

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Nathan Neiberg**  
**July 24, 2015**  
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## PREFACE

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## **NATHAN NEIBERG**

### **July 24, 2015**

Gail Schwartz: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Nathan Neiberg. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on July 24, 2015 at the United States Holocaust Memorial museum. This is track number one. What is your full name?

Nathan Neiberg: Nathan Neiberg.

Q: And what is the name you were born with?

A: **Nocham** Neiberg.

Q: And when were you born? And when were you born?

A: I was born in Piotrków Trybunalski. I was born in 1929 on August 20, 1929

Q: August 20<sup>th</sup>. All right let's talk a little bit about your family. First of all your parents' names.

A: Yankel Neiberg and Esther Neiberg. My father and my mother.

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Q: And how long had your father's family been, or had your father's family been in that town? How far back can you go? That you know of.

A: I would say like 50 years. I would say which I can remember but my father used to tell us stories.

Q: Of the past 50 years you mean.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And what kind of work did he do?

A: He had a furniture business.

Q: Furniture?

A: Yes.

Q: And did he make the furniture or he sold the furniture?

A: He made the furniture, he sold the furniture.

Q: And your mother?

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A: Housewife. She raised us spectacularly.

Q: And did you have any siblings?

A: Yes.

Q: And their names?

A: Six, yes. That was a small family in Poland.

Q: In those days. And their names?

A: It was, we start with the oldest. Dave. Dave. David. Sol, **Surit**. Herschel. Pardon. It was Hannah. **Surit**. Herschel, Rachel, **Avraham**. **Nocham**.

Q: So you were the baby.

A: Yes.

Q: You were the baby. Can you describe the town at that time, anything that you were told or that you knew about, what the town was like when you were growing up.

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A: Very little. I was, the war broke out, I was 11. So I would say very little.

Q: Did you live in the main part of town?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: In a house or in an apartment.

A: In an apartment. Jewish people as a rule lived in apartments. The Gentiles lived in houses but lot of them.

Q: How would you describe your family? Were they Zionists?

A: Yes.

Q: Strong Zionists.

A: Not strong but they were Zionists. Which I can remember. I wouldn't say they were strong Zionists but they, my father belonged to a, **Shomar Hataz'er**. And most of the kids did belong to the same thing. My older brothers and sisters.

Q: So the youth groups.

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A: Correct, absolutely.

Q: Was your family religious, observantly?

A: Father used to go to shul, Shabbos. Holidays. We all went to **cheder**.

Q: Did you have any favorite holidays as a child?

A: **Pesach**.

Q: Because.

A: New clothes, good food. Well, all the holidays were good. Really.

Q: Can you still picture sitting around the Seder table?

A: Absolutely, sure, sure. And I used to say the **kashus**.

Q: Any special songs that you liked?

A: For. I wouldn't remember them.

Q: You wouldn't remember them. Did your father wear white?

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A: Yes. Yes.

Q: So your neighborhood was a Jewish neighborhood?

A: Jewish, yeah.

Q: So I assume then if it was a Jewish neighborhood that you didn't experience any anti-Semitism in the immediate area? The rest of the people were Jewish?

A: Well. I, I wouldn't say that –

Q: We're talking about –

A: Did have Gentile people living in the same building, oh yes, yes. We were not –

Q: Did you have contact with them?

A: Yeah, absolutely. No we were not kind of in the, well there was a certain area that was strictly Jewish, the Jewish neighborhood was called the **Ingas**, but the rest of the streets were mixed. Really, yeah, it was just maybe a block or two blocks in our city was strictly Jewish. But the rest was all mixed.



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Q: What about your school? What kind of school when you started school?

A: Mixed, mixed.

Q: It was a public school.

A: Public school yes, yes. After school we went to **cheder**.

Q: So you didn't have any religion classes during the –

A: The school.

Q: The school day. It was only after.

A: Correct. About Judaism you're talking about.

Q: Yeah right cause some places.

A: That was **cheder**.

Q: At the school when there are non-Jewish children and I assume non Jewish teachers, was there any evidence when you were young of anti-Semitism?

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A: Oh absolutely.

Q: Can you describe some of the situations?

A: Well it was always –

Q: How did you know as a young child?

A: Oh they smelled you. They knew it. They could recognize a Jew for some reason.

Q: Were you dressed differently or were you dressed like they were?

A: We were dressed like they were but for some reason it was knowing who was Jewish and who wasn't.

Q: Did anything specific happen with you?

A: It happens a few times that I had to be s, saved a little from a beating you know. My brother used to be luckily around and it quiet down.

Q: Did you ever get hurt?

A: No. No.

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Q: And do you remember what they yelled at you? Anything?

A: Dirty Jew, that's about it.

Q: What about the faculty, the teachers? Were they positive towards you?

A: No they were never positive, but there was no positive. They just ignored, even you know it was no love about it.

Q: How would you describe yourself in those years prewar? Were you an independent child or were you very attached to your family?

A: Attached, oh absolutely attached.

Q: So you wouldn't go off on your own?

A: Oh no, no, no. We were very attached.

Q: So you stuck close to home. When you weren't in school.

A: Yes, yes.

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Q: Did you like any sports as a young child?

A: We had a couple of bikes in the house. That was the sport of swimming yeah in the summer. That's about all. In school we did some sports but I mean for maybe ten minutes. You went out and used to do some exercise.

Q: How would you describe your family? Were they middle class?

A: Middle class, yes, definitely middle class.

Q: Did your folks have a car?

A: No there was no cars in that town. Not in those days. There was no cars in the city. There were two taxis that's about it. The rest was horse and buggy.

Q: Hitler came into power in 33. Granted you were a --

A: I was nothing.

Q: When did you first or can you remember when you first heard of a man named Hitler?

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A: I would say somewhere in 30, in 38, 39 when my father was reading the Forward, the Yiddish paper, Friday night. And there were the stories about Germany. There was discussions about it which I can remember.

