

**HENRY LUBELL**

**March 2, 1992**

**Peekskill, New York**

The date is Monday, March 2 and we're talking with Mr. Henry Lubell of Peekskill, New York. Mr. Lubell could you please tell us a little bit about yourself, your name during the war, your date of birth, your place of birth.

Yeah, I was born 1911 in Dombrova Gornicza. This is by the German border in Poland and then in 1916, this was during the first World War my parents moved out to Germany. Actually it was Poland and my father had there a job as hazan and shochet(mohel).

In what town?

The town, first it was a little town Rawicz and later on in Katowice. We were six children, four brothers and two sisters. Somehow or other everybody got an education. It was no problem. My oldest brother was a dentist. The second brother was a pharmacist. I went to business school and my youngest brother also and we, I can't say well off, but better business class.

How was your home, Jewishly?

Jewish we only learned what we were taught at home by my father because it was a small congregation, there was no Jewish lessons there. We had maybe history, Jewish history and so on but otherwise we were only taught by our father, all bar mitzvah and everything my father taught the same as he taught other children.

Were you observant at home?

Not too much. My father, yes. My mother was not so religious. Also naturally it was a kosher home but we were not too religious. Also my parents knew about it and they didn't force us. They knew how it is and everybody finished school, high school or business school and everybody had to go out from home on a job. This went on nice and quiet. We lived in Poland; this town became Polish again, but we didn't feel any anti-semitism.

You didn't.

No, no. I had friends, gentile, Polish and even after the war I was in touch with him and he did a lot of favors what I needed, some documents from Poland and so on. Actually one of my brothers, he was a lieutenant in the Polish army, the pharmacist. He enjoyed it. Especially in Poland, an officer in the army, a lieutenant and he had the science of the medical corps and everybody was in awe. He liked to put on his uniform. Till the war started out...we lived in Katowice when the war started right next to the German border.

What were you doing at that time?

At that time I was in business and we were as I said pretty well off and we wanted to protect our parents so we sent my mother and two sisters to Kielce, this is a town maybe from the border maybe 150 miles or so, a week before the war started. When the war started we had there this apartment in Katowice and the next day already the Germans all over. They came out from the holes with the swastika. Of course in this part of Poland you couldn't know who is a Polack and who is a German. They could be whatever they wanted. Whatever was more convenient, this they took. Everybody spoke both languages in this part. And then we left with a little car, a little VW. Seven persons pushed into this car and we went with interruptions and we came to this town to Kielce. This was Friday ninth the first day of the war. But the next day there came already rumors the Germans are approaching this town. We were there on the plaza in this town. It was maybe after midnight. My friend put on the radio. It happened so that he had there a German station. There came already the mob around us that they called a spy because they heard us listening to the German radio. So the police came and they took away this friend of ours with this car and he became the chauffeur of the police department. Everybody said the men should go away because nobody could imagine that they will punish or kill the women and children. I had a little suitcase that I put in all my necessities and my father just grabbed his tallis and tvillin and we went out going east. Hundreds of thousands of people walked away from the German border and everybody wanted to go as far east as possible. We were walking and then we found a Jewish peasant who was going in the opposite direction so we told him, (he had a horse and buggy) I said to come with us. We were taking all the expenses and we will go with this horse and buggy. And that's the way it was. We went all the way to the Russian border. Somehow it was defeating. We went there through these little towns in Poland and you had the feeling that it's the Jew, he got to help us somehow. And it was also. We came to the little towns, the girls came out, they were washing our socks and shirts and we stayed overnight in different Jewish places. Everybody accepted this as a normal thing. Then we were in the last town \*Rajbiroff[ph109]. This was a prosperous little Jewish town. We came there in the market place. This was Rosh Hashonah. There came out a Rabbi. We were eight or ten people in this horse and buggy. So he divided us. He took my father to his house. There were some teachers. He gave him there some other...They were not afraid because they didn't know that the front was moving so fast.

