dead ones, next to that hole, four to a body. Four to a body.

Now, I said, "I'm wounded." So they made the wounded stand over here, on one side. All the wounded. And all the healthy, every five minutes, more bodies, because not only our train, there was other trains they did exactly the same thing, carriages, I mean. The first started burning, and we threw out the, they threw in the dead bodies. Any minute, I could see that the people who are standing in the wounded queue, also throwing in, all the wounded. Quickly, quickly, I managed to walk back, and come back with a body. Now Jusek was already standing in the ill queue. I could not send word to him any more, you know. Well, I was next to him, now it was too late for him, at that point, to switch, it was too late. And I asked him in Polish, and I'm scared to say too much, because, at the time, you could see people meant nothing, and throwing in and throwing in, like it was hell on earth. They threw in Jusek to that pit. Finished. Then we went back to another carriage, you see. And they filled it up again. By this time, my leg started to swell, slowly started to swell. These, these trousers doesn't do me any good now, because they're too tight. I want to cut off a little bit, because I could see my leg, it expanded daily. Now, I've lost a little of my appetite, but they're very, they give me, I eat, but I can't eat. Now I've got already other things, diarrhoea I've got. A few things developed, plus my leg. The leg didn't hurt, but it just kept swelling.

Had the other two Jewish boys that had been with you, were they killed?

No. No. They were wounded, but I tell you later what happened to them. I knew they were both wounded. One, as I told you, he was cried. That one, I think, survived. I think he's in Israel. I saw him the War was over, he wanted to go to Israel, nowhere else. The other one, I will tell you, he died in Dachau. He died. The other one, the one who couldn't speak Jewish, he died. Now, we managed, after the journey, I think two or three weeks took us, I'm not sure. We started, we stopped. We didn't know where, but we stopped. "Heraus." And I will tell you this, as I told you earlier on, we started off four and a half thousand people, we arrived in Buchenwald between 700 and 800. The rest were killed on the way slowly.

You arrived where?

In Dachau.

In Dachau?

Yes. We didn't know where, but when we came to the gate, we could see Dachau, we arrived in Dachau. I was very lucky. I got two Poles, I couldn't walk, but by that time I couldn't walk already, I could walk on one leg, I couldn't walk properly, they said to me, "If you're staying behind, if you don't go to the camp, they'll kill you. You must, with all your might, get in, into the camp, see what's happening. Maybe they'll kill us there, but you've got more chances there than outside." People who could not get into the camp, they were shot immediately, immediately. There were standing there, whoever dropped, bang, bang, then they have the Sonderkommando collecting them, and we could see all that. I managed, I managed to get in. We all, whoever stayed behind, stayed behind. But whoever managed, as soon as we got into the camp, we just lay down on the ground, just lay down. We couldn't walk any more. And with that, I remember lying there, I don't know for how long, I could see a Polish

