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Horn, Irving

RG-50.233*057

Two Audio Cassettes

Recorded January 11, 1992

Interview by Anthony Young

Abstract

Irving Horn (born Isachar Herszenhorn) was born in February, 1927 in Radom, Poland. Irving remembers significant anti-Semitism as a child. When he was seven years old the Polish government ordered the integration of schools. Irving and the only other Jewish boy at his new school were severely beaten by some of their schoolmates. Upon the outbreak of the war, Irving's father lost his job and his brother was accused of spying and temporarily jailed. Irving attended a secret Jewish school for two years until Radom became a ghetto. Upon the liquidation of the Radom ghetto, Irving and his father volunteered to work on the Waschnik estate. Irving survived encounters with the SS, then worked in a weapons factory where he encountered Jacob Holz, a ruthless security guard whom Irving later testified against. Around July 25, 1944, Irving marched to Tomaszów because the Russians were approaching Radom. From Tomaszów, he took a train to Auschwitz. There, Irving, his father and his two brothers were chosen to do work in Vaihingen an der Enz near Stuttgart. A guard sent Irving to work on the Nazi Secretary of State's sister-in-law's estate for two weeks, where he received food and regained his strength. He was then sent to Camp Unterriexingen, Kochendorf, and finally to Dachau. Irving was in Tyrol at the end of the war but was taken back to Germany and almost shot into a ravine. Before the killing was to take place, the SS men changed into civilian clothes and left. Afterward, Irving ended up in a military hospital in Mittenwald due to severe hunger, and then spent several years in a displaced persons camp in Stuttgart before moving to the United States in 1948.

Tape 1:

Anthony: Go ahead.

Irving: Well my name now is Irving Horn, but that's not my original name. I was born as Isachar Herszenhorn and I was born in the city of Radom, Poland. Eh…you want the date of birth?

Anthony: Sure.

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Irving: I was born in 1927.

Anthony: What was the date, the month and day?

Irving: February, 1927.

Anthony: Ok. Can you tell me a little bit about your family life after you were born, that period…

Irving: I come from a middle-income family and my father was a salesman in a tanning factory and I would say we were doing relatively well. Eh…life was comfortable except for a large scale anti-Semitism.

Anthony: Do you remember some instances of this anti-Semitism?

Irving: Yeah, when I was seven years old, because of an edict of the Polish government, we were told that we had to start integrating a school and I was the only kid, Jewish kid, in a Polish public school. The incident I remember most is that we were standing in the line to register for school. Now Polish schools were not exactly like schools are here, they didn't have building by themselves, and I believe that the school had the first and second floor and on the other floors, there were tenants actually, and we were, the registration was on the second floor and we were on the stairway after the second floor and there was another Jewish little boy who was thrown off that stairway and he either broke a leg or he got badly hurt, and when we reached the office, and the subject was discussed, the principal looked at my mother and said, "Well, it's a good thing it happened to him, he had no business being here to begin with." So life was miserable at school, we were always being beaten up. I was always being beaten up, being the only Jewish kid. After a year I transferred to another public school where there were three or four Jewish children in the class and there at least we had a chance of fighting. After two years there, I transferred to a Jewish day school and the last day before the war I spent in a Jewish day school.

Anthony: So you were there right before the war then?

Irving: Right before the war.

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Anthony: And that's 1939?

Irving: 1939. I was in the sixth grade, and the last thing I remember was passing a test for junior high, and getting ready to get to return to school on September 1939. That never happened…

Anthony: Right. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Irving: Yeah, I have two brothers, twins, and I have a…my father and mother adopted a sister, so I had an adopted sister.

Anthony: Can you tell me a little bit about when the Germans invaded in September, what you were doing, what your family was doing, what happened?

Irving: Well, before they invaded we were out on a summer vacation and we came back, and of course the war started September 1st.

Anthony: Where did you go to vacation, do you remember?

Irving: A small town, not far away, about twelve miles south of Radom…and we returned…we returned because my…well actually, I was there with my adopted sister, she was already married, and her husband got a draft notice, and we knew the war was on.

Anthony: This is back in Radom, right?

Irving: Yeah. It was a few days before the war started. And when we returned…well, mobilization was fully on, and shortly afterwards, which was Friday, if I remember, September 1st, the war started. Eh…there were bombings. The next day and the day after…

Anthony: On Saturday and Sunday?

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Irving: Yeah. In fact, one hit very close and there was some machine gunning. And this town was occupied a week later, on Friday the 8th, I believe.

Anthony: What did the Germans do once they entered the town, once they took control and then occupied the town?

Irving: Well, at first. Well let me say something, which is, maybe I shouldn't but historically it's true…there were a number of ethnic Germans in town who were actually welcoming the Germans. At the beginning what they…well let me give you a little incident on what happened within the first week. My brother walked down the street and he saw a…my brothers are seven years older than I, and he saw a young man, a friend of his, that he used to tutor in high school, a Pole. And all of a sudden the Pole called over a German and pointed to him and said that this Jew said that the Russians are coming. And the Germans arrested my brother and all of a sudden he found himself in a Gestapo basement.

Anthony: Just on this Pole's recommendation?

Irving: Yes. With three other Jews who were there. We didn't know they were there but we found out they were there. And the Gestapo wouldn't even talk to my mother. They were beating him up and they were ready to execute him for spying. The only person they wanted to talk to was a representative of the Jewish population. Now, I don't think we had one per se, but we did talk to the elder of the Jewish community. He went down, and after some negotiations, they demanded a ransom from the community. A pretty high ransom if I remember, I don't remember the exact amount…I know we couldn't pay it as a family, but the town got together and they paid a ransom and all the prisoners got free.

Anthony: They did release them?

Irving: Yeah they released them. And that was the first incident. Also, we couldn't get any help from anybody else as far as the Polish population was concerned. When we saw the mother of that boy, she said, "Well, maybe he deserved it."

Anthony: Right.

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Irving: Eh…I told you my father used to work for a tanning factory. The tanning factory actually belonged to ethnic Germans. And the day the war broke out they told him they could not possibly have anything to do with a Jewish person, officially, anyhow. So he was out of a job. That's how it started.

Anthony: This incident with your brother started…that was the first week of the occupation?

Irving: I believe it happened on a Monday. It wasn't the first Monday, I think it was the second Monday after the occupation.

Anthony: But shortly thereafter?

Irving: Shortly thereafter. Eh…the other thing is there were a number of edicts that they issued. You couldn't…you weren't allowed to have a radio. They closed all the schools, there was no education allowed. There…assemblies of persons of more than five people were not allowed. All this was punishable by death penalty or ten years, or whatever. I don't remember the exact punishment. Eh…

Anthony: You said something about the ethnic Germans welcoming the Germans into Poland. Were Poles doing that also? Or was that…were they happy to see the Germans or was it just usually the ethnic Germans?

Irving: I don't know the answer to that. I know there were people with flowers who were welcoming them when they were marching into town. I don't know who they were. I have no idea. But I'd assume they were ethnic Germans.

Anthony: Do you remember before the Germans invaded, do you remember any…I don't know the best word…do you remember anything…were you frightened of the Germans coming because you were Jewish?

Irving: Yes. Of course. By reputation we knew what they are capable of doing. We absorbed a number of German refugees between 1936 and 1939. And in fact there was a German girl who used to sleep in our house, she used to eat with us. And she was a German refugee. And we knew what was going on…we were aware what they were capable of doing. But not exactly of killing…but of all anti-Jewish laws; you weren't allowed to own anything or do anything.

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Anthony: Do you remember, going back to the last part of 1939, what happened in Radom…other than you've told me of these edicts and things like that. What things can you remember about that last part of 1939 when the Germans had already occupied the town?

