

Interview with Aron Derman
March 4, 1993
Telephone Interview

- Q: State your name and date of birth and place of birth.
- A: First name first?
- Q: Yes.
- A: Aron and the last name is Dereczynski, D-e-r-e-c-x-y-n-s-k-i.. My name is now Derman, D-e-r-m-a-n. Born?
- Q: Yes, when were you born?
- A: 5/5/1922.
- Q: Where were you born?
- A: Slonim, S-l-o-n-i-m, Poland.
- Q: Okay. Why don't we start from you telling me a little bit about your family background growing up in Slonim.
- A: The family background is -- my father was a small businessman. His name was Chaim. My mother's name was Merke, M-e-r-k-e. They had a store and a -- small businessman.
- Q: What did they sell in the store?
- A: They were selling yard goods and clothing there. We were four children. I had three sisters. The oldest sister was named Libby, L-i-b-b-y; then I came, C-r-o-n; then another sister after me, Fagel, F-a-g-e-l; and then the youngest sister was Edcia, E-d-c-i-a. A middle class family, Jewish middle-class family; traditional Jews, not religious but we did --. Well not what we would call ultra-religious, well we were religious, I mean we were going to synagogue. My father used to lay tfillin and would pray every single day. On Saturday, Friday night and Saturday, we used to go to shul.
- Q: Can you remember some stories maybe about growing up as a child there in Slonim and about the Jewish community there?
- A: Well, the Jewish community I lived in about 80%, the total population was about 13,000, 14,000 and over 10,000, 11,000 were Jews. The majority of the town

were Jews. So life was -- the anti-Semitism came in later -- but most of the time we had a much easier time because most of the population were Jewish. The professionals were almost 90% Jews -- the doctors, the lawyers and the same thing with the tradesmen, the shoemakers and the carpenters, the tailors were all -- most of them Jews.

Q: How were the relations with the Polish community, the small Polish community?

A: It was not, well, the relation was pretty good. It wasn't -- it was all right. But then in the later years, in 1939, '38, '39, anti-Semitism started. We had a very like organized anti-Semitism was coming. Partially was coming from the church and partially was coming from foreigners when they came in to build the dam. What a dam! Poles from different parts of the country came into our town and they -- was like organized anti-Semitism. So life was getting much harder but we still had the power. We were strength -- our strength was the majority and this is the way we kept our strength. We were pretty safe yet at that time.

Q: Did your family live in town?

A: Yes, we lived in the town and in summers we used to go out on vacations. My mother especially, she always used to go away for the whole summer to a resort place. We kids followed and we were there with them.

Q: Did you have other family in Slonim?

A: Yes. We had quite a family. We had uncles and aunts. Well, one uncle and three aunts and we had quite a few cousins. So we had quite a family that lived there for many, many years, for generations.

Q: Can you tell me about your schooling?

A: My schooling? Yes, I went to _____. I mean I went to _____, that was the Jewish school. _____ was the name. From there I went to _____.

Q: Was that elementary school?

A: Elementary school.

Q: Was that a Jewish elementary school?

A: Yes. Then after -- then, well you can help Lisa, you can say if you remember certain things. (Female voice: I was at Slonim too. I was at Slonim during the ghetto but what I wanted to add to Aron's, if you don't mind if I say something).

Q: No. I don't mind at all.

- A: Okay. (Female voice continues: That Slonim was known. It was a very fine center of Jewish learning. They had a very famous yeshiva. The rabbi of Slonim was in Poland, renown. They had a lot of, a lot of religious schools and a lot of shuls in Slonim. When you talked about Slonim, about _____, there weren't that many Hasidic in Slonim, there were some but not many. Mostly were _____. But it was very, very well-known, a center of Jewish learning. They had a Jewish gymnasium in Slonim, a tarbut). Well, my education after I went to tarbut, after tarbut I went to ---.
- Q: Tarbut was like a junior high school or---?
- A: Yes, but all Hebrew. (All the subject were taught in Hebrew). All the subjects were taught in Hebrew. Then we only had one hour, two hour, we had Polish, Polish language.
- Q: You went there through high school?
- A: Yes, well to ---. No, it wasn't high school yet. No a high school for us was a much higher _____. Well, I was still young at that time. But I finished the tarbut.
- Q: And what years were you in junior high school?
- A: Up till 1938. In 1938 I applied to Agricultural School in Palestine. The Youth Aliyah. I was accepted and I was supposed to leave for Palestine and the Workmen Council.
- Q: So you were on your way almost?
- A: Yeah, I was a very, well-accepted. I was to be in the place where I was supposed to go was Bet Shammos in Israel.
- Q: Did you have friends who went already?
- A: Yes, now I belonged to a Hashomer Hatzair. It's a youth Zionist organization.
- Q: During the thirties?
- A: During the thirties. My youth, I was probably about nine, or ten years old till the war. So I had a lot of friends what they belonged to the same organization. Our plan was eventually to emigrate to Israel, it was Palestine then.
- Q: Right.

- A: Zionism was all my life, a Zionist. I was reading from he first minute and I came out after school and spend all the time with my friends in Hashomer Hatzair. Can you probably know where the can is?
- Q: Yes.
- A: We stand there holding -- given most of the evening. Then on Friday night, Saturday nights and in the summer we used to go to _____, summer camp.
- Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about what kind of activities you did there?
- A: In the Hashomer Hatzair?
- Q: Yes.
- A: Also was intellectual. We were speaking politics; we were speaking about Zionism; about the leaders in Zionism and the kibbutz; everything about Palestine. Most everything, eventual we'll have, what-do-you-call-it, a national home. We were hoping that some day it would come, we would have a national home.
- Q: Can you tell me a little bit about the period right before the war? Maybe we could get into a little bit more detail.
- A: For example? You can tell me what ---. Well, what would you like to know about -- right before the war?
- Q: Yes. Tell me about what the atmosphere was like.
- A: The atmosphere right before the war was like I was saying, anti-Semitism was starting about that time. it was getting much stronger.
- Q: Can you give me an example?
- A: For example, we were going in the return. My sisters were -- we had the streets where we used to parade. That's like a _____. It was the street where all the Jews every evening, especially on Saturdays, where everybody used to come and walk on the sidewalk back and forth. (Parading). Parading, like parading.
- Q: Like a boardwalk, sort of?
- A: Yes, that's right, exactly. My sisters came home one evening. Somebody slashed their coats with razor blades. That's one incident. Another incident was ---.
- Q: Who were these people?

A: (Anti-Semites).

Q: Were these Poles that lived in your town or ---?

A: We don't know, we don't know. Probably this was already from the Poles from the town because it was only done by young hoods. Then already you could find that they could catch somebody on the street on the side street and they were beating him up. This already happened and we didn't have it anything before and that was _____.

Q: Do you remember anything happening to you specifically, before the war?

A: To me, specifically, no. it's not -- no anti-Semitism, no I did not have any special.

Q: All the students in your school were, of course, Jewish then?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit, were you worried? I mean did you worry about the war before it broke out?

A: Yes.

Q: How were people reacting and what were people doing?

A: They were talking because we did a lot of politics when we were -- when we used to get together on the evenings and our leader used to talk about it. Mainly especially about the ways to explore the situation, what's happening in Poland. At the same time to be more, true Zionist. They used to bring out the evenings, what happening, not only in Slonim, the same thing is happening all over Poland. How anti-Semitism was getting stronger and starting to flourish. We were worried that the work, that business, I mean already we start worrying. We heard on the personal level, they used to picket, what you call pickets?

Q: Protest?

A: {Jewish stores}.

Q: Boycott?

A: Boycott, yeah. They used to start already boycotting our store.

Q: When was this?

- A: That was in 1938. The end of '38, starting about '39 right before the war. {You know the saying in Polish, 'When you _____' "Don't buy from the Jews'}. Don't buy from the Jews and then they start already organizing Polish stores where they didn't have any before. Or we had very few before. They had like a cooperative stores open up. To tell in the church, they used to tell the Poles and the farmers and the White Russians because it was an area where the White Russians stood, to tell them not to go to shop in the Jewish stores.
- Q: During sermons at church?
- A: Yes, during sermons at church, they used to tell them not to shop in Jewish stores. They used to picket some of them, how do you call it? {Boycott}. Boycott, not to buy_____, not to buy any merchandise from the Jews.
- Q: Were you concerned about the events that were in Germany too? Did that enter into your --?
- A: Yes, we were, because we used to have already people from --. Already we had refugees from Germany. They came into Poland when Hitler came to power in 1937, '36. '37. The German Jews, some of them, ran away and some of them maybe had Polish citizenship, so they sent them back to Poland and we heard all these stories what's happening. At church they speak, the newspapers _____.
- Q: So you were very aware?
- A: Oh yes, we were very aware.
- Q: Were these discussions, did they carry over from your youth group into your family and into the synagogue? Were they restricted more_____.
- A: Yes, yes. I used to talk with them in the house, discuss in house. My parents were born in Slonim. They lived all their lives and their parents, their grandparents, lived all the time in Poland. There was no way to emigrate to any other place. To Israel, it was impossible to emigrate . {To Palestine}. To Palestine.
- Q: Right.
- A: To America, they did not consider. Of course, we had a well-established business. We lived in a town where mostly Jews so they didn't suffer enough._____.
- Q: Tell me about the war when it broke out. Do you remember exactly what was happening?
- A: Yes, one day when it broke out the war, so planes already start flying over the city. Then immediately we organize like a self-defense but I know the self-

defense was to build bomb shelters. I volunteered, my father and we were building bomb shelters in a little park in front of the house

Q: What did you build them out of?

A: We built just a -- like dig ditches. Just to be able to -- if a bomb falls, it wouldn't hurt you because you're in a ditch. If an explosion would come, it would fall maybe a few meters away. you wouldn't get hurt. But who knows, that's a chance, that's what we were doing.

Q: So you were doing this after the planes flew over Poland?

A: Yes. Immediately when the war broke out. Lisa, you can come in, say whatever - - . {We also had to -- in all towns. It was _____, to put strips on the glass} Oh, yeah strips on the glass. {On the glass from shattering, you know. In case it shatters in the bombing}. So everybody put some paper in zigzag. {X's like} X on the glass in case a bomb falls, the glass won't shatter.

Q: Do you remember what it was like when the planes were flying overhead?

A: We were very scared, very worried. It was very frightening. We never seen anything like this before. It was the first experience we ever had with planes; we didn't have too many planes flying over Slonim before. We had a small little airport not far away but very seldom you could see planes flying there. German planes were coning through, coming that side, the confusion on the streets, panic on the street. Especially Jews were very, very concerned. Because in our mind, we knew that Poland is not going to be able to survive against the Germans.

