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Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project. 1991-2000, undated.

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Louis Shulman
9 Cedar Row
Lakewood, N.J. 08701

November 28, 2000

Dear Mr. Shulman,

Thank you for responding to our letter about sending your story to the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project at the World Jewish Congress. We are writing to you to confirm that we received your letter and we will forward the transcript of your story to the World Jewish Congress in your name. This is an important project that will help preserve the testimonies of you and other survivors, so the lessons learned and the people who perished during the Holocaust are never forgotten.

Again, we want to thank you for sharing your story. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to call me, Jamie Goldberg, Rabbi Herbert Friedman's assistant, at 212-355-6115. You may also contact Ms. Yudin at the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project at 914-722-1880.

B'Shalom

Jamie Goldberg

LOUIS SHULMAN
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11/22/00

Dear Rabbi Friedman

I am mailing you a transcript of my video testimony for you to read. If you think it's worthy of submission, please do so. Happy Chanukah & best wishes.

Sincerely Yours
Louis Shulman

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

HOLOCAUST HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER ORAL HISTORY

Interview with: Louis Shulman

by: Harriet Passerman

date: October 5, 1994

Q: Tell me a little about your childhood and about your family.

A: I remember a lot. My dad's name was Abraham, my mother's name was Hinda. My dad was an excellent shoemaker, even though he was orphaned in 1916. His parents died in one day, a natural death, in World War I. There were eight kids left. One child they gave away for adoption. They dispersed. One became a carpenter. One sister became a nurse with a very famous doctor in Warsaw. He was born in a little village in eastern Poland, which I'll talk about later, because we wound up in that village during the war. They all migrated around Warsaw and in Warsaw proper.

My father married my mother in 1927. He somehow married her out of spite, supposedly. Not out of spite. He ran away to the Polish army because he couldn't marry her when he wanted. My grandmother said he was too young to marry because they didn't think he could make a living then

[even though] he was an excellent shoemaker. So he enlisted in the Polish army in 1926, but then he got sick of it and decided he wanted a discharge. So he came home and married my mother, no matter what happens. She had a sister in London and used to get money from her sister. This was to be the dowry, so she saved that. Somehow he married her.

I was born in '27. I started school when I was five years old. I had a very good childhood. I spoke Polish fluently and I was very promising in school. My dad was illiterate until he joined the Polish army. But when he joined the Polish army he was a soccer player, a fullback, with another fullback who was a major in the Polish army. My dad threatened him (he was a short man, as you can see in the pictures), "If you don't teach me how to read and write, I am not going to play with you." So the man took him under his tutelage and taught him how to read and write. From then on, just when the war had started, he became a township committeeman, he was on the board of education, and he was very highly regarded in town. Later he paid a price for that, for being very prominent in town.

The town had about 20,000 people, about 5,000 Jews. I'll digress a little. Just about three weeks ago, we were at the cemetery there--like an obelisk on Staten Island--for the Holocaust deceased. There were five thousand Jews and

there were maybe eight survivors there at the cemetery from the five thousand. Our town took a tremendous hit.

Anyway, I started school when I was five. I did very well. I went through sixth grade. I was supposed to start seventh grade on the first of September, when the school year starts in Poland. Otherwise, we were very happy. We used to go camp. If I couldn't go to camp, I would spend my summers in one of my uncle's fruit orchards near Warsaw. We used to have a lot of fun, used to go to a lot of soccer games. My dad was an ex-soccer player then. He was playing still when I was a kid, but my mother somehow got him [to stop]. She said, "Either you'll play soccer or we'll have a marriage or we'll have a business," because people would come into the business and want to buy shoes and my dad was out on the field playing soccer. Later on, he was refereeing. So somehow he gave that up but we still used to go to a lot of soccer games. We used to go to Warsaw to international games. I used to love sports. On Monday morning, all my dad's cronies and friends would come in and I would read off all the scores--just like here you read off the football scores on Monday, I would read off the soccer scores by heart. That was enough joy from that.

But then, of course, in 1939, on the first day of the war, disaster struck. We were thirty kilometers from

Warsaw. If you know the Polish map, Warsaw was centrally located in Poland. On the first day--I remember it vividly --my mom was getting ready for the Sabbath. We were not religious, we were secular Jews, but Sabbath was Sabbath. About three o'clock in the afternoon she was getting ready. That meant cooking. We looked up in the sky and we saw some planes flying. The war had been declared the day before. In the morning, we knew war was on. The night before we were on the railroad platform, seeing off the Polish soldiers to the front. Baked goods and flowers were thrown at them, singing patriotic songs. We never believed the Polish army was going to be beaten. To us, they were invincible against the Germans. We really thought so. There were a lot of Jewish people that served in the Polish army as officers. Friends from town were mobilized in the last few days.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, when we see a few planes flying, we thought they were Polish planes on some sort of maneuvering. Sure enough, boom!, out of nowhere, right in the marketplace. I don't know how many bombs fell. Before you know it, about three o'clock, we had ten people dead on the first day of the war. Today, it is called terror bombing. That's what terror bombing was all about. We had no troops in town. They were just flying over and

dropping them to cow the people, to terrorize the people. Among the fallen, ten or twelve, were mostly Jewish people who lived around the marketplace. They had to bury them right away because the rule is that you can't keep bodies over the Sabbath. So they took them right to the cemetery and buried them so the Sabbath isn't disturbed.

My dad was an air raid warden in addition to everything else. He took on the role because he was too old to serve in the army. He was 33 years old. They hadn't mobilized yet to his age, or they didn't have time. So they made him an air raid warden, which gave him three or four streets. He was walking around with a gas mask, very proud. Polish was Polish. On the sixth day, the Germans started marching across Poland. They were approaching the town. On the following Thursday, my dad packed us all up. I don't remember whether the railroad was still running. Maybe the railroad was still running. I can't remember whether we took a cart but I'm sure it was the railroad.

He set us up in Warsaw. We took an apartment in a basement in Warsaw, thinking that Warsaw will be defended to the last Polish soldier. But it wasn't, of course, because they capitulated three weeks later. Then he showed up the next day. We were in this building. In Warsaw, they used to have three courtyards: the foreyard, the middle

yard, and the backyard. We were in the third yard, in a corner, in the cellar.

The third week of the war was the Jewish holidays. Like this year, it was early. They started to bombard with artillery. We were sitting hiding in the basement. At this point there was no food. When I say "we," my father's sister and her baby and my mom and my other sister that was part of twins born in '37 (the sister that lives now). We were sitting on our bundles in the cellar. The last day, the building started to burn. But it started burning in the front and the fire made it to the back. The men went out and started to knock a wall through. In Warsaw, they had a lot of buildings built back-to-back. So they started to knock the wall through. We used to stand in line for bread and the artillery would hit us. People in line would fall. It was awful! I was barely eleven years old then. My mom was very upset about it, too. She took it very hard, mentally primarily. But my dad was there. So finally the fire started in the front and worked its way to the back. So the men went and tried to break through the wall with hammers. When they finished one wall, they realized there is another wall going through to the other side, because they built them back-to-back. So they finally got through. Then we went out in the night and the whole city was aflame.

My dad was holding the little baby. She was then two years old. There were tremendous sparks, beams flying all over. Somehow we found a place of shelter. The next day, I think, the Poles capitulated. Every-thing was burned because we didn't take anything out from there. Whatever bundles we had, everything was burned.

The Poles declared a ceasefire and the Germans didn't want to march in yet because the Poles had built barricades. They laid tramways in their way. They turned tramways over and all kinds of barricades, ditches, anti-tank. We had on top of our building a Polish anti-aircraft gun. They called them Zenith guns. But it was all over. Of course, we were hungry. There was a Polish cold-storage warehouse with food. We were very starved at this point. My dad and his brother--he found his older brother, the one I have the picture of here--went and looted that warehouse and brought some preserved eggs and something else from that warehouse and we ate.

We wanted to go home to our town, but the Germans wouldn't let the men go through. Right away, they shanghaied them. They drafted them or grabbed them. There wasn't yet any shooting of any sort, but they grabbed them and told them the only way they will let them go home is if they will clear the barricades so they can march in

ceremoniously, triumphantly, to Warsaw. So my dad said to my mom, "You go home." So with my mom and his sister, we started marching the thirty kilometers home. My mom at the time was very weak. The last pair of twins she had, she had phlebitis in her legs from the births. But somehow she managed, holding onto the babies. So the first day we slept in a synagogue about fifteen kilometers [from Warsaw] in a town called Proszkow, which is halfway between Warsaw and Grojec. The next day we marched home. When we came home we had nothing. About three days later, my dad showed up.

The Germans had marched into Grojec. There were placards there when we got home about an execution of ten people that had already taken place, because the Germans had this notion: anything that was done against them, they would take ten hostages and shoot them. So they already had executed about ten people. This was in 1939. At that time, things weren't that bad, because the Germans didn't know themselves in which direction they were going really. My dad opened up the shop and started working. The Germans loved riding boots, cavalry boots of sorts.

Q: You said, at three o'clock in the afternoon your mother was preparing for the Sabbath and this happened. Was there

any clue that anything was happening prior to that? Did you have any feeling of anti-Semitism?

A: There was Polish anti-Semitism. Now Polish anti-Semitism was taking a lot of forms. Poland had a lot of Hasidim before the war and they were dressed in distinctive clothes. They wore little hats with short visors. So if a Pole had a few drinks under his belt, if you walked in the street, he would knock the hat off. To a religious Jew, an uncovered head is already something. They would get drunk. All of a sudden they saw "the evil Jew" when they'd get drunk. Before the war, they had this Polish anti-Semitic party called the _____s or the _____ or whatever they called them. The initials stood for United Organization of Nationalists.

My dad played on a Polish soccer team in town. This organization decided to picket Jewish businesses. So they decided to picket my dad's business. My dad was very spunky. He went out to these guys and spoke to them, "Look, you guys, I've drunk with you, I've played with you. When you guys didn't have money for a bottle of vodka, I gave it to you because I had it. And now you have the nerve to picket my store?" It was on a Saturday night. My dad used to open up Saturday night. They carried signs and placards:

"Don't buy from the Jew." These were the forms. Then in Warsaw we read about where at the university they were attacking Jewish students. One time there was a minor incident. They accused the Jews of ritual slaughter. In a town near Warsaw before the war there was some sort of killing of some Jews. But murder, we never thought it would get to that. The Jews in Poland before the war had a lot of status. Now the Poles almost wish they had back those Jews, the Janus Korzaks, the Rubinsteins, the doctors that were tops in medicine when they needed a specialist. First of all, there was a lot of incitement coming from the Germans. The Poles liked to ape the Germans. Hitler was already in power in '33. After that, it became not unbearable, but to what point it would have gotten, I don't know, if it hadn't been for Hitler. I don't think it would have gotten too far because how long can you spread the bugaboo about the Jew?

Q: So, basically, nothing went on that you weren't already used to?

A: The Germans brought it to another level. The best was yet to come. Now what part the Poles had in it, there's mixed feelings. I could play the Devil's Advocate and I could defend them to the utmost. This was, again, a mixed

bag because the Jew was a Polish citizen. We were Polish citizens. When the war finally started and the Germans started the destruction, the Poles were not there to represent as a mass--like the Danes, for instance--"Look, these are our people. Whatever you do to them, you're going to do to us." It was never that way. It was, to a large degree, that they had it coming. There were quite a few people that were repulsed by it. I read a couple of novels about it. There was one book I read very recently that was very good. It is called "The Beautiful Mrs. Sneiderman," by a Polish writer. I can't think of his name now. It's a novel, but read it and you will get some idea about the atmosphere in Warsaw during the war, the interplay between the Poles and the Jews. Very interesting book. But this is what it was like.

Q: You are back in your hometown.

A: Here comes the next clinker. November 11th is Polish Independence Day. They declared independence in 1918. It was Armistice Day and Independence Day for Poland. So just before November 11th, the Germans had this inkling that the Poles might try something, some sort of demonstration against them, some symbolic gesture against the Germans.

About November 9th or 8th, in the middle of the night, the Germans came in and grabbed my father. Not just my father. They grabbed the prewar mayor. They were looking for some prewar Communists and some other prominent people in town. I think they gathered up about twenty. They took them right to the prison in town. My father had never spent a day in jail. To us, it was unbelievable. They kept him there for two or three days. We went to visit him. We used to climb onto the roof of a house and we looked down on the prison and we saw my father walking in the yard. We talked to him. It was almost exciting to see my father in jail. Anyway, they didn't harm him physically yet. But about three days later, they marched them all out from prison. We followed them from the prison to the railroad station. They shipped them away. They were holding them hostage. In case something happened, they would do them in, execute them. But nothing happened, so they kept him for about six weeks in a town called Ravagosh [?] near Lodz, in an abandoned textile factory, my dad was telling me. Then they released him. He came back in December, just before Christmastime.

Q: How did you feel when he left?

A: It was terrible! My mom fell to pieces. Not only that. The whole town was walking from the prison to the railroad station. We never thought we'd see him again because there were already rumors that the Germans were doing people in. My mom fell to pieces. She was stuck with his sister and her kid. Not only that. She had an elderly mother. Although she had two sisters in town and two brothers, my grandmother lived across the street from us and it fell to my mother to take care of her. The closeness of the European mother and child was unbreakable really. So while this was going on, the other sisters and brothers were busy with themselves, but they didn't want to help her at all with her mother. So one day my mother took my cousins and gave them a few cents and she said, "You go to Aunt Faga and Uncle _____ and tell them Grandma just died." They all showed up and my mother said, "No, she isn't really dead. I just wanted to show you that you guys better show up because otherwise she is going to be dead."

Anyway, my dad showed up in December. Out of a clear blue sky, they released them all and he came home and started working again. He started making shoes. The Germans would come in and he would make them custom boots. The Germans were very fond of boots. At that time, cavalry

was still in and they were wearing these beautiful breeches. My dad was making those boots for them.

Rumors started that they were building a ghetto in Warsaw. The walls were going up. This was late in 1940. But we didn't know what was the purpose, whether it was going to be just for the Warsaw people. Nobody knew. The Germans kept it all up tight. Even in Warsaw, they didn't know what was going on, where the ghetto was going to be physically. Then, in the winter of '41, all of a sudden out of a clear blue sky, they put up placards in town: all the Jews have to go into the Warsaw ghetto, the entire town. Well, how do you go to the Warsaw ghetto? We had some furnishings. Where do we go? Well, my dad went into Warsaw. At that time you could still ride the railroads. He found an apartment on a street called Jurasne ("Iron" Street). I am not sure what date--either the beginning or end of February--it stipulated that the town has to be free of Jews. The whole town, en masse, had to go into the ghetto. Of course, we arrived in Warsaw, which was only thirty kilometers away. There was all kinds of transportation. We had a tramway going to Warsaw and the mainline of the railroad. Then there was an electric tramway just between our town and Warsaw that was built by the Belgians in the early '30s. So we packed everything up and we went

into the Warsaw ghetto. When we went into the Warsaw ghetto originally, you could still go in and out before they sealed it. We moved to that apartment. When I say "apartment," I think we rented a room. All of us in one room. At that time, I think, my dad went back a few times to the town because we could buy some food cheap.

Q: You were at this time fourteen years old?

A: In '41, I was thirteen. I was Bar Mitzvah in the war, by the way. They made me a Bar Mitzvah in November of 1940, just before we went into the ghetto. It wasn't in the shul because they had demolished the shul. We had an old wooden synagogue, but they demolished it. Across the street, they made some sort of kiddush (collation) and somehow I was called up. This is vague in my mind. My father knows it and I know it, too. I used his tallis, his tephillin, and everything else.

