

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with William Loew
March 9, 1995
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with William Loew, conducted on March 9, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

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WILLIAM LOEW

March 9, 1995

Q: Can you tell us your name and where you were born?

A: My name is _____ and they used to call us Willy or Wilek. Loew was L-O-W, but when I came to the United States it was changed to L-O-E-W. So the name actually here in the United States is William Loew, but my friends back at home they remember me as Wilek. I was born in Lwów, Lemberg. Lemberg is basically a German name for Louve and my parents came from probably Austria. I'm not quite sure, but from Austria and we settled down in Lwów. That was Galicia at the time and also known as a Austria Hungarian empire. The time in the _____ when I was born I had basically a nice family, a wonderful family. Let me speak about my brothers. I had an older brother we used to call Eli. The oldest one was Abe. We had a very close family. My mother was very -- was a housewife but also dealing in business. Our business was we had a brewery a mead brewery which is a honey wine. The business was quite prosperous. For one thing, our business has been derived from previous generations. We started, but not my father but my grandfather and my uncles they started in 1870. As a matter of fact I still have one of the labels of our original wines which is a honey wine. Our family was approximately 80 persons strong counting my uncles, my grandfathers from either side, my mother's and my father's side. We were more numerous on my father's side than on my mother's side. My mother's maiden name was Margulies and some of her brothers went to Palestine. At that time in 1932, 1933 and the remainder stayed there in _____ at that time. We stayed and we tried to continue our business. My father died when I was four years old. He died probably 1929 so my mother actually took over the business. I don't think she was a good business woman from what I recall. The business continued. We had my oldest brother could not get into a university in _____ because there was a quota for the Jewish students, so he had to move out from Louve to Warsaw. So, he studied there. This was expensive to study in Warsaw because the money that we had from the business was not that prosperous. I'm not quite sure the reason for it but I think that my mother wasn't as aggressive in the business as she should be. So, if I recall sometime in 1934 to 1934 before we folded our business and we were no longer in the business of honey wine. But my uncles they continued to be in business. At that time in that previous years, we used to export our wine to different areas of Poland that we know and also to other countries. The Jewish life in Louve was the best that can be said back in '37 '38 from what I can recall was lukewarm. It wasn't very bad. It wasn't very good. We did have our quotas going to school as a matter of fact when I went for my exam to enter the gymnasium even though the gymnasium was ten blocks away from me, I couldn't get in because I had a quota. I passed I understand my entry exam, but I couldn't get in. That was back in 1938. So, in order to continue my studies I had to move on somewhere else and I had to go to another gymnasium back on Louve on _____ Street. It was known as the Jewish gymnasium. Going back to '38, '38 was a fairly peaceful years for our family but it was a hardship because we couldn't meet the loans that my father apparently incurred. So, things were difficult. My oldest brother Abe who was in Warsaw, he finished his master's degree and he came back home and he

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tried to stabilize, because he was basically the oldest in our family, he tried to stabilize the family. Eli who was two years older than I was, he was more enterprising but for his own good. He was not part of -- he would try to help stabilize the family but we used to love each other and we used to fight each other and we used to do things that 13, 14 year old boys used to do. Abe on the other hand was much older than we were. He was older than I by ten years so he was more a serious person and he had very little in common with us other than try to take over the father figure, which he didn't succeed in many ways. In 1938, in 1939 things were getting worse in terms of what I recall there were quite a few refugees who would be coming from the western part of Poland especially those Jews who were exiled from Germany who came from Poland and somehow they didn't stay long enough in the western part of Poland and they kept on moving and settled down in our place in Louve. This was in '39 and it wasn't really that bad yet, yet they came the German Jews in thousands and settled down in Poland.

Q: What year were you born?

A: I was born in 1925, October 29, 1925.

Q: Did you work in the winery?

A: No, I did not. We had people who used to take care of that, but as I mentioned before our enterprise, or the winery, wasn't that much as busy I think in 1934 or 1935 so I didn't work. The only time I went to the cellar or to the winery is to see the process of making wine, how they were stirring the wine and to smell the wonderful smell that still persists in the winemakers. They were there, of course, I recall we had a winery that took space a whole block because that whole block used to belong to us. Underneath in the cellar under the whole block was the whole winery. I recall that barrels where the wine was stored for aging was stacked four or five barrels stacked high. They were smaller. They were not the 55 gallon barrels which is the common size here in the United States but I recall they were maybe 35 gallons. This was the standard barrel at that time to age honey wine. I don't recall how long they were aging but that smell and that wonderful aroma contributed from the honey it was still there. But in 1934 and 1935 we were all gone and I don't know who took over our business. It could have been that my uncles had took it over.

Q: You lost your father when you were four years old?

A: Right.

Q: Do you remember him?

A: Very little. There's only one event that I recall about my father when I was four years old. He had a beautiful flag, eight or nine rooms and each room was designated for a certain purpose. Beside the bedroom and the dining room we had what we used to call salon which is a large area and we had a special reception place for certain events or for our friends of the family. So, we had a fairly large flag. My grandfather who actually brought

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me up because I lost my father when I was four, he used to live with us and my aunt Miriam she was a sister of my mother and we stayed together. That was my family, the immediate family. Our immediate family consisted of our three brothers, my mother, my aunt Miriam and my grandfather. My grandfather brought me up. He was in a way a philosopher on his own. He was a self taught mathematician. He was a true philosopher. Not only would he be reading philosophy books but he also was a scholar in his own mind with the tumult and all the laws of Jewish rights. He would get up in the morning four o'clock in the morning and he would be on his way to study in the synagogue. I knew that he would wake us up because he would be coughing. Whenever he woke up he would start coughing because he was a heavy smoker and when he left I didn't hear any coughing any more. So, he did traditional things with him. He would get up and go to our synagogue. We used to call it a _____. He would stay there until from four to seven, seven thirty and by that time he would come home and wake us up and go and prepare ourselves to go to school. My grandfather, he was very helpful. He actually prepared me for my bar mitzvah. He was very fluent in Hebrew and in German and of course other languages like Polish and Ukrainian. But his special language was Hebrew and German. By profession he was a printer. He came from _____ which is south of Louve. He did have one sister I think and he had some family somewhere in Romania. I don't know that much about grandfather's side because I never met his sister, but I remember back in 1938 that somebody from _____ which is from Romania, came to visit us and we knew then that there was a cousin from grandfather's side that they live in Romania. He had a good life what I recalled even though it was difficult from a national point of view, but it was close. We were one family. We had a good rapport and a good relationship with our uncles. The other brewery in _____ that was right across our street so we had a major industrial park if you will of breweries. It was the Isaac Brewery and there was the _____ Brewery and then there was a _____ Brewery and we were all together in it. It was good. I recall the way we were distributing our wine to different stores. We had a wagon and horses and we would be delivering wine so often. I used to like to go to the barn and every so often just to be together with the horses. So, the whole _____ where we used to live, we used to live on _____ which is a normal whole block that compares with any block in the United States, it was all one brewery. We were sort of like a corner house which was a three story corner house that borders on _____ and _____. That was the main road in the Louve that carried on for a number of miles. The _____ is sort of almost like a district, an area where Jews used to live. It was a dominant area for Jewish life. It had many synagogues. In all, the Jewish people used to congregate right there. I don't know how many thousands of families who are there, but there are basically, it was the majority in _____. The minority in that area were mostly Ukrainians and there was some Poles. There were more Ukrainians in our area than there were Poles. This is not to say that this was typical for _____. In our area it was typical. The main activity in _____ was on Friday where all the peasants or all the farmers would come and sell their goods, produce mostly. We had a farmer that would come and deliver every Friday, sometimes Thursdays, but mostly Fridays, dairy and the milk and the butters and the produce. The potatoes for winter time. The cabbages, all that stuff because _____ was the main outlet for those farmers. Of course, we were doing also business at the same time. They were also

