Interview with Joseph Elman

Question: Tell me your first and last name, and your address.

Answer: My first name is Joseph. It's Joseph, it's Yiddish is Yosef (ph), Elman.

Q: And where do you live?

A: Now I come from Syracuse, New York. And, you want the address?

Q: Yes, please.

A: 309 Wedgewood Terrace, Syracuse, New York. _____

Q: That's fine, don't worry about it.

A: Syracuse, New York, zip code 13214.

Q: And what is your occupation today?

A: Well, I'm self-employed. I'm in the recycling business, _____ in the recycling for the last 44 years.

Q: Okay. Could you give me your date of birth, please?

A: Yeah, I was born February 5, 1922, in Prujena (ph), in Poland.

Q: And did you have any other names between 1933 and 1945 that you used?

A: No, I didn't use one. That's my name, but I _____ until I was six.

Q: And you grew up in Prevnau (ph), Poland?

A: I was born in Crushani (ph), a little town. I would say it's the eastern part of Poland, Belarush (ph).

Q: Could you tell me your parents occupation?

A: My parents, my father is Bechani (ph) and my mother is Seur (ph). That was gonna be an English _____.

Q: And what were their occupations?

A: My father was the -- we had a concession in the Tobacco. In Poland, you

had to pay a concession in order to sell tobacco products, cigarettes and tobacco, so we had a concession, where the seller, the store and the marketplace, _____. There was occasion in the center of the city, they had a hundred stores like little shops, as you call it over here.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about your family life as you were growing up? Special occasions, holidays?

A: Well, the family life was good. My father, he was born in Homeskitz (ph), a little town. And he went to Yoshiva (ph) in Prujena (ph), that's where he met my mother. And we had a family of four children. I am the older brother of two sisters. _____ My older brother passed away two years ago. And my two sisters perished.

Q: What were their names?

A: My older sister's name was Hieke (ph), the younger girl was Shafel (ph).

Q: Where did you go to school, Mr. Elman?

A: I attended public school until 1939.

Q: A public school?

A: Public school, yeah. I finished. And _____ worked for _____ in 1939. And I kept thinking I want to explain in 1939, our part of Poland was taken over the Russians.

Q: I will ask you about . . .

A: And so I continued and went to Russian schools.

Q: And, was your family -- your parents were religious, I understand.

A: Yeah.

Q: And was your father prominent in the Jewish community in. . .

A: No, my father belonged to the Schewel (ph) and the Schewel belonged _____. My father used to be sometimes about it was very -- you know, it was very -- then you go and you shiver _____. As a matter of fact, it was almost the college _____, Rabbi. You know what I mean?

Q: Yes, I do.

A: So it was occasionally, he used to read a Torah. You are to read a Torah and he used to be _____ power.

Q: Could you tell me something about your town before the war?

A: Prujena (ph) is a town. It's a warm _____ to task. The woods were like over here, we call it region _____. And it was a town, population, I think, I would say around 12 -- before the war, 12,000. And 57 percent, I would say, maybe six, seven thousand Jews.

Q: Were there a lot of Yeshivas (ph) in the town?

A: The Shevas (ph), it was a big Yoshiva that's there, you know. And where my father, I think still remains, but you know there were smaller ones that I recall. Now, I went to Hayda (ph) because I didn't go to Yoshiva, I went to Hayda. And, you know, and coming up from the Hayda, I went to the public school.

Q: Do you remember any incidents of anti-semitism before the war? Like in school or in the town:

A: Oh yeah. Right in my town _____. In Polish, I went to the Polish

school, because of anti-semitism, I can recall, for instance, when there was a religion class, now we didn't have, you know, the Jews were out of the class because there weren't, I would say, maybe 80 percent Christians to 85, another percentage. Very little, very not many Jewish people. So we had to -- it was a religion class, we had to come out, you know, be free, left the class. And _____, when we came back for the next lesson, it was something tense. And, you know, it depends what the priest -- what they were learning there. Many times I recall that I was called the Jew, Christ-killer, or something like that. Jews -- you know, there weren't too many Jews.

Q: When were you aware that the Nazis came to power in your town?

A: Well, see, in the way, in Prusia (ph), there, so we were unfortunate that the Nazis came in '39, but the war broke out, I think September, was it September 1? I don't recall exactly the date. I think it was September 1st when the war broke out. The Nazis, they came to Prujena (ph). It took them 'til they reached -- we are of the eastern part of Poland and worked through all the western part of Poland. And exact date when they reached in Prusiaph ph), I don't recall. But they arrived at the date, and overnight, they pulled out and disappeared. We didn't know what's going on. Eventually (ph), the next day, the Russian troops came in and took over Prujena (ph). So, you know, it was to why they -- we didn't know _____secret pact. And Poland was the _____ between Stalin and Hitler. So Prujena (ph) hill, that blocked 50 miles was already the border between the Germans, Poland, German Poland and Prujena (ph) and

Russia. So I was able to go to school from 1939 to 1941 in Russian school, for two years.

Q: Were you worried the Nazis were in Poland before they came to Prujena (ph)?

A: They came, they only -- they just walked in and they pulled out. It seems to me that they were -- you know when a _____, it seems to me they must go (clap, clap), must go (clap, clap). Went over a certain territory, which _____. Eventually was quiet, we sort of -- we didn't know what's gone. We expected the Germans. And then, at day, and overnight, _____ pulled out and the Russians came in.

Q: When were you aware of the Nazi presence?

A: This was in 1941, when the war broke out between the Russia and Soviet Union and Germany, because the proximity was so close to the border, we only were about 50 kilometers from the border from the Germans. So overnight, in, I think it was June 23rd, 24th is not it. Overnight it came in the Nazis. I mean they, I remember that for three weeks, columns and tanks and tanks and columns, all kinds of things and some others, no one on foot marching, marching to the city. And _____ tanks, you know they weren't -- sometime you call it enclosed -- but it just opens, free. And _____ anybody who was outside sometime on the street, as so little rescuing. "How far is Mensk (ph) and Moscow (ph)." You know they were directly they'd talk to you or they'd go on in a home overnight or 'til they -- that's all they were interested. "How far is Mensk?" I told they got a long way to _____ to Mensk. You know,

_____, they just crossed the border. So they came overnight, they marched right in.

Q: What are your recollections of first seeing the Nazis?

A: Well, in the beginning, when the German army arrived, it was -- everybody was inside. You know, everybody was inside. And people were afraid to go out. And we heard already, you know, it was night, we heard the radio stories and all that. But you have to go out to get some water. You know, we didn't have inside water, we had to go to the well to get some water for the families. The man from family had to go out to the well to get some water. So that, you know, some Germans were washing around there. And it was not 'til -- it was not any -- I don't recall any special events happened while they were -- while the front went through. But, after three weeks, when the troop moved, and then the Gestapo took over, you know their city says -- we heard about, some soldiers used to tell us, you know, that well, we were wary of them and the successor's coming. Beware of the accessors coming. It means they were telling you that they haven't got nothing, something against Jews because it was an occasion a soldier was from Austria, an Austrian soldier. This was -- a friend told me that. You know, you were not allowed to water to outside the city. You know? You know that German is actually Austria and he told us and he told that to what's gonna, that the assessor's gonna come after them to take --they call it a control. Whatever then you have -- you'd better take -- be careful, take hold of something you've expression _____. So I would say three weeks after the -- at

three weeks when the front, when _____ and the SS Gestapo came in to accomplish their. . . So I recall what happened I think in the first, first days, what they did is they requested or they picked up I think it's eleven Jews, representatives from different groups. They asked, you know, if you were ever a president for a synagogue or if somebody chartered for organization. And if you were in charge at some time for any Zionist organization, we had the patriot, we had the Bund (ph) organization, you know. And presidents and so, so they picked up some intellectuals and they took him out, I know this, by the little forest that's about three kilometers from Prujena (ph). Lachi (ph), lachia (ph) _____. And that they shot him. That was the first days _____ first days that they took control.

