

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Raphael Aronson
September 23, 1994
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Raphael Aronson, conducted by Randy Goldman on September 23, 1994 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and 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.

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RAPHAEL ARONSON

September 23, 1994

Q: I'd like you to start off by telling me your name at the time of war years, and where you were born, and the date of your birth?

A: I am Raphael Aronson, also known as a nickname, Folia. I was born on June 21, 1919 in Kuanas, also known as Kovno, Lithuania.

Q: I'd like to start by just learning a little bit about Kovno before the war. What kind of life was it? Tell me a little bit about your family, what you did?

A: We were three brothers. My father was an engineer, mostly involved in importing advanced engineering systems from Germany to Lithuania. Systems, he introduced to Lithuania, central heating systems. Also, he introduced processing of meat in sausages and things for food industry. He was a quite successful businessman until Germany changed their political situation, I should say Hitler started to become active. Then the Germany companies didn't want to deal anymore with him, or he didn't want to deal with them. Then he switched around in importing different building materials for construction industry, such as material known as _____, which now is manufactured in United States by _____. He passed away. He was a heavy smoker, and developed lung cancer and passed away in 1938. My mother graduated from the University in St. Petersburg. She was a pharmacist, but she never practiced as a pharmacist. She was involved in bringing up the children. My older brother is -- after the war he was back in Lithuania, but right now, for the last five years, he is in Israel. He attended the University. He was also a construction engineer. He had a hobby as a glider, and he was a member of a gliding club in Lithuania. Mostly Lithuanians belonged there. There were one or two Jews, and he was fairly accepted in this gliding society. He published a magazine about gliding as a hobby. He learned somehow English, and he had ability to translate these magazines published in the United States or in England into Lithuanian language. And this was mostly part of his magazine which published in the Lithuania language. My younger brother, David, he was born in 1921, and after my father passed away he emigrated to the United States. As a matter of fact, at that time I was going also, me and my mother were going also, to the United States, but I couldn't get a permit, because I was an officer in the Lithuanian Army. I just graduated from Officers' School, and the Lithuanian Government had certain rules that I had to stay three years in the country until I could leave.

Q: Let me ask you, why was -- did everybody go into the Lithuanian Army? Did all the Jewish boys go in?

A: The Lithuanian Army everybody at age of 17 or 18, I don't recall, had to go into the Army, but I didn't go into the Army. I went to Military School, just like West Point. There was a certain way to do it, but after graduation you go immediately into the

Reserve. I chose to do this. There were very few Jewish people who did it, but after I graduated from high school, I just felt that I'm not ready for the University. I didn't know what to do with myself, and I applied, and I was accepted.

Q: Were the Jewish people in the Army treated the same way as everyone else?

A: Probably not. There were three of us Jews that were not part of the complete society. And Lithuanians are not intellectually advanced. They are mostly farmers, not very educated, and they looked at a Jew as a foreigner who doesn't belong in this society, in spite of the fact that there were quite few prominent Jews in the Army, very limited, who were colonels or one was a general, but they mostly were connected with medical services through the Army, but not the organization or things of this nature.

Q: Now, you lived in Kovno or Slobotka (ph)?

A: No, we lived in Kovno. Actually, Kovno, at that time Kovno was a capital of Lithuania and Slobotka was suburbs, not suburbs, part of Kovno, but close to the river. We had to cross a bridge. Slobotka was known as what's called left side of the track. Usually people who are not very well to do used to live there. It's the poor section of Kovno. This applied -- there was a very high percentage of Jewish population, but also non-Jews lived there.

Q: In Kovno itself, did you mix with non-Jews? Was your family religious?

A: My family was -- I wouldn't call orthodox religious. They were traditionally religious. They celebrated all holidays. We belonged to the Temple. We didn't go every Saturday or Friday to a Temple. My father was more religious, because my father graduated from a Jewish Hader (ph), which is a Jewish religious school. But my mother didn't know how to read or write in Jewish, or in Hebrew, because, like I say, she graduated from St. Petersburg, Russia. She spoke Russian. As a matter of fact, our language at home was Russian, not Jewish. Jewish population in Kovno did not mix with Lithuanians or very rarely. I don't know how it happened that I was the exception to the rule. The majority of youngsters went to Hebrew or to Jewish schools. I went to Lithuanian high school, which all subjects were taught in Lithuanian. We had, I believe, once a month, a Jewish religion class, which was make believe situation just to comply with certain rules and regulations. After graduation, as I stated, I went to this military school, which was mostly non-Jews. There were three or four Jews, and then I attended the Lithuanian University. So, I had quite a sizable exposure to Lithuanians and all nationality Jews.

Q: Did you get along well with them? Did you experience any anti-semitism?

A: Yes. There were -- I mean, non-Lithuanians were anti-semitic. They were hiding it, but as a rule things were changing in the '30s, the early '30s, 1930s. They were changing different laws and regulation to such to take away all wealth and ability to do business from Jewish population.

Q: In the early 30s?

A: The early 30s.

Q: In Lithuania?

A: Yes. Actually, Lithuania, just going back, became independent in 1918 after the first World War. At that time, Lithuania, in origin, people who could create Lithuania didn't exist, so they asked Jewish people to help them. So a Jewish warrior by the name of Hrobison (ph) I believe Hrobison, I'm not sure, wrote the first constitution for Lithuania. In the same year Hrobinson, later on when Israel became independent, he also helped to create the first Israel constitution. There were many prominent Jewish people in the Lithuanian government at the time, except the President was not a Jew. Slowly, once we got the feel of an independent country, they started to eliminated the Jews. Lithuanians were never involved in any trade. All trade was controlled by Jews. Slowly, they were issued different rules or directives to eliminate Jews or to create Lithuanian companies which, for certain religious reasons which Jews didn't have. But in spite of this, Jewish population, or part of the Jewish population, was fairly comfortable at businesses. They were professional people. And then there were a percentage of Jewish people who are not comfortable, just like any other European country or eastern country or western.

Q: Were you aware of what was going in Germany with Hitler and the Nazis?

A: Yes. We knew all of what was happening, but people were very naive at that time, and they said it's fine, it's in Germany, it's not in Lithuania. But everybody was very much concerned and tried to do something, but nobody knew what to do because for one, iten one; they were comfortable. They had houses, buildings. They were established and somehow they didn't feel like separating from everything that they had created in their lifetime. Some people, many left Lithuania, not many -- I'm sorry. Maybe one or two percent of Jewish people left. Just for example, my brother left, and we were going to leave, but we couldn't as I stated before. Just an example, when German came to Poland and started the atrocities of killing Jews, many Polish Jews came to Lithuania, run away. At that time there was Japanese consulate in Lithuania, in Kovno, who I don't know the reason why, was giving out Visas for Jews to go to Japan through Shanghai, I believe. And there were huge lines in front of the Consulate to obtain a visa to go to Japan. And this was mostly Polish Jews. Very few Lithuanian Jews were there, because Polish Jews had already the experience of being under Nazi occupation for a relatively short period of time. Lithuanian Jews, probably they didn't think this was the right thing to do or were not ready to do it. I'm not sure. But I just recently was in Europe and read an article about it, this week, and it was described in detail what happened to this Japanese Consul, I forget, _____ I believe his name is, and the people who obtained visas mostly were Polish Jews.

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Q: Were you involved in any political organizations while you were in Kovno before the war?

A: I belonged to a student fraternity which was right wing, the fraternity was EL AL, which was right wing. We followed the leader who was Trobotinsky (ph), and it was just a student fraternity. We had political involvement, social involvement, just like any other fraternity, and probably I was a right winger not a left winger.

Q: Why did you join this, do you remember?

A: Because I had to join -- I mean it was very customary for students, university students, Jewish, to join fraternities. There were three fraternities. This one was left wing, which had belief in being left. One was something in between and many of my friends were in this El Al fraternity, and that's where I went.

Q: But you were concerned about the principles that Trobotinsky (ph)?

A: Yes, I believed in it to a certain -- I didn't believe in what's called Jewish Socialists, or left wingers. I didn't believe in that. I believed more in the right wing, with Trobinski (ph) or what was called Batar (ph), and I believe it was a goal to achieve a better life for Jews was better following Trobinski or Batar, as compared to left wing. Or there were quite a few Jews in Lithuania who are Communist. Communist was illegal. There was a particular movement of communist in Lithuania, and a high percentage of members were Jews.

Q: The reason I'm asking is that it sounds like your family had a fairly comfortable life style, and you were not highly religious and yet you were following -- you were concerned about the future of Jews in Lithuania?

A: Yes, that's right. I don't believe it can be limited to future of Jews of Lithuania. We were always talking about Jews as a nation, not only Lithuania. We never referred that Jews of Lithuania should be better off or concerned about Jews of Lithuania. We always talked about Jews as a nation. And speaking about their comfort, yes, we were comfortable until '34 or '35. At that time, my father already -- Hitler was already in Germany-- he already, in Germany, he couldn't do business with Germany. At the same time, he already had certain problems with his health because of smoking, which he never stopped smoking. Then things started to go down, and when war started and the Communists came in, which was in 1940, then we were just existing. We were not poor, but we were not well to do.

Q: I do want to ask you about how things changed with the Communists, but I think first I just want to get more of a sense of Konov before the War. Culturally, what the life was like there, was there a lot of opportunity? Was there a good life for a Jewish boy like yourself?