The second day of Rosh Hashonah we wanted to leave so the Rabbi said you are already on the run, never mind you can go. We will stay here and see what's going to happen. So we went another maybe 20, 30 miles and we got to the Russian border. It was a small town, \*Lanoftsa[ph122]. This little town was maybe 100% Jewish. Also the population took care of us...in line for fruit or bread. And they said not to worry, the Russians would come over here. We didn't believe it. Nobody believed that the Russians and the Germans made a pact to divide Poland. It happened so that the Russian army came to Poland. No Russian soldier came to this little town there. They went and circled it and went they further and we stayed there and again the \*Byezhenski[ph134] they called us. It came Yom Kippur and we went to the shool. The whole town was there. I come there in the shool, and in the hall outside I see there a man sitting there with a gun so I asked what is this. He says this is the only militia man we have. He is Jewish. He wanted to go to Kol Nidre and the other one is a great land owner here in this section and he had to watch him and not to lose him he took him in the shool also. Then the Russians came and we went to the bigger city there in eastern Poland, Lvov or Lemberg. The city was so filled up with population. It had before the war some 300,000 population and now with the refugees the town had over a million population. ..had to go back to bring some clothing and maybe some valuables and I went back to Germany, to the German part of Poland. I went there with a Ukrainian shiksa who was in love with me and another Jewish girl and we went back to Poland. But this is all complicated.

Are there any major things that happened at this time, episodes or incidents that you remember?

The Russian soldiers, wherever they were, when somebody wanted to come this way, the Russians said go back. So we were by the border and the Russians stopped us. This was already on the way back. So we told him we want to go to the German side but we changed our minds, we want to go back. He said so go back. So we crossed the border without being bothered by the Russians. This is luck. And then people didn't know what chances to take. It was only to take a chance. I survived because I didn't have any illusions. As soon as we were in the wagon I prepared for myself. I took a carton of cigarettes, a loaf of bread and a blade, a sawing blade I put in my shoes between the soles. We knew what's going on but the people didn't want to know it.

You knew about the camps?

We knew about the camps maybe not so close about it but we knew. When I jumped the train I knew that I was taking a chance with maybe two or three weeks of life.

Do you want to tell us about the time when you jumped the train or was that much later?

No this is later. I can tell you maybe skip the ghetto, how the ghetto worked and how it was arranged.

That would be interesting. What did you do there?

When they started with the ghetto and they needed people to work for them. But nobody wanted to go to work. So they went out, the Germans, and they caught people on the street, wherever they found them and they sent them to the railroad station. There the job was to widen the railroad tracks because the Russians have a different width of the railroad tracks. It was very hard work. There was a man, his name was Horowitz, and he was the head of the congregation. That was a famous family. They had a tallis factory in Kolomjya. He came out and he had a big speech for volunteers to go to the railroad station so the Germans promised him they wouldn't catch nobody on the street. So I volunteered. I was a strong young man. I spoke fluent German.

Where were you when you volunteered for this?

In the ghetto. We went only to German schools. So at home we spoke German and this helped a lot maybe too. Anyhow we were there and everybody looked to have a bunker in the house where they lived. So we had the attic, like this was the wall from the attic, so we built up a second wall. We had a foot, maybe two feet space between the two walls and if somebody came up the stairs and looked left and right and he saw just the wall so he didn't expect that there are double walls. So the next day I volunteered and the son of a bitches they hit us the same as before. Also I was a little experienced with it. But anyhow I went home and I said no more volunteering. Later on it was the ghetto a little organized and there came a lot of Hungarian Jews, among them my wife and parents too and they had there a soup kitchen and they made me in charge of order in the soup kitchen. It was not an easy charge. They gave out maybe some five or six thousand portions and to keep order among a few thousand hungry people is not an easy job. But anyhow they had nobody else and they made me the head of the kitchen. There among others my wife came there for soup, too. I always treated her good. It was so there were these Hungarian Jews and I didn't come in one day to work and everybody was asking for me because they knew when I was there everybody had to be disciplined and that's all we needed because the soup they got five minutes earlier or later but everybody was hungry. And it happened so later on when I escaped from this ghetto I was in Hungary and there some Jews were escaping from Kolomjya too and they heard about my name and they asked me if I was there in the soup kitchen.

