

Rubin Literman

[Good evening. My name is Toby Tickin Back. I'm the Director of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo, and we are very honored this evening to have with us Rubin Literman, a survivor of three concentration camps. Rubin, would you please tell us about your childhood?]

I was born in Plock [P-L-O-C-K], Poland, and we, I have big family. I have 5 brothers.

Together were 6 brothers and 1 sister. And as any other youth in that time was, we're going to school. First public school, then high school. High school happened to be a Jewish high school.

And the war started break out September 1st, 1939.

[I think before you get to the war, Rubin, I think we'll, we'll get a picture of, we'll focus in on your family.]

Okay.

[We'll ask for the picture to be put on the screen, and perhaps you could tell us about your family.]

All right. As you see from the picture here, I have my mother and my father, and my twin brother right underneath me, and standing are, is, two brothers, also another set of twins, at one end and the other.

[You're one, you're a set of twins?]

Right, a set of twins. And then 2 brothers. The one is the eldest one, and the one is one year younger. And one here is my sister and my brother-in-law.

[On the extreme opposite side of your sister is her husband.]

Right. Opposite. Right. So we have six brothers and one sister and one, my, one brother-in-law, Ries.

[And this picture was taken in what year approximately?]

This picture was taken probably in 1930, and sent to my uncles and aunts in the United States.

[In Buffalo?]

In, in Buffalo, New York. And this way, I really do have the picture because we didn't, we couldn't salvage anything, we didn't get anything, everything was taken away from us including pictures and all the possessions.

[So it's fortunate that you took that picture and sent it.]

Right. Right.

[So you went to school. You had a normal happy family life and student life.]

Normal happy life, and I also, right, a student life. And we also belonged to a a Zionist organization by the name Akiba and we were all happy and doing things like normal children would do in any other country. Anti-Semitism was in Poland, even there then, but we just went about our business, and while I was going to school, we are 4, we're 4 brothers, accountants, so we had also an office, an accounting office in Plock.

[What did your father do?]

My father was a merchant, yeah. And 4 brothers accountants. One brother was helping out my brother – my father – and really 2 brothers were helping out, but after school. So, I really went into the accounting quite a bit still in Poland. When my brothers went into the army, into the Polish army, I was only then 16 years old, and I even by going to school during the day and doing other things, I sort of substitute for him in managing the office and certain of his accounts, until he'll get back from the army.

[And then the war broke out September 1st.]

Then the war broke out September 1st, 1939. And because our city was the, was taken into the, what we called the Third Kingdom, or Third Reich, immediately we lost all our rights and privileges. And to us it was like the world would come to an end. It happened like overnight.

[Did you have the wear –]

Yes. We were taken into forced labor and all the accounting office disappeared because was no more. The school stopped and everything was disrupted. And we had to wear the yellow Juden badge to identify, and we couldn't live on the same street and the same house where I was born and where we lived for that many years.

Immediately we're taken into a ghetto in the same city, and then this was not enough. They were were taken to another part of Poland to another ghetto.

[To another city?]

To another city in another part of Poland. Because this was Judenrein, which means no more Jews at all and we had to leave not only the area where, the place we were born and the house we lived in, but even the ghetto. So so many people have say that we have, we were sort of the first victims of circumstances and even more than others because of the Third Reich, and we couldn't stay in our hometown.

[How did your parents respond to this being moved?]

Well, it was very very difficult for them to move. We couldn't take nothing along because this was the German order. We were taken to a special place. They call it marketplace. We're taken to a a on to a train, to the cattle car.

[Oh to the Umschlagplatz].

To the Umschlagplatz, and to the part, the other part of Poland. When we arrived there and it was, the trip was not that pleasant, and we didn't have enough food and we didn't have enough

clothing but in some way the the Jewish committee, or the Judenrat, was helping us out because the Jews in the other part of Poland, the city, were still there intact and they were helping us and the Red Cross and so on. But it was the –

[The Red Cross was in the town?]