Irving: Shortages. Bread shortages. Meat shortages. All type of different shortages. There were…[pause]. I was only a boy. I was only four years old. My world was probably different than the world of an adult.

Anthony: Sure.

Irving: My main preoccupation was the fact that we couldn't go back to school. That changed. Not immediately, but within the next three months or so. One day I was walking into a store and the owner came out and told me that he wanted to talk to my mother. And then the next day, we were in a secret school. There were ten of us. Maybe ten or eleven.

Anthony: Was this a Jewish school?

Irving: All Jews, yeah. Mostly students from the day school. It was run by a Ms. Sobol. She was a teacher in that day school. And we always had somebody on guard. And we were trained to give signals in case the Germans would approach. Of course it would be very dangerous if we were caught. But we were going to school for two years, two and a half years, going through junior high and most of…some of high school, without being able to carry a book or paperwork or anything of that sort because they immediately became suspicious. And of course nobody could have known. If a neighbor had known or a Pole would have seen us or detected us they immediately would have pointed it out. That was quite an enterprise.

Anthony: Was the teacher, was she involved in setting this up, or was there someone else…

Irving: She lived with a family, I don't know if they were related to her, they must have been in an apartment. The apartment was right on Main St. and they set it up. I presume she was involved in it…I don't really know. But yeah…it was quite a group there.

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Anthony: That's very interesting. In fact, it's a story that I haven't heard about. I mean I knew that people would set up schools in ghettos and things like that, but this isn't a ghetto, and this is very dangerous.

Irving: This is not a ghetto, no. In fact, as it went along, it got more and more difficult to get to the place because it was right on Main St. and for a while, later on, we weren't even allowed to walk on Main St. as Jews, so we had to go through the back door. And we did that. Until it became a ghetto, we were going to that school.

Anthony: And that was almost two years you said?

Irving: 'Till 1941, April 1941. I believe we started in 1939. I'm sure, we started in 1939.

Anthony: And so in 1941 the ghetto was set up.

Irving: In 1941 the ghetto was set up.

Anthony: Can you tell me a little bit about the ghetto, what that was like when they set it up…what the restrictions were, was it a closed, walled ghetto, or…

Irving: It was a closed ghetto and walled. The ghetto…it had…well…no it wasn't exactly walled, no. It had entrances on both sides, which you could easily go through. In fact, to go from one side of the non-ghetto area to the other side of the non-ghetto area they had to go through a street, which ran right through the ghetto. So no, it wasn't walled.

Anthony: Did you know people who would go back and forth, who would sneak back and forth?

Irving: Yeah. I did too. Well, there were two ghettos that they set up actually, there was one ghetto on one side of the town and the other ghetto, the main ghetto. Where we lived before the war was actually where the main ghetto was set up. We didn't even have to move.

Anthony: Was the main ghetto, was that in a suburb, or was that in the middle of town?

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Irving: It was in the old town, called the old town.

Anthony: And that was the main ghetto, does that mean it was larger than the other one?

Irving: Yeah. Well, it was a historically, traditionally a Jewish area. Yeah, it was larger than the other one. The other one was not historically a Jewish area and was on the other side of town. But there were a number of people that commuted between the two because they had a job…

Anthony: Between the two ghettos?

Irving: Right and they had permits to go on bicycles between one and the other. Well…I can give you an incident, I'm going to deviate slightly.

Anthony: Sure, no, that's fine.

Irving: My father, in order to make a living, he went back to tanning during the war, which was illegal for us, but he…

Anthony: Why was it illegal?

Irving: Anything was illegal for Jews. You were only supposed to work for the Germans.

Anthony: So he was doing this on the side in order to make a living for himself and the family?

Irving: Yes. And then what he would do was stay home and [?] tan calf…rawhide, and then sell the leather someplace else, a small town…but in order to transport it, he couldn't transport it out of the ghetto, he sometimes used Polish farmers who put it on a wagon and put hay on top and hide it. One day, my brother used to work, he had a permit to go from one ghetto to the other. One day when he was travelling through, going from the large ghetto to the other ghetto, he saw that wagon of hay with the man that he knew, with the Pole that he knew, standing on the market on the main street, near the police station. Unfortunately, he went over to find out why, and when the Polish police saw him, they arrested him.

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Anthony: Is this the same brother who was arrested before?

Irving: Yeah. And after that, of course, they started looking for my father. Well first of all, he was in prison. While he was in prison we then wanted to find out what was happening because we had no idea. And what we found out was routinely they would take them out, at eleven o'clock in the morning, something like that, and take him from there to Gestapo headquarters for interrogation.

Anthony: Now this is your father?

Irving: No, my brother. From the prison, to Gestapo headquarters. So that was early June, 1941. And we were in the ghetto already, so me and my other brother, who is his twin, looks like Fagan, we took our armbands off that identified us as Jews and walked in front of the policeman right down Main St. I mean not in front, in back. They were walking in front and we were in the back, and had a conversation with him. He wouldn't turn around, he was talking right in front…and we were talking right through Main St. without our armbands on.

Anthony: Had you done that before?

Irving: No. Never done it before. The amazing thing is that they had to cross the street, this was the main street, to take him to Gestapo headquarters and they couldn't cross the street for over 45 minutes because the German armies were marching east, there were hundreds of thousands of Germans, and this is early June…

Anthony: Right, just before the invasion.

Irving: Hundreds of thousands, just walking down the street. So they were standing on the corner and we were talking to him, and they couldn't cross the street. So that's…you were asking if people would go out…some people would just go out like we did.

Anthony: That's amazing.

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Irving: People would do that. In the early days yes, but then later they used to catch them and execute them for that or put them in prison for ten years, which is the same as execution. It was dangerous…

Anthony: Did people go outside the ghetto to try to get food, and things like that from the region…because you mentioned shortages.

Irving: I don't know. You're asking the wrong…I was a kid.

Anthony: Sure.

Irving: I was thirteen years old, fourteen years old…that wasn't really my duty—I don't know. I did this later in the concentration camp, but I didn't do it in the ghetto.

Anthony: So we're talking about June 1941, right before the invasion. Did things change in Radom once the invasion started, could you sense a difference?

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Irving: Well, yeah, the ghetto, things in the ghetto started getting worse and worse. There was hunger. There were different levels of life in the ghetto. There was an affluent level, which lived normal…but the poor who had no food, there was disease…and there was no way to get anything…and overcrowding. There were three or four families to an apartment. And disease was one of the worst, there was typhus, all kind of diseases…and then there were raids by the Germans. They would come in the night and arrest and shoot people…

Anthony: Was there any particular reason given, or they just did this?

Irving: No. They would have lists, and at various times there were different people they would arrest. At one time they came and arrested…don't ask me why, but they arrested the kosher butchers…they picked up the kosher butchers. I had a friend who was my age, who lived in our house, a young boy, and they arrested him, and they held him for a while and then they brought him back one night. Right in front, we had a little area, which there was no building on it, it was a little garden, and they brought him back right to that garden right in the middle of the night. We heard them all scream, "Mama, mama!" And shot him right there where his mother could hear him and then a while later they came and picked up most of the kosher butchers and sent them to Auschwitz. But meanwhile, while they were picking them up they would shoot a

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number of them and if they would come to an apartment and not find the right person they would take somebody else like a brother or another relative…

Anthony: So they were looking for specific people as far as you could tell?

Irving: Yeah, generally.

Anthony: They had like a list or something?

Irving: Yeah, they would come to our house and pick people up. But if they're not there they would pick others. But if they would find, and those raids usually would be in the morning, early in the morning. And I know in some of those raids they found some people who were going to work like 5:30, 6:00 in the morning and they shot them, just 'cause they were moving around and wanted to come to work. Why, I have no idea. So those raids got more and more, came more and more often…

Anthony: More frequent.

Irving: More frequent.

