United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Zygmund Shipper
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PREFACE

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ZYGMUND SHIPPER
May 27, 2008

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Mr. Shipper.

Answer: Good morning to you.

Q: Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed with us today.

A: Now, it's a -- it's my pleasure and it's an honor to come to the United States, you know, to be interviewed. So, I'm only too pleased to be here.

Q: Well, we're glad to have you. Tell me if you would your -- the name you were born with and what town you were born in.

A: I -- my name is -- originally was Zygmund Shipper. Now it is Ziggy Shipper, you know, because in England Zygmund would have been a problem, you know, with pronunciation and -- but it was -- it's Shipper now and it was Shipper originally, except the spelling was different, it was S-zed-y-p-e-r and now it's S-h-i- double p -e-r. The reason, my wife decided when we got married, because when we had children they had problems at school, you know, is it Zyper, is it Zipper? So we thought the best thing is that we change the spelling, and we did. Now, I was born in a city, second biggest city in Poland, called Lódz, L-o-d-zed, and that's where I lived til I was deported from Lódz.

Q: And you were born in 1930, is that correct?

A: I was born, yes, 18th of January, 1930.

Q: And tell me a little about your parents.

A: Well, unfortunately my parents, you know -- I come from a very Orthodox family, Jewish Orthodox family and my parents were divorced and my mother left me with my father and my

grandparents. And with a Jewish family in the 1930's Orthodox, divorce was as bad as death, or even worse, you know. It was such a terrible thing for a Jewish family, you know. So as far as I knew, you know, after awhile, you know, I -- I thought my mother was dead, and I didn't see my mother and that was it. So I was just left with my grandparents, of course, and my father, which my father worked, so I didn't see that much of him either. But my grandmother, as far as I can remember, she was a wonderful woman and I owe her so much that I wish I could have told her that when I grew up, but unfortunately there was no chance of that.

Q: Yeah. Would you like to tell me your grandparents' names and where they were from?

A: My grandfather was Itzhak Szypers, he was from Lódz. My grandmother came from a place called Zduńska Wola, and her name was Esther Berger, before she has a ma -- her maiden name, before she got married. I had -- she had six children. Unfortunately, two of my aunts died well before the war. One aunt was left and I also -- my father had two brothers, which were in the -- with me all the -- well, not with me, but they were -- they were in the -- in Lódz.

Q: Mm-hm, so you had an extended family --

A: I had an extended family, yes, and my father and one of my uncles and my grandfather worked in the same business, they had their own business in -- import business of chemical materials. And the other uncle was an engineer, he had his own business, you know, he worked. So in a way, I think, from what I know now that we had a -- a reasonable comfortable life, you know, I -- I remember having enou -- my own bedroom, which is almost unheard. But I suppose because we lived in a big city, it was a second -- as I said, second biggest city in Poland, and you know, there was a million inhabitants before the war, and 25 percent, like 240,000 were Jewish people. I went to a Jewish school, you know, I -- it wasn't a cheder or a Orthodox school, it was a Jewish school, but we learned Hebrew much more so than -- we didn't learn the Bible or things

like that. Hebrew we learned and -- and all the other things that children of six, seven, eight learn, you know, it was -- it was almost a normal life I had. I don't -- after awhile I don't think I missed that I haven't got my mother, you know, really. I was -- maybe I was too young too, because my grandmother was -- was a -- certainly a very good substitute for a mother, you know.

Q: Was your grandfather working when you were small, too?

A: Yes. He was in the business with my -- where my father was there, and my uncle, the three of them worked in the business, you know.

Q: What was the name of the business, do you know?

A: Szyper and sin, you know. Father and son, the name of the father and just son, it's like it would be here Berger and sons, limited, that company.

Q: Mm-hm. They were importing chemicals for -- do you know what --

A: Yes, soda and those big bottles of -- of different acids and things like that, you know?

Q: Hm.

A: All I remember, my father had to wear goggles and gloves, you know, to protect, because it was coming on trains, you know, the -- their place was on a railway sidings. So they --

Q: They had a warehouse?

A: Oh yes, a very big warehouse, you know, and that's what I can remember.

Q: Right. And your school was all Jewish children?

A: All Jewish children, the school I went to.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: And did you like school, were you happy in school?

A: As far as I remember, yes, you know, I -- I -- I wa -- there was no choice anyway and at -- I think so. I -- you know, it's going back 70 years. I should imagine that I did like school.

Q: And -- and you were born in 1930, so you grew up throughout the 1930's in Poland.

A: Yes.

Q: Any -- anything remarkable that you remember in those early years before 1939 about your life, or was it just --

A: N-No, I mean -- I didn't come across -- you see, that's -- the thing was that the school was in the same building at -- where we lived, you see? It was a small school and so I didn't come across anti-Semitism as much as other children that had to go in the street in school and non-Jew, you know, Polish kids, so -- and they used to throw stones at them, and so on and call them names and there were always fights. I guess I wasn't out that much, only played in the yard with other children, even with Poles. Course, lots of times, you know, there were anti-Semitic remarks, but there -- it didn't mean that much to me, I didn't quite understand what it meant, you know, why are they calling me dirty Jew, or something like that. You see, which they did, you know, in Polish.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But it -- it -- I had no problems about, you know, possibly, you know, when you're six, seven, eight years old, I don't think any child has problems, they just fight. If it wouldn't be with them, most probably they would have fought amongst each other, you know, whether were they Jewish kids or non-Jewish kids.

Q: Yeah. Did you ever travel anywhere?

A: Ah, no. I have -- the only place we went, we -- we traveled to a place called Columnow, which was sort of a s -- not a seaside because we weren't on the sea. You know, there wa -- there

was a lake and you know, and I remember going swimming, you know, we went away, sort of. I don't know what month it was, whether it was July or August, because Poland gets very cold in the winter, but very hot in the summer, you know, and I remember going there as a child and having a good time, you know? I -- on the whole, I think I had a good life, you know, til 19 -- til September 1939, you know.

Q: Did you live in a part of town where there were mostly Jews then?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No, I lived in a -- in one of the main st -- roads in -- in Lódz, you know, it's funny enough, I went to visit it first time I went back to Poland. And even -- it was a nice apartment and i -- ik -- we even had a -- we lived on a second floor, we -- as I said, we -- I had my own bedroom, you know, and we had a balcony, you know, and -- you know, even when I showed it to my daughters when I went back to Poland, I couldn't believe it, you know, I mean, because, you know, everybody -- well, not everybody, most people I s -- in England, and I don't know how it is in the U.S. think that everybody lived like "Fiddler on the Roof" in a little shtetl. It wasn't, you know. Warsaw, Kraków, Lódz, you know, they were big cities, and you know there were -- there were poor areas, naturally, and there were sort of not so much affluent areas. But there were the areas, you know, which all apartments. There was no small houses or something like that, that was all apartments. But I mean, you know, it -- it is just unbelievable. When I tell my friends, they don't even want to believe that we had a telephone.

Q: Really?

A: You see, I-I'm -- not that I spoke on the telephone, I'm sure I wouldn't know how to dial it even, you know, and --

Q: Yeah.

A: So it was -- it -- it -- as I said, I think it -- we had a good life, as I had a good life as a child.

Q: Right.

A: Had wonderful gr -- well, parents almost, they weren't parents, but grandparents. As I said, my father I didn't see that much, you know, because he worked all day and I suppose he had his own life to lead. But he knew that he left me with good -- and so I s-suppose my mother must have known that she is leaving me with -- you know.

Q: Did your mother ever come back to visit?

A: My mother came back once, and I still remember that. I don't know whether I was six years old, five years old, you know, don't know exactly. And I c -- I wouldn't go to her and I screamed. I even hit her or scratched her or something like that. I -- I just -- I don't know why. You know, today I think back, why did I do it, I --

Q: Did you know who she was, or did --

A: No.

Q: You didn't know.

A: I didn't know who she was, but she says I'm your mother and maybe that's what -- you know, maybe I thought how could you be my mother if my mother is dead, you know, and so on. I -- you know, I tried to analyze it -- I did years ago to analyze it, which you can't, you know, but no, I wasn't happy to see her and when she left I didn't -- didn't mean anything to me, I mean, she left and I think that's it, I'll never see her again, and --

Q: Did you know -- was there -- do you know why she left? Did you ever hear --

A: No. It's -- it's one of my regrets, you know, that I never knew why she left, you know? I -- look, when you sort of -- especially when you grow up and you're 13 - 14 and you see other

people with mothers and fathers, you know, and -- and you think to yourself, how could she leave me? But of course you get older and you realize things are not that simple, you know, that there must have been a good reason why she left.

Q: Well tell me now about the late 30's and -- and how did you notice things starting to change in your life?

A: Well, in -- in about 19 -- I would say 1938 there was a lot of talk about war. You know, eight year old boy, I mean, what did I know about war? I didn't even mean -- didn't realize what it means there's a war. And they said, you know, Germany and the Germans will come in and they -- I [indecipherable] and this was carry on like that til 1939, you know, and then 1939, you know, in September '39, one morning I was in bed, you know, my father came to me and he said he has to go away. And I said, why are you going away, you know? So I says -- I thought to myself, now here a mother I haven't got, now I won't even have a father. Oh no, he says, don't worry at all, I'll be back within six months because there's going to be a war and the German armies are going to invade Poland and the first thing they will do is take all the young men away, you know, but you and your grandmother and grandfather and the children a -- they will -- won't touch them, it's only the young people. Of course, he couldn't have been more wrong, but nevertheless he left and I never saw my father again. He run away to Russia and I suppose conditions in Russia were not that good either because at that time the Russians already were together with the Germans, they split up Poland in half, you know, some part went to Russia and so on. So he decided to come back, and he managed to get to Warsaw, because Warsaw was by then -- the whole of Poland was already occupied by the Germans or by the Russians. But Warsaw was a occupied part of Poland by the Germans. Lódz was part of Germany, they annexed it. That's the Third Reich. So he couldn't get back to us, you see? But that's what I had found out, later. But

’39 when he left, you know, and within a few weeks, of course, the German armies came in and things completely changed straight away.

Q: Do you remember that, when --

A: Oh yes. I remember certain things, not everything. I-I -- I hadn’t seen it, but everybody was talking about it, first of all, as soon as they came in they destroyed most of the synagogues in -- in -- in Poland, in Lódz especially, you know. And -- and you know, to -- to a -- to a child, even nine year old, you know, being brought up as -- in a very Orthodox family, you know, to destroy a synagogue is -- is the most terrible thing that could happen. But of course everything changed, you know. We -- we weren’t allowed to travel on normal transport like on trams. We had trams in Lódz, we couldn’t travel on trams. I found out because I never traveled on trains, you know, but you couldn’t travel on a train. Jewish doctors couldn’t practice medicine, Jewish teachers couldn’t go to school. And of course, there was no school, you know. I left school when I was -- in June. That’s where they had stopped it in -- in Poland at the time and I was about nine and a half years old, and I never went back to school. That was my education in life. And every day different things happened. I mean, ya -- you know, we couldn’t -- we weren’t allowed to walk -- not that people came out of [indecipherable] they were too frightened to come out, but you know you’ve got to eat, you’ve got to buy food. And food was scarce because Jewish shops weren’t opened, they closed them up. We weren’t even allowed to walk on pavements, you know. But of course children like my age, you know, we got away with it, we walked. But the thing was, you know, they called a je -- a -- a Jewish man, you know, with the long beard, which they knew he was a Jew, you could recognize the Jewish people that were Orthodox, especially in -- in Lódz. They used to -- first thing they did, you know, took out the beard off and I -- and I asked why are they doing, you know, I didn’t ask the Germans, I asked my grandmother, why do they do that?

They said, purely to humiliate him, you know, because they know it's the most terrible thing to have that beard cut off. And then they made him wash the pavement, for no reason at all, just to degrade him, to humiliate him, to -- and you know, you're not even 10 years old, you cannot understand why and you keep asking question and there is like always, there's -- there's no answers why.

Q: Did anything like that happen specifically to your grandfather?

A: No. My grandfather didn't go out, you see, and he was at home and food was very, very scarce and he was getting weaker and weaker and -- and -- because he wouldn't eat that food that wasn't kosher and kosher food was almost impossible to get. So he lived on bread an-and potatoes and things like that, you could still get some. But it was getting more and more difficult and then they decided, you know, to recognize every Jew that is not recognizable, we have to wear a Star of David and in -- in some places, like in [indecipherable] they used to wear one in the front. We had to wear one in the front and the back so that the minute th-they saw you they -- they knew who you were, so you get beaten up, especially the older people, not -- you know, and the children started stealing food wherever they could, you know, to bring home.

Q: Did you do that?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Was your grandmother then going out to get food or try to find food --

A: Yes, when she --

Q: Yes.

A: -- had to, I -- there was no choice.

Q: And would you with her when you --

A: I don't remember me ever going with her, you know, but we were out, you know. When I say stealing food, there was a lot of trees with apples and pears and plums and things like that, you know, whatever there was at that time of the year. You know, we used to go and st-steal and we used to get beaten up, but you know, but when you s -- nine, 10 years old, it's -- it's a game more than anything else, so we didn't mind, you know, we got beaten up, so we went next day again an-and bring home something, you know, and --

Q: So she didn't try to keep you in the house?