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purchasing wine. It wasn't a trade off. It was just a matter you would be buying for a certain period of time. My mother would be purchasing from week to week produce, but for the groceries she would go to a special store where it would specialize in Jewish food. It was a vibrant area for Jews to live. It was very interesting and when the market the farmer's market was over by Friday night, Friday evening as a matter of fact, you would see everything was depleted. The whole area was quiet because Friday night we would be going to synagogue, so the area was depleted. Saturday it was not as fortuitous but it was still kind of vibrant, mostly for the farmers who need to do some other shopping. So the whole weekend was vibrant and active when it came to Sunday, Sunday was much much quieter. Although the Jewish life continued. When the life in those days and I'm saying '38 and '39 was quite active it was also troublesome. Because we wouldn't be completely free of any problems. Any rumor that would install it would be quite dominant in our lives. The rumors were obviously of what happened in Germany and what happened in some other countries like in Romania or Russia although we knew very little of Russia but there were rumors, and the rumors were that Hitler was making statements that affected us automatically. There was a movement in Polish society to promote the anti-semitism. There was a part of that and anti-semitism was very dominant already in Louve and it was moving toward the end that we were worried. We didn't know whether we had to take any action. In fact we didn't take any action other than we had a way of saying let's wait and see what any troubles would be forthcoming. In 1939 it was a year that we will remember the rest of our lives because it's the year the war broke out. I don't remember _____ other than I recall when the war broke out it was a time where the _____ was bombarded. All the houses, one bomb hit our house. We were then in our basement, actually in the cellar was where the winery was, but we no longer had the winery but we had the cellar. A bomb hit just a part of our house, just a part of it, but it was -- the damage was done not directly to our houses in general, but the staircase, for example, which were concrete staircases, were they were marked and there were some splits in it, although we didn't think anything looked collapsed, but there was damage in it already. When we were in the cellar we had some other friends and some people were in the cellar and we felt we are in trouble when we got out and it was a while that I got out with Abe my older brother to see the damage. We didn't see any fire. Nothing was really down other than one portion was hit and there were some other buildings that were attached to our house and we checked that and I remember my brother said well, there's not much damage to our hiding place. So, that I recall that we were hit by a bomb. Apparently it wasn't a large bomb, but from there on, that was the beginning of the war and in probably the next few days things had happened that Poland was divided into two major areas with the lights somewhere west of Louve and the Russians came in. This was a new era that we began. The Russians occupied the eastern part of _____ and _____ was part of that territory. I recall when the tanks were rolling down from _____ coming from _____ and they were huge, huge, I have never seen in my life huge tanks and apparently they didn't have to fight anyone because the Polish army was not in our immediate area. If they were they were somewhere else. So, there was no conquest to be bragged about. They kept on moving, and they occupied _____ and our immediate lifestyle had not changed other than that in the next few weeks there was a proclamation of I think it was in a few weeks that all the major homes and businesses were confiscated and we had a

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new regime and so on. This was the Soviet territory. So that means that our house no longer belonged to us. And probably we did not have to pay any taxes any more because this was our main concern previous, because my mother always had to come out with money for the loans we had incurred some years ago. So, that was a relief in a way. The big question was how do you make a living. My mother didn't see how her facial with the army showed that she was concerned about those things. Eli was basically two years older than I was. He wasn't much concerned about the family as much as he wanted to find himself, and he tried different approaches. He didn't feel like going to the gymnasium. He never cared for that. My older brother Abe was concerned because he was one of the intelligencias and there were rumors that the Russians are rounding up the intelligencias for reasons that I don't understand. They would put them in prison which was on -- I recall that prison being called _____. Whether they were arrested or not I'm not quite sure, but he was with us at home. During that period of time, 1939 and into 1940, 1941, there was a period that I don't recall too much about Abe as much as Eli. I continued to study. I continued to go to school, the gymnasium until that time. The subjects my studies were now basically new. First of all since Jewish -- this was a Jewish gymnasium, we were told that now we are going to be learning Yiddish language. That was a surprise. In addition to Yiddish language we also had Russian language along with the Polish language, along with the German language, which was okay. My mother also makes sure that she wanted me to learn the English language and the French language. She used to, back in '39, she sent for me a special tutor for French and English. I was better in English than I was in French. That's how I picked up some of my English language. But in the Jewish gymnasium we picked up two more languages and I was quite proficient in Yiddish, although the Yiddish alphabet is the same as the Hebrew alphabet. You actually write in Yiddish the way you pronounce it. In the Russian language it was very similar to the Ukrainian language so I was also pretty much aware of that language, so we kept on going with our normal, normal studies with exception that we picked up two more languages. The life under the Russians don't have too many bad recollections other than that during that period of time more since Poland was divided into two areas, the German area which is the line, quite a few refugees were coming more so from the western part of Poland to our area. Of course the Germans occupied the western Poland so they were directly under the German authority. And Jews were fleeing from that area. I recall that in my class in _____ we received at least three German students one was from _____, one was from Berlin, two were from Berlin and one from _____. And there was another fellow who was also a student. He was from Czechoslovakia. I don't know he escaped probably from Czechoslovakia, but not Czechoslovakia per se. He was from the Bohemia part that was occupied by the Germans. He escaped into Poland and then to the western part of Poland. He came to us to the Russian occupied part. In all, they were very jolly fellows. I was 14 or 15 at that time and of course the fellows from Berlin they tried to speak either Polish or Russian and they had a horrible accent and they just couldn't get through because their Russian language and the German language they just don't put together. They used to pronounce things in German that the pronunciation it was funny for us to listen to them, but the were wonderful fellows, very, very good boys.

Q:

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A: No, they did not elaborate other than would I think would happen was the whole family escaped Germany to Poland so there were no problems with the family and they hardly spoke about any events that involved them. They were boys. They were my age. They were more interested in soccer games. They were more interested in learning the language, how to deal with us because we were actually _____ and they were the Germans so we were basically -- they were not even of Jewish nature. We were Jews. We knew the Hebrew. We knew the laws. They were not that much involved. They didn't care about that. Not that we cared either because we were actually just a part of our lives. We were not frightened to bring them into our way of life. They had their way of life. So, they did not mention anything of their event. The refugees who were coming in more and more from the western part, from Poland, we felt that we better slowly but surely being overwhelmed with those people and the reports that they brought from the western part of Poland was just bad. They were claiming that the concentration camps are being established. they were claiming that there's a terrible persecution going on. We thought in _____ because we knew about persecution that persecution -- because we didn't have the same rights as the Poles of for that matter the Ukraine, but these were true persecutions they were telling us. We didn't understand what a concentration camp means. It was a hearsay and in fact you just didn't believe that. It wasn't a part that he would accept that, it just wasn't acceptable. We didn't know what people would do in concentration camp let alone the establishment and how do you so things people ignored that part. But as they were coming, more by thousands, the shed that we used to have at home, we have opened up, the salon and the special section room. We gave it up for them to dwell on it, to live in there. We had a large kitchen and we offered them everything we had. They stayed with us. Some of them took to work. Some of them moved out on their own, mostly they were not families, they were mostly single people men and women who came who escaped and tried a new life maybe it was temporary because they had left some other people back home wherever their home was. There was quite a few from _____, from Warsaw from -- I don't recall the small towns in the western part of Poland. So, they stayed with us for a number of months until one day, one night a knock at the door, we had a big house in _____. It was the Russians came in and they forced themselves into our place and they basically took all of these refugees. That was traveling maybe 1940 there was a time when there was a major gathering, a major expulsion of the refugees from _____ to Russia. And we befriended some people there, so we were not far away from the main station. I run into that, and they put them in boxcars and a cattle trains, cars and they were locked up over there. That's how they were going to transport them from _____ to east to Russia. We couldn't do anything about it. I knew they were crying, really crying. What did they do wrong? These were Russians and this was the main event that I recall that the Russians did to the Jews. They didn't kill them, but they put them away. We found out later that they were sent to _____ and to different parts of Russia. I never met them again. Life in _____ continued after that expulsion until another war broke out and that was in 1941 and that was the time when the main when the Germans invaded _____. Can we stop for a second?