Anthony: Did…do you remember when those raids were, do you remember dates at all, roughly?

Irving: Between 1941 and 1942.

Anthony: Ok.

Irving: There were a number of those.

Anthony: Do you remember, were you living in your house in the ghetto since you…I know you mentioned that your house was already in where the ghetto was set up.

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Irving: Except two other families moved in.

Anthony: Two other families moved in…

Irving: And we shared, we had a three-room apartment, so there were two other families moved in…

Anthony: Um…why don't we go on, uh…and move to the, when you left the ghetto, when you and the family left the ghetto.

Irving: Well, we didn't leave the ghetto. Sometime in August 1942, they liquidated the ghetto, the second ghetto. They came and took all the people and sent them to Treblinka, to the gas chambers.

Anthony: Now was this the SS, or was this just German guards, or do you remember?

Irving: That was, must be SS, helped by the Ukrainians.

Anthony: So Ukrainians were there.

Irving: Ukrainians were guards. I really don't know because they…that was the other side of the ghetto. I mean, they only left…they killed several hundred people that night. They only left about a thousand males and I don't know how many females, not many.

Anthony: Was this in the main ghetto?

Irving: The other ghetto. The _____Glinice it's called Glinice. And that was the beginning. Then there were rumors that they're going to liquidate the large ghetto any day now. Actually, they did, probably about ten days later. And sometime…it began in August 1942. I don't know the exact date, but it was some time in August. It was right before the Jewish New Year. They…it was a Sunday morning, and they started installing bright lights so we knew something was going to happen that day…there were these two ghettos and there was a group of people who worked in a factory. There was a factory in town that produced weapons owned by

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Austrians, and Austrian company _____[341]. And there were a number of people who were stationed at that factory and one of my brothers was there and my mother was supposed to that day go to the factory, but when they started installing the lights, everybody was trying…they knew that something was going to happen that day. Somehow they came in that morning and they were looking for some people to go and work in a place called _____Washnik [ph, 347], which is an estate, four or five miles out of town. So me and my father volunteered for that. We went to work there. So we walked out with that group, and mother was supposed to go to the weapons factory, from what I hear by the time she was ready to go the Ukrainians were there and they wouldn't let her go any more.

Anthony: From the house?

Irving: From the ghetto.

Anthony: Oh, from out of the ghetto.

Irving: So she got deported with everybody else in that ghetto. Only about ten percent were left or so. But I wasn't there that night. I was in Washnik…eh…we were on a little estate working for…and we didn't know what was happening. Of course, we saw all those bright lights and heard shooting all night. From what I understand there were about 1,500 people killed that night and some 20,000 or so which were deported. A few days later we decided, the remainder of us got sent to something called the small ghetto…

Anthony: Oh, they sent the rest of them to the small ghetto?

Irving: In the small ghetto there remained about two or three streets left from the ghetto. And that was walled in. Now…we decided to eh…we meaning me and another fellow about a year older than I am, we were standing in water most of the time working on that estate, we caught a cold. I didn't feel so well so we went to…the man who ran that was a German, he was not an SS man, he was a civilian. So we went to him and we told him we didn't feel well and we'd like to go see a doctor, we actually wanted to go out and see what happened to the little ghetto. And he finally relented and said he'd let us go and gave us a Jewish policeman who was there to escort us. And he said he'll give us a letter so we can go safely. He gave us a letter and we left, on the way, my brother worked in a factory on the way, so we stopped in to see him.

Anthony: This is the armaments factory?

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Irving: No, no. My other brother who was in the ghetto. He survived, there was a selection, some of the men were left, and he was part of the remainder. And he was working in a factory that was on the way from us to the ghetto. So we stopped and he told me, of course we knew then that my mother is gone, most of the people were gone. By that time we opened the letter to see what it said. And what it said was, it was a letter from that man to the German police saying, "These two Jews are lazy. They don't want to work, and I suggest you execute them." Of course, we never delivered the letter. We just went back to the little ghetto and disappeared. Luckily, they didn't look for us. But that's how I got back to the little ghetto. Now this is what we called the little ghetto, there of course everybody was assigned a working detail. Most people were working in cleaning up the remainder of the large ghetto. There were some other details. I worked on…in a place that provided a shower and a steam bath for the people. It was outside, it was in the old ghetto, but outside the little ghetto. And things there were very bad. There were all kind of bad actions, constantly going on, every few weeks…Um…some, well let me tell you one personal thing that happened.

Anthony: Sure, sure.

Irving: When I was working…which is just an example or whatever…when I was working in that eh…place outside the ghetto, one day, there was a bakery right down the street, a Polish bakery…

[break]

Anthony: Ok, you were talking about a Polish bakery…

Irving: Yeah. There was a Polish bakery, so we went out. It was very difficult to get food. The only way we got food, the Poles would come to the wall, it was a wooden wall, a fence, and we would give them some of those clothes that were left over and we'd trade it for food. And I wanted to buy some bread so I went in and there was a line out. I took my arm band off, of course I didn't have much of an accent, so… and I was standing in line and I almost got to the counter to buy a piece of bread. And there were working men here, probably my age, maybe a year older…he saw me at the counter and started screaming, "You're selling to Jews! You're selling to Jews!" So I ran out. And he went and got Germans and the Germans start looking for me. And I had to hide, it's a good thing they didn't find me. If they had found me they would have executed me. That's the type of relations we had…You were asking if we risked going out…it got very difficult. There were constant executions, people would…by the Germans. A lot of the executions were done by the S.D., the *Sicherheitsdienst* [450]. They would bring

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people in, we don't know who, and execute them right near-by. At one time in that little ghetto there was a…they announced that there will be a list of people who want to go to Palestine. At first people didn't want to register but then finally people registered, and I and my brother registered for that. And one day, and that was January 13, 1943, they got everybody out of the house and put them into a back yard and started calling names. And the names that they were calling were from that list. There was only one difference, they weren't all from that list. Some of the names were changed, how and when we don't know. Our names were not there. Somebody changed some of the names. But names were called, they were called from that list. There were about 1,500 names on that list, and those people were put in the street. Now the question is, we knew one of the groups would survive and the other would go away, and we just didn't know which. But it became apparent that because of the names that did appear on the list that the group who is on the list is going to be the one that survives. Eventually, I ran forward after they finished reading the list. The elder of the ghetto was a doctor…

Anthony: Was that who was reading the list?

Irving: No. The Germans. Some…but no. A Jewish man was reading the list, one of the secretaries. But there were two Germans who were checking the list because the men were running out. If you didn't show up when your name was called—forget it—they read another one.

Anthony: Did the…Jewish council, or the Judenrat, did they take the list down, or did the Germans take the list?

Irving: Don't know. Well…what happened is that I ran out there and the lady who was running the place where I worked, her name was Ms. Zucker, and she was an acquaintance of that doctor who was the elder of the ghetto. All of a sudden he called out for Ms. Zucker and her family. And I ran up and they stopped me and they said, "Who are you?" and I said, "I am her brother." And they checked with him and he said, "Yeah, he's her brother." Of course he knew I'm not, but he did. So he saved my life for that…so they let me go. And that's how I wound up with the column [503] that was safe. Now they took those 1,500 people, which were about half, then they added some other, 50 or 100. That part, that column stayed. The other people were just sent on the train and sent out to Treblinka.

Anthony: So you were able to stay in the ghetto because you were pretending to be a brother of…Did your brother, did he remain?

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Irving: Yeah. He remained because all of a sudden they needed another 50 people or something and somehow they picked him.

Anthony: For a work detail or something?

Irving: No. They just needed 50 more. I don't know why. They pushed them over, and he somehow wound up with those too. At the end he found out that he was lucky too. We both survived. Now, there were executions. One day they called all people who had degrees, doctors, lawyers, and put them in a truck and the Ukrainians took them out to a small town outside the city and shot them. But that type of thing was happening…

Anthony: Right…

Irving: My father and my brother were in the factory that produced the…the weapons factory. So sometime I think in April.

