

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Esther Raab
April 30, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Esther Raab, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on April 30, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Research Institute's collection of oral testimonies.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

ESTHER RAAB

April 30, 1990

Q:We're starting. We're on. Could you tell me your name, please.

A:Esther Raab...Turner Raab. Turner is my maiden name.

Q:Where were you born?

A:In Che_m, Poland.

Q:And when?

A:1922, June 11th.

Q:Tell me about your parents and your family.

A:I mean I come from a small family. We were only two children. My father was well-off middle class. Not rich (laughing). And...they gave us good upbringing, education. As much as I could take in before the war. Jewish and Hebrew; and Polish, natural. Yeah. And we had a very happy home life. That's what I think. Very happy, yeah. And then the war came.

Q:Tell me...tell me a little more about your home life. Did you go to school?

A:Oh, sure. I went...I finished public school. I went to a Catholic school, which was the best school in our city. And then I...and I went in the same time in the afternoons to a Hebrew school, for a few hours, where I got my Hebrew education--which is still very good. And then I

started business school. And then the war came. And I didn't finish. I just had started.

Q: Tell me about what happened when the Nazis...what happened when the war broke out?

A: I mean, they were talking about the war; and my father's concern was only that they're gonna take my brother--who is older than I am--and...and he's gonna get killed. That was the only concern. I mean, we didn't have a concern what's gonna happen, or the faintest idea what's gonna happen. And I...I asked my mother, "Usually, how does a war really look? What happens?" And she told me her experience from the first world war. She said they were fighting near the railroad station. They brought up the wounded to the city. You know? And everybody sit in the house and they didn't go.... And that was the war. But it wasn't like this. The first Friday when Germany declared war, they bombed our city. I remember we got ready. We...my father brought a few sacks of flour home and...and...and oil and sugar and tea and whatever; and we stacked it up all in the attic, you know. And they figured, "We're gonna stay here until the war is over, so at least we'll have food;" because they didn't know how it's gonna turn out. But it wasn't like this. On Friday, when the...Germany crossed the Polish border...they declared war and they crossed the German border. Right away, they bombed our city. My father came running home from his business and he said, "It's very bad. It's very bad." And we ran all to the fields. And I remembered the...the corn. The fields were cut already, because when was in...in...September. And I got my...feet got all scratched up and hurt. And then we came home, and it quiet down. And a few days later the Russians came to us. Not the Germans. Because they made some kind of an agreement that the Russians will take this part, because we were so close to the River Bug. Maybe a week later, the Russians came and things weren't too bad. My father conducted his business again. And the Russian...being my father had...uh...had a wholesale from flour for the

bakery, the Russians took over one of the bakeries that my father supplied; and the officer came to sleep to us, you know, in the house. And then came all of a sudden an order that they made some kind of a pact that the Russians should go back and the Germans would come here. And he insisted and he begged my father to take his children and to go with the Russian army to Russia. "You know," he said, "the Germans are going to come. They...they're gonna do awful things to you." They knew, but we didn't. "And you have young children. They can go there in to Russia. They can study, and they can work, and you'll be alright." My father and my mother thought, "Here...here we have our home. We have our furniture. We have our things. We have our Passover dishes. We have these things." You know, at home. And we didn't want to go. My father didn't want to go. He said, "I didn't do nothing wrong. Why should I run?" You know, people who belong to the communist party or whatever, they ran. But we didn't have... my father said he doesn't have a reason why to run. He didn't go. And then the Germans took over. And when the first unit of Gestapo came into our city, they rounded up all the professionals, all the rich people, all the well-known people, all not-so-rich people, quite a few hundred...and they marched them out from the city. My brother went with my father, to be with him. They marched him out from the city in the...in the direction of Hrubieszów. That was where... Hrubieszów. And on the way they shot them all. One by one. They couldn't walk. They walked for a few days; and they shot my father, too. My brother pretended to be dead. And after they left, he had a wounded foot. He got into Be__ec. All the way...that's past Hrubieszów. It was a village. Be__ec. And he hid there by a family, and got word to us that he's there. My mother went and brought him home. We nursed him, and he came back. That's how I lost my father. In 1939. He was 41 years old. And my mother, when they took us to Sobibór, we...we were...we kept my mother with us in Siedliszcze. We used to hide her during the day. In the evening, she came out. Because in Siedliszcze, in camp, we could go home.

They made like a ghetto...like a section we could come home to sleep. In the morning we went again so we...we succeeded in keeping our mother from '40...late '40 until '42, until they took us to Staw[-**Nowosiolki, NB:** labor camp in the Lublin district].

Q:Thank you. Let's...let's...uh...I just a little confused. Let's go back to Che_m and to you before we move on to the camps. Tell me what you did when you were still in Che_m.

A:Uh...During the war?

Q:During the war.

A:Yeah, I...I was the only. I had to help out. We had a little money and we had things that my father accumulated and we lived on that. We didn't live in the ghetto yet so we lived in our own house. My mother and I, we used to do little bit knitting and sew and make a little bit money with it, you know? That's the only thing my mother knew how to do is to knit very well. So she used to knit for the Polish people, for the Germans. They used to give her sugar for it, eggs. And then we could exchange this for other things. So things weren't too bad. And then I had two Polish families who were customers, my father's customers. And they really came forward with helping us, while we were.... One wife, one baker who had the bakery shop, you know, bakery.... She used to put everyday behind the fence where they had the bakery, a loaf of bread and a bag of coal--they used to bake with the wood and the coal--and a little bag with the flour, every day, and we picked it up. That was a fortune, because half we sold and could buy other things and half we used for ourselves. And then we had another one who later saved our lives. He used to help us out also a lot. He was very upset that they killed my father. He said, "If they killed your father, they took my luck

away." He believed so strongly in my father. We were very closely friends with this one. The children were close. The parents were close. We didn't...my...he didn't do nothing with...there goes back a story, which I'll get back to it later, how that relationship started. But he helped us survive, too; which was much easier than other families because if they had businesses and they had goods and that, they had to give up everything. You had to give up. You had to give up if you any forks...you had to give up if you had any silver, you had to give up if you had any gold. And the money was worthless. So the only way you could survive if you had something to exchange.

Q:So they helped you?

A:Oh, yeah.

Q:When did it start?

A:Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q:When did it start to get very bad? What happened?

A:It started to get very bad the beginning of '41, when they made the ghetto. They made the ghetto; and all of a sudden they...uh...decided that all the Jews from the city have to move into one section. And they had to leave...we had to leave, like in a couple of hours. You could take only what you could take on your...back or in your hands. And they put us in with a woman with six children, in a room with a kitchen. And my mother wasn't a well woman, all those years that I can remember. And she couldn't...the poor woman couldn't sleep and she

couldn't...and she says, "I cannot stand it in..." You know, with my father gone, she lost a lot of will to live, I would say. And we decided, being we had family in Siedliszce. At that time it wasn't a camp yet. It was just a village. So they let us know that we should come there. There's no ghetto. And we could stay there with them. There's plenty. So we packed up and we went, and we left Che_m and we went to Siedliszce. And there, it wasn't so bad. My brother worked in the mill, you know? And if he worked night shift, he used to steal some flour and some...uh... what's it called? Cream of wheat. You know? He used to put it in the cemetery behind the mill, and I used to go and pick it up at night. And it wasn't too bad. Once in awhile the gendarmerie--not the real Gestapo--used to come, and they would rob and they would steal. They would take away whatever you had, but you could live. And we stayed there until...and then they made the camp out of Siedliszce, and again a ghetto. So we moved in also with an old lady in one room. But at that time I guess my mother got used to the conditions, and I guess the circumstances made her stronger and healthier, that she could go on. I don't know how, but she did. And we stayed...we used to go both to work, my brother and I. And she remained at home hidden. In the evening she came out and we were together. In the morning, the same thing; and that... that almost a year we were there with her. And then we heard that in May of 1942, they started with the Judenrein, you know, all of Poland. I don't know about Europe, but I, ah...Poland.