A: Actually, there existed a certain opportunity for an educated Jew, like myself, at that time I was probably 20, 22, 23. I was born in '18, we're talking about '37, '38 and I was 23 years old or so. Young people of my generation had many possibilities, because first there were families in certain businesses which always, the children used to take over the business from the father. Second, many professional people were Jews. Doctors were Jews. Many lawyers were Jews. Many nurses were Jews. There were Jewish factories, big factories producing rubber products like rubber boots and rubber coats into rubber in general. There were salt factories which produced bakeries. Industry was fairly much controlled -- not controlled, but it was very represented by Jewish people. So, there existed opportunity as far as for a Jewish doctor, it was much more difficult to obtain a license to be a doctor as compared to Lithuanian Jew. You have to know somebody, you have to bribe, like in Israel or any European country actually. Bribing or knowing somebody was very important way of life. Even going into the Army certain people, Jewish again, did not want to go to the Army because they could afford, they could pay off to somebody to say they were not physically capable to be enlisted. There was, I believe he was a colonel, who was in charge of army medical services, top man, and he was a Lithuanian, but he married a Jewish -- his wife was Jewish. I didn't know it, but now I found out that he was accepting bribes to issue certificates that a Jewish fellow has certain problems, physical problems, medical problems, and he must excuse him in joining the Army. So, as far as opportunity, yes, but many Jews of my generation, if they could afford, left Lithuania temporarily to attend universities or get education or get experience overseas. They went to France. They went to England. They went to Belgium and right now they are back -- many are back in the United States. They came somehow. But, some of them were, during the war, were in England because they left just before the war. They went to universities in England during the war, and everybody had a dream to leave Lithuania and go someplace. Naturally, the United States was one of the favorable places to go.

Q: Did you have an active social life? Were there a lot of cultural activities you took advantage of?

A: The Jewish type?

Q: Any type, I want to know about Kovno.

A: Yes, Kovno had a fairly prominent opera house. There was a prominent singer by the name of Petroskauf (ph), who was a good friend of a very famous singer, Sholapkin (ph), a short fellow who -- I don't remember. Sholapkin, this second series to visit this famous terror of Lithuania, and to participate in operas. Opera was central for social activity. There were theaters. The Jewish theater was very good. The Lithuanian theaters I don't recall. There were movies. There was a big university. There was a School of Medicine and another University Engineering School and Economics School. Lithuanians had their own societies and their social organization. There were Lithuanian writers which were

promoted by Lithuanians. In my opinion, they were not very good. Actually, going back to the history of Lithuania, in 1430, Lithuania had a very powerful king who occupied the whole of Europe from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea belonged to Lithuania. Then he married a woman who was of Polish origin, and she dropped him and married the King of Poland, I believe. And then the whole territory that was acquired by the Lithuania King had become part of Poland. From this point on, Poland was never an independent country. The next independence that came to Lithuania was in 1918.

Q: I'm trying to get a sense of how you spent your leisure time. Were there nice memories before the war?

A: As being a youngster or in general population of Lithuania?

Q: You?

A: As a youngster I participated in different sport activities. I was a referee of a basketball team. At one time, there was basketball match in Lithuania that all of Europe participated and Lithuania took first place, because they imported all Lithuania basketball players from the United States. There was only one player who was Lithuanian. We watched -- we spent a lot of time in this sport complex. There was tennis and skiing in winter. Summer we used to go away in the country, rent a bungalow as a family, my mothers and my brothers. My uncle, who his wife was my mother's sister, had a huge farm not far from town, probably 10 miles, 15 miles away, and we used to go there and spend a lot of time at the farm and do activities. That's the extent of it. I was a person that was always busy. I was never bored. Until I went to military school, I was involved in going to school, which requires homework and things of this nature.

Q: Did you ever go into Slobotka? Was there any reason to?

A: After -- when I joined Alile(ph), and when I was a student at the University, somehow I used to go because there were certain people who used to live on the shore of Slobotka, just as you cross a bridge, rabbis mostly. And a certain rabbi's daughter was part of our young society, and I remember she had a wedding, she was married at her father's home, who had a big home in Slobotka. Maybe I was a few times, but it simply wasn't what I chose to do. I don't recall. I was pretty sure I was there many times -- not many times - three, four, five, ten times. I just don't recall.

Q: The reason I was asking was, I know that that was a real center of Jewish life, but it's obviously something that you were not that involved with?

A: No, like the Jews Talmud studying in town, which I was not involved in such activity.

Q: I want to ask you one more question, and then we need to change tapes. Because you were involved, or you went to school with a lot of Lithuanians, you were in the military

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with a lot of Lithuanians, did you personally experience anti-semitism before the war broke out?

A: I wish I could say yes, I did, but I cannot recall. I had a few Lithuanian friends, which we were friends in high school, especially in the higher grades of high school. At the University, I spoke only to a few Lithuanians who asked me certain questions because I was good in mathematics, better than average, and they asked me how to solve this problem or this problem, which I told them and this was the extent of our contact.

Q: So your friends were Jewish?

A: No, about half, half. I knew people, but friends is something else. I had two or three Lithuanian friends and maybe four or five close Jewish friends, probably. I was in between. There was an uprising in '35 or '36, I don't recall, where there was a right wing -

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: You were starting to tell me about this uprising in the mid 1930s?

A: Yes. In late 1930s there was Lithuanians in the fraternity, which were very right wingers, and they started to introduce different difficulties as related to Jewish students. They started to beat up on the street, Jewish youngsters, and the University introduced -- or they did not introduce -- but they forced Jewish people to sit on the top of the auditoriums, the last two or three rows of the auditoriums. And whoever did not comply with their request was written up. And some were badly beaten up and had to be taken out by ambulance to a hospital. Also, they introduced, or they enforced, certain requirements that Jews between them should not speak Jewish at the University grounds. Only the Lithuanian language should be used. At that time, it became a not a very favorable place for Jews. They were not equal with all students. As time progressed, the Lithuanian fraternity on this organization, which there were two, one was part _____, the second was a student organization, they became more and more powerful and attracted more and more members, and they were very instrumental later on when Hitler or Germans walked into Lithuania. Things changed probably in '34 '35.

Q: How did life change under Russian occupation, was that noticeable?

A: Yes, very much so, because it was a very slow process, a gradual process, and things changed. First to start with, they closed up all Jewish fraternities.

Q: I'm sorry. Could you start over and say when that was when the Russians took over.

A: Okay. When the Russians came to Lithuania after some agreement was made between Russian, USSR and Germany, the Red Army came to Lithuania, and nobody realized what was happening. First they were met with flowers and everybody was very happy that the Russians came. Gradually they changed the way of life. First they closed up all religious -- not religious -- fraternities which relates to Jewish activities or religious activities. They introduced, for example, Russian language and Russian Communist history in all schools and universities. They reorganized school systems. They deported the majority of successful business people from Lithuania to Siberia, and between them there were quite a high percentage of Jewish people who owned business and were prosperous and active in social life of Lithuania before they came in. Then they started to take over businesses and real estate, and major changes took place very similar to -- eventually became a way of life in Lithuania very similar to way of life in USSR. At that time, the young generation, which is my generation and my wife's generation, which is people between 16 and 22, something like this, probably felt a certain freedom came in, and they were living up the freedom. They started to party and enjoying themselves, and they didn't give a damn what's happening. Suddenly a lot of business activity disappeared for them. Their parents didn't talk about how to build up the business, how to create something more, how to open another store, or whatever the case may be. Memories of

this era are regretfully, especially my wife's memory, who was younger than me. It was a year of freedom and partying, and she has good memories of it.

Q: I would just stop you a minute. You were telling me that actually when the Russians came in, there seemed to be less, maybe less structure, less formalities, but for your young people, it was liberating in a way?

A: That probably is correct, because somehow in the very beginning, Jews felt that Russians came in, and they should not be concerned anymore regarding anti-semitism. They were completely wrong. Several became equal with everybody else, and they felt that their way of life at home became much easier because their parents or relatives were not involved and concerned anymore about their business because business was taken away from them from bigger businesses. Somehow, I think for the young generation, life became easier in the very beginning. Later on, things changed. Certain people advanced because of Russians being in Lithuania. Certain people went all the way down. It changed the balance of the society.

Q: Now, did it change the balance for you in a positive or negative way?

A: For me, it changed -- it's difficult to answer. I missed the fraternity and fraternal life. And then everybody got involved and became a better student in the University because somehow it was a feeling that if you have enough education you'll succeed. In the very beginning, before the Russians came in, success was prosperity, how prosperous and successful your parents' business. Education was very important at that time also, but here you became independent. You couldn't depend any more on what your parents had or will have. You had to create your own space in the society. In order to do it, you should have education. So, everybody got involved and became a better student, studied more to get better marks and graduate sooner. That's what I recall.

Q: Tell me about the German occupation. Do you remember the day the Germans came in?

A: Yes. The Germans just --they didn't come in in Kovno, but they crossed the border on the day of my birthday, which was June 21st -- I was born on June 21st -- in 1941. Then we went out with my friends. We were going to a nightclub party, and they were coming in around 2:00 in the morning or maybe 3:00, because it was getting daylight and all you see from the skies is falling down like pieces of burnt paper or something of this nature. We didn't know what it is. We thought somebody threw something out from the airplane. We didn't know. I went to sleep. The next morning, suddenly all streets were full of Red Army running and moving from Kovno, and all streets were just loaded with them. There were some that were barefoot running, some on tracks, all kinds of means of transportation, and they were just running away. Germans were already across the border between what's called Memau (ph), which was part of Lithuania, which Germany took away before. And nobody knew what was happening because there was no communication. The radio didn't work, nothing worked. The telephone, I believe,

worked. I believe we tried to get some information by telephone, but it was impossible. We couldn't get any information. I'm not sure if it was the same day or the next day, there was no Germans still not in Kovno, but the Lithuanian right wingers opened the jail and let out all prisoners from the jail. These were all types of whatever people were in jail, murderers, and whatever you want, and they got weapons, and they distributed the white ribbons to Lithuanians, and this was in celebration of the Army of Lithuania. And the first task of this liberation army was to kill Jews. And they went in Slobotka, and then from house to house trying to kill many, many Jews, I don't how many thousands, just kill them, chase them out from the houses, took away their possession and there was no law at all. Then they moved to Kuanas across a bridge and again was going from house to house, and they selected three hundred most prominent Jews in Kuanas, and put them in what's called -- this was called a huge garage where this bath system is stored, a maintenance garage. And they said you will be here. The German government will promote you to be in charge of the City, whatever it is. The next thing, they came with rifles and killed all of them. So, actually Lithuanian Jewish Society was the leaders of this community. Then they continued going from house to house. They came in our house, which we lived in front of a multi story building, not multi story, maybe five story buildings, and back, it was like a one story building which was our house where we used to live. They killed quite a few people in this building in front. Then they came to our building. They walked in, and I put on such an emblems that I am an Officer of the Lithuanian Army, and I said, "What are you doing here? I am an officer of the Lithuanian Army, you pay attention to me." They were standing with the rifles and taking us away to kills us, I'm not sure. Then the caretaker, or the person who took care of the apartment building came to our building, superintendent he's probably called, came in and said, "What are you doing here? These are nice people, these are nice Jews. Leave them alone." So they never touched anybody, and at that time they turned around and walked away. So this was the end of this. Then in the next few days, the German Army moved in, and they issued the white arm bands, not to lay down the weapons and follow only rules and regulation which German Government Occupation had issued, that is was illegal to go from house to house. Then the Germans gave a systematic way how to eliminate Jews. Actually, there was no more fear that somebody would knock at your door and kill you, but there was rules in the next month or so, all Jews should move out from the City and move into this specific area in Slobotka, which was the beginning of the Ghetto.