Anthony: Of 1943?

Irving: 1943, yeah. I, they took me over there too. So I started working there too. Now there was a camp that, there was a working camp. We all worked in the factory, two sheds, and slept in a camp a little bit away from the factory. And we were guarded by Ukrainians mostly. But in the factory there were a number of ethnic Germans who were guard…eh…guard…

Anthony: Security people?

Irving: Security guards. And they really had the upper hand…they used to…

Anthony: These were ethnic Germans?

Irving: Yeah. One of them especially. His name was Holz, H-O-L-Z, Jacob Holz. He used to…he executed about eighteen people. One of them…he forced everybody to watch, as this young boy, a young man who I knew, he was a friend of mine, his name was Weinberg, and the

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whole camp had to watch it. And they executed him. The reason they executed him is I believe, because he fell asleep…

Anthony: While he was working?

Irving: Yeah. One day they called me over. My job there was to sweep the street, sweep the yard. They called me over one day in the morning. And he was there and he told me to dig a grave for a freshly killed body of a young boy. And he told me to bury it. And I started burying…and he kept that gun in front of me and said, "Bury it, and if you don't do it quickly, you're going to be buried, too" He was something…

Anthony: This was the same Holz?

Irving: The same Holz. He also killed a…there were some people escaped and when they came they got…I think it was some relatives with two children, and they executed…I didn't see it. About eighteen people. Now I went and testified against him.

Anthony: You did?

Irving: Yeah, a few years ago, a couple of years ago, not long ago in Eastern Germany. They got him. Ok, that's the part in the factory. Now sometime in 1944…

Anthony: Now actually let me ask you a question real quick about where you were working in this factory. You said that you used to sleep at the factory…?

Irving: No, at the camp outside the factory.

Anthony: At the camp, ok. How far was this from the ghetto in Radom?

Irving: Oh, it was on the other side of town.

Anthony: Oh, so it was very, very near.

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Irving: Near? What do you mean, near? On the other side of town.

Anthony: But it wasn't like twenty miles out of town?

Irving: No, no.

Anthony: And there was a camp set up around the factory for the workers, for the prisoners basically I guess to be taken at night? Or did you all sleep in the factory?

Irving: Oh, we never slept in the factory. We slept in the camp. There were two shifts—in the morning a shift marched into the factory and worked all day and in the evening they went back to the camp and then another shift walked in…they worked in the factory and stayed in camp.

Anthony: Ok, ok. And another question…Holz, the guard, you said he was an ethnic German. Was he an ethnic German who was a Polish citizen or was he a German SS guard?

Irving: No. He was not an SS guard. He is an ethnic German. From what I understand now, and I didn't know then, he is an illiterate ethnic German. No, he is not an SS guard.

[Flip Tape]

Irving: Sometime in 1943 we…they brought in the people from the small ghetto and combined the two camps into the camp of the…from the factory, from the weapons factory, combined the two camps and shortly afterwards it became a concentration camp. Now, if you ask me for a date, I don't know, it might have been November 1943…

Anthony: Ok, but some time in 1943.

Irving: Yeah. I think it was 1943, yeah…and at that time the SS took over, we had a new set of guards. In fact, they were trained to be concentration guards and all that…and we got concentration camp uniforms, hats and all that, and we were there until July 1944. Again, the same thing repeated, there were constant raids here and there. They would pick a number of

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people and kill them. Just before we left, a few months before that, they took a number of people who were carpenters, I don't know why they needed carpenters, I think they wanted to erase any of the marks that they left. And these people disappeared, apparently they executed them.

Anthony: In this camp you were taken to the armaments factory to work, from this camp. Can you tell me a little bit about working in the armaments factory? What you did, what your job was…?

Irving: Personally?

Anthony: Yeah.

Irving: I personally cleaned the yard.

Anthony: Oh, right, you told me that. Ok.

Irving: Most of the other people worked on eh…a line doing…building bicycles or building weapons or whatever…yeah.

Anthony: And that's what your brother and father were doing at that time?

Irving: Yeah.

Anthony: Were both your brothers there?

Irving: Oh, my father was also working cleaning the yard.

Anthony: And both your brothers were then working in armaments, they were doing…on the assembly line?

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Irving: Yeah. Around July, shortly after, July 20th, 22nd, 23rd of July, we started hearing noises which were, well, surprising noises, which were…at first we thought it was thunder, but it doesn't really thunder. But those were the approaching Russian army. They were actually in Lublin, which is only 30 to 40 miles down the road. And we had some Polish people who did some training and at that time we asked them if we could stay with them for a week or two because we thought the Russians would be there within a week. They refused. No way. But around the 25th or 26th of July, again the dates, I cannot be exact…the…we were all evacuated. We walked out of the camp. We walked down the streets of the city. And if I remember, there were a lot of Polish workers who were just looking at us, believe it or not, applauding.

Anthony: Do you know what for?

Irving: The fact that apparently that we were leaving the city. I'll never forget that. I shut out a lot of sounds that happened during the war, but I'll never shut out that sound. I never will.

Anthony: The applause?

Irving: I'll always remember that. There were some people who tried to run away that day. And they went into a local building until some of the Poles indicated where they are. The Germans got them and they were shot. We walked for several nights and several days. On the second day or the third day, actually, well maybe it was the second day of the march, they asked that the people who were weak and they couldn't walk be put in a horse and buggy in the back…and then…so they shouldn't get too weak…and in the evening we used to…at night we slept in the fields. Wherever we were they would select a field, and we'd sleep in that field. And that night, before we got to the field, the sick people in the buggy got driven into the forest and executed by the guards. And the guards for that march were all Lithuanians or Ukrainians.

Anthony: So were there any SS?

Irving: There were SS. There were the regular SS that were with us.

Anthony: But the majority…

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Irving: But the majority…they used a lot of Lithuanians and well, there might have been others, Latvians…I don't know. Ok…it was a very tough march. We marched to a place called Tomaszów.

Anthony: Did they tell you where you were going? Or not at all…

Irving: Just started marching. We were hoping at the time that the Russians would get there, but…

Anthony: Get there right…

Irving: But apparently they stopped. As we know now, they stopped for several months, but we didn't know it then. They kept us in this Tomaszów factory, in a factory that was idle at the time, for several days.

Anthony: Could you spell the name of that town for me?

Irving: T-O-M-A-S-C-O-W.

Anthony: Ok.

Irving: And it's got a yetski [ph 701] on the end because of…

Anthony: Right.

Irving: And we stayed in that factory for, I don't know, I think it was about eight or nine days. They separated the women from the men. The men stayed in the factory, the women, I believe, stayed in a local jail, I'm not sure.

Anthony: Were they feeding you on this march at all?

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Irving: Yeah. I think they did. I'm not quite sure. I don't remember anymore, it wasn't that type of a thing. We had a shortage of water. We did not have enough water. As I remember, one night when we stopped everybody ran to get water and they started shooting and some people got wounded because of that.

Anthony: Because they went for the water?

Irving: Because they went for the water. So we had water problems, but I don't think there were food problems, I can't remember that. On a Saturday, one Saturday, they put us in wagons and transported us from there to Auschwitz.

Anthony: This was on a train? Train-wagons?

Irving: Right.

Anthony: From this town?

