HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

KURT KUPFERBERG

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher
Date: July 24 and 29, 1981

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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KK - Kurt Kupferberg [interviewee]
JF - Josey Fisher, [interviewer]
Date: July 24 and 29, 1981

Tape one, side one:

JF: Could you tell us a little about your childhood, where and when you were born, and a little about your family?

KK: I am born September 21, 1907, in Berlin, Germany. My parents come from Galicia, formerly Austria, to Germany and settled in Berlin. My father was a tailor. He never was a German citizen, because, when you are in Germany, you have to be a rich per son. You have to have a certain amount of money in the banks and what you can show them that you have a lot of money and then you can be a citizen.

JF: About what year did he come to Berlin?

KK: He came in 1898, 1898, right. He came to Berlin with two children. Two girls. He settled in center city and worked as a tailor. We were never rich people, because we were a big family. Seven children.

JF: Where were you in that? Which number were you?

KK: I was number seven. There really were eight children, but one died as a little baby, so I never count this girl.

JF: What restrictions did your father find not being a citizen in Germany during those years?

KK: Not at all. He was an Austrian citizen then, you know, because Galicia was then in this time was at the Austrian part of the land. After 1918, the First World War fin ished, this piece of land became Polish. He tried to be an Austrian citizen, but it doesn't help. They told him by the Austrian consulate in Berlin, "You can do nothing; you are now a Polish citizen." So automatically we children became Polish citizens. But we had nothing to worry about. In Germany you can live, too. You can live to be 200 years old as a foreign citizen. But not a *Burger* [citizen].

JF: What kind of community did you live in, in Berlin?

KK: There is no community. Jews and Gentiles lived together. O.K., certain Jew ish quarter, but it was not big, maybe three or four streets in center city where Jews were living with kosher bakeries, butchers and so on.

JF: And this is where you were living?

KK: No, no I wasn't living there.

JF: You were living in a mixed neighborhood?

KK: Mixed neighborhood, yes.

JF: And what was your experience like? Did you experience any anti-Semitism?

KK: Yes, sure, as little boy, the other children in the school said to us, "Jew, you dirty Jew," or "Christ Killer," you know, we killed Jesus.

JF: Was this common, or did you have any non-Jewish children that were friends of yours?

KK: Yes it was common...oh sure I had Jewish boyfriends. In the school was more Gentiles than Jews. In a class of forty children, maybe six was only Jewish. Only six.

JF: And you were friends with the non-Jewish children as well, or...?

KK: I don't want to say really friends. We played together, that's all. I wasn't in their house and they didn't come to my house, but in the street we played together. Foot ball, and you know like this.

JF: What kind of school was this?

KK: Public school, or German *Gemeindeschule*. Then came the First World War. The trouble began with the food. We suffered a lot in Germany. Those poor families. Rich people could go outside in the country and buy for money different kinds of food, meat and fruit and everything. But my father was a poor guy, but he made as a tailor working for other people, he wasn't working for himself. He worked for factories and took the work home and sewed in the house. You know?

JF: Who owned those factories that he was working for? Were they Jewish or non-Jewish?

KK: Yes, I think it was Jewish factories...yes sure. They cut the pieces of material and he took them home and sewed them together, and brought them back. He didn't make much money. But with a big family we had *kaum* [barely] food to eat. And then the war was started and the ration cards came out; they had cards for bread, cards for meat, for different kinds of ration cards. And bread was the first thing...but when we bought bread, this was the first thing that was too little for the whole family. Very often, I begged my mother for a piece of bread. Butter, we never had butter in the house, we only had margarine and the margarine was terrible. Smelling. Most of the time we eat marmalade. But not really from fruit, it was made from different kinds of vegetables and sweeted it with like Sweet and Low, what you have today, saccharin. It was not a nice time, as a little boy or a little girl to grow up in a poor neighborhood. But, on the other side, when I think now about it, this saved my life in concentration camp.

JF: In what way?

KK: I was six years in concentration camp alone. From 1939 to 1945, and liberated from American Army. People came in concentration camp...some people, you know, they every time they had always rich food and good food, and they died for hunger in the concentration camp. They give us only a little piece of bread every day and a little bit water-soup and there was really nothing in there. Maybe a little bit of green stuff, or what was swimming in there, but never a piece of meat or nothing. After a couple of weeks there, they shrinked. Those people, you know, the rich people, came into the concentration

camp...on this little bit of food they couldn't live. They became[1] diarrhea and died...after a couple of weeks, they died. I was a small eater. With this little bit what my mother could give me, I was satisfied. This saved me my life in the concentration camp. That's what I think. With this little piece of bread what they give us, and the little bit water-soup like I have [not clear] one soup ladle full—I was satisfied.