Do you want to tell us about your escape? How did you escape?

In this ghetto there came every few weeks, there came an action they called it. They took thousands and thousands of people. First they segregated. I was there on the plaza and I was the head of the kitchen there with my personnel and I talked to this German and he gave me half the employees and me. After this went by, they took away this one day quite a few thousand people. But they always did the same thing. When the day went by, whoever survived they made believe that this would be already the end of it, that they wouldn't take any more people. But I didn't trust them. I forgot to tell you something else, let's skip it.

Do you want to go back and tell me, it's okay.

The first action what there was, there were German and Hungarian soldiers. I had a little store there in the ghetto with sweets, bakery and so on. I went to work on a Sunday morning. I go out and I see the street is empty. I kept going and I see there's a German SS standing and he stopped me and asked me where I'm going so I told him I am going to open up the store. So he looks at me and he says you see over there on the road there is standing maybe some two three hundred people, Jews and they were surrounded by SS men and German shepherds and he says go there and join these people. I was wearing a trench coat and here on the left arm I had the Jewish star and I was walking here. I didn't go on the road, I stayed on the sidewalk. My coat opened up and covered here the star and as I approached this group they started walking towards me. I stayed on the sidewalk and I walked by. There was a group of Polacks standing there and they said in Polish, for heaven's sake you'd better go home because they will grab you too and you will never come back. I went around there a few blocks and I went back home and this was the first action they took. I come home and I told it to my father so he says in honor of your grandfather they didn't take you. Out of this group none came back. Among others there was the sister or the wife of the \*Judenratt[ph303] this Mrs. Horowitz and everybody was asking go and try to get the people out. He was collaborating as good as he could and he didn't intervene for his wife. He asked to intervene for the whole group and they didn't want to give it to him. So this Mr. Horowitz later on when he realized that this was a lost case committed suicide. This was the Mr. Horowitz in Kolomjya.

Do you know what year this is?

This was in 1940, 41. This was the fall of 1941.

Do you want to move on to your escape from this ghetto. You did go to other places. Is that right?

I stayed in this ghetto till the last action was there and the Germans surrounded the whole ghetto. They came at night between three and four o'clock and they took everybody out of the beds and put

them all on this plaza. My father wasn't there anymore. He was taken away the action previous. They kept us there on this plaza the whole day. Only in the afternoon we went out. I was there with four other friends and everybody had some kind of instrument hidden on him. We didn't know where they will take us because they took people sometimes in the village behind this town and they prepared ditches and they took the people there and shot them there in the ditches or they could take us to the railroad station. So we made up, everybody was voting for me, I was always the guy who got the votes, so I told the group - I said we go to the railroad station, then we have a better chance to jump out of the window or something. If they take us there to this little village then we will know that we don't have much of a chance. So we went to the railroad station, eight abreast, and we go on the road, so we knew that we're going to the railroad station. Here next to me was a woman with a little baby in the arm and as we walk along she takes the baby and pushes it on the Polish woman's arm. She didn't know the woman, she didn't know her name. She just took a chance. She knew that this child has more of a chance maybe to survive. This is what I say when it comes to discussions about the holocaust and so on about the books that came out in the tens and the hundreds, who can describe the feeling of this woman who gave away her baby. Who can describe this? So anyhow we went to the railroad station and we were maybe in the middle of this whole march. I see that they're starting by the end of the train and they're chasing in there some seventy or a hundred people. Then they go to the second train and they're hocking and beating everybody and then I saw one of these cattle wagons had their window taken out and repaired. So I said to my group we stopped and we let the front go further and we went here and went to this wagon here, to this wagon I picked out. We went in there. Nobody was hitting us and we were safe in this wagon. It happened so that I was standing there and I had the feeling that I'm just a neutral observer. When I heard the people talking I had the feeling that it doesn't concern me and the episode with the water did you put it in here before?

No.