Q: What happened in those following days?

A: What happened in those following days --When did the Russians come? How far was it before --. I know September 21st the war broke out. July? {No, the war broke out September 1st}.

Q: September 1st.

A: September 1st; a few days later the Russians came in. They occupied our town. The excitement was ---Can you hold on?

Q: I'm going to pause the recorder.

A: I'm through. I knew I'm going to expect a telephone call.

Q: Okay. Let's talk a little about the Russian invasion. Tell me what that was like.

- A: All right. The Russians invasion, we were terribly excited. We were very, very excited and happy that at least the Russians are here so the Germans are not -- won't invade our town. On the way in, another incident is, I jumped out when the first tanks came in. The Russians invited us to come in on top of the tank. I was very excited because they picked me up and I, with another few friends of mine, we drove in. It was almost a little bit not the outskirts, it was a part of the town. We drove in with him to the middle of -- to the center of the city on the tank. They took us on top of it and we were overjoyed, very excited.
- Q: People came out to greet the tanks?
- A: Yes, everybody came out, especially Jews. All the Jews came out, with tanks, the Russians. At that time they were very friendly to us and they told us not to worry. The front line is already far ahead and in fact they didn't fight because it was-- they made out a deal with the Germans. They would cover one part of Poland and the Germans would take another part. There were no battles at that time, very exciting times.
- Q: After that, did your school continue as usual?
- A: Yes. Then I enrolled in a technical school.
- Q: Was this a Soviet school?
- A: A Soviet school, a Soviet technical school and I knew that my time for going to Palestine was almost over but I didn't. I took my chances I went from Slonim. I went to Vilna on a train with the underground from Hashomer Hatzair.
- Q: Now you were trying to go to Israel, to Palestine now?
- A: Yes.
- Q: What date was this?
- A: That was 19____, I don't know exactly. I can figure out, well it could be in the forties, 1940, early 1940. I went with a friend of mine. We were sent to Vilna, make some connections with the_____.
- Q: How many people?
- A: I went with 21. But I run out of_____, 15 or 20 fellows.
- Q: You were all planning to emigrate?
- A: We were all planning, yes. So we start to still work like a little underground organization. Underground, we're still talking about going to Palestine. So I

went to Vilna. I was in Vilna for about two days and then the leadership over there decided that they still need us in the occupied territory. I should return to Slonim and work with the underground so I followed that. I start going back, they left us on the border.

Q: On the border?

A: On the border between Lithuania and White Russia. Then after they arrested me, then I went back to Slonim.

Q: Who arrested you?

A: The Russians.

Q: Why?

A: Well, they thought ---, I don't know, they suspect me as a spy. But they couldn't get anything and there wasn't any spy so they after two days, they released us and we went back to Slonim. In Slonim back, I enrolled to technical school and after I finished technical school, went by a year. After the year they sent me out to pay back. So it was -- my job was to show who is, in the small towns. They gave me a truck with a projector with some electricity because they didn't have any electricity in the farms or small towns. That was my job.

Q: Was this around Slonim still?

A: It was approximately, was real ---. First I was in _____ and _____ Was not far from Slonim. I worked over there until they _____.

Q: Did you continue our activities with the underground while you were in the technical school and while you were working?

A: Yes, while I was in the technical school, yes.

Q: What kind of things did you do?

A: We were talking with each other, we didn't do any sabotage but we were just dreaming and talking that one day, maybe, we'll find a way how we can, we can find a way to go to Palestine. I didn't know if I waited some directions, somebody would come from some place. Could be from Poland, could be from Lithuania, could be from Russia because a lot of Jews ran away to Russia. It was an underground from Russia to Palestine. Going out, we didn't know, but it was. We met some friends what they had the underground deep in Russia not far from _____. {Black Sea and then they went by way of Romania to Palestine}. It was the underground.

- Q: So you were hoping that you would be contacted to do the same?
- A: Yes, we were hoping that we will be contacted because we could not make any other contacts. We were waiting that maybe someday we will be contacted.
- Q: Tell me about when the war broke out again.
- A: The war broke out again ---. Now you're talking about 1941.
- Q: When Germany___?
- A: Germany, Russia.
- Q: Or do you want to say anything about maybe when you were working in the towns or ____?
- A: Well, I was --. Well, I had one incident when I was working in the towns. This would take too long, it's not so terribly important.
- Q: Okay. Where was your family during all this? Were they still in Slonim?
- A: My family was still in Slonim; they got jobs. My father could no get a job because he was a businessman; he was stamped a businessman. {It was an undesirable_____}. Undesirable so he got a place to protect it; he got a job as a watchman at night. Watchman in a little factory or whatever it was.
- Q: So your family's standard of living was reduced?
- A: Standard of living was completely reduced. The only thing is we're still had merchandise but we hide it when the Russians came in. We hide like yard goods, so we still had something all the time to trade and still live a better life than {the average person under Russian occupation, they didn't have it}. We still had something left plus they were pretty well off before so we still had some money and some jewelry.
- Q: Did you see your family often while you were working?
- A: While I was working, yes. I used to come in, not so often, but quite a few times I came home. In fact, maybe I should tell you this first. I had one incident, like I say before. I had my own equipment to show the movies; I had a generator. I left the generator in a school and locked up the school. Somebody broke into the school and they stole the generator. In the time when I went, I didn't let him know, the weekend, I went to see my family, I went to Slonim. Came back and the generator was stolen. Now the main problem with stolen generator, you cannot replace it. You cannot go out and buy another one. [_____You can't

replace anything}. Cannot replace it. So the only thing I was awaiting is jail for negligence. The war broke out otherwise I would be in jail.

Q: It happened within weeks after --?

A: It happened in weeks before the war broke out. A few weeks before the war broke out. So almost the war saved me from going to jail. The war broke out; the night when the war broke out, I was on a date with a beautiful girl. At twelve o'clock, after midnight, I heard the artillery and the war started. I immediately after the date, I came home and even here, the shooting, the shelling was getting much heavier and I immediately packed my little knapsack and I start walking home with it.

Q: Walking home?

A: Walking. Only by foot, I could not go any other way. On the way a lot of things happened.

Q: You were walking from Grodno?

A: No from Oftryn. It's a small town where I worked.

Q: Can you spell that?

A: O-f-t-r-y-n. I'll try to find out maybe exactly. {yeah, that's the way you spell it}. So immediately I start going to the direction to see my family. I go back to Slonim. On the way already, the Germans were bombing the roads; the Russians were flying in trucks. The ones that were going were bombed. The villages were burning and the roads were clogged up. What more incident is that the Germans came with planes and start bombing the place where I was walking. It was a dogfight, the Russian planes came right to the place where the pilot parachuted. I was there when the Russians the ones that were walking too, were on foot. Four Russian soldiers were on foot running back to Russia, the border. I was there when they shoot the pilot.

Q: The German pilot?

A: The German pilot. It happened that they walk away and I went after and got his gun. I took his gun, hid his gun and I walked to my house, back to Slonim. On the way, all the villages were burning and it was safe to come home. In fact, it happened on the road. Until I came to Slonim. Slonim was already occupied by the Germans so immediately right before I came to the city, I threw away my gun, was a pistol. They arrested me and they ---. Every male in Slonim they arrested.

Q: Jewish male?

A: No, every male.

Q: Every male, period?

A: Every male. Mainly they were looking for ---. I was lucky that my _____ particularly, wasn't that important. I had my hair, now I'm bald headed but at that time I had hair. {A lot of it}. A lot of it and hair was very important. Because anybody who was a soldier, who was in the army, had a crew cut. So they knew that I'm not a soldier. Immediately they arrested me and they put me in a big yard, with the rest of Russian prisoners, a schoolyard. Then after the next day, they announced that anybody who is younger than a certain age, 15, 16 years old and I looked young, could go home. So I went. I was one of them to be a youngster and to run home. So they set up a place where you can run out and they were beating up each one as he was passed by so they can have any place where they can hit. But being a kid, they jumped over the gun what they had, the rifles and I got back to my house. When I came to the house, it's another story but an important story. I came to the house. I didn't see my family for maybe a couple of months. It was, if I'm not mistaken a Friday night. It was Friday. I came in the house. It was not Friday. They made a real nice dinner for me, the ben yorlin. If you notice, I have three sisters, I was the ben yorlin.

Q: The only son, yes.

A: Only son. I assume that you understand.

Q: Right but I'll just translate it.

A: I was the ben yorlin. The ben yorlin came home so they made a nice dish, a nice dinner. Then I told them a little bit of my story, what I went through. Before we had a chance to go to sleep, we could hear -- the dark at night -- we could hear fighting going on in our yard. It was like a ---{orchard in the back of the house}. Yes, our orchard was, not a yard --.

Q: A courtyard?

A: A courtyard. {A courtyard} It was a small little courtyard. All of a sudden we could hear the shooting and the fighting that was going on and before we turn around, the house was a wooden house, the house was on fire. We grabbed shingles on top, we could have _____ tracking the shingles. So my father says, thank God, it's raining. It wasn't raining, it was striking on the shingles before we had a chance to put out the fire. We ran out the house, not to be burned -- we took the chance to run out in the middle of the fight. After we -- immediately some were arrested by the Germans right there in the yard. After the fight was over in the morning, they selected anybody who didn't have any hair. They thought --, well short haircut..

- Q: Who was fighting in the courtyard?
- A: The Germans and Russians. {A unit of Russian army that was dislocated somewhere. Ended up --}.
- Q: They took them to your courtyard?
- A: {In the courtyard and they started a fight with the Germans}. They didn't know that they were surrounded.
- Q: The Russians started the fight?
- A: Yeah, they were all killed, the Russians were killed. {They were all killed}. The Russians were killed and then they took everybody from our courtyard. {They were all Jews}. All Jews, the men came out, anybody with short haircuts, or short hair, they took him and the rest of us, me and my father, a few other men, they made us to dig a ditch. A big hole, a big grave and they shoot the rest of the people, the Jews, a few Russians, they shoot everybody on the place. They bury them in our yard. That was my first experience with the Germans in my hometown.
- Q: Now, let me just clarify. How many of the soldiers were there in the courtyard? Was it a small troop or --?
- A: You mean, how many were fighting?
- Q: Yes.
- A: I wouldn't know but I would say maybe 30, 40. Small --.
- Q: Then how many people were arrested at that time?
- A: Arrested, probably, maybe another six or eight Jews from the courtyard.
- Q: So in other words, your family and a few other people?
- A: Yes, yes. But what I mean is that six or eight of them, they killed. The women and the children, the rest of them they didn't touch. The only thing the men without hair, Jewish men.
- Q: Whether or not they were in this group of Soviets?
- A: No, they were not at all. They were --. {The Soviets wore uniforms so they could identify that they are soldiers}. No, the soldiers you could see that they were with uniforms.