Yes, yes, in some way, they were helping out.

[What city was it, Rubin?]

Pardon me? In what city?

[What city?]

This, the name of the city was Chmielnik. It's near Kielce. And, and this was a very, okay, in other words, again, the same difficult situation. People were just dying out. They didn't have enough food. You could see they swollen and would just fall apart right on the street. And whoever was stronger or whoever was more lucky and received more food through the various organizations or through private enterprises was, could survive a few days longer, a few weeks. Then this was not enough and then from this little city in October 1942. I'll never forget this day. Happened to be on Hoshana Raba. It was on Friday morning. All the youngsters were called in to the special marketplace and we didn't know how things will be, but we had to go and we had to report to. So instead to go to the temple, we had to go over to this place, to the marketplace. And I remember vividly exactly what happened. My mother thought, well, she would see us off. I was with my brother, another brother, at this particular place. And we were taken on trucks to Skarzysko-Kamienna, where my certificate will show, when I came to Buchenwald, what I came from. So my brother tried to escape right there and then, but somebody caught up with him and they put him back on the truck. It was this particular camp in Poland, Skarzysko, was very very bad. Not too many really survived. Again hard work, not

enough food. No cure for, if somebody was sick, was no cure for the sick people. If you had fever like hundred and two or three, it was a problem. If you'll stay in the barracks was impossible. They would find you right underneath the bunks or in the barracks, and they they would be shot to death. If some friends will take you, to pretend that you are okay, through the special border, the special police who was, were watching that, was a problem because again he would not be able to perform and produce. And again was a problem. So if anybody was sick, was no such thing as a hospital or a doctor. It was all finish. This particular camp, and then, I just want to go back to the October 1942, that 3 days later, right after Sukkot, the, my parents and whoever was still left in this little town, young or old, and who were hide-, was hiding, that from few days before, and was caught. They were all taken then to Treblinka to the gas chambers. Therefore I have Yahrzeit on particular -

[All at the same time.]

All at the same time. And I go to temples especially to observe this Yom Hoshana Raba and then Yahrzeit afterwards.

[How do you know that they all died at this time?]

Well, from witnesses and from the neighbors and from all the data which we received after the war. We ask the rabbi, and other who are watching those calendars, "How are we gonna observe the Yahrzeit?" And after we gave the report, as we know, it was told how it was and when they were taken to Treblinka, they said this is probably the proper day, and keep this one day all the time, and we did, and we are still doing that.

[Now they were taken away, and where were you?]

Yes, at that time, when they were taken away, I was already 3 or 4 days in Skarzysko concentration camp.

[Which is in Poland.]

Which is in Poland. And again this was an ammunition factory. And any wrongdoing or anything, if you couldn't perform, it was the same thing. And then we have what you call the selections. To the right or to the left. If somebody did not look quite right, was taken away. For the ladies and the girls especially we tried to in some way to make yourself on the outside, on the cheeks, a little rosy with some coloring paper to show, when go through the special selection, that the German inspectors would not see or sense that the person is sick. Artificially in some way. Was not cosmetics in a way, but just for survival. Everybody in some way was trying to carry on and not even to commit suicide, to try maybe we feel, it's always, you can call it wishful thinking, naïve, but we say, "Well, maybe tomorrow is gonna be a better day. Let's get by today and we'll see tomorrow." So everybody was fighting and determined. The one who was not determined and not fighting was really a problem and they couldn't really survive. It all depends on the circumstances also.

[Rubin, what kind of work did you do in this camp?]

Well, I was in a, this, what do you call, an ammunition factory. And we had to, to work with a special carriage and push hard containers like from one place to another. And if they were on a special track, miniature railroad track, but if something would fall out or get out of place, then it will be our fault, and we would be punished for it, penalized. It was hard work.

[So you couldn't really do, sabotage the activity.]

Yeah, right.

[Cause it would boomerang on you.]

That's right. The conditions were impossible, unbelievable in this special camp that I was, where I was in.

