

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

NATHAN FORM

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Barbara Spector
Date: April 22, 1985

© 2000
Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

NF - Nathan Form [interviewee]

BS - Barbara Spector [interviewer]

Date: April 22, 1985¹

Tape one, side one:

BS: [unclear] very happy that he has been willing to give his story and share it with us, that it will be a history for all of us to have.

NF: My name is Nathan Form. I was born in Kroszno, Poland, near Krakow, on February the 28th, 1922. I went to Polish school and Hebrew school. In Hebrew school up to the age of 10, and the Polish school up to age 13. At the age, when I was 11 years old, my father died, and I had to help out my family to work. Just had my mother left, and two older sisters, and two younger ones. I was still going to Polish school, but many times I had to leave school after two, three hours and come home, help out, work. We had a leather factory. We also had a farm. In the, after age 13 I was working, full time in the factory, help support my family.

BS: And what year was that?

NF: This was 1935. Then, from 1935 till '39 in Poland became already very hard for the Jews, as the antisemitism was growing more and more. Like the priests, the churches, they would say it to the Polish citizen, "You don't kill the Jews, but don't buy by them. Don't bother with them. They will starve from hunger by themselves." We was, in 1938, I remember when Daladier [phonetic], when Chamberlain went to Munich, when Czechoslovakia was taken away, the part of Sudetenland. And the Polish government, instead to go with the Czechoslovakian against Germany, they went with Germany against the Czechoslovakian people. My hometown was right on the borderline between Poland and Czechoslovakia. I remember I was a young boy like, on Saturday night in Sep--that time September, the Polish army moved toward the Czechoslovakian border to take away a couple of villages from the Czechoslovakian government, because Hitler enticed them. We, all Jews knew it was wrong. We knew that this is the prelude to the World War II because the Polish government that time should have gone with the Czech's government, against Germany, not with Germany. And after that, it was only a matter of time in the Spring of 1939, when the German government after taking away completely Czechoslovakia went and demand the port for Gdansk. And the German demanded from the Poles they said this is part of Germany. Then the Poles realized that the Germans are after them. In September of, 1, September the 1st, 1939, the war broke out. As we looked on the borderline between Poland and Czechoslovakia, that Friday morning, the Germans were massed on the frontier line in Czechoslovakia, behind our town. I was working that Friday morning--I remember like today--in that factory when the Polish policeman, the Captain from the Police, came running over--he lived in, nearby us--and said, "Get your

¹ Recorded at the 1985 American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA.

things together and get out of the town because the Germans will be here in a matter of hours.

BS: So they were being kind to you.

NF: The Polish government, see, because they knew that the situation is hopeless. At that time, we had a farm, so I had a horse, and a wagon. I got, put things together, a horse and wagon. I took my mother and the four sisters. It was my father's oldest brother, my uncle and his wife. We put everything whatever we could, our belongings, on the wagon. We started to run out of the town. We ran toward western part of Poland. Fortunately we ran for three weeks time. As much as we ran, the Germans were always ahead of us. Their *panzers*, their tanks, always surrounding us. Till we came, it was the Jewish holiday, came Rosh Hashanah. It was that time I think it was end of, around the middle of September. And we came not far from a Jewish town we called L'vov/Lemberg. In that time my uncle, as he was very religious, he says, "The holidays are coming. We don't go no place. We stop over here and we wait. Whatever will happen, it's in God's hands." We stopped in a village over there. Some Jewish people were there, and there we stayed over the Jewish holidays. Unfortunately over there, we had a lot of mishaps, as there were some, there was a Jewish fellow who was convicted for life in prison for killing people before the war. And when the war broke out, a German bomb broke off part of the prison, and he was free. He came back to that village. My uncle was telling the Jews that in the village where he comes he was a rich man; he had a big factory, some, some sort of factory and he has land and houses. So they right away said, "We have the Jews over here from Poland, from the eastern part. They are very rich, and they have a lot of money and gold and silver." And this way, that fellow who was in prison, he organized under, the mafia, and they went after us. One morning I come in to feed the horse. The horse is gone. Then, they start to bargain with us how much money we give them for ransom for the horse. Because they wanted to feel us out how much money we got. Two days later, I come in to look for the wagon. They took off two wheels, one front wheel, one back wheel so we couldn't go no more. So then I saw he got that, that's the end of us. If the Germans don't kill us, they will kill us. So I says to my mother and sister, "Let's get out from here." I was at that time 17 years old. I said, "Let's get out, even leave everything here. Because we not come out alive from here." We went, we bought a little horse, and two wheels for the wagon, and we started back home, because we had nowhere to go.

BS: Did you go back to your town?

NF: As, the Germans, they surrounded us. They occupied already that part of Poland already. Took us three weeks to go back to our hometown. When we came back to our hometown, everything was ransacked in our house. The Polaks, the Polish people, all of them stole our beddings, our different things, and we have to start all over again. Then, I...

BS: Did your uncle go with you back?

NF: Yeah, he came back, yeah, yeah. Then, as I was, I start to work in the factory, the Germans came, they requisitioned every what we had leather in the factory, as they need it for the war machinery. I had to work for them, in supplying whatever; we had the leather for the Germans. In same way, it helped me out as, as also. Leather was very hard to get and the Germans decreed later on that any Polish peasant who has a cow, or a calfling, he's not allowed kill it for himself. He has to give it to the government. And they decreed if somebody's caught not obeying the laws, they can be k--the death pen--death sentence for it. So sometimes I used to get, buy from the Polish farmers a raw skin, work in the factory. Otherwise for, it was like a extra. The, they couldn't count, didn't know exactly how much we had. And I used to trade with the Poles, because money doesn't mean so much. They give us like flour and potatoes, for a piece of leather, a piece of skin. And this helped us a, we helped, we were able to help out other people in our town, as most Jewish people were, hardly anything left.

BS: The people were...

NF: The business.

BS: Did the people stay?

NF: Yes.

BS: Oh, so the people did stay.

NF: Very few, yeah. This was, as a, we had potatoes, flour, everything else, so you should give out to other more, less fortunate people also. I had my aunt, my aunts and my grandmother--my mother's mother--lived in Krakow, in the ghetto. So we tried to send them over there food whatever we could. Because we had more over there.

BS: Because you were farming your own?

NF: Because, no from the...

BS: And you were trading.

NF: From the, I was trading, yeah. Then, in 1941, the Germans came, they took everything away, and they close up the factory. In order to survive, we had a cellar under the house. But we lived near a river. Every time the river got little full of water higher, the cellar was flooded two, three feet high in water. For me, in order to work over there, I had to go down in the cellar, work there at night. Was hardly any air, just a little, maybe a candle or a kerosene lamp to show me what I am doing. I stayed there like from 10:00 o'clock at night till 4:00 o'clock in the morning, in the water...

BS: Doing your leather?

NF: In heavy boots, yeah, up to my knees. In order to camouflage that nobody should know that there's, I have a little factory in the, hidden underneath. We had chickens, was a big, we built a big, like a chicken coop. In the daytime the chickens were sitting over there. At night, I moved away the dirt, I put the chickens one level higher up...

BS: Mmm.

NF: I opened, as big as a table, the platform, and I went down over there.

BS: You were about 19 years old?