- Q: The rest of the Jews with short hair, they thought they might have been soldiers?
- A: No, they were civilian population but they thought maybe somebody changed their clothes. So that's why they were looking for ---.
- Q: Your mother and your sisters weren't arrested?
- A: They were -- well I would call it arrested because they keep them in one place and they had a guard. They didn't take us to a building and arrested in some place. They just put a guard against us.
- Q: They shot the Soviet soldiers and then the few Jews that had the short hair, they shot as well.
- A: Yes, They made after the big place, they make a hole and bury them, bury the people. That was in our yard. We just had a small little yard made for vegetables. _____ farther away.
- Q: Tell me about what happened to your family after that. Was your house burned?
- A: Yes, the house burned and it happened we had another house in another part of the city. We went to this house and we went to _____; some people were living over there but they let us in. We were with the other people. It was approximately a mile away.
- Q: These people were renting the house?
- A: Renting the house. Because they kept this house, my parents bought a _____ for a dowry. It was for two sisters. It was a two-plex. Said they would give it for a -- a duplex I mean.. {A duplex}.
- Q: Two houses together?
- A: Under one roof. Took them to give for a dowry some day when the girls are going to get married, they'll give them _____.
- Q: So you moved in there and then --?
- A: We moved in there with other people and we stayed there until the next encounter what we got was --. The Germans, maybe a month or six months later, the Germans came in. They called it the _____. They came in and they grabbed only men and took out the head of the family, the man. They went through house to house and they grabbed the men. {Just Jews, just Jews}. Just Jewish, Jewish male. The male was 16 or 18 years old. They grabbed him and they took him to the market. We didn't have a chance, one day, the house was burnt.

- Q: So you didn't have any of your clothes or anything?
- A: {Nothing, nothing. They just ran out of the house}. Just ran out, we didn't have anything. {As they were}. The only thing is what we had, we had some cloth what we buried in the ground to hide from the Russians. This, we still have because it was hidden in the ground so we still have that. The other encounter what I had was that they took out 1,500 men. It was my father and I was one of them. They took us to the marketplace surrounded by Germans all the way around and we didn't know where they were taking us. They told us they're taking us for labor. A few hours later, trucks were coming in through the courtyard and the same thing happened in the courtyard because we had some real important Jews from the community leaders. The rabbi, the chassan and some other community leaders were there too so they were beating them up, were telling them to sing Sh'ma Yisroel, other Jewish songs and told us why don't you sing to your God. Maybe your God will help you. All the time _____ Trucks were coming in and we were loading up the trucks, about 35 or 40 people on every truck and took them away. I went for a few minutes, it was a very hot day in the summer, so I went in the back to get running water.
- Q: In the marketplace?
- A: In the marketplace. It was a big _____, a theater.
- Q: A theater?
- A: Yes, a theater next to the wall. One wall was a theater and it was spigot over there where water was coming. I was so thirsty so I went to get some water. Meanwhile I could see that before I could come back, I could see already my father getting up to be taken away. By that time, I didn't go back to the front of the line. I was standing all behind it. About three o'clock, exactly three o'clock the German high officer came and he said that anybody left here will be able to go home.
- Q: So you just kept standing in the back of the line?
- A: Yes. The action was over. They took 1,200 men, 300 were left. I was one of the 300. The 1,200 they took out about five kilometers away, shot and killed. Found out after that they made a pact (PAUSE IN TAPE). They made them to write letters to their family.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1.

- A: ___Wife didn't believe so he took a chance and there were always some kind of stories and _____ five kilometers away. Some of them went out at night and the place where some partisans were telling them and they found the clothes, they

found their glasses, clothes, food, _____. They recognized that the people were killed.

Q: So they found out what happened?

A: They found out what happened.

Q: Let me make sure that this working well.

A: Okay, the second time what happens to me I'm going to skip it and I'm going to the part of the liquidation of Slonim.

Q: Okay, just tell me in a very broad outline, the creation of the ghetto. We can just go in very quickly but I want to cover it a little bit.

A: Then after they organized they told everybody, they gave them a certain part of the city where it was most of the time it was ----. {In the beginning it wasn't in the worst part of town and there were no barbed wire in the beginning }. But they told us you cannot well, yeah, we're going to skip it and go to the ghetto already. In the beginning, it was no ghetto and you could move around from one place to another till it happened' till November 29, when was the action? {First action in Slonim was on November 14, 1941. First big mass murder}. But the ghetto was probably sometime in the late summer.

Q: Of '42?

A: { '41}. Forty-one.

Q: So it was November 14, 1940?

A: {Forty-one, the big massacre in Slonim. They killed 10,000 Jews}. We're talking now everything we are talking is already '41.

Q: This is after the ghetto was created?

A: Yes, well in 1941, in September when the Russians came in, that was -- no, no, the Germans took it over. When was that? {June, 1941}. June, 1941 they took it out, the Germans came in. But it was still free. The Jews could still move around. Then in the late summer, I don't remember when it was but maybe it looks like probably in October, {No, earlier than that because we were _____ already}. All right, so maybe in September. {In summer, no, earlier in August}.

Q: August?

A: {In August they cut off part of the neighborhood on the outskirts where the Jews lived because we lived on the outskirts of Slonim. They moved everybody into

the city. We had to abandon our place and come in close into the city to the Jewish quarters}. So the ghetto was in September, 1941? {'41, yes, but it was no barbed wires at first. It was an open ghetto they called it. All of us had to wear yellow patches, not Stars of David, but a round patch, a yellow one in front of the garment and in the back. We were restricted to walk around in the neighborhoods where we were sent from, that were not part of the Jewish ghetto even though there was no barbed wires}.

Q: But if you were found, you would be arrested?

A: {If you were found, you would be punished. Then before the first action in Slonim, before the big massacre, they again shrank the ghetto, the perimeter of the ghetto. Again they made it smaller but it still was not very sealed off. Already they had barbed wire but loose}. But then we had the ghetto, we have four ghettos, divided by the river. {The river flowed through the town}. The river flowed through the town so the one with the larger ghetto and three small ones; all divided by a bridge and the river. So it was all four sides. One side {from the other}. Small ghettos but they were all connected with a bridge. The same bridge, the Poles used the same bridge. They had to pass by because it's part of the city.

Q: Could you go freely among the different parts of the ghetto?

A: Yes. {Yes, until it was sealed. At that time, that Aron is talking about, yes you could walk freely}. You could still walk freely.

Q: This was still in 1941?

A: {Forty-one}.

Q: Then at the end of the year was this big massacre?

A: Yes, the big massacre came in November 14, 1941.

Q: It was hot that day, you say?

A: Yeah, it was hot. It was --. That time they killed 10,000 Jews.

Q: Just tell me because I think I want to write about this story on the ID card. It was already fall in terms of seasons or was it winter already.

A: Yeah, it was already November 14th.

Q: So it was much hotter than usual?

A: Oh, November was already cold.

- Q: You said you went to get water because you were hot. So you were just thirsty?
- A: No, no. That was a different time, that wasn't this time. That time they only took 1,500 men. That was --.
- Q: Oh, I'm sorry. I was confused then. Okay. This happened maybe only a month after the occupation?
- A: The first one happened only a month after the occupation.
- Q: Okay, now it's clear in my mind.
- A: The 1,500 happened a month after the occupation. Then the other one happened on November 14 and they killed -- that time they took out 10,000 Jews and they killed them from 8 o'clock till 5. By chance I found out something is going to happen the next day.
- Q: How did you find out?
- A: Next to our house a photographer lived. The Germans used to come to take pictures for their wives. So they made friends with the photographer. That was not Nazis, was the regular Wehrmacht. This was Wehrmacht. So he told him a secret that something is going to happen tomorrow. The photographer told us something is going to happen. Plus another sign was that they gave special scheins to special tradesmen. They gave special permits. So that was a bad sign. All of a sudden they gave out special permits to tradesmen but we didn't know it, was no experience. We had no experience, we didn't know anything that this kind of thing is going to happen. But we were ready and worried why are they giving the _____ the different Jews, craftsmen, the scheins?
- Q: The skilled?
- A: {The skilled, exactly}. I immediately took my family, I was the head of the household, my father was killed. I took my family, my mother and three sisters and we went out of the ghetto and we stayed overnight in an empty house.
- Q: How did you get out of the ghetto?
- A: At that time, wasn't hard. It was -- the wires -- it was patrolled but it was {loosely} Loosely. It wasn't so heavily guarded. {Wasn't sealed}.
- Q: So you escaped into an abandoned house?
- A: In an abandoned house and we stayed there a night and a whole day. The next day we come back, half of the ghetto was taken out and killed. The rest of the

other half was back to normal. They told them -- {10,000 Jews were killed}. You can fill in Lisa, you can fill me in every ---. {I was at the graves. I was one of the people that came back from the massacre}. Lisa came back from the massacre but Lisa knows everything what I know. {They were shot and I was there in the ditch}.

Q: You were taken with your family?

A: No, I was hiding by a Christian woman.

Q: Oh, I remember now your story, yes.

A: {She would keep us and --}

Q: I remember now the story, yes.

A: That was Lisa's story. Okay ---.

Q: So you?

A: {Right where the Jews were killed was called Jepakova}.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: {C-i-e-p-e-l-o-w-o}.

Q: That was a forest?

A: {Yes, a forest. I imagine that the village probably was called Ciepelowo although this was the forest of Ciepelowo}. But they didn't kill them in the forest, they killed them next to the forest. {They killed them in the ditches near the forest}. Right next to the forest. In the forest you couldn't dig any holes.

Q: Did the Jews in the ghetto know what happened?

A: Yes, after. {Yes, we knew because people returned from the ditches. After}.

Q: People who hadn't been killed?

A: {Who hadn't been killed. But do you know what happened? They went in the hospital and the Nazis got to know that people survived and that they're there in the hospital. They came at night and took them out to kill them}.

Q: The wounded?

A: {The wounded}. How much more time do we have?