[How long, how long did you stay in this camp?]

In this camp, for about 2 years. And the the, what I want to mention is that the Germans always went went ahead of us, ahead of everything, not to let us be liberated, so, if, when the Russians came into Poland in that area where we were in, in Skarzysko, around that, to the last they were waiting and when it was almost the last few days, they shipped us. The men went to Buchenwald and the women went to Leipzig in Germany. Matter of fact, Luba went, my wife, went to Leipzig at the same time. We were together there in Skarzysko.

[Did you know each other before?]

Yes, we knew but just knowing, and just met her in Skarzysko. But of course with the conditions in that, it was impossible to make any special contact or, but we knew each other, yes. And as a matter of fact, just because we knew each other and we cared for each other, we, when I was in Skarzysko and she was in Leipz – when I was done from Skarzysko – went to Buchenwald and then she was in Leipzig, some arrangements were made to give up a portion of bread on my side and one on her side, just to find out through a special messenger. I don't know how this worked really. It was, I couldn't believe that this will literally be it's true when I received a message or that it's true they will deliver. That, but after the war, I found out it was delivered, that she found out that I am in Buchenwald okay, and I found out about her, that she was in Leipzig okay.

[So you had your own courier that was –]

Was something unusual, other, which I couldn't believe that this will really materialize. Yes, but we we sacrificed in some way by giving out, up, a piece of bread which was our livelihood. This was the thing, but because we care for each other, that's what we did on the, on both sides.

[Were you in Buchenwald with any of your family or friends?]

No. Just from in Buchenwald we were from, with a group of people who were also in the same camp in Skarzysko. So just friends who I didn't know really from before the war or from our hometown or any families or any friends. Just prisoners just where we are, we're working together.

Speaking about the, when Buchenwald had also another kommando which with a special factory, a similar ammunition factory as it was in Poland. And we were also set up in barracks to live during the night and, or on a shift, maybe sometime the night shift, or the day shift, and we were going to the ammunition factory. And I, just to say like miracle of surviving, I just was trying to get attention to one of the German foremen who was in Poland and arrived also in the Buchenwald kommandos, camp.

[In Germany.]

Yes. And he promised me that he will take care, cause you mention about friends, that he will assign to a group of the ones who are from Skarzysko, and I'll be able to work with them together and the food – well I went because of the food and also the friends, and because this was the, again, to survival. And the food supposedly was better in this particular department. And he did. What happened I was supposed to go on a shift the next morning. The same night when the arrangements were made for next morning to go, it was an explosion. And all my friends were killed.

[Oh, my goodness. That's, that's a miracle that you –]

So it's a miracle that that I I would be there. I mean, it's no question about it.

[If it had been some other time . . . ]

That's right. Another miracle which I can also mention, when I was in Chmielnik, before we went to Skarzysko. I was single. And my brothers, the twin brothers, we showed them, the

picture before, were married. Married during the war. The Judenrat, or the Jewish committee, have, they they need, they had received quota from the German administration to deliver so many Jews to this labor camp. And one of my, our, name was mentioned. And my sister-in-laws were sort of kind of because they were married and they were not sure: is it one brother or it the other one? So I just very volunteered to go to this labor camp. And when I went, I was there for three or four days. Somebody called me to the office and ask me my first name. And I didn't know what this is, but I just had to go and I give my name. They send me home, and they brought one of my brothers from the twin to this particular labor camp. And 3 or 4, or 4 days later they were all taken to Auschwitz and didn't survive.

[So, that's another miracle. If you had stayed there –]

It's another miracle. Yes.

[But look how meticulous the Germans were. They wanted the right Literman. They didn't want "any" Literman.]

They wanted the right Literman. Right. Yeah. Right. Then two brothers, the older and the other, the the accountants, they, one of my brother was a general partner of a electric flour mill in our hometown. And the other one was the chief accountant. As the situation deteriorated, and we knew that we cannot hold on to the ownership of the flour mill, the decision was made voluntarily, and with no even that much consideration of, to turn over the flour mill to one of the local, happened to be a professor at the accounting school where my brothers attended. A very good friend. And and they were meeting on a Saturday night in my brother's house, this was still in the beginning, the first few days.