There was in this wagon some seventy or a hundred people and there was no place to sit down. Only part of the people could sit down. Then somebody looks out the window and it was very hot. The sun was shining on the roof. It was only October. Then somebody hollers they're putting in bread and water in the wagons. So I said to my friends. You will see nobody will drink the water. They said what are you crazy. And I said no, I'm not crazy but I know what's going to happen. And sure enough after a few minutes they're pushing in two loaves of bread and a pail of water and everybody goes and tries to grab a piece of bread or a sip of water and they turned over the pail. So I told my friends, you see, this is what I know will happen. And we were standing so in the corner the whole day and it got dark the train started moving. I talked to my wife's parents before we before we went into the wagon. Then I said we have a chance to get out when we will take out the piece of wood there on this window. This was easy to take out. Everybody had a screw driver or a hammer or something. And I said we will jump out. There I saw a lot of people who jumped. Everybody who jumped from the train had here a scrape of the face like this because this movement of the train it went forwards and you had to jump backwards because you get the push from the

movement. I was jumping the third. The first one I said you will be the first one jumping out you'll go in the direction of the train and the second also and the third stays on the place and the rest of them goes back and we will meet here. But it happened so that I met only one of my friends. This was a young man by the name of Hammer. His parents had a paper factory in the village next to this Kolomjya. This Hammer the Germans made him the manager of this paper factory and every day in the morning he went out with a group of workers from the ghetto. He went to work and at night he came back. So he says we will go there to this village and we'll make believe that we came out of the ghetto to work. We had to stay there the whole day and wait till they went back to the ghetto. He went to work and he put me there in a shack and he says I will bring you something to eat. Just stay there. Sure enough he brought me to eat and at night we went back to the ghetto like from work. And the other group came back. And we went to the ghetto. And here comes a Mr. Haas, he was the head of the ghetto.

A Jewish head?

Yeah, yeah. He says to me, Henry I want you to be the distributor of the bread. After each action or whatever it was the Germans wanted to know how many were left and they sent so many portions of bread in. So I said no I'm not interested anymore in nothing, only one thing I want to get out of here. This time there was maybe a few hundred maybe less than a thousand people there in the ghetto out of 25,000 or more. So he says you can make a fortune. I say I know how to make a fortune by this bread distribution but I'm not interested anymore. So how is the gold mine there? You got so and so many pounds of bread. I don't know, everybody got a pound or so, something like this. The one who sold the bread had a scale - two pots, on each side a pot and one side were the weights, on the other side the bread. It took a day to distribute a whole bread. So here where the bread was were crumbs. I never cleaned out the crumbs. The crumbs were staying there the whole day and from every portion of bread the crumbs may be a quarter of an ounce or something and by the end of the day everything was distributed and you had one bread, maybe two breads left over. But I said not interested anymore. And there was a Polish, a Ukrainian peasant maybe who delivered to the Germans, they had a place where they collected metal, rags, and so on where they could recycle. This peasant came one day and says next week Wednesday there came the smuggler to me and he has to have ten people and he will take you over the border. This smuggler was the same that Elizabeth went with. I didn't know about it.

Was he a Hungarian?

No., no, this was Poland, Ukrainian. He comes. There was a girl living with me in the ghetto, a Hungarian girl, not this one. They send the smuggler for her, to bring her back to Hungary. But the smuggler wanted to go only with ten people because otherwise it doesn't pay so I told the guys and they said they won't go, they will hire and go with the truck not with the peasant there. So I said

