Interview Aleksander Laks
January 24, 2005
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Q: Good afternoon.

A: Good afternoon.

Q: Could you please introduce yourself?

A: My name is Aleksander Henryk Laks. I live in Rio de Janeiro. I'm a Brazilian citizen now, and I am head of the Jewish Survivors in Rio de Janeiro. I also am also active in the community in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil all over, and I'm glad to be here now to give my statement about my surviving, and I don't know how I survived, but I know.

Q: Tell me a little bit about where are you from? When were you born? And, what was your name at that time?

A: I was born in Poland in 1927, and oldest, and my name was Chaim Benzion Laks, my father's name. And, all over during the Holocaust I attended by that name. After the war in honor of my mother, I changed my name to Laks, and now I am known as Aleksander Henryk Laks.

Q: We have to stop for a second. We have to do it again because you said Laks instead of Cale. Could you please tell us when you were born, where were you born, in which city were you born in, and what was your name at that time?

A: I was born in Poland, city of Lodz, and I attended as Chaim Benzion Cale. It was my father's name, and also mine. During the Holocaust and in ghetto, during persecution, concentration camps, death camps, I was always Chaim Benzion Cale. After the war, in honor of my mother, I took my name to Aleksander Henryk Laks, and now I'm known, people know me as Aleksander Henryk Laks. I'm active in Brazil and I'm chairman of Holocaust survivors in Rio de Janeiro.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about where did you live in Lodz before the war? What did your father do? What did your mother do? Just a little bit about how well-off you were or poor or what was your life like?

A: I was born in a Jewish – a Jewish family, full of love. I was the only child. My mother, my real mother died. I was about three or four years old, and my father remarried. My mother was Sima, Sima Cale also, and my father remarried and her name was Balcie, and today when I think of my mother, I think of Balcie. She was a person extraordinary and gave her life for me during the ghetto and afterwards. I don't speak afterwards about it. My father worked at the wholesale meat delivery Goscinny Dwor in Lodz. My mother took part in home work. She did work, and we were a family, a happy family. We were not

rich, but we were not poor. The party in Poland, Polish Jews were very, very poor people, and we were considered rich people. We were not rich, but we were considered rich, and it was a family, a happy family. I went to school, public school. I wasn't the best student. I wasn't the worst. I wasn't the best, and so that's life got till 1939, and then came the war, and everything changed by that time. The Germans – the Germans invaded Poland the third of September, and three days later, the Polish army left the city of Lodz. They came up, swastikas because in Lodz there were very many Germans, and they considered themselves as Germans, as Nazis, and three days later, exactly a week the war started. It was a Friday, and the next Friday the light went on and we saw that we had lost. They made some to know what's going on. In the streets they put on a – what do you call it – announcements what's going to happen. So, I went to see. I was 12 years old. I went to see what happened, and it was written like this, "Tomorrow" at that time "the German Army is going to enter the city of Lodz, and who make any sabotage or something like it will be killed." Just that, "Will be killed," and I was a child of 12 years complete. I had 12 years when it all started. And, it was the orneriest thing. The first thing I met the Nazis, say "Going to be killed." It was such a shock to me that I came home crying and told my father, "They're going to kill us." My father said, "No, people don't kill people. They're doing it because we were in the war and they're afraid that it's going to happen, something to them. So, they say going to kill, but no one kills nobody." My father didn't believe what is going to happen here. Nobody believed it. And, tomorrow, I went to see the German army to get in our city. I was very surprised. It was all motorized and it was very good looking, but the same day they took people, Jews in the street and hanged them. You could get there in the street and see five, six people hanging. They took Jews. Jews by that time used the beard. My grandfather also, he was very religious. My grandfather was. He wasn't, but my father – my grandfather was very religious. And, they catched him and pulled out his face, never recovered, they pulled out his beard and he never recovered. He was taken out after awhile before the ghetto, and he just disappeared. That was the entry of the German army, the Wehrmacht, the SS in our city. Schools closed, and it was all – we didn't know what to do, but we were – we had to use stars, yellow stars of David. We couldn't get into some cities. They changed the name for Hitler and so on. We couldn't walk on the sidewalk. You had to walk in the middle of the streets. The Jews couldn't go in movie or streetcars. We had to go to be separated. We had to eat. In Poland, it gets very cold about – very, very cold. We had to eat. So, my father was afraid. They took people, Jews, took them and they said it's going to work, but there's no work. They make these big ditches, and people had to undress, put it in, and dance over it and sing, and the words were – very few came home after. So, my father was afraid to just disappear. My father was afraid to go out. So, I had to go in the line to buy bread. I went out about five o'clock and four o'clock in the morning. It was very cold, very cold, and eight o'clock they came – German policemen because this district is called Warteland, and we were attached to the German Reich. So, we were ruled by German boss who came in German policeman, and usually, almost everyday, said, "Juden rausse" Jews, out of the line. I didn't need, by that time, a Star of David. So, it wasn't for me. It was just waiting, but most of the time, there was someone who recognized me and said that I'm a Jew. I was thrown out, kicked out of the line, and came home crying and we didn't eat that time. I know – I feel it very much. I don't hate. I don't hate nor have hate in me, but I feel very, very much what they did to us.

Q: In May 1940, the ghetto was sealed. Did you and your family, your parents and your grandparents, did you have to move from your apartment or where did you live? And, how did you feel about being in the ghetto?

A: When they started to speak about the ghetto, I didn't know what it is. I asked my father what was the ghetto? And, he told me that in the dark ages there were ghettos, but afterwards couldn't get anymore, but he said, "You'll see. We'll be all with Jews and at least we have the Germans. We have the Germans. We know that they're our enemies, but at least we won't have the Poles to what they were doing with us and beat us up and so on." And– we didn't know what's going to happen. So, I went in – we went in to the ghetto. I lived at Gesia, Gesia 7 apartment 8, and it was a good apartment. The house belonged to my grandfather. He was a very wealthy man. We were not, but he was. And, so we didn't have to move, but my father – my father worked I said in wholesale, retail/wholesale, and they called themselves grinszpan. So, I went – he send me because he was afraid to go. I went there and we brought one of the brothers, and he came to our house and lived with us for a while. Afterwards, I don't know how it was because I don't remember. He left the house. We had a big house, but they were – people who took part a way to place newcomers, we had to give up two rooms for people to live there. It was very – the ghetto had room about 25,000 people to be there. We squeezed in 165,000 people in the place. There's room for 25. It was terrible. People didn't know what to do. It was cold, also. The worst of all was the hunger. We didn't have no food. People started to die because we didn't have no food, and to say what is food it's so hard to say because nobody understands what food. You can eat something. It's okay, but if you don't have nothing to eat. You don't see your neighbor. You don't see your parents. One thinking, you think all one thing – eat, eat, eat and you have nothing to put in your mouth. People started to die, and all over the ghetto there were people with open eyes, and you looked at them and you thought, "Give me some food and I will get up." But they were dead. The Germans said, "If you make shops and work, we'll give you what to do and we'll give you food." It was made in a short time, and they started to send me. To live, you need 2,400 calories daily. We received 200 calories. It's a fact that people were just who eat no more than 200 calories can live most eight months. I lived five years with 200 calories. I don't know how I ever survived. I don't know how.