Q: Before we get to that, the Lithuanians who were running around the City, going in homes, beating up on Jews, do you think they were under German supervision or they were just doing it on their own?

A: My feeling is that they did it on their own, because this was this organization, this right wing organization, which was fraternity was a sport club, was very much right wing. Then they joined all these people who were let out from the jail. But people who were in the jail, the majority were right wingers because the Russians put them in the jail. And the Russians came into Lithuania everybody who didn't like the Russians are in Lithuania, mostly Lithuanians put them in jail. Jail was loaded with so-called right

wingers, Lithuanians who, really it's just like if you let out an animal from a cage, they are overwhelmed. Here they let them out. They open the door from the jail, give them rifles, go, and they were just running and all others joined them. When a mass movement starts, there are many joiners. Anybody who wanted could pick up a white handkerchief around his arm and join them.

Q: Were you watching any of this? I mean did you actually see any of the beatings or shootings or whatever?

A: Yes, yes, because you couldn't miss it, you couldn't miss it.

Q: What did you see?

A: I saw that they had come and beat up a Jew and let him laying on the sidewalk. I didn't see a shooting frankly. At least I don't recall, but beating, I saw all the time during this several days. As a matter of fact, my brother, who worked for some company, engineering company, older brother, just felt that he should go back to his office after -- it was Monday, the 22nd of June, and he came to his office and his best friend with whom they worked together on a certain project says, "I'm glad you are here. You are under arrest." And they picked him up and put him in the basement of the office building where he worked. Somehow, he escaped from there, because he tied a white handkerchief around his arm, and he didn't look too Jewish, so he escaped. And he was hiding for maybe two weeks, because he was always afraid they would come and look for him.

Q: Didn't you wonder where he was?

A: Sure, but that's all. I just wonder. I got a notice before the 21st from the Lithuanian Government that I should report to a certain place as active duty as a lieutenant and this date was the 22nd. The 22nd was Monday, the 21st was Sunday. I should report to a certain place to be reenlisted. I called this place, and there was no answer on Monday, and nobody knew what's happening. So, I decided to go to take myself to this place and see what -- because I was afraid if I don't report something will happen to me. And I came to the last door and knocked at the door and nobody answered, and I turned around and went back. But as I walked there and back, I was very careful. If I saw somebody with white arms, I was going in the corner of the buildings. I knew something could happen to me. As a matter of fact, my mother told me please don't go, don't go, but I just felt I should.

Q: Your family was very frightened?

A: Oh yes, yes, especially my mother because my father was already dead. He died in '38, '37.

A: Were you thinking about making any plans?

- Q: At that time, it was already too late to make any plans. Some people managed to make plans even then to go to Sweden, or some went by boats to Sweden from Lithuania. Some went, somehow managed to go across the border and go to Russia and go to Siberia. There were a limited amount of people found ways and means how to escape, but very, very few, very few.
- Q: Now, I read that really the first few days before the Germans even came in, people were being rounded up and taken out to, I guess, the forts and shot. Thousands of people in the first few days were killed. Do you know anything about that?
- A: Sure, sure they were. This was mostly people from Slobotka were killed. The numbers were something like 7,000 of Jews, and they were taken, not to the Ninth Fort. The Ninth Fort was established later on by Germans in collaborations with Lithuanians as a major killing spot for Jews. But there was another fort called Seven Fort, which was just an intersection of two rivers. They used to take Jews in the very beginning right there and kill them, in that Seven Fort.
- Q: Did you know about this at the time?
- A: No.
- Q: Is this _____?
- A: No, I didn't know at that time, actually, probably I found out more about it being here in the United States than in Lithuania, because everybody knew that the Jews were killed. Where and how they were killed was not known at that time because we were moved from our City to the Ghetto, and yet everybody was disengaged from his everyday existence, a new existence, accommodations were very meager. They were preoccupied to create the best they can under existing circumstances, and they just knew that many Jews were killed, but they didn't talk about it, the where and how. Later on, it started slowly, and then after the end of the war when the facts were available became known.
- Q: These killings were in _____, outside of Seven Fort, in _____?
- A: No, these were just Lithuanians. These right wingers, I call them right wingers, is a cross section of Lithuanians who wanted financial benefit by doing it, or they hated Jews, or they got a kick out of doing it because Lithuanians probably became later on -- Germans really liked Lithuanians because they were professional Jew killers, and they used to not only in Lithuania but also in Poland and Romania.
- Q: Now, it was still a little over a month before you went to the Ghetto. What were you doing in that month? Did life kind of stop?

- A: Nothing. Trying to get as much information as we could to find out what's happening, you know. What Germans -- how do we exist, how do we live under German occupation. What will be next step. And every day there seemed to be new announcements by German Government regulations related to Jews, and was posted all over the City, from today on all Jews should have to say Heil Hitler or wear a patch, and who doesn't have it will be killed. Next thing came out were regulations that all Jews should not walk on the sidewalk, should walk on the street. It's not allowed. Any businesses which still exist that belong to Jews should put a big sign in front that this business belongs to a Jew. And the Jews should not attend any universities. There were all kinds of rules and regulations. Everyday was something new, and this was anticipation like today you put on the radio to see news. Here, every morning, you run out to see what the new announcement hangs on the buildings or on -- and every day or every second it was always something new. Then it was a request to turn in all gold and valuables. It became illegal to possess gold. It was a very gradual process, an organized gradual process. This kept you busy.
- Q: Was there a feeling of you know, violence, I mean were you afraid when you went outside?
- A: If you complied with directives which are posted, probably you could walk on the street nobody would touch you. If you didn't walk on the sidewalk, if you had a yellow star and as a rule, basically by memory, you could walk out -- nobody felt safe, let me put it this way. But, if you were within all of the directives that the Germans issued, you were mobile, you could go to a store and buy bread or do things of this nature. And everybody was living in anticipation of what's next, and next came moving to the Ghetto.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: How did the Ghetto come about?

A: I believe one morning they posted a notice that all Jews should move to the Ghetto in Slobotka, and they organized a Jewish relocation committee.

Q: Who organized a committee?

A: The Germans. I don't recall who was on the relocation committee. But then this relocation committee also established certain relocation consultants, I don't know how they call it, and I was part of them, because the only reason I say they assigned me was because I was a lieutenant in the Lithuanian Army and there were five or six Jewish youngsters, the same as me. Then they proceeded to tell me that here on this street in the new Ghetto that these families should be relocated in these houses. And I had this list, and I go up to these people and say you'll be moving to this street to this house at this number. And that's what I did. This took maybe two weeks or three weeks. I don't recall. Actually a relocation of where Jews from the City to Ghetto. I'm not sure how long, but it would be safe statement that the period was one month. I just -- I'm not sure if it was one month or three weeks. And during this period there was not too many means of transportation. There were no trucks, actually horses and buggies or wheel barrows or things of this nature. The majority of people left the bulk of their furniture or possessions in their apartment and moved to Ghetto. Ghetto consisted of two sections, the main Ghetto and Small Ghetto. Everybody was assigned apartments. This location which was assigned for Ghetto used to be occupied mostly by Lithuanians, not by Jews and probably Lithuanians, I'm not sure, paid for the housing and things because they moved out. They were very cheap, inexpensive private homes. The majority, which had two, three four rooms and one room was assigned to a family. In addition, there were two high rise apartment buildings which Lithuania built for government subsidy for poor people -- Lithuanian poor people. These, two huge, we used to call it blocks, apartment buildings were also occupied. In each apartment was three or four rooms which in each room would be one family. Eventually, everybody was moved to the Ghetto, and to once they were in Ghettos, they organized working brigades which is one way they go to work, manual work.

Q: I just wanted to ask you a little bit more about the Ghetto, and then we'll talk about the war. It sounds like the effort to get in was fairly organized. People didn't take furniture, but they were able to take a lot of their belongings, their books?

A: Yes, some people even took furniture who could afford it, because they still had money. Money could do many things, or hidden gold. They used to bribe or pay Lithuanians to provide better means of transportation and these could take their furniture. Not everybody, but a small percentage.

Q: So, there was an effort to get all books in and people preserve their --?

A: Yes. They took as much as they could.

Q: Tell me about where you were living in the Ghetto?

A: We lived in a house which had two rooms, one very small room and one is like a bigger room. It was on one of the streets of the Ghetto. There was an outhouse, and I don't recall if there was running water or not. Frankly, I don't recall, probably not. And we brought our beds to sleep and pots and pans and clothes and books, albums, things that were of certain value to us as a family. That's about all I believe. My brother was married, my older brother, and he was with his wife and my mother and myself. Somehow we got two rooms because probably we knew somebody, because one room was my brother and his wife used to stay in a separate room from my mother and myself. That was it. It was not - it was not in comparison to what we had in Kovnov before the war. But we slept well.