Q: Was that a frightening time for you or just

A: No it was just listening to the stories and I wouldn't say it frightened me at all. I didn't give it any thoughts, really.

Q: What language did you speak?

A: Yiddish.

Q: At home.

A: At home, Yiddish.

Q: And at school?

A: Polish.

Q: So you were fluent obviously in both languages.

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A: In both. Well I can speak Polish but I wouldn't say I'm fluent in it by now. But. The only one I'm really fluent is the Yiddish.

Q: What did you do in the summertime? This is prewar.

A: Oh we still had, I used to have a sister in a little village called **Shindlif**, next to our city and my sister lived there and I used to go out there for staying with my sister.

Q: Which sister was this?

A: Hannah.

Q: You would spend the summer with her?

A: Not like, yeah a couple of weeks and then I had to go home and then I came back but we had a good time there.

Q: What about hobbies? Did you like to read or did you have anything special in your spare time that you –

A: Yeah we had some, but you have comic books. We used to have that too you know. Not exactly comic, but stories. About the United States, cowboys and all that. Yeah we had that. We knew about the cowboys.

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Q: You knew about cowboys.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Any particular cowboy that you knew about?

A: Well we used to go to the movies I think. I remember Ken Baynard, a cowboy movie. This is the only name I do remember about the cowboy movies. Tom Mix. Absolutely. Yeah, that's about it.

Q: With the white hat.

A: Correct, absolutely.

Q: Did you like to read a lot besides comic books?

A: Yes we did, we had you had to read. We got our take home, homework so we had to read.

Q: What did the United States mean to a young 8, 9, 10 year old again before the war, what did it mean? You said you read the cowboy

A: Cowboys and Hollywood.

Q: What did that mean to you?

A: Well it meant to me all kinds of mystery stories about they lived in here and we had some really dreams about it. Rich life, good, good way to live.

Q: Did you have a lot of friends your age, contemporaries?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: All right so now as I said Hitler comes into power in 33. You're not aware of it obviously cause you're so young at the time. Until your father reads the Forward and

A: Correct.

Q: And so what was the first change then in your life?

A: When Hitler came in.

Q: When did you notice. I mean I understand you were very young. I know that. But when did you, can you remember when there was a change in your life?

A: Well really when the war, right up, when the war started.



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Q: In September 39 is when

A: Correct, correct, correct.

Q: And what do you --

A: I think it was September 1, not 31, 1.

Q: No September 39 I said.

A: Ok yeah 39, that's right.

Q: Do you have any memories of that particular

A: Yes, absolutely, the bombing. We went, we went, we left our --

Q: Were you home at the time?

A: Yes. It was a Saturday morning that we felt the first bombs so my father decided we should leave and go stay with our sister in that little village.

Q: This is Hannah.

A: Yes. Yes and we left there til the war, til the army occupied our city and also the little village. We then decided to come back where we used to live.

Q: You went back to your apartment.

A: Correct, to the apartment.

Q: So was it just a few days, you're saying.

A: No it was like, almost a week that we stayed in the little village. But in the week they came in and, and then they decided that we can walk, go home so we went home and we stayed. Really our town was one of the first ghettos in Poland.

Q: I think it was the first.

A: Yeah the first ghetto in Poland, yeah, so we kind of I think we stayed in our apartment for another three or four weeks and then we had to move over to the, into the ghetto yeah.

Q: What does a parent say to you were like what ten years old?

A: Eleven.

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Q: Eleven, what how did your parents explain that to you? You're still a young boy.

A: Well you know we got very quickly old. We didn't stay eleven. You know like I would be sent out to the Polish people that my father hid some stuff with them, to collect maybe some of, they will give my father send them some messages that I will come and if I would be able to collect. So in the beginning they used to pay my father back for what he was. But

Q: Collect money that he was owed?

A: Correct, that they owed. But this happened like twice and after the third time they said no more. We haven't got it no more. So I used to go out from the ghetto

Q: This is by yourself.

A: By my, oh yes, because if you, if they caught you they shot you. There was no question about it because there were a couple of like a couple of women that went out that they thought that they can go through and come back. They caught them and they shot them. But since I was at that age, they didn't pay much attention to me.

Q: Did you look older than you were or younger or

A: No, my age. I looked my age.

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Q: You didn't look especially young or especially.

A: No, no not really.

Q: What memories do you have of the ghetto. I know there was no wall. It was what, barbed wire or was , were there just signs?

A: Right where the ghetto ended you had a Jewish policeman and a Polish policemen at the gate, yeah. And you were if you stepped over that gate you were shot.

Q: So how did you get out?

A: Well I, there were areas that you can smuggle yourself out. Nobody should know, but we knew about it because we used to play around. We used to run around the kids, all the kids and play and play you know but we knew the areas where we can run out and come back.

Q: I understand there was no wall or any barriers.

A: No, no, there was no. As I said the police were still there and we knew the elderly people knew that this is what it is. Otherwise, but we just tried and this is how I got out. And I was lucky enough to come back.

Q: You never questioned.

A: No, no, no but that there were certain areas that you could just run out.

Q: And when you were playing with your friends, did you talk about what was –

A: There was fear, no absolutely there was fear from day one. We knew about it and we you know but you had to make peace with yourself, but there was the fear. We'd be started to think, now by 11 you're old. There were kids that had to take care of 11 years old and their family. So it, we grew up very quickly.

Q: What would be a typical day in the ghetto?

A: I had, we were, I was lucky enough that my mother we could afford the teacher. There was quite a few teachers, Jewish teachers that, that my mother could pay that I could attend illegally, that was not legal. If they caught you there were repercussions, big repercussions but it was all but they got away with it. Then if you could afford so it was like 40 or 50 not dollars but Polish currency. I was lucky that my mother could afford to pay but my father was never \_\_\_\_\_ at that time. He died.

Q: Oh when did he die?