Q: Tell me what did you eat? Who was in charge of getting the food? What were the ways that your parents went about getting some food for the family? And, what other activities did you have? Did you go to school? And, what happened there when the ghetto was closed?

A: We received a kilo – kilo is a two pounds, two pounds of bread. It was dark black and full of water inside. Two pounds for five days, and soup. They gave us some vegetables and they were old. It was nothing to eat, almost nothing. People died. That's why we died. And, that was – but, they permitted to make schools in ghetto. So, we had – they called them Juden Alteste. Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, and he thought that he was the emperor of the ghetto, and this emperor opened schools. So, I went to school. It was, of course, to learn also, but the main thing was a soup. You received a soup day. It was not the – it's more water than vegetables, but it was a soup, and it's – I think it's one of the reasons that I survived too. My survival is also, I think, because the love I received at

home, and I never was beaten up to die. I never received a beaten up. They didn't beat me up. That's why I'm here.

Q: Tell me a little bit about school. What did you learn there? Who were the teachers? And, who were your schoolmates? Who were your friends in school?

A: The teachers were the best teachers in the world. They did everything to teach us, and we did everything to learn. They were – so bad as we were, no food, empty stomachs and thats – they didn't understand what we say, but we did, and they didn't say what for. They all want to die, what for to teach them, but they did everything to teach us. Today, if I can speak, if I'm a person, if I'm a Jew, if I'm Brazilian, I belong to humanity, it's thanks to that teachers. In school, we had – I had some friends. I remember some names, other I don't. It's 65 years, okay? I'm 77 years old now, but I still remember each time, but names I'm very bad. There was a friend of mine. His name was Cukier, and I liked him very much. He was a friend, real good friend, and it's something – something I want to say. We had in the ghetto, they made – they made a – how do I say – we wrote to Rumkowski. He was the emperor, and we called the father. The father, it was not the father, but we had to do it. And, we made a writing for him to the end of the year, we made a writing for him, to him, and who should make it is exactly this Cukier, but he was so dirty. His hands were always dirty and I don't know. We didn't have no soap of course, but he was more dirty than other kids. So, he started to make it, and the principal said, "No, you don't make it. Who's going to make it is Laks, Cale I mean, and I made it, and I remember I made this writing to the Prezes. We call him Prezes.

Q: What was the occasion?

A: I think it was a New Year it was Rosh Hashanah or something like that. I don't remember exactly, but I know it was good because I was in the principal's room. I didn't have to attend school. It was very good for me. I liked it and I recognize it now.

Q: You told me before that before each class every morning you started with a song.

A: Oh, yeah. We started with a song. It's something like this "We children beg you oh God, give us life and to be pure and good." In Yiddish, I will sing it in Yiddish, I remember it still [sings Yiddish song]. Was the song we sang and, afterward, when school's ended, there were no schools anymore. I was in the part – part of we studied in ghetto without food, without nothing, but we studied.

Q: Tell me what happened in October 1940 when you became 13 years old.

A: Oh, as I said, my father was not a religious man, but he was a Jew. He was proud to be a Jew. So, am I now, and it was time to make Bar Mitzvah. So, I don't know where it was. I didn't know about it, but in the front of our house there was a private room, private house and they had the Torah there, and I was taken in there, and I made the brachos, and I made Bar Mitzvah, and I don't know how my father managed to bring some pieces of

bread – pieces, not bread, pieces of bread, and all the people there who attend and pray got a piece of bread. That was my Bar Mitzvah.

Q: After Rosh Hashanah in 1941, the schools were closed, and western Jews were brought into the ghetto. Could you say a little bit about that?

A: Before I wanted to say, I went to school before the war it was a church. It was on Franciszkanska Street, 21 or 20, 19 – I don't remember the number, and at that school, we were lined up and it was time to have the soup. We wait with our pots, and came up a German and took pictures of us. In 1940, he took pictures, color pictures. I found it now. I have a picture with my friends in there, and I knew about it, last year, in 1940 - 203, when I came back from Chelmno with all my family – my family, my parents and friends perished, and the driver took out a xerox and showed me. It was me. This picture, the original, is now in Frankfurt, the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt. I knew it in 2000, it's me. I mean 2004, we're in 05 now, 2004 after 60 years.

Q: Tell me now a little bit about people that moved into your apartment.

A: At first there were, as I said, my father's boss and they got out. I don't know how it was. I was too young. There are some things that I know, but I can't imagine now. I imagine, but sometimes I think like a child. I was a child. I was a child. Some people – when I speak – some people ask me, "What did you feel as a child?" I say, "I felt like a child, but in one day to the other I was grown up." They took away my childhood, my youth, and I didn't have it, but I still, I was a child. And, what was your last question?

Q: I asked about the Western Jews who came into the ghetto.

A: In ghetto, they came in trains with especially from Germany, not only, but especially from Germany. They came from other parts. I had a teacher from Athens, from Greece, but he taught me history, and they came trains from other parts of Europe especially from Germany. They were told they were going to be changed for German prisoners of war from England. And, when they came in, they came with crosses and medals from the first war, and they thought they were going to England. They came in, they asked, "Where are the ships? Where are the ships here?" There are no ships. And, a couple of elder people went into our apartment where we lived. There were two couples and I remember one of them had ten Marks, and she kept it 'til afterwards. I don't know how. I think they received – they had to go out of the ghetto and they were taken, of course, they were taken to Chelmno where all people died of the Wartegau, and these people also. But, I had – I had afterwards, I was designed, assigned to work at metal as a metaeines as a – English – Slusarz to– work in the shop. It's called Metaleines, and-

Q: When these people who lived in your apartment, when they disappeared, they left, what did you think? What did your father and mother tell you? Where did they go?