[What year are we talking?]

This was still in 1939. Still in the beginning. They – we just talk about miracles – I'll just mention about my family, how everything went and so on.

[Certainly.]

And and the the the flour mill was on fire, so they were suspicious and they were accused of that sabotage, that they burned the flour mill. The professor really risking his, in a way his life, and his reputation and everything else, being a Volksdeutsch at the same time. To say he would make –

[So he was partially, originally from Germany.]

Right. To say and make a real strong statement that this is impossible: “I was with the gentleman in the same, at the same time when the fire was on. I was with him negotiating and in that.” For one reason or for another, because was the beginning, was only the Wehrmacht and not the SS yet in, in the administration. They, after a few days, they just let him go. But they were afraid even to go home for overnight because somebody else will find out and will send him back. So they went to Russian-occupied Poland, this is Bialystok. And while this was on, we thought everything is okay and at one point, I was trying also with one of my brothers to go over on their side to, on the Russian side. But for some reason or another, the border was closed, was impossible to cross the little lake that bordered between Germany and Russia. And we were shipped, we were shipped back to, back to our hometown. We were so sure that the two brothers were alive because they were in Russia, on the Russia, in the Russia-occupied zone, and not in Germany, but later after the war, we found out that when the German decided to go after Russia, and that they sort of like overnight overrun the city, Bialystok, and was not enough time for them to escape and to go in deeper into Moscow or other places. And again, they also perished.

[Were these brothers, in other words, taken to, to the gas chambers, one of the concentration camps?]

Right. Right. Then one of my brother who was in Skarzysko was, is my sister-in-law, and through some fellow who was coming in from the outside, from the city into the factory, not Jewish but he was a Pole, he was trying to help us out in some way. So one particular afternoon shift, for the night shift, we went into the, from the barracks to the factory, my brother just slipped out, out of the group, and just proceeded to the railroad station. Unfortunately, at the railroad station he was caught and shot to death.

[Oh, dear.]

25:14 So, I am just going over and over again. That's why I so involved, as you know, with the Holocaust. As difficult as this been painful to talk about it, to recall, but as painful as it is, the time is of the essence. Now not only I started many years ago, as you know, but some others, the other survivors, they speak up today. They they are ready to talk. And also the people are ready to listen. And not only to listen but to be tuned in. Really to to understand. It is difficult to understand. Like Elie Wiesel, I mentioned that one presentation, professor Elie Wiesel, who is the U.S., who is the President of the U.S. –

[Holocaust Council]

– Holocaust Council, he said that the the survivors are special kind of people. Nobody can understand them, but we would like to be so much understood. I am devoting so much time because being a survivor of the Holocaust and being the sole survivor of my family, I'm putting all my efforts, anything to do to help, to explain, and to, that in in hopes that this should never ever happen again.

[Amen.]

A tragedy as such. And, and, you know, it's it's just that, today after 50 years or 51 since Hitler came to power, you, and it's 39 years since we were liberated, you still have today anti-Semitism even in the free world. And the Nazi and neo-Nazi propaganda that the Holocaust never took place. And denying that. As a matter of fact, I wrote, I saw an article just last week that in Germany, they'll be punished and penalized or in jail for 3 years if they'll ever deny again. But nevertheless, they are denying. So because the Hol - , the occurrence of the Holocaust is still being contested, we, the living survivors, these witnesses –

[must give testimony.]

– to a national catastrophe, it's our duty, our responsibility, to really educate and tell and retell our stories. I know it's difficult to understand and that, but we will be telling, and now it's not only for us, but we hope that the second generation, our children, they are the next generation to carry on the legacy and the continuity, and we expect that the children of the survivors really to carry on and and and and and so this cannot be forgotten because this is something which we, it's history now, but it is a situation that we hope, we've suffered, but we hope that nobody will forget, that future generation would not suffer as we did.