Q:Excuse me. Do you mean Judenrat or Judenrein?

A:Judenrein. Judenrein. Judenrats, they were all over in the meanwhile. Judenrein. And my aunt...and we knew that we're not gonna stay too much longer. So my mother's sisters from Che_m, which remained in Che_m, let us know if they should take us young--like my brother and myself--to a camp, Mom should come to them, because they believed they're

gonna be there over the winter and maybe.... So we left my mother... and all of a sudden one morning, you know, they didn't warn you or they didn't prepare you, one morning you're going away. So we packed up whatever we could, and my mother we hid; and she said at night she will go out, and she'll find a way to get to Che_m back to be with the family-- because they told us that no older people...older people...she was probably 40 or 41 cannot go...just young people. The people who worked in Siedliscze. So my brother and I left, and it seems that my mother couldn't get in touch with her sisters because in the meanwhile they took them. They took everybody at the same time. And she got tired of sitting. That we found out after the war. Somebody who survived in Siedliscze, that she went over to the police station and ask them they should shoot her and they shot her. That was the end. We didn't find out 'til after the war. And my brother and I, we started our march from Siedliscze. We didn't know, but it was to start in Nowosiolki, what I told you. You know? And I had a bundle and I grabbed whatever I could...new things and old things, because we felt...my mother said, "Take it. Maybe you'll be able to exchange for some...." You know in Europe, like my mother...she had old linen from my brother, and everything for the dowry in case.... You know, like they got ready for these things. And I had...I had a heavy coat on and I had those bundles and my brother had.... And when I came to Nowosiolki, they...uh...rounded us up and they made in threes or in twos, and they started picking out who is going to go to work and who not. And as it came up to me, from that walk probably wading 40 kilometers in the mud. That was October. You know, in Poland, and the villages, I got...I turned yellow from aggravation. I turned yellow as a young girl. And when I came in front of those who selected...you know, who should go here, who should go there. So they put me with the old people. But one mistress of one of the Nazis who did that selecting was from Che_m, a Polish girl. And I went over and I said, "[Lee (ph)], look what they did to me." She says, "Come out." When I came out, she rubbed a little lipstick on my cheeks. I

was always very fortunate. Luck was with me. I can't say no. She rubbed a little lipstick. She said, "Take off the babushka." You know, I had a babushka; and she pushed me in again at the end of the line. And I went through with the young people. And they picked me out and the rest went; and they took us in to Staw-Nowosiolki. Staw-Nowosiolki, the conditions were unbelievable bad. So bad that one ate the other one alive almost, you know? No food. We were all pushed into one building. On top were the men. On the bottom the women. Filthy. Dirty. You know? Winter, they took us every day to work. You had to walk at least... you walked 30, 35 kilometers a day. We didn't have the proper clothing. You know? And I worked there for two months, and it were few people left over from the previous people. And they said, "Here is the last stage. From here you go to Sobibór." That's where we really found out about Sobibór, you know? We heard the rumors in May, when they send out some people from Siedliszczce, but just slight rumors. But there they told us that from here you go to Sobibór, and that's the end. And we were there...I was there for two months. They gave us once a day a piece of bread, some potatoes--with the sand, with the peels, with a little water--but we had still some things from home, so we could.... Those who were from before, they had certain privileges. So they used to go into the countryside and exchange or buy; so we used to buy a little bit, you know? But the conditions were unbearable. You couldn't wash yourself. I remember my friend [**NB:** Hella Felenbaum or Zelda Metz] and myself; she escaped from Sobibór, too. She's not alive anymore. There was a river flowing behind that building. We used to go out at night and break the ice in order to be able to wash ourself. We didn't catch cold again. We didn't catch cold. Isn't that amazing? We didn't have no vitamins. Nothing! And there I was for two months. Those were the worst two months. I mean, except for Sobibór. You know? And one night they surrounded us, and they loaded us up early in the morning on horse and wagons. The farmers brought it. And then we knew where we are going. You know? But still...how

should I say? I never could see myself dead. Is that stupid? Yeah? No? I never could see...I always felt somehow I'll get out of it. And then I heard that my brother jumped from the second floor, and he ran away. So I figured at least one of us survive. It's better than nothing. Because he had no way of getting to me. You understand? And they loaded us up on the wagons--was even dark yet--and they started going and going and we rode in those wagons a whole day, you know? In Europe...in those muds, and the wagons got stuck and you had to go out...help pull them out; and finally I figured, "My God, I wish it could be over!" But I couldn't see myself dead, again. And then when we came before Sobibór all the way, the Polish farmers-- they knew what's going on, you know, and they looked at us. Some were happy. Some didn't care, or whatever. And we arrived at Sobibór, was dark already. That was the 22nd of December 1942. And they started unloading us with dogs and with...they always barked. The Nazis didn't talk. They barked like dogs, you know? You couldn't even make out what they're saying, although I spoke very well German. You know? And they loaded us up on the ramp in front of the...on the railroad station, and all of a sudden I see one of my friends. She was a tall girl. They came from Silesia. They spoke very well German. Her mother was a professor. And she goes by with Wagner [**NB:** Oberscharführer Gustav Wagner], and she points at this one and she points at this one. And I said, "Mira, what are you looking for?" She said, "I'm looking for girls who know how to knit." I said, "What's about my talent?" And she points to him and he took me out. They took out eight girls and I think two men from the whole 800, and the rest--the next morning we...we saw their clothing and everything. And next they took us out and he marched us in to the camp. The camp made a terrible impression. First of all, the smell from the bodies. Although I don't...I didn't believe it. I didn't believe it. I just thought it's a smell, you know? And you saw the fire. Because the whole grounds where the camp was...were, were very small. Very small. And they took us into a empty barrack. And then came in the

commandant...the Jewish commandant of the lag...of the camp, and he told us, "Do you know what here is?" We said, "No." First of all, we were afraid to say that we know. We...you had to be careful you didn't know where you are. And he said, "Look at the fire." And he explained us, and I just listened. I didn't say yes or no. I didn't agree and I didn't disagree. And they put...brought in some blankets and they brought us in some bread; and I said, "At least, I'll get my last meal (laughing) and I get a place to sleep." And the next morning they builded a room for us, with...uh...bunk beds, you know. And they brought in lots of wool and they told us, "You have to make one knee sock a day," which wasn't bad. We used to do it. Then one day, they took us to sorting and we saw all this and we just...it was a very difficult to accept...very difficult to get adjusted. You...you...you don't understand. Very difficult to find your place in there. You...you didn't know whom to believe, and who you didn't believe and what to do and what to say. And I remember in our Strickstube [**Translation:** "knitting barrack" (Ger.)], where we used to do the knitting, was a young boy. His mother came out with us. And she was related to the real Rothschilds, from Vienna. He was 16 years old and he knew how to knit perfect. He said, "Esther, this is it. You can give me your food, too. You...you won't survive. Nobody will survive." He was 16 years old. He could eat for three, you know. Not for one. I said, "Listen, I am not gonna give nothing away because I'm not going to the frying pan." We used to call it [**NB:** the gas chamber] the "frying pan." I said, "You see the boots?" I came with them...I still came with brown leather boots. At the movie, one of the survivors reminded me...said, "You remember your brown, leather boots?" I said, "These boots I'm putting away underneath my hat," we had on the bunk. "And with these boots, I'm gonna run away from here. Don't ask me how. I don't know. But I'm gonna make it." He said, "You're gonna fry together with us." You...you know? Those were the small talk. And I worked in the Strickstube maybe four weeks or so; and then they accumulated so much stuff from the fall...in the beginning of the