A: We don't spoke about it, a little, we spoke very little of it because before that, Germany invaded Russia, and they said that we're going to – who wants to go with them can go to

work in Russia. It's not hard work. They can go, children, the families, or just individuals, who wants to go to work is going to work in agricultural, it's not bad. See here you're dying, but there you can have a potato, grow potatoes and that, but you'll work, and it's very good job. Many people went out as volunteers. And two uncles of mine, my mother's two brothers went as volunteers. We know now that all those people went to Chelmno, but we didn't – I don't know. People just believed it. But, anyhow, we didn't have – we were not in touch anymore with them, and people started to wonder, "Why don't they write? What happens?" So, the volunteers quit because nobody wanted. So, the made a sperre, gehsperre, also those people who went away, went into gehsperre. Nobody spoke about it because nobody knew where we were going, and that's why we didn't bother those people who went away also. I don't know. We don't spoke about it, but nobody wanted to get out. So, my father made a hiding. In Poland, if you come in, in the front of the house, you've got doors, and each door means a room. If you hide one, you don't have any room. So, my father pushed a cupboard – my father pushed a cupboard in front of the door. So, when they came in there was nothing – there was no room – no door, no room. We went in the bottom of this cupboard and the other room we went in. If something happened in this room, we went in about 13 or 14 people in there. Who made it was my father. In the beginning, the Germans didn't know it, but afterwards they pushed the cupboards to see. They were not dumb also. So, looked – and they told us, "Who's going to be in the hiding will be shot on the spot." They did. So, we went in there, and there came in a child – a child of three or four months in the same building. It was forbidden, but there was an exception. There was a child. And when they came in, they said that they will shoot, and we hear a shot. We have to go down there, and they'll segregate who can stay together and who can not. Before that, they took out all the children, all the children of the ghetto. They took out and they said they're going to resettle, but all died in Chelmno. Then, by that time, they had children. They were going to take children 10 to 12 or 10, 12, and elder people, but they took others also. They had to have 5,000 a day, and if they would not have 5,000, they took other who could work. They didn't like it. They didn't have to. They never did what they said. And, they went in – this child went in with their father and mother, and all the time they came in and the child started to cry. So, this sperre, people started to cover the child with blankets and all was in his hand, and the child didn't cry anymore. We were in there – we didn't breathe. It was – it's something you can't – I don't know how to say it what I felt there. I wasn't standing, didn't sit. Somebody sitting didn't stand up. We were afraid to breathe, they hear us breathe. I don't know how long it took. It took – every second was ten years, every minute was ten years. And, afterward, we heard outside crying and shoots, and then people were crying. Afterward, they went away, the child – the child was dead. My father make a mouth to mouth, but the child was dead. That time we weren't discovered, but at night those couple, the couple with the child went and gave themselves up to the Germans. It's something that marked me to the last day, I think – I won't say I lived, but 'til the last day, I – we be able to think.

Q: You mentioned to me before that at certain points you thought that sperre was over, and you went to get some soup – tell me about that.

A: They started in the morning. Nobody could get out of their room. You had to stay in there, and they stopped about five o'clock in the evening. We knew about five hours it's going. It's no more, no more sperre. So, I heard that there was a kitchen and they were giving soup. I don't know how, but I know from where, but I took a pot and run over there to get a soup. I didn't ask my parents. I just run away. I was only a child. I was still a child, and I came there. All of a sudden, we were encircled by Germans, by SS, and Jewish police, too, and they caught me. I don't know how. I run away, went into a house, an empty house already, and there was another, my friend from school. Not but that time, but from school. We met there. His name was Woda, and we run up to the last floor, and went in there. So, I was so naïve. I said, "I'm going to put a towel in my face and say I'm sick." But, he said, "No, don't do that. Don't do that. Let's go in." There was a box from coal to burn, and we went both. We went in this box, and we stood there, and we heard outside to come out police after us, and so they look all over, and when he went away, we came home. Of course my parents said, "Never do that. Never do this." But, what would happen? And, I was with Woda.

Q: Tell me a little about your work at the metal workshop number one. How did you get this job? Who told you to work there? What did you do? How many hours a day?

A: It was a good shop. It was a good shop. I learned. I was a – I learned to be a – my job – I don't know how to say it, but I had two foremen, Brogowski and another one. The other one was a Jew from Vienna, very nice people. They didn't beat us, and they teach us how to work, and I'm thankful for it. They don't live anymore, but they were very good people. And, we work 12 hours a day. We had also a soup in this. In this shop, we had a soup, and the soup was always so thin, it more water than – so, we had a song it says to get this spoon up to the bottom to take out a little maybe some vegetables or something like what was in there. And, we had a song it said, it sounds like this [sings Yiddish song] to put the spoon down there, and we sung it [sings Yiddish song] let us at that shop, but those both people, I'm thankful for what they did. The name of the principal of the school, of that shop was Chaimowicz. Chaimowicz was a bad guy. He molested girls. He was bad.

[New Tape]

Q: Tell me a little bit about the school that you attended before the war, on Rybna Street, if I remember correctly, and the school in the ghetto, but first talk about the school before the war. Did you like going there? Do you remember any names of teachers? What subjects did you learn?

A: Yeah, I don't remember – that school before the ghetto was a public school. We had subjects, Polish was our language, my language by that time. It's not anymore, and mathematics, history which I liked very, very much, geography. I think that's all about. I don't think I had anymore. We were young. In school, I had good friends, not only Jews, but good friends, but some people were discriminated. Not too much, but sometimes they

said, “Oh, you’re a Jew. You’re a Jew. You’re a Jew.” But, I didn’t feel it so much. The schools were very good, very good. The teachers – I don’t remember any name of any teacher. I’m very bad in names and dates, but I remember facts what happened. So, in school, most of all, afterward we went into the ghetto and they started the school in the beginning for a few months only, and we had almost the same subjects, but we had also Yiddish. We had Polish, German. I had a very good professor from a German university, and it was just beginning. Afterwards, they brought in Jews from all over Germany, but in the beginning, just the beginning they brought also Jews from Germany, also, just in the beginning, and I had one of those professors. He was a professor. He was a teacher. So, we had German, Yiddish, Polish sometimes, not anymore, but who want it – and history, geography, and some Hebrew also, some Hebrew who want it. I had very good teachers. They – I spoke about it. I had the best. No, this was afterwards, but I had very good teacher. All were very good teachers. So, and we were children. We were children and we wanted to eat and it was not so much about learning to eat the soup. It was good. It was to eat another soup, and my parents, of course, were happy that I ate another soup, and this was the school. We came home also in school, we had – we were not so cold. At home, it was very cold. So, I wanted to go to school not so much to learn, but to eat the soup and not to be frozen. That why. That’s was the school, our school.

Q: Did you have gymnastics, sports in school?