A: Not that I can tell. I'm sure she tried, but you know -- you know what that 10 year old child is, it's -- you know, he goes anyway, you know. She turns around and he's out, you know, it's -- and that's what I did, you know. A-And then it's by November of 1939 we were told, you know, I -- I was told by my grandmother, you know, we've got to leave our apartment. We've got to move to a certain area of Lódz, which was the poorest area of Lódz, which was called Baluty, you know, it's funny enough, a lot of Jewish people lived there before the war, you see. And of course, a lot of Polish people lived -- now the Poles had to move out of their apartments and we had to move into theirs. Now, the Poles were very happy about it, because they moved into a good area, a nice apartment, nice furniture, because we couldn't take much with us, you know, and out of the three bedroom apartment we had with a bathroom, you know, a -- we managed my -- and I had an aunt also living with us, and the four of us moved into one single room on a second floor in a -- in a tenement building with stone steps. And it was already November, it was getting very cold. In November it's full blown winter in Poland and no running water, no toilet or everything. And the four of us had one single room, no kitchen, no nothing, you know, and --

Q: Do you remember going there?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember how -- how was your grandmother and grandfather, how were they notified and -- and do you remember that moment when they were notified?

A: No, no. All I remember is going on a horse and cart, you know, with a bit of things we had to take with us, you know, we've -- I don't -- I don't even know how we found it, that -- that apartment, but all I remember is living there.

Q: And did you go -- was it far from where you lived?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And you had to go across town?

A: The other side of town, right across town.

Q: Did you go with other people, or do you remember seeing people on the streets?

A: Oh yes, there was a whole lot of people going all the time, from morning til night, moving there. I don't even know how we found, whether we were offered that place, or we were allocated that place. I don't know, that I cannot remember. Maybe I was too young to -- to know. But I know where it was, I remember the name, the street, the number, the second floor, and --

Q: What was the street?

A: Limanowskiego 26. And it was, the thing was, you see, by April the whole -- everybody in Lódz had to be -- if he was caught outside the ghetto, he was shot. So by that they surrounded with barbed wire. They had -- we had our own Jewish police and a Jewish sort of committee, government thing with a -- with a leader of that. His name, I'm sure you know, was Rumkowski. And -- but the street where I lived they had a problem because how would they go from -- the Germans or the Poles go from one side of town to the other? So two streets were blocked -- were -- the actual road was outside the ghetto with barbed wires. And for us to cross -- we had the bridge, or two bridges to cross from one side -- because I worked on the other side, we had to

cross on a bridge. So they -- which was, in a way for -- for us it was lucky, because what was happening, when lorries with food and potatoes or carrots or something, they weren't in sacks, they were loose -- or they [indecipherable], so, you know, you soon find ways, so we had long wires and we used to try to hook them onto the lorries when they were passing, or a horse and cart, and move that thing and they fell down and eventually we could get some potatoes or whatever was on the [indecipherable] we had -- we had to try to steal things. But the worst thing was, winter came and you know, we had to go downstairs to fetch water, you know, to pump actually water and to carry up [indecipherable] and that I still remember. I remember falling down because it was all frozen, you know, and it was slippery from the water, you know, and --

Q: And that was your job, to go get the water?

A: Well, it wasn't my job, but somebody had to do it. My grandfather could -- certainly couldn't do it because he was already too ill and, you know, within a very short time he died, in 1940. And purely from -- from -- I think he had a broken heart because he was so religious and he so had -- even -- even the rabbis came and they said, you know, you can eat anything, because you know, life is more important than anything else. But he wouldn't and he -- he died from malnutrition and -- and everything else. So it was just left my aunt still there an-and she died soon afterwards as well, and it was just my grandmother and I, and then they said, you know, we each could get the ration card, but you had to work. If you didn't work, you didn't get the ration card. I was about 10 and a half when I started working in a metal factory.

Q: Before we get to the metal factory, tell me something about when your grandfather died. Did -- did you take him -- there was a cemetery?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Oh yes.

Q: And --

A: There was a cemetery in -- which is even there today. You know, there was a cemetery just a -- just outside but it was still in the ghetto.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Right at the end of town, there was a Jewish cemetery there. Because as I said too, you know, before the war there was a lot of Jewish people living in that area, in the poor area, you know, and of course so they had a cemetery.

Q: And did someone come and get his body and take him there --

A: Oh yes --

Q: -- or did you have to do that?

A: -- yeah, it was a proper, it was a proper -- at that time still, in 1940, yes, proper --

Q: So that --

A: -- everybody that died in the ghetto was buried there.

Q: And then there was a service of any kind?

A: That I don't know.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I honestly don't remember a servi -- I'm sure there must have been something, and as I said, I -- one of my uncles was in the ghetto. You see, my father wasn't, but one of my uncles was in the ghetto, so I'm sure he was there that could say kaddishim, you know, but I don't remember it. I -- I certainly wasn't at the funeral. Why? Because I would say the first time I went to a funeral was in -- in London, in England. So I am sure I wasn't.

Q: You weren't.

A: I would have remembered.

Q: Yeah. But -- so it would have been your grandmother and your aunt, maybe.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Would you tell me your aunt's name so we --

A: Genya Szyper.

Q: Genya. And how was she related to your grandparents?

A: She -- she was a daughter.

Q: Oh, your father's sister?

A: Sim -- a sister, yes, as I said to you in the beginning, there were three sisters, two died before the war, and one remained, and that was the one that remained.

Q: And she was single?

A: Single, yes.

Q: Yeah. Younger than your father?

A: Yes. She was the youngest in the family.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you know how old she would have been, ro-roughly?

A: I honestly don't know, but she must have been pretty young, be -- I know my father was born in 1900, and that means he would have been 40 in -- when I was in the ghetto with my aunt and my grandparents at the time. So she could have been -- she must have died when she was about, I don't know, 38 or something like, I do -- 35, you know --

Q: And -- and you think it was also malnutrition like your grandfather?

A: Malnutrition also, and I remember she had a boyfriend. I remember then, as a young kid like that, I remember she had a boyfriend and then they split up, something, and she was also -- I

don't think she wanted to live, you know. The circumstances we lived in, you know, and she had nothing to live for, you know, and -- and -- and unfortunately she also died, and -- and --

Q: That winter?

A: Winter, oh yes.

Q: The first winter?

A: Oh yes, the first winter, yes.

Q: Your grandmother must have been a strong person.

A: She was, you know, I mean you've got to remember women in -- in Poland and Russia and eastern Europe, you know, before the war, they were hard working. When I think back, you know, to bring up six children, you know, without -- without help. We had no maids or help. You know, to bring up six children, to -- to cook and wash and as you, I'm sure you know, in Poland, you know, a lot of food, you know, you made yourself. You didn't go to shop to buy you know, you know. Like vermicelli, you know, [indecipherable] you know, you -- you made yourself. I remember that. And -- and even the challahs, you know, you baked yourself, and you know, I just -- and I -- all I know is I think my -- my grandmother already had the first child when she was 16 years old because in them days in Poland, when you were 20 and you weren't married, you were already on the shelf, you know, it was a stigma. How come you don't just -- not married, or something like that. So no, she -- she must have be -- you wouldn't, if you looked at her, and I look at her picture now and I think she couldn't have been that strong, but she was.

Q: We need to take a little break and change tapes.

A: Yeah.

Q: And we'll come back in a minute.

A: That's quite all right.

Q: Okay.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: W-We were talking about your grandmother before we took a break and I -- I just want to ask you one other question about her. W-Was she -- did she -- was she optimistic in any way? Was she giving you hope throughout this period, and was she the strong one in the --

A: It was -- absolutely, she was -- she -- she never thought oh, we'll get killed, or we will not survive. It was always, I don't know, I'm sure she didn't believe what she was telling me, but she always, oh, it won't last long, it'll get better, and so on. And I think this is also a Jewish trait, you know, of it'll get better, don't worry, you know, an-and the usual thing you know, with Jewish people, you know, next week, next -- you know, and -- and God will see to it and so on and so on. No, she was -- she wa -- I don't know, like I said, whether she was optimistic or she was just talking to me as a child, you know.

Q: Right. When you were in the ghetto, you got a job in a metal factory.

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah, tell me about that job.

A: It was -- we were producing all different things for the German war effort, you know, an-and there were different groups. I was assigned to a group that we were producing little metal things that were going onto shoes, you know, so that the soles, and you know, and -- and the heels, to last, there were some little s -- round things to put on the soles so that they should last, the shoes should last longer, you shouldn't wear them out as quick as that. So it was two of us, one was putting things into a wooden things, six of them, and the other one was making holes into them, you know what --

Q: With a -- with a press?

A: With a press, yes.

Q: Yeah. You were 10 years old.

A: I was 10 and a half, you know.

Q: Mm-hm. Is that --

A: You know ac -- you know, ya -- this you get sa -- no, it wasn't a question that I a -- I had to work because if I didn't work then there was no ration card, there was no food. Whatever little food we had, I had to obtain on my ration card. At work we worked like six days a week from what, I don't know, seven to seven or something, and there was nightshifts as well, which I didn't work and lunch time we used to get a soup and -- to keep us going and so on, and I had a very good man that I worked for, that he was the boss of the group of about, I don't know, 20 or so. And he was very good, he tried to look after me for a certain -- to a certain extent, you know. When he thought that I -- I can't do it, you know, because I'm so tired, he says go underneath the bench and sleep for an hour and so on. Because there was no -- we weren't surrounded by Germans, you know, it was all done by Jews. Everything was Jewish, you know, whether it was doctors or hospital, or whatever, you know. But unfortunately, the food that we were -- were getting, even with the rations, every month, you know, it got worse and worse, or less and less, and people are dying of malnutrition and -- and of course, frost and -- it was that cold. You know, when the summer came, of course it was a bit better. But every morning we used to go to work, and -- you know and we were -- had to step over dead bodies, cause they didn't have a chance yet -- they had a special group of people that were taking the bodies away and then taking it to the -- I suppose there were mass graves, you know.

Q: You mean -- are bodies in the street?

A: In the street, yes, we had to just go walk over them almost, to go to work, and you know, you get so immune, you know, that you just don't care any more.

Q: And where -- where was the factory? Where did you go to work?

A: The factory was about on the other side, as I said to you we ha -- I had to cross the bridge and it wasn't that far, it was about 20 minutes, half an hour to walk to the factory. It was a very big factory.

Q: Did your mother go, or I mean, your grandmother go as well?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. She --

Q: Did you go by yourself? You walked --

A: -- I -- yes, oh yes. I -- you were quite safe, you know, as far as walking in the ghetto, you know, you had no problems there, you know. But unfortunately, you know, it's -- it's the -- the main thing there was the food and -- and the conditions we lived in. And, you know, by the time we -- we went into the ghetto we were about 150,000, eventually finished with 70,000. But people were dying. Also people that were coming in and sending -- they said we need 5,000 people to go out to work, you know, in -- in labor camps. Which wasn't true, we found out later because the people that were taken, you know, they were like -- but the problem was they took people out so that you thought there was more room. But then what the Germans did, the S -- the Nazis, the SS or whoever they were, they were liquidating all the small ghettos because they said it's useless having more guards to guarding small ghettos, we'll take those people and send them to the bigger camp -- ghettoes like Lódz or Warsaw or whatever there was. So every time they sent people in, you know, from other ghettoes, so it was -- it was never enough room for people to -- to -- to exist, to live, to --

Q: Did you n -- did you know that at the time, did you know that people were coming from other ghettos? Were you talking to people, or --

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, they sat and you know, they told us how bad it is there. They didn't realize how much worse it is in our ghetto, because Lódz was -- Lódz and Warsaw was one of the worst ghettos in Poland you know, because [indecipherable] was -- a small ghetto was not, but we were so overcrowded, you know, and -- and like I said, overcrowded. In the winter it was cold, in the summer -- I don't know what was worse, because disease in the summer was worse, you know. Luckily that -- that at least we had enough water to wash.

Q: And how was your health? Did you get sick?

A: Well, as far as I know, all the years I was in the ghetto, I wasn't ill. I had no problem with illness. I was problem with lack of food. I was -- you know, i -- hunger is a funny thing. It doesn't matter how much you eat, you're still hungry, because it's all in your mind most of the time. You know, even when I had -- when we used to go out sort of near the outskirts of the ghetto, you know, and there was some stuff we could steal, you know, and -- so we used to go, a few of the kids used to go out and you know, then we were either at the borders, you know, of it -- of -- where the barbed wire, you were hit by the Germans, or the Jewish police culture, you know, we were sort of -- have the -- our jackets or shirts inside the trousers, so that we could put the food away there and they caught us, they just opened it up and the food came out. We got a good hiding and we run back home and that was it. But then -- but they didn't stop us going again, you know. But if -- there were times, of course, that we managed to get home with some

food and we had so much food, and -- but we were still -- it doesn't matter how much we had, we were hungry.

Q: Yeah. In the Lódz ghetto they were rounding up children too, weren't they?

A: Well yeah, of course.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, but the worst thing was -- you see, was in -- I think it was 1942, the Germans decided they need 10,000 people, you know, a day or something like that, something -- an enormous amount of people --

Q: Right, yeah.