JF: Your father could not fight in the army, I assume?

KK: No, my father was a Polish citizen. In the First World War they didn't take him because he was already...always when they called years...when they called the people in to serve for the army, he was always a year older.

JF: They would have taken him, though, as a Polish citizen?

KK: No, no, then he was, in the First World War he was an Austrian citizen. Austria was in war together with Germany against Russia. He went very often and said, "Gee, I want to serve for my land," but they wouldn't take him, because his year wasn't on. He was born 1864 and they never took his year. He was already a little bit too old, you know, to serve. He was a big patriot and he was a soldier in Austria...army.

JF: He did fight in Austria then?

KK: He didn't fight, he was a soldier three years. There was no war at this time and he was serving in the 1880's, whatever it was. So, coming back...this saved my life. This was a big factor. And people died like flies from the bad food. It was not nourishing. It was nothing, you could just live like, what do you call it, vegetated. Yes, like...

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about your Jewish upbringing?

KK: Oh, I went to a...my father was very conservative, Orthodox, not too crazy *fromm* [religious] but he went to *shul* [synagogue] every morning you know, in synagogue...he was a member from a synagogue, but so at home he doesn't care much only about his only son, what I am.

JF: You were the only son?

KK: I was the only son, and six girls. He cared only that I went to the *cheder*, you know to the religious school. The girls...he didn't care. He was old fashioned, he was...boys are the main thing.

JF: So you went to *cheder* then?

KK: I went to *cheder*, yes. I learned Hebrew, *davening* [praying] you know.

JF: And was your home kosher?

KK: Yes, we were kosher. We kept all the holidays, Passover, everything was clean and we had extra, extra dishes. Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur, we went around, my father and mother was crying all the time and he was *davening*...

JF: Did you also speak Yiddish?

KK: No.

JF: Not at all?

[1]Perhaps bekam, meaning received or got.

KK: I went in a German school. My parents talked Yiddish to each other, to each other. But we understand, but we couldn't talk to them back in Yiddish. We talked to them in German and they answered us in Yiddish. Oh, a little bit German, sure, in time they learned a little bit German.

JF: What happened after the First World War? What happened with the change in German politics? With the start of the Republic? Did that affect you in any way?

KK: Not at all, really, not at all. The Jewish life went on nice and all the synagogues and everything was really smooth, and good. But then started the era when Hitler go up. Hitler came off. After 1918 with a couple of officers they were not satisfied with the circumstances where Germany has to pay reparations to the Allies and friends and so on. And they lost the war, you know. I don't know if you know it, in 1918, Kaiser had to quit his throne and then starts a revolution, with different kinds of soldiers with different kind of officers, *untereinander* [among themselves]. *Kapp Putsch*[2] was shooting on the streets, people died on the street.

JF: So you remember seeing this?

KK: Oh yes, yes, I saw it. Then sometimes those different kind of rifles hit in the house where we are living, behind those big doors, the house doors. We were living in a cellar at this time.

JF: Why?

KK: My father had a little tailor shop after the First World War with cleaning, repairs, alterations he made on men's clothing, most of them men's clothing. This was a cellar, it was a little store, but a couple of steps went down. So half in the earth, went down. Big windows, so you see more when you are like on the street than you are upstairs in a house, an apartment.

JF: Your father was able to work during the war? The First World War?

KK: Yes, he worked, yes. But he did never make much money. Like I said to you, other people had lot of money, had a good job that made a lot of money. And he had a big family, he couldn't afford many things that other people could afford.

JF: Did anything change for him and for the economics of the family during the 1920's?

KK: Yes, we lived a little bit better. We had more food on the table, you know, because he made better and the business went good. He made not too bad. I started after school and went eight years in the, what's it called, the *Gemeindeschule*, *Volks*-school. After eight years, my father said to me, "You have to be a tailor, too." I had nothing to say as a little boy. He give me to a master, *in die Lehre* [in an apprenticeship] and I had to learn the trade. Then started the depression to the...we had a big inflation in Germany. He said to me, "You work with me." I was jobless, I lost my job, it was a depression in Germany, in the '20s, you know. I started to work with him together. We made not too bad.

[2]A failed uprising led by Wolfgang Kapp in Berlin, 1920.

JF: Was your father at all concerned with Hitler's attempts to get into politics?