A: No, we marched. We marched. I was assigned to be the head of this class. I mean after the war. Before the war, no. But, I mean, during the war. During the war, I was head of the class. They called it Gospodarz, land lord, but there was no land lord, of course, and we marched. We marched and we said, ‘Achad, Shtaim…[Yiddish counting],” We marched, and this was in the school. We marched, yeah. In that school of Franciszkanska where I have the picture where the German took a picture in color.

Q: Did you play football?

A: No. We didn’t play no football. Before the war, of course, we – but, during the war there was no time. During the war, no. Before the war, we played football, yeah.

Q: When you started to work after the schools were closed, did you have time for any play with your friends or reading books or belonging to an organization of any kind?

A: During the war effort, yeah. We had some – some organizations. I was in the Socialist organization, Bund, and it was something I can’t say – I can’t say it was something good or bad, but we had no time. I had no time, and not always with people came together I didn’t go because I was too tired. I had to work 12 hours a day, and one week during the daytime, and the other week during the night. So, I think I didn’t go because of that. I was too – I wasn’t lazy. I was tired. No food, I was freezing, and that’s why I didn’t go out.

Q: When you were at home with your parents, what did you talk about? Did you ever think that it’s going to end, or did you think the Germans might win the war?

A: We were – I don't know why, we believed – we believed that we are going to survive. We thought that it's impossible to survive, but we had a – I don't know why, but we believed it. We believed it really that we are going to get out of the ghetto and life will come again as it was before the war or better. I don't know why. The Germans were going up, and we were happy when Germany invaded Russia because we thought that now it's going to – that the Germans are going to lose the war because Napoleon did and so on, and so on but it was upside down. The Germans went to Moscow, near Moscow, near Stalingrad, Leningrad and so on. We saw it was not going to happen, but we believed it. We believed that we were – also the Germans stimulated us to believe. The Germans stimulated. They said these people who went out of the ghetto. They lived good, but we didn't know it. They believed every time, it was Biebow. His name was Biebow. He always said, "We need you, and you go to live because we need your work, and don't worry about it. People go out, we take, we send to another place. They are replaced, and we need you because you are good and you are working and we need you in production. And, also this Rumkowski, I think he knew that it's not true, but he always said and made speeches that we're going to live. He said, "I brought you in the ghetto" That's not true, "And, I'll get you out of the ghetto." Of course, it was not true, but always the same. They stimulated, the Germans, and the Jewish ghetto Aeltesten. They stimulated us to believe that we were to live.

Q: Were you afraid of the Germans? Who were you afraid of in the ghetto?

A: I was afraid of everything. All the people were afraid. I was afraid of police, Jewish police. I was afraid of Germans. I was afraid in the shop where I worked. I was afraid of everything. I was afraid I won't have to eat tomorrow. Today, I ate something. I didn't know whether tomorrow I will have another soup, and I was afraid of everything. We always lived in stress. We were very stressed. All people were stressed, and we spoke at home, but sometimes we didn't speak at home because my father had to work at another place, my mother another place, I in another place, and sometimes we didn't meet at home. When we came together, who made all the preparations to eat was always my mother, and she left each piece for one, my father, me, my parents, and we sometimes didn't speak at all. And, the evening ghetto, we had a theater. It was for people, not us. People who had some jobs in the Ghetto-Verwaltung and so on. And, this was, I spoke about it I was going to see the theater and so on, but people like me, like us, couldn't have it.

Q: Where from did you get news? How did you know about Germany invading Soviet Union? Or things not going so well for the Germans? How did you find out about it?

A: We had a – from German newspapers. We didn't read the paper as it was written. I'll give you an example. It said, "We're going to fight the communists in Krakow. In Krakow, we're going to make a great counter attack in Krakow." So, we knew it was near Moscow. How come it's near Krakow? They were beaten back, and that we knew. We didn't know that they were going to win Krakow, but they were up there and now they were down there. They were pushed down, and that's how we knew.

Q: At work, in the metaleines workshop, did people talk about politics or military issues of how is the war going for the Germans or the Russians moving, fighting back, or the Allies, the Americans and the British? Did you know about D-day?

A: We didn't know about British. We knew only from the Russians, Red Army and we looked at them as liberators and even after the war, I thought that's true that they were liberators and so on. The only hope for us was this side, the Russian to come. They never came, and we didn't know about invasion. We didn't know about Americans, the west. We knew only this side, the east, the Russian, the Russian army. We spoke about it, yeah, sometimes we spoke that the Russian would come and liberate us, and we'll be good. That's it, but we didn't know the other side what was going on in the west.

Q: Did you ever think about running away from the ghetto?

A: It was impossible. It was impossible to run away from the ghetto. I think it's the only ghetto in all Poland, all over the world, all over Germany and Europe, that was impossible to get out of the ghetto. First of all, we were – there were fences, fences, and we couldn't go to the fences. There were some streets where the fences were people couldn't walk there. I lived near the fence, but didn't go out on the left side. I had to go always on the right side inside the ghetto to another property and not in the streets. So, we couldn't go in. Afterwards, the Germans took away all Poles, all others on the other side of the fence, and they relocated Germans from Germany and also Germans from Russia. So, I don't know the distance. There were always a German policeman watching and inside were Jewish policeman watching. So, we were isolated completely, but completely from all the world. We didn't know what happens on the other side of the street. We knew about, about the Germans going to win or lose by the papers as I said. But, what's going on in the city and near Chelmno, we didn't know absolutely nothing, and also in the ghetto, this Rumkowski he had spies. If you said something, if he didn't like or invented even something, you were taken out and sent, it was called the Czarnieckiego. It was a prison, and from that prison people went out of there. So, we didn't know absolutely nothing.

Q: When you still went to school, how many children were in your class?

A: We were about thirty. I think so twenty or thirty people.

Q: At that time at school, did the children talk to each other about what was happening? How come you are in the ghetto? How come you're isolated from the rest of the city?

A: No, we were happy in school, very happy in school. We were together. We were between friends, and we had good teachers too. The teachers simulated to be friends. They were your friends, too, I was happy in school, we had soup. They had the soup there. We knew if we come home we maybe have a piece of bread, too, and between us we marched. It was good in school. But we didn't speak about what's happening. We didn't want to know. We were happy in school. We lived from one moment to the other. Never in the ghetto, we never make plans after the war, yeah, we're going to be friends – but, 'til the

end of the war, we didn't want to speak about it. I was a child, but also the adults also was the same.

Q: Tell me what happened in August 1944.