winter, from the transports, because they were so busy. They...they had a terrific business going there that they accumulated outside, and this had to be cleaned up and sorted out before spring. And they had also...in the wintertime, in the beginning, they just put the bodies in an open ditch. And then they realized that it started smelling, so then they built...not ovens. They had pits there. Not ovens. And they started digging out with cranes all those bodies, and burning them. You know? And I worked in...every day just...that the revenge feeling builded up that you were ready to bust. I mean, here you have to put a smile. When they tell you something, you have to pretend that you're so glad you can do it for them. But inside it was terrible. And two months later or three months after I came, Leon Feldhender came. He was a cousin of mine. With another transport they took him out. And when he came and we started talking, he said, "We have to do something. We have to escape. Because we have to revenge and there has to be a way." And I think that kept us going, although we didn't believe that somebody will make it. Nobody in his right mind...I mean it was foolish. But we felt that planning and that talking kept us, you know, gave us courage to live through a day...another day, you know? And every day there were new things besides the routine that you never got used to it, but it became a way of life. That the transports come. They killed the people. You see them running naked. And then you...you sort out their belongings. But there were other things that happened every day. They took out this one from us, because maybe he didn't look straight in the face, and shot him in front of us; or two guys escaped. They dug a hole underneath the barrack; and then they took us out, and they took every tenth one. You know, we were more like a family; and everyone that they took out, it was just like they tore out. Because we figured we're losing everybody on the outside whom they bring in. But those are people that we go through the worse in our lives, and we stick together and one tries to help each other...uh... physically sometimes and morally for sure. You...you understand? And some shared the food. And if you know

somebody works harder, we saw to it that he should get some more than we did where we could get along with less. And then every transport, when you heard that whistle, it's very difficult to explain. It's just like tore your insides out.

Q: Tell us about the transports. You told me about before about the transports from Be__ec and an incident with Frenzel.

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: You see and then...in March, I think, Himmler came to visit the camp; and at that time they brought 400 young girls from Majdanek, to show him how efficient and good they are at killing. And I remember...and that's the first time when they started to shave the hair by those people...by the women. And when Himmler came...and there was a rumor, you know...the SS people in the camp always like--through a word, you know, either when they were drunk or whatever...they said a word. Then you put two together, and you made out something of it. You know? You didn't answer. You pretended you don't hear, but sometimes.... And then they were so sure of us, that we are not going to go out and tell somebody. You know? They knew we are...whenever they can...want to finish us, they can finish us. We're in their hands. So after Himmler came, they said that Be__ec and Treblinka they're gonna close up; because this is most secret and the most efficient camp from all the camps. So one day they locked us in, and we knew if they lock us in something is going on out of the ordinary...out of transport, and so. And they brought the inmates from Be__ec, and we knew the next day that those were the inmates, and they killed them off in Sobibór

and they closed up Be__ec. Because the next day when we sorted out their clothing, we found notes in their clothing; because we used to check very careful the clothing. First for documents, you know--to see from where the...the transport comes, who came, how many came, and sometimes you had very interesting notes. So we always checked. We had to check, anyway, everything for valuables and give it to them. And we found...and they...and the main thing in their notes were--we couldn't do it--but "please revenge us" and "please revenge us" and all those cries and.... And then awhile later, not long, they brought the inmates from Treblinka, and they locked us in again. And they shot them one by one. You could count the shots. Because they were afraid. You know? Don't forget there were only like at one time 11, 12 SS people, and probably about 200...at that time maybe not even 200 Ukrainians. They were afraid. So they figured, it's safer to shoot every one separately than to take the whole, all of them, to the gas chambers. And then we found again notes in their clothing. And letters, and names, and lists, and stuff like that. And they brought them to Sobibór to finish. And that's when Sobibór became very busy. Business was booming at that time. Three transports, four transports, day and night. It really became sometimes unbearable.

Q:What was the camp like when it was so busy, as you put it?

A:We had to work 14, 16, 18 hours a day from early...we used to have roll call, in the summertime even....in the spring it was still dark. Like 3 o'clock in the morning, 4 o'clock in the morning. And then they marched us off to work about 5, 5:30, 6:00. And then we worked through all sorts of hours because ...and if they needed us after we...they took us again. Yeah. I mean, it was very difficult. You know, when you stay in that barrack and you sort the clothes, and the barracks were arranged from this side and the other side where the people left their

belongings in the middle. They used to walk through. When you see those people, and you cannot even tell them where they're going. You know, it...it wasn't easy. I don't know how I preserved my sanity or somebody else...not just myself. You...you...you understand? Like when I came it was more primitive; so when a transport arrived and they told them to leave their belongings, everything went on outside. Not inside. Later, was built inside. And there was a Oberscharführer [Hermann] Michel. And he would go out and out and started, "Juden, you denkte _____ gelunkheit (ph)." You know? And he said, "You came...you came here and...and we'll put you to work, and work is good for you. And you just leave here the belongings, and everything is going to be disinfected." They even had a wall with nails where everybody hung up his belonging. German efficiency. (Sigh) And they said, "You just get undressed and you'll go and take your shower and disinfection, because we don't want any sicknesses." We used to call Michel "the Baldarshn" [**Translation:** "the Preacher" (Yiddish)]. You know what the Baldarshn is? Like you have...uh....in a synagogue. Somebody who tells you what..what to read. I'll get the word for it. But later on, they didn't even bother with this. They didn't...they were so busy that they just built three barracks like...like..uh..across you know. So on this side they used to unload the stuff in there...and the middle the people used to go through. And it was very difficult to watch. You know, you see people normal people--children, women, men--and...and you know a half hour later they won't be here. Why? You ask yourself, why? And it's very difficult not to say anything. Those people there were not in that war for Germany. They didn't do nothing wrong. They were law abiding people. Why? Why those children? I mean like Gomerski [**NB:** Oberscharführer Hubert Gomerski]. I was at his trial too. He got life sentence also. I mean he called them...we used to call him "the Doctor." When it came a transport, he used to walk around with a white coat. You know? And they used...he only asked who is sick and who is unable, who cannot walk, he wants to help

everybody. And they had those...uh...lorries ...I don't know how...yeah? And they would just throw them in like garbage; and on the way to Camp 3 [**NB:** where the gas chambers were located] to the...he would shot half of them...shoot half of them. And then when it came a big shot sometimes to visit, because they were such...they ran such a good operation, we used to go and clean the quarters. Because when nobody was there, they lived very luxuriously. But when somebody came, everything was hidden and they had to live like military people, you know. So once I...I went to clean the house. It...it was called "Summlustigung Floh" [**Translation:** "Merrily Buzzing Flea" (German)], that house. Where a few SS people lived. And I cleaned and I put plain blankets and plain pillows and took off the table cloth and took off the silk sheets. You know, just put it in plain. And all of a sudden...usually when we were cleaning and somebody came or a transport, they put us back to the...but somehow everything happened so fast that they forgot about me with another girl. We were two girls there. And we stayed there. We knew we are not supposed to go out. And I hid behind the curtain. I wanted to see what's going on. And I saw the...the rail...the box cars coming in. Matter of fact, I was this summer the first time back in Sobibór. That house is still there. The railroad is there, and the box cars are there. You know? (Sigh) And as I watched I saw they're unloading the whole train. And the mother, I don't know for what reason, she left the baby in the box car. And...and she walked. You know they chased, and she ran away. And Frenzel--who was in charge most of the time of the Bahnhauskommanden [**NB:** the Bahnhofkommando], of the trains--he grabbed that little baby by the little feet and smashed his skull against the box car and...and just threw it in like a dead rat. And I think this will be with me until my last day. I just can't get over it. I...I was at his trial twice. And I brought it out. He got life sentence, just for that one case. But he said I accused him falsely. But I told him in court, "Tell me that you didn't do it!" He didn't. What bothered me mostly...I went so many times to trials back to Germany, because I