- Q: I just, you know. We'll just get through the story, that's fine. It's not a matter of time. If you want to --.
- A: Because we'll have to leave by 5:30.
- Q: Okay.
- A: We have a lot of _____. {Carmit, maybe you can call again}.
- Q: Let's just go until you want to stop and then if we're not done, I'll call back.
- A: All right.
- Q: If that's okay. After the massacre, your family went back into the ghetto?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Were you working in the ghetto at that time?
- A: Yes. I got a job in the ghetto and I belonged to the -- immediately joined -- we had the underground. Jewish underground. Part of them were my friends from the Hashomer Hatzair. We organized and our purpose was -- we didn't have a final purpose, resistance in the ghetto or _____ the forest. I was part of them and another incident what happened --. {Carmit, after the 10,000, they shrank the ghetto again to make it smaller}.
- Q: Right.
- A: I worked in the b_____lager. It was a place where they're accumulating --. The b_____lager was a big building and they took Jews from the ghetto to assort arms where they found in the fields the Russians left. They were repairing the arms and assorting the arms.
- Q: So you learned how to do that?
- A: I worked there and the head, the foreman was my friend's father. He was the foreman. We smuggled in, we sold the arms inside the ghetto. It was the biggest job to bring in arms to the ghetto. It was almost impossible because we were searched every time we came in back to the ghetto, you were searched. No question about it, if they find not only arms, they find food, they could get. Everything was in order, if anything was caught, everything was punishable by death. We took the chance to bring in arms. How did we do it is our foreman got acquainted with the two Germans, the ones that were the heads of our department. The two Germans, one his name Wutz, one was named Brown. Brown and Wutz. They promised to start doing business with him. What was the business?

Bringing in some valuables from the ghetto. In return, he would give him soaps. Soap, I don't know where the Germans got so much soap but they had boxes of soap. It was wooden boxes packed with soap. What we did is, we took out underneath, we took out part of the soap and we put in ammunition and grenades, part of arms, pistols, whatever we could find. We couldn't find too many pistols available, but just parts and we assembled them inside the ghetto. What we did is the foreman, you could not bring in the soap in the ghetto, how would you bring in the soap to the ghetto. So the Germans with the trucks when they took us home, he knew already the guards, the German guards at the entrance, they used to drive in with the truck in the ghetto. {and unload}.

Q: And he thought he was just giving you soap?

A: Exactly. He thought that somebody was using the soap for his business. That's the way we got arms. We were being organized until there came an order that we should go to the underground.

Q: What date?

A: That was the summer -- November 14 was the ghetto -- that was probably February of '42, the beginning of '42.

Q: Who gave this order?

A: I don't know, the underground, I don't know. The underground worked very secret. You don't know who belongs to it. You only know a few people around. You don't know the _____, you don't know how it works. The only thing --.

Q: You just get your order?

A: I got only the order that I should come to -- his name was Archibond. {Yes, he still lives in Israel, Aron's leader}. That I should come to Archibond's house at 7 o'clock in the evening. I came home from work and I got the order so I went there to the house. Something with me, I don't remember, a sweatshirt or shirt or sweater and a piece of bread because I had _____.

Q: Microphone fell off. It's back now. This organization was called _____? Is there a name?

A: Well we were only members of what-do-you-call members of Hashomer Hatzair.

Q: Okay. So you went to his house?

A: Yes. I went to his house and my mother followed. She found out all this stuff when I came home. She found out that I'm leaving _____. She came to the house and here and there with my friends, she comes in and she starts crying.

Nagging me, you're the only man in the house, how can you leave us? Only provider _____ not working_____. {TAPE VIRTUALLY UNINTELLIGIBLE HERE} My friends went away to the underground and I _____.

Q: Did they go to join the partisans?

A: Yes. _____. And I was left in the ghetto till I left this job. I found another job. I was working with _____ a big _____ warehouse where they were providing goods to the German army, in fact all the Germans to the Nazis, the _____, Gestapo, regular army. {Wehrmacht}. The Wehrmacht used to pass by to go the army. {Go to the front} Go to the front. It was a station where they stopped here. They picked them out the people, the first time, slave labor. Most of them, they picked only eight and I was one of the eight. I worked for them. I had a good job there till I found my girlfriend. We were all the time together.

Q: Lisa, were you working in the warehouse?

L: {No}

Q: How did you meet?

A: {We were neighbors in the ghetto. Aron lived kitty-corner}. I had a friend of mine lived next door to her. I went to visit to my friend and that's where I met Lisa. She was that time sixteen. {Fifteen. This was in the winter of 1941}. '41. {that's right}. So she was 15 and ---.

Q: So you met Lisa at the same time that your friends went and joined the partisans?

A: {That's right}. At the same time, yes. But after I got stuck. {Aron maybe would have survived but I don't know if I would have survived}.

Q: Without Aron?

A: {That's right}. I'm going to tell you an incident how we survived. I'm talking now in '42. Ten thousand Jews in the ghetto in July.

Q: Ten thousand Jews were left?

A: Left. It was June. {June 29th}. It came another action. They started to liquidate the ghetto. That time I worked at the p_____.

Q: In the what?

A: In the warehouse. I was working for the Germans. We had two officers, German captains and two or three regular Germans. {Wehrmacht, all Wehrmacht}. Was

no Gestapo, that was Wehrmacht. This was a very good job, very good pay in food, mainly food. I had plenty of food for me, had plenty of food for my girlfriend. Goodies like fried food, we could have everything when we were working there. You know, the Germans had plenty of food. On the job, we had all the food but on June 29, they surrounded the ghetto. They blocked up the ghetto; a special kommando came into the city and they announced nobody could go out to work. Nobody could go in or out of the ghetto. {By this time, the ghetto was already sealed. It was surrounded by barbed wires, tightly, with guards. It wasn't an open ghetto anymore}. It's no way you can get out. {No way you can get out}. No way you can get out of the ghetto. In the same evening, this was on a Sunday, the special kommando where they came into town, they needed schnapps. They needed liquor and rations, food. So they came to my boss, the officer, his name was Mr. Miller. They came to Miller and they asked him that he should give them, should go and give them ration of food. He told them I cannot give you any food unless you give me the eight Jews. {You release the eight Jews from the ghetto that work in my p_____, I'll give you the food. Because the Germans were only supervisors; they did the labor}. We did the labor; They didn't even now how to fill an order. {They had to unload also; it all came in huge quantities}. We had to unload so he told them he is going to take care of this. The next morning about six o'clock in the morning, the head of the kommando came into Miller, the captain of the German and they brought him a special permit to take out the eight Jews. He came to the gate and he told the German and the Jewish police to ask for Aron Dereczyaski and the rest of them. Come out to the gate. The Jewish policeman came to my house; he knocked in the middle of the morning. By that time I want you to know that everybody was hiding in hiding places. Already we made hiding places in getting ready when the action comes so we build a hiding place. But I was still on the lookout and they came to my house and asked for me, Aron Dereczyaski. They told him, he was smart enough, they told him that Mr. Miller was waiting at the gate. I knew when he mentioned the word Miller I knew that it's legit, that I can come out and see Mr. Miller. The captain was telling me to get all the people together and in half an hour he'll be back and we'll go out to work. All right, he gave us a_____; he says don't worry --. {Nothing will happen to the Jews}. Nothing will happen to the Jews They found the underground organization on the Polish side. The Poles are organizing; they have an underground organization so we are going, the Germans, he said "we" the Germans are coming to go into the ghetto to check if the Poles are not hiding in the ghetto. That was the excuse. That's what they told me. But surely enough, we didn't believe it. {Nobody believed it}. I got all the people. {that worked in different places} in the p_____. We got out five minutes to seven. Seven o'clock, the action started; we were only half a block away. We could see on the outside how all the German tanks and trucks and army and ammunition and machine guns are all pointing to the ghettos. Everything was at the end but we still walked to the p_____, to the place where I was working. A block or two blocks away, we could hear already the shooting coming into the ghetto. We were just outside before. I think we're going to cut off here and I'll finish the story --.

- Q: Okay.
- A: That time --.
- Q: And Lisa was not with you then?
- A: No. {No, I was hiding}. I came out and I changed her into men's clothes and I took her out. {That was later, that was Wednesday, Thursday}. Yeah, on the third day.
- Q: Okay, do you want to start from there when we speak again?
- A: Yes, we'll start right there from the p_____.
- Q: Okay, right.
- A: When is the best time for --?
- Q: Let me stop the tape. -----No, okay.
- A: No. Unless you think something over there. You want to clarify something. Miller took us out, took out eight of us and the minute maybe we start walking out of the ghetto, I want you to know that we are the only one 8 people what they took out from the ghetto before the action started. The action started exactly at seven o'clock but this story happened when they took us out, that happened before. The minute we walked out of the ghetto we could see all the special groups are all surround the ghetto with machine guns pointing at the ghetto like a real armed camp. You could see that like, for me, it was clear that the ghetto is being liquidated and it looks like nobody is going to be able to survive. Sure enough, they will not be able (?) to get out with life. We start walking and on the way we were stopped and checked our documents again. The high officer stopped us and checked us -- our permit. He let us go and it happened that Miller knew all the big shots because they all used to come to him for different kind of parties that they made. Meanwhile all the big important Gestapo and Wehrmacht people was invited to his house.
- Q: Who is Mr. Miller? Was he Jewish?
- A: No, no. Miller was the --.
- Q: Was he just a local German?
- A: A German, the head of the p_____. {He wasn't a local, he was a Wehrmacht}. He was a Wehrmacht, a captain. He was a Wehrmacht captain.

We went to the same place where I was working because there it was p_____, that's the name of it in German.

Q: That was the warehouse?

A: The warehouse where they used to give out the food. We stayed over there during the day. You could hear and the shooting, you could hear all day and they are taking out people. I mean they're shooting in the place and we heard -- the other Germans were telling us that they're taking out Jews whom they can find. They're putting on trucks and they're taking them out; outside the city, outside of town in the direction of Ciepelowo how-do-you-spell-it?

Q: We spelled it yesterday.

A: No, yesterday we had --. No, Ciepelowo {C-i-e} We had a different place. {C_____ but you had Ciepelowo where they killed the 1,200 men}. Oh, Ciepelowo we had Thursday.

Q: Right. So Ciepelowo was first when they took out the men and it was also here when they were liquidating the ghetto, is that the same place?

A: Well, the first time they take out near Ciepelowo, the 1,200 men. Then the 10,000 to Pietralowicze.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: {P-i-e-t-r-a-l-o-w-i-c-z-e, Pietralowicze}. Now Pietralowicze that was on the --. {That was on the _____} That was on November 14th. This time they took to Ciepelowo, in the direction of Ciepelowo. Now, in the place where I was working, you could see a small window in the warehouse, you could see a small little lake and past the lake you could see the hills of Ciepelowo where they were killing the Jews. During the day, later in the day, you could already see that people were getting killed right there. We could see it through the window.