A: In August 1944, the ghetto was being finished. They came up to us, and said that we're going to Germany because the Russian army is near, and we'll be shooted by them as collaborators to the Germans because we're in ghetto, and they're going to help us not to be. So, they're going to take the ghetto as it is with machines and shops and all of us. You're going to Germany to be better in Germany. Each one will receive to go there, two pounds of bread, and there you'll have German money and that would going to be good for us to go. We didn't believe it. So, for two or three days, we were hidden too, my family were hidden. And my father said we're going to die here. Let's go. We're going to die. So, we gave ourselves up. We were taken to [unintelligible], not far away I lived before the war and in ghetto, and from there, we were taken to a place. I finished up in a place. We didn't know where we were. People in the meantime, I would like to say something also. That, today, people say that they didn't know what was going on. Well, when we left Poland, I mean ghetto Lodz, and went through to go there, there were people working in the fields, and there was a woman there. She made a cross and prayed for us. So, I said to my father, "You see people are praying for us." But, after the war, I remembered that. This woman, she knew where we going. She made a cross to death, that we were going to death. So, if she knew all the people who were over there knew too. If, they knew, the village also knew. If the village knew, also the city knew, and if the city knew, all of them knew. They knew and did nothing. But on the train, went on, and we came in, in a place. They said we had to go out. I want to tell a story also on that train. It was August, it was not so cold, and we became two pounds of bread, each one finished it in two minutes, and we wanted to have, to drink something. They didn't put in nothing. In the train I was, a young girl or man, we all were young, and started to cry, "Water, water. I'm dying. I want water, water, water, I'm dying." There was no water. When the Germans came in, we had to give up all we had of value – gold, silver, furs, all of it, but in that train where I was, a man came up with a watch, a golden watch, and said to the – we had in all the trains we had a – there's a window and he said to he, "Take this watch and bring water. A person's dying." He took the watch but didn't bring no water. The cries were weaker and weaker. I'm sure that person died of thirst. The two things that marked me all my life – the child and that person. We came in – we came in. They opened up the – they were waiting there, and my father grabbed for my hand not to lose each other. He held me by my pulse and we jumped out the train. They said, "Women one side. Men down." I was with my father. My father asked they called Kanada, Sonederkommando Kanada, and my father said, "Where are we?" He said, "Shut up. You're in Auschwitz. The only way out is the chimney." And, I thought, before we went out, I thought I'm in the – where they make iron and steel and so, I saw chimney, I said, "It's a factory." But, when we came out, my father asked him and he said, "Shut up. Shut your mouth. You're in Auschwitz. The only way out is through the chimney." And, women went to one side. It was the last time I saw my mother, and my mother was very thin, and I want to tell about my mother. In ghetto, between one organization and the other we could go to a doctor, and the doctor gave or not the medicine. The medicine was

a few ounces of bread, and my mother became ill, and the doctor gave her. She didn't eat it. She brought it to me. I ate this bread. Was my stepmother. She was a mother. My mother was very thin, and she died. I looked for her after the war all over the world, all over the world – wrote Red Cross and all things because my mother died in the gas chamber in Auschwitz, in Birkenau. Right 'til now, I don't know how I survived, but I know what for. I survived to be a witness and to say all the world that can not happen again, never, never again. I do it in Brazil. I will apologize also for my English because I speak Portuguese, and Portuguese would be much better, but I hope people will understand, and never again.

Q: Tell me a little bit about what happened then with you and your father after arriving in Birkenau, and what happened later.

A: I was in Birkenau, we were, they took off our clothes. We were naked, just as we were born, shaved – cut-off our hair was cut-off. And, we were taken, my father asked, yeah inside they took a part to the left and the other part to the right, beating us. We separated, one on one side – one part on one side, other part. The one part we were not, they asked them to get their sleeves up and tattooed, made a tattoo with a number. So, we – my father thought they going to take us because we were not tattooed, and my father said they're going to take us to the gas chamber, but we didn't. They took us to a block and they – we were sold, sold as slaves to build a – what do you call it?

Q: Trenches?

A: Trenches also, but to make-

Q: Gas tanks?

A: Tanks, yes.

Q: Anti-tank reinforcements.

A: We were sold to make the jobs, and I want to tell you – to tell you also about what happened to me in Flossenbürg, I mean in Birkenau. I was standing to get the soup, and they came up a Kapo and said to me that I'm for the second time taking soup. I wanted to say something, he said, "Shut up. You're in Auschwitz. The only way out is through the chimney." Come, [German]. It means to get beaten up with 25 lashes, and I don't – I know only one person who survived 25 lashes. My father saw it. He wanted to say something. I said, "Don't talk. Don't talk." I was afraid they were going to take my father, too, and he went to kill me. I don't know why he didn't kill me on the spot, but why he took me. So, I started to march. He kicked me sometimes. I don't know where I was. In came another one, a friend of his, and said to him, "Come I want to show you something." So, he said, "What I going to do with this? I'm going to finish him." He said, "Take out, take another, you have so much what do you need him for." So, he went with him. He kicked me right here march zuruk. My father didn't believe that I came back. I think I was – I don't know why I survived. I was dying. He took me there to kill me, and