Irving: From this town. We arrived in Auschwitz on a Sunday morning. I'm not going to give you a date because I don't remember…sometime in August 1944. I don't know exactly, but it was a Sunday morning. While there, it was early in the morning…about…the first thing we know they told us to get out of the cars and line up for a selection. While we were lining up for a selection, they said, "Hold on, hold on, it's a mistake, go back." So we went back into the cars and we heard another car coming. And while we were sitting there a train came in from a place called Lodz, L-O-D-Z. I don't know how many people were on it, it was a large train, I think there were about 4,000 people on that train. And while we were standing there they emptied that train, took all the people, all of them. And what we saw on that train, they came from a ghetto, Lodz still was a ghetto at the time. And they were eh…there were some children there. We didn't see the children because we were in a camp already…there were no children. It was supposed to be a population from maybe fourteen [ph] years old. And eh…they took all these people and sent them to the gas chamber. All of them within a few minutes.

Anthony: Was there a sense on your train that you were being held for some work purpose or not? That you…since you hadn't been sent--?

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Irving: We didn't know. We didn't know. We had no idea. We thought, then they told us to line up. We thought, they're going to do the same thing with us. But they didn't. What they did is they took the people who looked young and looked old, we were also told to watch out because they were looking for twins. My brothers were twins. My father at the time was 48 or 49 and I of course was seventeen. So we were all a problem. What we did is they separated, they weren't standing together. I didn't shave, and my father shaved twice. Somehow we got though. But they did take, I don't know, maybe 1,000 people, maybe 2,000 people.

Anthony: Did they ask you your age?

Irving: No, because it went through, you know, like a short arm inspection in the army. You know what a short arm inspection is?

Anthony: Yeah.

Irving: That's what they did. They just picked out…you go this way, you go this way…and that's it.

Anthony: Can we backtrack just a little bit? Can you tell me about the train ride to Auschwitz?

Irving: I already told you about it. It's just locked, and we were about 60, 70 people in a car. And the car was locked, and it was overnight. I mean we left in the afternoon and got in there at three in the morning. It wasn't that long a ride. It was not that momentous a ride. We were mostly in fear, so…we didn't…I don't have any recollections.

Anthony: Alright.

Irving: We left Auschwitz and the thing that I recall is that we stopped…we left Auschwitz Sunday afternoon.

Anthony: They put you back on the train to leave?

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Irving: Except the women. They kept the women. The women remained in Auschwitz. The men were put back on the train…and essentially most of the same SS guards came back, and then some new ones. But not the Lithuanians. I don't know what happened to them. Well, some of them…not all of them came, some of the guards we knew. And we started off on a journey. Well, the first stop was in Czechoslovakia as I remember, the next morning. It is interesting that when we stopped in Czechoslovakia, we saw…we saw a train going the other way, filled with French Jews.

Anthony: French Jews?

Irving: Yeah. And all they wanted to know was how far it is…how much longer they have to get to Dachau to Auschwitz. That's the only thing. And we continued. Essentially, we went to, I don't really know what path we took…

Anthony: Did they let you off the train at all?

Irving: No, only on the train. We went all the way from there, I guess through Czechoslovakia and Austria, Bavaria and Stuttgart.

Anthony: To Stuttgart, ok…

Irving: And in Stuttgart I think they took us into a delousing and shower and then they reloaded us and took us to a camp called Vaihingen, which is near Stuttgart, twenty miles from Stuttgart. It's Vaihingen an der Enz, there's also a suburb of Stuttgart called Vaihingen, it's Vaihingen an der Enz, which is about twenty miles down the road. Now that camp, it was brand new. There was nobody there. We were the first inhabitants. It consisted of five wooden buildings, maybe six wooden buildings, no walks, all mud. The latrines that were just a hole covered with a roof and very few basic things available. And the labor there was to build. I don't really know what we were doing. I think we were building some kind of armament factory.

Anthony: But you weren't actually building armaments, it was building some sort of factory…

Irving: No, no. A factory, it was building a building. It was a *baustelle*, the German word for *baustelle*, bau-stelle, that's what we worked on—the *baustelle*. I don't really know what we were building…em…we would line up in the morning and each group would go out to a

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different type of work. Now, the em…food situation, although you get…a cup of coffee in the morning. And there wasn't coffee there was smoked chicory or something. And a cup of soup and a slice of bread.

Anthony: That's it for the day?

Irving: That's it. And, eh…it didn't take very long before people started dying. And the rate of death was pretty high. Of course then diseases came in…lice, there was no soap, no washing facilities, no shower. There was a shower built later, but the shower built outside the camp. I wasn't there when the shower was built, but I understand that the day they put in the shower they evacuated. So I don't know about it. But it was built outside the camp so you'd have to run out naked to take the shower and come back. Ok? But I wasn't even there then. So I couldn't even take a shower this way. There was no shower.

Anthony: Were you working? Was this building underground or was it above ground?

Irving: The buildings?

Anthony: Yeah, the buildings, the factories, or whatever.

Irving: No. It wasn't a factory, it was a *baustelle*, we were building things, we were putting things together. There were German *baumeisters*, they were directing us. We were taking stones from here and putting them over here.

Anthony: Ok, I see.

Irving: We were doing some buildings. We were building some things. I don't know what they were doing. I have no idea. There was…there are things I can…there are some things I can tell you about this camp, which I feel are interesting.

Anthony: Sure.

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Irving: Which is…unusual. The guards, we started learning about some of the guards. Some of them were very mean, they beat us. They were very mean. But some of them were less mean. One of the less mean of the guards, whose nickname was Gabba…

Anthony: Gabba?

Irving: Yeah, we called him Gabba. Now I don't know what his real name is. I learned that if you went with the Gabba you usually got a better assignment. So one day I went to work for the Gabba. And it turned out that that day he took us to a place, which was not the building, not the *baustelle*, but something in the opposite direction. We went to the forest and then we wound up on an estate. It was quite different. First of all, there was a big tub of potatoes being boiled. And some of the people, there were maybe thirty people. They called some of the people to go and get some hay. The rest of the people were near the potato pot. And there was nobody near us. And when we saw…I mean we were hungry! And we saw boiled potatoes standing there…I mean this is a big estate, it was a nice background and a nice house…we turned the pot over and started going after the potatoes, grabbing the potatoes and trying to eat. And the SS of course started hitting us with their rifles. And then this lady came out and started screaming at the SS, telling them to stop it. They can't do this, not in her place…they'll never do this. And all of a sudden they stopped. They listened. We didn't know why, how, what's happening. Turned out that the place belonged to the baroness from _____Neurath. She was a German noble. Her brother-in-law was the Secretary of State in Hitler's cabinet. During the war he was the protector of Himmler. He got twelve years in Nuremberg.

Anthony: Ok.

Irving: But she said that while we worked at her, we are not to be touched. She was a good protector. She protected us. And they wouldn't. After that they made an agreement. She said, if you're going to work for her, we're going to get food. We're going to help get the food from the trees. Any fruit that's on the trees is hers—any fruit that falls off, we can have. That type of thing. And she was very nice. There was one young man that she particularly liked and she would sometimes invite him to do some special things. And she was very good to us. She was a very nice lady. And we used to get a lot of fruit and things improved because we had extra food. We could live there. I worked on that place for about two weeks. And it really helped me. It really put me on my feet. And one of my brothers worked there too, he was on the same duty. That helped us a lot. Now her daughter is alive. She was a book-burner.

Anthony: Oh really?

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Irving: Yeah. And…so…

Anthony: Your other brother and your father were back in the camp?

Irving: Yeah. They worked on other details. We worked on that detail. Well, it turned out that after two weeks they decided, this is constantly going on, they were sending out 50 people to one camp, 50 people to another camp. Slowly new people were coming into the camp Vaihingen an der Enz. Other camps, other nationalities. At first when we first went in we were all from the same town. We were all the same. Slowly, new people came in from other cities, other nations. And after working there for two weeks they took the four of us, my two brothers, my father and me, and they sent us to Unterriexingen. Eh…that's another camp, which is about seven miles down the road.

Anthony: From Stuttgart or from Vaihingen?