A: -- and they'll do it in a week and they'll take them away, so most of the people they would have taken away. But I asked the -- which I don't think it could have been 10,000, but they said -- the Jewish police have to go and give them every day so many people to bring out. But of course they came to the -- to the Jewish homes and they got beaten up by the people. Nobody would have given away people, you know, nobody would go. And then the Jews -- so the Germans said there is no way they can do it, so they said they are going to do it themselves, and --

Q: Did they ever come to your place?

A: Oh yes. Not the Jewish police, I don't remember them coming, but the Germans said right, we're going to do it systematically, nobody's going to work for a whole week. And from Monday onwards, you know, they went from street to street, house to house and everybody had to come down and they took people away and they said they're taking them to work. But you know, as young as I was, you know, I -- I realized, you know, you don't take people to work that are disabled people, old people, women and children. And my grandmother was hidden

somewhere and I went down and they took me, they slung me on the lorry and it was a similar scene, funny enough, like in "Schindler's List." And I -- I don't know why it was so bad and I was alone, I s -- I would have thought why did I want to escape? Maybe because I thought to myself I'll be alone and I wanted to be back with my grandmother and I jumped off the lorry. And the Germans were inside the yard, you know, had they stepped out they would have seen me, they would have shot. I'm sure they would have hit me because I wouldn't have been that far away. Anyway, I -- I was lucky once again and I run and I hid myself in the house and I stayed there for hours. And I remember a distant cuz -- well, it -- a distant cousin came and he also escaped, also jumped off the lorry and he escape and I remember -- I remember like today and he says, come on, let's go home, cause we lived in the same sort of block or yard or something. And I started screaming at him, I was in such a state, you know. Eventually, of course, I did. But the funny thing was, it --

Q: What did you scream?

A: I just screamed at him that why he said to me we should go back home, I was -- I don't know, I was -- my mind was completely -- I was completely confused, you know, and -- but a funny thing happened that that boy, that cousin of mine was the only one of his family that survived, and not so ma -- and he was very religious. And -- and he became the chief rabbi of Poland. About 10 years ago he was a -- or 15 years ago, a chief rabbi of Poland. He lived in Jerusalem, but --

Q: What was his name?

A: Joskovich. And anyway, I went back and after awhile things went back to as it was, you know, my grandmother came back and --

Q: Where had she gone?

A: She went to hiding somewhere, I don't know where.

Q: You don't know where? Not in a building?

A: No, it must have been from my uncle, you know, I don't honestly know. May -- could have been in a basement somewhere.

Q: But when you -- when they took -- came to take people away, she was -- she was gone?

A: She wasn't there, she was gone, you know, she sha --

Q: And you had come home and found that she was gone?

A: And -- no, she wasn't there, but I knew she was in hiding.

Q: And why didn't you go to hiding?

A: I -- there was no way I could go, for some -- I don't know what the reason it was, but I wasn't -- I didn't go into hiding and --

Q: And the Germans came and physically dragged you out?

A: Oh yeah -- no, we had to go downstairs, they didn't come. Everybody had to leave and they searched the rooms, you know, and downstairs they said they just picked up people and -- and -- and I saw women, children, disabled people, it's not -- something is not right, and this was the reason it made me jump -- jumped off the lorry, and you know, and -- and we found out later, you know, we never had all those people again, so we knew that they were -- where they were taken I don't know, but they were certainly -- at that time there was no Auschwitz yet -- you know, I mean there was Auschwitz because Auschwitz was built much earlier, but it wasn't built for Jews, it was built for Polish prisoners of war, you know, and certainly Birkenau wasn't in existence. And you know, in -- within two days we went back to work and we carried on and -- and things got worse and worse and worse, til it carried on like that til 1944.

Q: Two -- three years.

A: Mm -- well, I was -- from 1940 til 1944, you know, was --

Q: Right.

A: -- April 1940 the ghetto was shut, you know, and it's liquidated in autumn of 1944.

Q: Were there other deportations that you escaped? I mean --

A: Not from Lódz, no. I never escaped another deportation, Lódz or otherwise, you know, it -- but when they liquidated the ghetto it was automatically -- but where I was -- you see, I -- I don't know, in my life I always seem to have been lucky. And were -- the factory that I worked for, the metal factory, when we -- the Lódz ghetto was liquidated because they said the Russians are getting nearer, and we've got to -- they're going to send us to working camps inside Germany, and so street by street, day by day, they were taking away peop -- people had to report to the railway station and they were allowed to take one suitcase. They said when we get there we get more clothes and all the rest of it. But me, they didn't take -- they didn't tell us to come from the house where I lived then, but from the factory, because I said they were going to take us to Germany and we're going to work in a metal factory there. Which the funny thing was that it was true. We didn't reach Germany to work in a factory, but that was the intention.

Q: This factory -- the fellow you mentioned who ran the factory, say his name, because he was very important to you.

A: Well, th-the man that -- that saved my life --

Q: Yes --

A: -- twice --

Q: Yes.

A: -- you know, he saved my life, his name was Zilbershatz. And also a funny thing that a nephew of his is a friend of mine today, he lives in London, you know. And the man also

survived the war, the one, Willie Zilbershatz, he lived in Israel. Unfortunately I never managed to see him because by the time I went the first time to Israel, he was -- he died. But I am very much in touch with his nephew and -- you know, and --

Q: Did you know very much about him before he had this factory in the ghetto? Did he --

A: Well, he didn't have a factory, he was just in charge of that group. It was a very big factory. It was -- somebody else was in charge of the whole factory, his name was Hemovich.

Q: I see, it wasn't his factory.

A: No, no, no, it wasn't his factory, it was -- it was nobody's factory, it belonged to the ghetto, you know, it belonged to the Germans really. I don't know what it was before the war, whether it was a factory before the war and who owned it.

Q: So he was the manager.

A: He was the manager and you know, they had groups, managers of each, you know, like 20 people worked in one group and -- and that man Zilbershatz was in charge of that group that I worked for.

Q: Was he a young man? He --

A: Yes, oh yes, he must have been about 30 at the most, you know. You know, to me he wasn't a young man, you know, and I -- I was 10 years old, 11 years old, 12 years old, a -- he wasn't a young man, you know, but he was a very young man.

Q: And there were times when he saw that you were tired and he let you rest --

A: Rest, oh yes.

Q: -- were there other children? Were there other children working there?

A: There were a few other children. I d -- I don't remember whether the others, you know, I -- I ha -- I don't know what it is, but I -- I think I've always had a -- in Yiddish they would say

chutzpah, you know. And I still have. I'm 78 years old and I still have a chutzpah today, you know. And I think I get away with many things which others might not have got away with them. So he was very good to me as that was, you know, and there were some good people there. Not many, but there were some. It's -- it wasn't a question that a -- I mean, people become very selfish, you know, everybody wants to live, so why, if he's got something more than you, why should he share with you, you know? You gotta be a real great person to do that, and you know, not many people are around like that, to share their last piece of bread or something, you know. But there were some, and I came across them.

Q: So tell about when the n -- when in '44 they liquidated the ghetto.

A: Yes, they told us that we're going to Germany, and that we're going to build the factory. And again we had to get just one suitcase, and I went with my grandmother to the station. She also came -- as I was in the metal factory, she came with my group, as a group. And we went to the station, reported to the station.

Q: She didn't work in the factory.

A: No, she didn't work.

Q: So that you --

A: But nevertheless, she came with us, you know.

Q: They allowed -- so this was the manager --

A: Yes, well, they allowed --

Q: -- her to do that.

A: -- yes -- well, yes. And as we arrived, you know, th-there were cattle trucks waiting for us, you know, which I couldn't understand, you know, and they just said, take a suitcase, get onto the cattle trucks. We were helped by the Jewish police. And this is when it started. We thought,

you know, that things are bad in -- in -- in the ghetto, but that's when our trouble started, between 1944 and 1945, those were the worst -- the worst year, well it was less than a year that happened to me that stand out in my -- mostly in my -- first of all I was already older. I was already, you know, I was 14 years old, 14 and a half. I was already -- to my way of thinking, I was already a grown up person already. And when they put us in the -- those trucks, do you know, it was just impossible to survive. It was so packed, you couldn't breathe. And do you know, today, I said that many times, you know, I feel ashamed, not only for other people, for myself, what can happen to a person, that when we stopped -- th-th-the train stopped somewhere after a day or so, and -- and there were a few people were dead, you know. First of all there -- there was no water to drink. You remember like I said to you, we're -- it was July, August, in the summer in Poland, the heat. You know, you talk about your sort of 90 degrees or something like that, packed like sardines. And people, you know, elderly people, people that ha-had problems were dying and -- and I'm so ashamed today, you know, when I think of it, how could I have ever done that, say thank God they died, there'll be more room for us, you know? And of course at that time it -- that's how I felt, but -- and most people, and -- but today when I think back, like I wasn't human any more, you know? How can a human being think like that? To be that selfish, you know? But unfortunately that's how it is, you know. I -- I saw children stealing a piece of bread from their father. I saw a father s-stealing a piece of bread from -- from a child. And do you know I'm a father today and a grandfather and I think I would rather die than do that. But if I would have a father then, would he steal from me, or would I steal from him? Maybe. I don't know, you know. You've got to be in that position to realize. It's easy to say how could he do it, but today, you know what, I've got a family and I've got -- I'm not short of -- of anything, you know. When I say anything, food, or drink, or -- I can say that. Would -- how would it have been

in those circumstances, you know, if I was starving and knowing that my child has got a piece of bread, could I have stolen it? May -- I definitely say today no, but I don't know. You have to be in those circumstances to realize whether you can do it or not. And we traveled for a few days and it was less and less people in -- in -- in -- in the coaches, you know. And eventually one morning at about, must have been five, six o'clock in the morning, the train stopped, and you know, we could see through the slats, you know, of the truck, something written up, Oswiecim, and then it said Auschwitz and I -- didn't mean anything to me, an-and the grown up people say oh, it's a concentration camp, and I didn't know what a concentration camp was. And they opened it, the gates and straight away in German they started shouting, raus, raus, raus. And there were people sort of wearing striped things and striped caps and we did -- still didn't understand that. And it was -- like I said, it was in the summer and it was hazy, the sun was hazy because it was very early in the morning. And there was like a haze, yellow haze, and then we saw chimneys and we saw that's bakeries, or [indecipherable] whatever it is there, and -- and then, as I said, we had to jump down, you know, and it was pretty high, and some of those people that were there, they were Jewish inmates of Auschwitz that helped people to jump down. We weren't allowed to take our suitcase, they said, you leave everything behind. When you get to where we going, we get our luggage back, you know, and of course, we didn't. And then we had to go through a selection committee. And here we go again, I was lucky again. Being in the factory, we were a main transport that went through the selection committee. Women, children, disabled people, everybody went through. We were 500 and odd people. But the train had many more people on it, and all the others had to go -- the selection, there were German officers with dogs and batons, you know, and everywhere -- and they were rushing them, and you know it was right and left, right and left. And then we realized what was happening, that the people going to

the right were disabled people, women with babies, with children. And some of them -- and there were screams, you know, because they -- they -- they took the child away and the woman they said to go to the left. And of course, can you imagine a mother giving up a child. So the mother run towards it, she was beaten, but she was left with the child. And they said they're going to take them to showers, but we found out soon afterwards, you know, beca -- from the guards, from the Jewish people that were [indecipherable] that an hour after a -- that train arrived in Auschwitz, in Birkenau, you know, those people were dead. They were gassed and put in -- and how can a human being do that? Taking a child, a p -- a person, a woman, a disabled person, whoever and put in a gas oven, and then burned? It just -- but unfortunately I learned. I'm now an old man so I've learned that it's -- appear it's happening today. I mean, maybe not to the -- that extent and maybe not to the Jewish people, but it's happening. And us they took to -- the people that went to the left, we all went to showers. They were actually showers, they were not gas -- they were not gas cha -- crematoriums, gas chambers. And we had to take all our clothes off and we never saw it again. They shaved everybody, whoever had hair, wherever you had hair had to be shaved, women and men. And we came out and they gave us striped clothing. And of course the women went separate to a different one, we went separate. And had a -- one of those caps. They didn't tattoo us at the time, it was -- I don't know whether that was because we were with a group, or whether they didn't tattoo any more people, but they -- but we had a number, so at that time that was -- I wasn't Ziggy Shipper, I was 83303. Not that anybody called me by the number or so, but that's what I had writ -- a stripe, think here.

Q: On your jacket?

A: On my jacket, yes, an-and trousers. And I remember like today, and I don't know why, you know, they just gave me a uniform, one of those striped thing. I mean, they didn't say oh, you are

small, we give you a small one, big one, and I got a very big one, and I don't -- and you know that my trousers went almost to -- under my arms. And somebody came, oh I got the smaller one, can you give me the bigger one? I don't know why, you know, I remember like today I said no. Maybe I thought because it's bigger it'll be warmer in the winter or something. I didn't know how long I'm going to wear those. Anyway, after the showers, disinfection, haircut, you know, shaving, we -- they went into barracks. Now that I -- we expected many things, but we didn't expect that. I don't know whether you know what it looked like. I went back after the war to see that and you know, it was bunks, three bunks, one out -- above the other. You know, three bunks, I don't remember if I was in the bottom or middle. I think I was in the middle bunk. Three persons to a bunk, you know. Two one way, one that. And straw and every morning we used to get the -- it was hot, you were -- could suffocate. Every morning we had black coffee and a piece of bread. Every evening we had -- we didn't work. We just had to stand outside all day long, you know, and then go back.