Q: What were your feelings at this time, seeing all this happen?

A: After that?

Q: Yeah, while this was happening, what were your feelings?

A: Well, we heard that --we were scared. We were scared, but it was -- the ghetto was not established yet. We were living among, you know, along with the Christians, all that. And so, life was going on and we were outside trading yet with the Christian farmers and all that for awhile. And eventually, it didn't take very long, that they established the ghetto. It was, I think, in August or September, they established the ghetto.

Q: In 1941?

A: 1941. September, '41, they established, already, the ghetto. And they

called those Jews who lived in the ghetto remained. Those Jews -- we lived outside, you know, on the outside. So we eventually had to abandon and move in with one of the family. So after establishing the ghetto, there is some -- they extend and _____ certain laws were for effect (ph). And first thing I recall that they requested, like, I think it's because of the Russians, it's sort of Russian money, but _____ in rubles. They requested I think it's like a certain amount kind of. They think it's they have kilogram of gold and two kilograms silver throughout the first three days; so the ghetto was established. . .

Q: This was from the town they requested this gold and the -- it was from the town, from the Jews in the town.

A: From the Jews, yeah. That's already the law. The Gestapo, the Bergermeister, the mayor of the city was already here, you know. The mayor came in and the Gestapo and they told the Jews of the ghetto to select a unirat (ph). They didn't install the unirat (ph). I mean, you install a unirat (ph) for representation from all different branches. So if we gonna deal with you, we need labor, for instance, or money, anything like that. Inside you control Jews, inside the ghetto. Police force, Jewish police. So unirat (ph) was established throughout the way when the ghetto was established. I think it was over 12 or 15 people representing the unirat (ph), although we had _____ wanting charge of the -- especially labor was important, you know, and they -- right away they took you to any type of labor work. It was about three miles from the city that we had an airport and, wintertime especially, we needed a lot of you know --

we get cold, cold winters and lots of snow. So to clean the airports, you know, is 500, you know, by shovels in hand. We [didn't] use bulldozers and snow plows and stuff like that. So labor was important and each branch. And charge somebody in charge of the food, you know, gets rationing established. So much, I don't know exactly the rationing, but I think there was certain rationing like 15 or 25 gram of bread, so much _____ bread, they give you margarine in certain amounts. You know, rationing was established.

Q: Could you tell me something about -- okay, before the ghetto was being established and the unirat (ph), were Jews prohibited from public places? Like in Germany?

A: When they arrived, you mean?

Q: Right.

A: Well, it was the first days -- we were able, the first days, to go outside, because the ghetto wasn't established, and go out and trade with the farmers because the stores were already -- the stores were closed under the Russians, to close. You know, you couldn't have on (ph). There was all these _____ storekeepers already got liquidated. I mean, it was sold out and closed. So whatever you had had and little, you know we knew that the war was gonna start, so each one, like over there, prepare the little food something for the future. But you were able in the beginning to go out and trade with the farmers, yet, the first days. This was 'til the ghetto was established. So I would say, maybe, about a month that you were free going out. But most of the Jews were confined. You

know, we were confined in the house; sitting there, you didn't go nowhere and you know, I mean, you didn't participate in any going out, like social going out. I recall, while the Schull (ph) -- well, as a matter of fact, I don't think it was already only one Schull (ph). There were the Schulls (ph) who were already not active under the Russians, already more so than any Schulls (ph). Only a couple were left. You know, a town, like a small town, we had six, seven synagogues.

Q: What was it like when they imposed that the Jews were the Star of David? Do you remember?

A: Oh, well, this is when the Star of David was the law when the ghetto was established. Then it came out, a law that you have to wear the yellow Star of David on both sides. One here and, it was yellow, certain sides and in the back.

Q: Do you remember if there was -- what was it like when there was destruction of Jewish property by the Nazis, or being forced out of your homes and businesses in the beginning?

A: Like I say, the home, the businesses -- there was no businesses already, which may be because the Russians, when they came over, they liquidated the business. So there was no businesses. Everyone was working, though. It was normal. You were a chance (ph) to, you know if you were a professional, you worked with your profession. If you were even a businessman, say, "Oh, yeah," when one of them asked you if you were a business man, might say -- when the Russian came over, my uncle had the flour mill and he was a big business man. So when the Russians came over, they told him, "Okay, you

manage, you go on. You remain there." But he didn't own it. They paid him a salary and that's the way the businesses were operated, all businesses under Russians were liquidated and they let you run. They paid you a salary. They didn't come to save you for the business, though. So when the Germans arrived, it was already in Prujena (ph), that there was not private businesses. The profession, your professions, like teachers and lawyers and doctors, whoever were Jews were, under the Russians, were able to practice their particular profession.

Q: How were you notified that you would be going into a ghetto?

A: Yeah, we were notified. It came the date, I don't know, "It's around in September that the ghetto will be established." They called the Jews where they gave the unirat (ph), the measurement of the ghetto, the map of the ghetto. And they called them to build, even to build a fence and hold the dimensions and with the unirat (ph), we have to pay for it, even for that. So they were given the instruction where it's gonna be and all the sections, quarters, which we _____ together. So we knew. And then they give us a time to state. So if you are out of the ghetto, you're _____ in your home, and the Christians who were in the ghetto to get out. And [we] bought their homes and we took up. Of course it was very, very crowded. They give you a few blocks, let's see. It was crowded, so some relatives, families of too many, just take in their own family. When we moved, we were two move out from our house. We had to join my aunt's house.

Q: What did you bring from your home to the ghetto?

A: From the home to the ghetto, that time, we had to -- we couldn't bring the furniture. Everything was left. But they told us that we could bring, you know, certain possessions.

Q: Like what?

A: Like, I guess, you can move in, bring in the ghetto, _____, certain -- each person, a couple, what do you call it, pack? back packs or something like that. So, I remember, with a little wagon and a push cart we moved and moved from there to my aunt's. Furniture and all that was abandoned.

Q: Your beds were abandoned?

A: Yeah, the furniture, beds and all that was left.

Q: Do you remember how you felt while this was going on with Jews, when you were going into the ghetto? Your feelings at the time?

