

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

EPHRAIM GLASER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Sylvia Brockmon
Dates: September 16, 1989

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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EG - Ephraim Glaser [interviewee]

SB - Sylvia Brockmon [interviewer]

Date: September 16, 1989¹

Tape one, side one:

SB: Testing, testing--Ephraim, the last time I interviewed you, you mentioned that you were in a unit acting as a German, in, in the Air Force, right, as a, acting within the setup of a unit of the Nazi Air Force? Is that correct? What we wanted to know was, what were some of the things going on? What were the occasions? What were the events going on there, and at what period of the war, and what were they actually doing at the time, and what was your role in it?

EG: First correction, it was not an Air Force unit. This was a supply unit just immediately after the frontier, or just very close to the, the frontier, to the--now, yes--so this was a unit consisting of mainly Austrian people, but all these Austrians had their commanders starting from a captain and the lower office, lower officers, and the, and the main staff, they're all coming from the Reichs German, in Germany, the real Germans. I don't know why. Probably, I came to the conclusion that they were sort of supervising, even the Austrians who were, as a matter of fact also Germans were supervising them and overlooking them, they're okay. Now they, this was, we were always very close to the, actually to, to the Russians. The distance between where we were located usually was about, wasn't more than about two to three or four or five kilometers where the Russians were standing, and so actually I came in, and as I told you, I think in the former history, how I got there, just by chance, and I have hidden my Jewish, my Jewish...

SB: Identity.

EG: ...identity and they, they were of the opinion that I am a gentile Hungarian. Possibly a lot has to do with it that I did look like a *goy* and this was actually far away from even the imagination that I have to [unclear] to be a Jew. So, of course, the events were all concentrated within the operations, due to the assistance for the fighting units which are in the front to supply them all their needs...

SB: Now tell me, what period; exactly what year are we talking about?

EG: This was in 1944, between, I believe I was there between August 1944 and the end of December 1944.

SB: And at that time the Nazis were...?

EG: They were at that time, at that certain area where I was it was almost a retreat. A very hasty retreat for them, they couldn't set off-- be enough, quick enough to run away from the Russian, Russian attacks. Of course, as a Jew, I had a lot of very unusual experiences there, and there are rumors. Actually they were coming along and they had

¹This is a follow-up interview in which Ephraim Glaser discusses his experiences after his escape from labor camp in more depth. See also Ephraim's first interview conducted in 1988.

their own army newspaper, and even at that time when there were no Jews anymore I believe anywhere, those newspapers were all so full about Jews, bringing the Jews from Poland, they had pictures, and then some of the people sat down with me and told me, "You see Emery", that was my name now because it was my original name. "You see Emery these are the Jews! That's the way they look like." That's the way [unclear]. I think I mentioned to you with all this when I have, when I joined this unit and was drafted and [unclear] some military clothing with the swastikas and the whole lot, and under the pocket of my left side I had a bunch of pictures which I always kept with me and these are the pictures of my father with a beard, and *peyos* [earlocks, worn by Hassidic Jews] and my brothers from Palestine, and all my family. I don't know why, I believe possibly at that time I did act almost like under a trance, so because I did not give myself an account, what are the dangers involved? It was a hasty--a momentary decision and my idea was to join this army because I wanted to become as near as possible to the Russians, so that I can escape from the Germans over, go over to the front and that would really help me to, I mean to escape and survive. So I also had with me a, what do they call it, a *tefillin beitel* [bag for phylacteries] because my brothers, when I was Bar Mitzvah'ed, sent me from Palestine a very fine *tefillin beitel* which was, which was embroidered and Hebrew words about Jerusalem, and it was made out of the very fine, what do you call this?

SB: Silk?

EG: Not silk, it...

SB: Velvet?

EB: Velvet, it was from velvet made. And a certain stage--I took the *tefillin*--they took me to the Hungarian working unit, the certain stage they have asked the Hungarians that were in Poland, they have taken away all our valuables, a watch, whatever we had, and even money, a watch, anything which they liked and they took away and they have, demanded that we throw away the *tefillin* but I kept this *tefillin beitel* with me and I brought it over to the Germans, but one day it disappeared, someone had stolen it, because I believe when I was away, someone has opened my footlocker and looked what I have inside, and they did like this one, but even so, for some reason I don't know, they have not suspected me what have I to do with it? I thought I possibly have taken it from other Jews myself. So I had some very unusual and very painful [pauses]...

