

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Leopold Page
March 11, 1992
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Leopold Page, conducted on March 11, 1992 in Beverly Hills, California on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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LEOPOLD PAGE

March 11, 1992

Beep.

I want you to describe for me Oscar Schindler. Describe what he was like, what he looked like, and then tell me in general what he did. I've never heard of him. I don't know who he is.

I met Oscar Schindler the first time when I was hiding from the Gestapo who looking after me when I escaped from the Prisoner of War transport, and I was thinking that he's a Gestapo officer looking for me, and I still have my pistol, so I put the pistol behind, beh, behind my back, and I was waiting till my mother opened the house. He entered the, her apt, my mother was very scared, she ask him what he wish, and he said, "Don't worry, I'm not here to arrest anybody, I am here to make business with you because I took apt, a Jewish apt, from, and I pay money for the apt. I received it free, but I pay money to this Jewish fellow, and he said that you were in, interior decorating, and he was decorating his apt. This moment I came forwards. I knew that he's not a Gestapo officer. He was about 6'2" and I was only 5'8", so I looked to this guy, handsome face, young looking and in his early 30s or late 30s. How to describe his age he looked very mature, he was about 35 years old or 34 years old at this time, and he looks me, and I felt right away a closeness between him and me, and we start talking, and we became a friend right away from the first day we met. And he asked me to do some certain things to him and then market in city to give him, get him some goods to his new apt, I tell you what, he paid for it, and we became a very, very close associate together. He was a German, he was a Catholic, and I was Polish Jew. We stick together till the day he die in 1974. He did extraordinary things. He'd bought himself a factory, and employed Jewish people, and from the first day he employed, this is end of 1939, till the day we were liberated, he called those people who he took from the camps, close to 1300 people, women, children, women and men, from all type of professions, even a prostitute was in our camp, and he said he will try to save us, and he save us. He did extra ordinary job. It's very hard to explain this in a few words. You have to really go day by day to explain the danger what he was exposed to it. The danger that when he will be exposed, we will be perished. He managed to escape by bribing the high officials, and they were afraid to expose him because in this case they will lose their life too, so one hand was washing the other hand, by using bribes, by organizing a fake factory, we never produced anything in the factory. Everything was uh, staged, like in a movie, but he went through from the December of 1939, till May 8, 1945, and he promised to stick with us till 5 minutes after 12, and he kept his promise.

Tell me the scale, how many people do you think he rescued.

He start with about 36 in the beginning. He asked me many times to come to his factory, but I was very independent, I didn't want to go to factory, I want to have open hands, and figure out how to get every time because I wasn't sure what I would do. I didn't want to be in a camp, I didn't want to be in a gh-ghetto, I don't want to be any place, I want to run. But, in between I got married, and this changed completely my life because in 1940 in July, I got married to my wife who survived with me thanks to Schindler, and while I was tied up, I was trying to run, uh run, run away before, during the wintertime over the borders, but, the minute I met her, I decide to stay and see what, what happen. And I follow her up from Krakow to ghetto, from ghetto to, to concentration camp, and then we were separated. The man went to Gross Rosen in Sudetenland, and the women went to Auschwitz. Schindler pulled out the women, 300 women from Auschwitz by the list, and 900 men by the list from Gross Rosen, and was a miracle what never happened before and never happened after. And, he fed us, he protect us, he paid the money to Gestapo, 600-half, Deutsche marks, German marks for each of the prisoner, even though there were children who was in the age of 5-6 years old, and old women in his, their 60s. Well, he promised to protect us and save us and he did. This is a miracle of 20th Century.

Tell me what you called yourselves.

He called himself, we, he call--

What you called yourselves. What you called yourselves.

How I call myself?

The Schindler Jews, tell me about that.

We, the Sh--the Sh--the people who were employed, we decide to, we establish ourselves as a Schindler Jews, Schindler Juden. Why? Because he became like a father to us. When the, when the women were sent to Auschwitz, and we sent to Gross Rosen, I was, we were sure that is the end of the line. But, when we saw him coming over there to Gross Rosen to pick us up, and the women saw him over there in Auschwitz, pick--picking them up, and when we came to the factory in B-----, the Sudetenland, and we saw him, some definite feeling came to, to us. We knew that we are safe with Schindler how long he is with us, and this was a tremendous wonderful feeling. His camp in

Krakow, what he established, what was all, only for protection purposes, not too much for work, except when they were working on the utensil, what he could sell it on the black, black market and get money for it, you understand, and use the money to bribe the officials, you understand, nothing was produced for the uh war effort of Germany. Everything was bought by him on the black market. Everything he bought for with his own money. I don't know that any of the Schindler Jews give him any money, that he should use it to save this life of the Jews. No. He was using only the money what we could sell on the black market, and this was the only income he got. And this was a very big income, because according to the estimation, what was done by, uh, German Distribution -----, he spent in the last 8 months of the war, from October, 44, till May 45, he spent 4 million marks, equivalent in these days to 2 million pre-war dollars. That was a tremendous fortune. When he would like to wash his hands and run away with this amount of money, he would go any place in the world, and hide himself till the war was over. No, he stick with us, he spent the money, he save us, and he became a pauper. After the war, he didn't have a penny to his soul. We help him.

Why do you think he did that?

This question, I gu--, everybody asking me the same question. He got involved with the Jews right away in the beginning, and he knew about what the German has, they have in sleeves for us, what Hitler want to do with us. He knew that the Jews will be killed. Because he has a, not so much on the count that he was relig--a religious, he was not religious, but his upbringing, upbringing from home propagated him. He has a lot of Jewish friends in his family. He was warned??? and he lost them when Hitler came to Sudetenland. And he knew what will happen. He decided on his own, from the bottom of his heart, from the goodness of his heart, to do something. First of all, he start to employ them, and the work, and working condition in his camp was so wonderful that people who were in the Plazov Camp, or in or in any concentration camp, called his camp and his factory what we ca--there was the name Amaria, we called them a paradise. Because everybody was dreaming to go to Schindler camp because it was, compared to the other camp was a paradise. He provided food, the -----, he didn't allowed anybody to interfere with his work. He protected those people. And this the reason we call ourselves Schindler Jew because he save us. He said, "I will be your father, and you are my children. You are my children." This what he always said, "I stick with you till the end of the war." And he really kept his promise, was a big promise given to us, but he delivered. I don't know, maybe this was the destiny, I don't know how to answer.