Q: While this was happening, they were making you unload food?

A: Yes, while this was happening, we were working regular on our job like every other day. Now when it came at night, he did not send us back to the ghetto. He let us stay in the p_____ in this place, to stay overnight. We did not return after the first day to the ghetto, we stayed there overnight. The action was going on for three or four days in Slonim. At that time, they killed 10,000 people or 9,000, 9,000. In the beginning they could not find anybody inside the ghetto because everybody was hiding so by the middle of the first day, they put the ghetto on fire. They burned two or three ghettos; it was four ghettos so two or three parts they put on fire. It was a resistance in one ghetto, a small resistance when one Jewish fellow came out. He was a friend of mine and he came out with the hand

grenades. He threw a hand grenade on the German truck and he killed some Germans. The Germans got real mad so they put the ghetto on fire. This particular ghetto, that was the name of the ghetto was Japinka that was part of the Slonim ghettos, part of the four ghettos. We were still sitting in the place and working. I mean in the same place the p_____. On the third day, on a Wednesday, on Wednesday, on the third day, I asked that captain Miller to --. I offered him --. On Tuesday the next day I went to a bakery shop to get some bread what we used to do it every day. Going to the bakery shop, we had to cross the ghetto because the one street the one we had to pass belonged to --. That was the street that the Poles traveled on it and the Jews walked on it when we could; when they took us for slave labor. I went with the covered-up truck with a German, his name was Hans and I passed by the ghetto. I could see the ghetto on fire; I could see people burning on fire, to the water because the little lake, the river was passing by. People were burning their clothes so they were jumping in the water of the river.

Q: Were they found by the Germans and then shot?

A: The Germans were shooting at them. They were killed anyway. The Germans were standing on the bridge and they saw anybody running in the water, they were shooting at them. They were killed anyway. Then we returned back to the p_____, the place of work. This was the first day, the second day. On the third day, I got an idea and I came up to the captain and I tell him, Mr. Miller, if you --. By that time, it quiet down already. The first day or the second day, they didn't leave anybody to live. Anybody they found, they killed them on the place, they put them on the truck and they took him to Ciepelowo, to kill. But they realized that maybe they should leave some people arrest and take them someplace so the other ones will start coming out from the hiding places. So the rumor came out that anybody who comes out -- they announce on the loudspeakers that anybody going to come out, they're going to live. The action is over and this kind of stories. It was getting a little bit more quiet in the ghetto. Some Jews came out and they took them, arrested them and they took them over to the jail.

Q: The ghetto jail?

A: No, not a ghetto jail. Before the war was a regular jail.. So they took them back to the jail, to the yard by the jail. They accumulated people over there and then they put them to the right and to the left. {They made a selection, who's going to live and who to die}. They put them on trucks and sent them to be slaughtered. A few of them, the ones that would get special permits, they let them out. I could see -- by that time, Captain Miller came and he gave me the special schein, a small little ticket about the size of -- maybe 4 inches by 4 inches. Maybe smaller 3 inches, 3 or 4 inches with a stamp of the _____ commissar. My number was, I don't remember but I think it was 4 or 5. He gave us all eight and we had the first numbers.

- Q: These were the special permits which allowed you --?
- A: Which allowed us for now to live. That was only one document that we had, that we could show that we have a *schein*. Then anybody what they had let out from the jail, was somebody the Germans recognized. The German came and took him out like a special carpenter, a special shoemaker. One of the Gestapos somebody recognized him, he took him out and he gave him special *schein*. By that time, they took us out and they gave us 100 _____. By that time they gave us a new building where I had worked before the B _____ lager the place where they were accumulating the arms, to sort the arms, the place where I have my job. They gave us over there two buildings and anybody they gave the *scheins*, they sent him over there where they could sleep. At the same time they told the Germans told us that we are not going to sleep any more in the p _____ but we'll be able to sleep in the new place. At the same time, I came to Miller and I told him, I say, if you can get me a special permit to go into the ghetto, I will get you anything what you want. He was very much interested in gold and chandeliers and {silver, _____ whatever he can}. Whatever I can to benefit him and then he could send it home. He wasn't doing it from a good heart in the first place, he was doing it for what he would get paid.
- Q: Do you think he had a good heart in general?
- A: No, no. He did only to us, only to take his eight Jews. Otherwise he was a killer to somebody else. {In fact, I was told he was a killer in _____ in a different city}.
- Q: How was your relationship with him? Were you afraid of him?
- A: Yes, I was afraid. Yeah, but we had a relationship. Him, by himself, I wasn't afraid that he's going to take the gun and kill me even if he feels like I did something wrong with my job. He wouldn't kill me, he would reprimand me but he wouldn't kill me. We had after working together, we had a relationship because we were good workers and he could depend on us. At that time, he went to the _____ commissar and got the special permits to get into the ghetto and he gave me, four of us, permits for four people. My intention was if we're going inside the ghetto and see if I can get in touch and can find my family and see if I can find Lisa. I knew approximately where they were hiding. In my house, I helped build the hiding places. I knew in my house, 31 people were hiding under the floor that we dug out. These 31 were hiding under the floor _____ so I knew because I was part of the people helping to build.
- Q: Lisa, were you also hiding in that house?
- A: {No}. Lisa was hiding in --. {I was hiding in a shed in the yard where the house that we lived}.

She was hiding in the shack. When I got the permit for four of us I'm included, we went inside the ghetto. I went to the place where I lived. I found the people in hiding. I could not take them out because I could not help them. The only thing I helped them was to give them food, water. I told them what the situation is and I could not take out my mother or sisters because the other ones wouldn't let me. Because that's the only way they could have the contact is if my family is there. Because they know if I can help, I will take them out. I will help them. everybody was looking for how they can save their own life so they would not let anybody take my family. I wanted to take one of my sisters. I couldn't take any more. I left them there and I went on the way back to the gate. I had to pass by Lisa's house. Lisa's home was only about four or five homes away from mine. {Was kitty-cornered}. On one side to the other side --. I came to Lisa's place, I looked in the place where they're supposed to hide and the malina was opened. The Germans discovered the malina, they shot the people.

(END OF SIDE B. TAPE 1)

Q: {Yes, S-c-h-e-i-n}.

Q: And then Malina?

A: {But you make sure that it is spelled right, the German}.

Q: Okay, I'll check it.

A: Malina is the hiding place. M-a-l-i-n-a.

Q: That's in German or Polish?

A: Well, uh --.

Q: Yiddish?

A: They called it that in the ghetto.

Q: A ghetto term?

A: A ghetto, _____.

Q: Okay.

A: I'll start a little bit before in case --.

Q: So you were looking at Lisa's house?

A: Malina where we were supposed to hide. The place in Malina, the hiding place, was discovered where they took out the people. I didn't give up and I looked for Lisa a little bit longer. I went to the back, in the back was a small little yard, was a little shack. I went to that shack and I start calling in Yiddish. I say is anybody hiding? {That's Aron, that's Aron, Lisa, are you hiding?} After a short while, I was calling their name, Lisa heard my voice and she was there hiding with her father and little brother. Before long, Lisa came down from the hiding place and I made an immediate decision that I'm going to take her out. Now she's a young girl, she was just 16. She was sixteen years old, '42 – fifteen years old. {I was 15, 15 ½}. Fifteen years old, very pretty, a good-looking girl. I decided that I'm going to take her out. So she parted with her father and brother. I took her next door to a place, not where she lived but a cousin lived from where she lived, right next door to each other. I took her with a little attic, I mean a little -- like a second floor. I went down in the house and I found a pair of pants and a jacket and a scissor. I looked all the way around. I cut her hair, I put her boy's clothes, men's clothes and a cap and I made her look like a boy. I took some PX wires, electric wires and I covered all the way around her neck. I did the same thing to another fellow and we had a couple of chandeliers so she carried a chandelier on top of her shoulder and the other fellow. We were four, the other fellows helped me do it by cooperating; I mean getting the chandeliers, both of us.

Q: Why did you take the wire?

A: I found it, I pulled out some wires from the home because the home had a lot of wires. They're like extension wires; was running all over the apartments because we didn't have any electricity so they made their own. I mean we had electricity but wasn't like here, was plenty wires. {The electrical wires were always on the outside in Europe in the old homes. You didn't have to go in the wall to pull them out, they were hanging}. Hanging, so I pulled them out wires from the things and put them all the way around her neck. The main thing is she carried the chandeliers so she put the chandeliers --.

Q: Why did you put the wires around her neck?

A: Around the neck, you know like a loop. You know like a big loop of wires, covered up from the neck, going down to the waist.

Q: I see. Okay.

A: {Around my neck sort of, I wound them around my neck and then they were hanging}. They were hanging loose and the main thing is I found a couple chandeliers where they kept them _____ so I took the chandeliers. She was carrying the chandeliers; then I gave her my schein, my permit to leave. I gave it to her hoping and thinking in case if I'm caught without it that some way Miller

will take my up. He will get me out in case if I am arrested. All five of us were walking through the gate. I took that white piece of paper what he gave me with the special permit for four. I came to the gate and the police were German guards were staying right by the exit of the gate and I'm already walking out. {You waved it}. I waved that piece of paper; I says here's my permit and here's my four men. He didn't check, he didn't look. {He didn't look at the permit}. He didn't look at the permit and he said for four men and he let us through. From there I went all the way to the prefanza, to my place of work. By the way, coming through the ghetto, the German dropped us off, the same guy that told us we would -- Fritz, it was Fritz, not Hans, it was Fritz. Fritz dropped us off the first time to come in, in the ghetto. Then what we supposed to do is; Miller and the rest of the Germans, they live across the street from the gate, right across. Almost a little kiddie car. {They lived in a beautiful Jewish home, they requisitioned}. So they lived over there so my -- someone else, can you hold on a second? Then we took the goods, whatever we were taking with us, we took it there. {For Miller, all the things we had some silver pieces and chandeliers. We found a watch here and there}. Whatever, all the valuables what we took, I took across the street and left in Miller's house. Now we came in Miller's house, another problem. How do I get Lisa to the work place, where I live. I came to Miller, Miller was still home at that particular time, for lunch or whatever it was. I came to Miller; I asked him, I told him that I found my sister; how can we save her? So his answer was this place is not for hiding Jews. {My place is not for hiding Jews, get her out of here immediately}. Immediately. I took her out and she went into the basement. He didn't follow or look for anything. It was a basement and she was hiding in the basement, in Miller's basement. Over there, after a while, Miller left. Another German was there. {Also there was a young Jewish boy. I really wanted to insert this. There was a young Jewish boy that was working for them like a mascot, polishing their boots and shoes and helping the cleaning woman with chop the wood and everything. He came down and he was sort of my protector. He kept on telling me not to worry, not to worry, that he'll protect me, that he'll do everything that is possible. He'll never let the maids go down. He will always run to the basement to bring whatever is necessary}. Now that's a --.