KK: Not at all. The German Jews, I am not one of them, but...because I am born there you can count me, too. They didn't care much. They said, "Ah, a *shtick mesh uginne*, Hitler, he's crazy. He never can make something...people are much too democratic and not so big anti-Semitism. We didn't take it for real that he was there and made a lot of *Unruhe* [unrest]. And then he was in prison, he came to [not clear] in many years. He was in Landsberg in a *Festung* [fortress] and there he wrote his book, *Mein Kampf*. But then started the S.A., his Stormtroopers, they, they became bigger and bigger, you know, and the *Reichstag*, and the, like the Congress here, the *Reichstag* in Berlin. Berlin is the capital of Germany, there was the *Reichstag* and many, many Congressmen became Nazis, too.

JF: What was your feeling and your father's feeling when this happened?

KK: It was very, very, we felt very bad.

JF: Were you frightened?

KK: Yes, we were frightened. Sure, then they were marching on the streets—the S.A. and sing songs about the Jewish blood has to *spritz* from the knives. But the really frightening moment came when Hitler came to power on January 30. Hindenberg was then the President from Germany and he took him in and made him *Reichschancellor*. Then it was frightening. But still the Jews said, "He won't long exist. Give him three months." The Jews in Germany, they were very secure, they said, "Nothing can happen to us," and that's why all of them, the German Jews, really went under. The rich people could go out of Germany easily in the '30s, in the first years, in the '30s. They took their money and went out.

JF: Did anyone in your family talk of leaving Germany?

KK: No. We had not the possibilities. One sister married a Polish Jew and they emigrated to the United States in 1922 or '23, but they couldn't help us. They were struggling too, here in the U.S.

JF: But there was no talk that you might want to leave, even if you could leave, financially?

KK: I would never...I never felt that I go take my skin and save myself. My parents were old people, my father was in his 70's, and my mother was in the 70's, and both of them were very sick people...with the heart. I always felt obligated to watch them, to be there...to always be there. When they get a heart attack, sometimes I have to be at night at my father's bedside, and watching them. I very often was thinking, "You can't go away and save your skin. I have to be with your parents." I felt this, you know? An inside voice said to me, "You have to be with your parents. You can't run away."

JF: Was your father involved in any way in the Jewish Council and the organization of Jews in Berlin?

KK: No, not at all.

JF: Was he affected or, at that time, you were working, were you affected by the boycott?

KK: Oh yes, sure, sure.

JF: Can you describe it to me?

KK: In 1929, I took over the business. I was twenty-two years old. I took over the business; my father couldn't see anymore. He was very bad with his eyes. See, a tailor has to see what he is doing. The needle, you know. So I took over the business, but then in 1933 when Hitler came to power, the first thing what he did...his soldiers, you know, the S.A. put on all the Jewish stores a big sign with swastikas, "*Jude*, *Jude*." Jew, Jew, Jew. In the beginning of April 1933, a boycott started against Jewish businesses. Not that they threw stones in the windows, only they marked all Jewish doors with "Jew, Jew, don't buy by Jews."

JF: This was on your shop?

KK: Mine store too.

JF: Then what happened?

KK: A big S.A. man in uniform had a big sign around his neck here with a big sign "Don't buy by Jews."

JF: Did he put that on your store?

KK: No, no, no. On my store he only put up a big swastika on the window, with white chalk or whatever. But the trouble was one thing—in this house where I had my store and I was living in the back of the store. Upstairs on the third floor was living a S.A. *Sturmfü hrer* running around in uniform. He watched Christian people, when they go into mine store, and bring me some work, you know. When they came out, he warned them if they do this again they gonna be sorry for, you know. So then the Christian customers, one after the other, went away. Then my business lost maybe 90 percent.

JF: The first S.A. man you described with the sign, did he stand outside the door?

KK: Outside the door. Front of the door. Let nobody go in.

JF: How long did he do that?

KK: A whole day.

JF: The day of the boycott.

KK: The day, one day.

JF: And how long did the S.A. man live in your building, stop the Christians from coming in?

KK: Always, he always was staying there.

JF: From that point on?

KK: He was leaning out of this window from his apartment and watched people.

JF: How long did that go on? From the time of the boycott?

KK: All the years.

JF: Starting at the time from the boycott?

KK: Yes.

JF: Starting in 1933.

KK: '33.

JF: And going on?

KK: This is the difference between Jews in Germany and Jews from Poland, that you interview every day, they didn't know then nothing from Hitler. They lived in a freedom that nobody was doing something to them. They started 1940 when Hitler went into Poland, the whole trouble.

JF: Your problems then, you feel, started the day of the boycott?

KK: Really, sure, when Hitler came to power.

JF: What happened after that? Your business fell off 90%.

KK: Ninety percent. Only a couple of Jewish customers left. Then many Jews left the country, too. People with money left the country.

JF: And at this point, you were the only child at home with your parents?

KK: I was the only child home with my parents and my younger sister.

JF: There was a sister younger than you?

KK: Yes, yes.