Q: Let's take a little break and I'll change the tape.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: You were talking about your arrival at Auschwitz.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: The summer of 1944?

A: Yes.

Q: I'd like to know if we could back up just a little bit.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any sense of from the time those doors opened on the cattle car --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- to the time you were in your barracks, how much time passed by? Was it a matter of --

A: Matter of hours.

Q: Hours.

A: It wasn't a matter of days or anything like that.

Q: Right.

A: It was very, very qui -- one thing what they did was everything was quick. Quick, quick, quick. From the minute the ghetto [indecipherable] opened, you know, all you heard was raus, raus, raus, quick, quick, quick. And even the selection, when you went through selection, if you weren't fast they were beating you, you see? That's why they had those batons, you know, those big things and they were knocking you, you know.

Q: Right.

A: Hitting you, and you know, and --

Q: It must have been so frightening, so chaotic and so like a nightmare when you --

A: Well, it's -- it was a nightmare because you -- you just didn't -- you couldn't understand what was happening to you and to the people. What's going on, you know? It wasn't like -- it wasn't like being in the ghetto, you know, that every week it got a bit worse and more people are dying and -- and people are dying of starvation and whatever else, of illness, and you know. But here it was something happened so fast, you know, an-and -- and the people kept asking, where are they? Where's my wife, where's my mother, where's my child, where's -- you know, the ma -- men would be saying, you know, and then -- and there was no answer, because there wasn't other camps that you could see them. You know, where have they gone? But they soon found out, you see, because the -- the inmates, you know, th-the ones that were doing all the cleaning up and the disposing of the bodies, you know, and so on after they were gassed they had to put them in the ovens, you know, and -- to cremate them in. They asked them, and they were soon told, you know, what it is. But you know, even then, as a 14 year old boy, you doi -- i-it didn't sort of -- possibly, personally, I was lucky. I came with my grandmother and I knew my grandmother is still there. I had no siblings, you know, so I didn't have to worry about where -- where's my little sister, or my brother, or -- or -- nothing s -- sort of happened to me that I should feel in a terrible state, you know? And at 14 and a half, do you care what happens to other people, you know? And especially in the position where we are all in, like I said to you before, you become so selfish and so hard, that all you care is about yourself, don't care about anybody else. Because you are not human any more. They dis-humanized you. You know, yo-you -- you become a terrible person. I found that out years later [indecipherable]. But you see it today even, you know, in -- you know, people in -- in -- in the African nations or in the Middle East, you know, you know, people starving, you know and -- and you become -- you steal. You steal from each other, you know.

Q: So you were in the barracks with [indecipherable]

A: I was in barracks with -- th-there were --

Q: -- a men's barracks, in a --

A: Yes, a men's barrack, there must have been at least eight - 900 people in the barracks. There certainly -- there was room for them because we -- everybody s -- had where to sleep. The only thing the stench, the smell, th-the -- the heat, you know, i -- and people were dying there, they didn't have to kill them, they didn't have to take them to g -- the gas chambers to kill them, they were dying there. Wat -- anybody that was there was finished, you know. Either he -- first of all he couldn't survive and secondly they took him away and took him to -- straight away to a gas chamber.

Q: You would sleep three to a bunk?

A: Three to a bunk, and there were three bunks right, and there was another one next to it again, so it was like 18 people in a square sort of thing.

Q: Could you sleep?

A: I would imagine so, you know, as a child, yes, you know, and a -- the problem was always, you know, if you gi -- when you got your piece of bread and you thought you'll put it under the -- inside you -- in your jacket because you slept in your clothes, there was no undressing. And you couldn't sleep. That's the only time I couldn't sleep, personally, you know, it -- when I knew I had a piece of bread there. I had to eat it up, you know and then I managed I'm sure after, to sleep. You know, and we got up very early to c'est l'appel, which was the counting of the people. Why they had to count people, what were they worried, they were going to kill them anyway, why were they worried whether was one missing or not, you know? But that's the Germans.

Q: During those times when you were in the barracks, did people -- what did people talk about? What did they --

A: I di -- di --

Q: -- what was it like? Do you remember that?

A: No. No. Well, the only thing we were talking about, when will it finish. When will we get out of here, will we survive, will they take -- because we already knew about the gas chambers then. Will they take us away to the gas chambers? But -- ami -- but me as a child of 14 or 14 and a half, it never entered my mind that I'll be killed. I could never understand -- you know, I saw my friends dying, I saw other people dying. But I could never -- I couldn't accept it, that I'll die. That eventually it will be the end, you know? And you know, there were always rumors, you know, the Russians are near, the British are near, the Americans are coming in. Eventually we will be rescued. You know what, maybe that helped me to survive, I don't know. But I survived that and after a few weeks, not very long, we weren't a long time in Auschwitz, they found us. The Germans actually found us and they took us -- they said, right, now we're going towards Germany, which we didn't, we went -- well, it -- in a way we did, I suppose, because they took us to a concentration camp.

Q: Oh s -- is this group of people --

A: The group of 500, yes.

Q: -- that worked in the factory?

A: Yes, they to --

Q: And including your mother?

A: My grandmother.

Q: I'm sorry, your grandmother.

A: Yes, my grandmother. And we went to a concentration camp called -- it wasn't a extermination camp, it was a concentration camp called Stutthof, which was very near Danzig. Now there was a bigger problem because as hot as it was in Auschwitz, we were going on to the Baltic. And after a few weeks in that camp -- the camp was west, the living accommodation -- and the food was even worse than Auschwitz. We again didn't work, but it was getting late, you know, after a few weeks, you know, it was getting September, October, November, most people that were with us, even from that group, were dying. You know, the elderly people were dying, you know, from sp -- pure starvation and disease. And what we were saying when I -- I was asked, was I small, or was I tall, or was I, for a child of 14 and a half or so, I was [indecipherable] at 15. No, I was small. And what we did, when it was cold in the camp they made human ovens. What it meant to people was sort of getting together and make group and get bigger, bigger, bigger, sort of a round thing. And what we were supposed to do, the people from inside were coming out and going outside. And so me, I came out, but I soon managed, as being very little, I managed to get in -- back inside t-to --

Q: Back inside. So just the [indecipherable] bodies --

A: Yes.

Q: They were huddled in a circle --

A: That's right.

Q: -- and people were s --

A: That's right, a human oven.

Q: How long would they do this for?

A: Oh, we could stand for hours like that, you know. You know, we couldn't fall because we were all s-squashed together.

Q: And si -- and you weren't working, so --

A: No.

Q: -- this would go on --

A: No.

Q: -- outside?

A: The only work that we're do -- the only work we had to do was carrying big stones from one of the camp to the other side. When it was there we -- they had to carry it back to the other. There was no work there. There was just -- they wanted to kill you, but there was no such a thing as -- as they took you to the -- only if you were ill. Of course there, there was no hospitals or anything. They straight away took you to the gas chamber. They only had one gas chamber, one crematorium. And that -- the only problem was in the winter, if somebody did escape and there was w -- a person missing, we had to stand there all day long in the cold, in below freezing temperatures to stand there, you know. And then what happened -- of course, food was even scarcer than it was in Auschwitz. Then they said they wanted 20 young people to go to work in a cat -- in a working camp. And I said -- they said, who is 17, and I couldn't volunteer 17, I was 14 and a half and my size was about 12 years old. And they said there wasn't enough, so they said, who is 16? And I stood on my toes and I lifted my hand. And everybody said, all the others were saying don't volunteer, don't volunteer, they're going to kill you. I said, listen, if I stay here I'll be dead within a very short time. No food and cold and frost. I'm going. And so they took 20 boys, all Polish boys, Jewish boys, you know, and they took, by passenger train -- oh, they gave us -- by the way, they gave us new winter clothes, which was the same stripes, but warmer. So I said, well it's getting better already. A -- and they -- you know, listen, everything is -- is a matter

of -- it's relative to it, you know, it -- and they took us on passenger trains, oddly enough, to a place called Stolp in Pomerania.

Q: Before you tell me about that, did you have a conversation with your grandmother about leaving?

A: Ah y-y -- only through the wires I could shout, because I could see her. You know, and I said, I'm going away and I'll see you after the war. You know, everything was I'll see you after the war, you know.

Q: What did she say?

A: Nothing, she -- I don't remember exactly the words she said. I suppose she must have said something in Yiddish to bless me, or something. And maybe that helped, you know, and I -- they took us, like I said, on those passenger trains. We arrived at that Stolp. And the only thing that was better, it was in the winter, still Pomerania, which is very cold. But it was warmer for us because we worked on a railway yard, you see, to do with the trains and so on, I don't know what. And the food was even slightly better. We -- at least we got something, a piece of bread in the morning and in the evening and lunchtime we had the soup. And we had -- we worked for German people, and not the army, just German people.

Q: Really?

A: We were guarded by the -- but we worked for -- it was a factory there, that we worked at.

Q: I'm sorry, tell me where Pomerania is, my geography is not that good.

A: It is that -- today it's Poland, at that time it was Germany, it was east.

Q: So it's eastern --

A: East, yes.

Q: -- western Poland.

A: Yes. It was -- it's about -- I would say about 50 kilometers from Danzig, you know, so it was also near the Baltic, but it wasn't on the Baltic. And also the advantage was, there were only Jewish people in that camp. This was a labor camp, there was no extermination, like I said. And working on the railways, there's always a chance to steal some food.

Q: Cause these were passenger trains?

A: There were passenger trains, there were goods trains. Thank God there were goods trains so we could [indecipherable] goods train, we managed to eat whatever their goods they were carrying, we managed to get them, we managed to steal some carrots or potatoes or beets. The only thing was, whatever we stole we had to eat raw there. We couldn't cook it, there was nowhere to cook. But it didn't -- it tasted very good, you know. Doesn't matter, when you're hungry everything tastes good. You know, the unfortunate part was there, that one day five boys, older than I was, they stole some cigarettes or tobacco that was going to the German army, to the front, where they were fighting. And they were caught. So they put them -- there was a little room like a disinfection room, with no windows, nothing. They put them there and they kept them there for a week, then they said -- then they announced they're going to let them out. But the problem was they -- we had to come and see those boys. I don't know how those boys survived without water, without food, without anything in that thing. But when we came to the square where they were going to let out, we saw gallows, five gallows and little stools standing there. And they took those boys out, they put those ropes round their neck -- five boys, and I mean, I've seen people die next to me, you know, and -- but I've never seen somebody young, you know, putting a rope around their necks and going to hang. And they were start to read out why they're being, you know, German, another thing, they had to -- why did they have to say why? They were going to hang them. But those five boys didn't give them a chance, even. They

jumped off the stools and they killed themselves, th-they didn't wait for the Germans to kill them.

Q: Oh.

A: All five of them. And that was, like I said, the first time I saw people being hanged, actually, you know, people not dying, but being people killed. I mean, when they took away the people to the gas chambers, we didn't see it, we only saw the people taking away. But here I -- it's -- it's -- it -- do you know, I can see it today like it's happening now, in front of me, of -- of -- of course, what happened then. Then we started working again and going back to the factory and work again.

Q: Before we go on, I want to ask you another question about that.

A: Hm?

Q: These five boys who were hanged were not much older than you?

A: Well, no, I -- today that certainly wasn't, but they were like 18 or 19 --

Q: Right.

A: -- which were much older at the time, you know.

Q: But did it -- at that point, when you saw that happen, did you think then that you could die as well?

A: No.

Q: It never -- it still --

A: It never -- right through the five years, it never occurred to me. I don't know why, it just -- maybe that's how I am, you know, and --

Q: Right.

A: -- I never thought -- never thought -- I thought, one day I'll be free, you know.

Q: Did you feel fear?

A: Oh yes. Oh yes, every time, you know, you saw -- even in that camp that we were in, which we -- we -- it was considerable better than it was in Auschwitz or Stutthof, when we saw a German officer come in now, is he going to take us away, you know? Fear yes, but --

Q: Fear -- and what was your worst fear? If you weren't afraid of dying, if that wasn't --

A: I don't know, I don't know, just seeing that German was fear enough, you see. But no, and -- and then of course, what was happening that the Russians are getting nearer again, so they took us to another camp. Don't ask me where it was, but it wasn't very far from where I was in Pomerania. A place called Buschgraben, which was a German name, most probably it wa -- it was still in Poland, so it was -- I don't know what it was called in -- in -- in Polish. And there we stayed, there we did nothing. We had no food, no drink. And the Russians were so near us, the Russian soldiers, that at night we could hear the music. During the day we saw the planes flying over, you know, very low and the Russian would say we could -- you could see the pilots in the plane. And one sort of afternoon we looked around and we couldn't find any Germans. We were free. And so we said th-the -- the boys sort of my age, you know, said right, let's go over to the Russians, you know. At least we get some food and drink. But the grownups said you can't do that because they might -- they won't know who you are, they might kill you, they might shoot at you. So we said all right, we went to s -- we went to sleep that night, you know, woke up in the morning we were surrounded by the SS troops, by the Nazis again. And they were coaches waiting for us.