okay you can do what you want. What do you think you have such a good credit rating? The Polak will take you when he gets his money in advance. This peasant came and I spoke to him and I told him that I will go only with this one girl and for this one girl they had the money in Hungary. The next day we made arrangements and this peasant came there to this lot where they had these rags and he said he will go through town and by the end of the town there's a river and a bridge and when they cross the bridge he will stop and take us on this buggy. So we went through town and this girl was very semitic Jewish looking and whenever we went by a store and it was dark and the store was light I told her to wear a hat and I took off my band and somehow I felt like I'm a free bird. Why should I wear this? So I took it off and the girl took it off and we went through the whole town till we caught up with this peasant and he stopped and said, get up. So we went on this buggy and we laid flat on the floor and covered ourselves and he drove off. It took quite a few hours till we got where the peasant lived and we arrived on his farm and there was a big mountain of dried leaves. He buried us in these leaves and he said to stay here and he will come back later. Maybe after a half an hour, an hour, the peasant comes and says let's go. He took us in the stable. In the stable was hay upstairs and he says go up there and stay there in the attic. After a long while he comes with a loaf of bread and a can of milk and we were eating supper, so called. And the peasant says tomorrow morning he goes back there and what shall he tell the people? So I told him you want to do me a favor I wrote him down on a piece of paper in German to trust this man, that he is a very decent guy and not to take chances with some trucks or something. I told the peasant to tell the smuggler that we will have to go by ourselves because they don't know him and they don't trust him to go. The next day the peasant goes into town and at night he comes back and he opens up the trap door and sticks his head in and says in Hungarian[690], in English - in Kolomjya there's nothing left. And it happened so that I had such a feeling that pulled me out of this ghetto, out of this town. The Germans surrounded the whole rest of the ghetto what was there and they lit it up from all sides and hardly somebody could escape from it.

What year was this?

This was 1943.

Where did you go after that?

After that this peasant went with us. We went to the smuggler and I told him to tell the smuggler that when we will be on the other side, on the Hungarian side, he will have to bring a piece of paper, a letter that I gave him and other people will come the next time. They want to have proof that we are safe in Hungary. Besides me and this girl was another Jewish woman. She was hiding somewhere in the woods and the peasants were feeding her and then there come another young boy and he says the next night we will go. And the smuggler says don't worry. If there is any danger don't panic I will use the gun. So we went with the same smuggler and after a few days we're on the



Hungarian side. The smuggler takes the letter there from this girl to her relatives. The smuggler goes away and that night he comes back and says nobody is there at this address. The people ran away and he doesn't have nowhere to leave us. So I said what does this mean? He says we have to try whatever you can but I would advise you to go to some gendarmes and give yourself up. This was a sure death because the Hungarians when they caught somebody gave over to the German gestapo. They were right by the border. I had some Polish money so the smuggler exchanged some Polish money for Hungarian. This young boy who was with us said that he's going back with the smuggler. This boy was living in the village where he lived before the war and he stayed overnight every night somewhere else. He didn't even tell the peasants that he's there. Nobody knew, but he slept every night somewhere else. He went back. So I was left with these two women. The peasant came. He gave me some other few pennies[\*Hungarian731] he had, this Hungarian money and he left us there. This was on a Friday night also. The peasant went away. When it got dark, I go out from this bunker. This was built up from pressed hay for the winter for the cows, and inside was hiding us. It was hollow. He goes away and that's all and he says lots of luck. We started walking towards the village. It's light in the house and I hear singing Zemiro's and I thought now we are safe. I go to the door and knock on the door and the woman asks in Hungarian who is it. I answered in Yiddish to open up the door we need help. So this woman didn't open the door. But she was hollering so loud [\*in Yiddish749]. She didn't open the door.

Could you translate for the tape?

Yes, go away from my door. You're killing me. So we left her and we're walking and we come to another house. There was a light in it but it was not Jewish. And I said to the woman who was with us, she was a typical aryan face you go there (and she spoke very good the language also) and ask about directions, where the railroad station is and so on. So the woman goes in. She knocks on the door. Somebody opened the door and she walks in and I never saw this woman again. We were sitting there maybe at least an hour and nobody came out. I didn't want to take any chances. We go there to this village and all of a sudden a horse and buggy guy comes by and he stops and says where do you want to go? So I told him I want to go to the railroad station. So he says go sit down. So we went there in this buggy and we went to this village. All of a sudden there's a little bar there and this guy stops and walks inside the bar and says wait here I'll be right back. We're waiting and he didn't come out either. Another guy comes out and he's following us. We started walking and he's following us. I said let's go in here. There's a dark yard there. We walk in there and he follows us too in there. I stopped and I said to this girl, talk to him in Hungarian. I didn't speak the language. I said do something, try, do something. I started talking to the guy Polish, whatever I could, Hungarian I didn't know much. I took off my watch and I had a lighter and I said here take the watch and the lighter, what else can I give you and let us go. So he took the watch and the lighter and he says okay over there is the railroad station but watch out don't get caught because when you get caught here you are lost. This was right by the border. So we go to the railroad station and outside it was dark and inside was only a pale light. I go inside and I tell the girl not to stand in the light. There is a line there and people are standing in line for these tickets. There come