JF: One child was younger than you.

KK: Yes, yes.

JF: And you felt you didn't want to leave because you were responsible for your parents?

KK: Yes. One day came a policeman to our house and said to my father, he has to come to the police station.

JF: When was this?

KK: It must be 1938, in the beginning of 1938. So my father went with his wife, my mother, and a couple of sisters. I wasn't there. I wasn't there. I know now I wasn't there. Only he went. At the police station they told him, "I wanna give you the best advice...leave this country. Go away." So my father said to the police officer, "Where should I go? I am 72 years old, *fast* [almost] blind, and can hardly walk." He walked with a cane. "I can't go nowhere." "I beg you to"...one was not a...Nazi, the police officer (all was not Nazi) he said, "I beg you try to go out from Germany. I warn you."

JF: Why did this officer warn your father? Why did he take him aside, do you think?

KK: Because he was a human being.

JF: Did he know him personally?

KK: No, no. Maybe he knows my father, but my father doesn't know him.

JF: Now, can we backtrack a little bit before this instance, to 1935 and the Nuremberg Laws?

KK: Yes.

JF: Can you tell me what happened, how you experienced that period of time?

KK: I tell you the truth, this doesn't affect me. I wasn't running around with Christian girls. The Nuremberg Laws were only affected Jews who were, or Christians who

went together with Jews, or they tried to get married or what...This was then a law that Jews can't mary Christians and opposite, too, that Christians can't marry Jews. If they had sex, and the Jewish partner got caught, became the...death *strafe* [punishment].

JF: So you don't feel that the Nuremberg Laws affected you that much?

KK: Not me, not me. I was much too Jewish to go with Christian girls in this time. I never do this.

JF: Did you feel restricted at all in your practicing Judaism during those years?

KK: Not at all.

JF: There was no effect on your religious practice.

KK: No, not at all.

JF: What happened with your business...how did you support yourself with the decrease in your clientele?

KK: I made hardly a living. The expenses were not big. I had to pay the rent, but I was living there. I had to be there anyhow, I couldn't move to another place.

JF: You rented the basement floor of this building?

KK: Yes.

JF: And your shop was in the front and your living quarters were in the back, and the S.A. man was on the third floor.

KK: Yes.

JF: And were there other Jewish families or Christian families in...?

Tape one, side two:

JF: Can you tell me, then, what else changed for you before 1938? What else did you notice, what other experiences did you have in Berlin during those years?

KK: One sister married, married sister with three children, one was already married. They emigrated to South America, in 1935. My father was hollering to his son-in-law, "Are you crazy, [we are doing all right here][3] you can live here, nobody bothers you much," he said. But the trouble was the Jewish children couldn't go more to the Christian schools. This was a law. The Nuremberg Laws, I think. Jewish children can't go with Christian children together in one school. They had Jewish schools. There had to build Jewish schools. So he said, "If mine child can't go to the school anymore, I have to leave the country. If he has no education anymore, I have to go." So he sold his business in 1935 and went to Rio de Janeiro.

JF: So this was the second sister of yours that had gone?

KK: Yes, this was the second sister. Two sisters were married to Christians, had Christian husbands.

JF: Did they convert?

KK: No, no, no. It was not necessary. They were not married in a church. They married only for the law, that's all. So all the friends of mine went away, but I said to myself, "You can't go nowhere." Till one day, there came out a law that all Polish Jews have to leave the country. So, I didn't care much. I didn't went away. I had to stay with my parents. It was my obligation to stay with my parents.

JF: Did no one check to see if you were allowed to stay in the country?

KK: Then one morning, in the 5 o'clock in the morning, was a knock on the door. The *Gestapo* came into my house. We were all in the beds. "Take on your clothing and let's go." So, it's only my father and me. We were only two men. They didn't said nothing to my mother, or to my sister. Only my father and me. I started to holler. I said, "What you want from my old father, he can't go nowhere, he's half blind and he can hardly walk. He's 72 years old." He wants to hit me because I argued with him. So we put on our clothing. They didn't say nothing, what's going to be, or what, what they have in mind with us or say, "Take money with you, or take a piece of luggage with clothing..." Nothing. We went to the police station and there were big trucks and we saw hundreds of hundreds of Jewish people, men. They were putting them on trucks and brought us all in a big *Kaserne* [barracks]. Do you know what a *Kaserne* is? A *Kaserne* is big buildings where soldiers were living. Thousand soldiers.

JF: Like barracks.

[3]In this and other instances, lengthy German phrases have been omitted and only the English translation appears in brackets.

KK: Barracks, like barracks, but this was not barracks, was big buildings, three and four floors high.

JF: This was in Berlin.