A: He died of typhus. Yeah.

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Q: When was that?

A: He died I would say it was like 41, between 40 and 41.

Q: How long were you in the ghetto?

A: In the ghetto, we were til approximately 42, the end of 40, the beginning or the middle of 42.

Q: So from 39 to 42.

A: There was the big ghetto. Then like in 42 between 41 and 42 they dissolved the big ghetto. We were all at that time like 20,000 or 21, 25,000 Jewish families. And they left 10% of the 25,000 to clean up and sort out the stuff that the Jewish people, families left in their apartments. And the rest of the people were sent to Treblinka. And this is where my mother.  
(pause)

Q: So you lost members of your family at that time?

A: (blows nose)

Q: Can you describe what the living conditions where you were living what kind of set up, how many rooms you had and

A: We had one I'd say one and a half rooms. And we were

Q: One and a half.

A: Yes and we were like **Surit**, Rachel, Herschel, **Avraham** and me. Five. Yeah.

Q: Five children.

A: Yeah, yeah and my mother.

Q: What about food?

A: Well my mother had some that she put she had some money left that she should be able to provide for us some food. And she, and she also took in some people to feed them what they brought, they brought from southern Poland. They sent them out and brought them to our town and they were all in town kind of like 100 families or so, put in one big Jewish organization hall and they built some \_\_\_\_\_, they lived in horrible situation. And all the families that could afford used to take in them during, for the day to the house because there was no room to put them on. And we fed them. The people could afford, helped them out but they lived in horrible, in a horrible –

Q: These were other Jews from Poland?

A: Yeah from no from southern Poland. From close to the German borders which the German, the close to the German border they annexed they annexed that to Germany. All these if you read about it. They sent the Jews out to the, kind of like to us, to Warsaw. They sent them also to **Loge**, the **Loge** ghetto. And this is, that's the way it was.

Q: What, when you would see a German soldier.

A: Well either you run, either you run into the, go hide. (pause)

Q: I was asking you what it was like for you to see a German soldier, an 11 year old boy

A: You hid, you hid. Or if you stayed on you had to turn, you had to bow your head.

Q: If you're on the street when he comes by.

A: You have to bow your head. You step aside. You never try to be in his face.

Q: How did you know that?

A: Well you, as I said you grew up very quickly.

Q: Did you admire his uniform with buttons?



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A: No, no, no, no. That was just fear.

Q: Strictly fear.

A: Strictly fear.

Q: Did you see swastikas?

A: Absolutely.

Q: And what did that mean again to you?

A: Fear.

Q: Was this something you could talk over with to your parents, your mother?

A: Yes.

Q: And how would she respond?

A: We have to live through it.

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Q: And what about to your friends?

A: Same way we just, we didn't talk about it. No we didn't talk about it.

Q: What did you talk about?

A: We knew what's happening, you know we just tried to fool around.

Q: Just play and

A: Right to forget about it.

Q: Forget about it.

A: Right.

Q: Were you able to have a bar mitzvah?

A: No, no.

Q: Was that upsetting to you when you turned 13?

A: I didn't think about it.

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Q: And your folks didn't say anything?

A: Well my father was dead.

Q: By that time your father was gone.

A: My mother cared just to give us as much education as she could.

Q: Did you know, you said refugees were coming in from other places.

A: Yes, oh yes we knew.

Q: So you knew what was happening?

A: Oh absolutely.

Q: Outside of your town?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So life went on and then what was the next change?

A: Well the next change was when they liquidated the ghetto.

Q: Ok was that in what 42?

A: 42 yeah. And we, and I stayed on in the smaller ghetto with my brothers who were already at work and this is when it came that my uncle took over my father's name. When they, when they started to liquidate the ghetto they needed Jewish workers to clean the ghetto, the apartments, sort them out and send them to Germany. So they, they as I said they left ten percent of the population which we were like 2000, 20,000. So they left like 2000, 2200 Jewish people, single people not families. Just single. And they were looking for, they were looking for carpenters and my father used to employ like 15, between 15 and 20 carpenters to do the furniture. So he was known in town. So they came and looked, looking for him. So my mother said why don't you take **Yankel**'s name and you go instead of my father was dead. So you go to work instead of coming to Treblinka.

Q: You're talking about I'm sorry. Your mother is talking to your uncle.

A: To my uncle, yes. But with the condition that he should take me with him. So he said no problem. So I want to take my daughter too. Which she was the same age as I. She said, my mother said you take as many as you want but as long as you take **Nocham** with you. So he did and this is how I didn't and I fought with my mother. That I didn't want to go. But she kind of like threw me out.

Q: So you left with your uncle? I'm sure saying goodbye was hard. And where did you then go, what happened then?

A: Well then they took us to the, to a small, we had factory, big, for the war.

Q: You're talking about your father's –

A: No, no, no, no. This is where they sent us the smaller ghetto. They created a smaller ghetto in town. The majority of the people we had at one, two glass factories in the city and also a factory of what do you call it. Well anyway they created, they recreated that one of the factories to build for the German army little for the eastern front. Little houses.

Q: Huts.

A: Huts, correct. And I was sent to that factory and my brothers were working at that factory, three of them. So we kind of united and my sister was there too. And at that factory we were approximately a year and they liquidated, we were creating that huts.

Q: What was the location of the factory?

A: Right out of town from, yes, the name was **Bugai** and the name of the --

Q: But it was close to your town?

A: Yeah and the name of the German factory, of the German people that run it, they named it **Defi, Defi** factory of creating huts. For the eastern front.

Q: What did you take with you when you left home? Did you take anything special?

A: Nothing, practically nothing. They didn't allow us to take anything.

Q: Just the clothes on your back.

A: Just the clothes on the back and this is, this is the way you have to leave the house. They didn't allow you to take anything. And little by little we stole a little bit when we worked for the sorting the stuff that we took out from the apartments so we you know we used to take whatever we will need, we needed. If they caught you they shot you and they did that to a couple of women really yeah.