End of Tape #1

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Tape #2

A: So when the Germans occupied _____ there was a part that we didn't --when I saw we, I'm talking about the family. The family, my mother or my brothers and I was just a boy listening to what's happening, what surrounds us. We were concerned yet there wasn't much that we could have done even though that it would be an immediate danger. Our immediate danger would have been from the local people that we would be threatened by. As I mentioned before we lived in _____, which the majority of people were actually Jewish people, but also the minority were the Ukrainians and Poles. We were not quite sure how to take it, what really happened, although we heard a lot that the Germans are very threatening people. We soon found out that the first few weeks in Louve after the German occupation of Louve, there were quite a few robberies and personal insults and personal beatings of Jews by the Ukrainians. Some of them were maybe Ukrainians, some of them were maybe Polish, but it was very dangerous to go out. It was very dangerous to walk on the street. Soon, we had a curfew that would not allow the Jews to walk after certain hours, evening. That was maybe just as good, but the problem that we actually had when it came to night, that was the time when the main robberies and the main assaults on Jewish families began. It was the night first 1:00, then 2:00, then 3:00 in the morning. They would rush into the house and if they couldn't find anything, they would destroy or maim people. Only during the night could you hear the night cries, the night help rescue, seeking help. This was horrible right during the night. We, at home we were basically safe because on the first floor we had a tenant that used to live and apparently he was a _____. He was half German and half Polish, I think. They occupied that level and they actually controlled the gate, not that he would help us directly but people know that somebody's -- Snyder I think was his name, he lived in that house, so we were basically protected. But you could hear at night the horrible screams being robbed and maimed and so on. It was a very bad period, but it wasn't getting better because every week there would be new regulations and new instructions and at one point and I don't recall exactly the month, we got instructions that we had to vacate the premises, the homes, where we used to live, and move into a small ghetto that was _____. To find a dwelling and to move out, and we didn't have that much time. The furniture, the paintings, the rugs that we had, some of that Snyder took in his possession. He felt where we were going we wouldn't need them. All the beautiful paintings my father bought in Vienna, and the rugs. It's immaterial now, but at that time it meant a lot to us. So, we moved out with a basic one couch and some of the belongings that we had from the whole flat. It was my mother, myself, I'm not sure if Eli was there. My oldest brother, Abe, he was no longer with us. He was taken away just before we moved out to that small ghetto. He apparently went to a hospital to get some medicine. He never came back. He had to go downtown to where later on it became the major ghetto. It seems to me it was close to the _____ ghetto. He went there and he never came back. We didn't know what happened to him. We heard that later on one hospital was emptied by Gestapo or by people who worked with the Gestapo. They took them away. I'm not quite sure when _____ was established. _____ wasn't even at that time a bad word. But we heard _____. _____ is an area where Jews were killed and it was adjacent to _____ camp. But we heard that word _____. So, he was not with us. Eli was in and out of our area,

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our home. Not quite sure what he was doing. I'm sure he was trying to survive, trying to find some angles to get out of a bad situation. We moved out to that small ghetto. A secretary to our business who used to be our secretary, she used to live in that area, in that small ghetto in a free standing home and she offered her house to my mother. I don't know the deal that she made with my mother but at least we were secure that we had a house to go to and that was a relief because at that time it was very difficult to get an area because you're talking many thousands of people had to move out of one area to another area where you have a comparable exchange of dwellings. It was questionable, but we had it. With our house in that free standing house and I recall there were maybe three rooms perhaps and there was another family that moved in with us. Now, it was a period of time that we acclimated ourselves into this new ghetto. The faces that we didn't know before all of a sudden we knew them very well. They were all Jews. The way I understand that a Jewish police was formed who supposed to bring law and order in the ghetto and our _____ ghetto. We were not much concerned with them, other than there was another area that we were quite ambivalent that we did not know what that all means to us. We all of a sudden have a new life in a new ghetto, new people, new surroundings. The future, who knows what it's going to bring. The rumors were actually in that ghetto that those people who work will be much better off if they don't work, meaning that you better have a place to work and then you'll be getting some kind of identification card that will help you survive. Survival really didn't mean too much to us other than it came to the point where you had to survive somehow not knowing of camps or anything of that that we are immediately placed in jeopardy of our lives. That didn't grasp yet. We weren't involved in that. We were involved mostly in our personal belonging, in our personal lifestyle and being attacked by hoodlums because you are a Jew you are no longer a human being. The ghetto didn't mean to us that this was the end of our line. It was perhaps the end of persecution by the Ukrainians. You were not directly confronted with the physical abuse, the physical maiming of people. The rumors were you better get work. That was in '41. I was 16 years old, and I wasn't -- didn't know where to find work. Where do you find work in ghetto and I run across a friend of mine who told me that there is a place on _____ Street who -- and they called it _____ that they're looking for some workers, but he felt that I wouldn't be strong enough. I didn't know what the work consisted of, but anyway it was something to look into. I went back to my mother and told her that there is a place that I was told that they're looking for some workers and whether she would allow me to go interview. My mother didn't think that she objected other than she warned me be careful. I went there. I went to _____. They called it later on _____. _____ is a factory or was a factory that made tar paper for the roofs and the way they were doing is you roll out a three foot section of paper and you dunk it into asphalt. Later you roll it out and there are some people who were using dry sand and covering the wet asphalt and that becomes a tar paper. What they were looking for workers who could carry balls of paper 75 to 80 kilos of paper to go from one place, say from a truck to the depot that they had right in the back, or storage place, and I wasn't sure that I could do that, but if that meant to have an i.d. and be protected I better do it. I walked into the office and told them that I would like this work if they could have me. There was man called Fessel. He was a Jew from Slazia, it was in Poland, and he looked at me and close to him there was a foreman, a Polish foreman. I forget his name and he asked me can you use this young fellow and

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he says yes I can only if he can carry that ball. He took me out and tested me out, and he selected the largest ball, 75 kilos. Every ball was numbered and I picked it up and I carried it and I dropped it the place where he wanted me to drop it and he hired me on the spot. You can work with us. It was basically not a relief for me other than that I felt that I'm employable. I went back home told my mom that I have a job and maybe we'll be more secure. From there on it was very little things I recall other than I was working every day with them going back from ghetto to _____ or _____. It's maybe a 20 minute walk, maybe 30 minutes. So, at that time, I was going back and forth and my mother all day long I would be working and evening I would be coming home. At the same time I was able to purchase some produce at the place I used to work, like tomatoes and maybe bread although we could buy some bread but we were rationed in ghetto. So, it was helpful. I don't recall at what point they have established living quarters in _____. It was some time later than -- I'm trying to recall something which I'm not quite at ease with me. Let me say the time sometime in August of 19-- it was in '42 already. I did work a number of months. It seems to me going back from ghetto to _____ and here I'm blank a certain period of time that I cannot recall. The image that comes to my mind now is August the action. We called it _____, where that small ghetto in _____ was basically almost evacuated. Practically all the Jews were taken and I was at that time in _____. _____ was located on Żółkiewska Street. The main entrance was from _____ which was the main thorough between north and south. And it was the area which would be within a couple blocks of where my home used to be, a couple blocks from my uncle's it used to be and so on. There was a time I recall when the action came about in the _____ ghetto and it was close to evening. Somebody rushed into the factory one of our workers. They were moving them out to the street. We moved out, I moved out immediately to the gate to see what we wanted to see. We saw what we didn't want to see, thousands and thousands of ghetto people were moving and going to _____ Street. I looked and I saw some of my friends. My friends, dear friends that I used to play with. Some acquaintances. I was looking for my mother. I didn't see her, didn't find her. It was maybe twenty rows and miles of people. They were slowly marching. They were guarded by Ukrainian _____. I didn't see any Germans. Maybe in the back, but I didn't see them. Mostly Ukrainian on each side. I didn't see the front either. I came right in the middle. I didn't see the beginning the march, I didn't see the end of the march. I just kept on seeing the area where it was visible to me from that narrow gate. They didn't see me. I saw them because the gate was actually locked, the _____ gate. It was going on for hours and hours because there was a slow march. Finally it ended. People were looking from the windows because all _____ was inhabited by Ukrainians and Poles, second third stories, they're all looking at them. It was a very grim sight. I don't recall -- it was the following day that I decided to go to the ghetto. Although they warned me not to go, they I mean Fessel and the director of the factory. At that point in time I did already have my i.d., the identification card. I don't recall whether I had to wear a band or not. I probably did, but I don't recall that. But I got into ghetto because I wanted to see what happened to my mother. I rushed into the house. The house was empty but the hiding place where we had the hiding place for my mother was a couch. A couch consisted of a frame and on top of the frame there was this soft part which is the couch. You couldn't

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tell whether that couch was separate for anyone else it was one part. The frame and the couch, the upper part was one unit. That's why when there was any action, my mother would be hiding there. I would make sure of that. When I got home, the upper part was moved so I was scared of that. When I cried out for my mother she came to life. She was there. She was on the inside of the couch so even it was moved, she was in that area. She was wrapped around in a blanket, a dark blanket. So even though they were looking for her, they didn't find her. She was there, so we had our moment, with my mother. A number of weeks went by before another action came about. I think during that action I lost my mother, and I don't know how they got her. So, she was gone. Eli was gone, Abe was gone. It was a part of that they have then decided to establish a living quarters, I think, on the premises of _____.