A: Well, this is -- you asked my _____. When I was -- I was young and right next neighbor to me was a doctor, a Jewish doctor, Dr. Goldframe (ph). Now, by the way, this doctor, it's a miracle, too, she would survive. And Nam (ph), you know, when the sister, Nam, because she was the only doctor at the time -- no, not only Jewish doctor, but _____. And she was appointed (ph), very British _____. She treated here. And she was very liked all over the city. And she was Dr. Ola Goldframe (ph). So she was active in the community. And I remember as a kid, when I was young yet, you know, we used to sit and speak about the, you know, we heard about the Germans, what

happened to, you know, that whence they might (ph) arrive, and Hitler _____was interested in all that. I was a kid and I was mixing mostly with this doctor and another, you know, Maury (ph) Holder, politician (ph),. I said, “What I’m doing there with them?” And I was always,you know, something, was very interested and a feeling what was gonna happen, what was going down. This was in youth, it’s very young.

Q: Could you tell me your recollections about getting adjusted in the ghetto, living conditions?

A: Well, the living conditions of the ghetto, is now, when they established the ghetto, in the beginning, our house was outside the ghetto. So eventually, you know, had wanted to move in with my aunt. And, like I say, it was rationing. And you could do a little trading even though in the ghetto, you could do a little trading with the outside. No, with the outside, you denied with farmers. And you know, for money, for silver, for little, you know, if you had. There really was a little way of getting, I don’t call it market, but little bribery, a little trading. And besides that, they tried to bribe the unirat (ph) in charge, tried to bribe that mayor, the bergermeister a little. You gave him anything he wants, he’ll give a little more, more large the portion, the ration. You know, there’s that. So in the ghetto, in the beginning of 1941, you can manage, nobody starved, you know. Actually, there was no starvation. But eventually, with time, the ghetto was instead of up, was, I would say, shortened, squeezed shorter and shorter and shorter. And in the beginning of 1942, they started bring in some people from

different towns in the ghetto. So, in 1942, they brought in some Jews from little towns. And that's when the ghetto got crowded. And that's when, you know, the rationing, it was, the situation got worse. That situation got worse. Now, while in the ghetto, there was always -- every day, everybody was taken to labor to work, different kind of places. And certain places, you know, you work so, sometimes, you got an extra piece of, you know -- there were some Germans that weren't too bad. They'll give you a little extra piece of bread or something. And some places were terrible. Some just, you know, people didn't want to go work there. They'd say, "They're sending me back to the _____." You know, and they'd beat you up; they'd kick you for any reason and nobody wanted to go work for them. And eventually, what happened, they had to be bribed. This liemeran (ph), you know, and it was in charge of the communication and telephone lines in, you know, the front was going on. And he was a terrible -- I mean the _____ of this man, Warren (ph) -- the terrible Nazis. And nobody wanted to go work for them.

Q: What kind of work did you do while you were in the ghetto?

A: In the ghetto? I was in the ghetto. I was assigned a job in the ghetto in the food department. But we would get, for instance, from flour. We would get not bread, we would get the flour to bakery _____. In the ghetto was a bakery. So they gave you so much flour as to bake, enough to make bread in the flour. So I worked, you know, in the hot. And a lot of the flour -- most of the time. In the beginning, I did go out, different type of work, working on the airport, or

assigned to different places outside the ghetto, so forth. But eventually I got a job inside the ghetto working for the -- they call it a _____, you have _____for the department [ph].

Q: And that was your job the entire time?

A: This was, yeah, I was working there until the ghetto was liquidated and I escaped. See, my brother had bought a place.

Q: Where did your brother work?

A: See, that's what I wanted to say. My brother had bought the place. That's what I want to tell you now. It's like coincident. When we -- we lived like a mansion outside the ghetto and we had a big house. And before the ghetto was established, it was a brother and sister from _____. And they got caught during the war in '41, I don't know, over in Prujena (ph). And they were -- they stayed, lived in our house. The sister was a teacher from profession, and he was an international lawyer. And he just got stuck in the ghetto and they couldn't leave. And he was assigned -- was given a special job because he's a lawyer and he spoke fluently German. And his name was Schein (ph), last name Schein (ph), so I thought, you know, nobody could go _____it is German. Now, the unirat (ph) -- now, eventually, the unirat (ph) heard about him and they gave him, you know, it was very important, so they gave him a big position in the unirat (ph) and he's like liaison. He was dealing direct with a unirat (ph), with a bergermeister, and with a chief of Gestapo. And anything, you know, anything again, that was one of the members, he had a very important

job. Now he assigned my older brother -- the bergermeister's wife, the bergermeister knew that a chorus boy, what do you call it? No, _____ were called chorus . . . a job.

Q: Chores. Help, they helped around the house.

A: Well it's something, we each have to pull, you know. I don't sleep late here. Help around the house for the bergermeister. So if we had _____ he's gonna send _____, my poor little _____ with a job. Now this was already in 1942 because the ghetto was established in 1941. Now this time, when it was assigned, already the youths in Prujena (ph) ghetto got restarting, thinking, organizing about some kind of resistance. We already knew that we heard all kind of stories. People were brought into the ghetto -- escapees from little towns where they told us, you know, what happened there and they just got -- by a miracle they escaped, because in the little towns, they just -- there were 50 families they killed and robbed -- just came out and killed them right on the spot. And somehow a survivor survived and one of them came and got in in our ghetto. Or even the Germans, many times, survivors, when they caught some of the survivors, when they caught some of the survivors, they used to bring them into the ghetto. So I was thinking -- I couldn't understand -- I was thinking and then, you know, it's telling the survivor, telling him what was going on. He says, "You know, the whole village was all -- they're all killed." And what's the purpose? Why are they dropping in the survivors in the ghetto? I mean, why do they surround them? Because it means -- Then I realize

that it's only temporarily. It must be temporarily. We heard from a lot of the Jews who were brought in, they had to march for, let's see, 50 kilometers vicinity. They didn't (ph) brought them in in trucks or something. And they just marched on the way. And they came in and eventually, if they'd make it, show them. And they came in -- you know, they were telling us, we heard, what was happening. We heard what was happening. They brought in from _____. And this one was saying, "My father, my child."Eventually, you know, was going around. We heard in ghetto all kind of stories about atrocities and things like that.

Q: So a number of youth decided that they were somehow going to get out of the ghetto.

A: With us?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, and so what happened -- yeah, I was speaking to my brother. So he was assigned this job and it turned out important job. We already started to thinking about organizing and either, you know, escaping or fighting or burning up the ghetto. Do something about it. Now, we had about 30 miles from the city, we're fortunate we had some forest. So what happened when the _____, they were taking from the ghetto men to work at different kind of jobs. Some were sent to work in the forest, to chop _____ for the Germans, just for week. It took, you know, 30 people. Fifty go into forest one time. Now, in the forest, they got in camp one of the troops, you know, there

was some we call it Mecadizans (ph), but it was already some Russians with them, came over and got in contact with us. So, you know, got in contact, so _____. What they do is they said, they was telling us, “Eventually, we’ll try and get some money. And we gonna take you _____.” But that’s the way it started in the beginning. We had a little, little, heard about the outside partisans. It wasn’t actually partisans yet. It was just gangs, groups. It wasn’t organized. So the groups were starting with thinking about how to get some arms. And I mean, initially, it was a problem. Now, my brother was influential, but because he worked for the bergermeister and because he was able outside, even though he was picked up everyday from -- the SS man used to come down and pick him up every day from the ghetto, from the gate of the ghetto, march him to the bergermeister’s. The bergermeister lived outside the city. And after work, bring him back home. And while being outside in working for the bergermeister, he had a little chance of being free. And there were certain Jewish _____ working outside. Like there were some warehouse; like I mentioned there was an airport not too far from the city. There were some warehouses the Russians left with ammunitions, the arms, ammunitions, and they took some Jewish workers to work in the places to pack it and crate it and stuff like that. So that’s the way it started at least. So when the group was -- you know, my brother was already -- those guys who worked had, you know, _____. Of course, who worked out there was very secret. They had to, somehow, steal some certain, at the outside, to hide it. But my brother was

instrumental. We built a sled with a double back and big one and he was able to -- the ammunition was outside the ghetto. _____. And we brought to the bergermeister himself. That's the story when I was 12. I was interesting. This is thanks to his wife, which persuaded him. She was little, you know. She was, once in a while, tried to help. And we asked her for little food and told her that _____ was sick and this and that. So she says, "Okay." She persuaded the bergermeister. We smuggled in the sled. That's the way we brought it. Then we were able to bring in the contraband _____.