Q: Did they ever shoot children?

A: They didn't think, it wouldn't make a difference with them as far as shooting somebody.

Q: Even who was a child.

A: Yeah didn't make a difference, that was no big deal.

Q: So now you're making the huts in this little area next to your town.

A: For approximately for eight to nine months. Then they decide --

Q: Did you have any contact with your mother?

A: No, my mother was, went to Treblinka. After we left everybody all the entire 18,000 people went straight to Treblinka.

Q: When did you find that out? Did you know that?

A: For some reason they were talking about it. The, we knew about it. Kind of but nobody, but nobody believed that it really is happening. Ok.

Q: Of course.

A: Ok, so but there were stories really which I remember being told and, but and we knew but we never, we knew what is happening. Approximately.

Q: How would you describe your relationship with your siblings, older siblings while you were working, were they --

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A: Yes, I good

Q: Were they comforting, were they, I mean you were the baby.

A: Yes, yes comforting really. Yes absolutely yeah. My sister, my sister they all were yeah.  
They, I would say they take, they took care of my absolutely.

Q: And did you all live together?

A: Yes. Not, my sister lived, she was a woman so they kind of lived separate.

Q: The women were separate from the men.

A: Yes, unless you were married or something of that nature. You got –

Q: Describe your living conditions in this town.

A: Horrible.

Q: Did you have a bed. I mean –

A: No, they built one on top of the other.



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Q: Bunks.

A: Bunks yeah and this is what you had. And you well, you –

Q: And how did you keep yourself clean? Was there any plumbing?

A: There was plumbing that you took a big pail of water and you washed yourself. But there were no showers or anything of that nature. You were not exactly clean, put it that way. You tried your best but you never succeeded. It was always cold water. And there was nowhere, never anywhere to warm that water. Because the food came from generally you went, stood in line for, for your soup and your –

Q: Did you have your own dish?

A: Yes, we did yeah. You always had a dish. They always gave you a dish.

Q: And you kept that dish and used that

A: Correct, correct, correct.

Q: What kind of food did they give you?

A: It was, the food wasn't too bad. You know it's –

Q: Three times, did you get three meals a day.

A: Yes, I would say yes. In, you kind of, as long as you stayed in Poland it was better. Once you reached the German, Germany it was all the, then it was all gone.

Q: So you're now 13, 14.

A: 13, 13.

Q: And you stayed there for you said nine months.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then what happened.

A: Buchenwald.

Q: Ok, how did you know you were going? How did they tell you?

A: We didn't. We didn't.

Q: So one day you wake up.

A: One day you wake up and they said get ready. You're leaving. You can take some stuff with you. Whatever you have you can take with you and they took us to the, and they filled up wagons and I was just behind my brothers and you know they put in like a hundred.

Q: Into –

A: Into one of those –

Q: You're talking about the rail cars.

A: The rail, yeah. The rail cars. Put a hundred guys in and once and I was just the last one but they closed the doors and they put me with my brother in law in the next wagon. And then I was separated from my brothers because –

Q: What about your uncle?

A: My no you see, that's another story. I forgot all about that.

Q: Go back a little bit in time.

A: When they made the little ghetto, that was where the Jewish quarter used to be before the war. And there we had something like 2000 people that remained to clean the ghetto. So we

stayed there for like two months and they liquidated that little ghetto. And from that little ghetto they left maybe 200 people that worked for those huts in that big factory. When they liquidated that little ghetto from the 2000 people that they have left, they took 200 to send them to that factory to work. And the 1800 they dispersed in different camps in Poland. They really took me out to be sent to one of those camps. When I, when they took me out, I kind of sneaked, tried to sneak back in, and the Jewish policeman that watched that nobody should sneak back in, he knew me very well. And I knew them and I used to play with his daughter.

Q: What was his name? Do you remember the family?

A: Yeah, **Kornentz**. And he saw me sneaking in and he gave me the eye and he said get lost. Ana I snuck back into the little ghetto so I stayed with my brothers. My uncle they took him out also at that time. He stayed on and they took him to the, one of the camps, concentration camps in Poland. And I stayed and then as I said they liquidated that small little, they took us to that to the factory, where we were. And I stayed there til I went to Buchenwald.

Q: Seems to me you were a very independent young boy. From what you said.

A: No, I was lucky. I was kind of lucky. Every situation played my way. I wasn't that smart but since I had brothers that stayed and I going to go to the factory to live. I figured I want to stay with them. And I was lucky that that policeman was standing at that time and let me go through.

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Q: Yes, of course, luck and independence. So now let's get down to the rail car, unfortunately. What were the conditions like in that?

A: In that, well it was much better I would say the big factory than Buchenwald.

Q: I'm talking about your journey to Buchenwald. You said you were in that rail car.

A: Oh correct. I was in the rail car.

Q: And then

A: No food, no water, no nothing and we were traveling to Buchenwald. It took us like two days maybe more. And we arrived in the evening.

Q: Did you know where you were going?

A: No, no we didn't know. When we came into Buchenwald we didn't know where we are until we were told that we are in Buchenwald.

Q: The car stops and –

A: The car, we were unloaded and they took us in for shower and two of them, two Jewish people that I knew of the men they knew about the showers, the gas so they just took pills. Two of them. But the rest –

Q: Meaning they took their lives –

A: Yeah they took their lives. Yeah, yeah they took their lives and the rest of us went in for showers and we took those showers, that were showers and then they put us in blocks you know. Barracks yeah.

Q: What were you wearing?

A: They gave us the stripes. The stripes yeah and we go and got, we had to get to one barrack we walked.

Q: Were there any numbers on the –

A: Yes, yes we had numbers. We had numbers, I couldn't I don't remember.

Q: Was there a yellow star on the uniform?

A: No, no just the number and the stripes.