I came back. So, afterwards, we were sold as I said to another camp, and this camp of course belonged to Gross Rosen. The camp – the name of the camp was Kaltwasser, Kaltwasser. This camp was a little better because they didn't beat us. They did beat us, but not so much. At that camp, in the better camp, work was hard, and food was the same, but they didn't beat so much. The only thing they beat because it was cold and we were working with cement, and we took some paper to put in – it was so cold – to put enough in the feet, so cold. And each person who was catched with this at night, they'd beat us up. We had numbers. We gave us numbers, also, but not tattooed, but we had on our clothes, and our uniforms, we had numbers. At that camp, they came once and took youngsters, I was in it, took youngsters to stay aside. They came out one of them. I think he was a dentist. He took me in, took me out of this bunch of where we were. Took me in their quarters, and pulled me out a tooth. He said, "I'm going to pull you out a tooth, and you may cry if you feel something to cry over, just go ahead. Nobody will hear you." Anyway, and without anesthetic, without nothing, he pulled out a tooth. I wanted to stay up. He said, "Sit down. And, now if you yell, don't breathe in because I'm going to take out another tooth, and if you cry or something, I kill you right now." And, pulled me out another tooth, two teeth. I don't know why. From this one, it became five because I used a hook, and spoiled. I make implants to this side, and here I have a bridge. He took me out five from this side and three on this side, in that better camp, we made ditches, and it was raining so much that night. It was horrible, and the guards there were well guarded rubber. There was no plastics by that time. With rubber, they were dry, and he said, "Hey, Jew, bread." He said a little bread. I pulled out of the trench, and put this in my mouth. Other people saw something, I don't know how. I heard shooting, but people fell on me, and I was offered but the bread I had in my mouth. When they took out my beating, I don't know. I got out this same soldier, the same SS was near me, looking at me. I knew if I would run or something, he would kill me. So, I stood up, put my head down, couldn't look at the Germans. It was forbidden. So, I stood. He with his gun, he hit me here. It's still here. Until today, I don't breathe with this side. I breathe this side. This is Nazi. The name of the camp was Lärche. These youngsters, I received a little time ago, I received from Poland a book who said exactly what I'm – not about me, but about the youngsters that all these people who went – who were taken out of this camp, were sent back to Auschwitz and they all gone, all was exterminated in Auschwitz, and it was something. It was a blessing that he took me out and pulled my teeth out. If not, I would not be here. There's so many coincidences, but I think that God wanted me to be here. I think it's God. I don't know. Afterwards, we were taken out from Lärche. It was Kaltwasser and Lärche. When I was in Kaltwasser, we had to build Lärche. And, we build Lärche, and we belonged to a Gross Rosen. We were taken – they took us to death march, and at that time was almost end of the war. My father said to me, "I want you to promise me son." I said, "Of course, what do you want father?" He said, "To see the war's going to end. The Germans look like the Polish Army in '39. One runs forward, the other runs back, and if they won't kill us, you will survive. And, I want you to do a thing. If you survive, never let people forget what happened to us. Always tell what happened. Maybe some people won't get out in their head that something so terrible could happen, but you always say and tell what happened, no matter – young, old, many, few – always say it." I promised my father I would. He said to me, "Now, my child. I'm going to sit down because my feet don't – can't go on anymore." And, to get out of the – to be to not

go or sit down, they killed. We went out from there, we went out 600 prisoners, and at the time, my father fell, we were about 50 or 60. They killed all of us. My father said, “I’m going to sit because my feet – my feet don’t – over there.” I said, “Father, if you will sit down, I will sit down too. I don’t want to live without you.” He said, “No, you have to walk. You have to go. You have to survive because I don’t want” Anytime he mentioned to stop or something, I stopped with him, and near us, we were always in five. So, a person – I don’t know who it is, he didn’t survive. I’m sure. He said, “You want your son to live.” He said, “Of course. The only thing, I’m going to die. I’m dying.” “So, put your arm on me, and one arm on your son, and we’ll fall down all the three of us.” He was in very bad shape too, but we fall down. My father said, “They’ll shoot us. They don’t allow it.” He said, “Put your arm – put your arm on us. Let’s go.” And, my father after he put one hand on his and one on my shoulder and we went, and it was a miracle. All of a sudden, we had a train from nowhere. There was a train, and our commandant went over to the man who was in it. There was nobody in it, just a train, just only the driver, and we went into this train, and we came to Flossenbürg. In Flossenbürg, we were in Block 25, in quarantine. It was one of the – the worst in Flossenbürg, and the Kapo killed my father there because he went in and it was cold and my father couldn’t go anymore. So, he went in and he call latrina, and in there he killed my father. I asked some people, we shouldn’t push if someone died, we had to stay in same place where he died. They could say, “Get them in. Get them out.” But, they asked people to push my father and they attended me, and pushed him in Block 25, and my father was dead. I saw all the lice getting off his head from him. I knew that my father’s dead. He shared the same fate with six million Jews. My father had 45 years, 45 years. He was a good man. He was not religious, but good, respected, respectful, a good person, but he died because he was a Jew with 45 years. I had about 17. My father, the crematorium in Flossenbürg didn’t work anymore. He was burned outside the camp, outside near 25th block, quarantine in Flossenbürg. He was burned out there and I saw it. A few days later, I was taken to be drown in south Germany in Bodensee, to be drowned because came a cable from Himmler to Flossenbürg. My boat, I rowed a boat and I have the facsimile in Portuguese of course, and they said that no prisoner should fall in the hands of the Allies, and I was there to be killed. In the meantime, it was there. I didn’t know where I was. We were bumped. I don’t know by the English or Americans, and at night we had to get out of the train, and at night we were taken to another train to go on, and in the meantime we stopped in Offenburg. This town was bombed, and we had to clean it, but a few time, a little time, they take me in the train where we were bombed, as I said. And we went in this town of Tutlingen. We went into Tutlingen at night. I don’t know how – why, I mean I don’t know why, the train started to move, and we stopped in another train – another station called Emmendingen, and at Emmendingen, I was dying. I was sittin’ there. I knew I was dying, and I was in peace with myself. “I’m going to die.” I knew it. I didn’t feel no fear. I didn’t fear anymore. I didn’t hurt. Pain, just a little in my feet, because they were swollen, but I was sitting there in the train, they came up, and I heard outside some shooting and then lights, but it wasn’t at me. I stood there. I was there with my, they call a blanket, and I was tired. Came over to me a person, and spoke in some language I don’t know, it was Greek, I don’t know what they said, and came back with a – with some milk and gave it to me, but I couldn’t lift my hand anymore. So, he pushed my head back, and put this milk in me. And, I have a son. He is a doctor. He is a doctor now. He said,

"Father, you had to die by that time." I weighed – my weight was 56 pounds with 17 years. I was dead. I was dying there, really dying. He said, "You had to die like that." I didn't eat. I don't know how long I didn't eat, and all this stuff. 'The milk should kill you." But, I felt better. I got up. Got up, and they came Russians too said the Germans run away. We are free. We are free now." But, for me, it was – I don't know. I didn't feel nothing. But, I went into a train where the Germans were before. I could sleep there. So, I lay down there, and the French. I was awake by French. They left us as we were when we – garbage, they ask nothing – what happened. Who we are, they knew, but they didn't ask, didn't bring food, didn't bring a doctor, didn't bring a nurse, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. We waited few days afterwards, they came back said they going to retreat. Who wants to go with them can go, but they don't have any trucks to take us. I couldn't go a yard. I couldn't go ten miles, twenty miles. So, I didn't get up. I was dead. The next day, the Germans came back, and I was taken with others who also couldn't go. We were taken to be shot. When we came in near where they wanted to shoot us, there came a priest, a firer and two civilians, and said to – it was an officer – they told him, "If you kill these people and the French come back, we will be responsible for it." They did nothing. So, leave them because of us. And, they didn't say it's not allowed to kill. They gave him a reason why because they will be responsible. They took us in the school, and afterwards they were shooting and when we got out there were white flags and there was bread the second time. Sixty years ago, last year, was January 2004, I went to Germany, Poland and Germany, to see all this I'm telling you. All this, I saw it again, and I went to Emmendingen and spoke to the mayor of the city Emmendingen, and he has it all written down with dates. I don't know dates, but he did. I've got it home in Brazil. I have it written down all this. I read a book and I showed him what – this is this but without dates, and it's exactly the same.