Q: Coaches?

A: Yes, ordinary car -- vehicles, you know?

Q: Cars. [indecipherable]

A: Car -- well, you know, big. Like buses, you know? Luxury buses. And today I cannot understand it. They didn't have enough petrol for their soldiers, but they had petrol to transport Jews. And they said now they're going to st -- again, every time they're going to send us to Germany. And they said we go back to Danzig. And we went back to Stutthof to wait, which was even -- there was no gas, there wa -- and there was no electricity, there was no water, people are dying. But we stayed there only a few days and then they said now they're going to take us to a boat and they're going to put us on boats and we're going to Denmark.

Q: So the Germans were going to send you to Denmark?

A: To den -- yes, well, Denmark was occupied by the --

Q: Right.

A: -- Germans.

Q: But what happened -- do you know what happened to the Russians? You thought the Russians were so close.

A: Yes, but they took us away, you know, so most probably next day the Russians were there, they -- they occupied that place. But us they took away. The whole camp that was there in Buschgraben, and they say -- as I said, they were going to take us to Denmark. There wi -- everything will be better. And it was already getting late, it was already March, April or so in -- in -- so we went to that port and they put us on -- into barges, like you carry coal, or wheat or corn.

Q: Open on the top?

A: Open, and there was no watcher [indecipherable] you know, there was -- I mean, it could be closed, they could close the hatches, you know, but there was nothing on top. There was, well, just for you -- just for transporting goods. It wasn't a ship, you know, it was -- and they put us in

those barges. And they said we arrive in Denmark, everything [indecipherable] I'm sure Denmark was already liberated by then. We didn't know that. And we were only for about 10 days, eight to 10 days.

Q: Did they feed you?

A: There was no f -- no food, no drink, nothing. It wasn't a question like when we left the ghetto, we could take a little bit of food with us. Here we had nothing.

Q: And you were how many people?

A: I don't know exactly, but it was more than just one camp, you know.

Q: It was more than just that 20 that were --

A: It must have been about a thousand people there.

Q: Wow.

A: You know what -- you know -- but there wasn't one barge, there was many barges. You know, we also had luck [indecipherable] we had some Norwegian and Danish prisoners of war on those barges and they were treated much better than us, because they were prisoners of war, so they used to get better food. They were much more able-bodied people. And that was very lucky for us, but anyway, at that time I already had typhus. I didn't know then I had typhus, but I found out later. Now, you can imagine having an illness like typhus, never mind medication, that was, of course, out. There was no medication. But there was no water. And I think what saved me again -- it's funny -- that I was so ill that I didn't drink the salt water, cause I didn't have a chance to get it. A lot of people drank the salt water, within one day they were dead, because they swelled up and they just died. Cause you -- you can imagine how much salt there is in that water. Now --

Q: With typhus do you have a high fever?

A: I should imagine so.

Q: Right.

A: A-As far as I know, yes.

Q: Did you -- were you conscious during this --

A: Yes.

Q: -- boat trip. You were awake?

A: I was almost conscious, semi-conscious, I suppose. And after -- I said we were traveling for about 10 days and one -- one evening we were very near land and the German -- the troops, the SS, the whoever was guarding us got off those barges, then we were just alone. But we couldn't have -- we weren't on land, they went across on little boats. So the Norwegians, when I said why we were lucky that they [indecipherable] the Danish, they said, you know what, if you want to, whoever wants to, we will take over onto dry land. Because there were still little boats left. So slowly, right through the night, they took every person off, onto land. Some people escaped. Well, I wasn't in a state to escape, I do -- I couldn't walk, never mind run. The Germans came back in the morning and they saw what happened, they didn't put us back on the boat. We are 15 kilometers away from a town, which is a naval town called Neustadt. We go there, our boat that we are -- got to go on it will be waiting for us to go --

Q: The German [indecipherable]

A: -- yeah, to go. So we had to go on a march. And ev --

Q: We -- how many people -- the Norwegians brought people over during the night --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and some of them just ran and escaped?

A: Some of them ran away, I don't know how many ran away. Not that it was important to us --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- you know.

Q: But then the Germans came back to get you --

A: Yeah, well they didn't count us --

Q: -- and you were already on land.

A: -- you know. Whoever was there they took away. And that was one thing. You had to walk. If you fell you were shot on the spot. There was no transport and they weren't going to leave you there. And they were not going to carry you. So luckily I ha -- I was with friends that I was together during all the times even from Poland, from the ghetto, through the camps together and two of them managed to carry me -- sort of half carry, half walk and somehow, don't ask me how, I don't know, once again I survived and we arrived eventually. If we started a thousand people, we might have finished up about three, 400, the rest fell and were shot.

Q: How long did this take?

A: I don't know exactly, but it took hours and hours. And it was only another 50 kilometers, like 10 miles. Shouldn't have take -- well, to a able bodied person it wouldn't have taken that long. Anyway they -- we arrived at the place and it was a port and it was a boat waiting for us. That's th -- the only time they told us the truth. It was a proper ship, a liner, you know? Atlantic ocean liner, it wasn't some little ship. And there was already a transport of people from other camps on that ship. We didn't know then, but the re -- we found out, because there were planes going around and we knew it couldn't be German planes. We didn't know whether they were Russians, Americans or British. It turned out they were British planes, and all of a sudden they started bombing. And they hit that boat, but they didn't hit it that it was completely damaged, you know,

and they started -- people started shouting, screaming that we're on the boat. That's how we found out that there were other people on the --

Q: So you saw the boat you were on?

A: Oh yes, we were just in front, like in front waiting to go on it. But they couldn't do it because of the -- the bombing. And the people started screaming and jumping into the water and of course some of them drowned, you know. And we were waiting and waiting, waiting and it took -- must have been at least a half an hour and then it stopped, so we didn't know whether they -- everybody was already jumped off or they were dead, whatever it was. And then about av -- 10 minutes, 20 minutes later, we heard people shouting again, but it was different. They were waving things. We couldn't understand what was happening. And then all of a sudden we looked around and we didn't see any Germans. We were surrounded by the British army tanks. That was the third of May, 1945. And I went over to the -- to the tank and the first thing -- he was talking to me in English and I didn't know what he was saying, you know. And the only thing I kept on saying is in -- in German, wasser, wasser. You know, wasser, he must have understood wasser, water, you know and he gave me some water. This is the first water I drunk after 10 days. And not only that I drunk after 10 days, as a free man, you know. I don't think I appreciated the free, you know, because I didn't know, and of course then they threw me a little parcel as well, and I managed to hide it. A usual thing, I thought no, everybody'll want it, and it was true, everybody wanted [indecipherable] they didn't realize that we are free, that we can get food as much as we want. And they -- straight away some others came and some people could speak German, you know, some people -- British soldiers. And you know, they said you are free now, you can do whatever you want, you can go around. You can rope, you can steal, you can kill, do whatever you want. Well, of course, being Jewish and being a child, all we were interested was to get

food. And this, to a certain extent, I wish they wouldn't have done that, I wish they would have kept us and put us in -- somewhere in a camp and give us food. Not tell us that we can go and take whatever we want, because I would imagine that the first month of the liberation, more people died than in previous months purely from overeating. You couldn't -- our stomachs couldn't take it. And here we were just eating for the sake of it, you know, we couldn't -- we were right up to our necks in food, you know. We were eating meat and jam and cheese, everything together. And the British were so good to us, you know. Every time they -- they used to come in, they -- first of all they said to us, go and live wherever you want. We, a few of us found a prison. So we thought we'll stay there. But not where the prisoners -- there was no prisoners, but where the guards must have slept, you know, and that was first time in years of so white sheets, you know, and -- and of cour --

Q: Let's take a little break --

A: Sorry.

Q: -- I'm sorry, we have to change tapes. We'll come back to the -- to the prison, okay.

A: Do you un --

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: So it's m -- it's May of 1945, and you're in --

A: Yes, third of May, 1945, and I'm --

Q: -- Neustadt.

A: In Neustadt which is [indecipherable]

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Which is not far from Lübeck on one side and Oldenburg on the other side, and even not that far, it's about a hundred kilometers from -- roughly from Hamburg.

Q: And the British have said to you that you can go and --

A: And do whatever I want, yes.

Q: -- do whatever you want to do.

A: We were free. We could do -- and unfortu -- well, not -- I suppose unfortunately, there were also some Russians from the -- not prisoner of war, also inmates like us, on the boats, you know, and they did commit a lot of crimes, unfortunately.

Q: What kind of crimes?

A: Well, the natural thing was rape, you know, rape and murder and stealing and -- we were stealing, well, in a way we didn't think we were stealing, the food was there in the open.

Q: And the people were there who owned the stores or the market --

A: No, no, no, it wasn't --

Q: -- or they were bombed?

A: -- it was -- it was a naval port.

Q: I see.

A: And -- and the -- the -- the marines, the German Marines weren't there, you know, the German Navy wasn't there. It was open, it was -- nobody was there, you know, you could take whatever you wanted, you know, and like I said, you know and I slept in that prison with white sheets for the first time in my life, you know. But the funny thing was I woke up in the morning, I -- I didn't have a bath or a shower even then, I mean, this was the least of my problems, you know. Food was the only problem. And got up -- but when I got up in the morning I looked at my sheet and it looked so dirty, and I said, well, it must be from my body, you know, I -- I -- I haven't washed for -- for -- for days and days, for weeks. And the same clothes, there was no other clothes. Only one shirt, one pair of boots, you know, which were wooden clogs. And I looked at it and then -- then I saw things were moving and then I realized that it was lice. And of course, I was covered completely with lice. You know, but this didn't matter, you know, as long as I had food. And every morning, you know, they -- the British troops, soldiers were coming and with the Red Cross vans and they said anybody that wants to go hospital, and you know, and I ne -- I -- somehow my typhus didn't sort of exist any more, you know. And -- but I'm sure I was still very, very ill, and -- but I laughed. I said, why do they want to take us to the hospital? Now we've got everything. Everything in life was food. That's the only thing we are orientated. Three days later when they came I said I would like to go to hospital, but I won't manage because whatever I had came down, came out of me. And they took me to a hospital in Neustadt. I was -- they took away my clothes, I was -- had nothing and -- and then th -- they put me to bed. And I, even now I was -- I was very, very ill. I was -- I don't know what was wrong with me, I wa -- but I was semiconscious. And do you know -- and they asked me, do you want anything? And don't ask me why, the only thing I wanted is salami. It's just one of those stupid things when I think of it today. Well, of course I didn't get that [indecipherable] they put me to bed and

for three months I was in the hospital you know, when -- when I was already okay, I couldn't get out of bed, I couldn't walk.

Q: You were so weak.

A: I was t -- yeah, I couldn't -- they had to teach me to walk, you know. And you know tha -- I said, what is wrong with me, they said nothing. What was wrong with me? Also nothing, you had typhus when you came in but otherwise there's absolutely nothing wrong, but you know -- and I remember such stupid thing, I couldn't walk. But when I was in bed, you know, and the -- the -- the -- there was the American people were coming in from Joint, the American jo -- Joint --

Q: Joint Distribution Committee, mm-hm.

A: Yeah, and they were bringing us chocolates and cigarettes you know, so -- and you know that -- that mind that work, that -- that -- to steal, you know. So of course you didn't steal, you didn't have to steal, but wo -- we were doing, you know, the -- I mean, I was only -- I didn't need it, you know, I had enough food in the hospital. But when they came, to -- to the children they gave chocolates. To the grownup that were there they gave cigarettes. So of course when they -- the people that -- with the chocolates ha -- came, so I was there, sitting up in bed and I took the chocolate. When I knew the people with the cigarettes are coming, I covered myself over the head. And they asked, who is there, I says, oh, there's a man there, so they left me cigarettes, you know, that -- that mind that works, you know, it's -- it's --

Q: You just needed to keep things, you just couldn't give up.

A: Oh, keep thing is not, it didn't matter, I had to put -- have things, you know. Well eventually they said yes, you'll be able to go out. I said yes, that's all very good. I've got no clothes.

Q: How did you communicate with the British at that time?

A: Oh, there were -- there were already -- first of all, after a few months, the German nurses were doing everything and I spoke German t -- you know, I spoke Yiddish and a bit of German, you know, mixed it up. They understood. And some of the soldiers even, you see, the ones that liberite -- that liberated us went -- carried on fighting, you know. So the -- the ones that came in were different already and there were some soldiers that could speak Polish, there were soldiers that could speak Yiddish, there were Jewish soldiers, so there was no problem. So -- and the thing was that it was already three months after the liberation, so the -- the -- the German nurses already were girlfriends of British soldiers, you see? So she said to me, I try to get you something to wear, one of the nurses and she brought me a British uniform, you know. I said, that's very nice, but I mean, I'm a little boy, I mean, it'll be too big. Anyway, don't worry and they shortened it for me. And I came out of hospital and some friends of mine that I was with in the camps said oh, we going to a displaced person camp. Which was a camp where we had where to live, where we used to get enough food. They they said, you know, there is -- I think now the British government is allowing a thousand children to come to England. The Swedish government is allowing a thousand children to go to Sweden. And we can also go to Palestine because Palestine -- we can't go as such, just say right, we going, because there is a quota, because they said, according to the British government, because it was under the British protection, British mandate, that it wouldn't be fair to the other population to send all the people that want to go to Israel in one go. So every month groups will go. I said okay. But I definitely -- so, we sat down, we thought Sweden, England, it must be about 50,000 miles away. I said, what will we go to England, we know nobody. No, let's stay and go to Palestine. I said, I've got nobody in England, I've got nobody anywhere else as far as I know. And I said right, we'll do that. So we stayed in the displaced person camp, then we went to a -- ab -- about 10 miles away

to a children's home, and there were a few grown up people there, Jewish people and they kept on teaching us a little bit, you know. And --

Q: Teaching, you mean English?