Irving: From Vaihingen an der Enz. About seven or eight miles down the road. Now who came there. There was really not, again, nothing was there. It was a new camp. There were only…well one building was fully completed. One building they just started, I'm not sure they even started it. But by a building I mean a…it was a block. One block that kept prisoners. And again, the toilet was a slit with a roof on top. In there we didn't even have water. There was no water inside the camp. To get the water we had to go outside the camp. [break] There was no water being brought. Water had to be brought in. That camp was [break] the heat consisted of potbelly stoves, except they didn't give us any wood. The last time we had been given underwear was sometime in August. And by that time it was November. So our underwear was probably torn to pieces. It was full of lice. We had no shoes anymore. The shoes were wooden shoes and the straps were gone. There was no nails to fix them. There was no soap. Nothing to wash…there was no…there were no basics. The best way to describe the camp is—look around. See what it is you can't live without and then say to yourself, well we didn't have that. There was a doctor and he had probably some basic pills. There was also one room reserved for sick people. The death rate was very high. It was an awful camp. We worked there on building a landing strip for German planes. I believe that's what it was. But in the meantime I learned one way to supplement the food and not to die of hunger. Most of the people of course were dying of hunger. Hunger was probably the biggest cause of death…was to try to get outside the camp and get some food. So I did that. And especially on Thursday (?), I learned how to run away. I remember the first time I run away actually I stole a _____[933]. I found myself as working in the fields and dewheating [ph, 938] the fields. The grass was very high and we were laying deep in the grass and the guards were front and behind us and I was falling behind the column of people. I looked up and I was like 50 feet behind them. And I had a choice of either trying to catch up with them and I knew if I do that, _____[944] would see me

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and beat me up. I turn around and go the other way. And I decided to go the other way. And I did, went the other way I started turning around and running away and I did, I crawled away and successfully and first thing I did was go into a farmer's barn and find some vegetables and got some of the vegetables but then I have to make a decision. What do I do? I was outside of the camp, there was really no place to go. I couldn't go back to Poland. I couldn't be in Germany. There was nobody that I trust in Germany. I knew if they find out that I escaped they could probably harm my father and brothers. So I crawled back.

Anthony: You snuck back into the camp?

Irving: I snuck back into the labor brigade. And brought home the vegetables. It helped us and we…

Anthony: What did you manage to get? Do you remember?

Irving: I think I got some carrots and some garlic from that first time. Unterriexingen and I did this several times. But one time, I will tell you this so that we can make this a little shorter. One time, I went into a farm to a…the German farmers used to store and supply their food outside in the storage sheds. They never even closed the storage sheds, they would put a branch into the storage shed just to keep it closed. It was easy enough to open it up. And so I wandered to that farm and opened up the storage shed and that storage shed was full of potatoes, carrots, and all kind of what were to me goodies.

Anthony: Right.

Irving: And I started loading up some of that and all of a sudden I felt this thing in the back of my back. It turned out to be a gun. And a lady's voice says to me, _____[979], "Put up your arms." I put up my arms and she says turn around. I turn around and she looks at me and says, "Oh my God, you're only a baby, you're only a boy." Now we started talking and I told her that I'm…I was only seventeen years old.

Anthony: Right.

Irving: I told her I'm hungry, I don't want anything else. I just want some food, that's all. And she looked at me for a while and she said, "You know something," she said, "we're very short on

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potatoes," and closed the door and left. So I took some of the stuff and went out. Now I went back to that shed a couple more times. I know one time that I went back, I saw her in the window. She saw me go in. I think she waved, I'm not sure. But she didn't say anything.

Anthony: Now, this was in the second, this was in Unterriexingen. What direction was _____[995]?

Irving: One day…

Anthony: This was a farm that was not far from the camp?

Irving: Right, not far from the camp. It wasn't a big farm, it wasn't a farm like you might have here, a farm with several acres, just a small farm. One day, I remember that well, I went into that shed and the door opened and she came in and she said I want you to come into the kitchen. And she went in first and I followed her. I went into the kitchen, I sat there and she gave me a lot of food and she gave me all kinds of cookies. And she even gave me a drink of wine. She wanted to know if I knew what day this is. I didn't know, but it had to be the day before Christmas and in 1944. While I was there it started snowing and on cloudy day [ph] and snow, it snowed very hard and uh she told me that she cook for the guards. The guards told her that the only people that are in this camp are political prisoners who are against the German Reich and I told her this isn't true. How can I be a political prisoner, I was twelve years old. What did I have to do with politics? She uh… I sat there for a while then I left but you realize that I walked around barefooted and the snow was high by that time. It was very difficult for me to get back. By the time I get back, it was too late for lunch. I got back, it was past twelve o'clock and the group apparently was already assembled and they knew that I was missing. In fact, they had sent guards out looking for me. I knew I'm in trouble.

Anthony: Right.

Irving: I put stuff away that she gave me. I tried to preserve it. I just left a couple of apples in there and I waited till they came back from working. I mixed in them, you couldn't see me. But they immediately knew who it was because there were only one or two who used to run away.

Anthony: Right.

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Irving: They beat me up pretty well. And they tried to tell…they wanted me to tell them where I went, what I did. I kept telling them that I went to the airfield and that they gave me some apples. I knew they weren't going to do anything to the German fliers. Then in the evening they put me at the end of the column when they march back to the camp. Now two weeks before then, they, there were two Poles but I left out that. Meanwhile, some Poles came in to camp…a couple hundred Poles.

Anthony: They were just…they were not Jews? They were just Poles?

Irving: They were just Poles. Two of these Poles escaped and they caught them and the punishment was that, after they caught them, they exposed them overnight, they were kneeling with their hands up, all night. In the morning they were frozen. So, when the column went in they made me do the same thing, kneel with my hands up and I was sitting there. I didn't know what they were going to do with me. I knew I was going to get some punishment but I didn't know what type of punishment.

Anthony: This was already after they had beaten you?

Irving: After, yeah. And uh it got to be very late at night. A guy who worked for them, who cleaned up their SS guards' barracks came out and I asked him what they were going to do and he said they decided to shoot me. I thought this might be right. And then finally they came out, two or three of them; I don't remember how many came over and they said, well, they said we decided to commute the sentence.

Anthony: These were the SS guards?

Irving: Yeah, they weren't SS. They were guards but they weren't SS. In fact, the one that said that was actually a member of the German air force but he was a guard. He said, "You know, we just won a great victory." Now that had to be the Battle of the Bulge, you know that now, I didn't know that. He said, "You know we just have to win a great victory. We're going to need people like, slaves like you because the German Reich is going to want, is going to rule the whole world. So we commuted your sentence. Instead of executing you, you're going to get fifty lashes." That's what I got, I got fifty lashes. And then they throwed me into a, what do you call it, hydrolation [ph] (c. 053).

Anthony: Solitary confinement.

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Irving: And actually there were two other guys in that solitary confinement. One Pole and one Jew. The Pole was released about fifteen minutes after I got in there. The other guy, I remember about midnight the Germans would sit here, organize, and they broke several bones. Well they heal, you can't see it now. I take x-rays down at the doctors keep asking me have I ever had a big accident. I got lots of broken bones.

Anthony: That's when they beat you, that's what happened.

Irving: I think the fact that I was frozen helped me. The pain wasn't so bad. Well that's what happened that Christmas night, Christmas Eve. Shortly after, because of that night I guess, I got pneumonia. They kept me in the hospital about ten days and after I got out of the hospital they put me right to work. They made me, made me carry a load of bricks. I couldn't carry it. I was too weak, I was just out of the hospital. So I dropped it. Because of that they threw me in solitary confinement again. When they left me out of that solitary confinement, they were evacuating the camp. And all of a sudden everybody else in the second barracks (long pause) and I found my father there and my other two, my two brothers were too sick. So the sick people were sent back to Vaihingen an der Enz and all the people who were not sick enough was sent out to camp Kochendorf. There were very few left, very few. Most, a lot of people died. There were, the rate of death was like four or five a day. A lot of the Poles died. I don't know how many Poles survived but very few…there were several hundred. Most of them died.