[Of course. Of course. Rubin, let's get back to your story.]

Yes. Yeah.

[You showed us a postcard.]

Yes.

[Perhaps we can have that on the screen, and you can tell us about that postcard.]

Okay. All right. This postcard was written as you see here from the Russian-occupied Poland, in Bialystok, addressed to my uncle here, my mother's brother, Charles Silberberg at 52 Traymore, Buffalo, NY. And what this letter is all about – my uncle gave me when I arrived

here – in Polish they describe this in this way. “That, as you know, we never needed any help from anybody because we were comfortable in our hometown financially, and but now my parents are in Chmielnik” – which they knew the address – “The, we are okay and we were always. Please do anything you can to help them out. They are, if they’re ever were in need, now they are really in need of your help” and so on.

[What year was this postcard?]

This was in 1940.

29:57 [And did the Silverbergs try to do anything?]

29:59 They tried but it was really impossible, because the, it wasn’t a situation like with a prisoner of war or so on, through the Red Cross. It was just everything was sealed. Nothing even, you couldn’t travel but you couldn’t really even send a letter or a package.

[Must have been so frustrating.]

It was very, very much so. So when I saw this letter, I thought that maybe, you know it’s, but it was, it’s a souvenir in some way, but it’s unfortunate that it’s not so pleasant to see. Right.

[Let’s get back to you, when we left you, before you were in Germany at the concentration camp in Buchenwald, and you were in the ammunition, working with the ammunition. How long did you stay in that camp?]

In Buchenwald?

[In Buchenwald.]

It, it was like 8 months or so. 8 months. And it took –

[So we’re bringing you up to about 1943, I guess, 40 –]

No, no no. No. It was, see in 1942 to 1944, I, as I mentioned, October '42, my, we went to Skarszysko, my parents went to the gas chambers, and I and I never saw my parents again, so there. And then, In 1944, we were taken to Buchenwald.

[So this is in ninety-forty –]

So until 1945. In '45, again the same. When the Americans came in, to the, our area of Buchenwald, they shipped us to Theresienstadt.

[Oh, in Czechoslovakia.]

Theresienstadt is Czechoslovakia. Is a fortress city, not too far from Prague. And and over there we could find some people from Germany, German Jewish people, even second and third generation. Sort of the residual left. So we were shipped sort of like four weeks before our liberation. We were liberated in Theresienstadt on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

[That's a date you won't forget.]

No, I will never forget.

[Tell us about liberation.]

The liberation, well it was, you know, when when you are liberated, first of all you are at least, you are you are liberated and will, and and hope that I'll find my family and maybe it's all over. But to our all disappointments, and and I just want to compare in a situation like when it was with the hostages in Iran, just to say how it feels. In our situation, we didn't have a country and as we, you say, we didn't have the family, we didn't have where to go, and how to start. Nobody was to embrace us. And nobody was, we didn't have a a doctor to say, or a psychologist, or psychiatrist.

[You also didn't have any food.]

And didn't have food. So we were on our own. As young as I was, start from the beginning. New families. But the real disappointment was when I start traveling and inquiring about my family, including the two brothers from Russia, and also my little niece from - my sister's daughter. And when –

[Where was this little girl?]

This was not too far from our hometown, in a city named Gostyn.

And when I found out that this brother it happened that, the one who went this, was taken to Auschwitz, the two brothers from, in Russia, and this one, and when I put this altogether, “oh no.” It is I am alone. Nobody survived. And we tried to work out through some, through the Red Cross and the Joint Distribution and HIAS, and through the United States, and everything else, and to no avail. And as you know, I was in Jerusalem where they have all this computer set-up in order to find someone. We all hope that we'll be able to find someone after so many years, but unfortunately it was the same situation, Jerusalem and last year, 1983 in Washington, that I didn't find anybody out of my family or friends.