When we got to the ghetto, it was very depressing to see people all of a sudden displaced. They put up an entrance gate to the ghetto, guarded by a Polish policeman. Then they created the infamous Jewish police in Warsaw and a German gendarme. The excuse for the ghetto was that the Jews were spreading typhus. They put up a sign with a

skull-and-crossbones (like when you have a minefield) that said "typhus territory." I didn't know that typhus existed at that time, really I didn't. I know some people died at home from Tb. At that time there was a lot of it. Some people died of cancer, I remember, when I was a kid, but it was known already. We didn't know what cancer was at the time, but they said "This guy died of cancer," or "This one died of Tb." I know one very young fellow who died of Tb. But we didn't know anything else. So they put up this sign.

We had nothing to do. My dad was with us at the time. He used to go back and forth. We went down to the gate to watch what was going on. We could see they were searching people going in and out. We had the two little girls with us. My mother had the little girl and my father's sister's little girl. These kids used to play ghetto games at the gate and say, "Jew, stop!" They were three years old at the time. One was a little older. This was in 1941.

Then, June 21 or 22, 1941, the Germans attacked Russia. Of course, they were very triumphant at the beginning. Things started getting really bad. When I say "bad," the food situation. Starvation started. There were always things going around, that another town sits better. The Bug River in Poland that runs north-south was the border between the German part of Poland and the Russian part of Poland.

The German part of Poland was called General Government and the Russians took the eastern part of Poland in 1939. This was a town called HRUBIESZÓW-on-the-Bug. They said that over there things are good. Food is available. For some reason or other, they let people alone.

So my father decided we were going to go there. We somehow got some papers--permits of sorts. There were always people making up permits. Some of them were counterfeit, some of them were real. Then there were also people who helped you get over the wall. Somehow we got to HRUBIESZÓW. It was a nightmare getting there. We were on a train. We were passing Lublin. Some people got on. They were singing anti-Semitic songs, parodies on the Jews. We were sitting like cowards because we weren't allowed to be on a train. Jews weren't allowed to ride trains. We were sitting in a corner, cowed. My mother just couldn't take it any more. I remember this very vividly. She told my father, "Give me some change, some Polish money." She went over to them and said, "Gee, you sing so well." The translation was: "Beat, beat the Jew, beat him." There were other refrains in that song. She couldn't take it. She said, "Give me some change and I'll fix this wagon." She was daring really. So she went over and gave them the money. She said, "You sang so well but, remember,

you're taking money from a Jew." These guys were making a buck on it. That's all. It was a bad parody in Polish. I used to remember the whole song because it stuck in my mind so vividly. It was just outside of Lublin.

Q: Before you left the ghetto, what did you do during the day?

A: Nothing. There was no school. September first [1939] was the end of my schooling. Besides my family being decimated, they deprived me of every bit of schooling. I never went to school in this country after I came here because I was too old, 21 years old.

Q: So for that period of time you spent your days doing nothing?

A: For the Warsaw kids, they opened up some schools, as a matter of fact, from what I read recently. I didn't know at the time that they had some schools. They were giving university courses. People that were in medical school, they had medical professors in the ghetto that used to somehow clandestinely do some courses. But I wasn't aware of it and I never took any because there wasn't any. We

just roamed around. The ghetto at the beginning was somehow not as deadly. The deadly time was when we had come back to the ghetto later. From all our travails, we wound up back in the ghetto. This was when disaster struck with people lying in the streets, dying. We used to see bodies in the street. People would put them out at night because they didn't have any money for burial. They were waiting for a cart to take them away. We used to go down in the street. First of all, there was no electricity in the ghetto later on. They completely cut the electricity. So we used to use carbide lamps. A carbide lamp is a quart container. You put in chunks of carbide and you put water in it and then there is a wick on top. You light it and the carbide dissolves. When you go to dump it, it gives off toxic gases like a mustard gas or chemical gas attack. That's what we used in the ghetto for light. So what happened in the ghetto later on, whatever food was given--they would bring in a load of potatoes to give out--there were coupon books, you used to get ration books, which they never really had.

Q: We are ahead of ourselves. You are on the train.

A: We are on the train going to ~~Krabysev~~ HROBIESZOW. We stopped off in a town in Poland called Zamost. It is not far from

Chelmno, where there was a concentration camp. It was named after a Polish Count Zamosky. He used to have a big estate there. We had to change trains. We were waiting, huddled in a corner of the station. It was wintertime. I think it is the winter of '41. All of a sudden, German patrols would come in. They would take one look and say "Juden" and they chased us all out. We had bundles with us, always had bundles with us. My father grabbed the little one and my mother and me. For some reason or other, he decided, if we don't run fast enough, they're going to shoot me. Somehow, we ran fast enough. This was like a game with them, putting the scare into you.

Somehow we got back into the station and we wound up in ~~Przebyzov~~ RUBIESZÓW. Over there we found a place to live again. My father somehow was going out someplace. The Germans would come in and they needed some sort of work done, be it carpentry or ditch digging. At that time there were anti-tank ditches. All sorts of things. They would go out and maybe they would get a bit of bread there. You could live. Poles would bring things to the market. It wasn't like the ghetto. But, out of the clear blue sky one day, the Gestapo comes into town with an escort. They said, "We want 150 people to shoot." They'd take them outside of town and

execute them. That puts the whammy on the whole town. Just like that.

My father was born in a little town in eastern Poland. The town was called Seracomda [?]. In Israel, at the Valley of the Lost Communities, my father's town is on there. I have a picture of it. I was there two years ago when they were just finishing it. They gave us a special permission to go visit that valley. They were still engraving the stones. So my father's little village was a hamlet, a Third World hamlet. But near his hamlet was a town called ~~Kotzk~~ KOCK The claim to fame of Kotsk was, Number One, the Kotzke Rabbi; Number Two, ~~before the war,~~ they had a Jewish fellow in Kotzk that distinguished himself in the Kosciusko war of 1863, in an uprising. His name was Berek Yose Levitch. He was from Kotzk. They used to name a lot of streets for him. In all the Jewish quarters in Europe, there was a street named after Yose Levitch. So that's the claim to fame for this town.

KOCK

HRUBIESZÓW

After the shooting in ~~Krebysov~~--this was in '42--my father said, let's go. He heard that in Kotzk things are better. So we went to Kotzk. Again we took a train. There was a river with a ferry. We went into a little town called Libartov, which the Jews called Levertov. We slept in the

synagogue and the next day we hired a peasant's one-horse cart. We all got on it and he delivered us to this town.

Q: You were a teenager at this time. What were your feelings?

A: We primarily relied on my father and mother--my father primarly. Before the war, my mother kept house. She was an enlightened person, very literate, used to go to the movies every Friday night with her sister. My dad had a card game on Friday night with his cronies. She was an enlightened person but she relied on my dad, his instincts. This was all instinct really. Again there were executions but it was not the totality of it. The totality set in later, late in '42, when they started to round up en masse and just doing away with people.

So we went back to Kotzk. Again we rented something. My father had a sister living there who remained after he had moved to Warsaw. It was about twelve kilometers from the little village where he was born. We remained there for a period until one day the Gestapo came again and asked for twenty people to be shot. They took them out to the Jewish cemetery there. Now when you enter a Jewish cemetery in New York they have a little office where they give you

directions to the grave. In Europe, they didn't have that. They had what they called a COOLING ROOM, meaning a cooling room for the bodies. Before you took them to the grave, you would enter there. It was nothing but four walls with a table where they put the body and said a last prayer or something like that. They killed these people right in that room. After the killing, my father took me out there. It was just an unbelievable scene. Brains spattered on the walls. That was something that I remember so vividly. One of his childhood friends that remained in the town after my father left was killed there. It was just terrible!

When they came to get these people, they came to get somebody from our family. The guy that went around asking for people to go to be executed was a childhood friend of my father's. He became a policeman in that little town. My father's name was Abraham and this guy was also Abraham. But they called him Avramu. My father was a redhead in his younger years. So they used to call him "the red one." The other one was the other Abraham. This was a European trait to distinguish by nicknames of sorts. So my father said to Avramu, "How can you do this? You know me since we were childhood friends." He says, "Look, I can't help it. It's either that or it's my own wife." So they came. My father's sister had a disabled girl. She was limping badly.

They had an old mother-in-law. He says, "One of you has to go." So they started a fight between who should go. Finally, they took the mother-in-law because she was quite old. They executed her with the twenty people there. After that, my father realized he has no pull in that town; that the next time they are going to come, they are going to get him. So he picked himself up and took off for Warsaw.

Q: Did he take you with him?

A: No, he left me there. In the meantime, somehow there was a typhus epidemic there. People were falling ill with typhus. My sister got it and my aunt got it. If you know typhus, there is nothing you can do. All you can do is cool the body down from the high fever to keep them from going into delirium. So if you have alcohol, fine; if not, you use cold water just to cool the body down until there is a crisis period. Once you get over the crisis, you live; or if you don't get over the crisis, you go.

Then my dad got back to Warsaw and he got a job as a shoemaker. The outfit was called HAUPT VETERNÄR PARK DER WAFFEN SS meaning the main veterinary supply depot of the Waffen SS. Now this [photo], of course, was not in uniform. But when I saw him in '85 he was 76 years old. This is a '65 picture,

twenty years younger. Here he is in '87. He doesn't look any older, does he? This is how good he lives. He lives in Wiesbaden. He was at the time a captain in the SS. Later on he became a lieutenant colonel. He was a doctor. His name was Walter Hyman. My dad got a job there repairing shoes. Originally, they wouldn't keep him there overnight, so he would go back to the ghetto every night under escort.

Right after he left, the Gestapo came to the town and asked for 150 people. They took them out into a grain field. My sister, with a cousin, ran out right near where the execution site was, unbenownst to them. They didn't know they were going to take them into the grain field and shoot them right there. They were watching this whole execution of the 150 people there. My father somehow found out in Warsaw what happened there.

Then they sealed the ghetto. They were preparing for the Final Solution. Somehow, my father wiggled his way with the people at the place to get a room and let him sleep there. Now this complex they had consisted of a multi-unit apartment house. Then they had a villa for the officers. Then there were two big buildings that they used for the supplies. The Germans had a lot of horses in the Second World War. So they used it to keep medication. They would ship it to the Eastern Front whenever they got requests for

horseshoes and everything for the horses except harnesses; just medication, bandages, everything for the horses. They maintained this Depot.

My father sent out a Polish tailor who was working there to the town where we were. He brought me into Warsaw. My father somehow begged him to keep me with him. He said I would make myself worthwhile to be there for my keep. The "keep" consisted of food. After that, they gave me a uniform of sorts, like a German fatigue uniform, which was a denim jacket and denim pants and a pair of German army boots. This is what I had. The ghetto was still at the time. Right after that, my father sent the same Polish fellow and got my sister out of there. She was at that time maybe twelve years old. They wouldn't want to keep her there where I was with my father.

I had gotten typhoid. The time sequence is blurry somehow. I got the typhoid in the Warsaw ghetto, because we were in the Warsaw ghetto a second time. If you read the novel, "Mila 20," by Uris, we lived at Mila 18. That's where I got typhoid. My mother somehow mursed me back here. I have lost the time sequence of how we wound up there. It is getting a little blurry. In the Warsaw ghetto, if you got typhoid, they would quarantine the whole building. Going to the hospital was certain death because

there was no treatment. People were laid out everywhere and anywhere with no treatment because they were overwhelmed by typhoid. It was rampant. But my mother somehow bribed the Jewish policeman not to grab me into the hospital. My mother nursed me back and I overcame the typhoid without too much damage. That was in the ghetto in Warsaw at Mila 18.

Then he brought my sister and he put her into the Warsaw ghetto. At that time, the liquidation had already gone through quite a bit. This was late '42. The liquidation had started. What they had left in the ghetto primarily was what they called working people. They had a brush factory in the ghetto. Then they had a uniform factory. My father placed my sister in one of the factories and told them to keep an eye on her. He said, "She is not going to stay here for long. I'll get her out of there." Every day my father would take an SS man and go to the gate of the ghetto. He had a pass to go in. The SS man would wait for him at the gate. He brought in some food because we would go to the kitchen where they ate. He had a pitcher and whatever soup was left. It was a one-dish meal. He would put everything into the pitcher. Then if he would have some relatives that were still left, he would go in there and leave some food. A couple of times he was caught in a roundup. He almost wound up on the Umshlagplatz. That

means the transfer point from the ghetto to the Treblinka trains. Of course, everybody was lined up by the trains to get into the trains. It was panic city.

Q: So this is the end of 1942?

A: Approximately '42

Q: Your sister is in the ghetto and you are with your father outside the ghetto.

A: Now, what did I do there? I shined their boots. I loaded train cars to ship to the Russian front. I would heat their ovens. In Europe, individual rooms had big tile ovens. We had a basement full of coal. I would drag the coal. In the morning, I would get up early. They would put their boots outside. I would shine their boots. Anything just to make myself worthwhile. Actually, they didn't need me. They could have done without me. You could almost call it a mascot business. There was no payment. All we had was a dormer room to sleep and we would get some food. We used to eat the scraps after they ate.

Q: Where was your mother at the time?

A: My mother at the time was hiding out near my father's area. We left her there with my little sister and my father's sister. Since my father married my mother, she lived with us all her life. My father married her off just before the war to a fellow who was a tailor, who emigrated to France just before the war, because in France tailors used to do very well.

Q: So your mother and your aunt are in the town.

A: And her little girl. But they moved them already. They had deported them from there. From there, I think she was deported to a town called Parchep [?], which I know. Then she was in MIĘDZYRZEC PODLASKI, which was another point. They were going point to point. From there, she somehow found a barn to hide out with my father's sister and my little sister and her sister. She had some pieces of jewelry that my father had given her in the years of marriage between '27 and '39. It was nothing spectacular. My dad wasn't that rich. It was trinkets really, but it was good enough to pay off the Polish peasants to let you hide in a barn.

The last note we had from my mother--somehow a note arrived to us in Warsaw some time in '43--saying that she can't take it any more. She was hiding in a barn and the Ukrainian collaborators that were there were coming into the barn constantly and prodding with bayonets the straw stacks. The kids were crying out. She said, "I gave away all my jewelry. They don't want to keep me any more. The children are crying out. I have to choke the children to death, but I can't do that, so I might give myself up and you might not hear from me again." That's the last note we had from my mother. It was ironic that it was Yom Kippur time. It may be on Yom Kippur--you remember these things--that we got that note. She said, "That's the last you'll hear from me."

Now I am going to digress again. Read a book called "Ordinary Men." It is written by a Canadian historian. The book describes a battalion of German gendarmerie that were brought in from the Hamburg area to the area where my mother was hiding--this whole area around Lublin. They had the distinction of executing 46,000 people in the area and deporting over 50,000 within a certain period of time to Treblinka. These were prewar German policemen. For some reason, they volunteered for this particular battalion. After the war, they became policemen again. They had tenure

to become policemen again. Very detailed because the historian wrote it. It is very interesting to read how men behave in these circumstances. Ordinary men. It was reviewed in the New York Times Book Review.

Q: So you receive this note from your mother. Your sister is in the ghetto. You and your father are in this...

A: There were two other people there with us. A German Jewish couple was with us also. Now my dad was doing the shoemaking, fixing the boots. This German Jewish couple, the man used to have a tailor shop in Berlin before the war. So he was repairing the uniforms. The Germans were very fastidious about their rank, the braids and everything, so he was outfitting them so they could look very martinet-like. His wife was a typist. She was from Manheim, Germany, a Jewish woman. Her name was Gertrude. His name was Max Markowitz. So there were the four of us there.

At one time they said they were going to get rid of me. This German Jewish couple was a little antagonistic to us because the German Jews had a stuck-up attitude towards the Polish Jews. So they were antagonistic. At one time he told my father, "Because of your bastard, (meaning me) somehow we are all going to lose our lives." My father

almost killed him. He said, "If you ever say that word again, I'll be dead, but you'll be dead before that. Don't you ever call him a bastard." There were times when, after a while, the Germans got tired of what they called the "house Jews" and they would ship them into the ghetto or hand them over to the Gestapo. We had this Hyman. We knew there were other Commandos outside us. There were two Jewish tailors in the headquarters of the Gestapo in Warsaw, where the Gestapo did all their interrogating of the Polish Resistance. These two tailors lived to the end of the war there, fixing their uniforms. This was so ironic. One guy lived in Munich after the war and the other guy lived in Belgium, where I saw him last.