I'm trying to find a short question. Define a ghetto. Define ghetto. What is a ghetto?

In 1939 in September when the Germ--German enter, the uh Poland, and conquered the Poland in 3 weeks, they right away established certain part of the city to put the Jews over there. We knew that something will happen. We didn't know in 1939, in 1940, even in 1941 that will happen, even though I was trained as officer, and we knew what happened in Germany, but never think to our mind that the German will destroy 6 million people. Never. I never will believe it. When somebody will tell me in this time that this will happen, I say it's impossible. Germany was on the height of, of the, in Europe, the most cultured country. But they decide.

We have to reload. We have to put another roll in.

Oh, I'm sorry.

That's okay.

Because I want to point the point what---

Changing film, camera roll 2 is up; Sync take 2 is up.

Beep.

Okay, I want you to finish explaining about the ghetto.

So, the German decide first to put the people who recognize who is Jewish, not Jewish, and they put the armband with Jewish star on it, so, and there was a law, when somebody was caught without the armband, was shot, sometime on the spot, sometime they took him to the hills. Then after a few months, they decide to bring all the people from the city of Krakow and surrounding area to a certain enclosed part of the city, and they pick a part of Padush, this is a suburb of Krakow, and they expel all the Polish population, the Catholic population, out from the, the, the uh, from this district, and they put all the Jews. Now, in this time, in, in Krakow was close to about 50 to 60,000 population. They only established that only 15,000 can go together, and only people who has a working passport with some German establishment, or private or government, and everybody was trying to get this type of perm-permit, who didn't get it couldn't get in, but, when they move in March, 1941 from the city to the ghetto, they said to everybody over there, in particular to the official Jewish community official, that they will be self-supporting, they will be self-managed, nothing will uh happen to them, they will be protected by the German government against the Polish population, and this the reason they putting us up in it. In this time, the control of the ghetto,

they call this ghetto -----, what, because the Jews were only Jews in, there's nobody else could be there. Will be controlled by police, regular police, but couple months, three months later, they change it, and Gestapo took jurisdiction and this was changed of completely different picture. They crossed the walls, they built the walls, they closed the ghetto, and nobody could get out or get in without special permission. The groups were going from the ghetto to work. People has to, have a certain permit to have, to stay in the ghetto has to have a working permit with some government, uh government uh establishment or private German establishment. Who didn't have it has to be removed or leave the ghetto.

Why did people not realize what was going to happen?

You see, the German use a very uh psychologic--psychological point of approach. They said, "You listen, you obey, nothing will happen to you, we are thinking about your welfare, this reason we're taking you out from all these apartments and houses and places where you live around the city to one place, we will provide you with the food, you will get the uh certain amount of food, the whole amount of food was not more than 400 to 600 calories a day. But it, even this was, was stops after a few, few months being there. And, you will not -----survive the war, you will be protected and this, they were us--they were using a tac-tactic to keep the people quiet. When the people will realize that in 1941 what will happen in 1942, 43, 44, probably lots of the people will run away, the young. The old didn't have a chance. They didn't know where to go. But the young will have the chance. But, family, you know, Jewish family like to stick together. Uh, the sentiment and the love affection of children to parents, parents to children, husband to wife, wife to husband, they all tried to. What happened to me will happen to the, to my family, and they were sticking together, and they obey the orders, because not obeying the order was automatically uh bullet in the head. And they were using the strong tactics to force the people to obey the rules.

Was there any resistance in the ghetto, and did you play a role in that resistance?

There was quite a bit of resistance in the ghetto. I did not pl-play the role there, were only a couple of my students who participate, Shemegrenger, and Lieberskin, and couple of other ones. They organized underground, they were more prepared by the organization to which they belong. The uh, the Jewish organization, and they organized. They realize, they already lost pro-probably all the family, they were all abou--on their own, and they organize, and they devastated the German in the first uh mo--few months of their existence. They were caught later on and they were all executed. They were all killed.

You had an experience one time in the ghetto where you heard Arnold Gette, and others were outside and you were, can you--

Can you add something to the resistance? You see this was a resistance, but was different type of resistance. By obeying the rules, this means submitting to the orders of the German, I consider was a certain part of resistance. We are trying to take away from German hands the strong practice of killing and executing by obeying. This worked in the beginning, and later on the, the Jewish uh uh-----, you know, like the Jewish commander was trying even to go and use bribe system. They took the bribe, but nothing changed. Now you're going to the que-next question was--

It was about a time when you were hiding and you knew you were going to--tell me what was happening---