[You mentioned before that your sister-in-law and brother took the little girl, took the little niece, to a town in hiding.]

In hiding. And I was under impression, I was, I was at least hopeful that we will find out, but it is a possibility that she survived, but in another environment, not the surroundings, not to reveal to me that she is, and she is maybe living under a different name, different thing, but through all the sources, anything available, we couldn't find. I just, I remember one thing – how did I get to Buffalo? And I hoped maybe they would find something. Is that I remember a an address where my uncle and aunt were writing to our hometown, and just after so many years, not to even even

writing out the address, just remember seeing the envelope, I just sent it out to Buffalo and was the right street, and the right number. And that's the –

[Was that the Traymore address?]

No, this was on Voorhees. They write them, and I make my contact with my aunt and this was the way it was started.

[That's another miracle, isn't it?]

Another miracle because we were, we were really signed up and went, and on the way to Palestine, at the –

[Oh, you were among those that were going –]

And again, it's, I don't know, it's all like meant to be, like this here. And we were as far as Slovakia. We went to Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, and by the – we were ready to cross to Italy to get on the ships, something went wrong. This was the – what do you call – the illegal immigration, when you want to go to Palestine. And for some reason, or another they, they shipped us back to Landsberg am Lech, near Munich, and we were waiting there four years, to, in order to get to the United States. Which we arrived here May 14, 1949, in Buffalo.

[I think we have a picture of you, when you were liberated. Perhaps we could have that picture. Here it is.]

Okay.

[And, how old are you here?]

I will say 21 probably. And this was in Prague, Czechoslovakia. I would say that this is probably like 6 or 7 weeks probably after the liberation. I, this was my first picture after the liberation.

[Who took this picture?]

Um some, I don't know, maybe somebody from the Jewish Committee and the administration that tried to give us, make a picture and make us feel good. They tried to help us. In fact I was in Prague for about another couple months and working, and then I found out coincidentally, that my wife – it it was not my wife yet – but to be, is in Lodz in Poland. And then we –

[Why did she go to Lodz?]

Well, because the, everybody, was trying to get, they were, they were on a, on a march in Leipzig. And I was, they were walking for –

[Forced march.]

– that march, whatever you call, and in some way, everybody was trying to get again to the hometown in hopes of finding somebody who was still alive. And to our disappointment - she has a sister, yes, a sister –

[who was with her]

37:57 - together, together all the time. In Skarzysko and in Leipzig, and so, she's here in Buffalo. Right.

[That's, that's beautiful. How did you get from Buchenwald to, to Theresienstadt?]

Oh, from Buchenwald? Also by –

[Was that a march, or was that a train?]

Oh no, no. Cars.

[Cars, okay.]

And just as you, just like you mention it, all depends, and I know, you have faith and lucky, and determined. I, if one transport which left Buchenwald, or we were in this concentration camp and the ammunition factory by the name Schlieben, they left two weeks before us on the way to Theresienstadt. They arrived like one week later maybe, with half of the people. The others did

not survive. They didn't have enough food, you know, and transport and so on. And we arrived like about two weeks later and this was in cars, trains. It's another thing I want to mention about Professor Wiesel. In he, he was saying that certain words have different meanings. Like when we are saying "train", "car", is for pleasure or for different.

[You have images.]

We will never forget the train or the cattle cars, to Majdanek, and all the Auschwitz, and so on. And the same thing is with "selection." "Selection" is a good word for that, but to us, again, to the right and to the left. Those kind of things.

[It has a negative connotation.]

Right. Right. Right.

[Certainly different than most people have.]

Yeah. Right.

[I think you, we have a paper that was given to you by the army, by the United States Army.]

Yes.

[Here we have it. Perhaps you can tell us about this.]