So my sister was in the ghetto and my father kept begging them to let him bring in my sister to us, because we knew they were getting ready in the ghetto to rise up. But they said, no, they can't run a children's home. She was eleven years old. My name at the time was Luzer. "The Luzer, him we can still keep. He can do the boots. He can load." My sister's name now is Sophia. Because she lived in Israel, she changed Zelda to Sophia. The Germans had this fascination with the name Rebecca. Every Jewess was a Rebecca to them. "What will the Rebecca do here?" So my father said, "She'll do anything. She'll clean your rooms."

They had an apothecary. She'll wash the bottles in the apothecary. My sister kept sending out notes. When my fathr went in, she said, "Dad, if you can't get me out, you're not going to see me much more because they're getting ready to rise up." She knew it. She wasn't stupid. My sister is not a stupid girl to this very day. She's a very bright girl. She knew they were going to rise up and they had a date for it, too, because it was Passover time in '43. Somehow the Germans wanted to liquidate the whole thing.

So the day before the uprising my father somehow got permission to get my sister out. He took quickly an SS corporal--his name was Kiel. He took him to the ghetto and plucked my sister out the last day. The next day, April 20th, the uprising started and we could see the ghetto burning. When he went into the ghetto, they wanted to buy his gun. He almost sold his Luger, but he was afraid because he'd have to come back and account for it. They wanted to give him a fortune for the Luger. He was ready to sell it because at this point there was no gate any more. The ghetto was compacted to a very small area so there were no big gates. He went right into the place where my sister was. They wanted to buy his gun from this SS man.

My father brought my sister and we stayed there. My sister started to work in the apothecary, whatever she did.

I know what she did. This was in '43 after the ghetto rose up. We stayed there. We were there till 1944, till the Russians advanced on Warsaw. In between, there were episodes of beatings. First of all, when the Germans are drunk they are very dangerous. They can't hold their liquor too well. When they get drunk they get very rambunctious, especially when they have somebody they can really beat up on. There were episodes of chicanery and beatings.

Then they decided to run a farm with geese and sheep. The big story with the geese was that they used to go on furlough to Germany and the thing was to bring a goose from Poland. Not just a goose but a stuffed goose. So they would give me the job to stuff the geese with pellets. With my luck, I didn't know much about it. I used to make dumplings for the geese, open the beak, and stuff it down. Then you would put the beak in a little water and let the goose have a little water and then stuff the next dumpling. I used to make the dumplings out of potatoes and the hulls of wheat. Anyway, with my luck the goose got overstuffed and just before Christmastime in '43--he was going home on Christmas leave to Germany--the goose died. I go down in the stall and I see the goose is dead. The goose probably choked on the fat because the main thing was to get the fat on the goose. I don't have to tell you. These were

officers of the SS. He already wrote his wife that he was bringing home a goose for Christmas. I got the beating of my life. I mean a beating!

Another time... The Germans used to ride in trucks that used to run on wood. They had wooden boilers. They were very inventive. So we had stacks of wood. These guys that we worked for weren't really combat outfits. They were rear outfits. The worst threat to them was being sent to the Russian front because that meant the worst. So what these guys would do with these trucks--they didn't have much to do--there was a distillery outside of Warsaw. But the distillery didn't have any bottles. So they would use the trucks with those wooden boilers and go to a glass factory, get the bottles, deliver them to the distillery. The distillery didn't have any trucks to pick up the bottles, so they would deliver the bottles. Got them filled with cases of vodka. Then they would go to the peasants and buy pigs and bring it to the kitchen to eat, because there wasn't that much to eat in the kitchen. So they would bring live pigs. I would be the slaughterer. I would chop the chickens' heads off.

So one day they went out. I was supposed to load up sacks with wood for these boilers. Now there were stacks of wood there like we stack wood here for the stoves. I didn't

know the wood was wet. The guy went out and he filled up the boiler to the top with wood and the wood wouldn't burn. Of course, the truck stalled and he thought it was my fault. So they had to send out a tractor to haul him back in. When he got hauled back in, he said I did it on purpose. So he gave me a beating and he said, "Go ahead and clean out the boiler and then we're going to start all over." The only way you could clean out the boiler, you opened up the top and, by hand, you just shoveled out the thing.

At that time we had gotten another Jewish fellow that was staying with us. His name was Abraham Szidlow. He was older. So I was the only one small enough to go into that boiler to clean it out. I started scooping out the so-called wet wood. He would hold me by the legs and lower me into the thing. The boiler was about the height of this television, maybe a little taller, where I would be able to lower myself in. Finally, when I scooped the whole thing out, he comes up on top of the truck--that same driver--and he closes the lid and seals me in the boiler, with my head on the bottom of the boiler. So what happens? He is standing there and he is not doing anything. So this other Abraham--he was a house painter by trade in Warsaw--runs to my father, who is working in the shoe shop, and says, "You better come because Luzer is lying in there and he is going

to choke to death." By the time my father got there, I was blue. They pulled me out. This was his joke. These idiots, this is the cruelty that they perpetrated. Every day, day in and day out.

I almost got killed. We were coming back from loading a freight car. I was on the back of the truck. In Warsaw, the SS had a bordello for themselves and a restaurant, a café, on one of the main streets. So these guys decide to leave me in the truck while they go in and do whatever you do in a bordello. All of a sudden, the Polish Resistance decides to throw a hand grenade in there while I am sitting outside on the truck. Everybody comes running out. They busted big plate glass windows. These guys come out bloody. It doesn't take five minutes and the Gestapo from all over is coming. And I am sitting there, dressed in my little denim uniform. I said, what the hell am I doing? I'm going to get killed just because these guys decided to go to a bordello. My guys weren't supposed to be there because they were on duty. This was supposed to be an off-duty business. But then they came out and they ran into the truck, stepped on the gas, and zoomed off with me on the back of that truck.

Another time when they got drunk they decided to shoot a cigarette out of my mouth--with live ammunition. I

wouldn't let them. I was pushing them off, shoving them off. They beat me so my nose is deviated. They beat the crap out of me. They really let me have it until finally somebody ran up to my father in the dorm and said, "You better come down. They are beating Luzer to death because he wouldn't let them shoot a cigarette out of his mouth." So my father comes down and said, "What do you mean? I'll let you do it." So my father stood there and the guy aimed a Mauser rifle and shot a cigarette out of his mouth. And drunk! He was a corporal. They put ice on my face. The next day, this Mr. Hyman took a look at me and said, "Luzer, what happened?" So I said, "I fell down the stairs." He said, "No, it can't be. Tell me, who did it? He'll be on the front the next day." I said, "If I tell you who did it, I wouldn't be here the next day either," because they would have killed me. I let it go at that.

They had six of us there. There were a few of them all throughout Warsaw, little groups of Jews that worked for different SS outfits. We had maybe sixty or seventy people from the SS there. The degree of decency varied among them. Some of them talked their hearts out. They said they were just caught in the web of this whole thing. And some of them were the meanest bastards. The meanest was just unbelievable. And crude. Also they had some groups that

came from the territories. Some of them were from Hungary. They were what they called ethnic Germans. They were even worse at times than the Germans from the core of Germany. And some of them were quite decent, in all fairness, that really would not lift a finger to us. This fellow, when I saw him after the war, it was interesting. He told me certain things. There was a Polish typist that was working in their office. She turned out to be a Jewish woman. There was an SS sergeant that was in love with her. It's one of those stories that you read.

Q: In the meantime, things went from bad to worse.

A: The ghetto was liquidated. There was one time when there was a rumor that they were going to liquidate all these groups, all these people that were working outside the ghetto. There were quite a few of them scattered around. There was one at the German air base in Warsaw. So one day they said that we all had to go to a certain place because they can't keep us any more. The place turned out to be the prewar Russian Embassy in Warsaw. I can't remember whether my sister was with us at the time. There were a few hundred of us sleeping there that night.

They pointed out a fellow who had run away from Treblinka. He told the whole story of what was going on there. The disbelief was so great that this is where the end is. The Germans could have pulled anything off and nobody would have believed that this could take place. He said, "Look, the train pulls up and the people go in, and nobody comes out alive." The reason he ran away, he hid among the clothes. He didn't go out of the car. And when they started throwing the clothes back into the cars--right away they threw the clothes back into the freight cars and brought them back--then he jumped from the train and he made his way back to Warsaw. People thought he was crazy, that he was making up some sort of story just so people would have pity on him and take him in wherever he wanted. That's how prevalent the disbelief was.

So we stayed with this group until 1944. We had air raids. The Russians started to bomb. After Italy surrendered, they brought some Italians to us that served as guards. We had some Dutch people. They had ten Hollanders there from the Netherlands. They were also forced laborers but they were decent fellows as far as we were concerned. In 1944--this was almost the climax of the whole thing, of our ending there--they started to evacuate Warsaw because the Russians were approaching, the front was

approaching. Our whole outfit was to evacuate to a town called Kotpus [?] in eastern Germany. There used to be a stalag in Kotpus and they made a movie, "Escape from Kotpus." They used to keep Allied prisoners in a fortress there and there was a big escape from there and they made a movie of it. Anyway, they said we were all going to go to Kotpus, the six of us, with the outfit. We loaded all the freight cars, whatever loot they had from Warsaw--furniture, everything. This was the end of July '44.

The day before, they took my father and this German-Jewish couple and the other fellow, the house painter, with them. The train moved out. My sister and I were supposed to follow the next day. Now I don't know what happened. This is an enigma to this day as far as this Dr. Hyman is concerned. When I saw him in '87, I didn't have the nerve to ask him who gave the orders not to let us go together with my father, who gave the orders to detain us, because up till then we were clinging together. My father was the mother hen, watching over us. When we lost him, we thought that's it. The next day, instead of having us go on and follow my father with the next train, they locked us up in the building, where we stayed in a bathroom on the bottom. This was on a Friday. The Polish uprising broke out on August first. It was like Friday, the 30th. They

locked us up in a bathroom and they put a couple of boards on top of it.

Q: Just you and your sister?

A: With my sister. In Europe, they had wooden doors on the bathrooms. They had three little vent holes on the bottom, little round drilled holes. We were lying in the bathroom and we don't know what is happening. But we were watching through the holes what was going on. What had happened was, after my father left with the outfit, they sent in a guard company to watch the building. This was a company that didn't know us. These were also SS people but they were from a guard battalion. When they needed guards, they would send them out like security people. They locked us in. They didn't know us from Adam and they didn't know why we were there. The only thing they knew was that we were Jews. And Jews are killing material.

We stayed locked in there from Friday till Sunday morning without any food. Right next to it was the guard room where they used to sit and then they would go out on their posts outside. On Sunday morning, all of a sudden, I hear somebody ripping the boards off. They open up the door. There is a guy there. Mind you, panic was in the air

because the Russians were already in the suburb of Praga on the other side of the Vistula River in Warsaw. He opens up the door and he says, "We are letting you go." I embraced my sister and said, "My God, we're free! We can do anything we want." So he says, "Okay, go!" But I see he's got a submachine gun slung on his shoulder.

In front of the building there was a wire fence with two gates opening up. Then there was another fence surrounding the building. He kicks open the gate to the left and he kicks open the door and he pushes us in there. Just as he pushes us, he releases the safety on the submachine gun. Just as I see that, I said to my sister, "Run!" It wasn't very far to run--twenty feet, which was half the width of the building. Where the building ended you could make a left and then there was a big gate for the trucks to run in. You see, he was a stranger there and I knew the layout of everything there. So I said to my sister, "You run." I grabbed the barrel of the machine gun and disoriented him. He didn't expect me to do something like this. Just as I did that, I ran. And I run very fast. By the time he got his bearings back and fired a salvo, I was already around the building, but I could hear him fire.

From there, I ran across. There was a Polish superintendent there, like a janitor. We knew him from the years

we were there. I said, "What should I do?" He says, "You better run because they are going to come looking in my house." I ran. There was another building there with two big apartment houses they had kept for a depot and for the officers that had an air raid shelter. I knew it well. My sister was in front of me. I told her, "Run down to the air raid shelter and hide in the air raid shelter." In the shelter they had lockers. I drew this guy on me. It was one guy basically. I tried the door of the building. The first apartment door was open. I went in there and stood behind the door and locked the door behind me. He ran up the steps. He looked in every apartment and he couldn't find me. Then when he ran down he started breaking down the last door that I had locked because everything else was open. They had evacuated everything. When he started breaking down the door, I jumped out the window to the front and I ran. I kept running. That was the last run I did with them. This was Sunday.

My sister stayed there--I know now because, of course, I didn't know then--till the evening. Then she went out after it quieted down. She went into the next building where the Polish people lived. They took her in. So I ran to a woman I knew who lived in Warsaw. First I ran to a man that my dad used to know from before the war. He used to

make the uppers for my father's shoes or boots. My father used to take me to Warsaw. It was like a treat to take me to Warsaw. So I ran to him. He gave me lunch but he said, "I can't keep you," and he turned me out. I said, fine. Again, I am dressed in that uniform. I had no underwear and no socks. My head had practically no hair. For some reason, there was no hair on my head.

So I knew this woman that used to work in the kitchen there. She was sleeping around with the Germans, but we don't care about that. She lived near the German air force base, where the Polish airport was before the war. She lived in a basement apartment. I opened up the door and she almost had a heart attack because she didn't expect me. She had also quit the job when they evacuated. I said, "Vatya, you have to keep me here because I ran away. They took my father away to Germany and I don't know what happened to my sister." I didn't know my sister was even alive at the time. She said, "Here it's not good because the Germans are near. The air base is right nearby. You might get into trouble. But I'll take you to a place where you'll be safe." She had a step-father. He was a watchman over an unfinished construction site. She took me there and she told him, "You better keep an eye on him because it's very important that nothing happens to him." Just like that.

He took me in and, two days later, the Poles decided to rise up against the Germans on August first (the fiftieth anniversary has just passed). I am in that basement and we have nothing to eat.

Q: You are seventeen years old?

A: Sixteen, going on seventeen, in '44. I used to like fava beans when I was a kid. Fava beans were in season just then and there was plenty of fava beans around. I used to go out and bring in tons of fava beans.

At that time there was a conflict between the Polish government in Russia and the Polish government in London. The London government ordered the Polish underground to rise up because they wanted to show that they are the bosses in their own country. The Russians, in the meantime, sat on the other side. They had their own government. To me, it didn't mean anything. I was just a pawn in this thing. Anyway, the uprising started and the fighting started for real. At one time I thought I would become a hero and join the Polish underground. But this man told me, "Janek (I changed my name to Jan, a very common Polish name like John), don't go out. Stay here. If you want to survive, stay with me, because if the Germans won't get you, the

Poles will." There were incidents of them shooting you in the back. They came in a few times and said, "Why don't you join? After all, you can take your revenge on the Germans." He looked at me and said, "Don't go." I said, "Well, I don't have any experience, I have no military training. I'm not going."

We lasted there ten days. After ten days, they flushed us out. Originally, the Germans were retreating. When the Poles started the uprising, they turned back on Warsaw and took revenge on the Poles and on Warsaw and on everything else. So we were flushed out by the Ukrainian collaborators again. They took us to a green market in a suburb of Warsaw. We were there for four days in the open. I had my little niche under a table and I was watching the scene that was going on. The Ukrainians were going around at night raping the women. There was robbing and stealing whatever possessions these people had. I had nothing. I was just cowering under a table. After four days there, they took us to a town midway between Warsaw and Grojec, to Proszko, where they had a big railroad shed. They put us in there. Then the next day they loaded us on trains and they shipped us off to Sachsenhausen.