Q: Were you able to communicate with anybody else out of the ghetto? I mean, family that might have been living in another town?

A: No, no. We had a hint. No communication. You couldn't communicate, you couldn't go. We had an aunt living, the only one that _____. It was about, maybe, 60 kilometers. You couldn't travel. You only could go to work. If you were assigned, you had to make sure you come back. You know, to be accountable. Going out and coming in.

Q: How did you get news from the outside world?

A: The outside world? We -- there was a secret radio in the ghetto. We had a secret radio. And we got some news mostly from the German paper. We used to steal a German paper and smuggle it in. We didn't get any other news from -- but news from the outside world, we got a Phillips (ph) radio, which we got from underground. We got some news.

Q: Would you like to tell me how -- how long were you in the ghetto, until when?

A: Well, I was in the ghetto -- the ghetto was established in September ‘41 ‘til January 27, 1943, when the liquidation started. And so, we were already organized a crew (ph) and we had already had contacted the outside. It took a little while. This was since we first met the connection with the outside partisans. In January 1943, when they started liquidating the ghetto -- it took them four days, so on the second night, we couldn’t get through the -- we had already, you know, the ammunition; the _____ were prepared. You know, where you know you have to fight through, fight through the _____. And so the first night we were unable to work through because a mob (ph) followed us in the ghetto. A mob, hundreds, you know?

Q: Did they know that you were. . .

A: They saw us going out and they followed us. So we couldn’t work through them. So they said we had a bomb to build. So we went back to the bunker. We had an underground bunker built.

Q: Where did you have that built?

A: We had it built on the outskirts. You know, one of the groups, members of group. _____ the one built a ghetto. But we didn’t have it ready yet. We was gonna build it and tunnel until we were ready yet for the tunnel. So we went back, we hide. We are sitting in the bunker, waiting another day, because we didn’t want to get, what you call it, discovered. Discovered. First of all, it’s not only that, it’s already we knew already _____ liquidating. But it’s not -- I mean, what could it be worse. But we just tried to get out. We tried to get out

because we had already ten men about and our organization was already outside the ghetto, in the woods. But they didn't mention since 19-- they left four months ahead of time. There were already several there. And we're contact for them and they were coming back and forth in the ghetto and telling us what to do -- organized, get more arms, try to smuggle more arms and this and that. So on the second night, we _____.

Q: I want to ask you, were there any deportations going on from the ghetto before they began to liquidate?

A: No, that was not deportations. As a matter of fact, they were bringing in, they were bringing in into Galvestok (ph) and Prujena (ph). There was no transport, no.

Q: And as they were liquidating, did they call certain people first? or certain groups of people? or how did they do it?

A: Well, yeah. When they started liquidating, they had divided in four quarters the city. In four corners, this was, you know, East, West, South, North -- each quarter a night. So they started I don't know exactly where, which were first. I know that my parents went the second night. That's all I know.

Q: And they just told everybody they'd get to march to come to another place?

A: Here, yeah. _____ were told, I know that because it lasted one day, you know, the first day, we know what is going on. It was panic. So, they came, the _____, the chief of Gestapo came into the the unirat (ph), they says that "You get you ready, you have to -- tomorrow morning -- get your most important

things with you, what you can take is just a back pack and most important things and be ready at 8:00." We didn't have a station or stand kilometers from Prujena (ph), the railroads. We didn't have the station near. We had to go -- we had a little, little -- there was a little railroad taking, you know, when you have to travel, taking you to the station from Prujena (ph). But they didn't -- they told us to be ready at the farmer's market, which is the center of the little town, you know. They call it a farmer's market. The farmers used to come down there with their products before the war. And that's where we had the -- my father had his store at the center of the market. And the farmers were all ready with their sleds -- this was winter time -- with their sleds, ready, lined up, all over, inside and outside the ghetto. And I know they were telling us that you were to be taken to work and you go into the city. Where? You'll be taken to work, you'll be okay. But I see how they taking women and the children and say the women and the children gonna get special places. They're gonna be near the husband, all this kind of _____.

Q: Okay. So could you tell me about your escape from the ghetto? First of all, how many people were in your group, altogether?

A: Well, you see in our group, there were 18 people and two women (ph). Now it wasn't actually allowed, the way I understood, that they say there is no women. The reason no women, we didn't _____ because it was, you know, wintertime, there was no chance anyway. We didn't know what was gonna happen. We just tried, well. "What can it be? Worse to worse, at least you fight

and you'll die as a -- what you call it -- human." And so the commander of our group, so of course, 18 and three is 21. And ten were already in the forest. And, eventually, when we came -- when we escaped -- now, the second night, we stayed, we came to the woods, we supposed to meet this crew because we're told where they're gonna meet us and all that. So we couldn't find them. Q: Now, I want to go back a little. You mentioned the escape. Now, the second night, when we tried to break through the steel (ph), you know, we were followed. Not so many, but I think maybe about 50 people: girls, young, older men -- and some of them were able to go through with us. And they survived. And we lost three, you know. Eventually, took about 5 minutes, whatever, you know, quick, you know, break through the wire and we let the women go first and we had two go through first. Eventually, we discovered when they started the patrol that going out and we start firing, so some got killed. I don't know how many, but we were able, I know, that we lost three men. And we were running -- it was a spot, you know, we went through a spot. It's just on the other side of the ghetto, already you've got houses, you've got bars, farmers, to -- as long as you get through and go through and get behind the houses and farmhouses, you know, in the spot so you can start running and get to getting away. So we were running, yes. And -- it wasn't a panic -- I would say each one was running different ways eventually, but we knew our destination. We knew where we were going. We got to reach a certain place, and that was a village. And from there, the village was burned up and that was because the chairman burned the

village out because a -- they already _____ some partisans there, Russians, fellow Russians (ph), so they burned the village out. So we knew that we gotta reach this village -- near this village, there starts the woods. We gonna meet this group, but we didn't meet them, so we didn't meet them. And we wandered around for a couple days and some the group, which, you know, those followed us, there were couple girls that, remember, they said they _____. You know, they couldn't take it, it's cold, bad. So they went back. They said, "We're gonna go back and be with _____." Well, we didn't know. You know, they said you were [going to] work. We didn't know exactly a hundred percent, you know. You're going to -- we didn't know it a hundred percent. So they went back and _____. That's what I heard later when I came back to Prujena (ph), that they got caught and though the farmers, not the Germans, the farmers, from the way they caught them. They turned them to the -- gave them out, turn them in to the Germans. I remember the Germans. They _____. So, eventually, we caught up to the woods with two other groups, each not knowing about the other.