Now, you see, this happened in 1943 when they were liquidated the ghetto. I, my wife and myself and a friend of mine, Dr. Alexandrovich decide to escape from ghetto through the canal. Coincidentally, the action was going so fast, when I was trying to reach Dr. Alexandrovich, a dear friend of mine, and his wife and his child, they already went to the canals, and when I, when I arrived to the canals was no way to get in, the German already disco-discovered the canals exit, and they kill everybody whom they caught over there, so when I came back to my apt, the one of the apt, there was a one room, kitchen room, I notice my wife is gone. So, I ran outside looking where she is and they told me they saw her going out from the ghetto toward the Plazov camp, who was built over there on Jewish cemetery. They destroyed Jewish Cemetery, and they built barracks because the commandant who was appointment, appointed by the Gestapo, uh, ----- Fuehrer uh Armand Gette, he, he selected this place as the best place for Jews because they can be buried there right away on the cemetery, that was his expression. And Armand, Armand Gette, this last day, I would say, I was the last Jew alive who left the Krakow ghetto. I was trying to hide and figure out when the action will be over, I can go to my friends in the city, and stay outside, and eventually this way I can help my wife who will be in the camp. But they were going from house to house with 2 dogs. And they were ss--trying to trace all the Jews who were hiding, and I say, hiding behind a special wall, what I was thinking would be good protection, but later on, I found out it will be not a good protection against the dogs. I saw them pulling a woman and a child. They shot the woman and they killed the child by sli--taking the child by the legs and hitting the wall. Then I decide to step, and I knew that probably my min--last minutes of my life, but I didn't want to kill, be killed over there in the hiding place, and I s--decide to figure out how I can protect myself, and I know little bit mentality of the soldiers of and the officer, so they, when somebody gets some order and fulfill the or-order, then they have to respect it. So I start to take the bundles what was laying

all around on the street and put them on one, in one place, and when they came to me close enough, about 4 or 5 feet, I turned to them, and in German, I reported to them that I was appointed here by one of the officer to clean the road so that the -----will be open. There were no cars there, there were not horses, there was nothing there. They start to laugh, but they figure out, the guy just got the order, so he's doing the order, so he told me in German -----, this means, "Get lost." I did not run, I turned around, clicked with my heels, and slowly left, don't even turning my head behind, because I knew when I turn my head, maybe will will will get a bullet in the back of the head. And then I turned to the next corner, and I was the last Jew alive, with the last group of about 40 people left the ghetto.

Describe the going in and out of the ghetto and the little code where you for how many people had been executed on the hill, the little word in and out of the ghetto, 60-0.

Oh, this was in camp already when we were in camp. In the camp, we play a little game. And the game was very simple one. We count how many people were killed in the camp, and how many Germans was killed in the camp as a revenge. The history was like this, when a, when a group of 60 people in camp from a table, and they caught food on them, they took them all to the hills, and they executed, and this day was 60 to 0. Some days was 2 to 0. Some were 15 to 0. Some was 3 to 0. Every day was something happening in the camp, so when people were coming from outside, they said, "What is this, how is today, what is the mood?" "Oh today was 3 to 0." "Oh this is good, only 3." But one day, because we killed one guy.

Wait till we reload. We have to do that one again.

Beep.

Okay tell me again the story of giving the statistics as though you haven't told me before. I haven't heard this story.

In, in the camp, from the first day we arrive, the mentality of the German was to create a condition that people will suffer and, and die. The execution was almost on daily basis. Some of those people were working outside and the group were going out 6 o clock in the morning, returning 6 o clock in the evening back to the camp. And the people who were outside were in a better situation than the people who were inside the camp because we, inside the camp they have to live through the whole experience what is going in the camp, and the killing was going over there. When some group came in like 60 people from -----came in and they found food on them, they sent them

to the hills and executed the people, and we called this 60 to 0. This means 60 our Jewish people were killed, not one German. There were 2 to 0, 15 to 0, 20 to 0, one day, when they came outside, we said, today was 21 to 1. One of the boy who was led to the execution jumped on the German guard, pulled out the bayonet and killed this guard while he was killed too, but at least was one German perish -----one of the helper of the German was Ukrainian soldier. Now this was a situation what was like a game, but this was a very deadly game. Armand Gette would, would stay on his balcony with a rifle, from early in the morning, sometime afternoon, with a rifle, and picking up people and run them, and shoot them from balcony to create a, a tremendous pressure of people who were working outside because nobody knew when he can appear with a pistol or with a rifle. He was going from a one uh, uh barrack, working barrack like an uh, uh mechanical barrack, and he didn't like somebody who was doing the job too slow, he pull a gun and shoot them on the spot. He didn't like somebody walking through the camp, he has two dogs, who were trained to kill, he let the dogs uh tear the, the person to pieces. So there were every minute, every day from morning till we woke up till the day we went to bed, and at night something always happens.

Was there, in your experience, any physical resistance in the camp?

In this particular camp, there were very, I don't think so were any big resistance what I knew about this. No. There were maybe individual people who tried to escape on their own. Some of them escaped. Very few. Some of them got caught, and they were hanged, and for anything was only one penalty, penalty of death. So, the, in the German camps, in the Plazov camp, they were not organized resis--resistance, uh to, to do something. No, I don't think so.

What about mental resistance?

There were a lot of mental resistance because the, even those people who were kil--led to the death, to the execution place, they were going over there with dignity. They never begged for, for anything, they didn't ask for anything. They died with dignity, and I consider this resistance. One case what I can tell that's stuck in my mind, on Yom Kippur day, in 1944, they were always selecting the hardest jobs for the people. And I, we woke up in the morning, was dark because it was in October, and I noticed father and son was praying, religious Jews, pray, they, lots of Jews were praying, because there were lots of religious Jews, but not so openly, they were standing on the side of a barrack facing Jerusalem and they were playing uh, uh praying, and they German came, he said, "Los, los, to work!" and they didn't move, they were in such uh contemplation and such a spiritual moment, they maybe didn't hear this guy, he pulled a gun, and shoot father and son. That, I consider this was a tremendous resistance because they could save their lives if they would

start working, but they were praying and they were talking to God, they forget about anything else. This was a resistance in my opinion.

What other kinds of resistance did, were there friendships, did you keep each other's spirits up?

The friendship between the people was tremendous, everybody was trying to help each other. When somebody was, my wife, for example told me one day she didn't feel well, so the group of five girls who were staying in the line, were holding her so she shouldn't fall down or fainted or something because it will be automatically sent to for execution or in, in, in Auschwitz, to the gas chamber. So, there tremendous friendship, and everybody was trying to help each other, morally and even physically.

Tell me about friendship between men that you knew about. When you were alone with men in camps, did you have close friends.