felt I owned it to those who didn't make it. That they admitted Sobibór. They admitted what happened there. They admitted that so many...so many people were killed there. They admitted the uprising, that so many and so many.... But they never said it was wrong. You know? And that, I couldn't take it. And I told it many times in court, you know? Everybody followed orders, but nobody says that the...it was wrong. I remember I had an incident with Frenzel's lawyer in court. It was the first time when I accused him of that baby killing. He started, "Where did you stay, and what color was the drapes, and what color was here, and how far from there and how far from..." I said, "Listen, if I would put on a uniform on you, I saw you someplace as a Nazi. And one Nazi defends the other." And there was a big commotion. And they made intermission in court. And then that lawyer went, and he had some Jewish friend in Hagen and he came with him and he said, "You see. I'm not...I wasn't a Nazi. Here's my friend." I said, "If he's your friend, he's just like you." But later on in the retrial of Frenzel, it came out that that lawyer was a commandant in a POW camp. And I told him at that time, "If I would put a uniform on on you, I saw you someplace." I didn't see him. But, you know, I have in me...I developed that knowledge of people. I can smell it. I just smelled out that that lawyer, something is wrong. Because when I was at the trial from Gomerski and I told what Gomerski did, his lawyer got up--I have documents of that--and he said, "I defended the biggest murders in my life already, but here the art of defense gave up. I don't have nothing to say." He took off his robe and walked out. And that's when I had my first satisfaction--that somebody feels what I felt.

Q:Tell me about Gomerski.

A:Gomerski, I went three time to Frankfurt to his trial. Gomerski claims...he...I mean, none of them denied that they were.

Q: Tell me what you saw him doing.

A: He was called "the Doctor." And with every transport he would...he would dressed up...get dressed up like a doctor, and he would mainly take care of the old, of the sick, of the children, of the lonely. And they would throw them into lorries; and he would accompany them from the ramp to Camp 3, where it was the gas chamber. And on he way he would shoot half of them. He always, "Ich war Deutsche helfen. Ich war Deutsche helfen. Und wäre istkang (ph). Ich war Deutsche helfen." [**Translation:** "I was to help Germans. I was to help Germans. And they were _____. I was to help Germans."] Miserable. But when you look into the past of those people, where they come from, that was the lowest element.

Q: We need to pull back to your story to what you saw. Tell me a little more. What, besides the incident with the baby, things that you saw Frenzel do?

A: Uh....

Q: Tell me about him.

A: You see there was another thing when the...they used to go...the Waldhofskommando [**NB:** the Waldkommando] used to go to the woods. And they always build. They always build. Because they figured you're more efficient and you're more good the camp will work, that they would stay a chance not to go to the Russian front. That was there...so they didn't care at what price, you know, just to remain there. So two went to get water. Mr. Hoenigman...and Mr. Hoenigman and Pod... [**NB:** Shlomo Podchlebnik]. They're both not

alive anymore. And they killed the Ukrainian who went with them. I worked...at that time, I worked in the weapon area. I used to put in the bullets in the bands. They brought a lot of Russian bullets, and they were rusty. And...and they were low already on weapons, the Germans, because the Russian...the Russians started to push them back already. So we used to clean them up with sandpaper and put them in the bands. And there was the Ukrainian in charge. We were two girls there. And he always told me all sorts of stories. He's gonna do this, and he's gonna do that, and he's gonna kill this one. You know, I listened; but I didn't say yes or no. I didn't say it's right or wrong, because you have to be...you had to be very careful. All of a sudden, he says to me, "I see that some...it's a big commotion in the camp." And he says, "You have to go back to the barrack back." He closes up the weapon area, and we ran back to the barrack. Everything was very close. And we see like 12 or 14 people are walking on their knees from outside the camp into the camp. And Frenzel and all of them they are behind them with the [pages (ph)], and they beat them and everything. And they walked so until after camp where they used to sort...behind that barrack. And then they came in to us, and "Roll call! Right away!" We all assembled and they said, "Aufmarsch stehen!" So we figured this is it. They're gonna take us to Camp **[NB: probably she is referring here to Camp 3]**. So we said to ourself...I mean, it happen all in split second. You really didn't have time to communicate even, you know. Because when the bugle sounded, you had to be right away there, even before he started blowing. So...and next to me and my girlfriend as we walked was Unterscharführer Wolf **[NB: Franz Wolf]**, also miserable. I was at his trial too. And he said, "Okay, now you're gonna see something special. Nobody from you are gonna survive." So we walked and as we came to that open field behind the Sortieren **[Translation: "Sorting House" (German)]**, they assembled us like in a half moon. You know? And Frenzel held a long speech that...that what gonna happen if somebody escapes from Sobibór, and we shouldn't even think about it, and then he made the others pick

out 12 more. "Otherwise," he said, "I'm gonna take 50." And those...uh...those people didn't have no choice. They...they was so beaten up. You couldn't even tell their faces anymore. And they picked out some more from us...blindly...they didn't look. They didn't wanta take the one.... You...you know? And they shot all those 24. We had to watch; and whoever Frenzel thought maybe is not dead yet, he went and gave them another bullet, you know. But they shot them all in their faces, not in their backs. And then they told us we should go back to the camp. It was a terrible experience. You...your revenge broods up even more, like once...two.... But it goes to show that people there, if they have the slightest chance they wanted to get out and maybe tell the world what happened. You know? Because we knew if we won't do it, the world will never know. How would anybody know? The dead people won't tell. Like once two people made a tunnel underneath the barrack. At that time the fence outside the field wasn't mined. Later, they put in mines. And they escaped. They took us every...every 10th from us, and shot them in from of us. Every 10th. You know when you stand next to your friend and they take you and he look...that look in his face, it'll never leave me. This is not all. This is not all. There were so many incidents every day. Every day. Like they went once to take apart a bakery in W_odawa, and they wanted to bring it here and build it here, which they did. I don't know somebody said something. They took two people, shot them in front of us. Then the beatings every day, the 25 lashes on the bare flesh. Until they didn't see blood, they didn't give up. I mean, when I think back, I don't know how anybody survived. Including myself. Just to watch...to be able to control yourself, not to get at him and choke him or kill him or whatever. You know? You couldn't be sick there. If you admitted that you're sick or you have a fever, you went. So what we used to do, we used to cover up for them or hold them by the hands, drag them to work, hide them in the magazines where they kept until the evening and then take them back to the barracks. I have a friend who survived...she lives in now Australia. I mean, Wagner came in

once. She used to work in the...in the laundry. She used to wash the laundry for them. She is...she is shorter than I am and slimmer than I am, a young girl. And she worked so hard, and then she fell asleep in the bathtub and he caught her. He gave her 10 lashes. One kidney went right away. She's still sick from it. I mean things like that really got you. Like one woman came and she brought a baby, and she kept it for two weeks in the camp and finally they...and they gave her a choice: "Either you give up the baby and you can remain." She was a good seamstress. Her husband was there, too. He was 'til the uprising. Which mother's gonna give up her baby? So they...he shot them both. I mean if...if you watched things like this, it's.... When you think back...I mean, I don't sleep yet. It's gonna be 47 years that I escaped, and it's not one night that I go to sleep and all of Sobibór doesn't march before me; and then I can fall asleep.

Q:Thank you. We're going to change tapes. [Let's break here. We need to change tapes and then we'll pick up.] **[NB: TEXT IN PRECEDING BRACKETS NOT APPARENT ON VIDEOTAPE]**

TAPE #2

Q:Okay. Tell us. You have a transport you say.