SB: Episodes?

EG: ...episodes with them regarding Jews. On one occasion a Jewish boy came along, and I'll never forget this Jew when he saw me, he got frightened. So a few days ago I was a Jew like him and this impossible situation where, you know, where you were really nothing and then after a few days the same Jewish boy comes along and looks at me and gets frightened, and I said to him, "Okay, what do you want?" And he said, "Okay, I want some food." So I gave him a loaf of bread and some other little items which was a very big, very big, big dona-- well a big thing for him, and I'll never forget amazingly the Austrian sergeant, the one who was in charge of me and so on asked me, "Who is this

fellow?” because I spoke to him Hungarian and he didn’t understand that stuff and I said, “He is a Jew.” “He’s a Jew,” he said, “give him another bread, a loaf of bread.” So I gave him another loaf of bread. I don’t say that he was a Jewish lover [a lover of Jews] because I never could find this out, but again, you know, this is something which you cannot understand and I do not see how, why he did it. Oh, I remember other things when actually we were--I was always going with the Captain, and I was his interpreter. The Captain was a very small stocky man. He was Reich-German, a very harsh man actually. Whenever he arrived, he always confiscated from the Hungarian peasants, although they were allies, the best horses, and they were shouting and crying, it didn’t help anything. He was going around with a band on his arm saying that he was in Africa with Rommel...

SB: Rommel...

EG: Rommel troops, which was sort of an elite...

SB: ...in Northern Africa.

EG: Yes, which was an elite, an elite, I think and actually, of course, because of that I always was--by the local population I was always sort of respected and feared, and again, this is the, this is the whole...

SB: Contradiction?

EG: ...the whole, metamorphosis, the whole changeover, I came up from nothing to someone who is going to be feared, and it’s amazing. And not so long ago I found a diary which I wrote in fact at the same time, and a few weeks ago, about two or three weeks ago, we got in to some friends who were with me in the same working units before I escaped to the Germans...

SB: Your diary was of the time that you were in a forced labor camp?

EG: Exactly--yes, I have a diary of 1944, which I have with me now, I found it.

SB: And you think that we can copy it? Can we...

EG: Well it’s written in Hungarian.

SB: That’s all right. We have...

EG: Yes, we can copy it, yes. So actually I mentioned this diary, I cannot go over, I mean I cannot just settle down with the fact that here now I am someone in power with strength. So, what we had on another occasion, we were settled into a villa, which belonged to the Jewish, to a Jewish, sort of a chief engineer of a, of the, of a factory somewhere in some little town. And, on one occasion the, some soldiers, some German soldiers discovered that there is in the floor, there was a parquet, a very beautiful parquet floor, there was this mark which means to say that there is an opening. So they opened this floor and came down into the cellar and there they discovered a few large boxes, with bed sheets, and bed covers, and some very fine underwear, ladies underwear, which was at that time, of course it was a rarity because it was war, and people haven’t seen something like that in--and they came down with me with great--you know they were very extremely enthusiastic and pleased with what I found and Emery you know what we are going to do? We’re going out to the village and we’re going to exchange this all we have here for wine

and for Schnapps because they didn't care what happened, Schnapps and so you will come with us and so on and so forth. Well, I was terribly upset and that whole thing came back to me again. What am I to do? They, we put all these into a few big sacks and put them onto a cart, and I took all these and I went to the village, and of course, they threw the things just for everybody give a bottle of wine, give a bottle of drinks, give some worthless items, and they threw all these things there and I just couldn't bear it. And once I said, "Look, I mean you give it away for nothing, why?" He said, "Take some more, take, I will give you very valuable things, it's war, and so you haven't got them here," and then the, the same man in charge said to me, "Look Emery," that was my name, he said, "Look, you know, you behave like a Jew. These are you, these are your brothers, your own people, and how, how can you behave to them like that? Give it away to them." So of course there are one of the many folds of feelings one had. Of course that was, we were always under fire, under *Katyusha* from the Russians and the fire was a terrible panic, the, the determined shelling by those terrible *Katyushas* which made a very frightening noise and when they, when they kill in the air and they used to come in bunches of five or six or ten and it made a terrible noise exploding just wherever you were. And of course this put the, all the whole staff into terrific panic and they said, "Okay, they are so close that we have to go to another place."