lagerschutz, that is a, a, a, a Polish lager camp policeman, lagerschutz. And he had a P, and he had a lumkya (ph) here. So I knew he's a Pole, and also lagerschutz. And he looked well, the lagerschutz looked well. So I kept saying, "Polish Catholic prayer", crossing myself. So he came up to me, and he says, "Simko (ph), where do you come from?" And I says, "Poland." And I was very scared to talk too much, because he's, even at that time, maybe, not the accent, maybe he can recognise me, maybe. And at the time, I think I was, I weighed 28 kilos, which was, today I weigh 72 kilos, so it was, roughly, well, more or less, a little bit more than a third. He picked me up, carried me near the kitchen. And he sat me down, and he brought me out soup, but I couldn't eat it any more, couldn't ... just ... I was weak. I was weak, weak, weak, weak. I ate a little bit, but comme ci, comme ca. And he washed me a little bit, and he stayed with me, and he talked to me, he wanted to know lots of things, how long the journey lasted, where do I come from, what, you know, many things we talked. Anyway, eventually, and remember, he didn't know that I was Jewish, because that transport wasn't Jewish. He took me to the hospital. No Jews were allowed to go to the hospital. He took me to the hospital. I arrived in the hospital. Before I arrived in the hospital, they gave me a shower, and I remember, I was lying on the floor, because I couldn't get up. And I was washing myself on the floor, and the water was running. And there was another inmate there, he was Polish too. He says, "I'm going to report you. You are Jewish." Luckily, he didn't report me, but I was frightened. They gave me, I think, for the first day or two, I was sleeping just nude, in the nude, nothing, a blanket, and I got into the bed. When I got in the bed, a Polish nurse came to see me, a male nurse, and he says to me, that the leg is very very bad, they have got to take it, they have got to make an operation. And so then I say nothing to him. Listen. Yes, he said, "We may save your life, we may not." Anyway, he, he got me on to a wagon, and he took me for the operating theatre. Every cut they have made in my leg, I have felt it. Just, I don't think ... they gave me a little bit of anaesthetic, I'm not saying they didn't, just a little bit, I don't know what it was, but I felt every cut. They bandaged me up, yes, and they put me back to bed. We had two in a single bed. Two in a single bed. And I was lying in the nude. The fella who I was lying with, could see I'm Jewish. I think he was a Hungarian professor, I think. I think that's what he told me. He was a, I don't know, much older than me. And all night, I was thinking, "What do I do?" If they find me in the morning, I'm Jewish, they'll do me in. And all night I was thinking and thinking and thinking, and I was weak at the time. But, if a person wants to survive, he becomes like an animal instinct, you know, the last drop, and he'll still fight. And I came to the conclusion that the only thing, I've got to do him in. The only way I can do him, is by choking him, and I did do. I didn't choke him long, but I know one thing, he didn't move for ... after, I don't know, in the morning, he was lying next to me, and I pushed him, I talked to him, no answer, no answer. I thought to myself, "Maybe he died." Actually, up to today, I don't know whether he died, I had half it, he was, he was already gone a bit. And he was lying with me for about two or three days.

Dead?

Dead. Lying with me. In fact, they gave us a piece of soup, yes, he never touched it. But I couldn't eat my soup neither. Remember, I was weak already.

What I don't understand is, I mean, surely, like the Polish nurse must have known you were Jewish, and when they did the operation they would have known.

Maybe, maybe.

You know what I mean?

Maybe. Yes, I accept what you're saying. But what I'm saying to you, as I told you earlier on, like calling evil to the Germans, not all of them were evil, there were some of them, there were some of them. The same applies in the camp. You could have a thousand heflinger, prisoners, you only needed four or five to be evil, and that's enough, these four or five would give you away, even two would give you away. I'm sure the Polish nurse knew. I'm sure. But he never said anything. He was very nice to me. Very nice. Right through, he was very nice. So I find myself lying in Dachau with a dead body next to me, and then I hear rumours.

Who had done the operation?