A:We had once a transport which was probably the worst of all the transports. The people must have resisted on the way to Sobibór, so they threw in like chlorine and the body...into the box cars, and the people were dead and they swell up. And...and they...they were so thick, all of a sudden, and the whole transport came there, to Sobibór. (Pause) There were ...every day was something new. They thought...they were miserable if they didn't have blood. You know? Like...like dogs, hounds, pit bulls they call them. Yes? They...they just couldn't take it, not to have; and if one day there was no transport, let's say, for one reason or another... Not a day went by with out...let's say a half a day, you know.... They took us out and in order not to let us think, you know, when we had let's say a half hour off, they would exercise with us in such manner that you could drop dead. And if you didn't do it, they shoot...shot you, if you didn't continue. I remember once the cook, he couldn't keep up. He was old. If I was 18, 19, he was 40. So he was old...or 38, or whatever. He couldn't keep up. So they took him out and they beat him so badly, Frenzel, that you couldn't tell his face or head. His nose from his eyes was just one ball of blood. That was their pleasure. And when you talk to them today, everybody followed orders and whatever they did wasn't wrong, even. Wasn't their fault. And that hurts. It hurts. When I went all those times to Germany, I was afraid. Every middle-aged man or older man I saw, I saw him in a Nazi uniform. I don't trust them, and I don't believe in them that they changed. I said it at the trial. If Frenzel would have a chance to wear a uniform, he would do it all over again; but maybe he would make sure now that we wouldn't escape to tell the story.

Q: Tell us about the escape. How did you even begin to plan?

A: We planned constantly. And I think that kept us going. If we would know this is it, why should go on? To see another 10,000 Jews come and be killed, another 20,000 be killed? That was not...that we wanted to see. You know. We had to. Then after awhile you become so numb that you just...you don't react, you...you know? And then, we felt we're next in line. Everybody from us had a death sentence in their pocket. It just was a matter of time. But, we never gave up that hope to...for revenge. And I think that kept us going. If we had a miserable day, when they kill...like Wagner. He decided to build a Strafskommando [**NB:** Strafskommando; "punishment brigade"]. You know what "Strafskommando" means? "Strafskommando" means...uh..."Strafs" is "guilty." A "guilty unit" from whoever didn't walk straight or didn't look him right, maybe, in the eye, he put them to...to a special unit. And they had to work everything while running, not walk. That was the "Strafs." How long can you run? And they get...and their ration was cut in half. So we didn't get enough to begin with. You barely could survive; but if this was cut in half... And...and every day somebody else was shot, and was shot. And, you know, it was so terrible. And every evening they gave us an explanation. He didn't run fast enough, so they had to shoot. And you know what builds up in you when you listen to those words. It's just...I don't know where we got the strength not to react right away, you know. But we...we knew if we wanna plan an escape and if we wanna do it, we have to keep cool...keep our cool. We constantly...we planned maybe this way, maybe only part of us, and maybe.... And then after it happened with the Waldhofskommando [**NB:** Waldkommando], where they killed 24 instead of 12, and when they two more of us escaped and they took every 10th one, we felt it's not right that one should escape and leave all the others to the mercy of them. If there's gonna be an escape, everybody has to be given the chance. Not everybody will know until

the last day, because you had to be very careful. You ...you understand? So when Leon started planning this way and that way and that way and this way.... And we didn't know what's going on outside the world. We didn't know how far the war is and where the Russians are; because there was another thing if you get out, which we didn't think we will. But we felt if they'll waste some bullets and kill us in the back, it would also be a revenge not to go to the gas chambers. So then one day we saw marching in a Russian unit of POWs. They took them out to work. In the meanwhile they expanded the camp. They...they made Camp 4, where they used to store ammunition because they started to prepare for the Bug...for the River Bug...for the offensive in the spring, you know? And we saw...and those Russians came in, and we figured, "Why did they bring Russians here?" You know? In the evening you started talking and one said...turned out that they're all Jews. They are POWs, but they're Jews. And after a couple of days, Leon started to approach them, and talk to them; and we told them everything what's going on here. They didn't know either. They didn't know. And they had the military know-how which we didn't have, you know; and they came in from the outside, and told us what's going on on the outside. We needed that encouragement, you know. It did us a lot of good to have somebody with military know-how, with...supporting our ideas. And we started organizing, and after they came in and the plan was worked out that everybody at his place at work--usually wherever we worked, there was an SS man watching and a few Ukrainians--everybody at his place of work has to kill his SS and his Ukrainian at the same time, the same minute also. So we organized and we prepared knives, you know. And.... Huh?

Q:How?

A:In the...in the shops where they used to make the...you know, Schlosserei [**Translation:**

"workshop" (German)].... I'll come to it. They...they used to make...they made the knives and they gave everybody. Then everybody had to have pockets full of sand. We realized if you throw sand in somebody's eyes, he grabs his eyes. When he grabs his eyes, you can stick a knife in him. Very simple. We didn't have no weapons. And we figured we have to make the es...plan the escape for a time when Wagner is not in the camp. We knew their schedule with vacations. We knew that they're six weeks there or four weeks and then they go away. And if those went away, the next...these go away. And we figured because Wagner was very smart. Not smart. He could tell what you think, not what you do. That's how devoted Nazi. Very devoted Nazi! And that was 26 days, after the Russian unit came. And we decided for October the 13th to make the escape. Only a small group knew of it. I knew every day what's going on, what has decided, how it's gonna be, what we're gonna do. The plan was that everybody kills his Nazi at his place of work and puts him away where nobody can see him. And if we have all of them dead...then we'll assemble like roll call, assemble, and we'll walk to the weapon area. We'll take out some weapons, and we'll walk out through the main gate; because there was no mines at the main gate. And we'll go into the woods. It was in the woods they came. That was our luck. And we'll form a partisan group. So and...we had to cut the electricity...the electric wires, the telephone wires.... You know, all that. And on the night of the 12th, you know, everybody got ready; but nobody knew. Maybe 20 people. I was one of them. Because we had...some people as it turned out later got so panicky, you know; just the thought of the revenge was so great and...and some people didn't want to go. They gave up. So, maybe 20 knew; and we went...and we decided, next day 4 o'clock. I mean we didn't have to pack our luggage to go. You...you understand? Next day, we were all ready; and then a few trucks of SS people came into the camp. They never came. This time, they came. And you know, we were shivering. We thought maybe something leaked out. And they went into the casino. That was their... uh...dining room.

They called it "casino." And they had a good meal there. And we had to postpone. Right away. Postpone. 'Til tomorrow. And after a few hours, they left. They just passed by. They were hungry. There was a lot of good things here, and to drink. The next day was the last day because the following day Wagner was supposed to come back from [Fohler (ph)]. So the next day we said, "This is it." And the next day, 4 o'clock, it started. And we used to give...we gave signals that four are killed, five are killed. Somebody would climb up the roof...six are killed, you know. I worked in the garden at that time. And they gave me those signals, and I figured I'll better go to Compound 1 to be closer to the..uh...to the fence. And I came in and I stood in the laundry room with my girlfriend, ____ [NB: she is referring to either Hella Felenbaum or Zelda Metz]. And then I saw one walked into a barrack. Two boys made commotion, and he walked in and they killed him there. They made a commotion on purpose, and then he went into the shoemakers and they killed him. He went into the tailors, and they killed him. I cannot explain...all my fear was gone. Just the joy. We killed a Nazi! The revenge for all those who are burning over there...that their death is not in vain. And by 4 o'clock, they blew the horn; and we assembled all and as we assembled, they told us that they can't find Frenzel and Bauer [NB: Oberscharführer Erich Bauer]. Bauer wasn't in camp. He was outside patrolling something with the truck. And we were afraid that being the wires were cut, that he got out of the camp and ran for help. So they decided even before, that if it won't work out for any reason, everybody on his own. At least, let somebody.... And then some women started...when we told them the last minute, they became very hysterical, you know? They couldn't imagine what we gonna...and started crying, "What am I gonna do, and where I'm gonna go?" You... you understand? And as they...Leon jumped up at the table with Sasha, and they said that everybody on his own.... And Leon told us, "If one survive, tell the world what happens here." And he said, "Everybody on his own." I noticed that somebody put a stepladder next to the fence behind