A: Eng -- no, no. English was unimportant, we didn't need to know English. You know, we weren't going to England, it was in ger -- I was in Germany so we learned Hebrew mainly, you know, because going to Palestine and then they said all the kids that go to Palestine will go to Hamburg. And in Hamburg we were at -- they sent us there, so I said, let's go to Hamburg. It was a beautiful place. It was donated by the Varberek family, which was a Jewish family, Jewish bankers that when the war broke out in Germany they went to live in Switzerland and some went to live in England, you know. So we stayed there, then I got ill, I needed an operation. So again they sent me to the hospital, I had the operation. Of course there was no anesthetic at the time, but --

Q: What was it -- what was it for?

A: I ruptured myself --

Q: Oh.

A: -- you know. It la -- it was -- I can't tell you how it happened, you know, cause I'm too embarrassed.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. Anyway, I wanted to look somewhere where I shouldn't have done, you know, being 15 years old, you're very inquisitive. And I -- but anyway, so I went to hospital and had the operation. Then two friends came to me and -- with a letter. And the letter was from London, England. And I s -- who would write to me from England? I don't know anybody in England. I

look, and you know, the usual thing, I look at the back, there was a return address, London. And it give a name, it means absolutely nothing to me, and --

Q: Do you remember what the name was?

A: Oh yes, I remember it very well. I'll come to it in a minute.

Q: Okay.

A: And -- so my friend went up to [indecipherable] and says, why the hell don't you open the letter and you'll know who it's from and who is writing to you. And I open the letter and it says, written in Polish, you know, my name is so and so and I left Poland in the 30's -- it's a woman -- and I had a son in Poland, same age as you and I -- I found that name on the British Red Cross list in London. She even says where, in Woburn House. The only thing, the year of the -- of the -- the birth is different. It says that Zygmund Shipper, born 18th of January, 1931, and I know that my son was born in 1930. And she says, but if you have a look at your left wrist, as a child of about three or four you burnt yourself and there should still be a mark there. And you know, I didn't even think of the mark. I knew I had a mark because it was very -- you could see it very easily. But of course, today you can just about see it.

Q: Right there, yeah.

A: And you know, and I looked at that and I found my mother, that I knew that she was dead for over 10 years. As a child of five I knew my mother was dead. At least that's what I thought. And here a woman found me and she says she is my mother. The funny thing is I -- I -- tears come down now. When I actually knew about it, it didn't mean that much to me. And of course, in the letter she says, if I'm your mother I -- I want you to come to England to be with me, you know, and -- and I said to -- I turned around to my friends and -- you know, and I said, I don't know the woman. She doesn't mean anything to me. I mean, you are my family. You are -- you two are

my brothers. She is a stranger to me. And of course, you know, they said, how can you say that, you know. And when I came out of hospital an-and went back and the teacher there, we had teachers from the Jewish brigade, that were teaching us Hebrew and we had lessons in -- in -- in math and whatever else, German, I'm not sure, history or so on. And everybody said -- everybody was talking about the incident and they said you found your mother, how can you not -- you're one of the luckiest people alive that you've got somebody, a mother, and we've got nothing. You must go to your mother. Anyway, they persuaded me and it took about -- at that time I couldn't go, just go, she had to get a visa for me, and it took 10 months to get a visa, you know.

Q: Oh my.

A: Oh yes, it -- or even longer. Than happened in January and I think -- and I came to England in December -- 22nd or 23rd of December 1946. And I arrived -- I came on a boat, I arrived in Hull. A man met me, and he said to me in Yiddish, because I couldn't speak English, he says -- when I came off the boat he says, if you've got your things, get your luggage and we will go on the train, we'll go to London. I looked at him and I be -- start laughing. He says, why are you laughing? I said, what luggage? You see what I've got. I was -- I was -- when I was in Hamburg I was very friendly with a girl and the only reason -- reason I was so friendly with her is because I had one shirt and I had -- needed somebody to wash my shirt. When she washed my shirt I had to stay inside because I had no other shirt to wear. And he talks to me about luggage. Anyway, he turned out to be my stepfather, my mother remarried. And that's what I said to you I'll tell you the name, it was Killberg. And eventually we came home and you know, we -- I arrived and my mother cried, and made me cry as well, but I still didn't feel anything towards her at the time, you know? And the first six months I didn't go to work, I did nothing, but it was the worst -- one

of the worst times in my life. I thought my wer -- bad times have finished but they were bad, I had nobody. My family was in Germany, waiting to go to Palestine.

Q: Let me ask you a question about the time, that year that you spent waiting to go to England. What did you do, and what did you think about? I mean, did you -- and did you write to your mother, did you --

A: Oh, yes.

Q: -- get caught up and so --

A: I wrote. Yeah, not as often maybe as I should have done, but I did write, and what did I do? We had school. And you know, we were outside Hamburg and we -- we had a time of our lives, you know. We had money to burn. We -- we -- we used to get Red Cross parcels that were sent during the war for the American prisoners of war. And there were mountains of those. And -- and you know, we used to -- and in the parcel there was two pa -- a parcel for two people, so we used to share it. There was Nescafe, I'll never see Nescafe. There was -- there was prunes, there was sugar, there was chocolate. And of course the most important thing was the Nescafe and a pack of 200 cigarettes. Not that we smoked, but we could buy things with them. If we wanted to go to a theater, you know, to see an opera -- I mean, I never knew what an opera was -- we -- there was no tickets, you couldn't get. But when you put a packet of cigarettes at the desk where they were selling -- where the -- the ticket thing was, then you straight away got tickets, and coffee as well. We used to go to the farms, you know, German farms, and you know, exchange a tin of Nescafe, those small tins at the time, which cames in the parcel, for some eggs or some ham, or whatever we wanted, I mean --

Q: Was Nescafe ground coffee?

A: You know -- yes, you know, the tins. You've got it here, you know --

Q: Yeah, I just didn't know --

A: -- the -- the --

Q: -- if it was the same thing, the --

A: -- the ready made, you know, spoon cof --

Q: -- instant coffee.

A: -- coffee -- instant coffee, that's right.

Q: Yes.

A: But it was Nescafe, it's the same as today in England. I'm sure you've got it here. Anyway, so we were -- excuse me [tape break] Yes, and it was carrying on like that. I was with them. They didn't say you've got to leave because you're not going to Palestine, so I stayed with them and --

Q: [indecipherable] you stay, yeah.

A: -- til -- til we went, you know. I didn't want to go, right up til the last minute I didn't want to go. But anyway I came, like I said, and for the first six months I didn't do any work, all I did was go to cinemas. I've never seen a film before in my life. Now I certainly made up in those six months. And then one day they -- somebody came to me and said, you know, there is a club that young Holocaust survivors, boys and girls meet in a certain area in London in Belsize Park, as it happens, and why don't you go there one day? On a Saturday night they've got a dance, so why don't you go? I said all right, so I decided I'll go, you know, so I arrived at the door, you know, it -- they had a dance in a church hall. I knocked on the door and they opened. And I said some words then that I -- in the book what -- what Sir Martin Gilbert wrote about us, the boys that came here -- that came to England,. and I said -- the first thing I said when th -- I opened the door, I found my family again. That's what they meant to me, more than my mother. And from then on, my life completely changed, you know. I joined the club straight away and I spent more

time in the club than anywhere else. I got a job, my mother said and my stepfather said every person should have a trade. What would you like to do? I said, I haven't got a clue what I want to do. My mother said, would you like to go to school and [indecipherable]. I say, I'm too old for school. At 17 I was -- I can't go back to school, you know, I sort of -- so they said, what about tailoring? I said okay. So I went to t-tailoring. I worked in tailoring for about six or seven years and I must tell you I hated every minute of it. By then I already found th -- in that club, a refugee girl as well, but they came in 1939, she came with her parents to England. We started dating, you know, and I said to her, do you know what? The day the man will say that I'm a qualified tailor, this will be the day I give up tailoring and I'll never hold a needle in my hand. And I kept to it. He said, now you can -- he says, you'll have more money. I said, thank you very much, but now I'm leaving the job. And going back to that girl, we started going out together. Eventually we got married. And I opened a delicatessen business, that didn't go very well eventually. So she said, you know, my father is in business, but if you go in, you can go much bigger in the business, we -- why don't you go in? And the father said, why don't you come in with me, and I did. It was a stationery and printing business. And eventually, after a few years, I left him and he retired and I got bigger and I did wholesale, I had my own print place. I had retail shops in London. But you know my mother -- going back to my mother, you know, I realized then, you know, when I got married I realized, you know, there must -- she must have had a good reason why she left. You know, things are not so ha -- black and white. I realize people do get divorced, you know. But I regret -- I've got a regret, that -- I've got very few regrets, but one regret is -- which you did ask me, and I never asked my mother til she died, and she died, unfortunately, very young, why? What was the reason? And up to today I don't know the reason, you know, why she left, for

what, whether there was another person involved, or whether she just couldn't live with my father, or vice versa. I don't know.

Q: [coughs] Excuse me. I want to a -- I'm glad you brought up your father because during this time, while you were in the -- in the ghetto, in the camps, you didn't know what had happened to your father. You never heard from your father?

A: No.

Q: Did you -- w-w-when you were finally liberated, was it on your mind to try and go to Poland or find out about anybody in Poland, or was that a possibility?

A: Now -- the funny thing was that we -- very, very few of us Polish boys -- Polish young -- youngsters wanted to go back to Poland. Don't ask me why. I -- when I think back today I don't know why. But unfortunately some of them went back and were killed by the Poles. You see, the Poles were very scared of the Jewish people coming back and trying to claim their properties. I mean, those people lived in those properties for five years, and all of a sudden a Jew will come and take their properties away. They were beaten, they were killed in many, many places. There was a pogrom in Kielce, you know, in Poland, where they killed a lot of Jewish people, you know, because they were terrified that they're going to take away their homes. I can understand that, you know. Why they should kill, I don't know. They didn't have to kill them not to give them back their homes, but they did. I -- I asked questions, you know, but I didn't look properly til years later, you know, but like I said, you know, I was in business and I got married in 1954. In 1956 my wife became pregnant. October -- the eighth of October I went to the hospital, she was in labor. And I will never forget that moment, it was the happiest moment in my life, you know. And you know, when I walked in -- because at that time there wasn't such a thing as a husband watching the birth of a child, you know, and that woman presented me with that bundle,

and I looked at it and I couldn't stop crying. And I said, at last, I know I've got a family of my own, you know. When I look at that child, it was the greatest thing, that whenever I say that and my younger daughter is there -- because a few years later I had another daughter, she says, Dad, what about me, you know. And she knows how much I love both of them, there is absolutely no different. But you know, it did something to me, you know, that I cannot explain, you know. I know that every parents is -- it's the most happiest day of their life when their child is born. But the Holocaust survivor, when he's lost almost everything -- I mean some of my friends, they've got -- they had families, they had siblings and they've got not one member of the family survived, you know. You know, and I was lucky enough that my mother survived. Unfortunately -- I mean, she was lucky enough to see grandchildren, you know, which was a great thing for me and for her. And unfortunately I think she died thinking that I've never forgiven her for leaving me. And when we discussed it, and I used to -- about leaving me, she never said why and I never asked, but I said, if you would have stayed, most probably both of us would have been dead today. So, at least both of us survived. And I certainly did -- did not hold it against her. You know, I did, most probably as a child, but in later years, you know, when I came to England, you know, it never crossed my mind that she's guilty of something. And she got on better with my wife than she got on with me because she had it in the back of her mind that I must hate her, or -- and I know, I -- I -- I loved her as much as I could, you know. I'm sure I didn't love her as a normal child will love a mother, you know. But I did love her, I respected her, you see? But then, as I said, I had children, and eventually they grew up. Good kids. They produced three children each. You know, I've got six grandchildren and I think how lucky I am, you know. In 1981, I -- unfortunately I did work very hard, you know? I also played very hard, you know. I -- I smoke and I drunk and I goed -- went to casinos and I -- I -- I went to football, I did everything. I wasn't

a father like I -- I even apologized to my two daughters for not being a father like I should have been. They don't think so, but you know. But today they think I'm the greatest thing alive. I don't know why, you know. They are wonderful, wonderful kids. And when I think I came to England, without education I couldn't read and write. Never mind English, I couldn't hardly read and write in Polish. And the -- my oldest grandson has a master's degree in mathematics and statistics. From a poor little boy to come to this country, to meet her Majesty the Queen and shake hands with her. To meet the prime minister of this country and go to his place where he lives and where he works, why me? In 1981, as I said, I worked very hard. I had to go to hospital and they sent me home, they said there's nothing wrong. Four hours later I was in hospital again with a heart attack and they -- I think it's cutting out.