two policemen, two gendarmes, tall guys, and they started talking to me and I didn't want to answer, just moved my hand like this, but I understand, he wants to go ahead of me in the line. So he was ahead of me and I came to this window in plain Polish but in Ukrainian it's the same thing. I said Two to \*Rachov[ph792]. This was the next town. In \*Rachov this girl had a mach tainiste[\*ph799].

"In-law"

Yeah, in \*Rachov. So she says we'll go to \*Rachov and then we'll see what's going to happen. So we go into this train and I asked this girl how do you say in Hungarian good-night or good evening? I learned this and I said you take the tickets and I will sit here and sleep and when the conductor comes to check the tickets you handle it. Sure enough he comes to take the tickets and \*Rachov was the next station. When we arrive in \*Rachov I see a tumult, a lot of soldiers around. I said this is just perfect. In Europe when you go out from the railroad station they take your ticket when you walk out and they look at everybody in the face. In this little town everybody knows each other. When we got to the gate I said in Hungarian[\*815]. This means good evening. So the guy answers[\*816] and salutes. We went out and we went to this \*mach tainiste. This was again a Friday night. We get there and the girl knocks on the door and the \*mach tainiste comes out and opens the door and she didn't recognize the girl. First of all she was maybe ten days in the woods and she didn't eat and so on. So she told her who she is. She started lamenting you can't stay here, it is dangerous and all kinds of stories. So I said to the woman, look you don't have to give nothing to me. I don't need nothing, but this is your relative. So she says okay. This was after Succos. She said my neighbor next door has there a succa. Go in there and you will stay there overnight. So I said look I will stay there only if your neighbor knows about it because I don't want him to come out and catch a thief. So the woman gave us a glass of milk, but cold because it's Shabbos and wouldn't be heated and we stayed overnight. I said we won't go in the succa, we'll go in your outhouse, not the neighbor's. We went in this outhouse and the wind blows and the door goes open and closed. So I took out from my shoe the shoelace and I tied up the door. In the morning the woman comes out and she gave the girl some money and says go over there. There's a synagogue and they will help you. She didn't help anymore. She spoke Hungarian so I was not good for her. She goes away and I go in the street and I go to this big building where she shows me the synagogue and I see it's full of soldiers there. It was taken over by the army and they made their barracks there in the synagogue. Further down the block I see a Jew coming there with a tallis so I stopped him and asked him where's the shool and he says don't go in here. There's a barracks here. And he showed me there is another synagogue. He went there. He opened up, there was a padlock on the door. He says, go inside. I will put up the padlock from the outside so that nobody will know somebody went in here. Sure enough he went away. I sit down and there was a big iron stove there, heated up. I sat down and fell asleep. All of a sudden I wake up and I didn't know where I am. I think I'm dreaming. I see all the Jews there with the Streimel, fur hats and so on and everybody is singing and dancing and I was sleeping through the whole ceremony. One of the Jews comes over to me and asks me where are you from. I told him. He says you know what, do you see this gentleman there,

this Jew, when we are going home, you follow him. He knows about it, you follow him. So I follow this Jew to the house and we're coming in. There are his wife and three daughters but he told me, don't talk to my wife, don't tell her nothing because she will be afraid. I ate there and then he says to go back to the synagogue. I went back to the synagogue. He told me that the padlock would be open like it was in the morning. I sat down and there came in a congregation, they call it \*shalisheedos[ph880]

The third meal of the sabbath.