NF: That time, yeah, I was around 19 years old. And I worked over there for a couple of months. During the night either my older sister or my mother kept guard. When somebody walked in front, especially when the Germans walked with the heavy boots...

BS: Was it the S.S., or...

NF: S.S. or the Wehrmacht, when they walked heavy, and tapped with their feet on the ceiling so I should be quiet, because there was no windows over there. Unfortunately, after a while, my eyesight start to go bad. So there was no doctor in the hometown. I had to go to another town, around six miles away, to examine me. That doctor saw something is wrong, but he didn't know what, and I couldn't tell him. So he says to me...

BS: You were straining so much.

NF: He says to me, "A lack of air. A lack of oxygen." He says to me, "Your eyesight is getting bad because of lack of oxygen. You work someplace where is not air, and a lot of wetness and dampness, and eventually you go blind." I was 19 years old. He asked me what I'm doing. Unfortunately, I couldn't tell him, because my life was in danger, and my whole family's life was in danger. I worked there for a while till there was, and I think in the Spring, or beginning of early Summer, it was either May or June, 1942, somebody denounced us that we doing some hidden work.

BS: Wow.

NF: One Friday afternoon, three Gestapo with machine guns came to our house. My mother at that time almost had a heart attack. My sister's, my future brother-in-law, the one who was engaged to my older sister, he ran away. He was not home that time. When he heard what's happened, he was hiding out by the town. They took me around.

BS: They just took you?

NF: Yeah. They took me around around the factory, and the factory was closed. They looked in the windows and said to me, "What's over there?" So I make believe I'm dumb. So I talk to him in Jewish. There's the holes where I used to have the leather softening over there. He says to me, "Yeah, but where do you have that hidden factory? The hidden factory?" I says, "I don't know what you're talking about." I make believe I don't understand. Till they f--till they start to come up, the factory was in the back of the house, they coming closer to the house. And then we had a lot of flour and corn and food and grain on top on the house in the oven. So one came up, he looked around. He says to me, "You're well-prepared for the war." He says, "How long do you think the war will last? Why do you have so much grain and everything?" So I says to him, "We had our little farm so I keep saving as much I can." Fortunately, one was looking in the grain. Another one was outside. The third one was someplace else. But all three didn't see how much we had the grain over there. But the worst part came when we

came near that chicken coop, the entrance for the hidden factory. If they would found out, they would kill me right on the spot.

BS: They didn't find it?

NF: It was a miracle. I don't know why, I don't know how that I didn't faint over there. I stood over there, they looked in, they saw the chickens in top over there. They took their boots and they tap on the thing. And I almost fell on the ground. But I figured if he lifts up that platform...

BS: [unclear]

NF: And he goes down, and he finds the raw skin, for, for hiding a raw skin, to have a raw skin, that was death penalty.

BS: Mmm!

NF: It was a miracle that somehow that they looked around, they still only step on top over there. So they're by, near to the boots. They looked around. I didn't say nothing. They all, all that they want to know is where I have that hidden factory? And they stay right on top of it!

BS: That was great!

NF: It was a miracle of, somehow they walked away from that, that opening. Then, they told me, they told me that I had to come, that six miles away was the Gestapo, S.S., the main office in another town.

BS: They told you this at that same time?

NF: Yeah, I had to go over there, to report over there. And there they start to interview me again, to quiz me.

BS: To try and find the factory.

NF: Try and find, ask more questions and more questions. I should reveal things. I should tell them where it is. And also, we had on top of the leather factory, we built a double wall, for the finished leather skins we had hidden there with a double wall. And every time I needed some money I used to take a skin and cut it up, and trade with the Polaks, the Poles, the farmers, for food and everything else. And also...

BS: What did they use those skins for?

NF: For the shoes, for cutting the shoes.

BS: They, the shoes...

NF: To have made shoes to be able to walk over...

BS: You didn't make the shoes, though. They made.

NF: No, they bought the skins. There was like a shoemaker, and the shoemaker he made a special like twisted shoes, for the farmers. They used to wear the, these kind of shoes. And luckily, they stood by the double wall on top on the factory. There was a lot of hay over there. And they went, they were, somehow they were blind, didn't see that either.

BS: Mmm, man!

NF: How I came out from there alive, without having a heart attack or fainted, I don't know how.

BS: How did you design that? Was that your idea or was that your mom and your sisters?

NF: We, my future brother-in-law and me, see we, later on, see he was, during the war, as we ran away from our hometown toward Russia, somehow he ran faster and he got separated from us. He was caught behind that part where now it's the Russia, eastern part of Poland. He was there for a couple of months, then he smuggled and came back to our hometown.

BS: So he got back about the same time you came back?

NF: No, he came back around four months later. We came back right in beginning. He came back later.

BS: Oh, I see.

NF: Then we worked together. See then, he...

BS: To design this, this was quite a...

NF: See, so we had a Polish carpenter, a Polish carpenter with whom we could trust. Because you couldn't trust everybody, at least cert--only certain, Polish people, certain neighbors you can trust. So we had that, build a double wall, cover it up with hay. And with a single board we slide it aside to get in, and take out. Everything was done at night in the dark so nobody should see.

BS: And he helped you do the leather, or...

NF: Who? My brother-in-law? Yeah, he used to help me out working. But later on, see, when we had that hidden factory, so most I used to do, because only one person--it was so small--it was just like a, maybe 12, 14 feet long, 8 feet wide, and 6 feet high. But there was so much water there I had to constantly work in the water, and lack of air. But afterward...

BS: You kept doing it even after your eyesight was in danger?

NF: Yeah, yeah.

BS: You went back to doing that.

NF: I kept doing. He gave me medication. I applied the medication but I still kept doing it. But, that day, that Friday, in the Spring, or beginning of the Summer, '42, when the S.S. came, when they were there, and my life wasn't worth a hair. Then I said to my mother and sisters, "That's it." So, a couple nights later, I brought everything, there was the river over there. I took all the skins and everything and I throw it in the river to wash down there should be no sign. And I had to clean out the whole cellar underneath, all, broke all the barrels over there...

BS: The equipment.

NF: Everything. We had equipment. I throw it down the river. It didn't last, maybe a, then I was taken to forced labor in the town.

BS: You were taken then?

NF: Like it, for the day, it's, you go in the forest, or whatever the Germans need, loading coals for the S.S., like on the wagons to the trucks, whatever it was. Then...

BS: How did you get to do that? Someone, they came and got you again? Or when you were at that meeting?

NF: They, they requested by the Jewish mayor and so many people for the day, for certain work. And they used to assign certain people. As I was young, built strong, and I was used to hard work, so wherever it was, when a hard labor came along, I was always the right one to go. Same, in my hometown, same in a concentration camp. And maybe, because of that...

BS: And what was your brother-in-law, did he go with you to that...

NF: Oh no. He got killed. He got shot. So, then, in, I think either in June, 1942 I was taken from our hometown. They requested a certain amount of people, and they ship by trucks to another town, a little bigger town, to work on the railroad, to Poland. From there, I was shipped that time to a camp named, the town is named Rabka, near Krakow. There we were around 200 young people. We were slave laborers. And we had to work. There they used to train young Germans to become S.S. and Storm Troopers. There we had to dig. It was a big forest. And we had to dig out, cut down the w--the trees, and dig out like a whole road. And there they built like a practice, shooting practice for the Germans, to prac--learn how to shoot over there. And the Germans used to come by us take the dirt and put on wheelbarrows. And from the dirt from there, what we took out from the, from that forest, we had to wheel it like a, two blocks long. And we built a place like a stadium where they had, there they used to practice to run. And they used to play tennis or different things.