Q: You are an architect. What did the Ghetto look like? I know there were two parts and you were living in the larger part at this point?

A: Yes.

Q: What did it look like?

A: It looked like if you see the movies today, western type movies, you see the small towns or villages, the streets are not paved, and both sides of the streets are houses, wooden houses, not very fancy, fairly run down. There were some stores, not fancy, without any store windows and no lights on the street. It's a fairly primitive location. There was nothing fancy about it, except the two apartment buildings which were built. They were built of brick, no finishes, and no elevators. It was probably eight stories high, seven stories high, and you had to go up the stairs, seven floors. There were no elevators. It had running water, I believe, these apartment buildings, but the majority of houses didn't have, all it had was outhouses. They didn't have running water, I'm pretty sure.

Q: Were you allowed to leave the Ghetto?

A: No. Around Ghetto was a fence built of barbed wire, and there were guards walking around the Ghetto on the outside, and there was only one gate to go out. This gate was open to let out this working brigade in the morning to go to work and to come back. Everybody when they come back were searched to make sure he didn't bring anything into the Ghetto. And the guards around the Ghetto were mostly Lithuanians with rifles in case somebody wants to climb over the fence, if he could, they'll come down the fence and shot him. It was just like a camp, like a jail.

Q: You were sent out on these work brigades?

A: Personally, no in the beginning I was not. In the beginning, I was assigned like public works to make sure the roads are properly paved and passable and other facilities are in good working condition, probably because I had an engineering background, construction background. And then they assigned to me some twenty people or more, I don't recall, mostly elderly people, because they couldn't -- they were not useful to go out and work manual work. And probably they fix the road in the Ghetto not because they wanted Jews to have a better road, but because they wanted this road passable for Germans in case they come in trucks or cars in the Ghetto so they can pass and collect the Jews _____ whatever, as the case may be. That's what I did in the very beginning. Later on, based on my memory, probably roads were passable. Then I was assigned to a certain brigade to work, which was to load lumber into barges into ships someplace and to unload it. That's where I met my wife, because she was in the same brigade.

Q: Where were you -- you were loading and unloading this lumber?

A: Yes, it's wood. In country they cut the wood and load on the barges and bring it to a place, a mill, where they cut it into lumber and boards and planks, whatever the case may be.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

A: I mean I was assigned, actually each brigade had a leader, and I became the leader of this brigade and this brigade had probably 30 women and 30 men working. And she was one of the 30 women. And we had a certain advantage because we used to go out in the country where they used to cut the woods, and there were farmers, and since they were farmers somehow we made a deal with the farmers giving them our clothes that we didn't use or gold or valuables, and they used to bring us and give us food, like big bag of potatoes or flour or baked bread or whatever the case may be. Then I probably met my present wife at that time. Since I was the leader of this group, I say we need two or three people who should distribute equally whatever it was from the farmers to each person, because you bring a bag of potatoes, each person got four or five potatoes or whatever to hide. I had assigned her to be in charge of distributing this food. She and another two or three. And, I then got closer and closer to her because I used to come and say how are you doing, and eventually I used to meet her in Ghetto and eventually decided to marry her.

Q: Well, it's a nice story in the midst of all of this.

A: Yes, 1943.

Q: Was the work vigorous? Was it real hard work?

A: Yes, yes. It was hard, but to be very honest, was not as hard as other brigades because --

the worst place to work used to be the airport. In Kovno, Germans built a new airport next to the existing airport, and there people used to come and dig and carry stones. And it was very, very hard work. Not a good working environment. Many people used to die working at the airport or killed because the guards were not very friendly. This was a huge brigade, some thousand, twelve hundred people to a unit, and I don't know how many people were in Ghetto, but we used to go out three or four brigades to work at the airport. This was the worst place to work. Our place was also hard work, but it was a better environment. Somehow the guards who watched us were also more human, because they used to go away from big city in the country, and some nights we used to sleep over in the country because we used to go to with the barge. There's a river where the woods is, and it used to take a day or longer, and they used to sleep there someplace in a barn, on a farm. And then at night we used to load up the barges and go back to the city where the mills are. It was -- we didn't have to work continuously, because once you are on the barge you don't work. So, it was a more relaxed situation as compared to other brigades. Probably others were in similar situations, but it's just a question of luck. But, the airport was the worst.

Q: Did you work at the airport?

A: Only a few times. Maybe a week or two weeks. I don't remember how long, but I worked there after this public works was over. Then I worked at the airport for a certain period of time, and then in Ghetto was such a relationship between the Ghetto administration and people who worked. And administration which would come later on was this Dr. Elkous (ph), and then there was this other person who was, prior we knew from before the war, friends of our family. I went to complain to them, say I don't want to go to work at the airport, maybe you can do something to reassign me to work someplace else. And then they make me this leader of this group to pick up woods, lumber. There was a certain period when I worked at the airport.

Q: Any other work brigades you were part of?

A: In Ghetto, no.

Q: You brought up Doctor Elkous in the consul. Tell me a little bit about how the Ghetto was run, how it was operated?

A: I mean the Germans organized Ghetto administration and the leader of this administration was Dr. Elkous. Now why Dr. Elkous, I don't know how they found him. I just don't know. Then this committee that worked under him, there were different people, there was one lawyer who was his right hand man. There was one person who was in charge -- it was called some Arbitza (ph) labor department, who was assigned people. Germans used to say that we need a brigade of twelve hundred people to do this type of work, so he selected, made a list who are these twelve hundred people. Or like in my case this 60 people, he made the list, who are the 60 people. And he was not a very honest person.

Not a very liked person, because he used to take bribes from people who were in Ghetto. They would say assign me to a better place _____ I organize for you, I have a pound of butter or whatever the case may be. I don't know. So, he was by many people disliked, but some liked him, though. Elkous was a very honest person and a good leader, and he believed that under his leadership he should negotiate with Germans to get the best possible condition for Jews in Ghetto, which he did. And to his team he was a lawyer and to other people --. Then the Jewish police, this was also the police chief, was precincts, I believe three precincts and chief of the precincts and kept the police organization, who were on the surface, they executed orders from Germans, But at the same time, there was a certain amount of underground work where they did not -- they helped the Jewish population and tried to make it easier. As a matter of fact, Jewish police leadership was killed one time. They felt that there was something going on, and so they took all the Jewish police chiefs and the chiefs of the precincts and kept whoever was in charge, about twenty-five people I believe, and took them to the Ninth Fort and shoot them, all of them. And they appointed a new leadership of the Ghetto police, which I believe was also disposed, the second one was disposed, I believe, based on my memory.

Q: How were the police and the consulate chosen? Were they chosen by the Jewish community or were they chosen by the German?

A: Basically, appointed, probably by Jewish _____ Elkous group, probably or maybe with consultation with Germans -- I mean leadership. Regular policemen were just selected by the Administration, the Ghetto Administration.

Q: How was the Ghetto Administration selected?

A: This I don't know. I don't recall. Like Dr. Elkous and all of his people, I don't know. I don't recall how. But they were probably appointed by Germans in conjunction with Lithuanians and groups that knew Jewish communities in Kovno and probably Germans talked to them and said who should be the leader. Who would be a responsible person and speaks good German because Elkous graduated from the School of Medicine in Germany. He spoke good German.

Q: What were some of the responsibilities of the Jewish Consul? What were their importance to the community?

A: Actually, they were running the Ghetto, and their obligation was to comply with directive which they get from occupation from Germans and to execute it. Now, once they get it, we negotiate with them and try to change certain small details to make it easier for a Jewish population in Ghetto. Otherwise, they used to have public sports and Jewish services, religious services, they taught in schools, not schools at home for children, at hospitals there was a place where they used to -- there was a certain industry in Ghetto, to produce certain items or to fix up German uniforms. They organized this industry, and

they were just like any other government except there was no power like in democracy, you have a Congress, representatives by people, but here nobody was elected by people, they had to follow just directives they get from Germans. But if this was within the scope of the directive the German list would provide, then they organized a standard way of life for a community, hospitals and welfare and food.

Q: So, in a certain way, it sounds like most of the activities that you would have had before the war, you still had in the Ghetto?

A: No. What activity?

Q: Well, you had some schools, and you had --.

A: No, we didn't have schools. We had a hospital, which was a very primitive hospital. The schools were in somebody's else home, were little schools. There were ten kids or so, youngsters, just to come and some person who didn't go to work or after work they could teach them. It was not an organized school system. The hospital was an organized hospital. Food distribution was brought in by trucks from outside, bread I believe, there were others, potatoes and was equally distributed between population. There was a Jewish bakery, only one which was to take flour and bake bread in Ghetto. There was a butcher shop which used to bring meat and cut up meat in small portions and distribute to the population based on -- everybody used to have a cart to get. That was the extent of the activities. There was very little cultural activity as such. There was just work, go to work, get up in the morning, come back from work and try to figure out how to do the best from which you've got, to prepare a meal so that you will not be hungry for the next day.

Q: Was there any theater, music or anything like that?

A: Not yet. Sometimes the Jewish people, usually get together in a group to sing, and then there were Jewish musicians who were musicians before Ghetto time, they used to get together and give a concert. People used to listen on Sundays, I believe Sundays, and get together and give a concert and play. One thing which was very unique in Ghetto, I just remembered, during Sundays, Ghetto was on the shore of the river and there was like a little beach. It was off limits to go out and use it. At one time, this consul, the consul negotiated with the Germans, and they allowed to open the beach for the Jewish people on Sunday to go for two or three hours and everybody used to come and go for a swim. Because there was only one public bath in Ghetto and you really had to wait in line to go in there. So, we used to go in the river.