Q: Were they Jewish groups?

A: Yes, in our ghetto, the same groups. See, it wasn't -- each group was working something individually. See, they're on their own because you have to be broken up in small -- you know, in the beginning -- eventually you can join one group. So I didn't even know about this group. So we met up with two other groups. One group didn't have -- they escaped some how, some way, maybe

threatened (ph), or maybe some how, or maybe they were not exactly -- or maybe someone tell them they were hiding in a hideout in a place ‘til the liquidation finished and then they walked out. But they knew, they heard, you know, by the woods there were some parties out. So somehow they reached. So we met up with two other groups. So we’re all together already at the time, consisted of about 50. But the other groups -- the other group had very few. Very few ammunition. Now it’s important to say out who, the 18. Now we were armed fully, you know. We had plenty in the contraband, but my brother -- of course I was outside the ghetto. It was secretly my parents didn’t even know about it. So the sled came and I -- you know, to the ghetto. The bergermeister brought it in. I had to take it into my aunt’s house to take it apart. “Oh, you got some food, good.” But you know, there was a lot of -- had to take it out and hide all this stuff, the contraband. So we had to time our group. But in the interview, when I was -- the hour struck, I think I mentioned, you know, when I was interviewed by the _____. They wanted to know exactly how much. So I think we had 11 rifles and we had a machine gun. We had about four of each one -- you know, hand grenades, _____. So it was pretty, pretty -- I didn’t realized how strong, how much ammunition compared with some other groups, compared with some of the groups, you know. Even in the worst ghetto, which they had to fight so hard to pay so much money to get a pistol. And then, you know, they called the Polish underground supports to give it to them and they’d even deliver to them. I went to, I think Zucherman (ph) when I was in lodge (ph)

at that time, because I was liberated 1944. The war was still going on in August -- in July that's gonna be 50 years. And I came to Bialystok, and Bialystok was already a temporary capitol, at least while the war was going on. So they established temporary for Polish capitol. Warsaw wasn't taken yet. And when I came in '44 in Bialystok, it was already Jewish organizations. And from the Jews, I remember from _____, from a _____. It was different, kind of, already, you know, there was already movement. And I still didn't know what happened to my parents. I still didn't know that there was a Auschwitz concentration camp. We didn't know, there is not a single -- I mean, being hidden in the woods, it's a partisans. We never experienced somebody from the Russian prison. Somebody should escape and come in the woods and tell us, "You know, there is a camp there, there's a camp there." But the rest, for two years, being in the woods. And the Russians, maybe they knew we were told of some concentration camps. That's actually what was going on. We knew about the gassing with the trucks business. We knew that because it started, eventually, the survivors came in some. Some escaped and they came in the Prujena (ph) ghetto. We heard about that, heard about gassing and professional killing. Killing, you know, they took you out to dig your own real wide and give you a grave eventually. We heard stories about that. But we didn't -- from the trains, I mean, total liquidation like that, I didn't know anything about it, because in _____ in 1940, eventually, when I was -- I was already in _____ when I came. When I came, it was in '45 and when the

war ended, the first survivors of the concentration camp, _____ girls who were from Prujena (ph), and I was there. And she told me that the Prujena (ph) ghetto was taken too harshly. And she's the one told me that one of -- she thinks that one of my older sisters was in -- the older, older, you know -- the sister, she would have been that time, she was about three years younger -- she saw her one time in Auschwitz so I began think she was picked out to work instead of going, you know, instead of going. But the other sister, my mother probably went to her. So in 1944 (ph), that's when I discovered.

Q: Was there cooperation between the partisan groups? Were there Polish partisans also in the . . .

A: Well, we had -- now, eventually, when we had to operate as a Jewish group for four months, this was -- that's where the woods stand -- because we already, like I say, we joined the two groups, we joined all together. And it -- I think it's a week later we met the other ten men, the other group -- which they were already "established" they called it. See, they were already established with a group from the Russian partisan _____, so they had already tunneled a hole, we call it. They already had food. They knew how to go about life, about to making a fire, about--

End of Tape One

Tape Two

Q: Okay. About how you were getting water?

A: So, as a Jewish group, we existed four months. And eventually, we settled down and jointly we went. We didn't do too much, I would say, like the Russian, they reward, what do you call it? And eventually we learned _____, _____, where Mumar (ph) established. And they were already taking part with the other Russians, and they, besides taking food already, they were doing, you know, cotton, or already doing certain, like cotton, cutting telephone wires -- it was the easy job, going out at night and cutting the telephone poles and telegraphs and all that. And we -- they helped us to establish bunkers and they helped us in the beginning -- it was not really the beginning, it was later on already, joined to help us go and get some food to the farmers. And we got, eventually, went in to farmers, you know, we got bread, whatever, you know, for certain amount of time. But we had bad experience 'til then, 'til in the beginning, you know, when we were on our own and we went out to get some food in the beginning and we were inexperienced and we had _____ arms, we were armed and we went to a farmer to, you know, like -- it's not in _____ in Poland, to farmers, it's a whole village farmers. It's like over here. They live it. They have their land and they'll spread it all around. They'll have their house and the, I would say, most of the food and all that kept in the homes. So they knew that we were Jews, but they looked at us pretty good as someone they knew. But they didn't have a -- you know, they looked, "Hey, he's got a rifle there." So we took whatever we could. And so, one time, this was a couple

weeks later -- fifty people, you know, you need a little food and then in order to -- we need certain tools. We didn't have any tools like shovels and picks and saws to cut kindling and make fires and all that. We didn't have that, we had to go get it from farmers. So they knew, they called us "the Jewish partisans" were here in the village. And the Germans, you know, when it comes to Jewish partisans, Jewish partisans, they were after them, because it was seldom here you were after hating (ph) all the Poles and the Russians and all kinds of Ukraines and all that, quite a few wasn't partisan. The groups -- they called them groups, like we were group -- each one fighting for each other. And they didn't bother them, they knew they were there, but they didn't bother them, they were afraid, they were afraid to go in. But the Jews -- so, somehow, we had already built a bunker and we had ten men went out to get the provisions to last for at least a couple of weeks so we didn't have to worry every day for this and that. It's unfortunate the farmers reported to the Germans and they came in with a force and they followed us and they said, "Hey, you're the Germans," you know, some men went out to lay, take a rest and all that. And those who were, about ten men in the bunker, slept. So they blew up the bunker. So we lost ten men. And we _____, we ran away, we stuck together, rifle. Whoever caught whatever you could, we ran away. And eventually, this is the only bad experience we had. We had some losses in fighting, you know, when we were fighting _____. And another bad experience, what I want to say is, those ten men, the first group, nine of them got killed, not by the Germans, but by partisans. I don't know what's the reason, we discovered it later, not much, you know. We discovered

they killed them either for their food or maybe they didn't, say --

Q: Other Jewish partisans, or was the. . .

A: The Jewish -- that's the Jewish group which left before us, yeah.

Q: And was it other Jewish partisans that killed them? or was the Soviet, Russian partisans?