That's right. They came there. They were singing and eating and drinking and they say the next day I will go to Marmarosz-sighet.

Romania.

Yes but this was Hungary. So he says this young man goes to \*Marmalo Sigurt. You just follow him when you go off the train, don't talk to him nothing. Here is your ticket.

We're going to jump ahead a little bit if you don't mind. I'm interested in knowing about your time with the partisans. Could you tell me a little bit about how you got involved with it, what you did there?

Yeah, but again it's the same. It's too long.

Tell me about the major parts.

The major parts. In 1944, August the 28th erupted an uprising in Slovakia. It was organized by Russian paratroopers and the barracks of the Slovakian army. There's a difference between the Czechoslovakian army and the Slovakian army. They were in the barracks and the Russians drove in with a truck to the barracks and he said here we give you a choice, do you want to be with us or against us? So they joined this uprising and we were a group of 20 people. I said don't rush into something because we didn't know who was the leader. The communist party took over the Russian partisan movement and the democratic government had a branch in London. We had there a Polish lieutenant, he was Jew, and he got in touch through the Slovakian army with London and the army wanted us to join the army, and the Russians wanted us to join the partisans. This whole movement lasted two months. Then the Germans encircled it and we went in the woods. I forgot to mention

when we were taken from the ghetto to the railroad station I learned something from the Germans right there. There came a truck of German soldiers to the town where we were and partisans encircled and took them off the truck. They were standing on the side of the road, about 40 German soldiers. All of a sudden they dispersed the Germans. Everybody went in a different direction and you couldn't shoot because you would shoot civilians. All these Germans escaped. So I took an example from this and I told them if we go to this village if we run away, everybody has to run away in a different direction. But it didn't come to it. So the Germans came in and encircled this whole piece of land. It went from \*Bratislava [ph955] to \*Korshitza [ph955]. When the Germans came closer we decided we had to go in the woods. There was a whole groups of soldiers, 2 escapees from the POW camps and there was even an American B29 bomber landed there and he couldn't get out of it because the lawns were wet and he couldn't start. We went in the woods and all of a sudden (I was very good in orienting myself by the stars or by the trees and so on) and we all thought that we're going east to meet a Russian army but I stopped and I said no we're not going east, we're going north and north are the Germans. There's the town of \*Karzhmarop [ph973] and some other towns and I stopped there one of the Russian officers and one of the Americans and they took out a map and they took a soldier on a horse and they sent him ahead on the first line and told him to come back. So they came back and they turned around and we went east. There the Russians were there pretty close so we came there it started snowing already and we came there on top of the mountain \*Prashiva [[ph985] is the name of this mountain and the Russians sent home the Slovakian soldiers, they didn't have confidence in them and only they kept the POWs or groups like we that we couldn't go home. We were there a couple of days on this mountain and then they said they will go east to try to join the Russian army. I didn't like the idea and I told my friends when everybody is going your way I would like to stay here. Why? I said they had the headquarters of the partisans and they had there laying around bags of lentils and in the snow were frozen big beef liver and another piece of meat. So that's all stories.

I'd like to know maybe about the story of how you met up with your wife. Could you tell us that?

When I went with my wife..Anyhow after this whole episode we went through the front and in the valley they were shooting and we were on top of the mountain and went through the front and came out behind the front lines on the Russian side. The first soldiers we met there were Romanians and these Romanians were starving. They didn't have any food. We had food but we didn't have any cigarettes so we changed with the Romanian soldiers, bread for cigarettes. After we passed the front line they took us to the barracks and the officers were mostly Jews.

In the Russian?

No, in the Czechoslovakian army. There were Czechoslovaks were sent by the Russians to Siberian and then they came back with the army they organized in Siberia. They were mostly Jews because they were running away from the Germans, from Hitler.

This is the army in exile. There were two Czech armies if I'm not mistaken.