Q: Can I ask you something before we get to the living quarters?

A: Sure.

Q: What happened to your grandfather and Miriam?

A: My grandfather died during the Russian time. He died -- I don't recall but it was during the Russian occupation and he was buried in a grave yard. We felt that this was a very timely death for my grandfather to die, not to see everything. But it was definitely during the Russian occupation that we were not harassed at that time. Aunt Miriam she stayed with us. Aunt Miriam did not have a good rapport with my mother, but at the time of that bad time, they changed their minds or they have relaxed their anger or whatever it was, they were back together, at least on a talking basis. If I recall, she moved with us to the small ghetto. At what point she was taken I don't recall. But I don't recall her that much although I really liked her. She was one of the intellegencias, but she was a strange person to many eyes, but not to me. I was her favorite, but what happened to her, I don't know. I don't recall. Whether she was taken, the action I don't know because from there on I did not see her. I don't recall where she went.

Q: Tell me something about Eli and your family? Were you angry at him for not sticking with your mother at this time?

A: No. Eli was very special to me. He was 17, 18 at that time and he had his own friends. He had many girlfriends. He always looking for money. He needed money. I was more of a family son. I was closer to my mother and assuring that everything was under control and Eli was not the opposite of me and he wasn't completely with me as I would like him to be. Abe was completely different. He was much older than we were. He was ten years older. He had his own friends. He had very little to do with us. He would want to talk to me other than in Hebrew. He despised Polish language, so he would only speak Hebrew to me, and I had to respond to him also in Hebrew. Although my Hebrew wasn't that good, but I carried on a conversation with him. It was something that I wanted to impress my brother Abe at one point in time there was a Serbian or Yugoslavian king or Rumanian king that abdicated sometime in 1938 and I tried to tell him this in Hebrew. I don't know whether he responded to me, but this was the time I recall an event that I tried

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to impress and I wanted his assurance. Abe was a little bit on the snobbish side because he was always with his friends talking about zionism, talking about the world's affairs. He tried to settle all the world's affairs. Eli was completely different from both of us. He was more or like a happy go lucky fellow. He wanted to live now not tomorrow. Now is the day. Since he didn't have that much, he would take certain things from home and sell it to satisfy his needs, and I was fighting with him. I wasn't angry with him, but I tried to preserve things that the family had. He understood that very well, but he was my favorite brother because maybe we were fighting all the time and we loved each other and he used to give me some secrets and at night he used to take me outside the house and we would be smoking. So, I kept things in secret. He was very good natured, though. He cared about us. Now, Eli was taken away from us some time. I really don't know when. He was taken away from that small ghetto. Now I heard that Eli was in concentration camp in _____. We weren't sure that this was a death camp, but it was very fearsome place to be in. The fact that we heard that _____ and people are being killed there. Even though that I heard that Eli is there, I felt always that when Eli is in a tight spot he always will get out. At least I hoped so. When _____ established the living quarters, I was one of them. We were a crew of 40 Jews only men. It was a place where we felt was a very safe place at least for the time being. Even it was safe place that we had within the 40 people there were certain groups that were more confined with each other than others. Probably psychologists would love to study those groups. I was basically with a group of boys my age. The 16, 17, and 18 and the question is how do we get some cigarettes. That was the main thing at that time. The ghetto was gone. There was nothing that I can do any more in ghetto. I didn't want to go anymore there. As a matter of fact it was a Jew free area. The only thing that was dominant was actually the downtown ghetto on _____ Street and _____ Street. That was the area. I did not know too much about things that surrounded us because we were confined in a given area and the only thing that we heard was the rumors that would come in. Even papers didn't come in. We didn't have any papers. So, the 40 Jews, even though we were together, they had such secrets. I didn't know what the secrets were. I learned later on apparently they built an extra wall. There was a basement where we used to live. On top there was the factory and the basement was the living quarters and in that basement they erected a wall which was done sometime probably before the action in August. I didn't know that. Nobody let me know that. So, a lot of things -- in a way I was a little angry that they didn't let me know that because I could have brought in my mother, into the hiding place. It was a hiding place. It was a whole wall and in that false wall, false partition, it was covered with wood, piles of cut wood that when at night at 12:00, 1:00 they would remove the wood and people would walk out for fresh air. Even at that time I didn't know that. I found that out later. When I was living in time where maybe I was too ambivalent, to naive of knowing what was going on. But, they were Jews. Families of some of these 40 people and when I learned later on that there is a hiding place and I just hoped that Eli would be alive so I could bring him here. My work at that factory consisted of working first with the bales, carrying the bales and sometimes just dusting the asphalt with the dry sand. But then later on since I liked so much horses, we had a wagon there with horses that we would transport asphalt into the factory. There was one fellow who was we used to call the foreman. He took care of the horses and the wagon and he would transport the goods, certain asphalt and some of them he would bring also

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some sand to the factory. His name was _____. And he selected me to be his helper to care for the horses and so on. I really enjoyed that. I'd rather work with horses than work in the factory. The foreman of the factory liked also bunnies, rabbits. He had a cage of rabbits in the stall in the barn and he asked me to take care of them. So, I had the horses now and I had the rabbits and I used to take care of them. It was pleasant. I liked to work with animals and at the same time I was the helper of _____. I used to call him _____. He was a very nice fellow. A very straightforward fellow. He was Ukrainian. He did not see me as a Jew. I was Wilek to him and he was _____ to me. I didn't care that he was Ukrainian even though that I knew that the Ukrainians killed Jews and abused Jews and vice versa. He saw me as Wilek, a fellow. So, he was very nice to me, he was human. We liked each other. So, I was his assistant in doing anything that the factory needed, to take care of. Caring for the animals but also transporting asphalt. This was going on for a number of months. Now, I had an opportunity to go out of the factory with him and see what was going on. Now, when I drove with him on the wagon, I did not have a band, I don't think so because I was part of the _____. So, we used to drive oh maybe a kilometer or so to get the asphalt. We had a refinery not far from us within a kilometer or so. And that refinery there was an area where there was a refinery, there was also a slaughter house for animals. In that refinery, the bi product of the refinery is asphalt and they would pour out the byproduct into an area, a depleted area a narrow area not too deep and what we would be doing is we would be cutting them in blocks because they were solid and carry them on top of the wagon and bring them back to the factory.

End of Tape #2

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Tape #3

A: So we used to bring the asphalt back to the factory and of course in the process of asphalt being liquified later on in huge ovens and that's how we get the process of that tar onto the paper. That was my work in _____, working with _____ day in and day out. We were able to drive from our factory to maybe two or three different streets, and of course at that time Louve, that area any way, was already Jew free. There were no Jews there anymore. Perhaps some were hidden, but there were no visible Jews. The place was basically very quiet. It wasn't vibrant as it used to be the times that I recall back in '38 and '39. We were doing this a number of months and Peter and I we were very much befriended. We were talking about at times that it could happen that one of these days they will take me away. The discussion was how do I survive. How do I get out of this place. I did not have good moves ahead of me. I did not see too many visions, what is a good way of doing it. In back of our factory there were tracks and those tracks you could see every so often Hungarian troops going somewhere and the thought that came to my mind, wouldn't it be nice if I knew some Hungarian language and just jumped in the cart and said hey, I'm one of you. But it was just a dream. Back with Peter, I told Peter what's a good way of surviving. He didn't give me a good answer. One day he came and told me, you know Wilek, if I could hide you I would do that, but I can't trust my wife. I thanked him for the offer or his thoughts. We had a farmer that would deliver some produce over a number of years and he was a very good friend of ours. He looked me up in _____, and he told me that if you need a place come to us. So, in that preparation I was very glad that he offered me a place to hide because I was at his house back on the farm a number of years ago, a number of times on my vacation. He would take me in to _____. He had great piergos, it's dumplings with good stuffing. His wife used to make. I used to ride on the horses with him and take care of his cows. It was just fun for me to do that at that time. So, he came back, and he looked me up and he offered me, I had hope. There's a place to go. I had a duffle bag, a leather duffle bag and I put in some of my clothing, some of my things for him to have it just in case I do get to escape and get to his place. So, at least I have a place to go. Meanwhile I was working with Peter. Because I wasn't sure where his farm was, I knew but I really didn't know where his farm was, and one day, Peter looks at me and says Wilek come over here. Do you see this lady? There was a lady that was limping that was going to the office. I said yes I see her. I remember her. I remember her well. He told me that he delivered a wagon of potatoes there. That was some time early part of 1943 that he delivered a wagon of potatoes. It was a custom to buy potatoes in huge quantities for winter time and so on. That was the way we did that in Louve. I asked him what makes him think that she's the one. I mean how do I know. I don't know but remember her and I'll give you an address that in case something happens here, you go there. Because he felt at that time that the director Fessel is grooming her or grooming this place for him to hide. I took this as a good omen and I felt maybe he's got something there. It was a certain time within that period of time. It was just before the Warsaw ghetto that it was in April sometime that I remember that two partisans -- a partisan is a person who's a guerrilla warrior. They used to belong to a Polish underground, and they spoke to our leadership in _____ to join their partisan group. I'm not quite sure what transpired but I think our leadership rejected them. They didn't trust them. It was during that period of time that things are