A: No, that's the Russians, or the Ukraines, you know, where they were already not joining with them, but they were of course working with them. But they used to come quite often, even those from this group. The Jews with a couple of Russians come into the ghetto and the unirat (ph) requesting, you know, "Give us some money. We need some money because we want to buy this and that." The unirat (ph) didn't cooperate, and of course, you know that. You cannot blame the unirat (ph), but we were shocked to see him coming in, you know? What's gonna happen to the ghetto? This was while we're still in existence of the ghetto, still in existence. So they used to come in quite often. So we lost, I mentioned that we lost eight. The first brave men, they just killed them, I don't know what purpose. But eventually, so we existed about four months. And somehow, we got settled down, and we had already contacted with the partisans there, and we begged them, they wouldn't take us in, because they were -- they had already and they were well-armed and experienced. They always -- they promised, "You've just laid around. You haven't got enough arms yet to join our group." But they did help us out, for instance, to go and get some food. This was after the bad experience we had. They went with us. They knew already, so we never had any trouble after that. We always got food enough and

they used to help us with that. And we used to help them out. Then, they used to take some men from our groups with them, you know, to go and cut. They protected us. They gave us the sews (ph) and they gave us the cutters to cut the poles and cut the -- so we did that practically quite often, night after night, night after night. We used to cut the telephone and telegraph. This is about being an independent Jewish partisan group. In another instance, We did, we were able to go into the town of _____. I don't know, it's -- I forgot a little town I mentioned here. We went four nights and there was a station, a Gestapo station, we _____ and blew it up. And that's speaking about the Jewish group.

But later on, we were in the -- it's about -- this was in May, the order came, all the partisans asked to join together no more groups, no more bands. You didn't come here in the woods, you know. That came an order from the Russian command. They noticed that it was important jobs we are doing. So they dropped some parachutes, litter someplace from , you know. And we got all organized and for us was a blessing. So the jungle, the rule of the jungle, finally finished, and each one was assigned a time, I remember, all the young men. There was some recollection of women and children and older men followed _____ wives. They organized family, we call it brigades. It was fighting brigades and family brigades. And those -- even husband and wife, belonged to the family brigade -- see, we didn't separate it. So I was assigned at that time to the hero brigade, what you call it, fighting brigade. And it's the third platoon and then. . .

Q: How many people were in the brigades in the beginning?

A: In the brigade -- now, our brigade at -- it was the _____. I would say, you know I mentioned, we were all 50, then we lost 30 by the time we wind up. I think 15 of us belonged to the hero brigade. A lot of those with eh family went out with the families and they were safe it turns out. They were safe. We met and didn't lose a single person. We had to supply, protect them, supply them, the first thing they try. And see, my brother -- see, I was with my brother when the order came to the separation, you know. He was assigned to a different brigade and I didn't see him for all those years. I mean, I knew he's with a brigade that was not too far, but they operated in a different location. So eventually, after the war, that's all I heard from him. Now while being in the _____ brigade, now I was only, I was young, I was 20 at the time.. Most of the other groups were older. There were some younger ones. Those girls, and those who followed us, but actually, they didn't belong to our group. So they assigned me -- of course the brigade only had one _____. It was really heavy. They assigned me to carry the scab (ph). I don't know the true meaning, of course, _____. Well, it turned out for me very good because eventually I was trained to be the number one gun, you know machine gun. And I participated and I was the _____.

Q: How long were you in the woods?

A: Exactly -- well, it's about a year and half. From January 1941 to February 1944. I was liberated in June, a year and a half. After liberation I was assigned back, you know, we were liberated. And it's unbelievable, the way I saw the Germans marching in, the way I saw them at the trading gates. They seemed to wait, you

know, the way they were at training camp (ph). And we were stronger, really, at that time. We had brigades of brigades -- thousands of thousands of partisans already operating their -- some were assigned to fight, go back up the front for the Russians. I was sent back Prujena (ph). I came to my town. And I came to my house. And this is strange to get to my house, and the house was still in tact and I found somebody living in the house, a family, you know, I didn't care so much about the house.She was scared, she was scared and shocked, you know. And soon after that, my brother was in Galvestok (ph). See, he didn't come to Prujena (ph).

Q: He didn't come back at all, there? Or he just didn't . . .

A: No, he was liberated. He went to Bialystok. Bialystok was already Poland. And I was stuck in Prujena (ph), which was Russian, under Russian control. And I had a hell of a time getting out from Prujena (ph) because I had a letter from _____ that he was in Bialystok. So in order to get in, _____, he told me to Bialystok. I was, like I say, I was sent back to Prujena (ph), and the commander of my platoon, he was assigned back to come to Prujena (ph), that's why he took me back. A lot of them went back on the front, fighting back. So I was fortunate I wasn't one back on the lines. So then, there were about, I would say, seven, eight partisans from the old group went to Prujena (ph). And that's when, eventually, I met a doctor, what I said, it's a Nun (ph) and she got saved and she came back, went to Poland, but she was _____ in Poland, she came a little later, when it was liberated, she came back to Prujena (ph). And that's _____. And she treated us still like children.

Q: What was the feeling like those first days of liberation?

A: Well, the first day of liberation, of course it was a joyful feeling, you know. You can imagine how you -- you are already liberated. I mean, it's unbelievable. I mean, you couldn't imagine. We knew already that the front is moving and moving closer and closer and closer. And well, I have a feeling that my parents -- I had a feeling that the concentration camps, that they full and that something they went to, they went to slaughter.

Q: And when you got to Prujena (ph), what did you find? when you went to your house?

A: Oh, well. I came to Prujena (ph), I find my home in tact, and the farmer was like -- they were scared. I told them, "You can stay here. I'm not going to stay here, just give me a little room, somewhere to wash my clothes and all that. It was a family, a poor family, too, with a lot of children, maybe six, seven children. She tried to -- I'll never forget, she tried to cook me a meal. And all the kids were around. I think that maybe she gave me the last piece of meat which she had _____. I said, "Don't do this, I don't want it. I can get all the food I want." And the city, so what happened, eventually, we stayed there, in the group and eventually, some, a few came back to Prujena (ph). Some were able to, when the war broke out, to go east, to the Russian side, eventually, they came back and few people. And not young ones, a few older people. So, there was a community, I would say, of maybe ten or fifteen people. So I stayed there and for a little while. And I tried to get out. I had -- being in Prujena (ph), and being the commander, it was, you know, he was

with me. So, the first thing, he asked me if I know anybody who was from the corroborate (ph), if I know anybody still around who may have participated in the robbing and beating and stole food. And there was some -- Alicia (ph) was organized from Byelorussians. We didn't have the Lithuanians there. It was Belarus (ph), very few Poles. But actually, the others didn't trust the Poles. They brought in the Byelorussians, Ukrainians. They brought it in there. So, whatever I knew, you know, whatever I knew I told them this once. They were corroborated in there. And that -- they were sending them out to Siberia.

Q: And how long did you stay in Prujena (ph)?