Yeah. There were two Polish armies, too. One of my brothers was in the west in the Polish army and the other one was with the Russians in the east. Anyhow we went there and I had no idea if somebody lives or doesn't live and we went to Bucharest. I heard that in Bucharest the JOINT is active but the war was still on. We met the Russians and we had to give up our arms and I had left around some bullets and we were there with some Romanian soldiers that were collaborating with the Russians. The Russians gave them guns but they didn't give them bullets. So they bought from us the bullets and we went to Bucharest. I thought I had a lot of money there. It was quite a few thousand lei. We came to Bucharest and we went to take baths in the public baths. The money was just enough for the bath and a glass of soda. I got in touch with the JOINT. I knew I have a cousin in Israel, in Tel Aviv. He went out of Poland before the war. His name was Saltzman. So I wrote the address Saltsman, Tel Aviv. The first name I knew, too, Binim. We were there in Bucharest two, three weeks. After three weeks I go and they said there's a note there for me. So what happened. They found this Saltzman and they gave him the note and they found out the first time that I'm alive and my one brother was with my cousin there. My cousin had there a tannery during the war and did business with the English. Elizabeth had here before this piece of paper from the JOINT. They write that I'm here and my brothers are here and one brother is there and one brother is in the Polish army and one is in England.

Can we jump a little and see how close to your time of liberation. Where were you and what was going on and how were you liberated?

Liberated? I liberated myself. I crossed the border there. When I went to Bucharest I was already liberated.

I wasn't clear if the JOINT was already operating.

The JOINT operated there because Bucharest was liberated by the Russians before. But Budapest was liberated only the middle of January 1945.

You were in Hungary?

I was in Bucharest and then we went to Budapest and then I was looking for my wife. I had the address and I walk in. The building is standing but there was a big hole in the building from the top to the bottom. The bomb went in but didn't explode. I went into the staircase and I see somebody is coming down and there she was. She did not recognize me at first either and then she said are you that Henry? And I said yes. It happened so that she had a guy waiting outside for her, a date. So she didn't even go back to him. We went upstairs in the apartment. I have other episodes with the partisans.

Anything that stands out in your mind, a particular adventure?

We were a group of Jews there with the partisans and they sent us out on missions to put bombs under the tracks and so on. Among other things there came a Jewish group of four or five men. They were with the English air force. They came from Israel but there was no Israel yet. They were with the Hagana. They came with the idea to bring out the few thousand Jews hiding in the woods in Slovakia and they came with the idea to make a bridge. They wanted to take out by plane the group of Jews that were in the woods. They got in touch or we got in touch with them and they wanted to take out our group, there were some 20 Polish boys and girls and they wanted us to be the first ones coming out. But then the war started, the uprising collapsed. There was with us a young man by the name of Chaim \*Hermish[ph1165] When we crossed the front the Russians took out us, the Polish group, they didn't know what to do with us so they gave us to the Czechoslovakian army. There was this Chaim Hermish and another Israeli soldier. There wasn't an Israel then. They went to Odessa and from Odessa they sent them back to Palestine. This was the end of Chaim Hermish. After the war, in 1950, we went the first time to Israel from Europe. This Chaim Hermish, he went to Palestine and he went on the radio and he was reading a list of names. Among others he had my name. Somebody heard it on the radio, a friend of my brother's and he called him up and he says somebody heard your brother. So he says what are you crazy and this time he didn't have yet from the JOINT. And he called up the radio station and asked who this was. So they gave him the address of this Chaim Hermish. My brother

went and looked him up in a kibbutz and he was sitting with him there the whole night and he was telling him stories about me. This was how he heard the first time. I wanted to get in touch with this Chaim Hermish. So my brother couldn't catch him. They said he is a \*sheleach [ph1207] somewhere in South America and he is not there. It took years. My brother passed away in the meantime. In 1970 my brother was hardly alive. He says to me I heard Chaim Hermish lives in the kibbutz \*Glitzon [ph1217] this is in the north near Haifa. So I called him up and they told me yes he lives here but he isn't here now. In 1970 I finally met him and it was a reunion.

I want to thank you very much. You have had many adventures. At some time maybe we can hear more of them. I really appreciate your time.