Q: You were completely alone in the world at that point. You didn't know where your father was, where your mother was.

A: I knew my mother had perished at this point. My sister, I didn't know what happened to her. I am all alone. I am Jewish. Jews are not supposed to be alive any more. No Jews are supposed to be in existence, as far as I am concerned. Sachsenhausen is outside Berlin. It was built in 1933--the original concentration camp besides Dachau. When I arrived there, my prison number was 90,529. [TAPE #2] This is what I looked like [picture]. When you went out to work, they gave a command like a military command to remove the hat. This was not the original issue. The original issue was a striped one, but this I paid for with three-quarters of a loaf of bread, which was three days' ration of bread that I saved up, or maybe I paid it in installments. This is what I survived with.

We traveled, I think, two or three days in cattle cars. Believe me, no passenger cars. Then we arrived in Sachsenhausen. Sachsenhausen was maybe thirty kilometers from Berlin. It was called Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg. It was one of the original camps that Hitler built in 1933 or '34. As I said, I was prisoner No. 90,529. By the time we

left the camp, 150,000 people had gone through in the last nine months of the war and 90,000 in the first eleven years.

When you arrived there, first of all, they put you in quarantine. What is quarantine? The dress code was cement bags with two strings on the side over the head. Nothing else. And wooden Dutch clogs. And striped pants. This was the quarantine outfit. Then they had what they called the delousing process. This was the clincher. Of course, I am circumcised. Circumcision was not practiced among the gentiles in Poland. Nobody was circumcised except the Jews.

I gave myself a name, Jan ZAJĄCZKOWSKI. My dad had a client before the war, a customer who bought shoes, whose name was ZAJĄCZKOWSKI. It came into my head just out of the clear blue sky. ZAJĄCZKOWSKI in Polish is a rabbit. Unbenownst to me, my sister became Sophia ZAJĄCZKOWSKA. When I arrived there, if [they knew] I was a Jew, they would put me right out, it would be the end of me right away, it would have been curtains. I arrived with all Poles. There were no Jews at the time. Maybe there were Jews but they were in the same predicament as I was: disguised as Poles that were caught up in the Polish uprising.

The delousing was the shaving of the pubic hair. So you stand in line. Everybody is naked. Instinct tells you, do I look different than all the others? Of course I do

because they all have foreskins and I don't have any foreskin. My turn comes up and I go to the back of the line. I figure maybe the guy will be so tired that he'll never pay any attention to what the others look like. Somehow I passed this travail and nobody noticed me. Quarantine was strictly sitting in the barracks. The Germans were paranoid about contagious diseases. So we sat through that. Then they assigned me to what they called a juvenile barrack. They had a barrack for all juveniles: Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, no other nationalities.

Q: Not necessarily Jews?

A: No Jews. There was no such thing as Jews at that time. The only Jews they had in Sachsenhausen--they had four barracks full of Jews--were counterfeiters. In Sachsenhausen they had a counterfeiting operation. Years ago there was a book out called "Operation Bernhardt." These were the Jews from Sachsenhausen that were counterfeiting dollars and pounds sterling. They were completely isolated from the rest of the camp by barbed wire. They had literally roofs of barbed wire so they shouldn't reach out and hand out that money. When they went to the shower, they

went with separate escort so they don't have any connections with the rest of the camp.

The camp was huge. I realized later that Stalin's son was in that camp. They had a camp within a camp, called "The Prominenten Camp." They had Leon Blum, the prewar Prime Minister of France. King Leopold of Belgium was there. After the assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944, all the prominent Germans were in Sachsenhausen. But they were separated from the rest of the camp. Besides that, they had a Russian POW camp nearby. The camp was huge. When we arrived there in '44, there was some sort of normalcy. They had an orchestra and they also had soccer games on Sunday. But they also had their hangings. They used to hang them on the goalposts of the soccer field. We would march by. They would have a parade in front of the hangings. Hanging was for trying to escape.

Q: So you got through the quarantine.

A: I got through the quarantine. I was bunking with a Polish fellow from Warsaw with whom I got very friendly. I don't know if he knew I was Jewish. After the war was over, I told him. Every week they had what they called "louse control," looking for lice in the pubic hair with a

magnifying glass. Who did that? The Block Alteste, meaning the supervisor on the block. His name was Erik. He was there since 1934. He was a German Communist. So every time they had the "louse control," I would try to wheedle my way out. You stood on a table with your arms stretched out and your legs apart. He would go under the arms and mostly in the pubic hair. Again I was afraid. One time I got so tired of this I went in and told Erik, "I want to talk to you," in German. I am very fluent in German, can speak German very well. So he said, okay, come in. He had a little cubicle of his own at the entrance of the camp. He said, "What is it?" I said, "Erik, I know you are a Communist from before the war. You must have some sympathy for the Jews." He says, "Well, what is it?" I said, "I am telling you, I am a Jew. I am afraid every time I go to you for the louse control you'll discover me and you'll make a big to-do and, before you know it, I'll be in the hands of the Gestapo." He took off on me. "How dare you pass yourself off as something that you're really not!" This was the German mentality in him. Everything has to be neat and orderly. You don't disguise yourself. He was an idiot. The years in the camp got to him. But he didn't turn me in. Then when it got a little chaotic there, they gave up on

this stupid louse control. We were full of lice, by the way. We couldn't control it because of the conditions.

Q: What did your daily routine consist of?

A: We went out to work. With my father being a shoemaker, I thought I would be a shoemaker. In the morning, very early, we would get our bread, a quarter of a loaf, and something to drink. Then we washed ourselves and we started out about six o'clock. We would gather up in the groups we were assigned to and we would march out of the camp. As we were marched out, they had the guards with dogs. We went to this barrack where they would bring shoes back from the front and from all kinds of depots. The Germans used to like hobnails on their shoes. So we would replace the hobnails.

But besides that, in the adjoining barrack, they had another group of people that were ripping apart shoes from the extermination camps. They were breaking off the heels because they always had the impression that Jews were hiding gold in their heels. Remember Maxwell Smart? He always had something in the heel that he would flip. I don't know how much gold they found, but they were so idiotic. The pile of shoes was like a huge haystack. A mountain of shoes. We

had a mountain of shoes also in the regular boots. There was a tarpaulin over ours but theirs were just loose. Whatever they would rip apart, they would throw it out on that mountain.

So this was my original assignment. For some reason or other, I decided to appropriate a pair of shoes there instead of the clogs, because up till then I was in wooden shoes. I figured, I'm working in it, I might as well get a pair of shoes. Well, I got caught. So I was gotten out of there. They put me on another job where they were manufacturing antitank bazookas. It was a huge operation with about seven barracks. There were night shifts and day shifts. My job was to drill a little hole for the sight of the bazooka. The bazooka was a very simple implement. It was a steel pipe. They would fill it with dynamite. They had a projectile in the front and then a trigger device. You took it on your shoulder and pressed the trigger. This was the sight and all day long I would just drill that sight. Then you released it and dynamite in the pipe would blow the projectile against the tank. Any German infantryman carried three or four of these bazookas. If you got close enough, it was very effective. They had a test there. At one time they hung some people because they thought they were sabotaging. Lo and behold, one day early in 1944, they

had a wave of American bombers and there was no more bazooka factory. It was flattened.

Q: In all the time you were there, was there ever any news from other places? Were there rumors all the time? You had no idea what was going on in any other part?

A: No, it was completely isolated. The German civilians could see us marching back and forth. So when they bombed us out from the bazooka factory, we used to go out and clear debris from the bombing. We used to go out on Kommandos, a group of ten with a couple of guards. If a house collapsed, we would clear something away, poke in the ruins. If a road got damaged, we would go out and clear the road. We went out one time and the bombers came over and we lost the guards. We marched back ourselves to the camp without the guards. They both got killed. We were under a trestle and bombs fell on both sides and chewed them up to nothing. We swept up the guards and looked at each other and said, "What do we do now?" We decided the camp was safer than the outside because the bombers knew where the camp was.

Q: So this you did from August of '44 right through that winter to April of '45. You were able to survive the winter. It must have been very cold there.

A: That was the worst--the pits--and there was nothing to eat. They gave us so little because they didn't have much. You've heard the expression "mussulmans" in the camp. A lot of mussulmans in that camp.

Q: So your routine stayed pretty much the same?

A: Yes, through that nine-month period. In April, as the Russians approached, they started to liquidate the camp. The reason they liquidated it was because they tried to save themselves. They tried to run to the British lines. They didn't want to fall into the Russians' hands. So instead of running themselves and leaving us alone, they started marching us out. One morning in late April, we got up and they lined us up in groups of five hundred and escorted us out of the camp. The first day, they gave us one loaf of bread each, I think (I don't remember).

Q: This was the Russians?

A: No, the Germans

Q: Was this a death march?

A: Yes, it turned out to be a death march. We didn't know what march it was going to be. They drove us northwest towards Lubeck because the British were advancing from that area and the guards wanted to fall into British hands. So they started five hundred men--we had no women in our camp. The first night, they put us up in a huge barn. Of course, the food was gone. We ate it up the first day. There were rumors that at night they would put the barn on fire. They trained machine guns on the barn, I know that. The rumor was that at night they'd put the barn on fire and kill everybody. Somehow we survived that night. They didn't do that. The next night, again they set up the machine guns and they made us run a gauntlet of sorts. We thought this was going to be it, they were going to do us in. But in the meantime we had lost people. There was one guy riding on a bike in the back. He was shooting the people that were falling by the wayside. He was so coldblooded, so pale, he had a deadly pallor. He was a lieutenant of the SS. We started calling him "The Killer." We tried to drag these people along because we knew what they were doing.

Q: How did you feel at this time? Were you fairly healthy?

A: I was quite healthy. I wasn't emaciated. I was hungry but not emaciated. Somehow I had the strength.

Q: And mentally, you were sharp?

A: Apparently, I must have been. As you can see, it is still quite vivid to me. I haven't consulted with my sister or my father. (My father is getting a little mixed up in his head.) The time sequences in '42-'43 may be a little bit off because we were in places that I didn't describe to you.

Q: So at this time you didn't feel you were at death's door?

A: No, I didn't think so. Somehow I just went along as long as my feet were carrying me. We had cases where they were flying over--I think it was the Americans--dropping leaflets, threatening the Germans, if they'll find any more dead bodies on the road, they will prosecute all

these killers. All of a sudden, out of the blue sky, later on, an International Red Cross truck appeared and started picking up the people that were falling by the wayside before they were being shot. They were loading them on the back of a truck. They weren't getting killed.

I think we must have marched for about a week. At one time we found a dead horse and we started cutting it up. Somehow I found a German army mess kit that I carried with me. We cut up that horse and I got a piece of meat and I thought this would be my emergency ration for me and my friend that I bunked with. We saved it for a real crisis. We never ate it because as soon as we got liberated I threw away the mess kit with the horse meat. One night they took whatever was left of the five hundred--I don't know how many; a lot of people died because they were so emaciated at that point--and they put us up in a school overnight. We knew they were there at night when we walked in. My friend and I found a school locker with two compartments. We laid it on its side. He climbed in the top of the locker and I slept in the bottom of the locker. We feel asleep. In the morning we woke up and there were no guards and we see Russian soldiers coming. It was somewhere around Neuruppin, Wittenberge, in Germany. The Russians asked us who we were. I said, "I am Jewish." The Russian soldier was a Russian-

Jewish soldier. He spoke to me in Yiddish. In the period of nine months, I hadn't spoke a Yiddish word. All of a sudden, I started babbling that I am a Jew. I don't know how it came to me. The whole thing was over just like that.

Q: So you were liberated. Then what?

A: Then I think I am the only Jew left in the world. This is in Germany. Again I am dressed in this stupid prison outfit with this hat. This friend and I are together like bosom buddies. So I said to this soldier, "What do I do now?" He says, "You can do anything you want, go wherever you want." So I said, "I have nowhere to go. I don't know where to go. I think I am the only one in this world alive. I don't have anybody." Then it struck me. At that time I became conscious. I said, why did I survive? What do I do now? Why am I here? But I didn't break down.

This Polish fellow says, "Let's go get something to eat," because we were very hungry. I said, "How do we get something to eat?" He said, "We'll go into the first farmer and ask him to give us something to eat." So we go in there. He was cowed by us somehow. We were strange people. Before that, we stopped a couple of German soldiers and made them strip. All of a sudden, I am wearing a German air

force uniform, with boots and everything. He is wearing another German uniform. We go into this farmer and we ask him to make us a dozen eggs each. He says, "I don't have it." We said, "It's either that or we bring in a Russian soldier." That terrorized him immediately. That was terror. He would have done us a favor--because we wouldn't have brought the Russian soldier--if he hadn't made those eggs because we got so sick. We got diarrhea, of course. This friend of mine said he had the idea what to do for that. He said, "We're going to burn some charcoal." He burned wood and ate the charcoal to stop the diarrhea. I couldn't do it, I couldn't even take charcoal. It wasn't my style of getting well. To this very day, I don't take any medication. I refuse.

Then we stopped a couple of German soldiers and took away their bicycles, because the Germans were already disarmed at that time. These were all disarmed German soldiers that were wandering around. The Russians hadn't rounded them up yet into the prison camps. We somehow felt very strong all of a sudden and we took away their bicycles. We didn't go too far on those bicycles because, right up the road where we were going, there was a Russian company waiting for our bicycles. They were rounding up bicycles themselves for their own troops and they took away our

bicycles. So we were marching. I think one night we slept in this castle right after we were liberated. I remember that.

Then, maybe a day or so later, we met up with the Polish army that was advancing on Berlin. The Russians had organized a Polish army in Russia to liberate Poland and advance on to Germany. Actually, it was a Polish army with a lot of Russians mixed in because they were the watchdogs of the Poles. There were also a lot of Jewish fellows that served in the Polish army that had escaped from Poland to Russia. In order to literally get out of Russia, they joined up with the Polish army. There is a whole history to this. There is a sequel to it. We met up with them. I was with the Polish army for a few days. They fed us. Then we got on a train heading east towards Poland. It was an open freight car and a sudden spring snowstorm came. One morning we woke up and the freight car was all full of snow.

My dad, in the meantime, was in Germany with this German-Jewish couple and the other fellow, the house painter. He kept nagging the Germans that we were with, "What happened to my kids? Why didn't they show up?," in Germany where he was in _____. He didn't end up in _____. I'll tell you later where he ended up. He kept nagging them, "Please tell me what happened to my kids.

I am ready for anything." So finally one guy blurts out this story: "Look, Abraham, don't bother us. Something happened. The kids were shot and they were buried in the park." There was an adjoining park where I was grazing the geese. This was a huge Polish park. "They were buried in the park. Something happened. I can't tell you why or how, but don't bother us any more." Well, what can my father do? Nothing. From there, they were evacuated to Austria, to a town near Zell-am-See, between Salzburg and Innsbruck. He was evacuated there as the Russians were approaching. He ended up being liberated by the American army, the 101st airborne.

Q: Where had he been taken when he was taken away from you?

A: He was taken to ~~Kotpus~~ COTTBUS. From ~~Kotpus~~ COTTBUS, when the Russians approached, they shipped him out. In that area, in Zell-am-See, they dumped all the money they were making in Sachsenhausen. The Germans were to have a redoubt there. In that area they were going to hold their last fight. They dumped crates of money into that Zell-am-See. They are still looking in the bottom of that lake for all kinds of treasures. There was a story about it a few years ago

in the paper, how they were trying to dig it up. I am not making this up. It's all true.

My father was liberated by the American army. But again there is a Jewish foolishness or phobia about a decent burial: how can you leave two kids lying in the park for their remains to rot away? So he decided when he was liberated that he was going to go back to Poland and dig us up and then forget Poland and never again stay there. He took a train back just to assure himself that this is what took place. On the way, he meets a guy from our town, just outside of Lodz. He sees this guy. You have to understand, in 1945, people were running all over Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, going from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary.... He caught his finger in the door of the train from excitement.