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Q: Did you ever wear a yellow star in the ghetto?

A: No, we had the

Q: The armbands –

A: The armbands with the Mogen, with the Mogen star yeah.

Q: Just to go back to that time. Did that bother you as a child to have to wear that –

A: No, no.

Q: Were you proud of it?

A: I wasn't proud. I just wear it.

Q: You just wore it. This is matter of fact.

A: Yeah well that's about it. I knew that I had to wear it.

Q: And you didn't question it.

A: No.

Q: Ok now you're in Buchenwald and you're wearing the uniform. And then what happens.

Did you have to work there?

A: Yeah I went out like couple of times. It was which they called it Steinbrook. You did

Q: Broke up stones.

A: Yeah that's what you did.

Q: How would you describe yourself physically? Were you strong?

A: At that time I was in good shape, I was in good shape, in decent shape. Then I was also lucky because right across from our barrack were was a Swedish people or something, from the Netherlands. Then they used to get packages from their home town.

Q: These were prisoners.

A: Prisoners, yeah.

Q: Jewish?



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A: No, no they weren't Jewish. They were Gentile but for some reason I, you don't know why they, why they –

Q: Called prisoners.

A: Something of that nature. And they used to help us. Once in a while they'd throw in something so we were all kind of lucky too in that respect. But yeah and then it started to go down and down and down. Worse and worse and worse.

Q: You mean less food.

A: Correct, yeah.

Q: And harder work.

A: Harder work and then stayed in Buchenwald for a while and then they –

Q: How long were you in Buchenwald?

A: In Buchenwald I was kind of like a couple of months and then they say you know Buchenwald was a concentration camp. They concentrate the people and they send out from Buchenwald. SO I went to **Flossberg**. That was a brand new camp. **Flossberg** was near Leipzig. And that was and they were building the ammunition factory.

Q: Did you go with any members of your family?

A: No, no. My brother in law was sent out if you've ever heard of **Schlieben**. That was very known camp in Germany. And he went to **Schlieben**. I didn't. and I stayed on in Buchenwald. I stayed on for another couple of weeks. And they sent me to **Flossberg**. With 200 Hungarian Jews that none of them spoke any Yiddish. They spoke one language.

Q: Hungarian.

A: Hungarian. And we arrived in **Flossberg**.

Q: And you left without any relatives?

A: Without any relatives. I was all by, on my own at that time.

Q: Do you remember being very frightened? To be on your own.

A: Well no. I just missed them but no frightened I was not. Because what was the difference. We got used to that.

Q: Were you able to say goodbye to them? Before you –

A: Oh yes, absolutely yeah sure. One morning they –

Q: Did they say anything special or give you any message? Or –

A: No. Stay well. Take care of yourself. What else could you say. And Uri he lived through the war. He went back to Poland and he was killed in Poland by the Poles. In town, in **Piotrków**. So and as I say I was with 200 Hungarian Jews that none of them spoke any Yiddish and when they took us off the train and we lined up they called up who spoke German. Nobody spoke any Germany from like an idiot I raised my hand.

Q: Because you spoke Yiddish.

A: Right. So he tells me I should explain them what is, what he was talking to me.

Q: The interpreter.

A: Correct. So I tried to tell them I don't speak no Hungarian. SO he slapped me the minute I opened my mouth. You talk when I tell you when to talk.

Q: This is the German guard.

A: The German, the German guard. So I just shut up and I didn't say nothing. He says so aren't you telling them nothing and I quiet. I'm afraid to answer him. He said say it. In German.

So I tell him again. He tells me say whatever you want to say. Talk to them. So I spoke to them in Yiddish. That's about it. I don't know what, that was it. After I finished he said ok, disperse, go to your barracks. And this is what we did. This is how it ended.

Q: So now you go to the barracks.

A: So I go to the barracks and I am the guy that speaks, that can understand and we have a German guy a political prisoner which he is the eldest in the barrack and he runs that barrack and practically the captain. And he is a good guy, he's not a bad guy. He behaves to us very well, except that when you go out to work and come back you have to –

Q: Do you know his name.

A: Langer, Kurt Langer. A good guy. He didn't hurt you or specially he even used to say watch yourself when you go out. So I could never, we never complained on him. But there were hunger, great hunger. They didn't feed you well.

Q: What did they give you?

A: Practically water for soup. And for a while I was they sent me to the kitchen to wash the dishes or what not you know. And then this ended so I had, they sort of sent me to clean up the **kep**, inside the block. The –

Q: Barracks.

A: Barrack. That lasted for a week and then I had to go out to work. And I went out to work I came back for the two Kurt Langer, says how was it. I said terrible. He said well, maybe I'll find some work for you here. So he scraped around and this is where I stayed and he saw to it, I should not go out to work anymore. Because I was the youngest in the group and he felt kind of sorry, sorry about it. And he kind of helped me out and this is how I stayed on til the end practically, two months before the war ended. And they took us –

Q: So you stayed there til 1945?

A: Yeah but before the war, like four months before it ended they, the Russians were very close because it was close to Leipzig. They decided to evacuate us. And we again went in the train and we are driving around for like three, two, three weeks. Because –

Q: Are you in one of those rail cars again?

A: Correct.

Q: Are you wearing your striped uniform still?

A: Correct, sure. And as we were riding in the trains finally they found a place for us in **Mauthausen**. So we came into **Mauthausen**. And we stayed like two nights in **Mauthausen**.

Q: What were you, did you have any impressions that stayed with you from **Mauthausen**?

A: No because we were, they kind of we was separated from everything. The whole group. They were holding us like two nights. And they –

Q: And you stayed in the railroad cars.

A: No, no. They took us into the camps. And we stayed like two nights out in the camp. On the outside ---

Q: Did you see any of the quarries or anything like that?