KK: In Berlin, yes. Wasn't used anymore for soldiers, was empty.

JF: When was this?

KK: This was October 28, 1938. And we heard they were gonna bring us all, that was all Polish citizen what we were living there for years and years in Germany, were born there, some of them, like me, but we all had Polish passports. And we heard that they were going to bring us to Poland. Force us, and bring us to Poland. We didn't know then that in other cities of Germany, and other little towns, or what, they took whole families and throw them to the Polish border. Women, with little babies on the arm, and pregnant women, everybody from whole family. So in Berlin, we were all in a big place behind the *Kaserne* and I said to myself, "You have to do something. I can't take...my father can't do this...and go with..." I had the feeling that he wouldn't stand the transport to the border.

JF: You knew at this point what they were going to do?

KK: Yes, yes, we knew that they bring us to Poland. But I knew my father wouldn't [withstand]...this transport. He wouldn't live through this. So I went from one officer to others. Were police, no S.S. nor S.A., only police. And I went from one officer to another and no success. I said, "Please, can you leave my father go, let my father go home. I think he wouldn't stand this travelling on this [not clear]." Then I went to a higher police officer, I thought it was a higher one, and I said to him, "Can I talk to you?" He said, "O.K." I said, "My father is *fast* [almost] blind...he can hardly walk. Is it possible you can let him free, that he can go home?" So he said to me, "Where is your father?" I said, "I bring him to you." I went and brought my father to him, and he looked at him, like this, as he could see he was 74 years old, and he said to another policeman, "Take this man to a doctor." And I saw my father...I saw him no more. He went away. I said, "Daddy, go," I was happy. I had the feeling that he was going to be saved. Then they brought us in trains to the Polish border, to the border town. German border town.

JF: You said there were trucks, you went...

KK: Yes, first trucks that brought us and trucks to the station, to the train station. They put us in the trains...

JF: Were you able to take anything with you at all?

KK: I had nothing. They didn't say nothing to us when they took us from home. In other towns, they had luggages. Money and everything. I had in my pants pocket, maybe three German marks, or what. They brought us to the border town and it was already night. Nighttime. We had nothing in our mouth to eat, nothing. From the morning 5 o'clock they took us, from the bed we had nothing to eat. From the train, they let us out of the train, and everybody has to give up his money, what he has, they took everything away. Then the S.S. took over. No more police, S.S. with rifles, bayonettes on top.

JF: This was at the border town, in Germany; do you remember the name of it by any chance?

KK: Yes, Benchin, Benchin, B-E-N-T-S-S-H-E-E-N.[4] And this train was full with men, women and children from other stops, they stopped in other towns before they went to the border; from all sides came people and then in the train.

JF: What kind of trains were these?

KK: Regular personal trains.

JF: Passenger trains.

KK: Normal trains. They took our money away, only ten marks, everybody has to have ten marks, not more. The rest of the money they took away. Some S.S. men rifled the people, and some S.S. men took watches away, so really, stealing. And then they brought us outside the train station, and we came in a big wood. And they started to hit us over the heads we should run. The S.S. yes. Hit us. Old people fell, lost all their luggage, because when they hit you over the head you have to go up and run again, or they would hit you...so I was happy I had my father not with me. I was so happy. I was young, I could run. So in a little while, they said to us, "You see the little light there in the back in the woods, this is your homeland. You go there, then you are in your homeland. Don't come back, if you come back we shoot you." So we went through the woods to the little light and there was a little border house, a little house only. And we went in there, and there was a Polish border guard. We showed him our passports. "We are Polish citizens and the S.S. told us we have to go to Poland." And he said, "Back to Hitler, back to Hitler." The Polish guard, he don't want to know nothing. "Back to Hitler." And I said...not only I said, there were hundreds of people...many trains came and we said, "You have to let us through to the first town." Then we can't stay here and it starts to rain in the woods. "No, no," he didn't let us through. Came another *Grenz* [border] guard with a rifle and we had to stay there the whole night. And the rain was going down and the people were laying there in the woods. Women with little children, with babies. It was terrible. So I had the first taste from my homeland, so to say. In the morning he went into town and he brought a lot of police, Polish police with him, and they marched us into town. Not with trucks...we had to walk. We had to walk, it was maybe one-half hours or three-quarter hours. In this Polish town, this border town, the name is Borshin, in Polish. It was my German, the town was before German, and after the First World War it became Polish.

JF: How do you spell the name?

KK: Sporshin, in Deutsch Benchin, in Polish, Spascyn,[5] I think. So they brought us to big horse stables. It was a little bit outside of town. There were big horse stables, empty horse stables, with a lot of straw inside, without windows, only windows were only

[4]This may be Bendzin, or Bedzin, in Poland.