We have, I have few close friends, very close, we were all very close, we know each other, but I was in a much luckier position, uh, uh much lucky because I was a professor before the war, and I was teaching in every Jewish gymnasium in Krakow, and lot of my students were in -----, and they were a very, very close friend, and I tried to help them as much, and they were trying to help me, and many times happened that they helped me in, in, in, in the ghetto, for example, one of my students was a, in the police, in the out there, he asked and beg the German to let me go because I was already in a transport to go, and they let him uh, the to the-----this is a very important person, and he, he let me out, but you see, the, the, the, the respect and love was tremendous. The same between the women, between the men and women, between the families who were there, because the family was still over there, not every family was completely torn apart. I was with my wife in Plashow. Coincidentally, my family, my mother, my father, my sister, my brother-in-law, they were already in a different part of, of the country. They went to the Eastern part of the country and I never saw them again. So, it's very, it was a, a tremendous support one to each other.

Talk about keeping each other's hopes up and how rumors would help. Like once there was a rumor of food coming from Switzerland. Do you remember that?

From Switzerland? Maybe from Hungary. Rumor about what?

Food coming in.

I know the whole story----- . There were rumors that we would get some support from Switzerland, but the rumors were only rumors, it's true, we got some food, and there were uh rotten cheese, and some rotten marmalade, that's all. Where the money went, what's the Red Cross from Switzerland and Jewish organizations was donated, I don't want to know, I don't want to be in it, the history is written by Israeli government, let's somebody who wants to find out exactly what happened, they can find out with ----- . I don't want to point fingers at anybody.

Okay. A lot of times people believe there was no resistance in camps. How would you react to that?

This is not true. There were many camps in which be big resistance, Sobibór in Auschwitz, in Gross Rosen, in, in our little camp. In Brinwitz??? we have a very nice little group of resistance, what Schindler himself created, was 15 of us ex-soldiers, who uh, he organized us in special little groups, and everybody has a job to do, he explained to us that there are orders when the war will be over, and we are already close to the, because there was the uh the march 1945, the war was going to the end, is or--there are order to executed all those people in the Brinwitz camp, and already there were a grave dig out by the Russian prisoner of war who were in the different camp, four people from Brinwitz, from the camp of Schindler. He said, "Look, when this moment came in, you have to stand up, maybe you will get killed, but they cannot executed 4,300 people, it's physically impossible because when thousand people, hundred people will jump on -----SS soldier, they will kill some of them, not all the people, but we were very lucky. He organized this way, so on the night of May the 7th, to 9, to 9, to May the 8th, we disarmed 12 o'clock at night all the soldiers, and we put them in the cellar, and we kept them till the Russians came in on the 11th of May, we were protecting the camp ourselves, we put our own people on the towers, and we kept the guard the inmate, and we closed the camp because we were surrounded with over 100,000 German sold-soldiers around because they were between the American, French and English troops on the West Side, and the Russian troop on the East side, and we were just in the center of the whole mess, and we put a big sign, "Typhus inside," so nobody could enter because the Germans were afraid that the typhus could be spread, and we put -----because nobody---, and they lib-- we were liberated by ourselves, but officially on May 11, the first Russian soldiers entered the camp.

We're just about to run out. We have to reload.

I almost killed a guy too.

Change film, camera roll 4 is up; Sync take 4 is up.

Beep.

I want to ask you some more about Schindler. Tell me about the work you did and how involved he was in, in any sabotage.

When Schindler the, the, his factory from Krakow to Brinwitz, he knew that we cannot produce anything, and he supposed to produce the shells, the, the, the, the casting for the shells, you know, how you call this, I don't know, it's in English, you know, the brass part of the shell.

Shell casing.

Shell casing.

Start it again.

Okay. You know when he moved his factory from Krakow to Brinwitz, and he is establishing his factory to produce uh shell casing, understand? And, for the, for the war effort, for the German army, he knew he has to deliver. So, the first few weeks, we don't have to deliver because the ma, machinery came in we put the factory together, we put the oven together, we start working, everybody was hammering, was lots of noise, but nothing was coming out. We didn't know how to do it. We were not that professional, there were a few, maybe professional mechanics. There were very good engineers who fake up everything that looks like a big factory, but he has to uh, certain time, deliver the quantity what he promised to deliver. So were very simple procedures he made. He bought on the black market from another shell casing manufacturer, the quantity he needed, and delivered of his own. What we produce, they were using too, but they start to investigate him because they were all over burned or over hit. You see, they have to have, be hit a, a cert, certain amount of temperature. When they are overheated, they break. When the shell goes off, uh, uh, uh explodes. When it's under-heated, it won't work at all. So, his last speech was he says to us, he said, "Thank God that everything we produce here never kill anybody. Because they couldn't use it." They start investigate it, they sent a group of engineer, but when they look on the factory, and the, how the machinery works, how the ovens work, how they uh big uh, uh, uh, uh machinery is operating, they sent a report that everything looks good because we fake it up everything. Nobody was there who knew what did. I was a welder. What I did? I have to weld certain parts of the machinery, so I opened the, the bottle with the gas overnight, very little, in the morning was no gas. So I could report that we don't have gas, I cannot do the job. So they got me

another bottle, couple days happened to the other bottle. So we couldn't finish it. I said, "It's not my fault that they're putting wrong gauges on the machine. I don't do anything, I try to work, and then I cannot do it. Well, we were doing some little job, but this was a little type sabotage. Then Schindler give me and the other man, Mr. Mandel, a little radio, supposed to be, we're supposed to fix the radio, but we always fix the radio only about 1 o'clock in the morning when we have a night shift to listen to BBC to find out how it's going on. And every, in the morning, there were a little information on a piece of paper in every barrack, in every room, what is going on, how close the Germans are, what is happening here, and this, our radio mechanic was doing with us together, it was very interesting, we knew exactly what is going on.

Tell me again about getting arms for you at the end.