the carpenter's shop. And I said to my friend, "Let's go there. I'm not going through the main gate. I don't want to be a hero. I want to get out." And as we ran to...I mean this is all a matter of seconds, split seconds. As I run...ran to the...uh...fence and I went up the step ladder, I saw a lot of dead bodies already on the mine fields. And I jumped down, and then I got a bullet in my head. Yeah! Here. And I felt the blood flowing warm, but I was so much aware that I started hopping on the bodies, you know, not to step on the mines. It was split second. And I ran and as I reached the woods, I figured I made it. And I looked back and I said, "My God, I made it for all those." And I promised myself whatever I can do to...to make the world know what happened, I'm gonna do. So...then I came to the woods, and a lot of them came into the woods and it started to getting dark already. Was October. And Leon and Sasha told us to break up in small groups. He said, "If they catch one group, maybe the other one will make it. If we'll stick together, they'll get us all." Because we didn't know where Frenzel was. So somehow I...I teamed up with a group--nine men, myself and a woman from Czechoslovakia. We started walking and walking. I walked three nights, and I came back to Sobibór on the third night. In circles. And as we saw the camp, we ran again. And the night before the escape...in Sobibór, you didn't cry. You never cried. You so...it was so numb...it's...it's very hard to explain. You know? You never cried. But that night before the escape, we all cried and we said goodbye. I mean, nobody in his right mind thought even that we're gonna get out. Versh...? You...you understand? So we cried and cried and said goodbye and I fell asleep. We...I went to sleep with my boots and with my...I had two skirts and three sweaters and you know, and a babushka and a coat. And I went to sleep with everything. Because we figured in case something leaks out and they'll find out during the night, that I...we should be ready to run because there's nothing to lose anyway. Might as well! And as I cried and I fell asleep, I had a dream. And my mother came into the camp through the main gate and I said, "Mom, you know what we're gonna do." She said,

"Yes, and I came because of that." And she...she took me by the hand and she led me out to the main gate into a barn, and said, "Here, you'll go and you'll survive." That was the end of the dream. In the morning I told my next neighbor, slept a girl, and I said I had a funny dream. She said, "Naw, you know you were thinking about it." And I said, "You know what. If I'll get out, I have to go to that barn and see what happens." So after three days after we reached Sobibór again, we started walking again. And meanwhile my wound started hurting and it got all pussy [NB: covered with pus], and I got fever. All I had is a few lumps of sugar in my pocket and a piece of bread. No water. The worst thing was the water. You know? And by Saturday night, we fell asleep in a field with...not barley, something like it. Yeah. While I jumped down the fence and I got shot, that coat was so heavy it was hard for me to run; so I threw away the coat. That was my biggest mistake. But I didn't catch a cold. Don't worry. And we laid in that field. In the morning...a whole night it rained very fine. In the morning it started freezing. You know, in Poland. And I got up stiff. I mean I couldn't stand up. And I said to all of them, "Listen, there from far away I see a lonely little house. I'm going into that house. I cannot take it. I have my satisfaction. We killed the Germans. I escaped from Sobibór. But now, really, I cannot take it." So they said, "You know what? You go in and see if you can get some bread and something to eat, and we'll wait." I said, "Okay." As I started walking, one of the guys said, "I'll go with you." I said, "Okay." He came with me. I knocked on the door. There was an old man. An old man! He probably wasn't old. No teeth. He had a 20 year old son. How old could he be? But you know in Poland.... One room, the cow was in the room and the bed was in the room. Everything was in the room. As we opened the door, he told me, "You must be from Sobibór." I said, "Yes." He said, "You did the best thing that could help...happen to those Nazis." He said, "What can I do for you?" I said, "We need some food, and I need to wash my wound." I showed him what I have. He said, "Listen, you come into my barn. I have to

go to church with my son. If I won't come to church they'll get suspicious. And when we'll come from church, I'll feed you." So he took us into the barn and I said... Yeah, in the meanwhile, a third one came in. He said, "You told me two." I said, "This is it. Only three." [NB: the two others with her were Samuel Lerer and Avram Kohn]. The others saw that we are not returning, so they run away. None of them survived. So he took us into the barn. We went up on the loft, you know, in the straw, and everything felt so good and warm. And I said that whatever'll happen...he'll probably go for the Gestapo. But he didn't go. He went, and after a few hours he came back from church and his son brought us in bread and soup and hot milk and cheese; and I said to the guys, "That's our last meal, our last supper, probably." And we ate, and he told us that soon it will get dark. He'll take us into the house so we can clean up a little bit. When it got dark he took us into the house. He had a big pot of water boiling. He told me to wash off my head. He put some...his remedy, unsalted lard. But it healed. It healed. Took care of the infection. And we sat and we told him the story about Sobibór. He was very interested. And then he said, "What you want to do now?" I said, "I have to go someplace; and if I won't find a refuge there, I'll come back and maybe you'll be able to help us." He said, "Okay." He give us some milk and some bread and some cheese and some onions. You know, whatever he had. And we had some money. I wanted to give him some money. I had money from home, too; and I...we hid it, and in the last day we took it with us. He said, "You know what? Keep the money. Maybe there's somebody who won't give you without money." And the young man waited with us until twelve, one o'clock, when it's got very quiet all around. And he walked us to the woods and he showed us where it is. And I asked him his name and the name of the village. He didn't want to tell me. He was afraid in case they catch us and they'll torture us. You know? And I didn't wanna tell him where I'm going, too. So, anyway he took us; and from there to the place that I knew, that barn, was probably about 15 kilometers, maybe 18, which I could make in one

day easily. It took us two weeks to get there because we walked only at night and in circles. You know? Because we were afraid in the daytime. You see in the daytime we were in the woods because the Germans never went into the woods. They were outside shooting in, but never went into the woods. And after two weeks in the night I got a village I recognized. We...we stood...we laid three days and three nights just near the main highway to be able to cross because the Germans had so much traffic...military traffic, and we had to wait for the moment just to cross. So I recognize the...the barn, and I said, "This is the place." And I knew this was one of my father's customers...the gentile that I told you helped us so much [NB: Stefan Marcyniuk]. Matter of fact, when I was in Staw-Nowosiolki, he used to deliver bread for the Germans for us. And I saw his man who used to bring the bread and I said, "Tell Marcyniuk that we are hungry." He used to send us every day two-kilo loaf of bread. The..the guy left it underneath the fence. You know what it meant in a concentration camp...2 kilo bread? It was a fortune! So I recognized and I said, "This is the barn;" because we used to go as young kids. He had a big farm. We picked cherries, you know, like children. Was not far from Che_m, about 10 kilometers. And on the other side of the road, his mother used to live. So I said, "I'm gonna knock on the other side." And I knocked, and a man came out and he thought we are partisans; and, "Don't shoot!" and, "Don't this." I said, "I'm not gonna shoot you. I'm not after you. I'm after that man. I need to settle something with him." I didn't want to say. So he said, "You know, he doesn't live here." I knew he doesn't live there because he lived in the city. "But he comes once in awhile here, every week, every two weeks," and so forth and so on. And I said, "We have something to settle with him. Don't worry." He gave us some bread, just to get rid of us, and some onions...whatever they had. And we waited. I went away. We waited. When it got real quiet and all the lights were out in the village, we went into that barn. And as I went into that barn, I mean as dark as it was, I said, "That's the barn my mother showed me in the