A: No, no not at that time. And they didn't. They tried to make up their mind what to do with us. So finally they decided that we should go down to the **krankenlager**, to the sick camp. And the sick camp was that you had those German cuts that was like 30 inches wide. Five people were in a cut. And when we came in. We were all like this. But the people in the camp that were there looked worse than we were. So when we came in. When we came into the camp we just asked them how long was that you became you know they looked like you're going to a doctor and you see a skeleton. They were a skeleton. So we just wanted to find out how long it took them to become skeleton. And luckily it was right towards the end of the war. It was in 45. And it was already 45 in May. We came in.

Q: The very end.

A: Very, the end of April. And the Americans came in. The Americans came in. They opened up our camp that was the bottom in **Mauthausen**. And we went out. We didn't know what it was but we went out for some reason and they got scared of us.

Q: Who's the they?

A: The Americans.

Q: Got scared of you?

A: Of us yeah because we were not looking like normal people. They just –

Q: They were –

A: The tanks and the soldiers they just ran out and closed the camp until they brought in the Red Cross or whatever.

Q: What about you seeing an American soldier?

A: Well.

Q: Do you have any memories of what your emotions were?

A: Oh yeah it was just, it was just you couldn't believe it. You didn't, you didn't believe what happened. You just unbelievable. The holiday and the hollerings and the laughter and the you name it. Crying, that the whole, that's it was a trying time.

Q: And an American soldier meant what to you?

A: Well as they say **T'shea**.

Q: Did you know any English?

A: No. No. How would I know English?

Q: So you did not talk to any of these soldiers?

A: No really not. No had nothing to do with them.

Q: So there was celebration in a sense?

A: Right, yeah.



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Q: And sadness of course.

A: Right.

Q: And then the Red Cross comes in?

A: Yes.

Q: And did they treat you at all or –

A: Yeah, they –

Q: What did they do for you?

A: Well they clean us up a little bit. They fed us. And they took us out from that camp and we went into the better camp, up. And we stayed, they locked us, they kept us like in the camps. They wouldn't let, they were afraid to let us out. They were afraid that we would kill all the Germans there. So they kept us locked in for quite a while. But we jumped over the fence.

Q: What was your health like at that point?

A: Weak, very weak. Could hardly walk.

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Q: Do you know how much you weighed? Then or you don't.

A: No.

Q: So you get cleaned up and then what happened?

A: I got together with some people, with some young people. I was kind of the youngest always for some reason. Was very few, very few my age so I –

Q: But you were still growing even though you didn't have enough food. You were still getting bigger, taller I should say.

A: Yeah, yeah I was already like about 14, 15. Yeah. And I have still my teeth, I am so lucky you see that. Well we decided to jump the fence because we didn't like the food.

Q: So other teenagers.

A: No they were a little bit more than teenagers. They were all in their 20s, middle 20s. that's the majority that really stayed alive. And I was at that time they called me the kid. And they kind of, I don't know if they felt sorry for me that they, eventually they left and that's a different story. But we jumped and we went in there was three or four of us, we went into a German peasant in a little town which was called in a town, the village was called **Auw**, next to **Mauthausen**. Maybe three or four kilometers away from **Mauthausen**. **Mauthausen** was next

to a village, not to a town. The town of **Mauthausen** was a little bit further down. and we told the woman that we want food and we want a bed to sleep and a place to wash. Well she did give us a place to wash. And we told her what kind of food we want. It was an old lady and she says well I'll give you the food that you want but if you eat that food that you want, you're going to die. We were underweight and she knew where we came from so she said that's too fat for you. And this is why we left the camp too because the Americans didn't feed us the proper food. So we said ok give us whatever you have but we're hungry. And she did. Little by little she gave us food that she felt without fat. And we stayed with her for a few weeks. Until the Russian, we escaped to the Russian side because in Austria we were away, the Russians were quite practically next to, well they were, the Russian army and the American army were kind of together at that time. And just across if you run out from the camp, from **Mauthausen**, you were on the Russian side. But if you were in the camp, you were on the American side. So we were on the Russian side. And one night the Russians came in, soldiers came in to the apartment and they knew that we speak German. And we told them we don't speak Russian. We speak Polish. Never mind they said. We want what do you call it, watches. We want rings, we want all kinds of things. So and you tell the Germans what we want. And I said we can't do that. Said you better do it. So we did it. We went with them. And we walked into their houses and we told them what they want. And the Germans thought that we splitting with them. And we went into one of the houses that the daughter was going out with the commandant, with the main guy, with the Russian. The daughter comes home and she says and the mother tells her that those Jews that live at the neighbors brought the Russians in to rob them. (phone rings) Well the daughter called the Russian that she walked out, that she was going with and that she was, he was, called him or whatever. And told him that the Jews tried to rob her parents. And she didn't tell him that the

Russians tried to rob the parents, but the Jews. So he sends a soldier to tell us you should appear in front of him, 5:00 in the morning. So we thought between us if we appear and wake him up at 5:00 after his binge at night he'll shoot us. We decided to run. The woman had two bikes and the neighbor had another two bikes and we told them look we don't want to take it but if you want to give us the bikes because if we don't I don't know what's going to happen. Said ok we don't care.

Q: How many of you were there?

A: Four

Q: There were four of you.

A: So we took the bikes and we started to run all night long and we're all looking behind us if they're not chasing us. But it was ok. They did not chase us. We finally found the, came into a little town and the Russians liked the bikes. And they said but I am really too young to ride a bike all the way to Vienna. Just cause we were going to up to Vienna. What do you have in Vienna? I said we might have some relatives. We don't know. They said ok. Give us the bikes because you are too young to ride bikes to Vienna. It's too far. We'll put you on the trains. They wanted the bikes. So they took us to the station and they said wait for a train. The train will come. You go to Vienna. So we gave them the bikes, have no choice. And we waited. And the train came and we went to Vienna.

Q: And you just get on the train and then you don't need tickets or anything?