Q: So, did you go down to the river once or was it every week?

A: For a short period of time it was every week. I don't know for how long, but this was for half a year or a year, but summer. But this was something new and something that

younger people looked forward to doing.

Q: We were talking about activities in the Ghetto. Did people observe the Jewish holidays? Was the Temple open, the Shul (ph)?

A: Yes, they observed the Jewish holidays. The Ghetto, as they became more religious and conscious as they are Jews. There was one small Temple, but then there was a tent, a huge tent, across the consul where Dr. Elkous was, Village Square, and there was a huge tent which was all public services were available. The barber was there, and a notary, which somebody used to get married used to come there, and they would issue certain pieces of papers that you are married.

Q: Is that where you got married?

A: Yes. And somebody died, I mean all of the statistical or public records were kept there. This would also be at Temple during Jewish holidays. People used to come there, but in addition was a small Temple.

Q: Did you go?

A: I don't recall. I don't recall. Maybe I went once or twice, but I was not there every holiday.

Q: Now, you mentioned that the Jewish police were helpful to the underground movement. Tell me a little bit about the underground movement?

A: I frankly, I was not part of the underground. My brother was very active in the underground. He was to leave the Ghetto because he didn't look too Jewish and go to different Lithuanian organizations and used to copy maps where Germans are, German installations, and things of this nature, and bring it back to the Ghetto and give it to the underground. Underground was very secretive to such an extent that all people were divided into groups of five and nobody knew who else -- you knew these five people, but you didn't know anybody else. Also, if somebody used to talk about underground with other people, this was -- he could be killed by underground. There were many people killed by underground because they talked to other people what's happening in underground. Being in the Ghetto, I didn't have too much exposure, in spite of the fact that my brother was part of it. One time he was coming back from his trip to outside of the Ghetto, which he had to race to leave the Ghetto in some opening in the fence, and he was caught by a German and beaten up and placed in the jail. The Germans had a jail at the beginning of the Ghetto. But somehow he run away from it and came back. I knew that he was missing for a week or two weeks, but he wouldn't tell us what happened to him. Now, I know what happened to him. After the war, he told me.

Q: What happened to him?

A: What happened to him? He was beaten up. He was in jail, and then he run away from the jail somehow. I have the details how it happened. I'll give you a copy of his write up, and he writes how he escaped, but I don't recall offhand. The police in the beginning supported the underground, and that's one reason why the old police, big shots, police chiefs and so on were killed by Germans. Then I believe a second time, something similar happened. At the end of the Ghetto, I believe the Chief of Police was also killed. They were supporting and this Consul of the Ghetto had knowledge of this activity, and they were supporting it, but this was never revealed to Germans. Now, we know what happened, but during the war the Germans didn't know the Consul was supporting it.

Q: When you say that the police and the Consul were supporting the underground, in what ways?

A: I mean, the first objective of the underground was to get weapons. And police were instrumental in controlling the gate, the police. There were Germans controlling the gate on the one side, the second side, the Jewish police were controlling, and Germans were lazy and so they didn't search people. Jewish police searched people. And they used to let in arms. That's how the underground built up quite a bit of their different arms, their rifles and guns and so on. I didn't know that. I was in Kovno, five years ago, when my brother was still there, to convince him to go to Israel. So they took me in an area where the Ghetto used to be, which there is very little left, but there is one building, one house, and under this house was built underground a complete tunnel, and this was a shooting gallery to teach Jewish partisans how to use guns and how to shoot the target. And this underground was dug out by the underground, and it was used for this purpose. Nobody would hear their shooting.

Q: Who did the teaching? Who taught them?

A: There were -- I mean between the Jewish populations there were people who were in the Army. As I told you, I was in the Army, I was a lieutenant _____, so I was not, but there were other people who were officers in the Lithuanian Army. There were some -- I mean there was some movement, at that time already, before Russians came in in 1940, there were some movement to teach Jewish people to be a military people, because they already were thinking then about Palestine. There was a school in Italy where Jewish families could send youngsters to this school to teach them how to be a Marine and how to fight at war, and they were preparing for it at that time, the beginning the Jewish Army, the liberation Army in Palestine. Then everything stopped there. The communists came and the Russians came. Then there were a group of Jewish people who had a very good knowledge about it.

Q: Do you have any idea how the Consul was helping the underground?

A: I don't have the details. I don't want to guess.

- Q: Do you think in general there was sort of a strong spirit of defiance or resistance in the Ghetto, or was there something special about this spiritual resistance maybe?
- A: No, I don't think there existed spiritual resistance or resistance. To Germans or Lithuanians there exists only one thing: self preservation. Every person in the Ghetto had a feeling that resistance is a useless type of thing to do. They felt that resistance would not solve the problem. Even this underground, the way I understand, made contacts with Lithuanian underground in woods because there was a certain number of Lithuanian underground who didn't like German occupation. And they didn't accept these people from Ghetto because they are Jews. They would say it's not what we're looking for. We're looking to make Lithuanian independent, you'll not help us. And very few groups accepted Jews. Then when this rumor started around the Ghettos that Lithuanian underground does not accept Jews, then Jewish people in Ghetto probably felt that this is not the solution. Solution is self preservation until the end of the war, and we were hoping for the end.
- Q: Were you aware or were you ever told about people trying to escape into the woods or any of the underground activities?
- A: Underground activities, no. Nobody talked about underground activities. Escape, people escaped, yes. They say what happened to this fellow? He escaped. Underground activity, no. People didn't talk. They knew that it exists, but they didn't know. The thing is it's a very secretive type movement, and they knew that certain people were killed because they talked about the underground. It was very secretive.
- Q: Were there regular actions or arrests in the Ghetto that you remember?
- A: Action as in organized killing? Yes, sure there were. There were three major ones. One is liquidation of the Small Ghetto. When we moved in Ghetto there were two. There was this Big Ghetto and across the street was Small Ghetto, which had a population of 7,000, if I'm correct. After Ghetto was established, the Small Ghetto was liquidated.
- Q: Do you remember that?
- A: Sure. The majority of people who knew there was some pedestrian bridge_ going from Small Ghetto to Big Ghetto because in between was a street. Then who got the message, said the Germans are thinking to liquidate the Small Ghetto, escape from Small Ghetto to the Big Ghetto, but that left quite a sizable population. So one day they came in with trucks, mostly Lithuanians, and called the people who were left there, and took them to the Ninth Fort. It was the first time they used the Ninth Fort to kill Jews. And they were all killed.
- Q: Did you know at the time where they were taken?

A: The date?

Q: No, did you know at that time, where they were being taken?

A: No, no. After a few weeks or so, we found out.

Q: How did you find out?

A: First there was certain communication between Lithuanians and people in Ghetto, because people used to work outside of the Ghetto, and everybody knew somebody in Lithuania, or if they didn't know somebody, they would say would you like to buy a loaf of bread from me, and used to tell stories, what's happening. So, this is how you find out. Then, I don't know, from this act here, people escaped, but from other actions, people escaped, a few people escaped and come back together and tell what's happening.

Q: Was this liquidation the same time that the hospital was ruined, which was I think the beginning of October '41?

A: No.

Q: The liquidation of the Small Ghetto was later?

A: I'm trying to remember.

Q: The hospital was beginning of October.

A: Of what year?

Q: '41 when the hospital--?

A: Oh, no, you are talking about the Jewish hospital outside of Ghetto.

Q: I thought that was in the Small Ghetto.

A: No, there's no hospital in the Small Ghetto, or maybe there was. Maybe I don't remember.

Q: Where was this hospital that was burned down?

A: I don't recall this.

Q: Okay. Then I won't ask you.

A: But the question, what's the date?

Q: The liquidation of the Small Ghetto?

A: Yes.

Q: You know, I'm not sure of that. I thought it was the beginning of October of 1941.

A: Can I just look at the paper with the date.

Q: I have your folder. Do you want me to bring your folder?

A: Yes.

Q: You were talking about the liquidation of the Small Ghetto.

A: People that were killed, there were three thousand people were killed at the Ninth Fort and some people escaped the small Ghetto and came to the regular Ghetto. And this was the first so-called action which the German and Lithuanian executed in Ghetto.

Q: How did they do it? Did they burn, did they shoot?

A: They just stated on the loudspeaker that everybody should stay at home. Nobody should walk out on the street. Then they came with busses and trucks and then from house to house with rifles and say out, out, out, to go in the bus and, then these people, the Germans had people with dogs go through the houses to make sure there were no human beings left. And he go from house to house and collect all people. Then this bus was to go to the Ninth Fort.

Q: Do you know if anybody was able to hide in there?

A: In the Small Ghetto? I don't know.

Q: Then a few weeks later there was a big action?

A: Yes. This was done exactly or in a similar manner, with loudspeakers and notice was posted all over that on Tuesday morning everybody should stay in their home. Nobody should go out from the house. Then announcement came that everybody should go to a certain big field, like a farm land, and there was Lithuanians and Germans who lined everybody up, six in a row or five in a row, like an Army. At the same time, Lithuanians were came in, the trucks, the Ghetto with trucks, and they are going from house to house to make sure that everybody was out and whoever was left didn't walk out, they were to kill them. And then after everybody was lined up, I forgot to say, one German SS man who was in charge of the Ghetto, or who was one of the ones in charge of the Ghetto, went through the line, which there were five people in one row and divided two people

here and three people. Actually he broke up whole families. And where was this two people row, he would force them to go on busses and trucks to the Ninth Fort. And whoever was left in the other group, could go back in the Ghetto.

Q: Now, were you part of this action?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Who did they put in the truck? What kind of people did they put in the truck versus the people they said could go back home?

A: It was unrelated. They lined up everybody five in a row. Then broke up these rows, two on the left hand side and three on the right hand side, and then they took this rows of threes, or rows of twos, I don't remember, and say these people will go in the truck, and these people can go back in Ghetto. It was unrelated to who you are.