dream." In the meanwhile, when we went into the barn a partisan group came into the yard; and those two guys [NB: Samuel and Avram] said, "Let's go with the partisans." I said, "If you want to go, you're welcome. I'm staying." We also met a partisan group before; and they wanted to join, because it was the only way to survive the German party. I said, "If you want to go to the partisan, please. I'm not going. I'm going to find out what's there." And we climbed up the loft, with straw again. We were at home already. We stayed there about 3 days. Nobody showed up. So we got hungry. So I said, "In the evening, we'll go to the neighboring village, and we'll buy something." We went away, and we met...we went into a farmer. He gave us, he gave us a bottle of milk. He gave us some bread, whatever. And we walked back. We walked back. We climbed up the loft, which straw was very solid, and one guy lost a bottle of milk. It wasn't the bottle of milk. It was just not to leave any traces that people are here. And he...I said, "You better go down and in the dark try to find it." And as he went down and he looked, and I told him in Jewish, "Did you find it?" And as I said, "Did you find it," something jumped up from that loft like a white ghost, white linen pants. And we got so scared. And he said, "Who is it?" I said, "Idel." That was my brother's name. And he said, "You're dead." And that was my brother in the loft, being there already 10 months. And he said, "I'm gonna hold your hand until it get light because I know you're dead." And when it started daylight, he saw me and I told him where I was and I told him that I'm here. He saw the man. He said, "Listen, he's gonna come any day here. I'm gonna tell him only about you and one man." And the third man, if he'll take you in, we're gonna keep the other one. We're gonna share whatever food he'll give us." He came after a few days; and they...he used to whistle, and my brother knew that the coast is clear and he can go out, because underneath the loft he built him a bunker underneath the ground. My brother jumped out and he told him. And he said to my brother he should call me out, and I came out and he just went like this. He said, "If God put you together, I'm not going to

divide you. Whatever will happen will happen to all of us." And I was there 'til the liberation. He never found out that the third man was with us until liberation. We shared the food and we kept him hidden. Some story!

Q: Tell me about liberation.

A: A few days before the liberation...I mean, it was such a fancy farm and it had a wooden fence around; he was a very wealthy man in our city. And over there, only his old mother lived. He used to take care of the farm, but he didn't live there. And the mother was senile, already. And that was our luck. Even if she would see us...once she saw me. I walked down in the barn, you know, to stretch out my legs and she asked me, "Why...why you walking here? There's a war in the city?" I said, "No. I just came to visit. I'm going back." And a few days before...you know, we were already exhausted. My brother was there 19 months, and I was already 9 months, without a table, a spoon of warm water all those 9 months, without cooked food because he didn't live there. He couldn't cook for us. Only he gave us enough bread. And water. Sometimes a little jam, a little margarine, you know, or something like this. He gave us plenty of onions and plenty of garlic. And I think that helped us, too. And it was already the last days and all of a sudden we...and he told us that he built a bunker. He owned a piece of woods past the farms, a little further down. He said, "If you have a chance, run out from the barn and go to the woods, because the Germans are retreating and they're burning everything to ground, livestock and everything." So we said, "Okay." And as we got ready... ready...whatever we have to..you know...all of a sudden... yeah...before, the Germans came and set up shop in our yard. And we are sitting and looking at them, you know, through the boards. And two officers started cleaning their weapons and one shot the other. I didn't know if it's on...on purpose or accident. And they set up a court in the yard.

And I said, "That's what we need. Exactly. The last day." And in the meanwhile came an order that they have to leave. And they left. So we survived this. The next day, all of a sudden, we figured soon it'll get dark...we'll go out in the fields because the corn and everything was very high already.... (Sigh) They bring into our yard maybe 150 Ukrainians. Those were the people that they took with them to...to dig ditches, and to do their.... And those people was so worn out, you...you know. And they saw such barn with so much straw and everybody start pulling the straw, you know, and to make himself comfortable inside and outside. And we feeled that they're getting to us. And one guy was up there pulling the straw and handing it to the others. So we had on top underneath the roof, on the loft, we had a hole where we used to crawl in. The...the straw was solid...set up, and then we had a bunker underneath the ground. And there was like a stopper made out of straw that when we crawled in...because we had to go to the bathroom. We used to go once at night out in the fields. You know? And we used to go...he used to put water from the...uh... well. He had like a trough, where he used to...the horses used to drink, and the cows. So he filled it up every time with water; so at night we went out and got some water for us to drink. We drink one day...one time a day. That's it. So all the...so my brother noticed that he starts pulling that stopper. So he pushed it up and he said, "What do you want?" He said, "Don't worry. Don't worry. I won't do nothing to you." So my brother said, "Would you like a loaf of bread?" He said, "Yes." So we gave him the loaf of bread. And he said, "Don't worry. Pull in the stopper. I'll be here until we leave." So we pulled in the stopper; but we figured here's the end, you know? And he laid down there, took off his shoes; and then the others came into the barn and he gave everybody a piece of bread and they said, "Let's take everything a part. Maybe there's a lot of bread here." He said, "No. You see, I went through everything. Maybe the owner slept here and he left one loaf of bread." And we were sitting down. We could see through... through the boards...from the barn what's going on. And all of a sudden,

a few hours, there comes an order they have to leave. They have to leave and they have to assemble. They all went into the yard to assemble. He pulls out the stopper, that guy. He said, "We are leaving. Don't worry. I'll leave the last so nobody should bother you." And we pulled in and my brother said, "Would you like another?" We always kept a few loaves of bread in case we have to run. So my brother said, "Would you like another." "No," he said, "If I'll take another loaf of bread, they'll be suspicious." And we saw that they assembled and they calling him and he said, "My feet are so swollen, can't my...can't get my shoes on." And then when they all were assembled, he climbed down from the loft and he turned towards us and he went like this and they left. So we survived again. Yeah? So next day...this was at night. Next morning, my brother woke up and he said, "Listen, now they left. We're gonna leave to. We're not staying here anymore." Yeah. And during the night another unit of Germans came in. I don't know if SS or military. They came in and they left also after a few hours. My brother said, "They left. Let's leave. Whatever'll happen, will happen." And early in the morning, we saw it's quiet all around...was still not daylight. We just crawled down from the loft, down to the barn, and there were three loaves of bread and three cans with onions the Germans left and three rifles. We didn't know what to do with the rifles. And we (chuckle)...we took it and we crawled in, because behind the barn the field started. And we lay down. And he told us before, "The first chance you have, get us something so...in case something, people shouldn't recognize." We crawled in and we exposed ourselves...the faces to the sun. And all of a sudden, the Germans...this... this village is up on a hill...very high up and...and down below it is the main highway. On the other side were the Russians and up on the Hill were the Germans. And they started shooting. Zoook...Zoook...Zoook.... And we figured, "Here we went through all that, and now we're gonna get it!" Doesn't matter from whom, from the Russians or the Germans. And we laid up, and then it quiet down. And when it started getting dark, my brother said,

"Let's crawl into the barn and from there, maybe we'll get into the woods." As we crawled into the barn, he was looking for us. The Russians were already there. Because the Russians went from the Bug. They didn't go straight with the highway. They surrounded the Germans and they took them in. And that was when we were free. Not exactly free, because it started the Polish people were miserable. Very bad. Very bad. A lot of our friends who survived got killed by them. The...the national army just killed. And then they killed Leon, in December. And that was a big shock for us; because we just stuck to him and we looked up to him like a father figure, like somebody who helped us survive, who took all the responsibility for us. You...you understand? And there he was gone. And we decided at that time not to remain in Poland. We just followed the Russian army wherever they went, and we...until we got to Berlin. And it was funny that there we felt safe after all those years. It wasn't easy to be there. It wasn't easy at all, because everyone you saw, you saw them as a Nazi with a uniform. But we felt safe.

Q: Tell us about what you did next.