[5]Zbonszyn

on the big doors. We had to march in and there we should lay there. The Polish citizen come over—that was the reception. After three days, a big truck came on with bread. They threw this bread down from the truck to us.

JF: This was the first food?

KK: The first food, a piece of bread. Dry bread. And water, water we had from a well, we had to pump. And then the Jewish organizations in Poznan—this may be 50 kilometers away or what—bring food. The life got to be little bit like normal, normalized. Still we are living in the straw, you know, laying there, but that's all, we had food and we could rest, that's all.

JF: How many people do you think were there?

KK: Around I think about 500 people. Then life got a little bit normalized because we, they put some people in schools. Some people had became [got] monies suddenly from the U.S. or what.

JF: They got money?

KK: Yes, from relatives. Then everybody knew then what happened to those people and they sent money to them. And I got money from my sister in the U.S. and the dollar was very good. I became [got]...lots of *zlotys*...you know the Polish money.

JF: How did your sister find out where you were?

KK: My, I think, my mother and the other sisters told them what happened, yes. They sent letters to the U.S. and told them what happened, to their brother.

JF: Were you able to get any letters from your mother?

KK: Yes, sure, sure. They could send us letters. Not the first couple of weeks, but then we find out what happened in between in Germany.

JF: What did you find out?

KK: One of the Polish boys[6] in Paris heard that their parents in Hanover, got, they throw them out to Poland. And he went to the German consulate and protested there. And he wants to talk to one of the higher officers there. And he shoot one of those high officers, Von Rath. I don't know if you heard about it. This was a Polish-Jewish boy, Grynszpan. And this was the *Anlass* [cause] for the Nazis to start the whole thing against the Jews in Germany. They start to burn all the synagogues in Germany and my wife knows the one, she was living there as a young girl. Burned all the synagogues, *plü ndert* [pillaged] Jewish homes, tear everything apart. The S.A. went into the houses, in the apartments, slit with knives, everything, sofas, pictures and everything, tore everything down. Until then the real *tsorris* [trouble] started.

JF: This was the *Kristallnacht*.

KK: This was the *Kristallnacht*. When you say the word *Kristallnacht*, you can't think nothing. This word means really practically nothing. The "Night of the Broken Glass," you can say. This doesn't say that the synagogues burned with people in there with

[6]Herschel Grynszpan.

the *Shamosen* [caretakers]. The people were living there in the synagogues...some guards, the *shamus*, you know...they burned everything down.

JF: What happened to your mother and sister during that time? Were you able to hear exactly what happened to them?

KK: I didn't hear nothing from them, nothing. We heard it only over the radio. Over the radio, we heard what happened in Germany. My mother died then.

JF: Your mother died?

KK: My mother died. She was—I think she died like of a broken heart. Because I was the only son...she was only thinking of me all the time.

JF: When did you find out she died?

KK: I find it out, my sisters wrote me a letter.

JF: During this time that you were in this town?

KK: Yes, yes. And I wrote them, too. My address where I was.

JF: How long after you had left Germany was this do you think?

KK: She died *erev Pesach* [before Passover], March, 1939. I was then around five months away from home. Still there in Zbonszyn. We couldn't go nowhere. If you want to go to the train station, where Polish border guards...*gendarmerie*...didn't let you go nowhere. The streets outside, outside the town...you couldn't go nowhere...were all guarded constantly.

JF: Were you able to work at all in that town?

KK: Work? Doing something? No.

JF: The food that you had was supplied by the Jewish committee in Poznan.

KK: Yes, and then afterwards, many people got money from their relatives, and they lived from the money that they got. It wasn't too bad. Only that you couldn't go back to Poland. Couldn't go in the land. I wasn't very anxious to go to Poland anyhow, because I couldn't speak one word Polish. I was like handicapped, you know. But they talked to me, I didn't understand. This was a border town where many Germany were living too, from years before. So, it was not too bad. Then came out a law that Jews who left Germany and had a business there can come back for a certain time to Germany to liquidate their businesses. In a sense, they took us out of the beds, we couldn't do nothing and go. So we can come back for a certain time to liquidate everything.

JF: When was this?

KK: This was around May, 1939. So I said, "Here, I am one of them." They took my passport away and I became [received] another passport. A white passport. The color was white, and when you open it up, it was a picture of me. Nationality: *Jude*. They were worser than the Germans already. This wasn't in Germany then. Was it in Germany in '38?

JF: The Poles issued this passport to you?