Q: How long were you in the basement?

A: In the basement, maybe a couple of hours. {Couple of hours}. Now comes the main story too. I mean not the main story but it's an important story. When Miller left, was another captain with him, by the name Bauer. Bauer is the name. {I think Bauer is spelled B-a-u-e-r}. Here was the only one German was here since the time of the war what I knew that he was righteous. People always don't want to hear this; we don't like to tell the story. I mean we don't like to follow through but that's what happened. {When we give testimony, we have to give it exactly the way it was}. That's right when we give testimony, we want to give it the way it was. Bauer, after he left --. {After Miller left, Aron approached Bauer}. No, the night before. When I was sleeping in the _____, I noticed that

Bauer was talking to himself not far from me. He was holding his hand on his head and he was saying, 'I cannot believe it, how my people can do this kind of atrocities'. He was almost crying.

Q: To himself?

A: Yeah, not that he made any comment to anybody. But I noticed it. {Aron overheard it, talking to himself}. I overheard it so when Miller left, Bauer was in the house. I walked up to Bauer and I told him, Captain, I say, I have my sister here. Can you help me? He said where is she? I say in the basement. He came down with me in the basement and the first thing he says, don't worry.

L: {Well, when he came down to the basement, I thought he came down to kill me}.

A: He walked down with me to the basement and he took a look at her. She was sitting like a little, what do you call it? All curled up in a corner, hidden. He takes a look at her and he says, she looks like a boy. Are you a girl? She says yes. Do you have your clothes, your girl's clothes? She says yes. He says, take off the men's clothes and get dressed like you're being yourself. Get back in your girl's clothes and I'll take you to the work place. He said, you'll walk with me on the sidewalk because Jews were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk. If there is any black crow, he called it. {The Ukrainians that were policing -- he called them the black crows}. Anybody that stops him, I'll kill him on the place. Lisa left with him and --. {I came with him to the _____. Nobody stopped us, Nobody dared to stop him. He was a high-ranking Wehrmacht man, a German and nobody stopped us}. We made it through the _____ back to the _____, to the workplace. I was waiting over there already and I saw when Lisa came so Miller, what's-his-name, Bauer told us to go because Miller was in the work place. So Bauer told them to hide in -- well it was like an open basement under the warehouse. He says you hide over there. He walked in and I saw Lisa coming. After a little while, when Miller was busy in his office, and I found the right opportunity, I took her in, in the p_____, in the warehouse. In the warehouse had thousands of sacks lined up. It was sugar sacks, it was flour sacks, {flour, wheat, corn} all different kinds of sacks piled up in four or five high. Straightened it out like by the Germans. I immediately made a hiding place, I took out two sacks and made a hiding place for Lisa with the sacks. She stayed there for the next night --. {They marked the sacks with a sign where to find me} where to find her {it was several blocks long this warehouse with all this flour in the sacks}. Tell her what happened through the night. {During the night I was practically devoured by rats}.

Q: Gosh.

A: So she went out from the hiding place and she sit on top of the sacks. {I hit them with all my strength. I had to raise the sack}. Alright I'll talk. {See that time I was afraid that I was going to be devoured by the rats. I sat on top of the rats. I

sat and I would run away as soon as the rats would come. Then when it start -- day came, I was afraid to sit there for somebody to find me. So I went back into the hole}. The next day I got a permit for her, a special schein from Miller. I told her --what-you-call --- and I took over to the place where everybody else. I, in return, took another permit. With the same permit I went in next day; I took out two of my sisters and I brought them to the _____lager. I got to the new place where they living but I got special permit, two scheins for my sisters.

Q: From whom?

A: So the next day I took out two sisters.

Q: Who did you get the permits from? Bauer or Miller?

A: Miller. {By this time, why don't you say by this time --} by this time already anybody who {any Jew} any Jew who could already get a --they let already {they decided to stop the massacre and let everybody come out --}

Q: Let people work?

A: {from the hiding places to shrink the ghetto and take them all at once}.

Q: So then all the Jews that were left were put to work?

A: No. {No, it was sort of like a stalemate}. A stalemate. Bu they gave in two ghettos. One was in the building where I stayed and then they gave them in another little ghetto. They made everybody who survived, they made them you can leave and this because the psychology of the Germans always to shrink the ghetto. Instead looking for ten or twenty blocks now they have only one building left over. But they made other ghettos with another couple buildings. The next time if they wanted to liquidate the ghettos they have only two small buildings or three buildings to go in there and arrest them and take them out and kill them. That was their way of -- {Carmit, for reference really. Evidently we left that summer but the ghetto was still left on for a while. Some people did go out to work. You know that they had their special shoemakers and the special tailors and whoever for a very short while}. But we didn't {we weren't there already}. We weren't there.

Q: I'm wondering how you got the passes for your sisters and for Lisa exactly.

A: I gave Miller a couple of gold coins.

Q: Okay. And the same for Lisa?

A: The same for Lisa too. For money he would do it. At that time it was no problem already. He wouldn't give it out, I mean he wouldn't help but for money he

would give me the schein because at that time it was easy already to get a schein. But I didn't know and I was taking a chance. By the way we're writing a book.

Q: Good.

A: Yeah, it should be ready probably maybe by the end of this year. We've been writing it for six years. If you know, it's quite a bit stories what we're telling you but a lot of them I skipped.

Q: You'll have to send a copy to our library.

A: {Yes, we will} Oh, yes. }We should only live long enough to have it done}. Well, this year should be done, we're working six years on it. Mainly we want to have it like a teaching book too. People read, they should know the killing, what's his name heard a lot of our stories. L_____. You heard about L_____? {He's the head of the Righteous at Yad Vashem} He's the head of the Righteous. He says, Aron, Lisa you are the Holocaust. Different aspects of -- it's tremendous what the people lived through in camp. Most of it is the story of suffering but it's terrible. I mean it's no -- we cannot make it less but ours is like much more variety of different kind of stories. What happened in the ghetto. All right and we survived there. From there we left --. {Aron also did not tell you that he was able to take out his mother and sister, baby sister}.

Q: So you took out the rest of your family?

A: I took out the rest of the family. But my mother and sister, I took out from jail. They were arrested and I took them out from jail. I took out, I saved all my family by that time. Then I made a contact through a friend, a White Russian woman. {A farmer woman} A farmer woman what she took us with a horse and buggy from Slonim to Wishnoy R-o {There's a _____ on the o} z-a-n-a.

Q: This is the woman's name?

A: No, no. This is the place, the name of the town.

Q: That she took you to?

A: {Yes, and Rozana was already in the Third Reich}. And Rozana was approximately 20, 25 kilometers, maybe not putting any mileage, I don't know exactly. This woman took us from Slonim, at night -- I met her outside of town -- and she took us to Rozana. In Rozana, I was, again I'll make it fast -- I was arrested there and the Polish police what she knew, the local police, which probably was a made-up deal. They came in in the morning and they took away everything from us but they didn't arrest us. The reason why probably they didn't arrest us because if they would arrest us, we would tell them that somebody took away all the valuables. So this way they took away. Away from there, in Rozana,

I got in touch with the Judenrat. The Judenrat gave us transportation to go to V---
---.

Q: The Judenrat where?

A: {In Rozana}

Q: In Rozana?

A: The Judenrat in Rozana helped us to get transportation to Zolkowyski. {Z-o-l-k-o-w-y-s-k-i}.

Q: Okay.

A: I went to _____ to pick up transportation to Zolkowyski. We came to Zolkowyski, we got in touch with immediately, the same thing, with the Judenrat. The Judenrat found a place for us to stay. It was a place a lot of survivors that came from different cities. Because this was already -- [towns, towns} towns, because this was already the Third Reich. But that time they were not killing anybody yet. {It was summer of '42} Yeah, late summer of '42. This was already August, August of 1942. Now that was my terrible decision that I can never forgive myself but I couldn't help it. I had to make up my mind which direction do I go. I had a choice, to go from Zolkowyski or to Grodno or to Bialystok. In Grodno I knew that Lisa went. Lisa left by herself with her father and brother. They left the place in Slonim a couple of days, maybe a week before I left. I split up with Lisa because her father and brother survived too. So she went -- she stayed with me part of the time but to leave Slonim, she left with her father and her brother.

Q: To Bialystok?

A: {No, to Grodno} to Grodno. I was left with my mother and the three sisters. I took a different route with a different contact too. I found that woman, the one who took us to Wishnoy and to Zolkowyski. When I came Zolkowyski, they told us you can go two ways where a big Jewish ghetto is. One is in Grodno, one is Zolkowyski, {Bialystok} one is Bialystok. So I had to make up my decision. So I made up that time my decision that for me to survive, I can only survive {he realized at that time that he could not survive with a family}, as a family unit. The only way if I can survive for me being involved with the underground, I left the underground because on account of the family. Being a young man, I had to make the decision that if I have to go away to live, I am going to go. I could only go to the underground if I can go by myself. I probably couldn't help them anyway. There was no way for me to help them. {Can you imagine having to make that kind of decision?}

Q: No.

- A: So I had to make that decision and that was my worst decision in life -- because I never see them anymore. They went to Bialystok and I went to Grodno.
- Q: Now, did you, did they want to go to Bialystok?
- A: Did they want to go to Bialystok? It wouldn't make any difference for them. Yes, they had some friend, some family were there in Bialystok, Grodno was real strange for them. The only reason why I went to Grodno probably is maybe I'll see Lisa there. Otherwise I would go to Bialystok too.
- Q: So they all decided to go to Bialystok and then you said no, I'm going to Grodno?
- A: Yes. I had to make the decision that I'm going to get out and I'm going to go my way. Otherwise, I would go to Bialystok too. On a beer truck, they took us to the Judenrat from Zolkowyski helped us to _____ to transportation to Grodno and I went to Grodno. Being in Grodno I came to _____. I'll tell you the story in Grodno. I arrived in Grodno, I found Lisa, I moved in in the same place that they lived. They had a little space in their room with three or four other families. They made room for me; they put a mattress on the floor for me to sleep too. I stayed in Grodno and my only one purpose was, now when I'm in Grodno is how I can get in touch with the underground. There was no other way for me to survive. Already my decision was made; the only way you can survive. I had no doubt that liquidation is going to come to Gr_____ too. So the only way I was looking around is how I can find a contact with the underground. I lived through all the time in the Grodno ghetto. I did not make any contact with the underground. You can imagine how hard it was for a young man having experience, belonging to the underground, looked around, being a stranger in a ghetto. Because some people were asking questions, why didn't other people go to the underground. It's very hard for me to explain them that here is a young man, has no attachments, no family, trying to find a way how to go to the woods or to the underground. I did not find during my time, I arrived in August of 1942. {Till March '43}. 'till March '43, I could not find any contact to go to the underground. {Shortly after we arrived, they sealed the ghetto and they started the transports to Auschwitz from Grodno}. On November 1, the ghetto was sealed in Grodno, the ghetto was much tighter. You had to have special permits to go outside from the ghetto even to work. I went through all the time in _____ I went through all the liquidations of Grodno till the last liquidation. {Tell them that you are under --} We were always under leave (?). {Besides, I think Aron should tell you that he was on his way to Auschwitz and he jumped out of a train}. That's what I'm coming, that's what I'm coming. So we left -- till the liquidation of the last, what do you call it the last liquidation? {Ten thousand people they took out that time}. The last liquidation of Grodno, that was in February, February of 1942.
- Q: Forty-three, you mean?