BS: Like a hall, a recreation hall then.

NF: No. And this was right in front of the building. Many times, they also had Ukrainian soldiers who were their assistants. And they used to watch us. They had a, whips and dogs. So many times they used, we used to, if you didn't work fast enough, so they used to, when somebody wanted to fill up the dead with the wagon, and push the wagon up the hill. Many of them got weak, especially the older ones, who used to faint. So they used to whip with the thing, or let the dogs on them.

BS: Mmm.

NF: That's, they had, there's a forest over there, behind the big school. That forest, maybe there's around 1,000 people, Jewish families who we buried, that they killed, and buried, because they were Jews. Most of them, from the end of August, 1942, when they start to expel all the Jews from different towns. Some of the Jews were hiding out in the forest. Some were hiding out by Poles. As long as they had the money, the gold or silver, the Poles would keep them. After the gold and silver ran out, then the, they used to denounce them to the S.S. The first bad experience I had was in, I think it was in August, '42. In fact there is here, there is here a friend of mine from Los Angeles. He

came over here to the Convention. He was that time with me. They came one morning, they picked us, six of us young fellows, strong built...

BS: This was when you were in the work group. In the labor force.

NF: And that Gestapo came. They took us over there to the forest, and they marked out like a place six feet long, six feet wide, and six feet deep. And they give us a time limit to dig that place. But we didn't know what we were doing. They told us that we're digging trenches, and the Germans had to practice in the trenches. But unfortunately it wasn't so.

BS: They were graves.

NF: It was, that particular trench was a grave for a Jewish family--a father and mother and a girl of 25 years old. They looked in, next town, in Rabka [unclear] over there. According what was told to us, the woman had some kind of disagreement with a Polish neighbor. So she said to the Polish neighbor, "Some day the sun will shine for us Jews." So the Polish woman, or her husband, went to the Gestapo and told them that a Jewish family said, "Soon the Russian army will come and kill all the Germans." The Gestapo sent a Jeep, with a couple soldiers. They picked up the father and mother and the girl and brought them to the Gestapo camp. They put them, there was a sort of like a bunker, it was like a cellar with metal bars, where they used to keep all the people over there in prison until they took them to the forest to be killed. That afternoon, we dug that hole, and there was a Ukrainian surgeon. That surgeon, he was in the Polish army, then he was in the Russian army, then he was in the German army. So you see how you can trust this kind of people. While we were working there, digging that hole, he watched on us, over us.

BS: He was a surgeon?

NF: He was a regular surgeon, but he was in three different armies. And you couldn't trust him ever. When the Russians were winning, he was talking to us nice. When the Germans were winning, he was against us. He was, every day he was swaying like the wind. And that particular hole, when we were digging the trenches, there was a big stone and under the tree. We couldn't get it out. So I, as I was used to work hard, I took the pick and shovel, and I put the pick under the stone to loosen up, I put it under my shoulder, and I broke the pick in half. And he stood up. He says to me, "Where are you from?" I told him, "I'm from the mountains, up nearby." He said, "I can see that you used to work for hard lab--hard work." Then he says to us, "You better speed up and get out from here, because the Rosenbaum, the *Sturmstabführer*, he will come, and he finds you here in the hole, he will kill you all." Then I couldn't realize what he was talking about. Cause he, I thought we're digging trenches. Then he says, he watch, he looked on the watch. He says, "By a quarter of three, get out. If you hear him, his voices, coming to the grave, just finish up and run out in the woods." Then wait a while. When you hear a whistle blow, come right back." As we are staying in the woods, we couldn't see the

people, but we heard screaming and crying. They brought the father and mother and that daughter. They get undressed in front of the grave, and they killed them naked at the...

BS: Right there.

NF: Jumped down. When the whistle blew, a friend of mine--he is now in Israel--he unfortunately came the first to the grave. So the, the S.S. man showed me I should jump down in the grave, to turn over the bodies to see if somebody is alive. Otherwise they shot them again. When he jumped down in the grave, he fainted. Then he pulled out the gun and he wanted, he start to shout in German, "Make fast and do it, or I kill you!" Somehow, I don't know how, my, I, it occurred to me that I had the strength and everything. I jumped down after him. As I was young and strong, I was able to push my boyfriend out. We had to get undressed, only the top, take off our shirts on the top, that we're naked on top as we're working there. I jumped down after, I pushed him out. I turned over the bodies. And that woman, the girl, she was on the heavy side. That's all I remember. When I grabbed her hand to turn her over, her warm blood splashed over my head, my face, my body. I became like in a daze. How I came out from there, what happened, I don't know if I had nightmares, but day and night, that vision what happened. That was my first experience of seeing people being shot by the graves.

BS: Where was your mother and sisters at this point?

NF: Now, I, when I was in that camp, once I went back home for a day and saw my mother and sisters. And then at the, it was the, I think it was the end of August that time. The Germans start systematic expulsion, liquidation of all the towns and ghettos. What they did, they invaded in this town, population 10,000. Was only Jewish, 100 Jewish families. So they ordered our death in the camp, in that Gestapo camp...

BS: Right.

NF: They told them to get together, one Friday morning, get everything together. And we start a march to the bigger town, towards Krakow. On the road as they're walking...

BS: Your mother and...

NF: No, my mother got shot.

BS: Your sisters all together?

NF: No. They're walking, but see, most older people were, let's say over 40 or something, they shot them on the road as they went along. The Germans were riding in the Jeep, and they were shooting like at random, left and right. I wasn't there, but I met later on in the camps, and he survived the war, he lived in New York, so he told me. And he was a mechanic, so he, the Germans kept cause he was fixing their cars. He saw his own wife and children go on that death march, and he couldn't do nothing. So he told me what's happened. But my mother was shot right on the road. My aunt. And my uncle was killed before that. They rounded up Jews one Friday they rounded up in our hometown in the Spring of '42. They put them against the wall and they shot 11 people in my hometown that time.

BS: How about your sisters?

NF: So my sisters were taken from there to a bigger town, and then they were taken to Krakow. And there they were put in wagons and they were sent to Treblinka, to the death chambers. So we couldn't find out any more what happened. After that I never...

BS: You never heard from them.

NF: I never heard from them. I never went back to the town. And I worked in that Gestapo camp over there until either May or June, 1943. That's the reason why, or, or, I'll say it later cause I mixed up. From there, in 1943 in the beginning, I was taken on a transport ship toward eastern Germany, to another concentration camp named Gross-Rosen. This concentration camp was built in 1933, for German political prisoners who opposed Hitler. Later on, during the war they became like the foremans, or people in charge over us, in each barrack, these Germans political prisoners. When I came to that camp, a friend of mine who is in Israel now, yeah, we were to, we had to go, to get washed and every time they, we changed camps we had to change our clothes. Because as we came out from our hometown we had some money, some silver, some gold hidden. So then the Germans knew people had sewed in some things in their clothes at some, so they made sure you leave all your clothes before you went in to get washed, to take a shower. Some, many times when we came in to take a shower, we expected the gas to be on, because we heard that they were...