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getting closer and closer of annihilation of the Jewish population in Louve. We knew about Warsaw and we knew they were fighting. We also knew that the downtown ghetto is getting tighter and tighter. Very few Jews you could see being escorted on the street, less and less because until that time you see a group escorted by the militia. People from ghetto to work from work back to ghetto. Of course we were stationary. The group of the 40 Jews. We were stationary. We live right then and but we see them once in a while and sometimes I saw on my wagon these groups going back and forth. I mentioned before this slaughter house and there was one Jew who used to work there and as we were cutting the asphalt and that Jew across the field would look and wave to me and I would go there talk to him and ask him what his business was while he goes back and forth from the slaughter house back to ghetto. But at the same time, he offered me some meat to take it with me so I would bring that meat back home. Home meaning my _____ people. I would bring that. Occasionally I would be going from _____ to ghetto just to go there. I didn't have anyone there. Maybe I would be going with a friend of mine because he wanted to accompany, but I recall everytime I would be going there, I wouldn't be going there too often, but I was given an armband with a W letter which was for _____ meaning that we were working for the _____, the army, even though that manager of our factory was a captain in air force which doesn't make sense but that's the way it was. He apparently was very good, very good. A reasonable human being. He had an excellent rapport with Fessel. He was I think captain in the air force. He was the one who would warn us when major problems occurred. At one point, he would warn us that we were about to be picked up by the guards. We would move out. The way I dressed myself -- I was dressed myself as a typical farmer. This is the way I could disguise myself the best, with long boots, with special boot type slacks. They're specially curved that the boot accepts the slacks and with a hat and a cigarette in my mouth. I used to roll my own cigarettes so I was a typical farmer. The first time that we were going to be picked up I just left. I had no where to go. Ghetto was opened. You could go in to ghetto but who wants to go into ghetto. So I went downtown on _____ Street where I used to go with friends of mine and prominent the area when we used to be young boys and free of troubles. It was like three or four o'clock or two o'clock, something right afternoon that I ran off from _____ and there was very little you could do downtown other than be picked up by Ukrainians or somebody who recognized me. I was not, but my safe thing was to do was go to a movie house, so I went to a movie house just to kill time. After that time thinking just a few minutes ahead, what am I going to do next? I didn't have the answer. I had to do things that were natural in that point in time. I saw a movie, another movie, it was newsreel of cutting. This was where the Germans showed how the 20,000, or 40,000 Polish officers were killed. The Russians claimed that the Germans killed them. The Germans claim that the Russians killed them. This was the time that Saw that excerpt. I was all engrossed in that because for the first time I hear there was a cutting, there was a slaughter of Polish officers but from the German side. After the movie, I went out and I don't know what time it was but I saw a column of Jews were going to ghetto. I put my armband and I joined them. That is the only place that I can go right now short of being right down town without Jews. So, I joined them and I went over there to ghetto. There was probably a few weeks after the Warsaw ghetto or around that time. I knew that I had to do something very drastic soon, but didn't have the opportunity yet. I went back to ghetto. The ghetto was so crowded I

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did not feel so crowded in my life because that was the first time I was exposed to that. In other words, living in _____ in my own bunk in the basement with only 40 Jews was a paradise from what I have seen over here. People were living in the street. Just a terrible situation. No clothing, torn clothing, and a lady that I recognized who used to live on the same street, she was a daughter of a grocer. A very pretty young lady, she was probably in her 30s, I think. She became a prostitute in ghetto. But she took me in immediately. She was my neighbor, and she gave me some slotties and I left went to another place to another friends, the same surroundings, and I walked into an area where some older young men were looking for how do you get out of ghetto. How do you join the partisans. And I was right in the midst of it. On suggestion was we get a whole group with the armbands and let some of us be the militia, the Ukrainian militia and escort that group all the way down _____ all the way down because nobody is going to ask where are you going with this Jewish group. That was one of the questions. The other question is where do you the uniforms. Where do you get the arms, and so forth. It was a round robin exercise, how to you survive yourself. The following day I got word that we are safe. In other words I could go back to _____ and resume my work. I went back. I went back to _____ and resumed the work, but now I felt very strong. It's only time before things happen. There was another major action sometime later, I forget when in '43, whether it was June or July, a major action and I was told that Eli was there. He returned that he knew about me and during the action this was on that day someone else was going to go to ghetto also because of action, rescuing someone. I joined them. I said I want to go with you. I went and I took an extra armband for Eli just in case I catch him. I went over there and they told me the address and I went to that place and there was a lady there, an empty house basically and asked her about Eli. She said he was here, but they picked him up. I came too late. I was downhearted. There was a place that very few people should be going through this exercise. As I was walking on the street, there was one fence there and I hear right on the other side of the fence, people were praying with a loud voice. During the action and I kept on walking because I had to get out of that area. They will pick me up but I was secure because I did have the armband and I had the W and I had the identification stamp. I forget the stamp. It was a swastika stamp and I think it was a red stamp which was the most recent stamp. So I was safe. I went through and I got the other people who went with me from _____ and we made our exit in a hurry. At that time, I didn't see any buses anymore or any trucks anymore. They finished the action for the moment so we took our exit out. I went back to _____. Eli was gone. They took him away. So there was nothing I can do at this point. He's gone. The whole family is gone as a matter of fact. Now, a few months went by now and they were talking now about the liquidation of ghetto. I don't recall when they had liquidated the ghetto other than one point in time just prior that we were to be picked up they pronounced that Louve is Judenfrau, Jew free. No Jews live anymore in Louve. Now, the more I'm thinking from there on, I'm thinking more and more about this lady, the limping lady. Peter gave me that address and he told me exactly how to go there to get to that place. There was sometime in the morning, I forget when. It was a beautiful morning as a matter of fact. The sun was out, nice and chilly. Whether it was September or October, I don't know. It was sometime in the fall one day we were told that 1:00 we would be picked up. Now, time was early in the morning, maybe eight, nine, ten. I don't know. I knew immediately that something is going on because Fessel