SB: Did you get any orders from the, from the Germans in Germany about what to do, when to retreat, when not to retreat, or what were the orders?

EG: Of course, of course, I mean I don't know what the orders were, because I was never to this stage, but the, the orders were quite simple. They, they whatever we knew that the Russians are attacking in a way that they are going to take the place, people run away...

SB: So you retreated...?

EG: We retreated all the time...

SB: ...then you retreated to other areas?

EG: Yeah, to more inside...

SB: To the...

EG: ...to Hungary, wherever there was a possibility to retreat. So of course, in our retreat we got all this shelled and attacked on the road, and of course, and who was hit, was hit, and who was escaped, escaped. Actually I did not--I was not allowed to have, to use any rifles or, or, or use any kind...

SB: Any kind of ammunition...

EG: No ammunition or armaments, because I was only an aide, soldier that, there was sort of a soldier who was helping out and, an auxiliary aide and not a--with all this, they, the roaming, they looked, some of the Austrians--you have to go somewhere, yeah?...

SB: No, no, no.

EG: ...No, no, some of the Austrians had good intentions and they hated the war and hated Hitler, hated them...

SB: The Austrians hated Hitler?

EG: Yeah, those, those...

SB: ...despite the *Anschluss*?

EG: ...yes, those who were at that time there, and this was already at the very retreating, the glory of the Germans with all of the...

SB: [unclear]

EG: ...down into the mud, so they were warning me, look, remember when someone, some people come along and they need people throughout the front. They recruit everybody they see, they don't ask you questions, when they will catch you, they will send you out if you, they will give you a rifle, they will give you anything they want to, and you will go out to fight. And I remember we had two of those raids coming out [unclear] and immediately there was a terrible panic, and most of the soldiers went, they were hid--went into hiding, under the bed, everywhere because they didn't want to be caught by those who come and recruit those people and send them to the war. So you had to be hiding somewhere until those left and so we were escaping being recruited. And those were caught, amazingly...

SB: You're talking about the Hungarians who were...

EG: No, no, no, this is in the, the German army.

SB: The German army?

EG: The German army, they were trying to escape the possibility of being taken out to the front immediately...

SB: To the front, I see.

EG: They were on the front, but they were, they were sending us just on the front line, the very first front line.

SB: So was the German soldiers, who was in your unit...

EG: Yes.

SB: ...who tried to escape and to, and to hide rather than being sent to the front?

EG: Sure, yes.

SB: Their morale had completely been destroyed.

EG: Oh completely destroyed, no.

SB: Uh-huh [affirmative].

EG: I mean not, we did not hear this from the, from the Reich-Germans, they were very much keeping to themselves. They were never gave any kind of, they would talk softly to us, but in the evenings, at night we went to sleep with all these boys there they were talking, you know, very quietly and saying what they think. Yes, well I had, this went on and I was trying to work out some schemes how to escape, and one, one occasion and we were in a smaller, little town...

SB: And this town you are talking about was in Hungary?

EG: Hungary, yes.

SB: ...or in Hungary?

EG: It was already Hungary.

SB: Yes.

EG: When I was there and I sort of always met the important people of the town and in the little towns, Hungarians usually we have only three important people, two or three of them. First it is the judge, and then it's a notary. You know they work together and then, I don't know who, maybe the head of the *gendarmerie*, the one who was the force there, and I became friendly, I mean I had talks with the notary, and I was introduced to him and so on, and then I said to him, "Look I want to come to your home and talk to you." It's amazing, searching back, where the hell did I take all this courage to do that? It's just unbelievable. "Okay, my son," he said, "you come and talk to me." I was about, oh I was 20, 21 at that time. He said, "Come and talk to me." I says to him, I said to him "Look, you know I'm a Hungarian. So what's the reason for me to go out with all these Germans all the time and fight with them in battle? I mean, you know, it's pointless." I was trying to see what his reaction is. Then he says to me, "Look my son, no, you should not be...", sort of you should not lose your hopes. "We're going to beat the Russians. We're going to open a second front. It's all going to be all right. Just carry on until-- keep there where you are. It's important that you should be there and we want to go on and beat the Russians and you, you should not escape." Of course, [unclear] acting, I said, "Is that so. I'm very pleased to hear that. You give me some words of encouragement [unclear]."