KK: Yes, I am a Jew. I am not a Pole, I am only a Jew. And I had to leave the country and never can come back, stand [stated] in the passport. The passport is guilty[7] only a couple months or what. Then I went with this passport to the station and I could go to Germany back. Back to Berlin, my father, I saw my father. I saved him the life, for couple of lousy years in Germany. It was '43 when they took him and poisoned him with gas. I saved him five years, five years. So I came back to Germany; my sister was still there. She was married in between to a Jewish man. This Jewish man was up when the synagogues was burning. He was a German Jew. They arrested a lot of German Jews. Hundreds of thousands and sent them to the concentration camps. He knows something about it and he run away to Holland over the Dutch border to Holland. And she was waiting that something happened to him that she could go to him. So one day she then told her girlfriend, a German Jew, too, what was there in Holland. They went to the *Holl and ish* border—you know what *Hollandish* is, Netherland, to the Netherland border and tried to smuggle through. But the *Hollandish Grenz* [border] police catch them and gave them back to the S.S. So they arrested my sister and the other girl, maybe others, I don't know, and brought them to a town called Hanover, I think, I'm not exactly sure. This is not too important, anyhow. And she was six weeks there in a prison, they didn't know what to do with her, and they sent them back to their parents. So when I came back to Berlin—this was around June or July of 1939—suddenly, maybe that was the next day, I got a letter from the American General Consulate in Berlin, I should come with $10 to get my visa for the United States. I had to get a doctor's *Attest* [certificate] that I'm all right. I have to bring ten dollars for the visa. I was happy. But, the date when I should come was September 21, 1939. I said, My God, what do you do [till then]? You can't stay in Ger many, stated in passport, only short time you can be there. To Poland you can't go back because they wouldn't let you in, so I run to the American Consulate in Berlin, American General Consulate. Hundreds of people were there, trying to get out of Germany. Jews, Jewish people. I stand in line, I tried to cry, and said, "Here's my Polish passport what they give me in Poland. I can't stay here in Germany. I have to leave the country." And then on September 1st, the war started. The World War against Poland, first against Poland. I begged him, "Please put this date [ahead] for a little bit earlier. Give me an earlier date so that I can have my visa in the *Pass* [passport] and then I'm feel good when I have my visa and *Pass*, then I am [not clear] I go out of the country." Nothing helped. I begged them. He was stone faced, this American, *Beamter* [official]. "You come when you're told to come. September 21st is your date, not one day earlier. There are hundreds of other people before you that want to go out."

JF: This was an American, that man was an American?

KK: Sure, a consular officer. It doesn't help me. I came home whining, crying. Maybe four days later, knocks on the door, in the morning, 5 o'clock, I had the feeling right

[7]Perhaps, gü ltig [valid].

away what it is. The Gestapo again. "Put on your clothes, let's go." They didn't touch my father, only me. On the same afternoon, I was already in concentration camp.

JF: This was July...September?

KK: This was September 13, 1939. I came to Sachsenhausen. This is a little...this is a concentration camp. The *Ort* [place] is Oranienburg. Before, the name was Orianienburg. Concentration camp Oranienburg. Then they changed it to Sachsenhausen.

JF: How did you get to Sachsenhausen?

KK: They put us in trains, it was a train load full with prisoners. I was thinking I'm the only one, but then they were, hundreds other people. It was a regular train, regular passenger train. The only thing was we had to lay on the floor. That nobody could see us when other train would pass this train, they couldn't look in. There is nothing to see. They are all laying on the floor and this was all S.S. already. And pilfered us. S.S. took everything that we had, something on us that was *wertvoll* [valuable] good, good pillows, pencils, you know, gold, some gold pencils, pens, watches, took everything we...mine only had a regular *blechene* [tin] watch. They took my watch, they took it. Then we came on to this town and we had to march to the camp. A couple of kilometers away. When we marched through the town, we had to keep our hands behind our head like this and we had to march. It was a hot, very hot day. The people, they are laying out the windows, you know, the people from the town, laying at the window. "What, the Jews...they are Jews. Hit them, kill them, when you wanna give them food, kill them first!" That was the "good German"...

Tape two, side one:

JF: Can you continue about your arrival at Sachsenhausen?