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and Horowitz they were all dressed up. They're ready to move out. They were not moving yet, but they were ready to move out. I didn't even try to look down in the basement what is going on regardless even though you have a hiding place, I wasn't about to stay there. I decided to go, to move because I didn't see any future in hiding in that place. Sooner or later, probably sooner than later we were going to be discovered, so I didn't take this place as a safe one. My point was is to get out. The question when, that is within an hour or so. I went to Peter. I said goodbye to him and I moved out. That was the last time I saw Peter. He wished me luck and I went out. I kept on walking. I don't remember all the streets that I went through, I just followed certain streets and I went through a place a main thorough and right on the street a friend of mine, well, not a friend but an acquaintance. A fellow I went to school with, to public school, Sayer his name was and he saw me. He looks at me. Of course he knew that I'm Jewish and I look at him my question is is he going to betray me. I didn't think so. He grabbed me and we went to a gate, to a house and I told him I need your help. What do you need? I said I need you to be here at a certain time, about three o'clock. I don't know what time it was then but there was plenty of time. I thought I'd need him to go to the station to get my ticket because I had my farmer in mind. But I was on my way to that lady. Just in case I didn't get any results there, I'd have a chance to go there and I needed him to help me out to buy a ticket, a train ticket. I wasn't sure how to buy it. I wasn't sure that part how to buy the ticket, but besides I needed his help anyway if he could offer me or at least not to betray me. He said I'll be here at 3:00. What else do you need. I told him I didn't need anything other than to help me to go through that period of that hour or two. I kept on walking. I didn't think that I would be betrayed by Sawyer. I didn't think so even though he was Ukrainian. So, I kept on walking and I went to that place. At first I didn't recognize the house because he described me a certain house but when I looked at those houses, they all looked the same. Across the field there was barracks where the Ukrainian militia used to live. There was an area where I felt well, you do or you don't. I went to one house and I asked -- her name was Maria, and I knocked at the door, is Maria home? The person says no Maria here. I'm sorry. Then I went to another door. It must have been one of those houses so I went to another house. The next time and she opens the door. Maria was there. Now, Maria doesn't know me. I know Maria. She was limping. She was a good looking lady, probably 25 to 28, Polish. I asked her that I'd liked to see Mr. Fessel. She says no Fessel in this house. I said well, probably not but please tell him that one of his workers is here. She says no Fessel is not here. I said okay. I took off. Maybe I was misled. I took this as a true sign I was misled my next option is to go to my farmer. I kept on tracing my steps back, the same way and I was going to see Sawyer. As I walked down I'd say a good half a mile down the road, I hear some hollering behind me. It was Maria with her limping legs was after me. She was hollering for me to stop. I finally stopped and went back, kept on walking towards her and she looked at me. You're so stupid and some other expletives. Come back with me. And probably I was stupid and she took me back and walked me right into this room in this house where Fessel was. Now, my first impression was grim faces because they were not sure how I got that name, how I got the address because if I could find them someone else could find them. Obviously true, Peter could find them. This was their main concern. They weren't concerned about me but about Peter. Peter as far as I have never seen him drunk. And Peter he was such a friend that he would never betray me. So there was no concern. I

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wasn't concerned, they were. The group consisted of Fessel and his brother. His brother was a tall, very heavy set fellow who impersonated a German captain. He had a German overcoat and a German hat, but when I saw him, he was just Fessel, an obese fellow. It was Fessel, his brother, his lady friend, two other people who I don't know how they got in there probably through a different route, but the route that I know how Fessel got into this house was Fessel his brother, and another worker, I think Kline, who used to be his personal secretary in _____. So at least two people from our factory, his brother which I never saw him before, his lady friend. That lady friend was a sister of that other couple, that was already there apparently and another fellow that I don't know how he came about there. Maybe he was completely independent but he was a lover of Maria. So we had like seven people there. I think there was seven, I was the eighth one. It was a time where they were concerned about their security because of Peter. The question was whether or not they should send me back, back to Peter's place home and tell him no one was there. So, I could go and apparently go back home to their place to secure their hiding place. It was stupid and it was very inconsiderate and but because they would put me in a double jeopardy really, because it was very difficult to travel, walk that number of miles to his place. They finally decided not to do that because they felt that Peter was more of a friend of mine than of theirs. They left it at that. So, now I was not one of them, but at least I was in a safe place for the time being. The area we were in one room I think maybe it was another room, but basically I was in the front in the large room that was together with this hiding family. We had a trap door to the basement which was not in the walking place but in a crawling space. We had a special area that was covered with a rock in case something happens we all go inside and hide ourself there. We had our food. Apparently Fessel had enough money to supply for our existence there and apparently paying also Maria. I'm sure nothing went free because she demanded some money. I didn't have any money so she couldn't get anything out of me, and she never asked either. So, I thought things were taken care of by Fessel. The other couple they also were from Louve, I forget their name and that really irritates me that I don't remember those names because they're very important people because even though you're hiding and you're sort of in a group relationship, you were strangers. Maybe you had one thing in common, we are all Jews and we want to survive. There was one thing in common but different interests in different projections in their lives, that was another thing. So, the dynamics of our group was strange, but I could listen to their conversations. I could take part of some of them, but Fessel was the dominant fellow who would set the tone of this group. There was a point in time the ghetto was liquidated already and now there were rumors that the concentration camp _____ is being liquidated. The rumors were also that the Russian army is moving toward Poland, closer and closer. They weren't talking about immediate occupation or immediate conquer of the territory but it was close enough that you need to make a decision. Whether to stay in the hiding place or to move on. I did not take any part of the decision because my action was always to stay in the hiding place. So that wasn't an option that would be denied to me. The other option was whether or not to escape Louve all together. There was a young couple who would be coming and in keeping in touch with us. They had Gentile papers and they had excellent Gentile features and they would be the ones with whom we had contact with the outside. They would know how to prepare the papers, Gentile papers and how we could be rescued. Now the question was should they take me into the rescue effort moving out of Louve. They

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weren't even talking about Hungary at that time at all. The question was they're going to be moving out, should they take me with them. I confronted that part with Fessel and I told Fessel that although it wasn't his obligation towards me at all but I asked them that I would like to be with them. I could always stay here, but I want to get out of Louve in general. This is a horrible place. I don't want to be here, even in hiding. He said well, we'll have to see what our resources are. We'll have to see if we can give you some papers. He apparently was good enough to do that for me. I was told that their plan is to escape ultimately to Hungary from Louve to _____ from _____ to _____ Mountains, through Slovakia to Hungary. That's the plan. I walked with them all the way. I'll go with you anyplace you go. I felt that I could be of help to them if they needed me. The time came sometime in the early part of December I think, maybe it was in December, that we got our papers, the Gentile papers with our photographs and the stamps and the my name was _____. I took the name of an acquaintance of mine from _____. He was a very nice fellow and I thought he ought to have my name. So, from there on, my name was _____ from then on until my liberation. My religion was catholic, and everything else was true on those papers. My birth and where I was born, and everything else except my name and my religion. From there on, there was at night prior to that by the way that was something very interesting happened that I recall. You know when you are in hiding for so many months you don't know how to purchase things. How to deal with the outside although we are informed by Marie where things are, how to get to the station, because now we have to move from Louve, buy a ticket, and these are small items but very crucial items. Get out of the house, buy a ticket, go into the main station, buy a ticket and go to _____. Finding the place, and find a place and maybe a reservation for the train or not. That we did not know. Maria was not about to buy any tickets for us, so they asked me whether I could go on an exercise to the main station, look around, see where the purchase ticket box is, see if there is anything unusual and go buy the tickets. Well, I went there. One night they left me and I had to go from the place at night walking through the fields, through the barracks of the militia and there is a small station. I got to the station and I got to the main station and to see where I could buy tickets. I went to the main station, bought a ticket. On the way back to our place and to see the temperament and the environment we would be going through. When I came back, all the inhabitants of our hiding place were outside just in case to run in case they caught me and brought militia with me. They were relieved. I came back. Gave them the report and they were ready to move on.

End of Tape #3

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Tape #4

Q: Do you have any idea why Maria would want to save Jews or at least save this group?

A: I'm not quite sure. I never asked her. The only thing that I could stipulate was that she was prearranged prior to that. The fact that I saw her one day in a factory walking towards the office that means she was prearranged. She was given I'm almost sure that she was paid, handsomely paid, by Mr. Fessel. I know other things that during my stay in the hiding would be that her father would be visiting her one day in the week and that was the day that they used to play similar cards to poker and he would be playing with Fessel and Kline and Joseph evenings and it was make sure that her father would always be the winner on that evening. He may be losing a little bit, but in the end when the game was over, he would be coming out with money. He knew about us obviously, so he was paid that way through winning in this game. Other than that, I don't have any other facts, but Maria a person of no wealth. She had this house and she was with Usak who told me where she used to live and maybe that was part of the attraction, but I'm not sure what was the other relationship, whether she did it actually strictly for money and part of human compassion. Maybe it was a combination of both.

Q: Was this a very lonely time for you?