Q: I want to go back a little bit to the very beginning of the ghetto when you realized that you were going to be fenced up some little area. You were so called lucky that you didn't have to move because you stayed in your own apartment with your parents, but what was the feeling of being fenced in, of being separated from the rest of the world?

A: In the ghetto we were fenced in. It was a feeling of loses. We lost everything. We were not human anymore. We were put in like cattle in a place where there was room for 25,000, we were squeezed in 165,000, and it was something like to take out at night some person and put them in the street. We have all, even us, we were in the ghetto we were lucky not to leave the home, but we all – all we had before the war, but we felt the same. We felt the same because we were afraid of invasion. They came in some people and took it. Just went in and we want to stay here, and we are afraid that more people are going to come. We were afraid. You couldn't say no. Of course, you couldn't say no. Go in, get in, and that's it. They did so. They didn't ask, and we didn't say no. I was a child, but my parents – my father said it's okay. We don't need so much room. And, just it was something. I really don't have words to say what we felt. People were sleeping in the streets, in the street and it was raining.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the apartment. When you entered there was a separate kitchen, and was there a bathroom? Was there a toilet? Was there running water in the apartment?

A: No, no, no. We had – the apartment wasn't a new one. We had the toilet, you had to go out. We had to go down, and there was a toilet separate in the yard, and we had three rooms, sleeping rooms. One was mine separate. We came in the kitchen, from the kitchen there was a dining room, and we had three rooms – one was my parents', one was to hold some things that my father had, that my parents had, and my room separate. And, all those rooms were taken by – about the toilet, the toilet was down there just for the whole building. There was no running water in the house. We had to go pick it up in a pump, and to take it in. And, the toilet in ghetto, there was a – there was a barrel. They put it lying down, made a hole in the middle, and took out all this thing from people left there, put it in this barrel. This barrel was taken to Marysin, and there it was emptied and came back to take others. Those people usually were families who put it, and they received a little more bread. These people basic called scheisszkommando. The schiesszkommando were happy because they got a little more bread, and this was our house. It was very good. It was very cozy, but it wasn't very modern. It was very good. We lived good. As I said, my father, they looked at us as rich people. We were not.

Q: Tell me about the geography. You said that your street, Gesia Street, was near the fence. How far away was it from the bridge? And, how often did you have to go through the bridge to the other side of the ghetto?

A: The bridge – to cross the bridge – I want to say, the ghetto was three parts, and from one part to the other they made a bridge, and that bridge took from one part to the other. In the beginning, I worked in the Nazi shop. I worked in metaleines, but it was not in the same place where it was later on. We moved. They made it bigger and better and to go where I lived, I had to go it was quite a while to go. It was not so near, but it wasn't so far, and I had to cross the bridge and to go on the other side to ghetto, Nowomiejska, I mean Zgierska, and so I had to cross it each day two times. That's also where doors to open – we had door and the bridge. Some people went through the bridge, and some people went through the door, but the door was opened not always. It was opened sometimes because the street cars between one part to the other, there were street cars with Germans and Poles who went from one place to the other. In the beginning, I had two times, two times a day, to work and back. And, afterwards, I lived near the plant, near metaleines. So, I didn't have to go far, it was near. I was now in Poland, in Poland. It's something else.

Q: I have two questions – one was it scary to go through the bridge? And, if so, why?

A: No, to go to the bridge was not scary. I'm not scared to the bridge because I just through, it, and there was nobody had to be scared about it. We were always scared. We were scared. We lived scared. We were scared, but to cross the bridge didn't scare, just cross the bridge.

Q: Tell me did you ever see Biebow? Did you meet him? Did you see him in the street, or did you never maybe you never saw him, but just knew about him?

A: Biebow I saw once. He came to make an inspection in metaleines. He want always to look where people were working and so, but he came to metaleines. He came in where I

worked and asked – didn't really ask me, but he asked the other people if they have enough to eat and it they feel good and how feel, and that's all. But, we were, but Chaimowicz said if he, always, if he asked somethin' say always, you're good. You feel good. You have food. That's all. And, the person he asked answered exactly what was told to do.

Q: Was Biebow a person that you were scared of more than, let's say Jewish policemen?

A: We were scared of all of it. We were scared of Jewish policemen. We were scared of Biebow. We were scared of Rumkowski. We were scared of Sonderkommando. We were scared – always we were scared. It was no more or less, but we were – we had more, we were more afraid more for policemen than from Biebow. Biebow didn't come. He came one time, but the police you had it the time. So, we were afraid.

Q: What were you afraid of that what would the police do to you?

A: To take us – to take us for nothing. To take us to Czarnieckiego. We were afraid the policemen just to take us, so on, take us out of the ghetto.

Q: Tell me again why if you believed that they're taking people for work, why not to go? Why avoid it?

A: We didn't want to go out of the ghetto even we believed they going to work. We didn't go out because some had family. For instance, both of my uncles they went out of the ghetto. They wanted to eat. They told them they were going to Russia to work. So, went out. But, for instance, if I would be a grown-up person, I wouldn't go out because I wanted to be with my mother and my father. My father wanted to be with his wife and me, and my mother wanted to be with her husband. That's why. People wanted to go. Some went. "No, I'm going out because I want to live. I want to eat better." But, most of us didn't want to go. "Here I know it's bad. Maybe I'll die, but I'll die here. Why should I go look for better or worse? I'll stay here." That's the reason.

Q: Did you know what was Biebow's function? What was his responsibility? What was he doing with the ghetto?

A: We knew we had of Biebow, we knew very little. We knew he was the gaulieter. He is the head, and he is above Krippo. We had a Krippo – criminal police. We had a Krippo. We had a Gestapo, and also Jewish police, also in the same style. The Jewish police was in the same style as the Germans. And, Biebow himself, he didn't expose himself. We didn't know very much about him. He was the head, of course, but we didn't. After the war, we saw pictures. I saw pictures. I knew what really happened.

Q: Was it clear to you and your parents that it was these were the Germans who are making your life so difficult in the ghetto? Or did you blame the Jewish Administration – Rumkowski, the police?