Now with the arms, now we, we didn't have too much arms, we had only one little pistol that Schindler give to one of the guys, we have some stick, metal sticks, they were, I think so, but I don't remember only one -----Schindler got from a Czech partisan. We didn't have too many, but he knew that at 12 o'clock at night, they will be change of guards. I was the lucky one. I was sent to disarm the little commandant who was replacing the original commandant, who was sent to West--uh Eastern front, and this was an old-timer, and I sneak behind him with another gentleman, who coincidentally die in Vienna, and put my finger against his back, and say, hand the hold the hands up. He didn't know what I had in my hand. He put the hands up, I took his gun, and I held his gun. And he start to yell that I want to kill him, and Schindler came in and all nobody, all the soldiers, we disarmed them all, we put them in the cellar, and we kept them there.

What is Schindler symbolic of for you?

I will not say what he means to me because he was a dear friend to me. I will tell what Rabbi Levitor said when I interviewed Levor, Levitor for the Schindler List book, or Schindler's ----- what is calling in England. He said to me a very simple: "I as a Rabbi supposed to believe in only one God, the mighty one. Schindler is another God to me."

Why weren't there more Schindler's?

I wouldn't say, it's very hard to answer the question, because when I would like to put myself in the position of Schindler, well I do consider myself a pretty honest guy, I don't know if I will do it. You have to have a guts to do something like this because the penalty for helping a Jew, even giving him a cigarette or a piece of bread or shelter him overnight, when he's got caught, is a

penalty of death, not only to the person who did the helping, who give the helping hand, but the whole his family and even a village. When this happened in a village, a whole village was burned. When they, they caught the person, the whole family was executed. So this was a tremendous responsibility on the per--on the side of the person who wants to help the Jew, and put himself in the position that he can be lose his own life, but also endanger the family life. So, this was a very, very hard ques, question to answer. He was in a position that he knew how to handle the, the Germans in power. He became a friend, he bribed them, he dined them, he whined them. You understand? And using this type of method, of bribing this person, particular person, he got the confidence. When he got in trouble, they found out, they better take him out, otherwise he will s-say something not so nice about us and maybe we can lose our life, and this was his power. But why was not so many Schindler? I wish there would be another thousand Schindler, there will be another 60 or 70,000 people saved. There was another gentleman, Mr. Mavrich, who has 3,000 people working for him in his factory in Krakow. The considered him a very nice German. He was honored by Ger--by the government, I personally didn't have respect for this man because in November 1944, Schindler begged Mavrich to take his 3000 Jews with him to Brinwitz, and we will try to save those 3,000 Jews. He said, in German I will say it and I will translate it. "-----
-----: I did everything possible till November 44 for the Jews. I give them food and shelter and everything. Now I'm washing my hands and I'm going home to Vienna." And he did. In October, 1944, he went to Vienna with millions what he made under slave labor, he was good till this time, but later he run like a captain running from a ship what is going down, like a rat. And I didn't respect this. I was supposing to give him a Righteous Gentile Status, but some people who were working for him and there was 3,000 of them, they make a statement that he was good for them, and the Jewish government decide to give him the Righteous Gentile Status, and I think so maybe he deserve it, for this what he did.

Did his people live?

Yes. From his people there a very interesting question. Schindler from his memory, put on his list 64 I think so, or 65 names what he knew from dealing with Mr. Mavrich, and knew the people close, most the people who were in charge, like a chief tailor or something, he put with Mr. Tisch, Raymond Tisch, who was asst to Mr. Mavrich. The list, and the last minute, when the list was created to go to Brinvitz, those 64 people survived. From the other, almost 3000 people of 2940 people only are the same percentage what in general per, about 5 percent survived in this bunch.

Tell me about the first person you saw in liberation, what he looked like riding in.

The first person we saw on the uh on the May the 11th, when it was about 10 o'clock in the morning, there came a couple of Russian soldiers, I didn't know that one of them was Magor, they come on the horses without the saddle, the rifle with a string, they didn't look to me like a soldier, soldiers, they looked to me like a bunch of uh I don't know, running away soldiers. No shoes, no nothing, but they were the conquerors, they beat the, the Hitler's army, so they came in and they said, "Now you are all liberated." So, people were thanking them and kissing them and hugging them, and I stay away and look at them, and say, "My God, these are our liberators. What happened, why, why they were not here about a couple months earlier, or at least 3 days earlier, because from May the 8th till May 11th, we still were in a big danger because they were shooting people, shooting from outside to the camp, they knew some of the Germans knew who are inside, and one of the guys was wounded there. You see? So, but they were the liberator.

We're just, we're running out. We're going to reload.

Beep.

He only can stop for 20 minutes he said.

Yeah.

All right.

Okay, tell me that story.

Now, you asking a question about little Oleg Grossner. His father and his mother were a dear friend of mine before the war. He was a very famous musician, and he and his brother, Paul Grossner, were playing for Armand Gette, commandant of Plaushau. And they have some certain influence through their music, and this bloodthirsty murderer. One day, I was working in the garage as a welder, and we were repairing the cars for Armand Gette. He said, "You are going to the city to bring some uniforms for the factories what we have in the camp. How about maybe you should bring my son to the camp." I looked at him, and I said that this man is out of his mind. The children don't have a chance to survive here. I said, "What's the matter, you want, what happened to us, I want to happen to my son." I said, "This is not fair." He said, "No, this is our decision." Nancy, his wife, and he decided to bring him. He said, "My son will wait on this and this corner on the street, and you know the city very well, and try to bring him in." We went to the camp, to the city, and we passed the corner, and I saw the boy standing there with some other

gentleman, so we sent them, Ger, uh, the Ukrainian guard with money to buy some vodka. In between, we sneak the boy in the car. There was a big truck, in the little box. But when we returned to the camp, when we were passing the examination, they never examined uh, examined, because we were so empty truck, we didn't brought anything from the city. They look around and that's all. When he was passing off the guard on the, on the gate, I hear a little voice coming up from the box, "Mr. Mr. my little feet are sticking out." I look and I almost fainted, I see his two feet sticking out from the back, so I covered with my -----, going around, how this guy was going around the car, I was going around and cover these little feet, and we brought the boy to the camp. The boy survived the camp with the, with the parents, by miracle, and again, I have to say, thanks to Oscar Schindler, because when Oscar Schindler was making the list, he wants to have the musician with them so he put the musician name, and Oleg, in this time Oleg was almost ten years old, you understand? And he went to the camp to bring this, through the Gross Rosen camp, but from Brinwitz, in the end of uh, uh it was probably in the, in the, I don't remember it was, end of 1944, or beginning of of 1945, the commandant sent all the children to Auschwitz, and the parents, father decide to go with the children, and Herman and Oleg Grossner went to Auschwitz, this was in the end of 44, because mother saw him over there is Auschwitz, you know, and uh, uh...