BS: You really thought about that?

NF: Because then, in 1943, '44, we heard that there is crematoriums and gas chambers. Before I didn't know that.

BS: You did hear about that.

NF: Yes. So especially in that Gross-Rosen, we, was a gruesome sight to come in to a place, in there, there's two ovens, the chimneys. So I saw the smoke in the chimneys coming out. There, I met a fellow, a Polish Gentile fellow from our hometown. He was doing, he was living in Warsaw Ghetto. He was doing some black market business, and he got caught. He was sent over there to that camp, Gross-Rosen, over there. So when he heard that the new transport came, so he was talking to us, it just happened he's talking to a friend of mine who's now in Israel. He ask him, "Is there anybody from Kroszno, Poland?" So he says to him, "Yeah, I have a good boyfriend of mine, Nathan Form." See, in Krakow, so, no, I missed something, see. No, from Rabka, in 1942...

BS: Stop one second [tape off then on].

Tape one, side two:

BS: O.K.

NF: In 1942, in June, when we were sent out in that Gestapo camp, one morning, 4:00 o'clock in the morning they surrou--they woke us up and put us up in a place they called *Appell* place where they counted us up. Then we had to march right in the front of the Gestapo building. There they put us on trucks and they shipped us. We thought that they're gonna take us with the trucks to the forest and kill us all. One fellow from my hometown, he jumped down the truck, he start to run toward the forest. They were shooting at him. They shot his hand. Somehow he was able to run away and he ran in the forest in the farms. At that time it was a summertime. The farmers were working on the farms, Polish farmers. He asked for assistance they should help him, give him some clothes, and to help him to hide. Instead, they tied him up with straw, what do you call that, like, they make the straw, they made like...

BS: Twine? Hay?

NF: Twine, twine, yeah. Tied up his hands and his feet. They put on a wagon and they brought him back to the Gestapo camp. Luckily see there was, the Gestapo camp, as they knew nobody was left there, so they shipped him to Krakow-Plaszów, in a concentration camp. And there, luckily, they put him in a hospital. I went to see him during the hospital. And there they healed up his hand. This truck took us to the concentration camp in Krakow-Plaszów. Was in either May or June, 1942. There, I remained over till summer, I think either May or June, 1943. There I worked as, they ask you what profession, what profession you had. But they had the shops, like shoemaker shop, tailors, tanners. As I was, my profession was a tannery, so they put me to work in a tannery, there were fur, to work furs. Like they, a lot of the Russians got some in the Russian front, it's German soldier on the Russian fronts, and they were shot they need heavy clothes and heavy furs and wooden, the, what do you call it, coats. See a lot of them came back with blood and everything else. So you have to clean and wash them out. And repair them they should take them back to the front and give them for the German soldiers.

BS: So that's what you were doing there?

NF: Yeah. And there, we worked over, in that place over there, in Krakow, Plaszów, there was a big mountain over there, with thousands and thousands of men, women and children they shot over there and killed. Because that time, they were liquidating the Krakow Ghetto and they're shipping them to that concentration camp.

BS: And you saw the shooting in...

NF: Many times over there. And I didn't have, there, luckily I didn't have to go and bury nobody, see, because...

BS: You were busy.

NF: I was working inside. But, from our window, when we were working, we could see that hill, up the hill, and the people were going up over there, and the German soldiers with machine guns, they stand around, and there was a big like, I don't know how to explain, it was like big, two mountains, and there was a big [unclear].

BS: Like a valley?

NF: Like a valley. And they used to shoot them on top and they used to fill in the valley and bury them up. Then from the--from Krakow, Plaszów, I was taken again as the Russian got some, start to advance on the eastern front towards Poland. So the Germans tried to take the, whoever was strong enough to work, for the camps, and ship them to Germany they should have free slave labor. So I was shipped from there by trucks and wagons. It was very hot. We were sitting in wagons for a couple nights and days. And we had hardly anything to eat and drink. We were brought by camp Gross-Rosen. That's in eastern Germany. There I met that fellow, like I said before, from my hometown. When he found out I'm from his hometown--he was there quite a while already there--he says to me, (In my hometown they used to call my name Nathan. They call it in Polish Nusiek), he says, "Nusiek, I'm your friend. You see the two chimneys? They work day and night. Just, any time they have a transport to get out from here, don't ask any questions. You get out from here. Because you don't come out alive from here." In that camp, if you did something wrong, they didn't punish you. All they did, they took a big stone, 100 pounds maybe, they tie up in back of your shoulders, and make you walk around the whole day with the stone, in the sun, without even any water to drink or something to eat. This was, people used to collapse...

BS: And die.

NF: And then they...

BS: That was the end of them.

NF: After he collapsed they took him to the...

BS: To the oven.

NF: Crematorium, to the oven. That was the end. I was lucky somehow that after eight days, I was only there eight days, and I was picked on a transport to be shipped out.

BS: Where?

NF: And I was shipped there, they shipped us on wagons again. I was shipped to Germany. And it was more like a, in southern part of Germany, Wüstegiersdorf. It's near Bres--near Breslau. In Polish is Wroclaw. There I was lucky. And they shipped over there in the camp, it was a workman camp, and the guards were soldiers from the Wehrmacht, not S.S. And a lot of them were crippled. If one got shot on the Russian front, they couldn't use him on the front, so they brought him back and they should guard us. These soldiers were a little more easy with us, because they already went through plenty. And they were not trained S.S., so they put us to work. Unfortunately, one night, I had a terrible feeling, I couldn't sleep the whole night. And I had a dream that I was taken

to the coal mines, to work in the coal mines and, I got killed in the coal mines. Sure enough, 5:00 o'clock in the morning they used to wake us up, and they used to put us in the *Appell Platz* where they, in the place where they count the people out. I was built strong. I was young, and tall. And most, the old people already shrunk men, weak, short, so I always overtowered the other ones. Wherever there was some big and hard labor, the hard work, I was the first one picked out. When they picked me out from the *Appell Platz* to the side, and I had to go to work in that coal mine. See there, what happened, as the Germans and the Russian army...

BS: It was part of the same camp, though, right?

NF: In that, no that...

BS: The coal mine was...

NF: That camp, yeah, it's part of the camp. It was like a work camp, not a Gestapo camp, a concentration camp, but like a work camp. But there were still electric wires around in that, towers, and watchmen over there. We were 2,000 Jewish prisoners, workers there. But they, we had to go over there. What we had to do, we had to dig in the mountains tunnels for the Germans start to make the ammunitions and hide things, because they knew the Russian are advancing toward Poland and they're coming toward Germany. So, and the Allies were bombing that time all the towns and the factories. So they start to use the forced labor to do, dig holes in the mountains to make safe for the, the Allies won't, or the...

BS: They can hide.