Q: But they didn't say we want the strong people here and the women and children there?

A: No, not during this action.

Q: Do you remember what you were thinking at the time?

A: At the time I think this is the end of me, because I was lined up in the row was me, my mother, my brother and my brother's wife and my brother's wife's brother makes five.

Q: Tell me about your family when this happened. Who were you with?

A: I was with my mother, my brother, my brother's wife and my brother's wife's brother. There were five in a row. We were divided two on one side and three on the second side. The family was broken up. At that time, some miracle happened and thanks to my brother, who is now in Israel, he started to scream and push people in front of him and two Lithuanians came in and said what's going here, go here, go here, go here, go here and one Lithuanian general, who was in charge, started to scream, hell, what are you doing to these two Lithuanians -- hell what are you doing here, go where to here to this row of people, and they walked away. And then all of us moved into the good side very fast, and that's how it stayed. And there were five on the so called good side and others were taken away on the left. So, it's just a miracle.

Q: Do you remember other mass arrests or actions?

A: Yes. There was the second action in, I believe, 1943.

Q: Not until then?

- A: No, until then I think it was just minor events. Major, people were killed, but there was one event which I missed which was as soon as _____ was closed and everyone was living in the Ghetto, was issued certain directives that all Jews should turn in all gold and valuables, and whoever did not turn in would be killed. There was collection points and everybody brought in their silver, gold or valuables. And what many people decided to hide it, quite a few. At that time, quite a few were killed because they found they were hiding. But they couldn't find all because certain people were smart enough to do something about it. Especially at the time a popular thing was gold coins which Jewish people always collect after first World War, gold coins because they thought it was the safest thing to have. So there were quite a number of gold coins Jewish people had and it was very easy to hide. Thanks to the gold coins, food, you could obtain food during Ghetto time and get better accommodation for some good means to sustain yourself with gold coins. At that time, this was a very tragic time, because then Germans came they brought dogs in the Ghetto, and they were going from house to house to look to see if you turned in all gold, and if you don't hide. And they even took some people to undress them completely, some women to undress and the dogs were trained go and lick their sexual organs to make sure there is no coins of gold hidden.
- Q: Excuse me, what was that?
- A: They had dogs trained, they used to take certain woman, tell them to undress completely, and the dog with its tongue would lick their sexual organ of the woman to find if they put any gold coins there.
- Q: Do you know people that this happened to?
- A: Yes I do. This was in the beginning, and it shook up all the Ghetto population, but this was a very tragic event.
- Q: Now, throughout this time you were working, your wife was working, what was your mother doing? Was she working also?
- A: No, she was ill. She was sick. She could barely walk at the time, and she was bedridden. She could cook, get out of her bed and cook, but mostly she was bedridden.
- Q: But they allowed that, or they didn't know about that?
- A: No, I don't know. At that time, the Ghetto, nobody checked to see if somebody was ill or not ill or children because as long as you provided quite a number of workers, this labor department provided would say we need for tomorrow twelve hundred, fifteen hundred workers for this brigade. As long as _____ could produce fifteen hundred workers, they didn't care. They didn't go searching houses, unless somebody told them there must be guns or something. They didn't care. There was this second action was in March, I believe, in 1943 and this action was to eliminate all sick, elderly people and children

from Ghetto.

Q: I think this may have been '44?

A: If you could look in the file, it's written there. Yes, this was the action in '44 where they eliminated all children, sick people and elderly people. This took place during the day and nobody anticipated that this was the case. Everybody was out working in the brigades. And they were going from house to house and anybody left who didn't go to work or was sick or bedridden or old or a child they took in the busses and took to the Ninth Fort. They took my mother then during that. When I came back from work, I found she was gone. Now, for reasons which I don't recall, I went to work but my brother stayed home, and also my wife stayed home at the time, and they made my wife and my brother to carry out my mother to the bus. I have certain -- not a poem but a story written by my brother, which is a very nice story of how it happened. How they did this? She was taken to the bus and was killed at the Ninth Fort.

Q: When you came back from work, what happened?

A: I came home and the whole house was completely messed up, and my wife was there and my brother were there and they told me.

Q: Did this happen in all houses?

A: Yes. It's a certain type of word to word communication which exists in our society, but then in Ghetto existed. It was fairly good organized and once it happened in the first house, then everybody knew it was happening. And everybody started to hide people, children to hide and elderly people to hide, and to the best of my recollection my wife and my brother tried to hide my mother someplace in the attic, but anyway they found her and she was taken to the bus and taken to Ninth Fort.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

A: Yes, several people were taken the Ninth Fort, to get out, and after they finished their work the majority of them were killed, and they're killed. They never came back to the Ghetto, except a certain group of people that escaped. I'm not certain how many, but I know two people who escaped. One is _____, who was a good friend. His wife is a good friend of my wife, and she is alive, but he passed away just recently. He had cancer. And he was telling me all the details and stories of how he escaped, etc. And then there is another person, I don't recall his name, who was in Canada and went to work in a nylon factory, for stockings, became very wealthy, and he escaped.

Q: What did he tell you?

A: Just that they told me exactly what happened. They were digging out, opening the graves and burning it and crushing the bones left over with certain tools, whatever they had, and it was terrible conditions to work. It was a terrible smell, and then at the end they knew it, they saw it. They were killing the workers who worked, who were doing this work. And somehow by miracles, they escaped. One person told me, I believe, that he was laying under, made believe that he was shot, and when night came he escaped. That one person I recall. This was probably in '43.

Q: One more question about the Ghetto. At a certain point, the Ghetto was turned into a concentration camp?

A: Yes.

Q: What's the difference? How did that change things?

A: Probably it was changed to concentration camp based on the German classification. I'm not sure. It was easier -- I cannot answer the question, because, as far as I recall, there was no change in the behavior of the guards or Germans or Lithuanians who guarded together. Everybody had to go to work. I just assumed it was easier to kill a Jew or to beat them up or do things like provide less food in Ghetto. I don't know. But I know at one time they changed it, the classification.

Q: It didn't change your life?

A: I don't recall. I don't recall.

Q: Is there anything else that you experienced in the Ghetto?

A: I believe I covered everything.

Q: Any special or difficult memories?

- A: I can tell you an item of general interest about the Jewish society in Ghetto. When I got, when we decided to get married in '43, and we invited our immediate family for a wedding dinner, and at that time we decided to make a cholen (ph). Do you know what a cholen is? A cholen is a traditional Jewish meal which you put in potatoes and beans and meat in a pot and it stays for 24 hours, it cooks. In Orthodox of the Jewish family, you don't cook on Saturday, on Shabbos (ph). You get the meal at the end of Shabbos. You do it Friday early. This was available. Potatoes were available and beans were available and then somehow we organized a small turkey, which we put in this pot and took it to the bakery to stay in the over, where they bake bread for 24 hours. When they came back to take it home, and the people came for this festive dinner, the turkey was gone. Actually, there was stealing between Jews, from Jews to Jews. Everybody was hungry. Everybody wanted to get something special other than only potatoes and beans. The turkey was gone. I mean this was just a small event. It wasn't important.
- Q: Were there deportations from the Ghetto?
- A: As groups, working brigade to go someplace else to work?
- Q: Were there people that didn't come back?
- A: Didn't come back who was killed during work? Yes, there was, like I mentioned, at the airport, quite a few people were killed during work, or died from overwork or were killed because they wanted to escape or do something, buy a loaf of bread from a Lithuanian peasant.
- Q: Did the Germans come in and take Jews to camps?
- A: From Ghetto? No, I don't recall it.
- Q: Did you at this point have much information about the camps in Poland?
- A: No.
- Q: You were in the Ghetto until the liquidation. What happened? What was the liquidation?
- A: The liquidation came from directives that the Ghetto be liquidated and all people in Ghetto should report to a certain gate. There, by trucks, they would be taken to the train and taken to Germany. Those assigned by District, that first this District, then this section comes, this section, this day and this hour and this was a directive.
- Q: When was this?
- A: This was in '44, March or April -- August '44. The majority of people, especially the

younger people, knew what was happening, and they already had certain feeling that this would happen. They were building some hiding places. There was certain involved activity in Ghetto during last six months before, maybe eight months before, to organize and build a hiding place where you would hide in case -- we had enough knowledge that war was coming to the end, somehow in case they would decide to liquidate the Ghetto, everybody would have a place to hide. So, we had the place, one of the major hiding place was this two apartment buildings in Ghetto and under the apartment building was a basement and from the basement they dug out a long tunnel, and there they made like a shelter, like a nuclear shelter, to hide. We thought we would go there, but when we came there, it was just full. They wouldn't let us in. Because you know it had a capacity of people for room, on so many people can go in. So, we turned around, and we built our own shelter, because I had two days time approximately, which the houses in the Ghetto, there was a big field, like farm land. We dug a big hole about five feet deep or whatever it is, and removed from the house a few doors, put across and put on top some shrubbery, and there we put some water and a loaf of bread, and we went into this shelter, me and my wife. And we were sitting there and the Ghetto was already, the last transports had left the Ghetto, and then the Germans were walking around the Ghetto to find if there were any people left. And they came into the house where our rooms were, and we heard the one German tell, there's nobody here. And they were leaving already and we thought fine. So, only one German walked over our hiding place and stepped on the two doors where we had space for air to come in and stepped in with his foot, went in, and he started to scream. He got scared. He said there are Jews underground and everybody came running and surrounded us with rifles, and said out, out whoever is there and we went out. And then -- it was terrible in there, we had perspired and there was dirt coming down on us and -- then he put us against the wall. The German soldier put his rifle to shoot us, and one German officer came over and said, we are taking you to Germany, which is a nice place. People are usually clean. You are still young, and I don't think we should kill you, but we will take you to Germany where you will be useful. And go inside, rush around, change your clothes, which we did, and took us to the special last truck from Ghetto, took us to the train. After they took us from the train, they came back and blew up the Ghetto, dynamite and who ever was left, hidden in the Ghetto underground or any other place was killed, dynamiting the area, including all my relatives, my cousins. We were very close. We were hiding them, and they were killed during the dynamiting of the Ghetto. So, we came to this train which was cattle cars and each left and went to -- we knew where we were going because it was very crowded. I don't know how many people were in the car, but we could barely sit down. I'm not sure if there was food or not. It was very limited, maybe. Let we came to first stop which they ordered out all of the woman, left _____, and this is where my wife left and went to _____. And next stop in Germany was Dachau. They brought us to Dachau main camp and we were tired, and we were exhausted from this trip.