Q: Okay, we'll take a break, all right?

A: I'm nearly finished anyway.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: I'd like to go back and ask you about this group of survivors that you met six months after you came to London, and -- and I'd like to just t-talk a little bit more about who they were and what kinds of things you did together, and you -- did -- just -- just give me a little bit of better sense of what that group of people was like.

A: You see, they're a group of retired soldiers, they were the ones that came here in -- between August 1945, and sort of end of 1947. But tha -- on the 14th of August 1945 was the first lot that came here from Theresienstadt concentration camp. They were there -- they were liberated in Theresienstadt, then they went to Prague and from Prague they came to England. Originally they came to the north of England to a beautiful place called Windermere. And I don't know the reason why they brought them there, but people think it's because they were scared to bring them into a capital like London or Manchester, because they didn't know who they were bringing in here. They are bringing young people that were five years interned. Now, how are they going to behave? Now, within a few months they dispersed them, they sent them to London and Manchester, Liverpool and so on. Now, the people that I met, of course, they were the Londoners.

Q: Now, who is they? Who brought them?

A: They Central British Fund, which Leonard Montefiore was the head of Central British Fund, it was a charity, and they brought them to England, they supplied teachers and doctors. Everything was supplied by Central British Fund. They even paid for the transport, they paid for everything. The government allowed a thousand children, but the government didn't pay for it, the Central British Fund paid.

Q: And it was a non-governmental organization?

A: Yes, completely charity. Was a complete charity organization, they're still in existence now, but they -- they amalgamated with the big charities, they are not any more the Central British Fund, the Jewish [indecipherable] this -- this -- the whole thing involved, you know. And they had homes, you know, for the survivors and for refugees that came before the war to Britain, you see? And that group that I was with is the group that came. They were -- they were survivors originally from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia. Very, very few from Germany, but they were all a mixture of [indecipherable]. And we -- we came -- and when they came to London they lived in hostels and then they decided -- the CBF decided that they should form a club to keep the youngsters together. And they formed a club and it was like any other club. We did a lot of sport. One of our members, which today is the chairman of our society, which after the club finished we formed a society, became British lightweight champion in weightlifting. Now him they made British very quickly because he was very good. He represented England in the Olympic games, in the commonwealth games and of course in the Maccabee in Israel. And we had -- and some went to college, some went to university. Some became doctors, lawyers. You know, we had one who was working in -- in university as a lecturer, you know, and so -- well, actually two. One was a mathematician, you know, and we did -- they did quite well. And most of them went to trades or business, and -- and -- but the most important thing was that because of the club, we kept together. Now, eventually, you know, we got married and had children, we couldn't have a club, because it wouldn't work, because we wouldn't have time to go to a club. And we -- you couldn't carry on playing football, basketball, cricket and so on. We had other -- we had to work and we had to look after families. So they decided to form a society, which we still got up til today, which is called the 45 Aid Society, I think I told you that. We raise money

for charity, for eng -- in England and in Israel, mainly for children. Because we feel we were children when it happened to us, we want to help children.

Q: Is it just for Jewish children?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, no, in England it's -- whoever approaches us, we try to give. But of course, in -- in Israel it is for children. We -- we have been giving to a home for deaf children, you know, for -- for oh, for about 30 years now, if not longer. And we feel we should, you know, and -- and also, I think, because of that, having had a club and then having this society, which we look after also our own members, if they need help, we are there. They've got somebody to turn to, because they've got no other families. Of course, they got married and have got their children and grandchildren. But otherwise they've got nobody. They got no brothers or sisters, so -- or very few have.

Q: When you -- when you found this group, six months after you arrived, how many people were there wi -- more or less?

A: Oh, I wouldn't like to say, but there must have been at least about oh -- members, about 400.

Q: Oh really, that many?

A: Yeah, but, you see, a lot of them went to the United States, Canada, Australia, a few Switzerland. And of course, you see we are scattered all over Britain. Like, in Manchester we've got some members and of -- we've got a lot of members that were then in Israel are now -- that wer -- are now in Israel were originally in England, and some of them -- in 1948, or '47 and '48, they decided to go and fight in the War of Independence when the state of Israel was born. Some came back. Those that w -- came back, had to come back within a year, otherwise they wouldn't have been let into Britain. And some of them didn't want to come back, and they stayed in Israel.

And we've got quite a big grou -- well, not a big group, but a biggish group in Israel of those people. So much so that this year we had our own reunion every -- we have a reunion every Sunday -- every year in the first Sunday in May, because most of the people are liberated in that time. So, we have a fa -- a reunion of everybody. People come from the States, people come from Israel. This year nobody came from Israel, the reason being that a lot of the people in England went to Israel on the sixth and seventh of May to be -- and they had their own reunion in Israel, the Israeli people put on the reunion, and it was also because it was the 60th anniversary of the birth of the state of Israel, so they went. So we're a very close family and I think this helped a lot, because when you think that very few of us of that whole group needed psychiatric help, or being counseled -- I don't know anybody who was counseled through the years, because we had such a family, we had. And a lot of survivors that were in England or in Britain, I should say, needed help because they were on their own. And you know, they didn't have anybody. Like my children -- I mean, I never had a brother, never had a sister, but my children had a lot of uncles and aunts. And up til today, they call my friends, many of them, I mean it's, it's not everybody, uncle or aunt. You see, because this -- I think this helped us a hell of a lot.

Q: Of course.

A: You see --

Q: Let me ask you also about your grandmother. You said goodbye to her as you were being taken away --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to go and work in this railroad yard, with those other young men.

A: Well, this was the last time, of course, I saw my grandmother, and -- and this is one of my main regrets, you know, that I didn't have a chance, you know, to thank her for what she did for

me, to bringing me up. I'm sure it wasn't easy, you know, but there was nobody else that could help me at the time, only her. And she was like a mother to me. And what I am today, I owe it to her. And unfortunately, a few years ago -- well, quite a while ago now, I found out that she died in Theresienstadt, but she died on the day of the liberation.

Q: She got moved to Theresienstadt?

A: Yes, all of them finished up in Theresienstadt from Stutthof, because Stutthof was overrun very quickly by the Russians. And she finished up in Theresienstadt and she died out -- on the day of the liberation. That means she didn't even have one day to say, well I survived the war and maybe my grandson survived the war, maybe my son survived the war, or sons, I should say. Which one did. You see, my father -- the other regret is, I don't know when, I don't know where my father died. And I would have liked to have gone -- I'm not religious, but I would like to go and stand in front of his grave and say Kaddish for him, and you know, to say a prayer, you know, and -- and that's about all, but --

Q: You don't know anything about where he died?

A: Nothing.

Q: Nothing.

A: I've been to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem years ago and I tried to find out, I couldn't find anything out. I -- I tried everything you know, and those are the only regrets. Otherwise, I consider myself one of the luckiest people alive. Listen, I survived all that. I -- in 1981, unfortunately I had to go to hospital because thought I was -- I -- I thought I was a heart attack, but they finished up saying me, I had -- it's nothing. Four hours later I was back in hospital having had a heart attack. And but they said, well, it's -- it's a mild one, we'll keep you here for three, four days and then you can go home. I said, thank you very much. They took me up to the

coronary care unit. I was there, my wife came in and for some reason when she walked in, must have been two hours after they brought me in, I started speaking in Yiddish, not in English. And I said to her in Yiddish, you know, I -- I don't think this is a good business being here. And the next thing I know I had six doctors around me. And one of them said, do you know what happened to you? I said, I was talking to my wife and I must have fallen asleep. When I said the word sleep, I realized -- I was conscious enough then to realize that I didn't fall asleep, that I must have gone, you know, and they resuscitated me. And then later I found out, you know, they told my wife and my two daughters, who were there already, that my chances of surviving were nil, you know. That the -- the next 24 hours and they said go home and pray. And my wife said, you know the Germans tried five years to kill him and they didn't succeed. So -- and all I can tell you, three weeks later I walked out without medication. And that was 27 years ago. I don't know how I'm going -- how long I'm going to live, but I certainly survived 24 hours. And I ask again, why? Why did I escape such a lot of incidents, such a lot of -- the gas chambers, a massive coronary? I don't know, I can't, you know, there's no answer to that. But I cannot thank enough the British people what they did for me, first of all they liberated me. They let me come into their country and I could do whatever I wanted, I had no restriction of movement, I had no restriction of business, I could open any business I wanted, you know? So I am thankful to them. I'm thankful -- if there is a God, I thank God for what happened to me and I had a very good life.

Q: Are you a religious person? Do you attend synagogue? Do --

A: I am not a religious person. I go to synagogue twice a year on new year, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This is what I go, it's nothing to do -- as far as I'm concerned it's nothing to do with religion, because I sit down and I think of my family and what happened to them, and of course my grandparents were very religious, so I owe them that, you know. And I -- as I st -- as

you remember, I said that I was brought up in a very religious home, but unfortunately after the war, you know, when I asked questions, I couldn't accept the answers that were given to me when I asked like a foolish 15 year old, I asked questions that there were no answers to that. But the question the rabbis gave me, I wouldn't accept. And I --

Q: What was the question and what was the [indecipherable]

A: Well, I ask why. The thing I'm ask that everybody ask. Why. I said okay, grown-up people I can understand. I mean, people committed so many things against people, against God, they were punished for it. But a six month old baby being violated, put in a gas chamber? No, I couldn't accept the answer and I was very, very much against religion, so much so when it came to Yom Kippur, which is, you know, we got to fast 25 hours, we mu -- all we are allowed to do is to pray, I used to eat twice as much as normal that day. I used to go to football, I used to go to dog racing, I used to do everything, I -- I hated the religion so much. But you know -- because, you know, like everybody else wif -- you always blame God for good or bad, you know? And then I thought -- you know, you get older, you've got a family and you start thinking. Well, I cannot tell anybody that there is a God and nobody can tell me there is no God. I don't know, and nobody else knows. We -- we think we know. But what I cannot understand, why, if there is a God, why do we blame God for everything? We are the people that doing all those things. God doesn't tell us. It doesn't say anywhere God tell us to kill people, to let people starve. You see, I -- I mean, six million Jews alone were killed, for no reason. One and a half million children were killed. And not only Jews were killed. The Gypsy population of -- of Europe was almost wiped out. Homosexuals were killed. Disabled people were killed, including German disabled people. And it's only us that doing it, it's not God. When I look today, you know, that I looked -- I watch television, when I speak to students and I ask them what they ask me, that old question, can it

happen again, I say, don't you ever watch television or read the newspapers and you what's happening in Rwanda, Darfur and other places like that? And I think to myself, when I look at children starving, I -- I'm in such a state. And I don't see a black child, I don't see a white child, I see a child. And I think -- like I said to the Prime Minister of England, I said, when I was invited to his place, I said why can't we do something about it, to give a -- to give them each at least in -- a day a -- a bowl of rice, that would keep them alive? I mean, we've got so much and we give nothing.

Q: I want to ask you about when you met your wife, you were -- I don't know --

A: 18.

Q: -- 18 years old, and you missed your teenage years.

A: Yeah.

Q: You were -- well, you were a dra -- you know --

A: Well, I was very much grown up. I certainly wasn't an 18 year old normal boy, I wa -- I must have been a 30 year old man, you know, and -- but it was no problem, you know, it --

Q: Yeah, we -- tell me about -- tell me her name and where she was from.

A: Her name is Jeanette Shipper -- now she's Shipper, she was Gorge, G-o-r-g-e. She was born in France, in [indecipherable] Alsace Lorraine. Father was born in Germany, her mother was born in Paris. In 1939 they came to England. Luckily they both managed to come to England.

Q: They Jewish?

A: Yes --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- very much so. They came to England, you know, I think on a visa or wha -- whatever. She didn't come on Kindertransport, she came as a -- with her family.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: And she lived here, ma -- and as I told you, I met her in the club, and you know, and I met her once before, funny enough and I -- she didn't realize and then one day I said, you know, I know you from somewhere. I said, oh yes, yes, they all tell the same story, you know, and -- and we started eventually, you know, not straightaway, eventually we started sort of dating and the reason was because she lived near a football club, so I thought if I go in the afternoon to -- to the football match, after the football match I'll be able to pick her up and we can go out, and -- and that's what happened. And we've been married for 52 years. Like I said, I've got six -- I've got two daughters, six grandchildren. Four grandsons, two granddaughters.

Q: Was it ever hard for her, you think, because I mean, even though she was Jewish she didn't see the same kinds of things that you saw as a young person --

A: Mm, no.

Q: -- you know, she left with her family and --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- she wasn't in a camp or a ghetto or --

A: No, no, no, no --

Q: -- anything.

A: -- nowhere.

Q: So she had a different ki -- quite different experience.

A: Absolutely.

Q: And was it hard for you to explain some of the things that you'd been through? Was that ever a problem for you?