SB: So that in the main, the Hungarian peasant and the Hungarians supported the Germans then?

EG: Well the Hungarians had a-- they were divided, of course, they hated the war because they only lost people and lost everything in the war, but despite all of this there was quite a considerable group of Hungarians who were very pro-German.

SB: They were the Horthy Supporters?

EG: No the Horthy Supporters at that time, almost, later on Horthy was deposed.

SB: Yes.

EG: But these were the supporters of the right wing, you know, the Hungarian Nazis. Of course and then after the, October the 15th when the, when, October it was or September? No after September 15th when the Horthy wanted to make a *putsch* a, a, a *coup d'etat*.

SB: *Coup d'etat*.

EG: And then he was arrested and turned down and they had complete Nazi...

SB: Control.

EG:contr--leaders and big, you know people who turned the whole country to, to blood baths, mainly killed Jews and the remaining Jews were left in Budapest and so on. But of course, there were a lot of those who were terribly disheartened and disappointed from the war, but had no choice, they didn't do anything about it. So I was trying to, to get myself, escape from the, to escape from the Germans and I was looking for all occasions. So I think one night we went out to be on guard, and there was this man, Austrian. He was

armed and I was also in the Guard with him in the night. [unclear] It was my turn to do that, and he was telling me, "You know Emery, you can be in big trouble yourself because the Gestapo is after you." I said, "Why?" He says, "Look they saw you that when we had here some Russian prisoners and you tried to talk to them and you also gave them a little note so you are, you are suspected as a Bolshevik and very soon someone comes down and they'll talk to you about it." And the real, he was right because I knew some Ukrainian Russian which I sort of acquired in the mountains, of the Carpathian Mountains where Crimean's live and it was previously belonging to Czechoslovakia and Slovakia and I was there and I was quickly acquired it, sort of a working knowledge of this language, and I spoke to these Russians and they asked me which town are we near. And they said can you write it down for me, and I was an idiotic boy and I took a paper and I give it to them. Someone looked at this and said, okay, well he gives some notes to the Russian visitors and this is something bad. So I was a bit, turned out to be very edgy and I said to myself, I must do something. So at that time we were again posted in a little town which was famous in the fact that there was a bottle factory producing bottles, glass bottles, and the headquarter was in the villa of the, one of the owners of the factory which was a Baron, a Hungarian Baron and I came to this Baron, again another talk to him, and I gave him another *shpeil* actually. So again I'm looking back why I did it; how and why I did it. "Look," I said to him, "you know, I have very long information that the Russians are about 2,000 meters from here, 2,000, 2 and a half thousand meters from here and they will be here within 24 hours." I said, "Look, "I says, "if you'll help me, I'll help you, because I have contacts with them. Me, I had no contacts of course what contacts, nothing. But the, that Baron was a fine man, maybe the age of 40 or 50 or something like that. He looked at me, and he said, "What do you want me to do?" I said, "You should hide me." I said, "Whatever you can do, hide me because when we come out I will help you." He says, "You know okay, I will do it." So, and he calls in his plant manager and said, "Look you have to supply civilian clothing and hide him." "When?" He says, "Tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock you should appear at the entrance of the factory." "Okay," so this was in the evening. I put on my rucksack, put all my belongings in to a rucksack and I went where there was, you know, there was a door and we were, in our living quarters, we used to take us to living quarters, apartments somewhere and there were some hooks on the back of the door from the inside, so I hanged my rucksack on one of those hooks and at half past ten, eleven, I came back to the apartment from the headquarters to take my rucksack. I opened the door and my rucksack was hanging there, but along with my rucksack on the other hook was hanging the pistol of my colleague, and I was thinking, "Oh I'm going to take his pistol." That was the [unclear].