A: In Prujena (ph)? I stayed, I would say. . . I came six months. Then I applied; I wanted to go back there. I wanted to go to Galvestokph (ph). And I told my commander to go, that I have my brother, the only one left, and he is in Galvestokph. See it was interest in me. He says, "You know, we gonna spend a plane, we gonna bring him to Prujena (ph)." So, can you imagine that. I want to get out. So he sent a plane, so -- I could have managed with him. I had a _____ tough time getting out of Prujena (ph). Eventually, it was changed the law. And Polish citizens in 1946 were able, even the year Prujena (ph) was under Poland, I was considered a Polish citizen, because a lot of _____ partisan were left. I was the first one getting out from Prujena (ph). Eventually, they came to United States in the '50s and says, "Yeah, thank God. It's here already." I mean, Poland was established, they were able. But I had a tough time getting out. So I came to Galvestokph in order to be with my brother. And we stayed in Galvestokph for a little while. I don't

know exactly how long. And that's where, I think, in Galvestokph, I was interviewed about being there. And we had already -- they helped us. There was no problem with food and housing and all that. And so. . . yeah. It's important, I think, that when I brought, you know, when I was liberated in 1944, I wrote a letter to my uncle in Syracuse -- I knew I had an uncle. _____ was the _____ manufacturing and recording (ph). So I send a letter out telling him, you know. And the letter -- they received the letter in 1945, in May. Can you imagine so long? And the time we told them the story about, we thought, you know, there's not survivors at all. Only, you know, which we knew of a few. We didn't think anybody survived. It turned out that eventually there was quite a few -- couple hundred -- survivors from Auschwitz from Prujena (ph). And I'm still in touch. A couple hundred.

Q: Are you in touch with any of the other partisans to this day?

A: Yeah. Now there's not too many left. _____ the partisans -- we all joined. You know, we used to go there at once a year in the old day, you had the _____ where they have from Prujena (ph) vicinity, _____ surrounding. So I used to go. THe old partisans would be -- concentration camp survivors, anybody survived by any other way and all that, so we get together. Yeah, I was in _____ ten years ago, especially to speak for them at the Northside to tell the story about the partisans. Yeah.

Q: I didn't ask you how you were liberated. How were you liberated? Who liberated you?

A: We were liberated by the Russians army. The Russian army liberated us.

Q: And how did you come to the United States?

A: Like a _____, I sent a letter. We were already in Poland and we were moving. We were constantly moving. The reason is I have to -- we followed, you know. We wanted to get in to the -- you know. When the war had been _____, the war was still going on. 1944. Then we went to _____. The war was still going on. It took a long time to take the capitol of Poland. _____. This was 1945 beginning. Anyway, when the war finished, we came to lodge. We settled in a lodge. And then we got an answer already from my relatives that says, "You know, we've been bombarding you with letters and you've been moving constantly. You have to settle down so we can make our papers for you." You know, this and that. "And you're moving. We one time got a letter from you from here, then you got a letter from here. We wrote you a letter here, you weren't there." You know, town by town, town by town. So eventually, we escaped to lodge. We settled in a lodge. When they told us to stay in lodge. "Don't move. Whatever you need, we'll send you. We'll send you money. We'll send you organization packages." So we settled down already and we stayed in the lodge. And when the war was over -- Now, at that time, it was a problem, too. "Are you gonna come to disarm America's army and to smuggle to the Russian's army." And we didn't have any passports. We didn't have no passports, no identification, nothing. You could tell them that you are a Greek Jew, so you're going to Greece. You are _____. You know, it's still -- where you knew the language, it was tough, but the _____ organizations, you know, they were trying to push the

time most of the people, the league will bring them to Palestine -- we didn't have a state yet. So, through the organizations, we smuggled through from Poland through Bratif (ph), went through Bratislava (ph), Czechoslovakia, then we went to Vienna, and some Greece. I know we had a group leader which is trying to bring us out -- we're the first ones -- bring us out to the Americans' army. So we came the Americans' army. And we settled to the beginning -- I think it was Feldefing (ph), I don't know if you heard about it. You know, it's a big, big camp there. There's a lot of survivors in the camp. And then from Feldafing, we moved -- see, my brother was already married -- he got married in Galvestokph after the war. By the way, the girl he married, the whole family survived. A farmer saved them, all that. This is all happened. We didn't seal the married; we still didn't know that beginning 1945, there was still concentration came Auschwitz. And we stayed about a year and a half -- I came in 1947 -- a year and a half, or maybe it was two years, from 1945, I came. I was there. I came in '47, you know, July and August, something like that. Two years. Couple of years. And I came right to Syracuse. Yeah, the family was good to us. In fact, we still live there.

Q: How did you find out what happened to the rest of your family?

A: How did I find out?

Q: How did you find out?

A: Well, I mentioned the girl, when I met the girl from Prujena (ph) in Galvestokph. She came, she was young. She told me -- she's the first one told me that Prujena (ph) was taken to Auschwitz, I know it's Auschwitz. And she told me that "I think I

saw your sister." But eventually, I was already in Prujena (ph) for after deliberation for months. And while being here -- I didn't mention to you -- while being in Prujena (ph), some from the concentration camp people came to Prujena (ph), beginning right after the war. And I wasn't in Prujena (ph) already. I told her, "Don't go over into Prujena (ph) because _____" She thought maybe somebody survived. So I didn't find out -- I know they went to Auschwitz. And if she's the one said, so maybe one sister survived for awhile, but if anybody out, you would know already. You know, all the connection and all that. So it's . . . Now, I can give you a little more, 'cause I didn't want to say that _____ about my father. Somebody said, "What happened to my mother?" I mentioned my mother there; I mentioned sisters there.

Q: Please tell me anyway about your father.

A: Yeah, so. See, with my father, I mentioned that my father was religious, was this and that. And it was _____working for the unirat (ph). And he told us boys, eventually, we were talking about, you know, eventually, we gonna do something, we not gonna go. We gonna do something. So he drew a map -- you couldn't have a map -- you drew a map, you know. _____ He says, "You are here. Here is Poland. Now, even where you want to go, you've got a single country neighboring Poland. Now, if you have country, a neutral country -- Sweden or Switzerland, anywhere -- let's presume you get out. But you haven't got a chance because the -- you have to go through so much and the Gentile, where were they gonna -- you know, they gonna find you and -- let's presume you have a place where to go, even you reach the destination." I says, "There is no outcome, no future. Loss. Not

much." So it's -- the unirat (ph), it happened. See, we got fooled in Prujena (ph) -- I said they started 1943, beginning in January. In September 1942, we are told to pack and get ready. It was called off. All the unirat (ph) was called off the same was happening. Somehow we changed. I don't know what the reason. Maybe the unirat (ph) paid off a little to figure, "Well, we'll get you later on." Because we heard already that _____ and Galvestokph in the late 1942 -- I have the book -- was already evacuated. So we heard, you know, Longshang, you know, we knew Prujena (ph) it's gonna come. It's gonna come because it's already, it's territory. And so the unirat (ph), part of the unirat (ph) decided to commit suicide. And they took -- the doctor was in unirat (ph) mansion, so she supplied the unirat (ph) with pills. But it was less successful. I think maybe one died. And, see, my father committed suicide. So that's when it worked.

Q: Okay.

A: Pardon me. Everyone was back here _____, where they chose to save cottage for _____. And happened the same time that my uncle -- we stayed already with my mother's sister. My uncle was killed by -- was stormed by the dogs. So you see, there was two widows. She had four children. And with eight children in one house, it was tough.