A: Well, we have -- we never -- she knew about it, you know, what she had me speak to other people and so on, and she didn't ask too many questions. But you know, belonging to that club that she belonged, that every boy there was a Holocaust survivor, not a refugee, not a Kindertransport, he was a Holocaust survivor. So she knew quite a lot about it without me telling her, you see? Then my children -- and even today my children ask more than she does because she knows most of it, you know, and --

Q: Did you ever have -- did you ever hesitate telling your children, or do you think that your children ever hes -- hesitated asking you?

A: Well, I think it was both. I -- for the first, I would say 25 years, very few of us Holocaust survivors spoke about it, whether it was [indecipherable] I think there's many reasons, you know. When we first survived and came to this country, we were 15 - 16 year olds, you know, would people believe us if we told them, you know? They would say well, you know, kids exaggerate, children, oh it's a lot of nonsense, you know. And then, you know, we were so wrapped up in -- in work and in marriage and in bringing up a family, now are we going to tell the children? Is it fair to tell the children what you went through? But the children started reading. My two daughters at least, you know, that's t -- watching films and -- and then asking questions, you know, and they realized what it was. And then, you know, the time came that some of us decided we've got to do is talk about it, you know. And my two daughters insisted on going to Auschwitz, and going to Lódz where I'm -- was born. They wanted to see we -- I'm very close to my daughters and I -- they are very close to me and they wanted -- I said -- I said, why do you want to go? You -- you know all about it, you've seen it, you've read about it. They said no. We want to feel what you went through. I said, that's not a -- what for? Anyway, they -- they said if I don't go, after time and again refusing, you know, they said right, we go alone. So I

said I can't allow that, so we all went. And it was one of the better things I did in life, by doing it, because I felt then that I owe it to people -- I owe it to the people that did not survive when I speak to young students, I say -- when they ask me, why do you come and give talks? Surely it hurts you, you -- brings back memories. I said, doesn't matter what it does, I said, there are -- there were families, you know, that not one member of them survived. Now who is going to tell their story? Because all the stories are very similar, you know? So I decided then that I want to do a lot before it's too late. I don't know how long I've still got. So for the last sort of 15 years, 20 years, I've been going more and more to speak to students mainly, you know, to tell them what happened because of hatred, bigotry, anti-Semitism, racism, and the main -- the main thing I tell them is hate. And I insist -- my last two words to the students is, do not hate. And never give in, never give up. I don't hate and I certainly didn't give up. I'm not saying that's why I survived, but I feel it -- it's a little bit of a reason why, maybe. The rest -- 99 percent is -- was luck. It wasn't that I was clever, it wasn't such a -- that I was such a good person or something. No, it was luck and never have the -- the willpower, maybe, to live.

Q: You mentioned that when you went to -- back to Poland, that you went to Auschwitz.

A: Yes.

Q: And that your grandson was with you and that he was the same age --

A: Yes, he was 16, you know, he was the youngest of my grandsons. He was 16, of course, I was 14 and a half, was there. I went, was for the 60th anniversary of liberation of Auschwitz.

Q: What was that like, how did he react?

A: He -- he wrote about it and he really -- I -- I was very happy that I took him, you know, because where we were standing on the last day in Auschwitz, with the snow falling, 18 below zero an-and he wrote an article, I've got it here and I certainly will give it to you. It's a very short

article, and he says how he felt standing there, and he wanted to come over to me and say, Grandpa, can we go now, you know, in the coach to go back to Kraków because I'm so cold. And then I thought, I've got two pair of trousers, three pair of socks, two coats -- a pullover, a coat and a hat, boots. And he said -- and in it he says, and then, I thought, there were people like my grandfather here wearing lit -- like pajamas, standing in that cold. How can I go to my grandfather and tell him that I am cold? And he didn't, and I didn't know about it til I came back to England and I found the article, my daughter gave me the article wrote, and it was published in a magazine as well afterwards, you know, and I felt -- I felt very proud of him. Like I do about all my grandchildren, you know, and --

Q: What's his name?

A: Elliot Stern. Yes, he's -- he's very, very much. He's one of them -- they're all interested in it. I think he's -- might be more. He comes, tries to listen to those things, you know, and asks questions, you know. A-Another one of my grandson wrote an article -- wrote a play on the Holocaust. He is now finishing university, but he was taking the A levels -- I'm sure you know what the A level is, that's the last exams the last two years before you go to university. And for that -- so he wrote an article that -- for his -- on the Holocaust and he performed. There were seven boys performing [indecipherable] and it was very good. And he asked me very little about it, so he must have gone on the internet or books or -- he knew a lot from me without me telling him. And he did well on it. So yes, he's good. But I was gl -- you asked me before about me going back to Auschwitz. He was very good because, you know, I saw things that I've never saw when I was in Auschwitz. There was no way I could see those things, you know, you didn't walk around. And first of all, I was in biren -- Birkenau and Auschwitz is just the -- the -- today the exhibition place, you know, where you see everything and we all cried, especially when I saw

that room under glass with th -- with the babies, with the children's toys and toothbrushes and little spectacles, little shoes. And we hugged and we all cried. Said listen, under different circumstances that could have been my children's things, you know, and -- and they were somebody's children's things and it's -- it's tragic, you know, it's -- it -- it was one of the worst things. But when I stood in the tower of Auschwitz [indecipherable] you know, where the things are, and I said to my kids, you see, whatever Hitler wanted to do, he did not achieve the end. We won, he lost. Unfortunately, six million people died, but -- Jews, I mean, I -- like I said before, other people died.

Q: Let's take a break.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: -- question about your stepfather. You came into this family, he didn't know you, he'd never met you, he'd probably heard stories about you before. What was it like -- when you mentioned that it was, you know, a little -- you had trouble feeling like your mother was your mother, but how was it for your stepfather?

A: It was ver -- he was -- he was a very good man, he was a very nice man. He certainly treated me like his own son. Whether he knew much about me, I don't think so, for a simple reason; my mother didn't know much about me. She didn't know what I was, what person I was. Listen, I certainly, at 16 or almost 17 wasn't the same person that she left in Poland when she left us. So I don't know what he knew about me, you know. My mother certainly didn't know what she's getting herself into when I came to England. What is he going to be like, you know, as a person.

Q: They didn't have children of their own?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: So you were it.

A: I was it -- no, well the funny thing is he was married before and he had children and one of the boys lived with my mother during the war, you know. But then he left, I think he went to live with his brother and his mother somewhere in South America, Argentina, I think, or Brazil, I'm not quite sure, but --

Q: And what was your stepfather's name?

A: Joseph Kilberg. Joe Kilberg. And he was very good, he was a -- he treated my grandchil -- my chil-children, his grandchildren, like his own grandchildren, you know. He loved them to bits and -- unfortunate --

Q: Was he Jewish?

A: Pardon?

Q: Was he Jewish?

A: Yes, very much so, Polish Jew, very much so. But he left Poland, you know, well before the war, you know, he must have left Poland in the 20's, or something like it. But I don't know much about the background, you know. I know he didn't come from Lódz where I come from. I know very little about his sons and his ex -- first wife I also know -- he never discussed it, I never asked the question, but I knew there were two boys, you know. And --

Q: Okay, couple more questions. You mentioned that you had the opportunity to meet the queen.

A: Yes.

Q: And was that in your capacity with --

A: No. Well, it was -- you see, it was funny, because it's a very, very similar thing that you got here. We -- in -- a few years ago the -- the museum, the Holocaust Museum was opened in the Imperial War Museum in London and the quee -- queen was invited to open the museum and when it was finished she was leaving, she was coming across to meet people and the president of the museum, or -- Englishman, that is the -- was involved in the Holocaust Museum, must have said something to her, whispered something, that there are some survivors here, and she came over and she shook hands with us, you know, with a few of us, and I was one of them that she shook hands with me and through my work for the Holocaust Education Trust I was invited to her garden party, that was the second time. But years and years ago, quite a long time ago, I was,

through the work I was doing for Save the Children Fund, my wife and I were also invited to the garden party. But that was a long time ago. So -- so --

Q: Same queen -- same queen.

A: Same queen, much younger, you know, but same queen. No, I -- I -- I felt -- I was honored. You know, to meet the head of state, you know, i -- I wouldn't like to meet Mugabi of -- or people like that, but to meet -- I should call her by the right name, Her Majesty, the Queen, you know, it was a big honor. It was a big honor for me to meet Gordon Brown, whatever I think of him or don't think of him, you know. I didn't tell him whether I'm going to vote for him or not, you know. But no, I felt, as a Holocaust survivor, you know, I felt it's not only I was invited, most -- I was representing the Holocaust survivors, not only me, and I can tell you one thing, I think my two daughters are more proud of the thing. Everybody I -- people ring me up and you know and it's friends of my daughters'. Oh, you met the queen, oh, you met -- oh, you're going to Washington, oh, that's --

Q: Well tell me more about your work with the Holocaust Education Trust.

A: Well, the Holocaust Education Trust is -- was formed, oh about 10 years ago by -- it started by a rabbi, not Holocaust Education Trust, but he decided -- a local rabbi, Barry Markus, in London, and he took a group of people to Auschwitz for the day and then somehow they got together with a group of other people and they decided to form a Holocaust Education Trust, which is a working people, it's not a -- they work there full time, and what they do, they also teach teachers about the Holocaust. Teachers that have retired, or they want to be in teaching profession any more, and they devote their time for that. They do it -- they get paid for it, naturally, otherwise they couldn't do it. And they do seminars for young people. But the Holocaust Education Trust is mainly interest in taking young people to Auschwitz. Now that,

after that rabbi, Rabbi Barry Markus did that, they decided they would be able -- they can afford to take two groups of children, around 200 people -- there would be like 160 children. There'll be teachers from each school. Because it's not as a school, it's about 80 schools. They take two students from a school, you see, local, in London, plus teachers, plus journalists. And they take them just for one day, they go very early in the morning and come back late. And they go to Auschwitz, they go to birk -- to Kraków, Auschwitz and Birkenau. The main thing is Auschwitz and Birkenau. And they come back and they've got the bef -- but, so what I do, or people like me, we come and talk to them, because they know very little about the Holocaust. They know very little about the second World War. But now it's a thing that they've got to learn in school, it's -- it's a must, it's not whether they want or not. But how much is not -- doesn't come into it because how much they can just learn one hour in three months about the Holocaust. So they go -- so by doing -- what the Holocaust Education Trust does is they bring them -- they get them together, and they listen to a Holocaust survivor. Then they get another seminar, then they go to Auschwitz and when they come back they go to write about it, what they thought of it, what they -- the whole thing and they've got to send it in to the Holocaust Education Trust, and a panel sits then pick four schools of two children each and they got to come back to the Houses of Parliament or to the House of Lords, here in -- and start presenting their stories, what they think, they're int -- they're interviewed, they ask questions, you know, and usually some of the survivors are also there, a few of us. And then one of them is voted as ambassadors of the year. So what they have to do, they've got to go to other local schools and tell them all what they saw, what they heard. And being young people I am very much involved in it because I lungya -- I like young people, and I think it's very, very imporstant they should know what happened, because -- and they are lovely students, most of them. I've never had any problems, you know?

It's as quiet as anything, you know, and I talk to them for about an hour or so and they ask questions and -- you know, and --

Q: What kind of questions do they ask?

A: Well, all different. Some are a bit silly ones, you know, like naturally young people, they want to know whether I met Hitler, you know. I haven't been invited to tea by Hitler, but -- but that th -- one of the main question, it's always asked is, do I hate the German people. And they cannot understand when I tell them no, I do not hate the German people. Why should I hate people for -- most probably the people that they think I should hate are not alive today. You know, they're grandparents. And most German people are the same as any other people. Why should I blame something -- body for what their grandfather did, you know? Do I ask me -- do I forgive them? Now the people that did it, I haven't got the right to forgive. If there is a God, God can forgive them. The others are the people that died can forgive. I certainly haven't got the right to forgive, but I certainly do not hate, and I beg of you, when I talk to them, do not hate. Because this is not an answer, to hate. You are the one that will suffer if you hate. So no, I -- I love the questions. Some, like I said, are silly, but some are very [indecipherable] how they -- the usual thing, how did you survive? I wish I could tell them. I don't know. It's one of those things. People that are -- there are some students that are religio -- religious and they, do you think God wanted you to stand -- to stay -- to save you so that you can tell the story? I said maybe, I don't know. But I feel it's very important it should be told. We've got to have awareness of what happened.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because you know, in another few years there won't be -- the only thing you'll be able to do is to read about us, what happened to the people in Europe between 1933 and 1945. There won't

be anybody, you know, to substantiate the story. So people say well, is it true, is it not, and you can be the one to say, well, I met a Holocaust survivor. I have been to Auschwitz, I have seen with my own eyes. And I feel that's important.

Q: Thank you very much for sharing your story with the Holocaust Museum.

A: Well, it was -- it was really -- I don't know whether pleasure's the right word, but it was certainly my duty. The more people I tell it to, the more I am satisfied and I am happy about it with -- especially with the feedback I get, which makes me very happy that people do listen.

Q: Mm. Well, thank you for telling your story to us today.

A: It has been a pleasure.

Q: Thank you.

A: Thank you.

End of Tape Six

Conclusion of Interview