A: No, no there was no tickets in those days. No. Just took a train and we went, came to Vienna. And we came to Vienna. We got off in Vienna so it's you cannot walk after 10:00 at night. And we are after 10 so they arrest us and we were coming in.

Q: Who's the they?

A: The Russians. The soldiers because after that was that you cannot leave your house after 10:00.

Q: It was after curfew.

A: Curfew yeah. And so we were after the curfew so they took us to the station. And so in the station was a believe it or not a Russian Jewish guy so we spoke in Jewish. He spoke Jewish.

Q: He spoke Yiddish.

A: Yeah so he decided he's going to send us to a **pensione** and see to that we should have food and that helped a lot and this is what we did.

(file 2 – RG-50.106.0246.02.02; duration: 22:37)

Katie St. John: This is Katie St. John taking over for Gail Schwartz in the interview of Nathan Neiberg on July 24, 2015. So Mr. Neiberg you were telling us that you came to Vienna after the war. So could you tell us a little about that?

Nathan Neiberg: Stayed in Vienna of like a couple of weeks the captain of the post in Vienna, the Russian captain of the post in Vienna assigned us a place to stay in a hotel. And he supplied us with food and was very nice to us. After a few weeks I decided to go back to my home town in Poland to see who's left alive. Being in the station train came in from Poland and as the people walked off the train I recognized a few guys that came back from Poland. And I recognized that the war, during the war in the concentration camps. So I walked up to them and said what's going on in Poland. And they asked me which town I have come from. And I told them. So they said don't go to Poland to see who stayed alive because the Poles don't look at it, don't look at us welcome. That we should come back there even for a little while. They killed quite a few Jewish guys that came in to see if their parents are alive or somebody stayed alive in the family. So we advise you not to go back to Poland. But if you want to know go to Hungary. And in, there's quite a few a lot of Polish Jews that went to Hungary after the war. So go to Hungary. Find the, find Budapest. There are camps there. Refugee camps. Inquire there and you'll know more so there than if you go to Poland, go to your home town. So I decided instead of taking a train to Poland I took a train to Hungary. In those days there were no, you didn't have to pay for the seats on the train. You just boarded the train and you just went. And this is what I did. I came into Hungary and I didn't meet there people from my own home town. And they in fact they told me that some of your brothers stayed alive too. But they didn't know where they are or

they didn't see them but they heard from other people that they came across that they feel that some of the Neibergs, Neiberg brothers stayed alive. They don't know which ones. They might have think about me but they didn't know. So I stayed a while in Budapest. There was a refugee camp in Budapest also. And then there was that they started to form Zionist groups in the refugee camps with the intentions of eventually going to Israel. At that time it was Palestine. It was not Israel yet there.

Q: And what were the camps like?

A: In Hungary. Decent. Well any place you went after the concentration camps in Germany and throughout the war, once it ended, nothing was in comparison to the concentration camps. So whatever you did, it was always a little better then. So the question is that how was it. It was better. But was it good. No, it was just better that you had more food to eat. You weren't hungry and you had some clean clothes to wear. The rest ok.

Q: Is there anything specific that you remember from your time there?

A: From Hungary?

Q: From the refugee camp, yes.

A: From the refugee. Not really, not really. It was normal you know. As I came, as a refugee camp was, which was mainly that you survived, that you're not in danger of being killed

and being beaten up or had to go to work. To work that was it was a horrible type of work. But anything, you survived in the camps. You couldn't complain for, there was quite a few a lot of refugees that they just welcomed, and they did a decent job at whatever they could. No complaints. And then from, so I joined one of those Zionist groups. And decide that Zionist, the leaders decided that well we it's time to move on. We left Hungary and strived to reach Italy.

Q: Why Italy?

A: Because from Italy they formed there refugee camps in Italy. That was already refugee camps. And from Italy kind of striving to reach Palestine. That was the last stop before trying to reach Palestine. Or you went to France. But we picked Italy. So to reach Italy we had to go back to Austria. And we came back to Austria we stayed there for again, for like a month and finally the Jewish brigade that was serving the English army they helped the Jewish group, Zionist group reaching Italy with their trucks. It was not legal that they did it but they did it. Then we went through the Alps from Austria to avoid usual borders. Then we reached northern Italy, coming through the Alps. And we were left in Modena, Italy in Modena. It's close to Bologna kind of. It's a nice, nice town. And there was also a Jewish refugee camp kind of that they formed. And we stayed in Bologna a while. Then we left Modena to southern Italy which was Santa Maria. You have it in here.

Q: Oh, in the documents.



A: Yes. And stayed in Santa Maria for a while, naturally with the Zionist groups. And we decided from the Zionist group decided really, the leaders of the Zionist group decided that there was a ship which was called the **Moleta** and they said that you might leave with that ship. And we left with that ship and we reached Cyprus.

Q: And why that ship?

A: Well that was available. It was that ship was bought through the Zionist groups through the United States. It was a really a kind of a fishing boat you would say more so. But it was an enlarged fishing boat, a luxury fishing boat kind of. And we left in the at that particular time was the blockade of the British navy that they wouldn't let the Jews into Israel, to Palestine, I mean. And they used to know the kind of route we took from Italy to Palestine and they were controlling that particular route. And they always used to catch the illegal ships trying to come to Palestine. And we were caught by them and we were brought to Haifa. They took us off from the ships that we came on. They were raiding us. Well we had a light fight with them before they took us, took over the ship. We threw at them rotten tomatoes and they got a little angry with us but it was over and they attached us to their ship and brought us into Haifa. In Haifa we had to leave the ship that we came on and they transferred us to a, to one of their ships. And they took us to Cyprus.

Q: And how many other people were you with?

A: I would say another kind of at 100, between 150 to 100 people that we were.

Q: And you were all taken to Cyprus?

A: Correct yes and we were taken to Cyprus and must be familiar with Cyprus Camps right. Ok so we stayed in Cyprus for quite a while. From Cyprus when they declared the state of Israel naturally they let us go to come into Israel at that time. And –

Q: While you were in Cyprus what were you doing?