When we arrived in Kochendorf, again we went through a procedure of trying to get washed. The way we were going to get clean is they kept us out it was winter, it was January, I'm sure it was January. It was cold and on Sunday and we were being kept outside and inside they had a big tub of water, which was being warmed on one of the potbellied stoves. They filled it up with warm water, and four or five guys would get into that tub and wash themselves. After the first guy, that tub was as dark as the ground. We didn't take a bath in eight months, five months or something. August to January, five months, four months. So after that there were no towels either. Then you went to that around the potbellied stove and waited there until you dried. Meanwhile, they took your clothes, whatever clothes you had and they sent us to the steamer. When it came out the steamer they were all wet and you put it on. They send you outside then you waited till everybody was ready. Which means you waited outside for two or three hours. This procedure, I just got through pneumonia, with this procedure, by the time I got to the barracks, I was pretty sick. Now there we had a guy, the guy who was heading that barracks, his name was Teddy. He is a Pole too. And he was pretty tough. He was one of the toughest guys. He really beat us up pretty badly, beat up some guys. People were very scared of him. But he give us a lecture, he said, "tomorrow you can go and see a doctor if you don't feel good. But if you have a 104, he'll send you to the hospital. If you don't have a 104, he'll send you back here. I guarantee if you get back here, I'll kill you." And he meant it. But I went anyhow, I felt bad,

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so I went to see a doctor. And when, when I walked in he asked me what's wrong with me, first he took my temperature and I must have had high temperature. He took my temperature and asked me what's wrong with me. I said I just had pneumonia. But the German word for pneumonia is lung infection (Lungenentzündung). That's what I told him. And so he put me in the hospital, first in a hospital in Kochendorf. I was warm and I was in bed. I was in that bed till about ten o'clock. They came in and took temperature again. And then the guy came in and told me to get up and follow him. And now I thought, well they're going to take me right back to Teddy and this is it. And they took me like halfway to the barracks and that's all I know about Kochendorf is the hospital to Teddy and then all of a sudden he turned to the left and I saw a structure, which I've never seen in a camp before. There was a building, barracks, if you like, that was all fenced in, inside the camp. The camp itself as fenced. That other building was fenced in inside and we went to that building. The guy went as far as the fence and said something in a different language. Somebody came out, opened the fence, pushed me in and that's it and they closed the fence.

All of a sudden I asked what this is, where am I? They told me this is a TB hospital. I was in a TB hospital. It's the only one of a kind that I know of and it was all fenced in and nobody could get to it. I don't know how many people there were in there. There was a room full of people. They were all Hungarian mostly Hungarian. I couldn't understand most of the people unless they spoke my language, either German or Yiddish, then I understood. If they wanted me to understand this otherwise, they spoke Hungarian. But they treated me very well and I actually recovered in that place. The only problem is if you're talking about a place with no way out, that's a place with no way out. There's no reason why the Germans would maintain a TB hospital inside a concentration camp. And I stayed in that hospital till the middle of March, till the end of March. Nothing much happened. Just stayed in that hospital, nobody ever came there, nobody came to the door.

Anthony: Were the doctors inside?

Irving: Same doctor that let me in. He came…

Anthony: And he never left either?

Irving: Well, no. He would go in and out. He came in and he would go over to some people who didn't feel well or once in a while would ask me how I feel. They would take temperatures twice a day and keep a record of it. Oh, I asked him to please take my father into the hospital, regular hospital and he promised he would and I think he did. Why, I have no idea, but he promised.

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Anthony: Was he, was the doctor a German?

Irving: No. He was a Hungarian Jew.

Anthony: He was Hungarian also?

Irving: His name was Doctor Weiss. Ahh, he was a very gentle person. I don't, we didn't have any problems with him. And, as far as I'm concerned, he was very well liked. No problems. He would come in and visit and talk and probably be our only link to the outside world. He would go out and come in and that's it. But nobody else would…they would bring in food, take it back and that's it. Then one day…

Tape 2: [unable to verify, Tape 2 inaudible]

Irving: And what happen is the people who were in the hospital went by freight and the people who were not in the hospital walked. And the whole camp was evacuated to go to Dachau. Now, from what I understand, now, this is from a quarterback position, which we didn't know at the time. Teddy said that he once, he was going to try to run away or escape. He was walking with the people. And apparently, if there was any food, it isn't a long ride from where we were. Kochendorf is somewhere and near _____[013] something like that and Dachau. Today maybe it's a ride of two hours, two and a half, three hours. But there might have been some food they gave us, it was the war time. And _____[016] from what I understand, Teddy might have taken that food from us, from the sick people. In any case, they locked the _____[017] sometimes in the afternoons. This was Tuesday afternoon. The train started moving. It moved all day Tuesday, all night Tuesday night. Wednesday morning they opened the doors and they asked if there are any people dead. There was four or five people dead. So we handed them out and they took them out. And they buried them. I know the name of the town was Aalen. I remember that. And we traveled all day Wednesday, all night Wednesday. On Thursday morning, the same procedure. However, no food, no water. They just came and took the dead out. Thursday, sometimes during the day, we got into an air raid. I don't know what planes, could have been English, could have been American. _____[028] I mean we were all locked in. we could hear bombs, we could hear sirens. We could smell fire around us. We weren't hit. The guards were running all over. And then they came back. We were praying that we would be hit so we could get out…and we weren't. Again, nothing happened. Thursday night, we traveled again all night. Friday morning they opened the freight train and took more dead out. By that time we couldn't give them the dead anymore. We didn't have the strength to give the dead. By that time there were very few people in the car who were still alive. On Saturday morning, they came

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aboard to take the dead out. We finally arrive from Dachau Saturday night. No food, no water. Then when we arrived, then two prisoners of Dachau came out, aboard the freight train. They took us down and lined us, five people in a row and put our hands into the pockets and one guy would put his arm around one end of the five people, the other around the other five, and pick us up and took us in like this. That's how strong we weren't, just couldn't stand on our feet. How many people survived, I don't know. Very few, maybe ten percent. When we finally got into Dachau, it was late at night and we begged them to give us something to drink. Give us some coffee, give us something to eat. They said the kitchen is closed, can't give us anything to eat. Finally, after we begged them, they brought us some water. It was late Saturday night, just got a drink of water, no food.

Anthony: And that was the first time you had water since you got on the train?

Irving: Yeah, just Tuesday night. I was crawling on the floor. I was crawling around, crawling on all four, couldn't walk. All of a sudden I saw a familiar face. It was my father. He survived too. He was in that transport. And on Sunday morning in Dachau there were showers, there were showers in Dachau. And then they made us take a shower, so the first few people who went together to shower, I don't know why, but they turned the hot water on. And as soon as the people got in the shower, they died, they just fell down and died. I don't know whether the hot water did it or what.

Anthony: It shocked them or something like that.