I want you to tell me about a time when you were cleaning a window, and a guard came in, tell me that story.

This is it's happened in May in 1944, I got a order to clean the window, this was a Sunday, during the Sunday day there, there were 2 shifts, day and night, so the day shift cleaned the barracks, and night shift was uh, uh day shift was staying, uh, I have to go back to it.

Start again.

Yeah. There were two shifts in the barracks. The night shift and the day shift. The day shift was working during the day, and stay sleep at night, and the night shift was working during the night and sl-sleep during the day. And I was in the day shift, and I was in the barrack on Sunday afternoon, and I got a job to clean the window of the barrack, and I was cleaning the window the best I could, the, nobody too much pressure on do, effort to do this job perfect, but in between was a little shower, rain, and the window got spotted up, and then we hear some rumor that one of the Gestapo officer is going from barrack to barrack shooting people Sunday afternoon. He was drunk, no question about it, and he was named Hans Schreiber, and he come over, and he go, everybody disappear, there was in the barrack close to about couple hundred people, but outside, he brought outside maybe 50, 60 people. He put us in one line, and start to examine the cleanness of the

barrack, and the barrack wasn't so clean, and the window was even worse because rain ruined the all the job. But he start passing and looking and looking and passing, we didn't know what he's looking for, and one moment he said, "Who was cleaning the window?" Nobody surrendered with the information, and I was not the first one who will go forwards, so he was passing and asking the question, you know, like a drunken guy, he asking repeat the question and question. Nobody answered, so he op--he brought his gun to the barrack, to the front, opened the holster, and he said, "When this person who cleaned this window will not step out, every ten of you will be killed. And that was not a saying, this was not a trick, he was killing people just before he came to our barrack. Well, what do you do in a case like this. I knew I was the guy who was cleaning the window, maybe some other people were cleaning too, but I knew I did. So when he came on the height of my position, I was just in the center of the whole line, and about four or five feet away to from me, I stepped forwards in a like military way. I one, two, three, step, click with my heels and report, so and so, -----Fuehrer, Mr. number my hefling number, what was at this time, and I report, I, my number was very interesting, was, in Plachau, was 4040, was very easy, vierzig, vierzig was very easy to remember, and I did this. He looks down, and he has a right punch, he hit me over the head with the right punch once. I stayed, didn't move. He hit me from the other side. Again from this side, and again--I didn't move. Normally, normally people by instinct start to protect themselves. I said no, I will not move, because I knew I have to watch his hand, when he goes for his gun, I will try to go maybe for his throat, I, you know in the split second you don't know what you're thinking, but I was watching his movement. Then he come to me, and he ask in German, "I am not hurting you?" I said, "You can kill me, but I don't move, I am Polish officer." He come to me, pat me on the back, and said "You are a brave -----, you are a brave man." He took a pack of cigarettes and gave me. From this time, every time he saw me, he brought me a piece of bread, or apple for my wife, or something, and, and one day, he came in and start crying, that he did lots of bad things, now he's going to Eastern front, and he don't know what happen to him, but he apologized. I never saw him, I tried to find him after the war, I couldn't.

What does your experience make you feel about humanity?

When we were talking about humanity and feeling and between our Jews, we tried to support this, this was normal. About the humanity of the outside people, I would say there were 2 type of people, who were trying, very small percent, or people who stay on the outside, who were afraid to do anything, and I don't blame them for it, and there were other people who were very happy what was happening to Jews. Now, what is the majority, the majority was in the center. Was very few who helped, and I will say, majority was sympathizer, but was afraid to do it, and the skunks who were happy with it, I con--I consider them as rotten type of group, group of people, and I cannot

judge them, I am not the person who will judge them. Humanity, man to man, so, they show only those people who risked their lives, and helped the Jews in this particular situation. Probably they will help anybody else when there be situation like this, and this is the reason the, the Israeli government established the highest award a human being can get, the Medal of the, they called this Righteous Gentile. And give them a tree planted in the ----- in their honor. And when you look over there, there's over 5,000, maybe 5 to 6000 trees pleasantly??? planted. There are very few Germans, maybe on one hand, maybe on two hands, you can, very small amount of Frenchmen, very small amount of other nationality, 90% are the Polish people because they, what happened to the Jews mostly happened in Poland and they were found out, but percentage wise, comparing to the population, this was a very, very, very small percentage.

How did you survive?

Uh, by inner strength. By believing that I have to survive. By, I knew I will survive. And something happened in 1944 in May again, there was a, when the biggest killing was going in all the camps and they were killing people by thousands and they...Now the group of gypsies come to Krakow Plaushau concentration camp, and there was close to 800 with them, and on Sunday??? a friend of mine who lives now in Australia, his name is Dr. Roseli, we are going, and we just got a piece of bread, everybody got a very small piece of bread, maybe weighed, I don't know, maybe hundred gram.

Wait. Reload.

Change film to camera roll 6; Sync take 7 is up

Beep.