NF: Their position. They couldn't bomb the mountains. There, we were digging with machines, with pick and shovels, the stones to get in like we called bunkers what they would call it. There I was with my friends. I had two friends, somehow we survived -we were going from 1942 on. Wherever one was picked, all, two volunteered and we went together. Through that alive, we're together now. The two of them are in Israel. We survived the war. So we went to that camp over there. And I had to work that time from six in the morning till four in the afternoon. And maybe a half an hour before, I have to get up to work. A big stone loosened up from the top, and fell on me. Luckily, it hit my head and the side of my, on my back, and crushed a couple of my ribs. And I fell down. And the two friends of mine were together with me. So they put me like on a makeshift, what do you call, a stretcher.

BS: Stretcher.

NF: Stretcher. And they carried me down like 1,000 feet from the mountain down to the camp. Luckily, that in that camp wasn't a crematorium. Wasn't a concentration camp. They had the one barrack assigned for the sick people. And that...

BS: You had a doctor?

NF: The one friend of mine, the one from Krakow who is now in Israel, he was working over there like a nurse. But the doctor, was a Jewish doctor from Tarnow, from a town not far from us, a Jewish doctor. So, between both of them they helped me to get a

better, to be able to walk around. And they healed me up somehow my ribs should heal up. And I worked there for, I was there for a couple of weeks. But, the Chief from the Germans, from that camp, as the people, some of them they died out, some got sick from the work, and he had a shortage of labor in the tunnel, so every day he was looking out. Then one day he came around, he says he wants, he wants me back to go to the coal mines. While I was in the hospital I could walk around a little bit. They took me to go to work in the kitchen, help out people, take this and put in some soup, and do something. And this helped me. I was able to take some potatoes and things to eat. And at night I used to take, walk out during the night in the barracks and bring some potatoes and some soup to my friends...

BS: To the rest of the people.

NF: And put under their blankets nobody should see. I was lucky that somehow, day before, when I was supposed to go back in the mines, the man who was working the kitchen lighting up the ovens--there were four, twelve big ovens that they heat, put by coal to heat them, make the fire to make the soup for the 2,000 peoples (we had to get up 2:00 o'clock in the morning and go prepare everything so the people 5:00 o'clock in the morning had the food prepared)--somehow the Chief from the barracks took a dislike, and I think he caught him sleeping or something. And he fired him. He took that man, he shipped him in the coal mines. There was...

BS: To have you in the kitchen?

NF: And then there was a, the chief cook over there in the kitchen, he was a very good friend of, to the chief of the camp. And he knew me from my hometown. He knew my father and my family. So he go, he went over to the chief of the poli--from the camp, he says to him, "I want Nathan he should come and take over the job and work in the kitchen over here as, light the ovens and do all that." This was a very hard work. I had to get up 2:00 o'clock in the morning...

BS: But it was better than the mines.

NF: Better than the mines. So I stayed over there. And I took over the job. I had to get up 2:00 o'clock in the morning and would heat up, clean up the ovens, light up the coals, and make sure that the soup and the coffee is prepared for 5:00 o'clock in the morning, for the 2,000 people. Well that helped me to eat. And I, this way I gained weight and I helped out also my other, all the friends, other ones, with the food. There we were till end of January, 1945. Then the Russian army advanced already on Poland and almost, they took over Poland almost and start to go in in Germany. Then they took us. They liquidated the bar--that camp. And they sent us, they put us, yeah, we had to march in the snow and ice in the winter time. That's in the Alp, in Austria, to Austria, for a couple, maybe for two weeks, day and night. We marched that time...

BS: How many of you were there?

NF: From that time we marched out 3,500. Every day, at least 100, 200 people died out from not eating, from the cold, from the trouble with their stomachs...

BS: Exertion.

NF: Diarrhea and everything else.

BS: How many made it there?

NF: We didn't get to a camp. Then, they took us, we walked on that march, we call it like a death march. We marched like this for a week or two and we slept in barns on the ground, in the cold, in the winter time, was below 20 degrees in freezing weather. Then finally they brought us to a place--I don't remember the name--they put us in cattle wagons. They put us in cattle wagons. And there we sat, 120 people in one wagon, one pushed on top of the other one. We had no room to move. And it was open. Lucky thing, because the wagons were open; we had no too much food or water to drink, so we had, the snow was coming on top of us, so we ate the snow. And we were shipped from there, were shipped to Austria, to the camp Mauthausen. So we left, it took us around six weeks to march, and in wagons till we got over there. When they opened the wagons, may--maybe from each wagon, from 120 people maybe 50 survived. Most of them, everything was, pulled out, like, like bodies. We only had a blanket to cover us up. If that wasn't enough yet, we came to the Mauthausen there. It was snowing terrible, it was the March in the Alps, was bitter cold, and snowing. So we had to sit a whole night, to go in, again, to be washed over there. We didn't know if we're going to a gas chamber, or to get washed around. And it was bitter cold. So we sat together in one, was ten, twelve together, we put our blankets around, and we hoped to get through the night. By the time they called us in to go to, change, wash and change our clothes, from each group, half of us died in, in, frostbitten...

BS: Sitting there, oh...

NF: From the cold and from the, from the [unclear] from malnutrition. I, at that time I was so weak I didn't have my mind to work to go [unclear]. I was very weak.

BS: Your friends were with you too, still?

NF: Yeah. Still together. So we went you know that place. We get washed around. They give us these striped uniforms with wooden shoes. And here we are in the mountains, in bitter cold, in winter time, beginning of March, in the snow and ice. Somehow we went through the night. In the morning we got washed around, and we got a new, the new uniforms, the striped uniforms. And they gave us something to eat. And we went in to the barracks. Then they found out there were, camp Mauthausen was overcrowded. They had no room. So they made us again march over there in the snow and ice to another camp nearby, Ebensee. And there we had the same thing trouble again. We have to sit and wait to get in and get washed and things like that over there.

BS: They made all of the same people leave again?

NF: Yeah. But that was, whoever is...

BS: Whoever came...

NF: They systematically, every time was less and less. From the 3,500 that marched out from, that time, from that work camp in Germany, maybe 150 survived. So

in Ebensee in that camp we were there. There we had to walk every day, work again in the mines, dig tunnels for the ammunition over there. And the water was coming on top on us. There was 180 steps to walk down. The steps were made from stone, so we dug out in the mountains stones to walk down over there.

BS: At that point how old were you?

NF: In that time I was a, around twenty--twenty-three years old. It was before the liberation. Then one day, I met over there in that camp a boy from my, from my hometown. He was over six feet tall, very strong. So then, we had often, we had the Allied Air Force used to come over there, [unclear], and they start to bomb around the, because it was a lot of military installations there, in Ebensee. So, what they used to do, when the Allies, when they had the air raids, they made us jump out from the barracks, because like we were working night shift, so we had to stay in the day time in the barracks. If you work day shift, so we stayed at night in the barracks. It was like a twelve-hour shift. So they make us, force us to walk back in the coal mines, only they, we start to walk up and down. I could hardly walk already. So he says to me, he says to me, "Nathan, when the air raids go, goes on, don't go to the barracks. Go with me." He jumped out the window. And the barracks were built like on wooden stilts, like three, four feet above the ground. Because the water used to, when we washed the floors the water used to go down. So we only could crawl in them. We couldn't walk. So we crawled underneath and we hide ourselves. Unfortunately, the guards saw us when we jumped out the windows and went over underneath. When the air raid was over, they surrounded the barrack. They says, "Come on out." When they come us out they put a big box in back of the barracks, one took a long pipe like from the washing machine, a hose, and one took a big stick, and lined us up, and they kept on beating us on the back. That boyfriend of mine he was very tall. He was almost like a skeleton. So, to protect himself they shouldn't break his spine so he put his hand in the back and they broke both his wrists. They broke, broke his wrists, he couldn't work no more. So they put him in the barrack where the sick people are. And once you are in the barrack where the sick people are, they gave a needle...