Q: How did your mother handle being in the ghetto? What was she doing in the ghetto?

A: Well, being in the ghetto, she managed, you know, managed mostly take care of the kids, whatever the best she could and make the best of it for the family. Let's

see, if the sister, the other one, little Maura (ph), she'll send them up here, so they're out of way. We managed, we managed somehow. There's no one in, I would say, the period of the ghetto that was complete starvation. I would say there was no starvation at all. There was diseases. Eventually, we heard about the diseases and a lot of things. But you don't malnutrition call it, but it takes a long time, you know, to die from -- I don't think you know what I mean. Take small and see, with it at least you have little food, it doesn't have little varmints (ph), you see people. So out in the concentration camps, look at the rationing they have and all that. And still there's some of them survived for a year or a couple of year. So you cannot complain. Cannot complain about that. It was -- you're hearing all the stories what's going on and it's not gossip -- certain gossip and all that. So you lived with it. Young people, you lived with it. Went out on the streets and all that.

Q: Was there any kind of cultural life going on?

A: Well, it was -- you had books if you can -- if you got books, you read books. And cultural life -- actually, you couldn't go nowhere. You got together in the house, something like that. And joke around and forgot. You didn't want to think too much about it. You didn't want to think too much about it. In my case, you know, I -- that's probably why I survived. And it's not, I wouldn't say, like Warsaw ghetto, you're here or there. Because it's a big city, Warsaw, with so many people. And a little town. Smaller ones, you know, you can manage. It was -- you know, there were_____. Once in a while you heard about a farmer -- somehow the cow went in, you know. Meat. You know, the cow went in, was smuggle in during the

night. Maybe they paid off -- I really don't know. It's possible they paid off the policeman by the gate who said, "Well, what the hell? We gave them -- at least somebody the unirat (ph)." The unirat (ph) was doing good work as a whole with work. You cannot -- well, you cannot blame the unirat (ph) for -- they discouraged. They knew they discouraged. But later on, if you did try to help us, but it was "See, they didn't join." Somehow was kind of late. And all, I think it's 22 eventually, all 22, because I read about it from the unirat (ph), went to Auschwitz and two survived from the 22. One was in United States and one is in Israel. So I read about them, too, about that. What they tell me is the unirat (ph) -- one was Segal. He was in charge of -- they call it foreign minister -- he was in charge of receiving those people in the ghetto. So I read something about they received the -- they was from Galvestokph, about two thousand people who came in in one day and the chief of the Gestapo called and "Well here. Here is your scheise (ph). You take them in." Exactly he explained to them, "Here is your scheise, you can take them in and run them down." And so, we didn't -- I didn't know what's going down or what, the way they tell the story. He tells a story about the operation of the ghetto, how they had to deal with this and this, and this one and this one. Now, I heard then the bergermeister eventually was caught and I don't know what happened to him.

But about my youth, I didn't tell you very much I think. You asked me, but. . .

Q: I asked you a little bit about the school and. . .

A: Yeah, I went to Strader (ph) and I went to school, public school, and the Russian school, and . . . I had a lot of friends. I didn't go out to play. I listened to the

radio. But, you know, I followed the rise of the Reich. And it bothered me.

Q: What was your family saying as the time, as it was rising? Was there anything . . .

A: Not much. Well, we were in Poland 'til -- no, you heard about the rising of the Reich. This was in the 1930s. You know, you try. After all, it doesn't happen to you. What you heard in youth, like -- it's actually -- well, you worry. You figure the world will come to that. But you heard about that. Well, it's still -- it's not a complete destruction. So walls went in. This went in. You know, like they say the walls in _____ where you're not supposed to walk on the sidewalk. Commonsense, you're not supposed to walk, you walk in the drainage and all that. So, I mean, it's embarrassing if something we figured, actually, it wasn't -- we lived under anti-semitism in Poland for a long time, but it wasn't just like that. But at least, you know, it was many times. You were used to it, to call you _____, in Polish "lousy Jew" or something. It's coming. Or _____, "Abraham." We were used to those kind of name calling and all that. But at least it's not no physical damage, physical damage done. So you can see that being, even being in the woods, you know, those gangs. We all fight. Can you imagine that? We all fight? That's the way sometimes people are and it's the rule of the jungle. I say the same thing. It can happen anywhere. It's a rule of -- you know, there is no rules for something like that, to educate.

Q: Okay. I think we have finished.

A: We're gonna build _____. What it means, a hiding place.

Q: Within the houses in the ghetto.

A: In the houses in the ghetto. Everybody. We build the same thing, you know, to last for the whole family. You know, in your mind, you figure, well, maybe -- this is -- you're still in the ghetto. You didn't expect, you know, the order of provision wasn't in yet, but somehow, the feeling was -- and people were supplying us with food for weeks. Some were, you know, big, big -- I don't know. We had, in the back, a little -- what do you call it? -- outside the house, a little storage space, whatever you call it. So I remember, too, you know. And I could build a little space down there, a little space -- not for the whole family, just couple of places just for us two, me and my brother. It was a panic building. And eventually, what happens, maybe the Germans knew. That's why every so often they changed the dimensions of the ghetto. Like, we had already -- in the beginning, it was easier to make an underground tunnel. It was easy then because, you know, it was allowed. Each wanted a little strip, you know, like the old people, the old time. The citizens -- like over here, you had a house and you had a whole lot of wind around the house. Each one made their own -- you had your own garden. You had your own vegetables. So you made -- you're putting them in the garden. You dig out and make a little, you know, and covered it. Make a little tunnel or something like that. And over here, some something -- how could you do that? So each one of the Germans -- they didn't come in in the ghetto. Only once in a while they'll come in to the unirat (ph) and give orders. "We need this, we need this, we need this and we need that." And a lot of them could be bribed. They could be -- I would say that every one could be bribed

for a little till, you know -- 'til the time comes because what's he got to lose (ph). I mean, it can be mad, it can be tough to you, but you know, the unirat (ph) gives you "Well, this has happened, you know?" I didn't tell you, you know they did to our rabbi? The rabbi of the city, you know, with a _____, a very famous rabbi. Now, took from the Leimans (ph), brought us, you know, the one we killed, the Leiman brother (ph), and he was such a tough cookie. Tough. Now, he took the rabbi -- came to his house and took the rabbi out and made him run -- take the towers. Said put the towers in the trailer and they made him run (ph). Eventually, you know, somebody saw him and reported to the unirat. And the unirat, somebody came out and they took him in, you know, I don't know, to bribe him. You want -- you know, a trick to take the rabbi in order to get a good bribe.

Q: Was the rabbi any kind of leader that the people listened to in the ghetto?

A: He was, yes. He was a leader. 'Til the ghetto was established, the rabbi, he was very famous. He comes, you know -- his grandfather and his wife comes from rabbi. It goes way back. Something from -- like you have the _____, started the well-known -- and eventually, it continued and continued. But it was a big heavy man. Now, he had a son and a daughter, so why? Because they were studying in Europe. YOu probably got paid pretty good. In those years, you know it was like over here. He probably managed to send the children out. They survived. I met the son, you know, way back, when they come into New York (ph). It was the same thing. I went to -- probably, he went to Auschwitz and survived.

Conclusion of Interview.