When I came back to my town, my sister was already there. She wound up in Berlin, working for Siemens as a slave laborer. Then for AEG, which is another big German conglomerate. She passed herself off as a Pole in Germany, so she was not in a concentration camp but was used as forced labor. She was liberated maybe a couple of days before me. She headed back home to that same lady.

I'll tell you one more episode. I told you I took the name ZAJACZKOWSKI. This ZAJACZKOWSKI wasn't a ficitious

name, these were clients of my dad. The wife of this Mr. ZAJACZKOWSKI, in 1942, came to where we were staying in my father's home town, in Kotzk. At that time my father and mother felt the baby was a burden. The whole idea during the war was to roam, not to stay in one place, to be able to evade one raid after another. But if you were burdened with a child, you couldn't move around. That's why people were giving away children to the gentiles to keep.

So this lady traveled about 140 kilometers and she came to us in this place. We were ready to give away this little girl. It was all set. She traveled by train and cart. She had no interest in it. She didn't need the child. She had her own children. It was just sheer decency. If you wanted to find a decent person, this was it. She was there a day or two just to get acquainted with her and set it up. Well, at the last minute, my mother decided, no. She conferred with my father. I remember that very well. The saying went, "If we won't survive, the child won't know that it's Jewish." Maybe it's chauvinism of a sort. Today you would call it "politically incorrect," because the child should be able to survive on its own. Whether it is going to be Jewish or not is of no consequence. But in those days and in that tradition... So the woman went away empty-handed.

When I came back, my sister was already staying with that woman, this Mrs. PRAJACZKOWSKI. Then I arrived and found my sister there. She said to us, "You see, if you had given me your sister, you would have had another sister today." But it wasn't meant to be that way. Had she been given away, as you can see, my mother did not have really Jewish features--whatever Jewish features are. She was very fluent in Polish. A lot of Jewish people were hiring themselves out to Germany as forced laborers. They got lost in the crowd in Germany or roamed around. In Poland also, she could work as a laborer and be free to roam. The other thing was that she had this sister of my father's who was like her own child. When she married, she lived with us all her married life. She wrote to my father, "If you can't accommodate your sister, don't tell me to give anything away and escape, because you know how I feel about your sister."

Q: So you came here in 1948.

A: Yes. As a matter of fact, when we came there was a bit of a hoopla in Boston about us. We came on the first ship under a new law.

Q: Under what circumstances did you come here? How were you able to come here?

A: It was nothing spectacular. It took about two or three years. An uncle survived, my mother's sister's husband, but he lost his wife and four kids. He passed himself off as a gentile and wound up on a farm in eastern Germany, near Breslau. He somehow arrived here earlier. He had a cousin in Brooklyn. They mailed him an affidavit. I think he sent us an affidavit that he'll put us up. But when we arrived here and saw the conditions he lived in, I didn't think he could put anybody up. Meantime, HIAS brought us. When we arrived in Boston, I have a clipping from the New York Times. They were interviewing us in Boston in 1948. I am going to look it up in the archives. In the New York Public Library, I found a microfilm of our arrival, where we were interviewed. The Globe must have it also because I remember The Globe being there too. We arrived at an army pier in Boston in '48.

Q: After it was all over and you realized what had happened to so many Jews throughout the war, how did you feel about it?

A: It is fifty years after the fact. First of all, it is unbelievable what happened. Every time you see an episode about the Holocaust--you look at "Schindler's List" or "Au Revoir Les Infants," which is a great movie--I think two Jewish kids were in that school. Multiply it by what happened, and what gave them the right to get it into their heads that the people who were killed had no right to live? What was it that we did that was so horrible that brought on this wrath of destroying? Now, of course, I am an American and I did quite well for myself. We had a life of our own. We had family. I see gatherings here of families. Last year my dad was ninety and we celebrated his ninetieth birthday. I couldn't get more than ten people together. If I were to tell you what we lost... My dad had two brothers and four sisters. All had three or four kids. None came back. One of my cousins was in the Warsaw ghetto and was shot going over the wall bringing in some food. One of my uncles I found lying on the sidewalk from hunger. Then my mother had two sisters and two brothers, all with children. None survived. For some reason or other, our town was terribly decimated. Some ran off to Russia right before the war and survived. In Russia it was much easier.

My wife was taken to Russia during the war and she survived in deep Russia. She wasn't in the Holocaust, but

she had her own Holocaust of sorts in Russia. They suffered terrible hunger in Russia during the war. She was orphaned at eight years old when her mother died in 1940. Her dad got separated, so she wound up with an aunt in deep Russia whose husband was serving in the Soviet army.

Now you have the revisionists and the deniers. Somehow a hole didn't open up. They had to be killed by somebody. They had to be executed. They had to be exterminated. "Exterminating" is such a terrible word because it sounds like you are exterminating roaches. Maybe "exterminating" is a bad word. Life didn't mean anything. Nobody paid for it. Not many paid for it. The few grubby dollars they give out in restitution, for what they did to deprive a person of an education, of a family, of everything else.

Q: What did you end up doing here?

A: Nothing serious. I just do a lot of reading.

Q: You have three children.

A: Very nice boys

Q: When did you tell your children about your experiences?

A: My son, who is 42 years old, all of a sudden out of a clear blue sky about two weeks ago, said, "Did you see 'Au Revoir Les Enfants' the other night?," when they were showing it again on Channel 13 in New York. So I said, "Yes, what do you mean?" He said, "I saw it about three or four times. It's a very good movie. Dad, why don't we go to the Holocaust Museum?" So I said, "Norman, I think it's almost too late to go. Why didn't you ask me a little earlier? I would have told you what it was all about." So he said, "Yes, maybe you're right." Then my youngest son also called for some reason and I spoke to him and he said, "Dad, let's make a date for the Holocaust Museum." Maybe they think I'm on my way, but I'm not.

Q: Had you told them?

A: Oh, they are aware of it. They know my dad. My dad isn't as fluent in English as I am, but he is quite good at it. He reads The Times every day. But he has the accent and they know what we went through. They know there is no grandmother. I am sure they know something, if not the details. I don't see them that much. When they were kids, we were busy with school and business and so forth. Now THEY ARE FINDING OUT WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT THROUGH BOOKS, FILMS & OTHER WAYS.

LOUIS SHULMAN *
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4/15/00

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

Thank you for your lovely letter & attendance at the conference which was quite exciting & an educating experience. I was born in Warsaw, Poland, but spend my first years of my life & youth in a town called Grodzisk Mazowiecki, 30 Kilometers South of Warsaw. In Nov. 1940 we were driven into the Warsaw ghetto. We stayed there (My father, Mother & two sisters) for awhile then went to Hrubieszow in Eastern Poland where it was said things are "better." There was no Escape from the germans as it was proven to us. From there we went to a town called Kock, where my father was born and reared. He's still alive at ripe age of 96, lives on Roosevelt Island in Manhattan.

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About 1942 my dad went back to Warsaw then got a job repairing shoes & boots for the SS. He soon sent for me & my sister two years younger. I worked ~~fixing~~ shining boots, loading freight cars with supplies for the Russian front. My sister who lives in Westchester worked in the apothecary of veterinary medication. The outfit was evacuated in 1944 taking my father to Germany. My mother & my other sister died either in Treblinka or executed in the area which is well known as a killing ground mentioned in the book "Ordinary Men" by Christopher Browning. We were taken out to be shot on July 30 1944 on the eve of the Polish uprising. We managed to escape & in turn was captured during the uprising on Aug 10 & shipped to K.C. Sachsenhausen where I gave myself an gentile name (Jan Zajaczkowski). I was ~~to~~ liberated by the Soviet Army in late April 1945 after being marched for a week. That is all I can give you in two pages. Once again thank you for wanting to hear from a survivor.

Sincerely Louis Hartman

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Herbert A. Friedman

The Wexner Heritage Foundation
551 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022
212 355 6115
Fax 212 751 3739

Mr. Louis Shulman
9 Cedar Row
Lakewood, NJ 08701

May 2, 2000

Dear Mr. Shulman,

Thank you for your letter. You packed a great deal of information in only two pages. I was very impressed with your large number of narrow escapes. It was sad to read about your mother and one sister, but it was wonderful to hear that your father is still alive at 96. I am going on 82, and it gives me hope when I hear that 96 is a possibility.

I'm grateful that you took the time to write, because a letter like yours is the best way for us, rabbis and educators, to teach young pupils the human side of the Shoah. Statistics are one thing - but listening to what one person experienced makes it real.

Most sincerely,

Herbert A. Friedman

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Shalom

Apr. 18, 2000

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

It is most altruistic on your part to want to "listen and tell."

Exactly 54 years ago I, at the age of 9, was at Schlachtensee, having arrived with parents and sister by lorry through Stettin.

Could you please tell me how this illegal operation worked?

Recently, I have written segments

The Tomb of Rachel

Compliments of: General Israel Orphans Home for Girls / Jerusalem 132 Nassau Street, New York, NY 10038 (212) 267-7277

Judith H. Traub
15 Greenleaf Hl
Great Neck, NY 11023

Shalom

Memoirs of war-time experiences.

Enclosed please find copy of one of these chapters. Can you suggest who might be interested in the publication of this writing?

Thank you for your interest and sharing it with me and other survivors.

Sincerely,
Judy Traub
(Orka Hechtkopf)

The Tomb of Rachel

Compliments of: General Israel Orphans Home for Girls / Jerusalem 132 Nassau Street, New York, NY 10038 (212) 267-7202

A Birthday

* Judy Traub
[redacted]

The courtyard was surrounded by a crumbling stone wall. Two tall trees stretched their scrawny limbs towards the cloudless sky, and weeds grew everywhere. Three mud huts and an outhouse stood in each corner of the yard and a well in its center.

One mud house housed an Uzbek couple, the other a Polish-Jewish expatriate, and the last was occupied by my family.

It was hot. My parents and our expatriate neighbor sat on a make-shift wooden bench in front of their hut. They were engaged in a serious, hushed conversation. As I listened, I discerned isolated words: "died, illness, misfortune." Were they referring to our neighbor's young son whose death from typhoid I witnessed a month ago? or was it his wife's death two weeks later.

The conversation was interrupted by the chanting call from the minaret of a nearby mosque, summoning Muslims to the evening prayers. When it resumed, puzzling words reached my ears:

"Roosevelt, president, peace ..."

It was mid April, 1945 in Samarkand, in the Uzbek Republic, a week before my eighth birthday. A time of celebratory anticipation became a time of deep mourning. Our "savior," Franklin Delano Roosevelt, president of the United States of America, half way across the world, died and with him our hope for peace.

On the morning of my birthday, April 20 (in common with Hitler), I was awakened by my sister's scream. There was a deadly scorpion on our shared pillow! While my father disposed of the venomous creature and my mother sprinkled water and swept the dusty mud floor of our one-room hut, I rehearsed a many-versed poem my sister wrote on my mother's request for me to recite on my birthday. I was nervous, dreading the task that lay ahead. Fifty years later, I still remember the first two lines that ironically proclaimed: "Today is my birthday, the happiest day of the year."

I don't recall the birthday celebration, but I vividly recall my father taking me at its conclusion to the local photo-

grapher. There he presented me with a typical Arab headcovering worn by males. It was four cornered, embroidered and hand made. I desired this bright cap forever, and wore it proudly as I posed for the photographs. At the same time, however, I was selfconscious of my general appearance. I looked emaciated and skinny after a serious bout with yellow jaundice. I missed attending second grade and was tutored by my mother in school subjects and instructed by my father in Hebrew.

Before we left the photographer, he led us to his garden behind the shop, and picked purple, long-stemmed irises which he gave to me in honor of my birthday.

As my father and I walked home, I beamed with joy, with my new cap on my head, and the beautiful flowers in my hand. My happiness did not last long. The irises were snatched from my clenched fist by a passing boy, and I was left with tightly bled stems.

That night, my mother stood by my bed with an orange, a fruit I never

saw nor tasted before. Where and how she obtained it remains unknown to me.

She called it "a golden apple from Eden." And I believed her.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

The Wexner Heritage Foundation

551 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022
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Fax 212 751 3739

Ms. Judith H. Traub
15 Greenleaf Hill
Great Neck, NY 11023

May 2, 2000

Dear Ms. Traub,

I read your birthday vignette with interest because there was a genuine flavor to the mood you created, beginning with your mud hut in Samarkand.

There were scores of thousands of Jews who had fled or were taken to the Muslim republics beyond the Ural mountains - Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc. As the Nazis moved eastward to invade Russia, many Jews fled even further eastward from their homelands to escape. Also the Russians were happy to welcome the refugees, whom they needed as slave labor, for cutting lumber and building a rail line.

You asked about the illegal operations that brought you to Schlachtensee. When the war finished in May 1945 (Roosevelt died in March, Truman became president) and Hitler was dead, all of you living in the Russian republics, were transported westward by an organization called Bricha (Hebrew for "Flight") which was part of the Palestine Jewish underground army called Haganah (Defense Force). These young Jews shepherded you westward all the way across Europe right to the border of Germany. Why Germany? Because the American Army was there and under the American flag you would finally be free and safe and cared for. So that was the best destination. You couldn't go back to whatever homeland you came from originally because everything was destroyed in the war.

So, the Bricha men brought you to the closest point they could, which was Stettin. Large numbers of Jews were gathered there in makeshift dwellings. How to get you into Germany? That's where I came into the picture.

I was a Chaplain (Captain) in the United States Army, stationed in Berlin. There were 2000 Jewish soldiers in all four Allied Armies (Russian, American, French and British) and I was assigned to care for their needs. Secretly, I was also a member of the Bricha organization, recruited into that by Mr. Ben Gurion himself (but that's another long story. You can read a lot of this stuff in my memoir entitled "Roots of the Future", which you can order from Amazon.com.)

My orders from Bricha were to get six large Army trucks, which I could easily do, holding 50 persons each, so that was a total of 300 people. Drivers, gunners, mechanics were all Palestinian Jewish soldiers. We set out from Berlin at dusk, got up to the Stettin border point by midnight, (about 150 miles) and arranged to pay the bribes. Stettin is on Polish soil, so there were Polish guards on one side of the crossing point, and Russian guards on the German side, because this was the Russian Zone of Germany. The bribes were divided between the two sets of guards, and the cost was one carton of cigarettes for each Jew we loaded on our trucks. A carton of cigarettes cost $150 on the black market. So your parents, sister and you cost $600. The whole load of 300 people cost $45,000. For one night's work. This process continued for scores and scores of nights.

Once bribes were settled, we loaded, tied down the tarpaulins, and drove fast to get back to Berlin before dawn. The whole operation was under cover of darkness. We brought you first to a building we had in Wedding, which was the French sector of Berlin. You washed, ate and slept. The next day we took you to the camp Schlachtensee.

The cigarettes came from Jewish soldiers; from my father in Connecticut; and ultimately from the Joint Distribution Committee which sent over shiploads once the port of Antwerp was reconstructed. Clear?

Now you tell me how long you stayed in Berlin, how you left there, where did you go, when?, etc. etc.

As for your question concerning publication of the chapters you've written, I really have no suggestions. I could not get one of the large houses in New York to publish my book, so a friend in Jerusalem did it. I did not have an agent trying for me. Perhaps the answer for you is to find yourself an agent who is in the business of trying to sell a manuscript to a publisher.

Thanks again for writing. With best regards, I am,

Sincerely,

Herbert A. Friedman

The Wexner Heritage Foundation

551 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022
212 355 6115
Fax 212 751 3739

Mr. John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Illinois 60645-5319

November 10, 2000

Dear Mr. Fink,

Thank you for responding to our letter about sending your story to the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project at the World Jewish Congress. I am writing to you to confirm that we received your letter and we will forward your story to the World Jewish Congress in your name. This is an important project that will help preserve the testimonies of you and other survivors, so the lessons learned and the people who perished during the Holocaust are never forgotten.

