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Title: Oral history interview with Dov Dafner

Interviewee: Dov Dafner

Interviewer: Randy M. Goldman

00:00:00

**Q: ?**

A:Wait a minute. No. . We went to Prague later in the Jewish community center over there. We want to go to Germany, you know. All Jewish people went to 04:25 Germany. From Germany they went to Israel later - and to America. And I went and I met over there a few guys - how to cross the border. They were Americans over there. There were four zones, you know, in Germany; American zone, English zone and French zone - occupied this time from the armies. I was in the American zone. So we went over there to the other side with the suitcase. The Americans - They didn't care much. It's not their border. When the people went to church across the border we went together with them. It was Sunday morning. We went to Germany over there. Her brother lived over there. We got an apartment over there - in Germany. This was 1945, ya. I am glad I escape from the Communists. I didn't like it very much. We were living over there in Germany, you know - free. I was a soldier, however. You know I was a soldier. So I got two other soldiers. We got a paper from the Americans. We have a cafe over there - you know - a cafe for soldiers over there; sodas, beer... and three soldiers. But we were in civil clothes. We make a few dollars over there. Later they said, "Israel is gonna be free." So they said, "Wanna go to America?" I say, "We go to Israel." So I bought a lift. You know what a lift is? A lift is from wood made - like this room. How you call in English... ah - from wood, made wood - four walls wood. In the inside you put it in beds. I put it in - all kind things; frigidaires. I forgot. . They made from wood... ah... [lift is a container for large oversea's shipment] Q:Doesn't matter - .

A:Ya, ya, ya... Ya, I sent it to Israel. I made money over there - frigerators - everything. Went to Israel. I came over in December - the tenth, I think - 48. It was raining. The war still http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.was.... We were living - and I came from the Engligh soldiers - use to be English soldiers. Fifty families with children. Q:[Inaudible]

A:For hot water you have to go... A small child... Q:We can't pick up her voice so we just need you to tell us... 04:28 Unfortunately the mike iss over here, so....

A:It was not that good - with the war. It was a new, a new country. No. I was a soldier and they ask me, "You were in the army?" I said, "Yes." They want to take me to the army. I hold a child in my hand. "It's your child?" So they didn't took me. But later they took me when I have already - where to live. We were living in a camp over there about three months. It was terrible. It was a new country, I said. So we had a house in N.... I was in the camp in Nathania. You hear from Nathania. So we got in Nathania used to be a little village - in a hill over there. 04:29 Arabs use to live over there. They left over there. Not houses really. Took over one - one room - one room. It was a big, big room. I want to escape from that camp - you know, over there. They live over there fifty families over there. Stones and all kinds over there. there was young - clean over there. The room what we had - no kitchen, no water. I made lights for myself. No electricity was over there - in the house. Later had my cousin make me from bricks a little kitchen. Her brother came from Haifa. He make me the roof - and I had a little kitchen. They did the sochnut. You know what the sochnut is? The Jewish government make me a little booth outside - outside - a toilet - a whole, with a douche - outside. And we had over there, no - It was very tough. I have money. I start living on my money and went to work. But you have to go to work. I went to a pardes. You know what the pardes is? A garden with http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.trees - little trees with - trees over there with oranges [orange grove]. I cut oranges. I made, ah, how much?... A pound and a half a day. I tore up more clothes than I make. But I love it. I'm in Israel free. Was very tough. Was nowhere to work - but, I got by. I start selling a lot of things. Later I made a garden. Where I lived it was a little field - 10 meter by 20. I made a garden. I have bananas over there. I have potatoes twice a year. And everything over there. Q:We're out of tape. END OF TAPE 2 http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.TAPE 3 Q:So after the war you were in Germany a while and you went to Israel and what I was asking you was, was it easy getting to Israel. Was it easy getting a Visa?

A:Ya. Easy. Easy. If you want to go to Israel - Who wants to go to Israel? And they tell you to go - the organizations that came over from Israel, you know. They wanted more people always - in Israel you know. So I.... I was a Zionisr I told you I was a maccabian, not a Zionist, in my heart so... We passed through, you know, in Poland anti-Semites. You want to... and you hear you're gonna have a Jewish state, you know. So I went over there. Q:Why were you in Germany so long - after the war?

A:So long? Q:Two or three years after the war.

A:It was six, seven, eight - bout almost three years, ya. Q:Why didn't you go to Israel sooner?

A:We can't go. You have to go - you know - the English doesn't let you go. Her brother... Her brother went with a ship, you know, he sneaked in. You know they took to - They 05:02 took them to the camp over there in - in Cyprus. You know what was over there. He was in Cyprus. Her brother, the youngest brother - We go now. He is sick. And he went to http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.Cyprus. Later he went to Israel. You can't go. I can't go with a child and sneak to the borders. A lot of people went over there. Q:So it was difficult to get out of Germany until 1948.

A:Ya. You can go out of Germany. You have to go through German, Austria and Greece - and, you know... It was very tough to go to Israel. I have a cousin over there from my home town. She lives in Israel. She went too with her child like this. Q:After you were in Israel, you started to explain how you needed to get a house and grow things. Was it a difficult adjustment for you?

A:For everybody. It was very hard. There was no houses. Where you gonna live? They were from the Arabs. They have houses.... A lot of people were in that camp what I told you, Natania(ph), where I lived - were living two or three years over there. But I couldn't stand it - to stay over there with forty, fifty families over there. Q:In this camp in Nathania, what were - how many families would live in the same place? Were there tents? Were there...