BS: And that's the end of it.

NF: And he died maybe eighty [unclear] ation. I got beaten up. I count to twenty, twenty-five and I passed out. All I felt was one of the S.S. kicked me with his boot, and I fell, I fell down and I crawled from that barracks there was a toilet from the barracks just about twelve feet to the toilet. I was so sore that I couldn't sit on this toilet seat. I was sitting sideways. Luckily my two boyfriends who are now in Israel, this is what I said to them, "Please, don't leave me in the barrack. Help to take to go to work. Maybe I can work carrying." They came, they put their shoulder, their hands around me and they carried me to the barracks to work. There we had, the overseer was the Russian prisoners. They were assigned there because they were very strong. They were like overseers of us of the work, and they used to beat us if we didn't work enough. So I had a

couple of cigarettes. See, they used to give us cigarettes. I used to smoke. But when I saw the people used to give away the last piece of bread for a cigarette, so I saved a cigarette and hid in there, under the mattress, in the straw. So, when I couldn't work and that Russian foreman start to beat me, I says to him, "Please, I didn't want to tell nobody, but the Germans already, so now, I don't feel good. Please leave me sitting inside little bit till I'll be able to go through." And I gave him a cigarette. So he leave me alone. And for a couple of days, this way, my friends carried me back and forth to work. I didn't want to, because I knew once I stay in the barracks...

BS: That was it.

NF: That was the end of me. Lately, in, I was liberated May the 6th, 1945, by the American army. I think it was Eisenhower's Eighth Army. But, the last couple days my mind didn't work. I was very weak, and I could hardly walk. A couple days before the liberation, the Germans wanted to get rid of us nobody should, they were, we were 17,000 people there. We were maybe ten or twelve different nations--there were Greeks, Poles, Russians, Jews from different countries, and there were also some German political prisoners also among there. They were in charge of us, but they knew in case they're gonna liquidate us, they'll liquidate them also. So they pull us together on a big place they call *Appell Platz* where they count us out. We used to get up every, 4:00 o'clock in the morning they used to gather us together to count us. Every day each German guard, they took our group, it's a 220-50 people to work. If you brought back 20 or 30 less, he was rewarded for it that he got rid of a certain amount of people. Because he, they died on the way to work or from work. So a couple days before the liberation, was maybe beginning of May--1st, or May the 2nd, they call us to go down at noontime at the *Appell Platz*. And they tell us, "For your own safety, so the Allies won't come and bomb all the barracks, and everything else, we want you, you should go to the coal, to the mines, where you are working. And there, you will hide out, and be safe." But we are lucky these German prisoners found out that they had put mines in these tunnels.

BS: Oh my.

NF: The mines, all the...

BS: All the coal mines.

NF: All the mines, coal mines, see the mines [unclear] tunnels. They mined the tunnels. So once we go in...

BS: That would have been the end.

NF: Put up the mines, and everything would have disappeared. So luckily, they start to say us, everybody in own language, in Polish, in German, in French, in Russian, holler, "No! No! We don't want it! We wanna stay in the barracks." So he, in that time the Germans was scared because the S.S. ran away, only they had like they surround the militia, guarding us. And they had not so much power and they knew the Allies are very close by. So we start to holler, "No! We don't want to go! We want to stay here. Whatever will happen will happen." So he says, "If that's so, then I don't be responsible

for you. So you take your own responsibility in your hands." And he let us go, and we went back to the barracks. We went in, we stood in the barracks for well, I think, two or three days. And we to work. We had no food and nothing...

BS: No food.

NF: It was, was everything was like disarray already. There's no control, no nothing. See with me there was a Jewish fellow. He was a very religious man. His name was Abraham. The *shochet* of the town. That man, he had so much faith, so optimistic. I told him, "You're crazy." He says to me, "Maybe." So he says to me, "Before we, [unclear] should pretty soon be liberated. The Americans gonna be here, the Jews, they'll come over here and get throwing out all that [chuckling] chocolate. They give us food, everything else. You'll see how good it will be." I said to Avrum, in Jewish I says to him, "The, maybe before, before this will happen, we will not be alive." Because, my mind didn't work. I was very weak. I couldn't walk. And I was there, I knew that that's the end. I couldn't believe that...

BS: You just didn't have any more faith.

NF: No, I couldn't believe that this will happen. And sure enough, all of a sudden we heard some commotion one Saturday night. So they, some of them, the prisoners, they walked strangely especially the Russians, they start to go after the militia they were guarding us. They killed some of them, and especially after the, they call it *Kapo*, the overseers from the barracks. Each barrack there lived so many people. There is a barrack, 19, another one, that was terrible. It was like extermination barracks. Over there if you did something wrong, there was a barrel of water, they used to bend down, put your head down the water there and hold you as long till you couldn't catch no breath, you came out, you were suffocated, that's all. This is in the barrack, terrible things. So, we were in the barracks, and Sunday morning, I was there. I couldn't move hardly. I couldn't walk. My friend what's in Jerusalem, the (?), you met him? Hertzl? You met him. Hertzl. He looked like a skeleton. He was 30 years old. He was in, some...

BS: Your friend that's in Israel?

NF: Yeah, there's two of them. One's from Krakow, and one's from Lodz, Ghetto. He looked like, all you could see two big buck teeth, with a big nose. He looked like a skeleton. Somehow he had enough strength to walk out, he walked to *Appell Platz* and he saw the German, the planes, were American planes. And the Americans, so when they saw him, they got scared to see a skeleton like this. Now you, if a kid look like a 13, 14 years old. But the unfortunate thing what they did, they gave him chocolate, with, gave him salamis and things. He brought that back to the barracks and he start to eat. Two days later he almost died from dysentery, from diarrhea.

BS: He almost died?

NF: He almost died. See, I, somehow, I don't know why in that friend of mine, the other one, he says I couldn't eat too much because I shrunk, stomach was shrunk maybe.

BS: But he didn't realize it?

NF: Not to eat. So he was saying while he was there, when he gave it to me he grabbed me and he ate it. The day we got liberated we stayed in the barracks. Then, it took a couple days till they start, the Red Cross start organizing people and they start to look out for these people around. And I start to gain a little strength. Then I saw my, the boyfriend. His name is Michael. And he start to cry. He says, "I survived the war. I'm liberated. And now I'm dying. Help me! Help me! Help me!" So I went to that other friend of mine. We take him on a stretcher and we took him to the Red Cross over there they should take him to the hospital. So, they took him to a truck. So there was a truck over there and there was the American soldiers, there was one over there, they wanted the Americans to think, I don't know if he was a priest or what he was, a Gentile. So we start to talk to him. I knew German, a little bit, a few words of English, because my mother used to talk, teach my sister English. So I picked up a few words, so I understood. And he says to me, "If you promise me that you'll convert, to Catholicism, I will take care of you, I will see that you should come to a standing health." That time I got very mad and I told him, I says to him, "What difference it is? The same God liberated us, the same God helped us survive. So what difference is which God it is?" And luckily there was a Jewish officer also, and he understood Jewish. He was listening to it. He came over to me. He asked me in Jewish, "What's the, what's about?" So I told him, I says, "This is my boyfriend who is survived three years in concentration camps, and now he is dying. Please do something."