Your story is extremely compelling and touching. One thing that you referred to many times was the fact that the concentration camps, deportations, and ghettos all occurred within plain sight of the civilian population. About seven years ago, I participated in the March of the Living. This is a trip that unites 6,000 Jewish young adults from around the world to visit the horrors of five concentration camps and what is left of the ghettos in Poland. After Poland, we spend a week in Israel. It was an amazing experience. One thing that really struck me on the trip was how close the concentration camps and ghettos were located to major highways, civilian homes, and community buildings. There is no way civilians could not have known what was happening on the other side of the barbed wire fences.

Again, we want to thank you for sharing your story. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to call me, Jamie Goldberg, Rabbi Herbert Friedman's assistant, at 212-355-6115. You may also contact Ms. Yudin at the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project at 914-722-1880.

I hope you and your family are having a happy and healthy New Year.

B'Shalom,

Jamie Goldberg

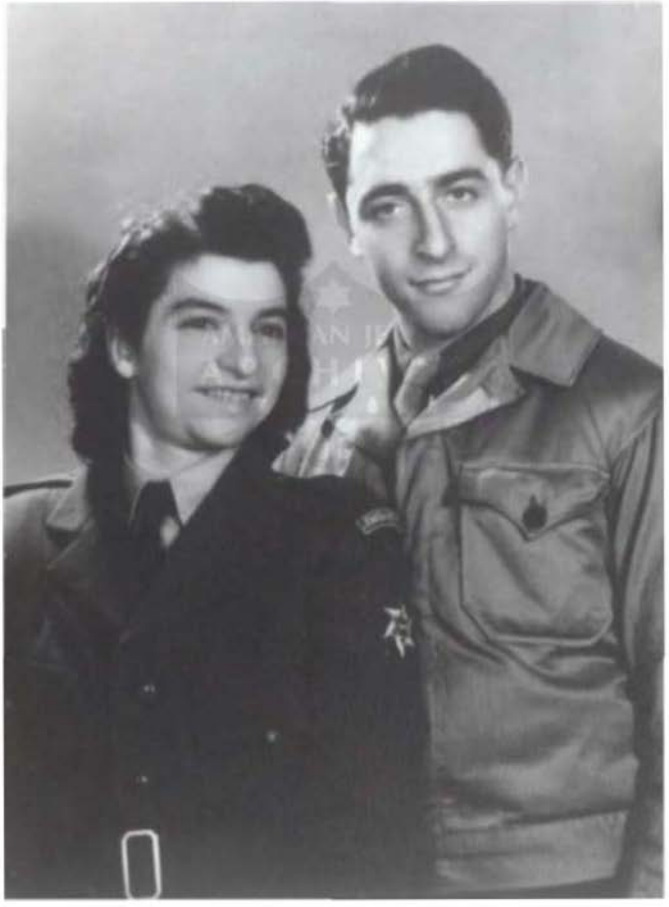
Jamie Goldberg

John Fink + Alice
6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Ill. 60645-5319

JAN 17 200

'Life Reborn'
Washington, D.C

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES



[redacted]

Hans Finke + Alice Redlich
Hamburg - Germany. 1948.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Illinois 60645-5319
Tel: (773) 764-8283

November 1.2000.

HERBERT A.FRIEDMAN
THE WEXNER HERITAGE FOUNDATION FAX: 212 751 3739
551.MADISON AV.
NEW YORK,N.Y. 10022

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

Thank you for your kind letter.I am surprised you remember my report. Pleas,e feel free to send the story which began for me already in 1933 under Adolf Hitler,to Charlotte whom I know and also her mother and whose father we knew in Bergen-Belsen.

I talked to Ezer and Reuma last week and now they have an office in Tel-Aviv and we can correspond or fax again.

Best wishes to you and your family,

Sincerely Yours,

John and Alice.

Herbert A. Friedman

The Wexner Heritage Foundation 551 Madison Avenue New York, New York 10022 212 355 6116 Fax 212 751 3739

Mr. John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, IL 60645-5319

March 28, 2000

Dear Mr. Fink,

Thank you for sending me your story. It was touching in its honesty and so helpful because it was so personal. As I read it, I could feel some of your pain and agony and fear.

Your story is one of the best I have received, due to the detail, which brings home to any young American Jewish student exactly what happened in those terrible 12 years. The details of your own youth in the years of the 20's and early 30's, made it easy to understand. This was a difficult time, but it had a certain normalcy, such as your father's good advice to learn a trade, which really saved your life. And then came the shock of your transport to the East. I will find your account very helpful in our Wexner teaching program.

It is a wonderful coincidence that your daughter Esther is a member of the Wexner Seminar group in Chicago. You realize she was chosen from hundreds of others, out of whom we selected only 40 persons, because of her record as a leader in the work of Federation, Day School, Community Center and many other good causes. Give my regards to Esther.

The second coincidence is my close friendship with Ezer and Reuma. They built a house next door to ours in Caeserea. And the third coincidence comes when you worked with the JDC in Belsen and in the Warburg house in Blankenese. Edward Warburg, who later was president of the JDC for 25 years, was one of my closet friends when I was director of the National UJA. I hope we have a chance to meet personally some day.

Many books have been written about the Holocaust by great scholars; many museums have been erected; many conferences have been convened, the latest in Sweden; and a trial has recently occurred in London wherein a man has denied there ever was a Holocaust. There is great awareness in the world about

Herbert A. Friedman

The Wexner Heritage Foundation 551 Madison Avenue New York, New York 10022 212 355 6115 Fax 212 751 3739

Hitler's's war to eradicate the Jewish people.

But all this activity becomes real only when one student, one teenager, one person reads the story of what happened to another one, a victim.

Your story will make it easier for us to communicate the horror and the lessons to the next generation. The slogan "Never Again" is abstract; your personal experience is concrete.

Thank you again for responding in your own words.

Sincerely,

Herbert A. Friedman

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Illinois 60645-5319
Tel: (773) 764-8283 u FAX.

March 5.2000.

RABBI HERBERT FRIEDMAN
THE WEXNER FOUNDATION
NEW YORK,N.Y. 10022.

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

Thank you for your extraordinary letter,a letter from a 'MENSCH'.
We enjoyed your speech on Sunday morning,1/16th in Washington.We could have listened to you for hours.
I talked to you for only a minute on the floor about that we having been in the'I.G.Farben-H.Q.' in Frankfurt/M.in 1998,invited by the (Fritz Bauer Institut'.We were about 100 former concentration-camp-prisoners,who had to work for the 'I.G.Farben'in Auschwitz.

We are the parents of Esther Fink-Persky,who is a member of 'Wechsner' and she was married in 1986 in Chicago by Nathan Laufer. From her I found out that you are a neighbor of Ezer and Reuma in Ceaserea.I worked after my liberation for A.J.D.C. in the Warburg-Blankenese-Children's-Home with Reuma and we are friends.The last time we met was in 1995at Beit Hanassi for a reunion of the former children at the home in Germany.
We are both 'Berliners'.Alice went to London in 1938 and was sent to Belsen in 1946 as a member of 'JRU'.I went to Auschwitz in 1943.

My wife and I will travel to Hannover in April for the 55th anniversary of the liberation in Belsen.

For today,best wishes and kind regards,

Sincerely yours,
John and Alice.

John Fink
5439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Ill. 60625-5313
U.S.A.

September,10.1991.

REPORT BY JOHN FINK. (fly.HANS FINKE,BERLIN.)

I was born on August,12.1920 in Berlin-Germany.My father was a merchant and he was a veteran of WW.1.He owned a store in a suburb of Berlin. My mother died a few months after I was born and my father remarried in 1922 and my sister was born in 1923.Around that time with high inflation in Germany my father lost his business and he became an employee for a department-store.Those were bad times and I remember that we drank milk donated by the 'Quakers' in America. We moved in the 1920th into the inner city and I was for 4 years in an Elementary-school.Around 1928 there was a great depression in Germany.My father lost his job.He went peddling with foodstuff and father & mother did rent out 2 rooms of our 4-room-flat.In 1930 I was enrolled at a Middle-school which I had to leave in 1933 because of the new imposed restrictions by the Nazi-government.I went one more year to a Jewish-Middle-school.In 1933 I was Bar-Mitzwah and I belonged to a Jewish-Youth-club.With Hitler in power and the constant new regulations to hurt the Jews,my father felt it was prudent for me to leard a trade.I became an electrisian-apprentice for 4 years, I made 1-2 dollars a week.In 1938 I made my journey-man's exams and with the Nazis in control I did not get the results or certificate. In 1938 we were forced to move into a run down neighborhood where they consentrated the Jews.Every few months,new laws were implemented like wearing a Yellow-Star,ration-cards for less foods what the Germans got.We had to deliver our radios,gold & silver-items to the Nazis. Any form of disobedience would get the Gestapo to take you away. They imprisoned,tortured,killed and put people into concentration-camps. Dachau,Buchenwald,Oranienburg,Sachsenhausen were well known for what they did to people there.The 1938-progrom,they called it'Kristalnacht' took place and I witnessed the destruction of Jewish-property and synagogues in Berlin.I was fortunate to work for a small Electrical-contractor.It was a small family-enterprise,the owners were not Nazis. Still,I worked,even as aJew, on construction for Goering's Air-Ministry and I remember I saw once Professor Heinkel,the builder of the famous airplaines.

This came to an end in 1941.The Gestapo (Nazi-secret-police)Concentrated the Jews under Nazi-bosses.We had to work strictly separated from the rest of the workers.I would like to mention here that my former boss,his wife and their daughter survived the war.She was 100 year old last year and we visited them several times after the war in Berlin.I also picked up my Journey-man's -certificate from the Eletro-Union.Life was very hard in the 30th & 40th for us Jews in Berlin.We had a special Identity-card with a big 'J' on it. We had to add the name 'Israel'for a man,'Sarah' for a woman to our name.Food was short,the work was hard,purchases for many things could not be made by Jews.At night the Allied-planes started bombing-raids. We were forced to go to separate Air-shelters in the basement,supervised by the Nazi,who was in charge of the building.The denounciation by him about anything brought the Gestapo into you home.In 1938 the Polish-Jews were sent to the border with Poland and many did not survive.German-Jews who had relatives abroad and the financial means were able to emigrate.Many went to Shanghai after November 1938.Zionists,many young people made it to Palestine after 1933.The war with Poland started on September,1st 1939 and the Nazi-daily-papers were reporting the'Blitz' into Poland.Oh,they were so proud over the 'dive-bombing' of Warsaw. The Germans got their rewards in Dresden & Hamburg in 1945.From 1941-1943 I worked with other Jewish-electricians on the construction of a Machine-fabricating-factory which was and still is on the outskirts of Berlin.At that time people were sent away from the city to the East. The rumor was,they were sent to 'Labor-camps'? and we believed it. The work was hard,the food was insufficient.Some days,I remember, a friend of mine and I went to a friendly farmer and carried each a sack of 100 lbs.Potatos home.We had to remove our Yellow-star and a stop by a Police-officer could be fatal.We ate horse-meat,if we could get it.In 1943 the Nazis made a great effort to make Berlin 'Judenrein' a present for Hitler's birthday in April.In February 1943,they called it 'Grossaction'thousands of Jews were collected at a Sammelplatz,synagogues etc.put into sealed box-cars and sent East under guard.Every Berliner saw it and was aware of it.Everyone of us was in constant fear of being arrested.Lists had to be made up by the 'Jewish Community' and people were told when and where to assemble with warm clothing and a few things.

On February 28th 1943 when the Nazis arrested most Jews in Berlin, some went into hiding, many were caught, but some survived the war. I was a patient in the Jewish-hospital and was operated on appendicitis. I heard that my parents were taken away and that my sister went into hiding. On March 8th the Gestapo came to the hospital and took patients, doctors, nurses to the Sammellager, the former 'Home of the Agend' in the Hamburgerstr. which they emptied out earlier by sending the old people on transports to the East. Here we slept on floors, we had to give the Nazis our documents and had to sign papers that we went voluntary to a Labor-camp. Even at that late date we had no knowledge of extermination-camps. On the 12th of March 1943 we were moved by trucks under guard to the railway-station in the Putlitzstr. herded into freight-cars, men wemen and children, babies and infirm people. The wagon-doors were closed by the Field-police and the train moved East through the night. We were the 36th East-Transport (946) persons. It was only the first of many trips for me by train I had to make as a Nazi-prisoner. By daybreak we passed camps in Silesia where people with Yellow-stars on their clothing moved around and we thought of them as Laborers. The train stopped many times, because of German- military-trains and we came to a final stop in the afternoon. It was very quiet in the wagons. Suddenly the doors were opened by SS-men and men in blue-white pyjamas cried to jump out and leave the luggage in the cars. Very fast, younger men were separated from older ones, women, [redacted] children. We had to move to the end of the railway-platform where SS-Officers with riding-whips deceided who should go to one or the other side. We, about 200 men were driven on trucks under guard to a camp with watchtowers, wire-fences and many wooden-barracks. Many of the men who were separated from their wives and children by now realized, that we were not in a 'Labor-camp' but in a Concentration-camp or worse. The beating of us with rubber-hoses begun by the prisoners who were in chargeof the camp, mostly German-crminals and Polish-prisoners. We were herded into a cement-building where there were showers and the so called bunker, and we had to strip off our clothes, which we never saw again. They cut our hair, even under the arms and around our privates and washed us with kerosene which was very painful. After a shower they drove us out into the cold night to run to Barrack#2 in 'Monowitz-Buna' a satellite of Auschwitz.

We were told to bunk down,three to a bunk on straw.One can not imagine what everybody thought.Next morning we were given ill fitted prisoner-suits and a number was scratched into our left arm.Later we got numbers on pieces of cloth which we had to sow on our suits.All this was done to the accompaniment of blows with rubberhoses.They succeeded in breaking down many of our fellow-prisoners who committed suicide by running to the fence around the perimeter of the camp which was charged with 380 V. and by the fire of the guns of the guards on the watchtowers.Later, many run out in the field, when going to work and the SS-guards had their fun shooting them like rabbits.I was very lucky that my wound of the recent operation was not detected and did not break open during weeks and months of hard labor like carrying beams of iron and sacks of cement. It did not take long that we found out from the other prisoners who came earlier where we were and what the camp was all about.Hard labor, little food,beatings,hangings,shootings and after you lost your health to be sent to Birkenau for the gaschamber and crematoria.Our camp-commander was Obersturmfuehrer Schoettl,The Rapportfuehrer was Ober-scharfuehrer Rackers,over them was Sturmbanfuehrer H.Schwarz,a heavy set tyrant.After a few months the order came for prisoners with experience in the trade to report for work with civilians on the construction of a factory-complex for the I.G.Farben Co. I was attached to a small commando # 88.Out of 20 men 2 were electricians,the others tried to be electricians in order to have a better job,which was understandable.Luck,work,health,food determined whether you live or die. At one time I was in the 'Sick-Bay' 9/1-9/14-1943 with Pneumonia. About the life in 'Buna-Monowitz'-the chemist and writer Primo Levi has written a book 'Survival in Auschwitz' which gives a true account about the goings on at 'Buna'.Also Elie Wiesel in his 1st.book 'The Night' had written later about 'Buna' where he arrived with his father in the summer of 1944.In Professor Peter Hayes of Northwestern-University's book 'Industry & Ideology' are a few pages about I.G.Farben's-Buna with pictures on page # 357.I kept myself alive and out of trouble through two very hot summers and two cold winters.Many of the people with whom I came were selected to be shipped to Auschwitz and death.Some days we got to see the flames from the crematoria and smelled the burning flesh.On August 20,1944 Allied-Air-Forces bombed the I.G.Farben-plant for the first time.I hid in the basement of a power-plant.When we heard the sirens for the all-clear and came up,the whole plant was bombed.Still,we and all other prisoners of war,foreign forced laborers,

Arbeitsdienst Führer: Stol

and cvilians kept working and rebuilding till January 1945 when cannon-fire could be heard.The Russian-Army started an offensive in Krakow which was 55 km away.On the 18th January 1945 we were told to take our blanket,we got some bread and set to march to Gleiwitz, a city in Germany.It was cold,icy,snow,windy and it turned into a Death-march during the night.Many SS-guards,after shooting our comrades gave up and were driven away.9000 inmates of 'Buna' were on the march.850 ill prisoners remained andwere liberated by the Russian-Army, a week later.Next morning we rested at a tile-factory in Nicolai and in the afternoon we reached the city of Gleiwitz. Because we were exhausted and hungry we asked the cvilians in the street where the concentration-camp was and we stayed in the over-crowded place a few days with Allied-planes planting magnesium-bombs at night in the sky.After a few days we were taken to a railroad-siding and were tightly loadedinto open freight-cars in January,1945. No water or food.We got only more room in the cars when people died or the Gestapo shot the sick ones on railway-stations in full view of the civilian population in Germany,Czechoslovakia,Austria,all places where they tried to unload us but those camps in those countries were all overcrowded with evacuated prisoners of the East.On January,28th my father's birthday,we reached Berlin.I recognized the radio-tower and we were unloaded in the suburb of Sachsenhausen in a hangar of a former aircraft-factory.We were taken to ashowerroom,wise as we were by now,we thought they would turn the gas on, but to our surprise hot water was poured on us,it felt very good and we came out of the shower alive.I was registered in Sachsenhausen as # 129930-prisoner. After a few days many of us were shipped on February 6th to concentration camp-Flossenburg in the South of Germany.It was a long journey interrupted by bombing of raillines.There was astone-quarry and many prisoners got killed.With a wound in my head, caused by a Kapo, I was shipped on the 8th March by train with others to a so called Convalescent-Camp with the name of Bergen-Belsen.With many sick prisoners on this train and a long trip North it was no wonder that many died. The train finally stopped in one night and those who were still alive had to assemble and march to a camp-compound.In the morning we could not believe what we saw.It was March 8th.1945.