- A: Forty-three, 1943. By that time I got acquainted with a Polish fellow. His name is Tadek {(P-a-v-e-u-s-z S-o-r-o-k-a)}.
- Q: And Tadek was his nickname?
- A: {Nickname, Tadek} Tadek was his nickname. {T-a-d-e-k} I got acquainted with Tadek working outside the ghetto in remodeling a house for a Gestapo man. So I was working over there with five other people. I went out to work as a carpenter and being over there, who took me in? a good friend of mine. He was working there so he said Aron you could be a carpenter, why don't you come out to work in this place. He worked -- I worked with him and over there we got acquainted with the name of this fellow Tadek. Tadek {bartered with him}. Tadek bartered with us. We brought in some different kind of watches from the ghetto and pants and some other clothing what we could put on us and then take it off and barter with him. {He would bring food}. He give us food and we took it back to the ghetto. One time he came in and he told us, he told to my friends, two of my other friends, he says, he don't look Jewish, I can get you, I can take you to Vilna. {And give you Aryan papers so you can live on and try to survive as Christians} Try to survive as Christians. My two friends accepted it and after a few days, they went to him, to Tadek. Tadek supposed to send a note back. {No, Hershel, one of the people was supposed to send a note with Tadek that they arrived safely}. So one of my friends was supposed to send it, they give us a note that they send with Tadek that they arrived safely and they are safe. Because at that time, you couldn't trust anybody, you could tell the same Polish fellow. Any Pole could come and take away the money from you and give it to the Germans and get paid for it. The Germans would pay him for it. We didn't know, we weren't sure what it is. But he came a couple of days later to the place where I was working and he says that Hershel and Ludnik (?) that was their names, they're safe, they're in Vilna and _____ in the Vilna ghetto. But he does not have a note. The reason why he doesn't have a note -- he says it start raining and he had to walk away, go away because the Germans are there and he didn't bring a note. {When the police was around the ghetto and he was worried, frightened}. Worried, frightened and he didn't bring us a note. This way, he used to come every other day back to our work and we did the same thing. Bothering with him and one morning I didn't know if I can believe him or not but one morning he came to us on the job where we were working. He said I'm going to take you, I mean the ghetto is surrounded, the ghetto is being liquidated. I'm going to take you, if you want it, don't go back to the ghetto, I'll take you to Vilna. By that time I had to make the decision, should I take the chance and go with him to Vilna or I mean, I wasn't sure anyway but it still probably safer than to go back to the ghetto. The ghetto is being liquidated. Anyway I had to make the decision. I made the decision, I'm going back to the ghetto. I did some thinking after that. I went back to the ghetto and Tadek gave me his address. He marked down on my body, spread out in different place on my body. I gave him my -- he gave me his address and any time I have a chance, if I survive or come back to him, he'll take

me to Vilna. That's the way we parted and I went back to the ghetto, coming back to the ghetto. I was immediately arrested. Everybody who came in back to the ghetto and they pushed us in a big synagogue. In the synagogue during the day accumulated approximately maybe three or four thousand people. I don't know how much the synagogue could take in. We stayed there all day and all night, all evening. It was probably about six, seven o'clock in the evening. It was six o'clock in the evening; all night more people were already in. The shul, the synagogue was already almost full from people coming from work arresting everybody. They kept us there all day, all night. I was looking for any place to hide. I couldn't find a hiding place. The next morning, about five o'clock in the morning, the Germans came in. They ordered us to get out from the synagogue and walk to the railroad station. That's what we did. We followed up, we walked in fours, we walked to the railroad station. I was looking for a place to run away, to hide. I could not find, the guards were too close. Here I am, already at the railroad station, put in a boxcar, locked after a short while, half an hour, an hour, two hours, who knows what the time was. Here I am in the boxcar, all locked up, ready to go to Auschwitz.

Q: Did you know you were going to Auschwitz?

A: I had a feeling because talk was already that they're taking to Auschwitz. Already it was almost known that they're taking the people to Auschwitz. {Carmit, they already had a camp, a detention camp from which they took the people from all the little small towns around Grodno. You know, Grodno had a tremendous amount of Jewish little, tiny towns around Grodno. When you refer now, people tell you, old people, the older generation, the _____ it means from the state, that the state of Grodno. There were a lot of, a lot of small Jewish towns, all predominately Jewish. They took them all to a camp called Kelbyshik. From there they packed them in the cars, in the boxcars to go to Auschwitz}. That was before they liquidated Grodno ghetto. {Before the ghetto, they sent --- }.

Q: So you knew already what was happening in town?

A: Yes. It was little by little. It was known that we're going to Auschwitz. Anyway here I am in the packed boxcar with all different kind of people, with all different kind of ages and I decided -- I saw a small little window on the end of the boxcar. I decide with some of my friends, the one I was working with. We tried the hard way. I told him; I say I'm going to jump. Here we have to break through that window. So some way we got pushed through, we came close to the window. We stood one shoulder, one on the other's shoulders, two of us. We know our power, I don't know where we got it but we pulled out the bars. We broke the bars, we pulled out the bars and I don't know where we got the power and we jumped out. {They started to jump out, one after the other}. One after the other. I was one that jumped out, the third one. I remember I wasn't the first one but I jumped out. The train, on a curve. It was slowing down on a curve. I jumped out

and I fell down. I was unconscious and before long I was arrested, put back on the truck. I was arrested by the German guard, the one that was watching the railroad, the railroad lines, the tracks. Before not long, they arrested me and it was already about eight o'clock in the morning. They brought me back to the synagogue. During all day, that was right in the morning, the synagogue was empty. There was only a few. By that time already they start finding people hiding in the ghetto. Nobody was already out to work. They discovered all different kind of hiding places and they brought them into the synagogue. Before long -- anyway, the first day, I looked around, I did not find Lisa. The second day I had a better chance to look because I was the only from the first ones. I did not find Lisa. Till late in the evening, I looked around where can I hide inside the synagogue. I found a place in the synagogue, had a small little room where there was a kitchen before. Over there was a pile of coal. I saw a young fellow by the name Ruby Lawrence. {Ruvke Lubich}. Well Lubich was _____. {R-u-v-k-e L-u-b-i-c-h}. He was a boy from Grodno and he is making a place to hide under the coal. After a lot of begging, he let me in. There's a whole story to that too but I'll make it short. He let me make a place right next to him. By luck, under the coal, we found a big piece of plywood what we made a roof. On top of the roof, we found some dead bodies. We put a dead body on top of the roof. At the entrance we found a cooking sheet, where we covered up with coal and then covered people that maybe covered the entrance.

Q: To the hiding place?

A: That was the hiding place. We survived there. The next day we heard the same thing had happened in the shul. They took out everybody and we survived there.. After they emptied it out, the Germans gave an order the same thing like this, they didn't have the time, that the rest of the people who survived {to come out of the hiding} come out of the hiding -- {they're not sending the transports any more} they're not sending the transports any more. {Again they shrank the ghetto} Shrank the ghetto. {They left four buildings}. They left four buildings and I went back to the place where I lived. I knew where Lisa is hiding. I found Lisa with her father and brother survived the same way. We stayed for a while in the Grodno ghetto. By that time a thousand or 1,200 Jews they left -- {survived} survived. {Survived the transports. Now by this time, people already knew what Auschwitz was}. Yeah and we stayed there a short while. Finally we made contact with Tadek. Lisa went out of the ghetto. I'll skip all different kinds of things what we had but she made a contact. She knew where Tadek, I gave her the address on Tadek. {Before yet, my father and my little brother went with Tadek to Vilna}. Before that they made the contact and they left. After we made the contact with Tadek, Lisa went off on a Sunday. She met him in church and then he told her to come out on Tuesday, come out on the public washroom. I'll meet you on Tuesday in the public washroom; you come out and I'll take you to Vilna. We took his word; it was very hard to get out through the public washroom because the ghetto was all surrounded. You couldn't get out. {We somehow made it}. Someway we got out, it was dusk, it was dark, we got out

and we came to the public washroom. Sure enough Tadek, he told her he is going to give her a signal. He's going to come with a pair of overalls like an engineer working on the railroad and he's going to have a flashlight. He's going to blink a few times with the flashlight; you'll know from farther that that's me. Sure enough we met him over there. "Everything went the way he said". Everything went that, five of us went out. He took only, he said he can only take two.

Q: When Lisa left, you left too at the same time, Aron?

A: Yeah, we went -- Lisa's father and her brother went before.

Q: And then you and --?

A: Then I went with Lisa and Ruvke, my friend, the one that survived -- {the one that he survived in the shul with him}. The one that survived, the one that let him make a place to hide. So we all moved in in one place and we all made the contacts with Tadek. I promised, I told that guy Ruvke, I told him that I have a Polish fellow, Tadek, and we'll go to Vilna. He was part of us going out to the public washroom. But at the same time he had another cousin and a friend so he took them too. When we came in the public washroom we were five, instead of two. Tadek said he can only take two. After a long conversation with Tadek, he decided he'll take three. I took Ruvke; he didn't want to go with me but I talked him in. We survived together so why don't you come with us. Don't delay it for another time. so all this here went and Tadek took us to the -- Tadek says for me, Lisa and Ruvke, follow us and we are going to the railroad station. We followed Tadek to the railroad station. Before we came right by the railroad station was a small, an empty lot. {A ditch like, along with the tracks}. Along the tracks. He told us you hide over there and I'll go around and take a look which train is going to Vilna. {Freight train, we're talking about freight trains. In between the freight are a couple cars, passenger cars that the Wehrmacht traveled}. After he came back, he told us, he pointed this is the train what is going to Vilna but it's very dangerous with the army going.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE II

He took out what-you-call-it. He told us that's the train that's going to move. He warned us when this train starts moving, you jump between the boxcars, the couplings. Jump on the couplings and then you'll find a little lever, you'll climb up on top of the roof. {The roof of the car and you should lie on your stomach so you won't be seen from the ground}. I'll find you there later, on top of the train. The train starts moving. We jump out from the place, from the hiding place. I was the first one. I jumped out, I jumped on the moving train between the boxcars and I climbed up on top of the roof. Ruvke did the same thing on a different car, he did the same thing and went up on top of the roof. Lisa was left over the last one, she panicked and she ran out. {I panicked as I looked back.