A: About who we blamed, we blamed both of them. The Germans, because they wanted to annihilate us. They wanted to kill us all. And, the Jewish police, the Jewish administration we blamed for some errors they did. For example, the Germans sended flour to make bread. So, he didn't make bread, and it to the people to eat. He made bread put it away and said there it will be harder times than now, and the bread they had to throw it away and we didn't eat it. He could do it. Potatoes – they send so little, but this little didn't come to us. People died because of Rumkowski with his all errors. They sent potatoes. Instead to give it to the people, eat, two, three, five potatoes. No, he made holes, put it in Marysin, put holes, put straw and buried it, and it spoiled. They bored of them. What the Germans didn't, the Jewish administration did.

Q: Many of survivors of the Lodz ghetto feel that more people survived from Lodz ghetto than from any other ghetto. What do you think about that?

A: About survivors from Lodz ghetto. It's not true. We were put in – we were squeezed in I said, 165,000 people. In the end of '45, when we were taken to Auschwitz, we were in ghetto 70,000 people still, but those people who were in ghetto, there were 70,000 between them, there were only 1,500 people who went in with these 165,000. All died from hunger, from Chelmno, and from so on. It's not true. From ghetto Lodz who came in out of the ghetto we had 1,500. Today, people all over around Lodz, you ask where you been, "Lodz". They not Lodz. Lodz is a state, and the oldest state Lodz. Some people went through Lodz also, but in Lodz where I was born in Lodz, raised in Lodz, lived in ghetto Lodz. In ghetto there are others also, but they're not from Lodz. From Lodz, and they don't know. They came in the end, and they were 70,000 people with them. From the 165,000 who went in the ghetto, when the ghetto was liquidated, finished, only 1,500 people, and this people could be more. If it would be better administrated and so I don't know. I don't think that he was right because if you want someone to be bad, give them power, and that was him.

Q: I'd like to ask you now about October 1941 after the schools closed, and the western Jews came in. You told us before that two elderly couples lived with you in the apartment, but did you meet other children, German speaking children that came from Berlin or from Vienna or from Prague maybe? Did you meet them? Did you know them? Did you play with them, talk to them?

A: Who came in the ghetto Lodz were no children, not youths. They were only elderly people, and most of them were decorated by the first World War, and they believed, as I said, they believed they were going to be changed for German POWs. There were no children. There were only elderly people.

Q: That you met?

A: Right, there were no children. I met in concentration camp after the ghetto. I met some from Austria, from – youth, children from Czechs and from Hungary, from, all this but in the camps, but not in ghetto. In ghetto, there were no children, only elderly people.

Q: Did you and your friends, your family somehow blame the German Jews or the Austrian Jews that came in and because of them the school was closed? Did you make this connection that because they came, the school was closed?

A: When the Germans came into the ghetto, we just ignored them. I don't know why, but we just ignored them. It wasn't because they were better or worse or they want to take our place or something like that. People don't know. Ignore them, people. They came in, in our house. They thought that the Germans and we are Poles. We were Jews, and they were Jews, but it was no – between us, nobody hate, nobody. You're a German, okay, you're a German Jew, but we didn't blame them, of course not. But, people ignored them.

Q: Could you communicate with them? Could you talk to them?

A: Yeah, yeah, of course. My father spoke very good German. So do I. My mother too, in our home was spoke Polish, and we had a lot of books. When the Germans came in, my father burned books. German books in our house, and they came also Lichtenstein from another, Luxembourg, yeah, they came from Luxembourg and we were friends – younger people. There came some younger people. We were friends, but older one looked at us that we were Poles and they were Germans. That's why. From the other parts, it was very good. There was no difference between us. They died just the same way we did.

Q: Sir, anytime you want to start.

A: All those years, I was looking for that piece of paper – it's not just a piece of paper, it's something I wrote when I was 13 years old. I'm 77 now, and I found it. I'm so excited about it that I don't know what to say. Of course, it's written in here, it's all a lie. We, it says, "We little children are grateful for you our father" is Rumkowski "because you took us out from the dirt and gave us cleanness that we now can breathe fresh air." And so on. It's a lie. It's a great lie, but I remember that at that time I had to do it because I had, and I was a little boy, and today I know it what happens here. And I'm very, very excited to see after those years something I made when I was twelve years old, thirteen I mean.

Q: [Background talking]

A: When the album was ready for Rosh Hashanah, we made it for our father – our father, and all the children had to sign it. I made the album. I wrote it, but all this students had to sign it. It's also my signature in here, and after those years, I found it out, and I would say it's a pleasure. Yeah, it's a pleasure. They wanted to kill us all. All of them were killed, but they forgotten one, and I'm a witness of what happened, and I got my signature right here with all my friends, my friends. All of them I liked. Was Cukier. He should have written it, but he couldn't. I did it. After those years, I'm here. Cukier, I'm here.

Q: [Background talking]

A: On Rosh Hashanah-

Q: Go ahead sir.

A: On Rosh Hashanah, we made an album to give to our father Rumkowski, father, and I wrote it. It should be Cukier who should made it, but I did it, and after those years, I found my signature in here. All the boys, we were together, all my friends. I'm sure nobody lives anymore, but I found my signature in here, and all those are my friends. They all live in me, all live in me, and I am here. The Nazis killed six million, six million. 1,500,000 children, but I am here. I am here.

Q: Mr. Laks, Anytime you're ready.

A: In 1940, right after closing the ghetto, the Germans permitted schools, a school, and I was one of the children who went to school. This picture was taken at Franciszkanska. I don't know whether 21 or 19. The building is still there, but we were a class, our class of children, and I was the head. I was the best. Of course, I wasn't the best student, but for some reason they picked me out to be the head. And, by that time, there was a German – I don't remember his name – he took pictures in 1940 pictures, colored pictures, and I am in that picture. That's me over here. That's me. That picture, that's me.

Q: [Background talking]

A: In 1940, the Germans allowed schools in ghetto, and there was open class school in the church of Franciszkanska, 21 or 19 I don't remember the number, but I was in it. The main reason to go there was not so much to learn as to have another soup. We see here children with pots to get a little soup, we got the soup there. In this picture, I am too. That is me, here. In 2004, I was back to see it, and the building's just the same, and here I am, here. Also, it made the – I don't know for the some reason – this little boy here, my friend of course, I don't know who it is. He has a hat from a Jewish policeman. It's something. I don't know why. Also, my friends have stars, yellow Stars of David, but I don't have a star. I don't have a star because I was not 12 years old by that time.

Q: [Background talking]

A: After making the album, and we were sent to take it to Rumkowski, to our father, and I don't remember well what was happened in there, but that is my picture here. Exactly here, that's me, over here. I found it now. I'm grateful to have it. I don't think it makes any difference, but for me it does. Here I am, 1940.

Q: That's it.

End of Recording