Well, while we were in Landsberg am Lech near, in Germany, near Munich, through the administration. This was, of course, occupied. This was a displaced persons camp with the Americans in the administration. And we found out that, that if we want to get any information as to the whereabouts or registration, or the certificate, like Buchenwald, where I was, it's a, and they give us an address, where to write a letter, and they will send us. And they did. And this is the certificate. What it shows and in fact the time we arrived, the, when I was born, and the name exactly as I am today, because I didn't change my name. Everything's the same, and my

number assigned, which is also on the Holocaust memorial, my number of 68113. And, and also

–

[Rubin, where did you, in which camp did you get that number?]

In Buchenwald.

[In Buchenwald.]

And also they, they change even the, in German, Plock was in Poland, and they changed to a different name our hometown. In German they changed the name also here. And they, when I came and all the details including, if you'll see here, the reason which I was in Buchenwald, is Politisch Judisch, which is my only crime was – I don't know why they got "politisch" - was that I was born Jewish. And that's what we are always saying again and again. It, we'd always talk about the numbers of 6 million Jews, but also you have in addition 5 million non-Jews, which is a total of 11 million civilian people. And within the 6 million, 1 and a half million innocent children perished, slain just because they were Jewish.

[Rubin, after you were liberated, this paper was given to you by the United States Army].

Yes, the U.S. Army.

[Now how did they know you were in Buchenwald?]

Oh, no. I, they found in fact because maybe they, the the Germans left everything because was not enough time.

[Oh, left all the protocol.]

They left all the ledgers. The registration was left in fact. So when I sent the letter to the United States Army in Arolsen, they send me back, and they found. I didn't give my information.

They, I just give them my name.

[And they filled it in.]

They, they found all the information as it was recorded and registered on the day I arrived in Buchenwald in 1944, right.

[So essentially you were in Europe for several years in a displaced persons camp then.]

Yes, I was four years in the displaced persons camp waiting.

[Did, were you married?]

Yes, and we were waiting 'til May '49 to get to the United States. It was a quota. We were on one quota, displaced persons, and then the situation on the immigration changed and finally they speed it up, but with the speed or not, we still had to wait at about four years, yeah.

[Because you came from Poland.]

Right. Right.

[If you had come from another country, it might have been easier.]

Yes, and if they would not change the, the law as far as the displaced persons, then that would be even longer, but in some way, was improved and speeded up and we arrived here. And –

[What did you do in the DP camps?]

In DP camp, I was, I happened to be in the, in the displaced police, a sergeant. I was on duty, and a lot of things. We watching the camp, the displaced persons camp. So everybody had to do something. And my, and Luba was knitting and making some sweaters and waders.

Everybody had to be even that productive in that. Yeah.

[How did, did you live in tents or houses?]

Hou - they were, they were army bar - not barracks but army kaserne, which is buildings, where they, there was Germany army before there. Matter of fact, Hitler was in jail where he came up with this blueprint of Mein Kampf, where he wrote in Landsberg am Lech. Yeah.

[But did you feel, did you have freedom? Could you leave the camp if you wanted to?]

Oh, yes. The displaced persons camp? It was after the war. Was no problem. But, we have certain regulations and we couldn't stay out too late and we didn't go to the city, and we stayed within the compartment of the camp and, but it was freedom, yes, within. Yes, we could go out and go to the city during the day but not at night, you know.

[Did you and your wife marry in the DP camp?]

Yes. Yeah.

[And there were chaplains there and U.S. personnel to help you?]

Well, officially we have the certificate really from Landsberg but we were married in Poland and we had a rabbi who was authorized to prepare all the ceremony and all the –

[What was your physical condition after the war, after so many years in cap-]

I lost that much weight and and really was very – it's the physical and the mental. And all the things finding out, finding out about the, my family, that nobody survived, it was a very difficult adjustments for all of us to start a new life. And we are grateful to this country, as President Reagan mentioned, and that's why when we were in Washington, that he was thanking us for choosing this country, and and this was really, and this is now our homeland, we appreciate everything, the opportunity given us, and also that we are happy that we can also contribute. But it was a start. We had, we are, you see, we got a chance at new life, to start a new life really. We started a new family. It was a difficult adjustment but we did.