Here was a overcrowded camp,filthy and packed with people in different camps partioned by wire-fences.Men,women and children and some in civilian clothing.Many dead and many died every day.It was my luck that I run intoa German-prisoner whomI had known in Monowitz and who told me that I should get a job with the Electricians and he would see to it. Next morning my name was called out on the Apellground.I had to get delaused and showered which was not much done in this camp and I had to report to Block # 1 where the maintenance-men slept on bare wooden bunks,a luxury at Belsen.I had to report to SS-Oberscharfuehrer Steinmetz in the Electro-shop who tested me for my knowledge in the Electro-Trade. From then on,an other Jewish-electrician from Poland and I had to go and do repair & maintenance-work in the different camps and in the SS-quarters and kitchen.Risking our life we stole sausages from the SS-kitchen and brought it in the shop for the other comrades.I was so hungry that I ate the meat from the dog's-plate in the kennel.In the shop we were under supervision of three SS-men who were stationed in Auschwitz before and known there for their cruelty.But they had knowledge of the advancing armees and they became friendly.In April they knew that we were stealing food,they ordered us to share with the other fellows which we did anyway.We also put a radio in good repair. On the 12th April 1945,we heard that President Roosevelt had died but we heard too that the Allied troops advanced and the sky was full of bombers flying North & East.The only food in the last weeks we got was red or white beets and sometimes a water-soup.All of us had to drag the many dead bodies to the crematoria-area.On Friday,April 13th 1945 we noticed that the Kapos & Blockleaders and the German-Army-guards and some SS-troops left the camp.There were still Hungarian and Ukrainian-Cossac-SS who shot people every day.Most of us were sick and weak from loss of weight.Thyphus was all over the camp.Our brains did not work well anymore.When on Sunday the 15th April 1945 British tanks and troops with a loudspeaker-truck announced that we were free,we did not comprehend that after 12 years the 'Third-Reich' came to an end for us. 58ooo people were free.As an electrician,down to to 80lbs,I helped the British-engineers on request to restore power for the camp and saw the camp burned down after everybody was transferred to the Military-camp a short trip away.

10000 unburied dead were found by the British,13000 died after liberation,they could not be saved in spite of the heroic work by the British-Medical-people.
Our SS-guards were apprehended,we saw them as prisoners in our shop they were found guilty at the War-crimes-trial in Luneburg for crimes committed in Auschwitz and hanged.
The liberators of Belsen: 159th Brigade-8th Corps
1st Commander Colonel Taylor
63d Anti-Tank-Regiment-British-Army

Chief Medical Officer 2nd British Army
Briegadier Glyn Hughes

With a heavy heart Imade this report on September 15th.1991 at the request of the 'Holocaust- Memorial-Foundation of Illinois.
This was my life until 1945, 12 years under the Nazi-Regime.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

John Fink
6439 North Rockwell
Chicago, Illinois 60645 -5319
Tel: (312) 764 -8283

On the 15th April 1945 came the liberation.I spent 4454 days under the Nazis 761 days in concentration camps as a young man.
After the liberation of Belsen I worked with the army-engineers to restore power in the camp.
Later I worked on the first shows in the tented theater as an electrician under Eva Golberg the entertaining officer.I also started working for the British-Red-Cross as a store & magazine worker.When the B.R.C. turned the supply-depot over to 'UNRRA'(United Nations) I became the manager of the store till June 1947.I was promoted during this time and wore an uniform and had the rank of a lieutenant.
In 1947 in July, I became a member of the 'American-Joint-Distribution-Committee,an American Organization.I was sent to the 'Warburg-Childrens-Home' in Hamburg-Blankenese to administer the estate and was put in charge of the repair and maintenanceprogramm of 3 houses and a large garden area.
On June 20.1948 I married Alice Redlich,a nurse of the 'Jewish-Relief-Unit'(English) out of England in Bergen-Belsen.The Senior Chaplain,B.A.O.R. and Rabbi Helfgott officiated.
From October 1948 until March 1949 I held the position of Director of the 'Warburg-Childrens-Home'.Reuma Schwarz of the J.A.F.P. later Mrs.Weizman (First Lady of Israel) and Betty Adler the Director had left and new children came to Blankenese.
In March,1949 I moved back to Bergen-Belsen and became Transport-Officer for the A.J.D.C.
My wife and I left for the transit-camp in Bremen on August 22.1949.
Alice was 8 months pregnant and we arrived in New York by plane Aug.26./49.
We became American citicens on May 3.1955.
This is a very short account of my life from 1945 (liberation) up to the arrival in the United-States in 1949.

John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell St.
Chicago, Illinois 60645-5319

John Fink (Hans Finke) born: 08/12/1920. Berlin,Germany.
4 years Elementary School,1926-1930.
3 years Public Middle School 1930-1933.
1 year JewishMiddle School 1933-1934.
4 years apprenticeship-Electrician and Metal-Trade-School.
1938-1941 worked for an Electrical-Contractor in Berlin,Germany.
1941-1943 Forced Labor for Siemens.
Arrested by the Gestapo on March 8th 1943.Sent to Auschwitz on March12th with 36th East Transport.
From March 1943-January 1945 in Auschwitz III (Buna)
Forced march to Germany on January 18th 1945.
10 day trainride (open cars) to Sachsenhausen-Concentration-camp, transported from there to Flossenburg and later to Bergen-Belsen.
Liberated by British Troops on April 15th 1945.
4454 days living under the Nazis,761 days in concentration-camps.
Worked in the British Zone of Germany from 1945-1949 for the British-Red-Cross,UNRRA and A.J.D.C.
Married in Bergen-Belsen to Alice Redlich,a member of the Jewish-Relief-Team 110 from England.
Came to Chicago in Sept.1949.Worked as an electrician til 1988 and retired.I am a member of I.B.E.W.Local # 134.
4 children,Esther,David,Miriam and Debbie.6 grandchildren

John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Illinois 60645-5319
Tel: (773) 764-8283 & FAX.

March 5.2000.

RABBI HERBERT FRIEDMAN
THE WEXNER FOUNDATION
NEW YORK,N.Y. 10022.

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

Thank you for your extraordinary letter,a letter from a 'MENSCH'. We enjoyed your speech on Sunday morning,1/16th in Washington.We could have listened to you for hours.
I talked to you for only a minute on the floor about that we having been in the'I.G.Farben-H.Q! in Frankfurt/M.in 1998,invited by the (Fritz Bauer Institut'.We were about 100former concentration-camp-prisoners,who had to work for the 'I.G.Farben'in Auschwitz.

We are the parents of Esther Fink-Persky,who is a member of 'Wechsner' and she was married in 1988 in Chicago by Nathan Laufer. From her I found out that you are a neighbor of Ezer and Reuma in Ceaserea.I worked after my liberation for A.J.D.C. in the Warburg-Blankenese-Children's-Home with Reuma and we are friends.The last time we met was in 1995at Beit Hanassi for a reunion of the former children at the home in Germany.
We are both 'Berliners'.Alice went to London in 1938 and was sent to Belsen in 1946 as a member of 'JRU'.I went to Auschwitz in 1943.
My wife and I will travel to Hannover in April for the 55th anniversary of the liberation in Belsen.

For today,best wishes and kind regards,

Sincerely yours,
John and Alice.

John Fink
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March 5.2000.

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6439 N. Rockwell
Chicago, Ill. 60645-5313
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September, 10.1991.

REPORT BY JOHN FINK. (fly.HANS FINKE, BERLIN.)

I was born on August, 12.1920 in Berlin-Germany. My father was a merchant and he was a veteran of WW.1. He owned a store in a suburb of Berlin. My mother died a few months after I was born and my father remarried in 1922 and my sister was born in 1923. Around that time with high inflation in Germany my father lost his business and he became an employee for a department-store. Those were bad times and I remember that we drank milk donated by the 'Quakers' in America. We moved in the 1920th into the inner city and I was for 4 years in an Elementary-school. Around 1928 there was a great depression in Germany. My father lost his job. He went peddling with foodstuff and father & mother did rent out 2 rooms of our 4-room-flat. In 1930 I was enrolled at a Middle-school which I had to leave in 1933 because of the new imposed restrictions by the Nazi-government. I went one more year to a Jewish-Middle-school. In 1933 I was Bar-Mitzwah and I belonged to a Jewish-Youth-club. With Hitler in power and the constant new regulations to hurt the Jews, my father felt it was prudent for me to leard a trade. I became an electrisian-apprentice for 4 years, I made 1-2 dollars a week. In 1938 I made my journey-man's exams and with the Nazis in control I did not get the results or certificate. In 1938 we were forced to move into a run down neighborhood where they consentrated the Jews. Every few months, new laws were implemented like wearing a Yellow-Star, ration-cards for less foods what the Germans got. We had to deliver our radios, gold & silver-items to the Nazis. Any form of disobedience would get the Gestapo to take you away. They imprisoned, tortured, killed and put people into concentration-camps. Dachau, Buchenwald, Oranienburg, Sachsenhausen were well known for what they did to people there. The 1938-progrom, they called it 'Kristalnacht' took place and I witnessed the destruction of Jewish-property and synagogues in Berlin. I was fortunate to work for a small Electrical-contractor. It was a small family-enterprise, the owners were not Nazis. Still, I worked, even as aJew, on construction for Goering's Air-Ministry and I remember I saw once Professor Heinkel, the builder of the famous airplaines.

This came to an end in 1941.The Gestapo (Nazi-secret-police)Concentrated the Jews under Nazi-bosses.We had to work strictly separated from the rest of the workers.I would like to mention here that my former boss,his wife and their daughter survived the war.She was 100 year old last year and we visited them several times after the war in Berlin.I also picked up my Journey-man's -certificate from the Eletro-Union.Life was very hard in the 30th & 40th for us Jews in Berlin.We had a special Identity-card with a big 'J' on it. We had to add the name 'Israel'for a man,'Sarah' for a woman to our name.Food was short,the work was hard,purchases for many things could not be made by Jews.At night the Allied-planes started bombing-raids. We were forced to go to separate Air-shelters in the basement,supervised by the Nazi,who was in charge of the building.The denounciation by him about anything brought the Gestapo into you home.In 1938 the Polish-Jews were sent to the border with Poland and many did not survive.German-Jews who had relatives abroad and the financial means were able to emigrate.Many went to Shanghai after November 1938.Zionists,many young people made it to Palestine after 1933.The war with Poland started on September,1st 1939 and the Nazi-daily-papers were reporting the'Blitz' into Poland.Oh,they were so proud over the 'dive-bombing' of Warsaw. The Germans got their rewards in Dresden & Hamburg in 1945.From 1941-1943 I worked with other Jewish-electricians on the construction of a Machine-fabricating-factory which was and still is on the outskirts of Berlin.At that time people were sent away from the city to the East. The rumor was,they were sent to 'Labor-camps'? and we believed it. The work was hard,the food was insufficient.Some days,I remember, a friend of mine and I went to a friendly farmer and carried each a sack of 100 lbs.Potatos home.We had to remove our Yellow-star and a stop by a Police-officer could be fatal.We ate horse-meat,if we could get it.In 1943 the Nazis made a great effort to make Berlin 'Judenrein' a present for Hitler's birthday in April.In February 1943,they called it 'Grossaction'thousands of Jews were collected at a Sammelplatz,synagogues etc.put into sealed box-cars and sent East under guard.Every Berliner saw it and was aware of it.Everyone of us was in constant fear of being arrested.Lists had to be made up by the 'Jewish Community' and people were told when and where to assemble with warm clothing and a few things.

On February 28th 1943 when the Nazis arrested most Jews in Berlin, some went into hiding, many were caught, but some survived the war. I was a patient in the Jewish-hospital and was operated on appendicitis. I heard that my parents were taken away and that my sister went into hiding. On March 8th the Gestapo came to the hospital and took patients, doctors, nurses to the Sammellager, the former 'Home of the Agend' in the Hamburgerstr. which they emptied out earlier by sending the old people on transports to the East. Here we slept on floors, we had to give the Nazis our documents and had to sign papers that we went voluntary to a Labor-camp. Even at that late date we had no knowledge of extermination-camps. On the 12th of March 1943 we were moved by trucks under guard to the railway-station in the Putlitzstr. herded into freight-cars, men wemen and children, babies and infirm people. The wagon-doors were closed by the Field-police and the train moved East through the night. We were the 36th East-Transport (946) persons. It was only the first of many trips for me by train I had to make as a Nazi-prisoner. By daybreak we passed camps in Silesia where people with Yellow-stars on their clothing moved around and we thought of them as Laborers. The train stopped many times, because of German- military-trains and we came to a final stop in the afternoon. It was very quiet in the wagons. Suddenly the doors were opened by SS-men and men in blue-white pyjamas cried to jump out and leave the luggage in the cars. Very fast, younger men were separated from older ones, women, [redacted] children. We had to move to the end of the railway-platform where SS-Officers with riding-whips deceided who should go to one or the other side. We, about 200 men were driven on trucks under guard to a camp with watchtowers, wire-fences and many wooden-barracks. Many of the men who were separated from their wives and children by now realized, that we were not in a 'Labor-camp' but in a Concentration-camp or worse. The beating of us with rubber-hoses begun by the prisoners who were in chargeof the camp, mostly German-crminals and Polish-prisoners. We were herded into a cement-building where there were showers and the so called bunker, and we had to strip off our clothes, which we never saw again. They cut our hair, even under the arms and around our privates and washed us with kerosene which was very painful. After a shower they drove us out into the cold night to run to Barrack#2 in 'Monowitz-Buna' a satellite of Auschwitz.