There were very few cars that I saw and I became terribly frightened that I will not have a chance to climb up to the top to take the ride. So I went out and the first car that passed by, I grabbed on and I stood on a little ledge with the boxcar. I held on to the handle of the door}. She held on the handle of the door instead of going between the boxcars, she grabbed on the door in the middle of the boxcar. Here the train start moving faster and she's hanging, she's holding on. {I was on the outside, you know on the outside of the boxcar}. The train is moving and we are already on top and we're out of town already. Here I see where I'm lying, Tadek came to me and he said Where's the girl? {As the train was moving and moving fast, he was running all the way to the end of the train looking for me, looking if he could spot the girl}.

Q: Who was?

A: {Tadek}.

Q: Tadek was on top of the train or in the train.

A: On top.

Q: He also went on top.

A: Yes. {Maybe he was at first in the locomotive but he climbed up to the top because we were on top of the train}. So he came and he found us on top of the roof. He jumped from one roof to the other on the running train, in the cold weather in March, freezing weather, until he found --. {He found me on the outside of a boxcar almost hanging}. He found her hanging on a boxcar. So he came back to us and he told us I found the girl. We have to go and come back to the boxcar where Lisa was hanging. I, too, and Ruvke too, we jumped with him till we came to the boxcar where Lisa is hanging. We made a human chain, Tadek lies down on the boxcar on top of the roof, we were holding his -- he shouldn't slip down -- we were holding his legs. He bent down much further and he grabbed one hand and then he grabbed the other hand. Then Ruvke was holding his feet and I came to help Ruvke to help to pull up Lisa. We pulled up Lisa on top of the roof. There we survived from Grodno to Vilna was 180 kilometers, sub-zero weather. {I wore mittens and I had a vision that that I would give him the hand and the mitten would slip. He would not hold on to my hand but to the mitten but he was very skilful and I held on with all the strength that I possessed to lift myself -- and youth}. Youth was on our side. This way we went all the way for 180 kilometers till the next morning, it was still dark; we came to Vilna. From Vilna we jumped down, Tadek was first, we followed Tadek. He came and hollered and he says I'm going to find a big group, one that's going back to the ghetto. {A group of Jews returning from a night shift to the ghetto}. You'll join the Jews when they're coming. {You'll jump in as you see them; you'll just run in, in the middle. That's the way it was}. That's the way it happened. We saw a big group of Jews running from the night shift going back to

the ghetto. We joined the other ones and we went in together. I will make it fast. In the ghetto, it was still a lively ghetto, Vilna. I don't know how many Jews were there at that time but maybe somebody will study, we'll find exactly. We came there in March, 1943. I looked the hardest ways to find the underground. I was successful, I found members of a Hashomer Hatzair; I joined the F.P.O., FPO --. {From Yiddish, F____, P____, O____, I joined and after a few months later till in August they decided -- we went through the whole situation in the ghetto. We decided we're going to the underground. {The leadership decided to send out after the episode with Edenberg which I am sure we _____ the history over and over again. We're on the barricades. We went through the whole episode of Edenberg in Vilna}. I joined the underground and then Ruvke joined and then a group of 30. We went out from Vilna, we went to the underground. We went to the forest of Narocz. {N-a-r-o-c-z}. It's approximately the same thing, 150 kilometers; it took us seven nights to go there. The only reason why we found the place because two young Jewish fellows {that were in the underground already} in their teens, what they left the underground, they came to the ghetto. {Risking their lives to be guides}. To be guides to take out Jews to the underground.

Q: Now you walked?

A: {We walked}. Seven nights, only nights. {In the day we were hiding}. During the day we were hiding.

Q: Did you have any food with you?

A: We got food from farmers. {Because the fellows that came, they had guns, the two fellows, the Jews that came for us}.

Q: So you forced the farmers to give you food?

A: {Yes, we forced the farmers}. Because they already behaved like partisans. This is the way we arrived to the partisans. We joined to a group the partisans. {The first group of partisans unit that we joined was a totally Jewish unit called Nakamah}.

Q: Revenge.

A: Revenge. {But there was a lot of anti-Semites from the Russians and we were dispersed. We could not stay, they would not keep us as a Jewish unit. Some of the members from this Nakamah were put in different units of the Russian underground. When we were liberated, we were part of a Russian unit, the Kalinski _____. Kalinski was the president of Russia, K-a-l-i-n-s-k-i}. What were we doing there, in the underground, in the partisans?

Q: Kalinski or Kalininski?

- A: {Kalininski, there's another "n"}. What did we do in the underground? We did all different kinds of sabotage work. We blew up bridges, we blocked roads. {Ambushes on ____}. Ambushes on Germans, on German troops and I blew up trains. {We also helped Jews -- they were hiding women and children that managed to escape from the small towns around the woods. We sort of helped them too}. That's the way it was going around. We lost 30% of our men we lost and from our group, what we went out from the thirty, about ten of them got killed in the underground in fights and in different ways, till the liberation. {We were liberated the summer of '44}. We were liberated the summer of '44 by the Russians. By chance, being a movie operator, I didn't have to go to the army. Otherwise they send, they pick up everybody immediately, they gave them uniforms and send them to the front lines. But me having my special trade, this was the propaganda, to show movies. They gave me a special place where I wouldn't have to go join immediately in the army. I went from there --.
- Q: Did Lisa go with you?
- A: Yes. {By the way, my father survived too. My father was in the underground. Not in the unit but he was in a hut}.
- Q: So your father --?
- A: {My little brother was caught in the street and sent to camp. He was in, first in a labor camp, then he went to Studhoff (?) but I don't know if you want it}.
- Q: That was when they were in Vilna?
- A: {Yes}.
- Q: Your father, he was with the underground in Vilna, not with these 30 people that went out?
- A: {No, no. He wasn't a member of the active underground}. Only in the underground they got me and Lisa. {But Daddy was in the woods and he lived through the German occupation there}. He knew where we are so he walked by himself. Her brother was caught on the street and they send him to Studhoff. {First he was in a labor camp in Estonia. Then from there he was in Studhoff ____}.
- Q: Aron, do you know what happened to your mother and your sisters?
- A: No. The only thing is I found out after the war that nobody survived. {They were in Bialystok, probably went to Treblinka}. I tried one time to go from Grodno to Bialystok but it was not successful. I had to go out to the Polish organizer (?) and he never showed up so I never made it back. But all the news what I could get,

the people from Slonim that were there -- I don't have any news of anybody surviving. I'm the only one surviving. To finish the story, we were liquidated, I mean we were liberated by the Russians and I went to see my hometown Slonim. Nobody was left and from there, from Slonim I went to Beronovich and from Beronovich, I went to Bialystok. {Because you know, as Polish citizens we're allowed to go back to Poland after Poland was liberated by the Russians, parts of Poland that were liberated by the Russians}. I went to Bialystok and Lisa followed me. She came a couple of months later; she came to Bialystok because she was still left in Beronovich with her father, only with her father. Her brother they didn't know if he survived or not. Lisa stayed with her father and then she followed me to Bialystok. In Bialystok, passport (?) important to have it. We already got in touch with the Br_____ through the same thing, through Hashomer Hatzair. We were in touch with the B_____ and we got directions to go from Beronovich to Lublin (?). From Lublin we got documents from the Red Cross that we are Greek refugees returning to Greece. So we went from Lublin to Cracow, to Czechoslovakia to Hungary to Austria. {All with the help of the Br_____}. Then in Austria we went through the border to the west, to the parts of --} We had to cross to Italy. {Cross to Italy where the Americans and the English were}. _____ was still controlled by the Russians and we had to cross the Russian zone to go over to the English zone. We had to cross the Alps; we crossed the Alps and we came to Terevisa in Italy. Over there we met, for the first time, we met members from the Jewish Brigade. Haolim from the Palestine Jewish Brigades. They were part of the English army. They, with trucks, they took us under their protection and they took us from Terevisa to Bologna. {From Bologna to Florence}. From Florence to Rome and in Rome, we were two youngsters. At that time it was impossible to -- Palestine was all the blockades. You could not go to Palestine. The only ones if you could come through, you would be arrested and sent to Cyprus. For me, being all my dream to go to Palestine, {look where he ended up}, I decided that I'm going for a short stop. {Meanwhile what Aron did not tell you that I had a grandmother in America. I had aunts and uncles and cousins. All my family was in America}. I'm going to tell you.

Q: So you could go there?

A: {Yes}. For a short while. {We really went for a short while I want you to know. Because the family so much wanted us to come}. But when we were in Rome, we decided we're going to get married. We got married in a big synagogue in Rome on March 25, 1943. {Forty-five, '47, what are you talking about? Show these survivors how they know dates!} March the 25th, 1947, we got married in Rome in a big synagogue. Then after, we took off and went to America. {We came in April, April 1st} April 1st, we arrived in New York. From New York we went to settle in Chicago. In Chicago, we start raising a family and we did pretty well. We have three sons, all doctors, medical doctors. {Physicians, you want their names or it is not necessary}.

- Q: If you want them to be on the tape, then say them.
- A: {Yes, yes} We have three sons. The oldest is Howard Derman. The next one is Gordon Derman and the youngest is Daniel Derman. They're all physicians, they're all married. They married with Jewish women and now we have eight grandchildren. {I would very much want to include the names of the grandchildren for posterity}.
- Q: Say them.
- A: {If it's ever going to be there. If anybody's ever going to look at it. The oldest is Courtney, 16 now; Lindsay, 11; Ari, 9; Evan, 5 ½; Benjy, 5; Rachel, 4; and Gabriel, 3 months}.
- Q: New addition?
- A: {Yeah, the new addition}. Well, that's the story.
- Q: Good. Thank you.
- A: All right. {What is next?}
- Q: Okay, let me turn off the tape.