[Now your children are raised without grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. How –]

Yes, my oldest daughter was born in Munich.

[Oh in, in the DP camp?]

In a, no, in Munich. We had to go to another hospital, to the city in Munich, to one of the hospitals in Munich. Because was, or it was a different type of situation that we, she couldn't have the baby in this, in the DP camp hospital, so we had to go out of town, yes.

[Do you tell your children these stories?]

Yes, you know with the children, like not all are taken the same way, but some are more silent and some are, will show. But I believe that with all the the interviews like, and to be on tape or videotape, and tell the children your own way, and leave something so they, and tell 'em really what happened. It was difficult in the beginning. Many did not. We starting up now again, and no matter how it hurts. And we pledged we we really this in in Jerusalem. We we pledged to do so. And the, for the children to carry on. And in Washington we confirmed again. And it is no, we have to do it, and survivors and the children.

[Survivors conference gatherings.]

The - that's right. The, the, the children are really the next one which we rely on. We hope that they will carry on, and they will, because for us, all right, another 10, 15, 20 years. Then what? We have to, you know, we'll have books and, and biographical and autobiographical, and all the kind of films and everything else, but we still need the generations. I think President Reagan even mentioned that we remember, we know, but the next generation should carry on and should continue to –

[I think you have a picture here of the gathering in Jerusalem. Perhaps you can explain what's happening.]

Yes. Yeah. Okay. This picture was taken in in Jerusalem at the Wailing Wall in June '81. We brought a rock from Buffalo, New York, from Buffalo, New York, and on this rock, I mark the names of my parents and my brothers and sister who perished, and later on this rock was

delivered to the Yad Vashem, the museum in Jerusalem, and this with all other stones, from all other survivors, will be a monument built in Jerusalem.

[Could you tell us what those names are? It's not very clear.]

Yeah.

[Perhaps you could read the names.]

Well, one name is Binem, which is my father. Sarah, my mother. Hana is my sister. Mendel is my brother. Yosek, my brother. Monek, another brother, and Yusek, brother, and Kuba. Yes.

[I presume you, some of your children are named after these, these family].

Yes, the childrens are named after the family, yes.

[So there will be a monument at Yad Vashem.]

Right.

[And I see that the generations continue. We understand that, that your daughter is in line for twins, that she is carrying twins.]

Yes.

[And you were one of a twin and you had twin brothers.]

Right. It skips a generation. Yes. Yes. Yup.

[So life goes on and we're thankful for that, and a free country.]

Yes. Right. I just want to also say that even today, after so many years, we still have nightmares and many time Luba would have to wake me up and says, "okay, okay." Still going to, somebody's chasing us. For us, it's different than anybody else. Even when they hear a siren, or a policeman, it's a, in some way, this will never, you know, be, will still be –

[Be eradicated.]

Yes.

[Have you ever been back to Germany?]

No.

[Do you intend going to Germany?]

No. No. No. No.

[At, when you tell your story very frequently, do you have, what kind of reactions do you get to the story when you tell it?]

My reaction?

[Your reaction and reactions of others.]

Yes, well, so many people were, like, say a lecture at University at Buffalo or Hilbert College or others, or in high schools, or any other presentation I make, and people, or they heard for the first time, or even the second, they cannot, just unbelievable, as to our experiences, my personal, and in general that what we went through. Because I want to just mention also, it is important that this is not just a group of people, what happened to us. It was the official government of Germany who did this here. To a civilization, a civilization collapsed. It was the government decided to do so. And this is something which is unparallel to any others. If anybody mentions the Holocaust, this cannot be compared to anything else. This is different.

[It was a well-thought out plan. It wasn't accidental, is what you're saying.]

It was – Right. Right. Right.

[Rubin, thank you very much. We know it's hard for you to tell the story. But as you mentioned before, you have to tell the story, and we're very grateful. Thank you very much.]

Transcribed by: Andrea Zevenbergen, SUNY Fredonia, December 2022