A: It wasn't lonely because I was always active. I was very active. My mind was always going regardless what was going -- what surrounded me. My question was to myself how do you get out of this place. I was fierce about it. I was driven by that. How do you get out and stay alive. Because I felt that I had to say something later on. Maybe this is why I'm here, but I felt that maybe other Jews will survive but I think I had a feeling that I had to say it, to say that part. So lonely, no I wasn't lonely. I was too dynamic to be lonely. So, when they saw me coming back from that train station and they greeted me with enthusiasm at least at that point in time I was one of them and soon after we packed our things whatever I had. I don't think I had anything with me. I just had just my hat, my jacket, a scarf, my boots and I was ready to go. We went through the main station, got our ticket. There was a direct train to _____. It was all night. We went through over night and the following day we were already in _____. We were picked up by the smugglers. Now, let me back off just a bit. That couple who used to come who had their connection from outside, brought the papers for all of us. That couple that I forget their name, were left behind because that's what they chose, to stay. All of us left, including the lady friend of Fessel's brother. By the way, she was pregnant. She was big and my estimation was that she was in the eighth month of pregnancy, but she was walking and she was also determined to survive. We were on a train and got picked up later on in _____ by the smugglers who were previously arranged by this couple who gave us all the false papers. We went to a place. I forgot this area at the time where it was that they took us. I remember that we had our lunch with Polish kielbasa. We had a piece of bread and that evening or that night, we were going to move out of _____. Because everything else was prearranged. It was sometime December or it was early part of January. I don't know that period of time. It was 1944, January or 1944 or December 1943 but very close to that time. I want to say that I am close right on

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the verge between December and January. It was very cold and we took a train from _____ to a small village close to Tatra Mountains. It was basically a ski resort and we departed from there. We picked up and we kept on walking. It was an area probably that was not very much guarded by the Polish police. By the way, this area was strictly guarded and governed by the Polish people, Polish police force and border police. The smugglers were actually Polish. I forget their name. I forget even their faces but we got through and we kept on walking through the Tatra mountains. The episode that I recall was walking in the snow. It was so called and also the snow was very deep. The surface of the snow was frozen so each time you walk into the snow, you like walked into a trap because you couldn't get out. It was a very difficult walk. Now, the lady who was pregnant she had a horrible time walking. At least I had boots but I don't recall if she had boots. So, she kept on walking and her friend, Fessel I have never seen him helping her. No one else would try to help her Kline or Joseph. The older fellow Fessel, he had a heart problem. He was always holding his hand on his heart, so he was incapacitated in that mode. I was young. I felt good. I was strong and I tried to help her. I did help her. I kept on walking with her. At first I was walking with her and giving my shoulder to her and embracing her and kept on walking but at least we were in step with the rest of us. At one point in time I asked Fessel to help her because I was getting tired and I asked Usak to help her or Kline to help her and they all felt that they were too tired themselves, they wouldn't survive the trip. I couldn't leave her. I had to walk with her and I walked her and a long time I just carried her and I didn't see any one of the people to help her out. Such a shame, but we survived. We went through the Tatra mountains and got into Slovakia. At least we were there. We were so called safe and the boarder police grabbed us. They took us into a place which I don't recall too much of it, but then later on we identified ourselves as refugees from Poland, so we were all Polish. So, from this police area I think they took us into a school. We were given lunch and had milk and we were cared for. I don't recall how long we stayed there. There was another couple from Poland, independently they came in. They were refugees. One was a professor I think, a Polish professor with his wife, and some other people. At that point they took a picture of us that I had it but I lost it during my other events but Usak got it and showed me some time later. The object has to move from Slovakia now to Hungary and within a few days I think we were moved from Slovakia to another border town which I have a hard time remembering. It was _____ comes to my mind. Maybe I'm wrong but _____ was the border. There were some Jews -- see Hungary at that point in time was not occupied. It was the early part in January. If I recall well, when I was already in Hungary, Hungary was occupied in February by the Germans, maybe a later part of January but not the early part. We were brought in and _____ and there was a Jewish couple that took us in for that evening. It was a Friday I think and the reason I remember was because there was shobotz and they offered us _____. A _____ is a meal a Jewish meal with beans and chicken and carrots and all that good stuff. It was very good, very tasty. This was the first time I was exposed to it. I was very grateful for it. The following few days from _____ because we wanted to g into Budapest and that was our goal because from there on Fessel had his plans. I had my plans so once I got into Budapest which we got into Budapest within a week or so. I don't remember that period very well, but I remember that we were in Budapest and the question was we were not occupied at that time so we were free and I identified myself

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with the Polish organization with all there were different refugee camps, not camps but offices and you reported yourself that you are one of them. Whether they helped us or not I don't recall. It was immaterial to me. What I wanted to do to identify myself that I am a Polish refugee and to be on their books. From there on it was just a matter of finding out your level of survival. Where do you go from there. The trigger point was the time when the Germans again invaded Hungary. That was the trigger point, be on the run. You had to run again, and where to you run. By that time I had already met some people, not friends, but acquaintances, we became friends because they were in the same shoes. The same problem, where do you run. One thought was to run to get into Turkey. The way you could get to Turkey was through Rumania. The other thought was to run to Switzerland, means you had to go through Austria. Which route do you explore. You explore them both, but one is less dangerous than the other. I felt to be in Switzerland would be a good deal to do, but to go you had to Austria. That was bad. A better way is to go through Turkey through Rumania. I had friends that became my friends that were in the underground movement and I joined them. Some of these people were mostly Jews. Some Polish, but that didn't seem that much of a difference because they all were going to run somewhere. I had more trust in my Jewish compatriots because the Polish underground which was a/k Army Crawly, was a group that I wasn't sure I would be comfortable with, so I went with that Jewish group. Even that group, I have some Polish members. I was in a cell. Seven people, we had seven people in our cell. I wasn't given orders to carry out. Basically I was a courier for them, transferring papers from place to place, mainly from Buddha to Paris and from Paris to Buddha and so on. At one time I had to go outside Budapest, but this was a short trip and I came back. One time I had to carry a gun to transfer a gun, but I was doing some carry out orders and I felt good about it. I'm doing something about it. Friends of mine, they were also printing false papers, false birth certificate, false statements of good standing of a given community and so on. Church papers I mean a lot of things that was needed for anyone especially for Hungarian Jews. Not specifically for Polish refugees. We were all saved so called. The question now is how do you help out the Hungarian Jews. They needed the papers. They did not have the flexibilities that we did have because we were right outside. There was a time that they were mostly almost confined to the house ghettos. They already had the stars. They had to carry, we did not. We were free. I happened to get myself with the underground and they advised me to have two or three residents in Budapest, having a place to live in Buddha, in Pess -- in Buddha I had to places where to live and when I chose a place to live, I used to live always with a Christian family. I was safe there. Although I tell you I feel at time whenever there was a knock at the door, there was always a heart beat, an extra heart beat that I have developed later on in my life because somebody is knocking at the door at the wrong time and maybe for the right purpose or for the wrong reason as far as I am concerned. So, there were time when they were raiding some areas, but this was in Gentile areas. I never lived with Jewish families, not in Budapest. But there were raids just in general and I was one of them, but I never had an occasion to be examined and to be found that I had any problems with them being either question whether I was a Gentile or not. As a matter of fact, I used to go with those families to the church every Sunday morning, and to be one of them. It was that kind of life that we tried to provide papers to the Jewish people in Budapest. Papers, birth certificates, status certificates and so on. Being in Budapest right in the midst, I'm almost angry with myself not knowing of