SB: [unclear]

EG: Shall I take this pistol or not? And for some, I don't know for some insight I said, "No, I'm not taking it because if I take it with me and someone is catching me in the way so what is going to happen to me, so I left it there. And so I came at the entrance of

the factory which did not work at the time, because they, you know they couldn't work, a huge factory, and then this man was clearly waiting for me there and he got a bunch of clothing, and then he takes me to another boy with my [unclear] and we were three Jews there, all the three, I mean myself and another two. I brought in the other two.

SB: Where did you find the other two Jews?

EG: When I was escaping from the Hungarians.

SB: Yes.

EG: ...they had two Jews, and I was escaping from them in a very unusual way.

SB: Yes, so where did you find the Jews now?

EG: Now they were in the, also dressed up as Germans and...

SB: Oh.

EG: ...and dispersed. One was a Swiss and one was a barber and I was his interpreter because I spoke a [unclear]...

SB: I see and they were also in this unit?

EG: They were also...

SB: ...and they were Jews also dressed as Germans?

EG: Jews dressed as Germans.

SB: And you?

EG: And the third Jew I couldn't find, so I'd taken this boy--he was a very shitty boy in the end I found out, but that's it, he was with me so I had escaped with him.

SB: I see.

EG: So when we were there, we're going, as he went down, it goes down into a sub-floor, stairs into a huge cellar, and then you take some bricks out from the, from the kiln which was used for making the...

SB: Glass and so on.

EG: Glass and so on. Of course, the kiln didn't work at that time. They took out the bricks and it was about three or four feet, three feet high, so you were bending down and went into there, and that we had settled down there. Before I come to this, to this point, you remind me that I had to, how I came, I think, did I tell you?

SB: Yes.

EG: How I came into the German unit, I told you that, didn't I?

SB: Yes, yes, that was recorded in your first interview, yes.

EG: So there we were and of course, he promised, look, I would get all this food, he had food at the time, and of course, there was--evening came and he brought us food. I remember even he brought us a drink. I mean, we came, you know, you have to understand it, I came to the German group I was in the situation of almost complete starvation, because even the population had no salt. So you were drinking, eating soup without salt and there was no bread, there was not, no food. They said to us, do what you like. So you can't go away but with all this food, we haven't got any food. So that's how I came to the Germans because I was going to seek some food. So then in the night, we have got terrific attack,

and bombs, and shelling, and heavy shelling, and we heard the front was coming near and we in this place, lucky enough it was a kiln, which was built with lots of bricks. Of course, we were just like in a rocking chair, looked left and right, and we knew the front was above us, and this was a non-stop, and the next morning nobody came anymore, and we had no food. So we were left for three days. We were there for, and nobody came, of course we believe it's impossible to move because it's fire and shelling and shooting and bombing and whatever you want and the front is there so. On the third day we decided, I said, "Look do you want to go out or do you want to sit here?" We were always in a lying position; you couldn't get up. I wanted to sit because [unclear].

SB: You told me.

EG: So I was getting out. The one was a very--this boy was a very retreated and a very frightened boy, he wasn't a nice boy either, but you know I, I took him on to help him, so I am moved out from this in this cellar. It was dark, it was always dark during the day because it was a very low cellar, low [unclear]. Suddenly I saw a Hungarian soldier with a machine gun, with a machine pistol standing there, and I look at him and he says, "Okay, I am escaping as well, I run away too. I run away from the front. I was see this, and I was hiding here." Okay, fine. But then he disappeared and we hadn't seen him again. And I was trying to see, got to see, what's going on, where are we? Are we still under the Germans or are we still under the Russians? To do that I had to come near to where the light is. So the light was there coming in because we had stairs coming down to the cellar and there was an opening, a sort of small opening of about two by two, two yards by two yards, something like that. Two or three feet by three feet was a small opening but the light came in through there. And I very carefully stand there and was listening and watching because I heard someone people were talking, listening and listening. Suddenly I found they are not talking Hungarian, and I just notice some Russian words. They're Russians. So I say to my friend, look, the Russians are here. Of course, you know, can you imagine this is something which, which is in your blood, back into you make you goose pimples all around, even when you think about it, and then we, we took our rucksack, belongings in a bag [unclear]. It was already before Christmas and it was cold. And I had-- they brought me clothing but they hadn't got me a coat.