I don't know. I don't know. I never, I don't remember, and I don't see, and I don't know whether I've seen the man properly, whether they're Poles or Germans, I don't think they were German, they were heflinger. The main body who I know was the Polish fella, who took me in a little wagon, to the, to the room, and there were two or three men, I don't know who they were, who they are, who they were, what they were, and he took me out again, you know. I don't remember them talking, because I was only concentrating on my, on my hurts, you know, when they cut it, that's all, you know. Anyway, rumours are in the camp, that the whole camp is mined, including the hospitals. We knew the Americans aren't very far, we knew it. Any time now. Even the nurse told me. So with that, I was weak already, and they said, "Either you will get shot", yes, "or the whole thing will explode." I forced myself to fall asleep. I thought to myself, "I don't, I don't want to see it. I'll fall asleep, and to hell with it, I'll die. You will sleep." I fell asleep. And the first thing I have noticed, in front of me, when I was lying in bed, there was a door, and all the time I was looking at that door, and in the door, was a circle, SS, you know, on that door, SS, SS. I woke up, I could see strange people. But this did not convince me so much, because the Germans had about a dozen uniforms, different colours, uniforms, because every, as you know, they put on different, green uniform, blue uniform, you know. So I listened to the language, but I thought to myself, "Maybe they could ... " because they, wherever they entered, yes, there were volunteers to join the German army, so they gave them a uniform, and then they spoke a different language, but they still belonged to the SS. And I thought, "Another group, but what?" It intrigued me at the time. The SS has gone. Something, zonderwitch (ph), I don't know, another symbol. And then I see a lot of black coloured people. A different uniform, which was the American uniform, but I didn't know what they were. Talking American, I couldn't understand. Different uniforms, shouting and blapping, ba ba, I didn't say anything. I never said anything. Some of them said, "I think they're Americans, we are liberated." And some of them, "I don't know. But at least they're not killing us." Then all of a sudden, about two hours later, we hear a battle outside. And what was the battle? I'll tell you what was the battle. When the Americans came into the camp, it was 12 o'clock, approximately, there about. They did not find any, very few,

in fact, guards, German guards. They thought that the guards had run away. With that, they stripped themselves, they left the tanks, and they made the rifles, like a pack like that, you know, together, you know, 20 rifles, and they had, and they went, had their lunch. While they were having their lunch, these Germans started shooting at them. They came out, and, and that was the fighting. In fact, I think, last year, I saw a, a what do you call, television, that when the Americans, it didn't tell you the whole story, when the Americans came into Dachau, they got out 275 German guards, and they were all shot. I saw the film. They all shot them. That's what happened really. But they don't tell you, the Americans, what happened earlier on, the Americans don't tell, because of stupidity, with great regrets, they didn't search the camp properly. Anyway, the next thing I know, volunteers, they were, I think, they spoke French. They were American, I don't know, half French, half what do you call? They spoke German, and they said, "We are from a certain group, from a joint ..." you know, to rescue us, you know. They told us who they were, you know, "You're now free", and all that. Okay. Naturally, we're delighted. The following day, they took out all the heavy wounded. Remember, here, they've got thousands and thousands of people, and they tried to save them, as many as they can. And they took me to the SS Lazeret, a German hospital, SS Lazeret, they called it. They threw out the Germans, of course, there was no Germans any more, because, they took over the hospital, and I'm lying there. I still had my name, "Stefan Kovalski yes, and religion, "Katolitska". And my leg at the time was very bad, very bad, gangrene set in. Two doctors came in, they spoke broken, a very very broken Jewish, and they looked at my card, they couldn't make up their minds, they couldn't fathom it out. And I says to them, in German, in Jewish, "Listen, I'm not Stefan Kovalski, they thought I've gone potty a little bit. I says, "I'm Jewish." And then I said in German, "Ich bin ein Jude", didn't take any notice of me. I tried to convince them, because I could see they speak between them, you know, no, they spoke to me in German, but it wasn't German, it was Jewish. Anyway, to cut the story short, they said to me, "I should sign that form", they're going to take my leg off. I says, "No". "No, no, no, no, this is no good to me." They didn't argue with me. I says, "Look, I want to walk properly, not ... I'd rather die." "Okay." Because they had thousands of people here. So they pushed me in to another room, lying there, on a mattress, nude, for the death, with the corpses, you know, because even the Americans, they couldn't help themselves, they didn't expect to see what they saw. They didn't come prepared. They needed not one doctor, they needed thousands of doctors. Here you've got thousands and thousands of people, could be saved, they've only got a few doctors to do this. They did their best. And I was lying there, lying quite happily, finished. I was then now, more or less 16. With that, a young American nurse came in, maybe she was 18, 19, and I remember, she gave me little sweets. And we started talking in sign language, and ...

End of F2930 Side A