A: What I did next? We settled in Berlin, where I got married. And we started a business. I started it. But we didn't want to remain there. We just waited for the first chance to get out, and we got out. And we came to this country and we started on the bottom and we made it. And we are very grateful. And I have two wonderful sons, very well educated. And I think when we came here, we didn't want pity, you know, from nobody. We just wanted to prove to ourselves that they didn't defeat us. They didn't kill us. Maybe, physically, they hurted us. You know? And we wanted to prove to ourselves that we can do whatever anybody can do and we can be human beings again. And we are very successful here. And I have seven grandchildren, which is my pride and joy. And that's the biggest revenge that I have on the

Nazis...those children. And I promised myself, wherever I'll have a chance, I have to tell the story of Sobibór; because after we escaped they erased every track of Sobibór. And if I told somebody right after the war, they said, "Never heard of it. Never heard of it. Never heard of it." And it hurted me very much, because I felt the people of Sobibór never gave up and they fought to the last and they didn't care if they make it or not. But just for that revenge, and to bring the story to the world. And I feel because we bring out the story, there are so many other stories for...from people who fought, who died just for that revenge and just for that protecting that honor of those who didn't make it. You know? And I feel they are not here to tell the story; but there're thousands and thousands of stories like my story. But if people are not here to tell it...so I have to do as much as I can. It's not easy, but I won't give up as long as I live. I went to a lot of trials, and I think the Nazis at the trials, not one denied that Sobibór existed. Not one denied what happened there. Just they didn't want to take the blame.

Q:Who did you identify at the trials? What trials were you at and who did you identify?

A:First, I recognized Bauer on the street in Berlin. And the funniest thought was...you see, after the war, all those Nazis...uh...if there were no evidence, they were like rehabilitated. It's called in German "[entnazivisieren (ph)]" [NB: "denazified"]. And Bauer was already [entnazivisieren (ph)].

Q:Tell us on tape who Bauer was.

A:Bauer was a nothing, but he was the gas master. He used to open the valves and close the valves and let the gas out...and that was...that was Bauer. I didn't...I personally didn't catch him. It

was another...the guy that survived with me together in the farm...on the farm [NB: Samuel Lerer]. He saw him, and he went over and he told the policeman to arrest him. He was like in the Luna Park, an amusement park. He was riding there, the thing. And then he ran home and he said, "Listen..." I lived in Berlin. At that time, I was married. And he said, "I found Bauer. And I told the police to check his documents, but they're gonna let him out." I said, "Let's go." And I went to the police station and I told them, "This is Bauer." And they said, "Oh, we can't. You have to have three witnesses." You know, the German bureaucracy. I said, "I'll give you three pounds of coffee if you keep him." He kept him for the three pounds of coffee. And the next day, you know, it's only three days if he doesn't admit, you have to let him go. And he didn't admit nothing. The third day-- the prosecutor was a German who suffered an awful lot during the war. He was in the underground. He was beaten. He was crippled. And I said, "Listen, I want you to sit and I want to ask Bauer questions." And he agreed. Natural, 1950 it was different like today. And I went, and I started asking; and I pinned him like to the wall that he couldn't get out. I said, "This and this girl worked for you. You lived there and there. Your room looked like this and this. You wore this and this uniform, when this Hauptstrumbannfuhrer came. You walked with Himmler, behind him." You know. And then he couldn't...he said, "Yes, I was there." And then the trial started. Natural, at that time there was no death sentence in...in Germany, and they...I was the only witness at the trial. And I testified, and he got life sentence. He was sentenced to life in prison. He was in Spandau with Hess all that time. And then after a few years...I was in the States, already. No. I was still in Berlin. He gave out Kliehr, Gomerski, Frenzel, [Franz] Wolf, DuBois, Bolander...all of those who were in Sobibór. And I went...before I left for the States, I went to Kliehr's and Gomerski's trial. I was also the only witness. Gomerski got life sentence. Kliehr...I really couldn't tell anything bad about him. You...you understand? He was in charge of the shoe magazine, where they collected all the

shoes from the people. And I remember once I went in and I needed a pair of shoes. He treated me well. He gave everybody shoes, if nobody saw. He was also in charge of the bakery. If he could give a piece of bread unnoticed, he would give. He really didn't have nothing to do with the transports. I don't really know why he was there. Maybe by accident. And I felt, "Why put the blame on the man when he didn't do nothing?" And he was acquitted. And I think this hurted Gomerski even more, because they...it proved that you could be a human being there, too. You know? But Gomerski, Frenzel, Wagner, one of the Wolfs...there were two Wolf brothers. One we killed. The other...the nice one we killed, because we didn't have no choice. But the other one ...you know, they did it with such a joy and with such a satisfaction and no matter how much blood they drunk, it wasn't enough for them. You know? So Kliehr was acquitted. He died later. And Frenzel got life imprisonment. Then I went to the trial of the 12. Frenzel got life in prison. DuBois committed suicide during the trial. Not Dubois, Bolander. Bolander. All the others got 12, and 15, and so. Everybody was there, but...nobody is guilty. You know? And I felt I didn't have the trust in the judge, because they were older people. And...and that's where I had the scene with that guy, [Wrangsher (ph)], with that lawyer of Frankel. You know? When I went later to the trials and there were younger lawyers and younger prosecutors, it was different. Although the prosecutor at this trial, he was from the [Ottmann (ph)], I have forgotten his name. I have his name home. He...he really....he was a young man. I trusted more the young people, the new generation than the old. I had a feeling one Nazi defends the other. They...they wanted to put me on trial instead of him. You know? It wasn't that they killed 6 million Jews, Hitler told them to do it. It's not Hitler told them to do it! It's not Hitler. Everybody...I...I told them at the trial. If you take all those and put on uniforms, the next day they'll do the same thing.

Q:Did you at the trial tell some of the same stories that you told me?

A:Sure. Sure.

Q:And that was your evidence?

A:Now, I'll tell you, they had a lot of evidence. More than I could remember. More than I could remember. They had a lot of evidence, because at that time there were more survivors. Not all went to.... Very few went to the trials. Very few. A lot of them just couldn't take it. It was..it was very difficult to sit there, and feel you're sitting in front of a murderer. It's not a murderer. A murderer kills one person. These are hundreds...millions. And nobody tries even...and nobody even says, "I'm sorry. It was wrong" You know, it hurted very much. They tried to...to confuse you. Don't forget, according to the German law, he sits there with a lawyer. The lawyer tells him what to say and what not to say. I'm sitting there. I don't have a lawyer. I'm not allowed a lawyer. You had to be very strong, really, to stand up. But I wasn't afraid. I was hurt. I was nervous. But I wasn't afraid.

Q:Can we go back for a minute to the uprising itself?

A:Yes.

Q:You've told us about it. Did you take any part in the shooting, or the blowing up of the crematorium at all?

A:No. No. No.

Q:Just what you've told us?

A:I just was...uh...like a messenger. You know? They send me here. They send me there. But no women took part in the actually killings. You know? They were helping in any way...bring a message. Because even in camp, the women could...uh...uh...move around easier than the men. It wasn't so suspicious if the woman walked around and moved around than a man.

Q:What...what has been the affect of all of this on your life do you think?

A:The affect probably is I have all the reasons in the world to be happy. I have a wonderful husband. We are married 44 years, going to be in July. Financially, I am very well off, considering. I mean, I'm very happy. You know? I have a beautiful family. But I cannot be happy. Inside! I see people like...they're buy...they're building a home. They're so happy. They're buying a car. They're happy. They're buying a dress. They're happy. I really cannot be happy. I have those things. I can have them, and I can not have them. You know, it's...how should I say...I really...there are people can laugh over anything. I cannot laugh. I laugh, but it's squeezed out. The feeling of enjoyment is taken. I feel that. (Long Pause)

Q:Is there anything you want to add?

A:I just want to add (sigh)...that it can't happen again. And that's why, maybe not in my time, but people...and maybe not for the Jewish people, but it can happen the Holocaust again. The world is full of bad things. And I think everybody should be on the look out. It shouldn't happen again.

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Q:Thank you. Thank you.

TECHNICAL CONVERSATION

Conclusion of Interview.