BS: Help him.

NF: So he took care of him. And he took me on the truck and they took him around thirty miles away to a German hospital. That Jewish officer, he told him--Michael told me--when he came in, he told the German nurses, "First of all," there was Germans, soldiers, wounded. "Push all of them out, and put them on different floors." That was emptied out for the prisoners. "And him specially. If he dies, one of you will die." He says, for three days and three nights not allow him to touch him, because they had to wash him and bathe him and give him some intravenous that his stomach should come, because it was [unclear] and blocked. He was diarrhea terrible. Six weeks later he came back. I thought that a German soldier came back. [chuckling]

BS: He was so...

NF: They gave him a...

BS: He looked so healthy?

NF: He had no clothes. He had no clothes, so they gave him, in summer time, in June, they gave him a German winter uniform from the Wehrmacht, with boots.

BS: [chuckling]

NF: He gained so much weight, he became healthy, I couldn't realize that's the same person. He survived. And then, we were together over there for, I mean, from there we shipped to Italy.

BS: How long did you stay there?

NF: There I stayed a couple of weeks. See the Red Cross took care of us and then the Jewish Brigade from the Israeli Army found out that there was Jews in the camps. They smuggled us in trucks from east Austria to Italy. We were in Italy in Chenss camps (?). We were there in Italy from 1945, '46, and '47. But in forty...

BS: At a camp in Italy?

NF: In camps, yes. We were supported by the UNRRA¹, a bureau, what they were called, the [unclear].

BS: By then you were 26 years old?

NF: They gave us food. Yeah I was 26 years old. We didn't work, but just we lived over there just like without anything to do. So...

BS: But you had food and you were well cared for and everything.

NF: Oh we had food, we had food, yes. They gave us some old clothes to wear and some things like that.

BS: And you had three, your two friends were with you still?

NF: Yeah. But then...

BS: And Abraham? Did he get there?

NF: The friends, see, one of them met a girl in the camp, up at that camp. And she had a brother in the Israeli army. And then him, and the other friend, they went to Israel. And later on a boat we got caught. That time with the, the boat they got caught, the, what do you call this? Outside seven. The boat caught on Cyprus? *Exodus*.

BS: Right.

NF: They went the boat before that, and they came in near Haifa and they got caught but luckily the Israeli brigade came at night with little boats. They had to jump in the water and they smuggled them over there. I remained over there because I found out, I knew I had family in America and I knew I had family in Paris. So, I looked for my family, to go over there. Now, if you want I'll tell you what happened after, why I went to Germany.

¹United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

Tape two, side one:

NF: We were talking to the government extension from the pr [unclear].

BS: O.K. This is a continuation of tape one, A and B, Nathan Form. O.K. We're going to continue from the liberation.

NF: What should say about the, how I came to friends in Israel, or shall I take up with the...

BS: Your friends are in Israel in this one. So now go back to where you were in Italy.

NF: I was in Italy in the camp in the southern part of Italy. The name of the camp was Santo Deseria [phonetic]. I lived until October, 1947. Then an uncle in Paris made out papers for me and he paid for my trip to come to Paris. As, see he is, he was a manufacturer for ladies' clothes and sorts, so he made out papers for me to come to work for him as a tailor. I couldn't work in my profession as a tanner in the tannery, because the French laws forbid for a foreigner can change trades. So I worked for him. I lived with his family over there, till 19--from October 1947 till October, '51. There I learned the trade from the tailoring and the clothing line and became a cutter, a clothing cutter and a clothing marketer. While I was there, my family from America, the uncles, aunts, and cousins, they wanted very badly I should come to the United States. I wasn't sure what to do. So my uncle told me, "Why don't you go over there and see how things are? If you have any problems, you come back." When I arrived to Paris from Italy, the HIAS helped me to get the papers to stay in Paris. I got such a good papers from my uncle requesting that right away they let me stay for three years. So the girl in the HIAS asked me, "Whom do you know in Paris who made out such a good papers for you?" After that I got papers for ten years to stay there. When I came to the United States I made a visa for one year to stay over here. And in case I want to go back to France, I could. I came to the United States. Unfortunately, in the beginning, times were very bad for me. I couldn't find work in my trade. That time was a lot of seasonal jobs. I worked a little bit then I got laid off. I didn't have enough money to keep myself going. And I was very disillusioned. And I was about to go back to Paris. Well, at that time, I was three months in the United States when I met my wife [chuckling] and somehow I moved from New York to Philadelphia, and I found a job in the needle trade. I was making out better making a living myself and I decided that I should stay over here. And within 15 months after I arrived over here, October 29, 1951, in May of 1953, we got married in the Bronx, New York. And luckily, see, then I moved to Philadelphia permanently, as the life was a little quieter than in New York. And I was blessed later on to have a son, born in '55, Jacob Sidney Form. And in 1958, I was blessed to have a daughter born, named Sharon Marlyn Form. And I'm very thankful that I am able to come here, to make a living, to become a family, and continue a normal life. [weeping] Therefore, I feel in the beginning I was very against tell stories as my survival has brought me a lot of agonies, a lot of

nightmares. And I didn't want to talk too much about the happenings during the war, that I survived, and how things were happening. Many times my children used to ask me I should tell them things. Because also they studied in school about it and they want to know about it. But I tried to avoid because I don't want to bring the bad memories of my experience into their lives. But as I was now and get older, and a lot of the survivors are dying out, and within another couple of years be very few left, of us to tell the stories what happened to us. Therefore, I'm, I decided I should tell my horrible experiences for the future generations to come that they should know what the Nazi, Nazis, what atrocities they did to the human people, how hu--how one human being should become a beast, not inhuman toward other people. The things that I saw, and that I survived were, well, I had to do. There is one episode stands out in my life. When I was in the Gestapo camp Rabka in 1942, they brought a whole family over there, maybe 18 people, women, children, and other woman. And we had to dig a grave for them. And I was standing aside watching them. And they had to cross a little ditch to go to the forest, to their graves. And they knew that they're going to be shot. There was a mother, with two small children. One, one she was holding in her arms and one she was holding with her hand. There was a young girl, maybe 17, 18 years old. As she crossed that ditch, she was singing and laughing as she was going to the death. So the German S.S. man says to her, "Do you know where you are going?" She says, "I know. You're gonna kill me." He says, "Why you so happy?" She says, "I want to show you how a Polish girl, a Jew, is going to her death." And I was standing around 30 feet away and I heard all this was around, all this commotion. Then I had to go down in the grave. Here I saw them alive, and ten minutes later I had to go down and bury them. And this episode stays with me [weeping] for the rest of my life. That's the reason in 1964 I was called from the German Consulate to come to the German Consulate over here in Philadelphia Twelfth and Arch Street. They sent a German lawyer to interview all the survivors from that Rabka Gestapo camp. And he asked me questions. He showed me pictures from that forest, from the graves. And he wanted to see if I was actually there. So he showed me pictures from that, that murderer Rosenbaum. Unfortunately, I didn't recognize him, because he was a handsome young man around 25 and he was that time there in uniform. And so many years later, my memory faded. But the rest of the places, I remember exactly where everything was. And while he interviewed me I almost passed out from when I saw all these things. And I felt very bad. We had a recess then he came back for me after lunch. He says to me, "They caught him and he is in prison. There'll be a trial. We would like very much you should come to Germany to testify against him. Otherwise they'll let him free." I said to him, "You see how I feel now. It reacts very bad on me on my nerves and my own condition. I would rather not go back over there, bring back all these memories that I survived, that I witnessed, in that camp and someplace else." Then the German lawyer says to me, "How will you be able to live the rest of your life with your conscience, if the German government sends me around to Israel to [unclear] to Australia to find survivors? You are