Q: How long was the trip?

A: I don't know. Long, five, six, seven days. Four days, I don't know.

Q: What was it like in the train?

A: It was terrible. I mean there was no sanitary facilities in the car so everybody did wherever they could. There was limited food. People were getting crazy. Some people who I know, a woman, a young woman got just crazy, was screaming all of the time. It was terrible. It was not a pleasant place to be. It was probably the worst experience I had being in a train. Then we come to Dachau, and we didn't know what's happening there because they lined us up again like a brigade, four in a row, whatever, and then around us are people who used to be call Kopa (ph) which we didn't know who they are. It was a certain uniforms had, but this was Jewish people, mostly. Some were homosexual, Germans, the Nazis took homosexuals and put them in the camp. They were beating us up, line up, line up, stay here, stay here and then took us to some kind of a barrack, and we went to sleep probably. We stayed there maybe a week, and then they transferred us to satellite camp Slaneseberg (ph).

Q: You were beaten up by these Jewish Kops?

A: Yes, if you didn't stay in line. I mean some were Jews, not all, but they were really -- later I found out that they were all -- the majority were Hungarians.

Q: What did you do for this week in camp? What was it like?

A: I mean, in the morning you have to line up in a certain place, and they take a count of you and assign you a number. And then they refer to you only by number. You have no more name.

Q: You were telling me about you week in Dachau, what your days were like?

A: Probably, based on my memory, they fed us. They gave better food than in Landsberg, because probably after the transport in the train, we were really in a bad shape. Probably they wanted to bring us up to better certain standards which they have in order to make most use for us as laborers. But, they already call the morning crews to line up on a certain place outside, and they count us and assign us numbers, as I told. After a week approximately, they moved us to Landsberg which was satellite, again. Landsberg was still a new camp opened at that time. There was no housing. They brought masonite and made like tents of masonite where we slept on straw, put straw on the floor and slept there.

Q: Who were you with at this point? Were you with a brother?

A: Yes. I was with my brother, and my wife's father and probably, we had a group of relative people, probably a group of five or six people together. We tried to stay together. And when we came to Landsberg, there was no accomidation there was just this masonite

tents made with straw. And then they started to build housing for us which consisted of a long trench, where we dug out a long trench, actually it's U shaped trench, and then on the ground again, they put straw and planks around, and then they put a roof over it, made of steel, a steel roof. This was the housing and one -- in the middle, a wood burning oven. I'm not sure, when you walked in the housing, you walked a few steps down to this trench which was dark and on both sides people used to sleep.

Q: In the trench?

A: No, the trench is to walk. The trench, you used to walk and on both sides used to be a five foot space, and you used to lay down and sleep.

Q: No floor?

A: No, no floor. And after we finished the construction of this so-called housing, then they started to take us out to working brigades and work was a underground factory for _____ for airplanes. They felt that the war come to an end soon and decided to build an underground factory, and this was someplace in the woods which was where we were digging, and there was very stony ground and wheelbarrows and carrying stones and digging ditches, mixing cement. It was a very difficult type of work, manual work. Many people got sick, of course not enough food, were killed or died working there, and population of this camp was decreasing very rapidly. I was lucky. One morning when everybody lined up on the field and takes a count they asked if there was anybody that knows something about architect, or who knows anything about building furniture, and I was standing next to two fairly prominent architects in Lithuania, and they wouldn't pick up their hands and I said why. They said they want to find out who is educated and kill them. I didn't believe them, so I picked up my hand. Then they called me and said what we are getting here many Germans SS men coming here with the families as guard to the camp and there is no furniture for them so we want to open a small shop to build furniture for these Germans. Could you organize and find who is cabinet maker between people in the camp. Get about eight or ten people, and we will get you some equipment and some wood and build furniture. So, it sounded good to me. So, we started to do it, and we were still exposed to the same food which was given us, which was just a little soup in the morning, just a liquid, just nothing inside and the same thing in the evening and a piece of bread. But then the Germans started to come in, and one German told us he wanted this bedroom, this, this and then another German comes in. One is like a captain or a higher rank, and I was told to do first for a higher rank officer than for lieutenants of a smaller rank. Then the smaller rank would come in, and I'd say we have so many orders for these people to do and we cannot, it would take months and months. So, the next day he comes with a piece of sausage or a piece of bread and says can you advance it some how. So, that's how I got to organize more food than the average person had, and I shared with my brother. At that time, my wife's father passed away already from conditions which were not enough food and hard labor. And also, I believe my brother-in-law passed away.

Q: How old were they?

A: Probably late forties I would assume. Probably, I'm not sure.

Q: The conditions were that bad?

A: Yes, it was a very bad condition. Then this Landsberg camp had a hospital and Dr. Elkous was in Landsberg together, and he was in charge of the hospital. He came over to German authority in this camp and told him, look in order to take care of all the sick people, I need this and this and this medication and this equipment. The Germans looked at this and said, okay we'll take care of it. But by weeks and weeks nothing happened. So then Dr. Elkous went over to them and said I need bed linen because there are more and more sick people here and if I don't get by this day, I will go on a hunger strike, and he did. He died of being on a hunger strike for, I believe, ten days. He died.

Q: Did you know him personally?

A: Yes, I knew him because my father and him went to the same Jewish School, Hader, in a small town in Lithuania. And then when he became a doctor in Lithuania, he was our doctor.

Q: What kind of man was he?

A: He was a dedicated doctor. He graduated in Germany School of Medicine and his whole life was medicine. He never belonged or did anything other than reading medical books and studying medicine to be more advanced. He was very prominent in the medical society in early Lithuania Kovno. But he was not involved in Jewish affairs. He did not participate. I don't know if he was religious or not. I'm not sure, but he went to what's called Hader, which you learn history and things of this nature when he was a youngster.

Q: I don't mean to back track, but since we're talking -- just because you did know him and he was your doctor, did that give you any special privileges in Kovno?

A: Limited amount like I mentioned I was taking care of this public works in the Ghetto. It's because I knew him or I knew his sisters which was _____. Then when I finished this and I started to work at the airport, and then I became in charge of certain brigade where I met my wife. The reason I became in charge of brigade because of certain connection there. And then certain major events took place after I got married -- or before I got married, I don't remember. Germans selected about 20 or 30, I don't know how many, young woman to take them to a farm far away from Ghetto to dig out vegetables that were ripe to pick up vegetables. And everybody was convinced that once they finished this work, they would be killed. Then I went to Dr. Elkous and this Goldberg who was his assistant and told him, I want to get my wife back, what can you do. I mean,

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please do something about it, and they did something about it, because she came back.

End of Tape #5

Tape #6

- Q: So, you were actually telling me that there was a hospital in Dachau and people were sick?
- A: Yes, and Dr. Elkous went on a hunger strike and died in the concentration camp. I was involved in building the furniture for the German SS people.
- Q: Did you have a lot of contact with SS people or German families?
- A: No. The families not at all. The only contact was they would come in for a few minutes and tell that that's what they want. They want a bed and a cabinet for to put their clothes and a night table for to eat and a table to it, and that is it. There were certain designs of furniture we had to make. I mean, they couldn't design their own furniture. The only thing was a list of people for whom we are making it. Then as I explained before, certain people lower rank wanted before the people who were more higher ranked, and then by manipulating the schedule I obtained some additional food.
- Q: So people would ask you for special favors, and then you would get more food to give to your brother and friends?
- A: Yes, correct.
- Q: In general, did they treat you fairly well or not?
- A: When I was in charge of cabinet makers, yes, I had no complaints. I don't recall.
- Q: Who were a lot of the other prisoners here? Were they mostly from Lithuania or were they from everywhere?
- A: In this camp, everybody was from Lithuania. Actually there were a few not original from Lithuania because all were Kovno Ghetto, Kovno Ghetto, but in Kovno Ghetto the majority were Lithuanians, but then there were certain Polish Jews who run away from Poland during the war and Hungarian. But the majority were from Kovno Ghetto.
- Q: How big of a camp was it?
- A: I couldn't tell you. I don't know. Probably not too big, probably 8,000 people, 6,000, but I don't know.
- Q: Who were your guards, the Kopos?
- A: Guards were mostly Germans or Ukrainians who were engaged by Germans, and then there was this German SS and then like a corp of engineers it's called who were in charge

of construction, German soldiers in charge of construction because they were in charge of producing this new factory for airplanes, underground factory. I don't recall the Kopos, yes, there were Kopos in Lansburg which were Jews, probably. I don't recall. They were not very important probably in Lansburg.

Q: Were there any women there?

A: No. Wait. There were very few women who were in kitchen preparing this food and distributing the food.

Q: Did you know any of them?

A: No, not that I recall.

Q: Were the guards mean?

A: Yes, especially at the working place. And actually the conduct of the guards was something I would say three times during the work, the morning when they used to count us and see when we went up, who didn't feel good, they would kick him out, and they would say take him away, and that was the end of him. And in line for food, if somebody would go out of the line for food, he used to pull him out and say no food today and things of this nature. They were mean.

Q: Did you see any people get punished?

A: Yes. There was one occasion where three people were hanged in the morning because they did something. They stole cigarettes from a German. They stole -- I remember cigarettes were involved. They stole cigarettes from a German guard or something, and they were just in the middle of morning assembly. They were just hung in front of everybody else to show them that nobody should steal from Germans.