SB: The Russians?

EG: No, this Hungarian hadn't given me a coat.

SB: Uh-huh.

EG: So I had, I remember it was freezing cold but that's it. I had only a little thin jacket and it was very cold outside so, and then I come up the stairs and I saw there six Russian soldiers, which I was very amazed to see. He had no, he had no look of the soldier, had no criminal. He was a man with a dark man with a smudge a little on his forehead and his head and gray clothing and sitting with a machine gun and shooting all the time. He had a post there, a machine gun post because you know this was the front and when you had a machine gun post holding this place not to be taken back by the Germans. So I

collected all my knowledge which I knew and I was trying, went to the Russian soldier and spoke to him, and I said to him how good and fine to see him and greet him but of course I forgot that, the, my Ukrainian was very strange to the Russians. It wasn't Russian really. He looks at me, he looks at me and he doesn't know what I'm talking about. He knew that I didn't know and he didn't want to be bothered with me at the time, he said you go to hell. You get out of here. So we two, we moved back towards the place where we were headquartered, to the same villa where we were standing before I went down to the cellar. I arrived to the area and I see there's a big, what they call here now *balagan* [Hebrew: commotion], you know a big, this sort of...

SB: A lot of people around.

EG: ...a lot of coming and going and a lot of shouting, and a lot of soldiers, Russians soldiers in and out and moving and so on. But more surprising to some of the, some they know me there because the Hungarian population they knew me. I was a German interpreter going with a Captain, and they shout here is a German interpreter coming, which is a very dangerous thing to say...

SB: Sure.

EG: ...to say to a Russian, they shoot you without any questions. Shooting someone at that time was actually nothing. In Russia was very, in the front they were very lax about shooting people. They didn't go into inquiring and making any inquiries who is what. If they didn't like something they shot him and nobody ever asked any questions. So fine, I entered into the house where the plant manager lived, actually the villa--he was living below the villa in a little flat, the villa was a nice villa and he had a little flat there, and I come in there and the, this plant manager there I greet him and he's telling me, "Look, look, Emery, look I'm in problem, I have a, I'm in trouble here, with the Russians." And I said, "What's your trouble?" He says, "They demand some guns from me." So I come--the Russians see us--so I come to the Russian, there was a Russian with the two soldiers must have become the headquarters or something like that, and I asked him what...

SB: In what language?

EG: In Russian. [unclear] my ears were quite sharp and I could catch up, so I asked him what's the trouble with him? And he's bringing me to a sort of a cabinet you know a little less than this size. This was a gun cabinet. You know this cabinet was sort of a mahogany cabinet and inside was green felt and there were hooks for putting in the guns. These were usually guns, hunting rifles, and he's telling me, "Look you see the signs here," because somewhere, where the guns were, it wasn't faded. You know the whole felt...

EG: Yeah.

SB: ...was faded, but where the guns were was, "Where are the guns from this place? There were three guns here." And I translated this to Hungarian and I said, "Look they demand those three hunting rifles, give them those." He says, "No, I haven't got them," I says, "They haven't got it." Then the officer, "You know what, take him and

shoot him, take him out to shoot him.” I said to him, “Look, it’s a problem, a trouble,” because you know in most of the world they are similar, they’re in trouble, they want to shoot you. Then I came to an idea, he says, “Look I haven’t got them, where are they?” You haven’t got them. He said the German take them. “Okay,” I said, “you know what, the Germans were here, they’ve taken all their guns,” and somehow this soldier was convinced that this was possible. The Germans came in--then and he said let him go. I said, “Okay, fine you are too kind,” and so on. Oh, I had them, they, I had them times which was when the Hungarians had heard that I talked to the Russians in Russian. They came to me and they said, “Look we have to go up to the head--to the Russian headquarters, what they call in Russia *Komendatura* and we have to talk. Please come with us and help us out. Nobody here speaks, no, you speak Russian, and so on, come and help us out.” So I don’t know, you see possibly I don’t know, I must have been a very--I survived by luck. I didn’t think I survived by luck, but I know I must have lost all my fear of danger or sense of danger, and I, I don’t know how I survived. Maybe I survived because I lost it.