such important witness. As Rosenbaum denied that he ever had a gun in his hand to ever kill them, anybody. You saw him holding a gun up on your friend and he jumped on the grave and want to kill your friend." He says, "Can you let go by like this, things like this?" Then I told the lawyer, "I'll leave it up to the German court to decide whatever they feel I should do." In 1968, in April, my son was Bar Mitzvahed. A week later I got a letter from the German court, from the judge. They pressed me I should come to the trial, to Germany. I wrote to the judge, "I'd rather not go, as to bring up terrible memories from the back and face the murderers and all these things." But, I leave it up to him, to his discretion. If he feels that my testimony is so important that he should be convicted and pay for this, all these terrible things what he did over there and other places in the world, then I'm going to go. Three weeks later I got a plane ticket, the reservations over there to come to Germany to apply. And I was the first witness at that trial. That Rosenbaum was sitting a couple of feet away from me, in civilian clothes. Unfortunately I didn't recognize. I didn't know if he was. He interrogated me. He cross-examined me, as he had all the dates, the dates from the weeks, the months, and the years. I had only vague memories. And he contradicted me, going to show that I was not actually at these particular times in that time. When I came to the trial, the pressure for the Germans what's for they asked me, would I like to speak in German or in Polish or in English. I told them I'd rather speak in English. As I understand German, when they were talking back and forth, I had time to think over and to realize what I should say. I didn't realize that he was cross-examining me. I didn't, so I told the judge, "The only time I knew about the time, when it was snowing then it was winter time. When the snow melted and the leaves start to come and the grass out, it was spring. When it was very hot it was summer. When the leaves fell down from the trees it was fall. We lived like animals over there. We didn't know the days, the months. Therefore I couldn't say exactly which day of the month. If some in my testimony of the dates are not correct, according to contradiction, I don't have the exact dates." When I, when the recess, in the trial, lunch time we had a recess. I went down the hall way. The Jewish [unclear] come over to me. He says, "Nathan, how do you allow that murderer Rosenbaum to cross-examine you?" I says, "To whom you talking about?" He said to me, "Don't you know he's sitting six feet away from you!? This is Rosenbaum!" Then I got very mad.

BS: So he was cross-examining you.

NF: Yeah. Then I was very mad and almost didn't want to testify any more. But then the prosecutor took me aside and told me, "If you'll start to act hostile towards him, then we have to cross out all your testimony. As according to the German court, German law, a guilty person is allowed to cross-examine the witness."

BS: Hmm.

NF: So he said, "It's a good thing you didn't recognize him, either that you didn't refuse to testify against him. Otherwise your whole testimony would be null and void." Then, when they started to cross-examine me, at the episode about that particular

point what I had mentioned before, when he had, when he had the gun and he want to shoot my friend, when we had to bury the father and mother and daughter, he, and his lawyer, tried to pin me down to a testimony. He asked me, "Do you remember what color hair the girl had?" When I heard that, I start to cry and I fainted, and I couldn't talk for ten minutes. Then I says to him, "If you were in my place, would you remember what happened? When I went down, got in and pushed my friend out, and I had to turn them over, I was in a daze. I didn't know how I came out from that grave and how I was, remained alive." And after three days' testimony I was, I finished over there, some older Germans came over in the hallway, took my hand, shook my hand, and says, "Thank you for coming over here. It's such a painful thing that you tell us. We didn't know that our people could be such, do such a horrible things," the older German people told to me. Yet we had the feeling over there, when I was in Germany, that somehow, whoever turned on the, I don't know, maybe this girl's father was S.S. Maybe her brother was S.S. But the feeling so I want to get out from there as soon as, as soon as possible. He was kept eight mo--eight years in prison before the trial. After he was convicted to life in prison, he made an appeal to the ju--World Court in The Hague for inhuman treatments that they kept him eight years in prison before the trial. Yet, he was, his name was on the list in Yad Vashem as one of the most wanted murderers. And that's the reason why, why he was convicted. Cause they wanted...

BS: So he started the...

NF: And they wanted me I should come to testify because he denied he ever had a gun and he would shoot anybody, that whatever he did, he was, had orders from above to do these things.

BS: And he served eight years? That's it?

NF: No he, after that, he was, he served eight years before the court in 1960. Yet, the, when the German lawyer was here, in, in the Consulate, he says to me, "If you would met him, so when he came right back after the war he never changed his name. He remained with the name William Rosenbaum. And he got very, became a successful businessman, became a church-going person." He says, "You could see the rest on, eat with him, talk to him, you'd think he's the nicest person that can be." And they would, he could live out his life and nobody would know about him. But unfortunately he became very greedy. In 1958 or '59-'60, [unclear] government, they treated all German prisoners who were wounded in the war, they allowed to file for compensation as a, how you say, a reparational, like a...

BS: Oh I, I know it, what was that called?

NF: What's the word? [someone: "Pension?"] For pension yeah talk--for a pension, for a pension as a...

BS: Reparations is the word.

NF: Pension because he was wounded in the war. Because after the camps were liquidated he was sent to the Russian front, in '44 he was shot in his leg and he was

limping. But he was greedy for the money. When he came, applied for the pension, they took his name and his history. So he applied, "S.S. *Sturmführer* Wilhelm Rosenbaum." They start to look up the files and they send a copy of that to Yad Vashem. Right away, the Israeli governments in Yad Vashem sent back to the German government in Hamburg, "He is the most wanted criminal for the atrocity what he did in that camp. Please don't let him go." When he came back the second time he filled out more papers, and he still is, didn't know that, that the German prison is waiting for him. He says, "Come with us." And that time they put in prison there. They was afraid, they were afraid that once he goes away, he finds out that all the suspicion, they'll never catch him anymore, like the rest of the Nazis. And this way he got caught. And, and probably, I hope he's still in prison, paying for all these atrocities what he did.

BS: [unclear]. O.K. We come now, we're, Mr. Form is living in America and as you know has a nice family and a grandson.

NF: Now you want my son to say something?

BS: And...

NF: He should say something?

BS: Excuse me?

NF: Do have some, some, other questions you want me to ask?

BS: I think that's the end of our interview for right now. I want to thank you.

NF: I want, I want to say I'm thankful [weeping] to the American government and the people who, [unclear] to be, a wonderful country, America, to be free over here and to be able to live in freedom and have a family and enjoy the rest of my years over here in freedom, and my wife and children and my little grandson eight months old.