A: While Cyprus was a camp that you just were imprisoned. We were not doing anything really. Except we were doing you know in groups things to send out great teachers from Palestine and we used to study the Bible, all these, all kinds of lessons. There was kind of like a formed school that whoever wanted to attend was welcome there. This was the major things that we did. There was no work to be done. Yeah there was work that we all had to day, give a day in the kitchen about wash dishes or something of that nature so we all always were available if they needed some people but as far as really working, there was no work.

Q: Just focusing on your education.

A: Correct. Just on education and English supplied the food and it was ok. Can't complain that they didn't gas or beat you up there. It was normal way of life, a normal way of life in the camp. Being imprisoned. And naturally we stayed in Cyprus, the Jewish group, in that camp until they declared the state of Israel. Soon as they declared the state of Israel, they all let us out.

Not out, they I think the Israeli formed government sent ships to bring us back to Israel. Not back but to bring us to Israel.

Q: Were there any kind of big celebrations in the camp?

A: Oh absolutely. Oh yes, great celebrations. Great everybody was just like in heaven. Then after those celebrations the ship came to pick us up. Came in but naturally the majority of us who wanted to been to a kibbutz or just do whatever you want to do. But the majority was we all went in the army. And til the war ended and we became really a country. Then this was the end of it.

Q: From there, when did you decide to come to the U.S.?

A: Well I had two brothers here and a sister. And they really wanted, they wanted me to join them which I wasn't too happy to leave Israel. I liked where I was. I was doing pretty well there. But eventually they convinced me that we should be together. So I had to decide. They were, I was the youngest so I thought they kind of, and I this is when I decided to come to the United States.

Q: About what year was that?

A: 52. Right after the war of the independence, when the war of independence ended. When I got out from the army at that time.

Q: So you were out from the army maybe deciding what to do next and that's when –

A: Well I was working already there in Israel.

Q: And what were you doing?

A: I was only working in the port of, in Haifa port for a while. In the administration. And from there kind of I then took the United States, I decided and that was it.

Q: Did you go by ship?

A: Yes, yes. The usual thing.

Q: Did you go to New York or –

A: No straight to Chicago. Yeah because my two brothers and sister were in Chicago at that time. Naturally I -- And that was the happy ending.

Q: What was it like seeing your siblings again?

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A: It was great, it was great together with my family. Eventually got married. And had three kids and one of them is sitting right behind me, my daughter. Now she has kids. And that's what I did.

Q: My last question to you would be is there anything that you didn't get a chance to talk about. You want to –

A: No as I think about it, I can send it or something about it. Right?

Q: We can record it right now if

A: No that's about, that's about it.

Man (asks question): The period of time from when you went to Israel and then, your train –

A: We all went to be a soldier. And actually ok, Jack thank you. Thank you yeah, yes.

Q: If you'd like to tell us a little bit about that.

A: Well we had to go into the army, it was no question about it. we were all healthy by that time. We recoup from the camps and so we been coming to Israel. We were all over 18 already. I think. And we went, I went into the army and stayed in the Army for a while and by luck they

took me into the Navy for a while. So I stayed in the after, stayed in the Navy for most of my being in the Army really. And

Q: And why the switch from Army to Navy?

A: Well I you know when I was in Italy I did go a little bit to school in Italy. And it was the maritime school, scholastic school in Ancona. SO I had kind of like a test which the Army knew about and they needed people that had some type of a, a little education about it so they really picked me and they felt since we haven't got too many Jewish sailors and you had a little bit of schooling about it. So they just picked me and I joined the Navy.

Q: And so what did they have you doing in the Navy?

A: Well I started off as a regular sailor and then I was promoted to be the boson. Boson meant to be the head of the sailors. Kind of, it was a kind of a little rank. And stayed there like well I volunteered for an additional year while I was there. What was my time for, to get out of it was, they asked me if I wanted to stay for an additional year. I said well I signed for an additional year. They said, I liked it. And then once the year elapsed, I got into the civilian life and that was it. Became you know in the again worked in the administration in the port of Haifa until I came to the United States.

Q: Is there anything specific from the war of independence you'd like to include?

A: Well it was the war like any other war. You know. it's nothing special. You got your you know maneuvers and fightings but I was in the Army. The Navy saw very little fightings. Because it was skirmishes but nothing special. Just watched the borders. The water borders on the Mediterranean. And that was, that was the end and then that as I said I got into the administration and worked at Haifa port. That was the end of it.

Q: One more question. I'm curious of people who were Holocaust survivors who were fighting in the war of independence. Did their experience in the concentration camp make them more tougher as soldiers. Did they, did you see people who were –

A: We made yes, anger yes, but tougher soldiers no. The sabras was just as tough. As us. they were just as angry and dedicated as we were. We weren't any more dedicated than they, really born young people at those days in Israel. We were on equal, maybe a little, we were a little bit maybe more dedicated than the influx of Americans, the few Americans that came in and wanted to be officers running the Army. But they did a great job. They did a great job. They were in the American Army and they knew more so about armies than we did. That's true.

Q: Did you speak any English at that time?

A: No, not yet, not yet. No. I spoke a little bit of Italian.

Q: How did you learn Italian.

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A: I was in school for a little bit yes. I was, as I mentioned, I was in Ancona in this \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Where did you live when you were in Italy?

A: When I came into Italy? I saw, yes I saw, I said the story, I said the story. Well I was, I would say 45, 46. I was practically over a year. Yeah, yeah, I was going, coming and going there once –

Q: And the people in the town treated you well?

A: Oh great, great, can't say a bad word about them. About Italy. The opposite. All right.

Q: Began to like Italian food.

A: Right and the Italian people. Ok.

Q: Any last things you want to include on the tape.

A: No that's it. That's all.

Q: Thank you. It was very nice meeting you.

(end)