Irving: Just died. And we refused to go on then and they changed it. They changed the hot water to a less hot, cool. Then we got past this, and it turned out that this was April the first, Easter Sunday. And on Easter Sunday we always figured maybe we'll get—if we don't get the coffee on Sunday morning, at least we're going to get the soup at noon because every concentration camp—but it turned out this was Easter Sunday, April the first, 1944 and one day in the year and only in Dachau on Easter Sunday they did not give that soup. All they did is give a piece of bread and a slice of salami. That's the only time we ever got a slice of salami in camp but they didn't give it till 4pm on that day. So the first time we got a piece of bread, at 4pm on that Sunday. After we got into the block in Dachau. That's how we got to Dachau. We stayed in Dachau from April the first till late in April. Dachau was to me compared to Unterriexingen and Vaihingen and Kochendorf, although I didn't see Kochendorf. But from what I understand very few people survived Kochendorf. Very few people who went with to Kochendorf survived. Dachau, compared with these camps, was a luxury because it had showers, it had water. There was a Red Cross and they brought packages. My father used to wear glasses. He broke his glasses and one day he went down to the toilet and he hit himself on the bed on his leg and it wouldn't heal. It started to get worse and worse, almost greenish like. They wouldn't put him in

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the hospital but then by the end of April they announced that there'll be a Red Cross inspection. So when the Red Cross guy came him we pushed him out in front so the Red Cross guy could see him and when he saw what happened to his foot he told the guy who was in charge of the block to put him in the hospital. So my father was designated the next day to go in the hospital. At the same time the next day they decided to evacuate all the Jews from Dachau. So when my father went to the hospital in Dachau, I got evacuated.

Anthony: So you got separated.

Irving: We got separated. He went to the hospital and I went on a train.

Anthony: This was the end of April in 1945?

Irving: End of April in 1945. Don't know exactly what day in April but towards the end of April in 1945. This time it was a passenger train, not a freight train. We got a passenger train in Dachau.

Anthony: You got seats and everything?

Irving: Seats. We got a package before we got on the train, a food package from Red Cross. I happened to get a Belgian package. Other people got other packages. That was a food package. I don't know why they put us on the train and where they were taking us. I still don't know. It's still a mystery. But we took off from Dachau and went all the way to the Austrian border to a small town in Tirol called Zeaphant [ph92]. We stopped right before that town. We started walking up the mountain. When we walked up the mountain a man who looked to me like he was the mayor of Zeaphant [ph100], I don't know maybe not, but an official in either case, stopped us and said that Austria is no longer at war and as far as he's concerned we are no longer prisoners; the war is over and we should be free, except since Austria didn't do anything to us he cannot feed us. We got to go back to Germany but the SS were still there with the rifles and the machine guns. Apparently he had a long conference with the SS men. So they kept us overnight still under SS guard despite the fact of what he said in a barn in the mountains in Tyrol. The next morning they took us back over to Germany. There they put us into a ravine between two mountaintops, set up machine guns on both ends and there we were. I don't know what they intended to do. There were machine guns. There was a whole story about it that there were some women who came over and told them that if they shoot us they going to be punished or something or other. I didn't see that. I was mostly with some of my Hungarian friends from Kochendorf and so on. It was late in the evening, towards the evening, I don't know whether it

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was late or dark when one of them woke me up and said look, what we saw is that the SS is changing into civilian uniforms. The SS was changing into civilian uniforms and disappeared.

Anthony: Just leaving.

Irving: Yeah. The next thing I know is Peel's [ph123] following them and going on the road and I followed him. There were others crowding. There were lots of people walking. This is the Eleburna [ph125] Pass, by the way. There were lots of people walking into Germany. I just joined them, prison uniform and all. Barefoot, no shoes, prison uniform. I don't know if the moon is on or not. I can't tell you but the guy next to me, he's either Italian or Hungarian, not German, but he spoke to me. I just shook my head. We walked all the way into the town and as soon as we got into the town the first street I saw I just disappeared, ran into the first street. And there I started looking for an empty house. Saw a house which looked empty and I started getting in. I went to the basement but it wasn't empty. A guy came out with a rifle and started making noises and all these foreigners what are you doing in here. Who is this? I said very quietly and then he went back. I went to the next house and finally found an empty house—got in there. And there were three other Hungarians in there. The four of us spent the night in that house. The next morning there was somebody on the street told us in Hungarian that there is a trainload full of sugar at the station, that people are going down there for sugar. So I went down there too. And there were a lot of Germans picking up sugar from that train. I didn't need the sugar but I was looking around. And there was a German lady and she said to me she wants help with the sugar. At that time I was getting very sick, absolutely sick. I couldn't eat anymore. The thing that I needed most was sleep. All I wanted to do was sleep. So I told her that I will help her with the sugar if she lets me sleep in her house. And she agreed so I helped her with the sugar and we took it to her house and she let me sleep under the steps in that house until about—in the afternoon, maybe two o'clock in the afternoon, something like that. And then she came running in and she said the SS is running around and she's afraid and I'd better get out. So I left. I had no place to go so I sat down on a bench, a town bench and I was sitting there. I couldn't go any further. I was sick. I was very sick. Sitting there, a man came over in a uniform. Turned out the town mailman, the town mailman, and he came over and he said you can't sit here. If you sit here they're going to shoot you and the Americans are coming in tomorrow and because of that they're going to punish the whole town. He said, "You come with me and I'll hide you." So I went with him. He put me in the garage and I sat in the mail truck all night. The Americans came in that night, sometime during the night. In the morning he came in and said, "Now you can come up to my apartment." I went up to his apartment, asked me what I want to do and I said all I want to do and I said all I want to do is lay down and sleep. So he let me sleep in a bed in his hallway. The first thing I hit the bed I fell asleep as far as I know. The next thing I know is somebody is standing on top of me and shaking me and shaking me, and a woman screaming, "You can't die here, you can't die here!" They were both standing in front of me and saying that, "You have to go to a hospital, you can't die in here." That time they felt that I was dying. So they gave me a pair of pants and I put them on and I started crossing…They showed me where

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the hospital is across the street. I started crossing the street, went to the hospital. The hospital was in a school, in a former school. It had three steps. I had a hell of a time getting up those three steps. But I finally made it. I got up the steps. I got up to the hospital, went in. There was a doctor who was an officer, a German officer. First thing he did is stuck me with a thermometer. I didn't have any temperature. Already told me that he cannot accept civilian. I told him I'm not sick, I'm starving. I'm dying of starvation. I need help. So I have to go to a civilian hospital. So walking outside I fell down the steps. And I lay in the street; I just lay there, I couldn't get up. And a jeep came by. A jeep stopped. A guy came out, picked me up, put me in the back of the jeep, took me to American headquarters. Two guys came out; one spoke Yiddish, one spoke Polish. They took me back to the hospital, went back to the doctor. One of the guys took out a gun. He had a gun; he must have been an officer. Took out the gun, went over to the German doctor and said to him in kind of a semi-broken German, he said to him, "You know, he dies, you die." And after that he put me in a bed, gave me IV. I was in that hospital until the middle of June.

Anthony: And this was in early May?

Irving: Yeah, in the middle of Germany in a military hospital. It was a German military hospital in Mittenwald [187]. It was a place called Mittenwald in Germany. And that's where I was when the war ended.

Anthony: What did you do after the war?

Irving: I spent several years in a displaced person camp in Stuttgart. I went back to Munich and got a high school diploma. I took an exam and got a high school diploma. I went for a short time to a Polish university, Polytechnic, then I switched over to the German Polytechnic and then I left for the United States.

Anthony: Do you remember what year that was?

Irving: 1948; January 1948 I came to the United States and by now I work as an engineer and design naval combat systems.

Anthony: That's great.

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Irving: And I do have several degrees now. I did continue my education.

Anthony: Did you find Poland and Germany different after the war or was it the same attitude towards Jews?

Irving: I never went back. Germany yeah, Poland I never went back. I was in Germany after the war. I spent three years in Germany; 1945 to 1948. Did I find it different? Yeah, I guess. I guess it is different.

Anthony: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Irving: Well, now you've got the story of my life until today. Right now I'm happy I'm in the United States. In fact, I spent two years in the U.S. Army.

Anthony: When were you in the army?

Irving: From 1950 to 1952.

Anthony: Well, I think we're all done.

Irving: Okay, fine.

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