Q: So, you and your brother worked making furniture for the Germans?

A: No, my brother did not, only I did. My brother didn't qualify as a cabinet maker. They asked everybody their background, and I said cabinet maker, and they said whoever couldn't prove that he is a cabinet maker, but my brother also had certain position in Ghetto which was better than going to work in building the factory, the airport factory. After he became-- somehow certain pull between the Germans and whoever it was, I don't recall, and they made him-- there was a warehouse of this uniforms which he used to change it or collect it from people who died, collect the uniform to clean it up, wash it out, and give it to somebody else. _____ He worked in this distribution point of this uniforms somehow for a period of time. Once I finished this furniture business, then I went back to work to this _____ building factory. It didn't last forever. It lasted for a short period of time.

Q: You said a lot of people were getting sick and dying? Were the bodies buried? What happened to them? Who takes care of them?

A: There was a big mass grave. You used to take them in -- they're not wheelbarrows, but people used to push it, you know, it's more elaborate than a wheelbarrow, but I don't know how to call it, two wheels and a platform. We used to take them out, and there was a mass grave and just dump them.

Q: Who took them out?

A: Jews, the people that were in the concentration camp.

Q: Were there gas chambers there?

A: Not in Augsburg.

Q: Were there any efforts to escape or to resist?

A: I don't think so. I don't recall. There was no place to go. Landsberg was on a hill, like a farm land. It was not developed. It was just an area and fence around it, a double fence around it. And nothing was _____.

Q: Do you remember about how many people slept in that same area that you did in the barracks or whatever it was?

A: Probably a hundred, fifty on each side.

Q: Did you have beds?

A: No. I explained. It is very difficult to explain. This is ground here, this level with the ground and here is trench. People sleep here and people sleep here, and they walk through the trench. They come to their place where they sleep and drop and lay down and sleep. And this was just straw laying on the ground.

Q: How long were you in Augsburg?

A: Until it's liquidation -- not liquidation, disbandment, one morning they took us out on a march.

Q: Do you remember when this was?

A: This was in April of '45 approximately. One morning they came and said pick up your belongings, which your belongings which consisted of a little tin jar with food and a spoon, take your belongings, and we're leaving this camp. We went on a march just

walking someplace, we didn't know where we were walking and were walking towards Switzerland.

Q: How many people were there?

A: Whatever was left in camp, before I mentioned, I assume 6,000, then maybe 500, 600 not many.

Q: Mostly Jews?

A: Yes, and then we walked towards Switzerland. I was told later on they were hoping to exchange us for German war prisoners. And this walk there was not much food, and it was a difficult walk. I mean we didn't have shoes, just wooden type ---, and men were just falling down. They couldn't take it any more, and they got killed or were left, or we used to carry them to the next place that we could dispose of them. Then one day after walking for how many days, we went to sleep in some kind of outdoors in a valley, and in the morning when we got up, there were no more German guards. They were all gone. And then the German farmers came in and said the Americans are coming and the next thing the American tanks--.

Q: What were you thinking when you saw these American tanks?

A: Actually, I just recalled, the Germans came and said come, the war is over, come with us and took us all and helped us to get out of the valley and their barn and brought big containers of milk and cheese and bread. And then American tanks pulled in after an hour, two hours, and we were so called liberated.

Q: What were people doing?

A: The majority couldn't move. The majority got very sick, all of them because they were not used to this food which is very nutritious, it had fat and heavy milk and piece of butter, which we didn't see butter for a long time. The majority developed terrible case of diarrhea and couldn't move. They were vomiting and got really sick, the majority.

Q: You?

A: Yes, but not very. I was also sick, but some were really in bad shape. Some even died. It was so sudden and those who had been _____, they wanted the best so they started to distribute these candy bars, on top, milky ways, and this didn't help. The majority got very sick.

Q: How did the Americans treat you?

A: Very well, no complaints.

Q: What happened next?

A: Next they took us, they brought trucks or means of transportation, vehicles and took us to -- nearby was a German Air Force Academy which was just recently built, was a very modern up to date building and they took the complete building and converted it into a recovery hospital for all the people who were picked up and brought us to this _____. They brought us to this building and assigned rooms and there were doctors and nurses, but people were still sick, especially the sickness, which was diarrhea, they couldn't hold anything inside. Then Americans brought in Germans to wash everything, I recall.

Q: Was there any reaction towards the Germans?

A: From so-called prisoners? Not at that time, because at that time everybody was in bad shape, they were sick, and they didn't know what was happening. They were trying to recuperate and trying to find their families. It was very early stages.

Q: How did the Germans, when they came in to clean, were they nice to you?

A: I couldn't tell you. I don't recall.

Q: So, you were still with your brother?

A: Yes. And then we stayed there in the _____ for about probably less than a month, two weeks, three weeks, and then come announcement that anybody who is from Lithuania or actually Russia, USSR, but Lithuania was part of the USSR, there would be an opportunity to go back home to Lithuania and a train would be coming to pick everybody up. Then it became a big discussion to go back to Lithuania or stay in Germany and eventually go to Israel or the United States or someplace. And some people decided to go back and some people did not go back. I didn't feel like going back, but my brother insisted we should go back because that is where we would find our wives. Then we went back, but at the same time they called out from each railroad car that people should go out and pick up food for the journey. From our car I walked out and where I walked out it still was not organized, the train moved away, and I was left. So, my brother went on the first train and I was left. I went on the second train. Then when I went on the train I said, I'm doing something wrong. Why should I go to Lithuania. I don't have anybody. Everybody was killed. So, the train stopped in Dresden, which was eastern part of Germany, and I walked off from the train, and there were two or three other people from Lithuania whom I knew and here we were in Germany in Dresden not knowing what to do next. Next, this Russian, red army people, security, comes over to us and says who are you and we said we are Jews from a concentration camp. So, we tell him the story and he says, "Don't tell us this story. I know who you are. You are fighting against us. You are part of the Russian brigade which was fighting against Russia. You

are a part of this General Flaso (ph). You are part of Flaso (ph) brigade," and they put us in a camp. And took us every morning in trucks to dismantle German factories to be shipped back to Russia. And I was there for maybe a month, and then we escaped from there and escaped, and once I escaped I started moving west until somehow I found out that there are Lithuanian Jews, women settled down and finally I came to Lodz and found my wife. She was there.

Q: You went to Lodz because you heard there were Lithuania women there?

A: Yes, it was said in word to word communication because all Europe was moving east or west. Because everybody was -- nobody, there were many displaced people in Europe during the war. People in the Army, people in camps, people who escaped. Everybody moved. The trains were free. The trains were just moving and anybody could go on a train and go. And they used to meet people who were in camps and what do you know where people are. They said are you part of an organization, it was a regular organization a Jewish organization to organize emigration to Israel, to Palestine, and Henny joined this organization, and it's collection point was someplace in Lodz.

Q: How did you find the _____?

A: How? I don't know, by coincidence, a miracle.

Q: I came in Lodz by train, and then I asked somebody, some Jewish fellow was standing there, and I said do you know where there are women here in housing who were from Lithuania. He said they are from Lithuania but there are certain streets that the numbers where there are quite a few Jewish women, so I went over there. I went over there and before walking to the building, the front there was a certain woman standing who recognized me, and she was from Lithuania. She said oh, it's you and I said I'm looking for my wife. And she said oh, she's in this row.

Q: You must have been amazed? Yes my wife was very amazed.

A: Yes, I was very amazed.

Q: So, you were reunited there and decided not to go to Israel?

A: My brother was in the Army because my younger brother left Lithuania in '37 in the U.S. Army, and he was in Austria and he was looking for me. No, no, then we started to move with my wife and a group of other people west away from Russian zone because Poland was under Russian influence at that time. So we went to Czechoslovakia and came to Austria. That's where we found out that my brother was in the U.S. Army in Austria and we were going to go to the American zone of Austria. Austria was divided, and there was a British zone and an American zone. So, we were in British zone in Gratz (ph) and then Britishers came over and said you are Jewish, do you want to go to Israel and put us in a

camp. We should go to Israel, not Palestine. So, we were in Graz for maybe two or three weeks or a month, I don't know. Then I got the message that my brother was looking for us somehow. And then I went to U.S. Embassy and told them that my brother is in the U.S. Army and he is in Linz, which is an American zone and he gave us -- we somehow we got a certain piece of paper telling us the camp. And we went on a train in Linz, and that's where we met my brother.

Q: That's another miracle.

A: A miracle. I mean you're talking about six million Jews were killed and certain people survived. Everyone has a story to tell. Something had to happen in order not to be one of the six million. It's probably miracles.

Q: Do you remember when you saw your brother?

A: Yes, sure. As a matter of fact, when I came to Linz, he was not in Linz because he went to Vienna to get a permit from occupation from general to go to British zone to pick us up, then I crossed somehow. But then the next day, he got the message that we are in Linz, so he came back and it was a nice warm reunion.

Q: When you look back on this period in your life, are there any lasting images that come to mind, that haunt you? Anything that really stands out the most?

A: The most tragic is that I lost my mother and lost all other relatives whom I had, and suddenly I am all by myself in this world and to have to start to create a completely new life from scratch. Nobody really helped me, only I have to help myself and in order to achieve it, we atleast, I felt that we should forget the past and start from very beginning and create something new as comparison to other people who were in similar conditions as we were felt that they had to live in the past and they repeated to everybody in the very beginning and whatever they did they did. There are two ways to deal with the problem, which way is better way or worse, but there are two ways to resolve it. One way it to live in the past, the second is forget the past and go forward. This is what we did.

Q: Was that easy to do?

A: No, it's not easy but especially when the children were born, thought how to bring up our children. We never went into the past. Later on when they grew up, they could understand that it was hard to talk about this.

Q: Anything else that you want to add?

A: I don't think so. I think I covered everything.

End of Tape #6

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Conclusion of Interview