So, with a friend of mine, we were just getting a piece of b-uh bread, every one of us, was afternoon, and we were going to the work, and the men rode in the camp. We were approaching the, the part of the camp what was specially designated to keep these people over there for the few hours or few days what they supposed to be in the camp. They were all on the way to Auschwitz. Then one of the Hungarian Gypsies start to yelling to us in Hungarian "Kitsche kanner, kitsche kanner." We couldn't figure what this she meant, when we come, come to the uh iron, uh to the barbed wire ga-uh gate, she pointed on the bread, ----- in German, a little piece of bread. So I broke a piece of bread and give it to her. She didn't want to accept it. She said in broken German, she would like to give me, tell me what is my future. So I said, "My future is the same as

your future. Tomorrow you and today I, or I, or you today and tomorrow me." "No no, I want to do it." Well, if the gypsy wants to do it, do it. So, I show her my hand, and she look at it and said, "You and your closest one...you will survive this war." I have to stop, -----(long pause) "You and your closest one, you'll survive the war, you'll go over the big ocean to a big country, and you will lives happy after." I smiled because it was a very big prediction. "Okay, all right. Thank you." And my friend is giving also a piece of bread. She says, "I will tell you something what happened to you." She looked on his hand, and said, "You and your closest one will survive the war, and you will live happily after." We were talking about this. But inside, I found out, probably she's right. I have to survive. I hope, have to protect my wife, I have to try to save her as much I can, nobody is smart in this particular situation, but I have to be stay here, and this the reason I went there, otherwise maybe I will never went to the, to the camp, you know. And we survived. And we're living happy after. He survived, live in Australia with his father who was the closest one. He married after the war, I was married just when the war started. And this is a very interesting prediction because my inner strength, and this what she said to me, give me a tremendous push. There must be a way to survive, some way somehow, we have to survive. Not in the condition was favorable to us. We survived, but 6 million people didn't, including my whole family what consists close to a hundred people. So must be a purpose that we survived, maybe this is the purpose--that I am sitting here and telling you this story.

I want to ask you a hard question. A lot of people say that Jews went like sheep to the slaughter.

I disagree with this. I disagree with this. Because as an officer and trained soldiers, who went to war and a hardship. People never go to, to death like sheeps. When they go without the fighting, they go with dignity. When they fight and they get killed, they try to protect themselves, but not uh like sheep, because was no way to escape, what a children can do when they took close to 60 children on the hill and executed them? What the woman who can do when they undress them and they ask them to stay on the, on the side of the grave, and they shoot them with machine guns? What the other people can do? What the soldiers in the, in the uh, uh, uh last winter of the war where they execute them by Gestapo when they're in French country, close to 150 American soldiers were executed. What they can do? Nothing. They can try to escape, was no way to escape. I think so that those people who died, died with dignity in my opinion, and there is a ----- that nobody, nobody, I never heard that any of those people begged to save their life. They knew there was nowhere to turn. One of my friends who was led to the execution place in Plauschau, on the way there, and we stood by the road, because they asked us to stay there, he come to me and said, "Tell my wife that on the last road, I am thinking about her." The woman is alive in New York. He was a good person????

Take 8 is up.

Beep.

I want to go to before the war, the night that's known as Kristallnacht. I want you to tell me where you were, and what was going on.

This was in November, 1938 when the Kristallnacht, night, happened. I was teacher, and I was teaching in different city, not in city of Krakow, city in ----- . There were lots of things in the papers and we knew what is going on, but we got, was very hard to analyze because it was outbreak of some fanatical hatreds on the side of the German Nazi, Nazi Party. After the one of the, the Jewish fellow kill one of the secretary of the German Consulate in Paris, and this was like a, a revenge, and was horrible things, the paper was full of it, and we knew what is going on. This was like a point to realize it what the German had in their sleeves for the Jews in future. But we were in Poland, we were free, we could go anyplace we wanted, you understand? We were, we, we have feeling of shelter, but the one things we did, when all the German Jews who were coming to Poland what was expelled by the Germans because they were born in Poland, in ----- , and they came to Poland, was absorbed by the Jewish communities all over the Poland in Lodz, Warsaw, Czestochowa, Krakow particular was very, very known for the hospitality to those people. We accepted a family who stayed with us till, till the uh German took over Krakow, some of those people survived, some of those people perished , but the hospitality of Polish Jewry to those people who were expelled by the Germans from Germany, this spirit of ----- was the best you, in the most humane way, everybody was trying to help, and shelter them and feed them, and protect them even though they were outsider. They never speak a word of Polish.

Tell me about Schindler's birthday party.

In 19...In 1944 in October, Schindler was born uh on the 24th of October, and this was a party. This was a party what we would like to some recompensate to him for this goodness and the protection what he was giving to us. I'm sorry I'm, I'm giving you a...

That's okay you're fine.

One second. His birthday is not in October, or in April, I think so, uh, uh in April, yes? His birthday is in April, and this we decide to recompensate something, so the women decide to bake

him a cake. Now we didn't have a anything to bake with it, but we have our piece of bread, so everybody chip a piece of bread, they put this bread together, we have a little bit marmalade what we were getting from Schindler, and we use the marmalade and we make a cake. The bakers from our, the Jewish bakers who were still in camp made this cake of his birthday, and, and uh dec--we decide to give him also a present, so one of our friends still have his gold teeth. He remove his gold teeth, his bridge gold bridge and give it, and the one of the -----, who was working as a mechanic make a gorgeous ring for him, casting the, the ring, and inside the ring, he put the inscription in Hebrew, "A man who save one life, save the world." And this what we giving Schindler as his birthday present on his, on the 28th of April. And he has a speech of to us, and I remember, uh, I remember forever, we stay all the people there, women and men, 1300 people in the big hole, and he has a speech to us and said to us like this, uh short--that was a long speech, I will take the synthesis??? of the speech: "You are here, you are my chil-children, children, I am here to protect you. The war will be very soon over. You will be free. Remember the people who perished. We will have a one minute silence in the name of those people who perished, but don't take revenge on those who has did the harm to you. Let's the revenge go to the legal road. The road of, of uh, uh judges and legal ways. Don't take revenge in your own hand. Behave like a human being, and this was his last speech, and I remember like today, we were all shaved, so we didn't have a hair, but my, I get go-goose pimple on my top of my head when I heard this, I was thinking that they will kill him on the spot and we, all us, all of us together. He was not afraid. He has them all in the pocket in his, in his bribes, so he could really do it, very easy a speech like this, but it was gorgeous speech, the speech, we were, some of the women wrote the speech, and we have in the, in the-----, we have the whole speech what he give it to us on this birthday, April the 28, 1944, uh 1945.