We were told to bunk down,three to a bunk on straw.One can not imagine what everybody thought.Next morning we were given ill fitted prisoner-suits and a number was scratched into our left arm.Later we got numbers on pieces of cloth which we had to sow on our suits.All this was done to the accompaniment of blows with rubberhoses.They succeeded in breaking down many of our fellow-prisoners who committed suicide by running to the fence around the perimeter of the camp which was charged with 380 V. and by the fire of the guns of the guards on the watchtowers.Later, many run out in the field,when going to work and the SS-guards had their fun shooting them like rabbits.I was very lucky that my wound of the recent operation was not detected and did not break open during weeks and months of hard labor like carrying beams of iron and sacks of cement. It did not take long that we found out from the other prisoners who came earlier where we were and what the camp was all about.Hard labor, little food,beatings,hangings,shootings and after you lost your health to be sent to Birkenau for the gaschamber and crematoria.Our camp-commander was Obersturmfuehrer Schoettl,The Rapportfuehrer was Ober-scharfuehrer Rackers,over them was Sturmbanfuehrer H.Schwarz,a heavy set tyrant.After a few months the order came for prisoners with experience in the trade to report for work with civilians on the construction of a factory-complex for the I.G.Farben Co. I was attached to a small commando # 88.Out of 20 men 2 were electricians,the others tried to be electricians in order to have a better job,which was understandable.Luck,work,health,food determined whether you live or die. At one time I was in the 'Sick-Bay' 9/1-9/14-1943 with Pneumonia. About the life in 'Buna-Monowitz'-the chemist and writer Primo Levi has written a book 'Survival in Auschwitz' which gives a true account about the goings on at 'Buna'.Also Elie Wiesel in his 1st.book 'The Night' had written later about 'Buna' where he arrived with his father in the summer of 1944.In Professor Peter Hayes of Northwestern-University's book 'Industry & Ideology' are a few pages about I.G.Farben's-Buna with pictures on page # 357.I kept myself alive and out of trouble through two very hot summers and two cold winters.Many of the people with whom I came were selected to be shipped to Auschwitz and death.Some days we got to see the flames from the crematoria and smelled the burning flesh.On August 20,1944 Allied-Air-Forces bombed the I.G.Farben-plant for the first time.I hid in the basement of a power-plant.When we heard the sirens for the all-clear and came up,the whole plant was bombed.Still,we and all other prisoners of war,foreign forced laborers,

Arbeitsdienst Führer: Stol

and cvilians kept working and rebuilding till January 1945 when cannon-fire could be heard.The Russian-Army started an offensive in Krakow which was 55 km away.On the 18th January 1945 we were told to take our blanket,we got some bread and set to march to Gleiwitz, a city in Germany.It was cold,icy,snow,windy and it turned into a Death-march during the night.Many SS-guards,after shooting our comrades gave up and were driven away.9000 inmates of 'Buna' were on the march.850 ill prisoners remained andwere liberated by the Russian-Army, a week later.Next morning we rested at a tile-factory in Nicolai and in the afternoon we reached the city of Gleiwitz. Because we were exhausted and hungry we asked the cvilians in the street where the concentration-camp was and we stayed in the over-crowded place a few days with Allied-planes planting magnesium-bombs at night in the sky.After a few days we were taken to a railroad-siding and were tightly loadedinto open freight-cars in January,1945. No water or food.We got only more room in the cars when people died or the Gestapo shot the sick ones on railway-stations in full view of the civilian population in Germany,Czechoslovakia,Austria,all places where they tried to unload us but those camps in those countries were all overcrowded with evacuated prisoners of the East.On January,28th my father's birthday,we reached Berlin.I recognized the radio-tower and we were unloaded in the suburb of Sachsenhausen in a hangar of a former aircraft-factory.We were taken to ashowerroom,wise as we were by now,we thought they would turn the gas on, but to our surprise hot water was poured on us,it felt very good and we came out of the shower alive.I was registered in Sachsenhausen as # 129930-prisoner. After a few days many of us were shipped on February 6th to concentration camp-Flossenburg in the South of Germany.It was a long journey interrupted by bombing of raillines.There was astone-quarry and many prisoners got killed.With a wound in my head, caused by a Kapo, I was shipped on the 8th March by train with others to a so called Conva-lescent-Camp with the name of Bergen-Belsen.With many sick prisoners on this train and a long trip North it was no wonder that many died. The train finally stopped in one night and those who were still alive had to assemble and march to a camp-compound.In the morning we could not believe what we saw.It was March 8th.1945.

Here was a overcrowded camp,filthy and packed with people in different camps partioned by wire-fences.Men,women and children and some in civilian clothing.Many dead and many died every day.It was my luck that I run intoa German-prisoner whomI had known in Monowitz and who told me that I should get a job with the Electricians and he would see to it. Next morning my name was called out on the Apellground.I had to get delaused and showered which was not much done in this camp and I had to report to Block # 1 where the maintenance-men slept on bare wooden bunks,a luxury at Belsen.I had to report to SS-Oberscharfuehrer Steinmetz in the Electro-shop who tested me for my knowledge in the Electro-Trade. From then on,an other Jewish-electrician from Poland and I had to go and do repair & maintenance-work in the different camps and in the SS-quarters and kitchen.Risking our life we stole sausages from the SS-kitchen and brought it in the shop for the other comrades.I was so hungry that I ate the meat from the dog's-plate in the kennel.In the shop we were under supervision of three SS-men who were stationed in Auschwitz before and known there for their cruelty.But they had knowledge of the advancing armees and they became friendly.In April they knew that we were stealing food,they ordered us to share with the other fellows which we did anyway.We also put a radio in good repair. On the 12th April 1945,we heard that President Roosevelt had died but we heard too that the Allied troops advanced and the sky was full of bombers flying North & East.The only food in the last weeks we got was red or white beets and sometimes a water-soup.All of us had to drag the many dead bodies to the crematoria-area.On Friday,April 13th 1945 we noticed that the Kapos & Blockleaders and the German-Army-guards and some SS-troops left the camp.There were still Hungarian and Ukrainian-Cossac-SS who shot people every day.Most of us were sick and weak from loss of weight.Thyphus was all over the camp.Our brains did not work well anymore.When on Sunday the 15th April 1945 British tanks and troops with a loudspeaker-truck announced that we were free,we did not comprehend that after 12 years the 'Third-Reich' came to an end for us. 58ooo people were free.As an electrician,down to to 80lbs,I helped the British-engineers on request to restore power for the camp and saw the camp burned down after everybody was transferred to the Military-camp a short trip away.

10000 unburied dead were found by the British,13000 died after liberation,they could not be saved in spite of the heroic work by the British-Medical-people.
Our SS-guards were apprehended,we saw them as prisoners in our shop they were found guilty at the War-crimes-trial in Luneburg for crimes committed in Auschwitz and hanged.
The liberators of Belsen: 159th Brigade-8th Corps
1st Commander Colonel Taylor
63d Anti-Tank-Regiment-British-Army

Chief Medical Officer 2nd British Army
Briegadier Glyn Hughes

With a heavy heart Imade this report on September 15th.1991 at the request of the 'Holocaust- Memorial-Foundation of Illinois.
This was my life until 1945, 12 years under the Nazi-Regime.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

John Fink
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On the 15th April 1945 came the liberation.I spent 4454 days under the Nazis 761 days in concentration camps as a young man.
After the liberation of Belsen I worked with the army-engineers to restore power in the camp.
Later I worked on the first shows in the tented theater as an electrician under Eva Golberg the entertaining officer.I also started working for the British-Red-Cross as a store & magazine worker.When the B.R.C. turned the supply-depot over to 'UNRRA'(United Nations) I became the manager of the store till June 1947.I was promoted during this time and wore an uniform and had the rank of a lieutenant.
In 1947 in July, I became a member of the 'American-Joint-Distribution-Committee,an American Organization.I was sent to the 'Warburg-ChildrenS-Home' in Hamburg-Blankenese to administer the estate and was put in charge of the repair and maintenanceprogramm of 3 houses and a large garden area.
On June 20.1948 I married Alice Redlich,a nurse of the 'Jewish-Relief-Unit'(English) out of England in Bergen-Belsen.The Senior Chaplain,B.A.O.R. and Rabbi Helfgott officiated.
From October 1948 until March 1949 I held the position of Director of the 'Warburg-Childrens-Home'.Reuma Schwarz of the J.A.F.P. later Mrs.Weizman (First Lady of Israel) and Betty Adler the Director had left and new children came to Blankenese.
In March,1949 I moved back to Bergen-Belsen and became Transport-Officer for the A.J.D.C.
My wife and I left for the transit-camp in Bremen on August 22.1949.
Alice was 8 months pregnant and we arrived in New York by plane Aug.26./49.
We became American citicens on May 3.1955.
This is a very short account of my life from 1945 (liberation) up to the arrival in the United-States in 1949.

John Fink
6439 N. Rockwell St.
Chicago, Illinois 60645-5319

John Fink (Hans Finke) born: 08/12/1920. Berlin,Germany.
4 years Elementary School,1926-1930.
3 years Public Middle School 1930-1933.
1 year JewishMiddle School 1933-1934.
4 years apprenticeship-Electrician and Metal-Trade-School.
1938-1941 worked for an Electrical-Contractor in Berlin,Germany.
1941-1943 Forced Labor for Siemens.
Arrested by the Gestapo on March 8th 1943.Sent to Auschwitz on March12th with 36th East Transport.
From March 1943-January 1945 in Auschwitz III (Buna)
Forced march to Germany on January 18th 1945.
10 day trainride (open cars) to Sachsenhausen-Concentration-camp, transported from there to Flossenburg and later to Bergen-Belsen.
Liberated by British Troops on April 15th 1945.
4454 days living under the Nazis,761 days in concentration-camps.
Worked in the British Zone of Germany from 1945-1949 for the British-Red-Cross,UNRRA and A.J.D.C.
Married in Bergen-Belsen to Alice Redlich,a member of the Jewish-Relief-Team 110 from England.
Came to Chicago in Sept.1949.Worked as an electrician til 1988 and retired,I am a member of I.B.E.W.Local # 134.
4 children,Esther,David,Miriam and Debbie.6 grandchildren.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

The Wexner Heritage Foundation

551 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022
212 355 6115
Fax 212 751 3739

Ms. Pola Metzger
2292 Pinehaven Drive
Schenectady, NY 12309

November 7, 2000

Dear Ms. Metzger,

Thank you for responding to our letter about sending your story to the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project at the World Jewish Congress. I am writing you to confirm that we received your story, Mein Verfolgungsschiksal, and we will forward it to the World Jewish Congress in your name. This is an important project that will help preserve the testimonies of you and other survivors, so the lessons learned and the people who perished during the Holocaust are never forgotten.

If you have any other questions or concerns, feel free to contact me, Jamie Goldberg, Rabbi Herbert Friedman's Assistant, at 212-355-6115. You may also contact Ms. Charlotte Yudin at the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project at 914-722-1880.

I hope you are having a happy and healthy New Year and that this winter is not too hard for you.

B'Shalom,

Jamie Goldberg

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

October 31, 00

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

Thank you for your letter of 10-26-00 and for your kind offer to include my story for possible publication.

If you don't mind sending my story, please do so. Winter is a difficult time for me and I rather not deal with my memories.

I am enclosing this, my short report for your convenience.

I also like to wish you and yours a very happy New year and always best

Sincerely yours Pola Metzger

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Herbert A. Friedman

The Wexner Heritage Foundation | 551 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10022 | 212 355 6115, Fax 212 751 3739

Ms. Pola Metzger
2292 Pinehaven Drive
Schenectady, NY 12309-2607

March 28, 2000

Dear Ms. Metzger,

Thank you for sending me your story. It was touching in its honesty and so helpful because it was so personal. As I read it, I could feel some of your pain and agony and fear.

You called the handwritten note at the end a "short version". I can only imagine what a long version would contain. The details you described were sharp, vivid, powerful.

Your story will make it easier for us to communicate the horror and the lessons to the next generation. The slogan "Never Again" is abstract; your personal experience is concrete. Thank you again for responding in your own words.

Sincerely yours,

Herbert A. Friedman

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Pola P Metzger
2292 Pinehaven Dr
Schenectady, NY
12309-2607

Pola Metzger/Krajcer/Kreutzer

Mein Verfolgungsschiksal

I was born in Szczakowa, Poland on November 6, 1928. Till 1939 I had a normal childhood within an affluent loving family circle with an extended family of wonderful grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. With the German invasion of Poland my normal life became completely interrupted. First my father was killed by the Gestappo, then my education came to a standstill since Jews were forbidden to attend public schools. My mother with my sistter and me moved to our grandparents to Ost Oberschlesien Niemce/Ostrowy near Dabrowa where we stayed till 1941. In 1941 together with other Jews from the place we were moved to a neighboring village Czarne Morze, an open ghetto which we were forbidden to leave. Somewhere at the end of the year or beginning of 1942 we were moved again to Strzemieszyce alsoOstoberschlesien, which was incorporated into das III Reich. There we were eventually isolated in a closed ghetto. We worked at Eisenwerke Skopek-Blecheri & Schwerbetrieb. I worked in a stockroom Warehouse for the Schwerbetrieb. We walked every day several kilometers to and from the factory. Several families lived in every house. I, my mother, and sister had one small room. Food was rationed and limited.

On June 26, 1943 came the final Aussiedlung. Before dawn in the mornig SS Truppen marched into the ghetto, rounded up all Jews and marched them to the Zammelpunkt at the gates of the ghetto. On the way screams of theSS intermingled with the screams of the beaten, kicked, and tortured victims. Dead bodies were left unattended all over the ghetto. At the Zammelpunkt we were ordered to stand in pairs in line in front of the SS officers. As we came in front of the officer in charge of the selection, he would point us to the left or to the right. One direction was to a slave labor camp, the other to a death camp. Since that direction was provided for older or infirmed people or small children we knew where they were being taken.

My sister was separated from us since she worked the night shift. My mother an I were sent to Ottmuth bei Annaberg to a slave labor camp (Oberschlesien). We were only women, the men were in a separate camp. We lived in barracks in a camp supervised by the German Wehrmacht subjected to whims of an unstable SS woman Kommandant who would run through the barracks at all hours hitting people with a Peitche, or inflicting punitive Appels for imaginary insubordination. We worked in the Otta Schufabrik and walked to and from the factory several kilomenters. The conditions were below human habitat and food was below starvation level. I became very sick and twice had pneumonia and typhus.

But nothing had prepared us for the next KZ Ludwigsdorf where we were sent in early Spring of 1944. The KZ was under the supervision of the SS. Double electric barbed wire surrounded the camp and always present SS in a tower were watching us. It was a dismal place. The stink in the KZ was overpowering, the ground seemed always to be muddy. We lived in barracks of approximatedly 30-50 women in double or triple bunks without heating. Ludwigsdorf in in the mountains of Niederschlesien, it belonged to central of Gross Rosen according to our knowledge, a death camp. The diet was black so called

coffee, water soup, a piece of bread resembling lime, sometimes a square of margarine or a spoonful of sugar.

We worked within the mountain where munition factories were located. We walked to an from the factories several kilometers (it seemed like forever) under the guard of SS women with dogs. I worked soldering underwater mines or at other times on various powder presses for ammunition production. The powders were grey, green an yellow reddish TRI which was highly poisonous. The powders were absorbed by the skin of the person according to the color and was noxious to the repiratory passages. In our camp people did not resemble human beings but rather some macabre creatures who were grey, green, and yellow orange. Entering the mountain each day I had a feeling of entering hell where only the damned existed. The factories had many levels connected with steps. We were searched upon entering an leaving. We wore grey striped apron like coats with a yellow star on the front and on the back. We were starved, exploited, punished without a reason with appels - standing for hours in camp after work while our habitat were being searched. We were beaten, humiliated and degraded. It was a dismal existence without hope that lead only to death.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

March 8, 2000

Dear Rabbi Friedman,

I received your kind letter of am sending you a short version of my life during the Holocaust.

Best regards,

sincerely Pola Metzger

Pola P Metzger
2292 Pinehaven Dr
Schenectady, NY
12309-2607