SB: Sure.

EG: Because if I would be more careful and more so and so I--so I went up to this *Komendatura* and I came in there in the big room and there was sitting room with a big desk and a Russian Major. I was very impressed by [unclear] epaulettes, you know, the golden--he was sitting there at the table there and they pushed me forward and, and I should talk for them. And I started to talk to them, talk all these, whatever I said I was less than 21 and I was talking to him like...

SB: Like an equal.

EG: Yeah, like a man [chuckle] I don’t know what, and he says to me, “Look I don’t understand what you’re talking about.”

SB: [chuckle]

EG: I don’t see, I don’t know what you’re talking about. What other language are you talking, speaking? He was German. I said, “Okay,” and so a Captain came along and he takes me into another room and he says, “Who are you? You know Russian, you know Ukraine, you know German and you know Hungarian, who are you?” I said, “Look I’m a Jew. I am a Jew and I have survived and I know German. I know I was brought up in German language and I have learned some Russian and I told him the whole story in German. So, he looks at me and he says, “You know what, why don’t you come with us?”

SB: [chuckle]

EG: “Why don’t you come with us? We’ll have you, we want you to interrogate the Russian, the German prisoners and so on.” And I said to him, “You know what, yes, I should do that because I want to have revenge with the Germans. I’m going with you.” “Okay,” he says, “Go down and dress up and we’ll give you clothing and you will stay here and work with us and you will go along wherever it is.” I said to him, “[unclear]. But I have some personal belongings as we are not far away there in the village down in the little town down south. I’m going to take it.” “Okay,” he says, “Go on.” And I go down

there and I walk, and of course, there's a big [unclear] there were a lot of people and the men and women come dressed up in those sort of clothes and the Russian clothes having the big bowler hat and what the women are going around with some long clothing and golden shoes or possibly they have looted an opera or some theater and they found all these dresses and clothing, and they dressed up. They're drunk and dressed up with it, and they, the Russians are very liberal, they understand them today a fighter is a fighter, hey, makes them a little bit crazy. They were not so, they were very lax, in this kind of discipline. Of course there was a strong, if someone was you know trying to do something harmful, they were shot immediately, but [unclear] so it doesn't matter who they are so on. And then sort of a sergeant major stops me and he says, "Look," he says to me in Russian, "come on, come with me, I take you to work." And I say to him, "No, I have to go to the *Komendatura*" and when I come I have to go to the--and he says "Who are you? Why do you have to go to the...?" I said, "I am a Jew." I thought a Jew was something respected. He says, "A Jew?" To hell with you, Jews don't want to work, go away from me. And I arrived back to the village and I have--yet the previous night, I was working, volunteering to work in a bakery. The Russians have taken over a bakery and they made their bread for the Russian Army. I worked in a bakery there all the night and there was a Jewish man, who-- was a Russian Jew, spoke a very good Yiddish and I spoke a very good Yiddish too, and I was very [unclear] and so on, not only he was only 20, but knew all sort of Jewish Hebrew words which means he comes, he had got a some, he had got some religious upbringing when he was a child and so on. The other one was a terrific opera singer and he sang operas all the night, I have to work in the bakery. And I'm just giving you a what kind of people the Russians were. They've got a very interesting characters, some very amazing and loveable characters, the Russians were and I came back and I came to him and I said to him, "Look, tell me something, I was in the *Komendatura* and they asked me to come and join their army, join them." And he looks at me and he says "What do you think you should do?" He looks at me and says, "Why don't you go home?" "All right don't go anywhere. No, don't go." Then I met another soldier who spoke also Hungarian and so I said to him. He said, "Look, don't go anywhere, it's no good. Just look home as much as you can as soon as you can, don't join any army, it's no good for you, you shouldn't do it..."

[Tape one, side one ended; interview ended. Please refer to Ephraim's 1988 interview to read about what he did when he travelled back to his hometown after the war.]