A:Not... There were tents too, but we were living in a barrack - you know - from the English - when the soldiers were living over there - the long barracks you know. And there was between every bed, there were a curtain over there, how you say - would cover yourself - a blanket was covered between - between every family. It was fifty families in a barrack. You kidding? The children - little children... Everybody has little children this time you know - after the war - They married, have children. Was terrible. It was about... You wake up in the morning, the sun was shining. And we were in Israel, but was tough. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.They feed us. I can say they feed us - everybody. Nobody was hungry - never. But it was tough. It was a new country and, oh, everybody was young. And we start working and they learn a trade, you know, in the building over there. It was not bad. Israel style - I made a good living. The building make most all the money. Israel - hard work - country work, yes? Q:What work were you doing in Germany between 45 and 48?

A:No. We didn't work. Nobody was working. The Americans and the Jewish Joint, you know? HIAS. I told you I have a little cafe for a year over there, you know - when the Americans. I'm glad I wasn't in concentration camp with my wife. This is peanuts what I passed through - what I went through. Q:And who... Your parents were killed. What about the rest of your family.

A:My father and mother at Auschwitz. No. My father in ghetto. My sister told me. My father went out with the children one.... some - food - looking for food. The German killed him with a gun. This was my sis... I didn't know. My mother went to Auschwitz. My father got killed, I think... She didn't told me what year - 1941 or 1942. I don't know. Q:And your sisters?

A:I have my sisters - both. They were in concentration camps I told you. One in Czechoslovakia and one in Germany. One is living in Israel - in Holon - you know Holon. One is in Miami. She use to live in Chicago. Q:When you think about this period of history, when you think back, what do you think about? http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

A:What can I say? You know, I'm born in Poland. You were born here. You never knew what's to live over there in 05:07 Poland between Polish population. A Jew.... Ninety percent, eighty-nine percent were poor people. They could get by with bread. And they have a lot of children, you know. Religious people have always a lot of children like over here, you know. And everybody, they love all children, you know. And I have friends - He was a shoemaker. Good, nice people. He have only a kitchen and one bedroom. There were six, seven children. What can.... The comes in bread, two pieces - two loaf of breads. They tear up the piece of bread. Very poor. And the Polaks will always say the Jewish, they're rich - like over here is. I use to work here in a factory. They said, "Where you live?" "On Park Heights Avenue." "Oh, with the rich people." They already were living over there - colored people, with hillbillies over there. Like the Polaks say the same thing. I had a hard time over here too. I work with hillbillies. I had a hard time over here too. I work in a factory over here - The main cutter. I was an upholstery cutter. The main cutter was... and he was working other table and I was at this table. And there was the Yom Kippur War - 1973. And the radio was above us. The Egypts and the Syrians start attack Israel. "Oh, now the Jews gonna be gone." to me. I 05:09 say, "Why you said that to me? I'm live in America." "Oh, your finished." What can I say to him? I told him, "Wait a minute. The Israelis over there - They're gonna - If you go over there they're gonna kill you too." You know after two, three days, they start - they start fighting - and they went to Egyptian and they ask me, they say well, "Why don't you go over there in Israel. They're gonna kill you too." "Why you telling me this? Because I'm a Jew?" You are talking about Poland, [not?]Israel. How they call them, the hillbillies - rednecks? Q:It's hard to imagine that you went through all of this in Europe and then you come here and experience the same things. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

A:Ya. But I know. Q:I was very sorry [other person - inaudible].

A:You were very sorry. Q:[Other person - inaudible].

A:You know I lived in.... [Pause in tape] Q:We're just gonna tell you when the first picture was taken and what this picture is from - if you'll just say it for the tape. Q:[Multiple interviewers/male and female]. What is this a picture of? - What is this a picture of Dov? Tell me what this picture is of - so we can record this. I forgot.

A: a picture of. Q:Describe that one. What is that a picture of?

A:We were together. I told you we were working. I got the electricians over there - you know with the mechanics. We were fixing tractors and tanks. Q:For who? [male]

A:For the army. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.Q:Which army - the Polish?

A:There was... Listen, was Polish Russian army. Listen. We were under.... Q:What is this a picture of?

A:This is ah, we play ping pongs other people, you know. I guess other cities and championship. You understand? We go to other city? Q:When was this taken?

A:This is 1937 - in Krakow. We were young people - always good looking - a little makeup. They tell me, "Oh, you looking good people, you know." Q:What this is a picture of?

A:Ya. This is my father and mother. Q:Tell me who they are.

A:My father and mother. Q:And when was this taken? http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.

A:That was taken 1941. I don't know when but I figure because 1942 they put in Auschwitz. So I figure 1941. It was still - my father was - didn't know - so I can't. Today my father wouldn't look like this. Q:Dov, can you tell me who this is?

A:This is my wife. I married in 1945. That's the wedding. Q:Okay. So this is Regina?

A:This is Regina. Q:And you?

A:Ya. Q:1945?

A:1945. She use to be Regina Kozuch. But now she married me. She is Mrs. Regina Dafner. Q:Thank you. Conclusion of Interview. http://collections.ushmm.org Contact reference@ushmm.org for further information about this collection This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.