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_____. I never heard of him, even in the close circuits that I was that we knew how to survive things. No mention about Swedish consulates and so on. I don't know if I would have gone that route, but at least I was never exposed to that. Friends of mine were exposed to Switzerland and they went that route. I understand he never made it. Another friend went through to Turkey. It was a perfect Gentile couple who had went through a reverse of circumcision. They were perfect in the physiotomy. They got through _____ and through Rumania but they were torpedoed in the Black Sea I understand, so they never made it either. I was still there in Budapest and the question was when I'm going to get out of it and one day I have an order to go to Rumania because I have asked for them to send me to Rumania and to get in touch with other underground in Rumania. They send me and they told me who to see, when I get over the boarder, what to send them. The question was whether or not the border between Rumania and Hungary is safe. Of course, I was told that the reason they are sending me is to get that message to the other side, to Rumania. Later on I found out that the reason they sent me was to find out whether the border was safe. So, it was one of those things that you have to take your chances. I did not know about that. I found that on later on when I was sick and back in Germany, that I wasn't told the whole truth of the matter. Shortly I went out from Budapest directly to _____. I think that was the name, that was the city, and _____ I had to pick up those two smugglers who were going to take me to Rumania. The way they identified themselves is by folding hands two of them and they were there, they were waiting for me. And they took me and we were not far from _____. _____ was the village I think right on the border between Hungary and Rumania. They took me to a place to a barn that's all I remember, a barn. Apparently I didn't sleep all that long and I was so exhausted I just fell asleep before someone burst into that barn and it was the Hungarian _____. _____ with the black hats with a pheasant feather. From there on they interrogated me. I did not have too much with me. I didn't have any money. I had a couple hundred penco, which is minimal. I didn't have any papers other than my own identification paper and that's all I had. I had a few photographs that got me into trouble later on, but they were mostly interested about my spy mission. What was I carrying, why kind of message was I carrying to Rumania. This route by the way was known as a route the Jews were fleeing away from Rumania. There was one lady that I recognized her as being Jewish and she was in that interrogation room. They whisked me away from her later on. She was crying. Later on I also saw those two smugglers in another circumstances. They were beaten very severely. Their faces were black and blue, so at least from my prospective they did not betray me, someone betrayed them and in turn I was also betrayed. I was interrogated for a number of hours. I don't know at what point they transferred me, they deliver me to the gestapo. By the way, from that place they took me back to _____ where it was the headquarters of gestapo. I was escorted by the Hungarian gerdeams. The gerdarms they were actually the border police but they had some other special assignment. They were the leaders of the police force in Hungary. I stayed in _____ maybe a few days and I was again interrogated.

Q: Were you beaten?

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A: Yes, I was beaten. I was beaten terribly. In other words they put a bar between your legs and then your whole body is folded downwards and you're beaten on your feet. Of course on the buttocks and so on. It was very painful, but I took it. It wasn't a big thing that I recall it was impossible not to survive. They wanted to know again, what was the message that I was trying to deliver to Rumania. Being Jewish I dropped my pants, being Jewish wasn't their concern apparently. I don't recall that. Whether they took it for granted one way or the other, I was never told. The main idea for them was to move me as soon as possible back to Budapest and they took me back to Budapest and they put me in a political prison on _____. That was the political prison in Budapest and I stayed there for a number of weeks or months almost. I'm not quite sure how long. It was there that I met other some of my acquaintances from Budapest. I met _____ who was the ambassador from Hungary to Poland who spoke perfect Polish language. I also met across the court a lady name _____ who later on I found out she was Hanna _____. She was very resourceful to convey her name one letter after another. There was a time probably that I recall because we were seeing _____ at one point in time. It was a period when it was Yom Kippur. It was a time that if I want to tag a point it was Yom Kippur 1944. _____ was still alive. _____ definitely was still alive because I corresponded with him later on after the liberation. I was interrogated almost daily because not only they wanted to know what was my message but the unfortunate thing was they found a picture in my possession. A fellow that I befriended in Budapest who was from Berlin, he was also a Jewish refugee but for some other reasons I befriended him and we were dating girls together and we had fun with him and he was in that prison also. They caught him, so they wanted to know what was my association with him. So it was a complication. I don't know what happened to him. I don't remember even his name but he was a very nice fellow. He was a fellow that I would feel very comfortable to be a friend. Sometime later after 1944 I remember we were about to be ready to be moved out of this prison and we were told that they are going to send us to some kind of camp. It must have been some time in October because I recall I got in, they brought us to Auschwitz and it was on my birthday, October 29, 1944 that we walked on that platform. It was a train, from a regular train and they brought us immediately to this office. They tattooed us. Now, my name was 193 229, no longer the name _____. There was no other names but my number. The time in Auschwitz I have very little memory of it. I did work there. I did get this uniform. I had the cap, with the stripe. Whether they gave me some wooden shoes I don't recall. Probably they did, maybe I did have it. I did have it I think, I did have it, the wooden shoes. I was one of the inmates now. I was in one of the barracks, surprised that I don't even remember the number of the barrack because you must remember that. I don't remember that. Maybe I don't want to remember, but we were close to that barrack where there was a special barrack where things were -- a punitive barrack and I was told to stay away from it, that barrack. Not much, I don't think that I was ever concerned about being gassed. My only question was how do I get out.

Q: You were not there as a Jewish prisoner?

A: I'm not sure. I'm not sure if I was a Jewish prisoner or not. It seems to me I was among Jews so I was a Jewish prisoner. Until a given day that a barrack was empty and they

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were selecting people left and right, left and right, and they selected me. I think it was a left position and then within an hour or so they pulled me back. Took me back into my barrack. It was at that time that I realized that I am somehow protected and when they look at my tattoo oh you're a _____, that's the word that I all of a sudden get to my mind, a protected inmate, prisoner whatever. But what I was as a Jewish prisoner or not a Jewish prisoner, I was a Jew with them and it really didn't matter at that time what my status was because I was one of them. One major event that I recall was the hanging of five Polish prisoners who escaped Auschwitz. When they were brought back, they took out the whole camp to watch the hanging. That was sometime probably in December. It was awfully cold, very cold and we stood probably until two or three o'clock in the morning when the hanging took place and after the hanging normal life proceeded in the camp. Then again there's a gap that I don't recall what was going on, just a matter of daily consumption of the stale bread. The bread came from the transports from the wagons from the trains, but we were given stale bread. It was just at least it was something to eat. The food was very terrible, very thin soup, just water. But I was not -- didn't feel that bad. I still felt that I could withstand the ordeals and whatever took place because they were talking about soon there's going to be some liberation because Russian troops were moving in closer and closer. As a matter of fact, our thought was that _____ was already taken. Maybe it was a hope, maybe it was not, but anyway they were very close. So, the recreation of Auschwitz was almost eminent. January 5, comes to my mind but I'll stand corrected if it was something else. We were evacuated from Auschwitz and we walked a long time to another station, and I don't recall too well but we were put into open carts, only men. I hadn't seen any women, and they took us out. A horrible trip, a horrible trip, people were dying because of this cold exposure. I had frostbite on both feet. They were persistent, I had shoes that were tight and it was very trying for me personally because I never felt during the whole time that I will be able to survive. I always felt that I could survive. There was a doubt in my mind that I could do it because I couldn't physically move things the way I used to. We were, the train was moving through Czechoslovakia. I know because I heard that and as we were going underneath the overpasses, they were covered with a lot of Czechs and they were throwing bread to us in the open cart. It was a good omen. I had a loaf of bread and Leon, a friend of mine with whom I've been for since Budapest, that's where I met him, he was with me all along in the camp. He survived by the way and he was in Israel. He saw me sometime later in Munich. He visited me in the hospital. We went out and they kept us moving along from place to place. There was no place that they had in mind. We finally wound up in _____, why _____ I don't know. Just before we reached _____ they were discarding all the bodies from the train and people were most of them were that majority was alive and there were shot on the spot. It was a huge mountain of the corpses from the cart. It was molestation. It was all guarded by the SS and their henchmen. We stayed there perhaps a few hours, they kept us back and we kept on going, and from there on they took us from _____ to _____. We were told that when we came to Flossenberga that we were a sore lot, and we were, but we survived. _____, the headings on the sores of my feet, the healed and I don't recall what I did in Flossenberga other than that I was healthier and a long point in time the news came to Flossenberga that Roosevelt died and somehow President Roosevelt was a point of hope to me as long as he is alive, as long as he's in charge, he was the one who

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actually initiated the coalition and invasion of Europe. When he died a spark left out of me because I felt there is not going to be a continuation in the war, but later on a friend of mine, said another president will take over and he'll continue that. Flossenberg was the time where it was a step before my liberation. I think they took us out on our way to Dachau. That's where we were told an Leon disappeared. I don't know where he went, my friend Leon. There was another fellow, a Russian fellow who was also an inmate and with whom I befriended. He was my friend now that I tried to help him out from the actions in Flossenberg. It was three days and three nights of that death march towards Dachau. April the 23rd we were liberated by the First Army, I think. At that point in time, I was liberated. I was a free man.

End of Tape #4

Conclusion of Interview

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