Thank you.

I'm sorry I'm getting a little bit emotional too much.

That's all right. Let's get room tone now. 30 seconds of room tone. That means just sit very quietly, we're going to record just the sound of the room. 30 seconds.

End room tone.

Change film, camera roll 7 is up; Sync take 9 is up.

Beep.

Okay, tell me about when the women arrived from Auschwitz.

When we arrived to Brinwitz and we found all the women are not there, we are very much surprised, and we start to talk with Schindler, and I was also talking, he he knew my wife very well, and he says, "I'm sorry to say, I don't know where the women. They supposed to left after ten or two weeks??? Plashow, and come over here. He start to looking at our friend to find out what happened to to the women. He called probably the Krakow, and he found out that the women in Aushwitz. He told us that the women are in Auschwitz. We are afraid that we never will saw her, mothers or wives or sisters. And we start to ask him. He says, "I will try my best to do everything possible." And he got the idea to take the most beautiful German girl what he has in his camp, give her some gifts, Polish sausage, vodka, diamonds or ----- whatever, or rings or gold or something, and he sent her to Auschwitz to open the door for him so that he can come over and talk with the Commandant Hess, who was Commandant of Auschwitz, who was famous for killing 4,000 to 5,000 people a day, and the woman came in, she became a girlfriend, she was so beautiful, that he couldn't resist it probably and give him a, but when Schindler came in, he told him, "I don't know what -----." He know is here about 35,000 women in the camp, where I can find it. "You have to find, those are the most essential work for that uh war effort. You know what kind of trouble you will have, what kind of problem I will have when I will not get the workers back, their skill. I'll give you three hundred dollars a woman, you train them, is no time to train, we have, those are already trained for 4 years, they know exactly what they doing, and they start to look for the woman, they found the woman except one, mother of one of my friends, a Jewish friend, already was murdered in Auschwitz. When they brought them over there from the uh uh their together place when they were sending the transport out, the Hess was asking how a girl 11 years old or the woman 60 years old can be excellent worker. Well, he says "Look on the finger of the old woman and on the little girl. You will see they have a long, skinny finger. They can clean the boxes so good that nobody else can clean them. And he got 299 woman, and one day in November, early in the morning, about 6 o clock in the morning, on a foggy day, the big gate of the factory opened, and we see like on, like on that picture of the camp, this group of women coming in a dark because they covered themselves with anything, they have blankets or something, coming in the from the fog of the camp to the factory, and he stand there and wait for them, greet them and says, "And now you are with me. You don't have to worry about anything. Hot soup is waiting for you."

Now tell me about how long Schindler stayed with you, how you guys helped him.

Schindler promised us that he will stay till 5 minutes after 12, that means, when the war will be

over and we are secured, he will go away.

Let's back up and start that again. Tell me why he had to be worried. Why was Schindler worried? Or why were you worried about Schindler at this time?

You see, we were worry about Schindler in a, during the last month of war that when the Russian will come in, we will be liberate by Russian, they didn't ask question. They shoot first and then ask the question. When we didn't want him to get in the hands of the Russian because they will not have any mercy on anybody, and German particular when they fi-find out that he was the owner of the factory who was using the slave labor, so we decide that we will prepare getaway car for him and his group--his wife and his friends and who was there, what he wants to take with him, and we would assign a group of our people will protect him and take him out from the camp, and five minutes after 12, 12 o clock midnight, on the, on the day of uh May the 8th, you know, between May 7, May 8. After a while when we disarmed the, the, the Gestapo soldiers in the camp, he said, "Now is my time to go." And (laughs), I remember one thing, that somebody cut the wire to the gas pump in his car. We couldn't start the car, and I have to come with my welding machine at 1 o clock in the morning, weld this part together so we can start the car. The car start, and friend of mine who was a auto mechanic and who was engineer, uh his name is Rahan, he lives in Haifa, in Israel, presently. He took in charge the whole group of the people who supposed to go with Schindler, and they took the group through the German line because we are still by surrounded by the group of German of 100,000 around us, to the American and French line, and he surrender to the American and French, and they took the testimony about Schindler, and he didn't do anything to him and the whole group was waiting in Ragensburg for us to arrive after the war. And we protected him, and we start to protecting him from the first day we were liberated because the man became a pauper. He didn't have a penny for to buy himself a pack of cigarettes. He couldn't cope with the situation after the war. We were forced to do something to, to put a life together, so we stay and the group of Schindler Jews was a -----Munich, we stayed together, we invite him to our apt, we have a parties with him, I make thousands of pictures with him and we have them, and then we left for America. In America when I came in the first thing we did Nancy Rosner, Irka Hirsh and my wife, they went to join the -----, and asked for money for Schindler to send him to bring him to America, and this day, the who belonged to the Nazi party didn't have a chance. The other, who were good killers, and had a good protection, they came in, but Schindler was still a Nazi for them, and they didn't let him come in, so the -----send him a 15,000 dollars for him and his family to go anyplace he wanted, and they make a chance to go to Argentina, so he went with his wife, and he took with him a group of Jews who didn't have any money, from Munich, and paid with from the 15,000 dollars, all the fare for the group, and they

all went to Ar--.

(Stops here a little suddenly. Not sure if this didn't get recorded or just ends here).