KK: Yes, we came to Sachsenhausen and it was a big, big open space with buildings and so on. We were standing there in line and the S.S. came to greet us. Isn't that nice? Jewish men with big beards. They put on their lighters and burned their beards. And they had to stand like this and the beard was burning. They started to cry; it doesn't help them. Then we came to a barrack and they have to take all off our private clothing and the private clothing came in big containers. We saw them hanging them up. To have to take everything off that we had and wrote everything down. Real German, you know, everything has to be written. But I had a wristwatch, ring [not clear]. Then they stop us to take off our hair...shaved us the hair, the head. [The beard] everything was off. Then they put us [under shower] ice cold water. Ice, not warm water, ice cold. [With a dangerous] powerful shower. And then they gave us new clothing. And I saw what they give us. Heavy military uniforms, maybe 100 years old, worn what, from 1870, or what. From the war in 1870. With high stiff collars, and three hooks here. They had to be closed, those hooks, shouldn't be open. If they find someone with an open collar, they hit them terrible, on the tops of the head. They brought us to barracks, my barrack was 37, the number was outside marked 37. In the barracks there was two parts. When you came in, it was one, the toilets and the washrooms. Then came a day-room where you could sit and eat your *herrliches* [delicious] dinner and table and benches, not chairs, benches. Then came a door, there was the room where we slept: a big room, empty room and they brought in burlap sacks and we had to fill them with straw and has to staple[8] them on the back wall, to stuff them up. Then started our working days and hours.

JF: During this time, what kind of food were you given?

KK: We became [received]...everybody became [received] a piece of bread. Five men, one bread. It was bread, about one-and-a-half pound bread, soft bread. Black bread. They cut this in five pieces. Five men became [received] on bread. *Jeder* [each] a piece. The bread was so, that when you eat the bread, the whole mouth starts to burn. I don't know what the ingredients in this bread were...that everybody became a little blistered in your mouth, insides. Of the tongue, inside, you know. Little white blisters. When you eat fire, so was the bread. And ten men, became [received] one piece margarine, it was a pound piece. For cut in nine pieces and everyone become [received] a piece like this. [A little thicker.] Then they give us coffee...was only black water. That doesn't taste like coffee...was only black water with a sweet taste. In the evening they gave us one *Teller* [dish] full of soup, watery soup. And in that was swimming like, like pieces of *Kohlrube* [kohlrabi]—little pieces was terrible...but I eat it. Other people eat it, too, because they were hungry. So, work, they had not work for us. So the work was to laying a whole day

[8]Perhaps, stapel, meaning to pile.

on your belly next to each other—the hand in the back had to keep the little cap from head with both hands. And they watched that we had all the hands really in the back, not that we take one hand away. Then the S.S. starts to come in and have fun with us. Up and down, we had to go up from the floor, lay down, up and down, up and down. Till there were a couple of dead people, elderly people who couldn't stand this exercise. Then they stopped. One day they did a wonderful thing—they put people from the other half of barrack, put them in our part. And they have to lay in two shifts, one over the other. There's one laying on the floor and then the people from the other side barrack have to come our part and has to lay on us.

JF: How many people are you talking about?

KK: About 200 people. In two shifts, one over the other and on top come the S.S., stepped over us with a piece of wood and hit the people.

JF: They would walk on the two layers of bodies?

KK: On the two layers of bodies and hit us terrible. The head in there was unhuman, so the S.S. couldn't stay long there, because they couldn't stand the heat too. They had uniforms on, the black S.S. uniforms with the S.S. signs. They start to feel uncomfortable. Thanks God, they went out again, because they couldn't stand the heat. But they worked so long over the people, until there were a couple of dead people there—from this strenuous exercise. In the evening we had to go out and stay in line and get counted. But the people were laying on the floor, their brain couldn't stand it. They couldn't stay on their legs, from laying a whole day, so they tumbled, they couldn't control themselves...they stumbled over the whole place. Like they run away too, like this. They couldn't control their own...After the third day or fourth day, I don't know exactly how many, I felt I was one of the victims too, soon. The *Blockaltest* came in, he was a criminal because he had green triangle with his number. A tailor should *meld* [announce] themselves...who is a tailor? So I get up and I said, "I am a tailor," and with me maybe ten other people. And he took three out, from this group he took three. One of those three was I. We could sit on a bench, shouldn't lay on the floor anymore. No more exercise for us, we were sitting, those three, men sitting on the floor...we could take off our jacket because a tailor has to work, you know, has to be comfortable...could take off the heavy jacket. Those three men, you imagine the feeling that we had? We were so *nebbesh* [helpless] for the others, but we felt good...Ashamed to tell you, but it was like this. We could cool our bodies on the wet windows, the windows were wet from the heat, and the wetness felt good on our naked chests. And we had to sew on those *Mogen Dovids* on the prisoners' clothing and the numbers. Everybody on the floor, one after the other, has to sit up, has to take off the jacket, have to give it to us. We were sewing on the numbers and the *Mogen Dovid* and having to give it back to them. They had to put it on again, and lay again on the floor. The S.S. came in and [made] a terrible exercise with those on the floor. They had such wounds on the knees, from them laying on the floor.

JF: You were doing this in the same barrack where you had been before?

KK: Yes, in the same barrack, but we three they took us out, not out, they put us on a bench, we could sit on a bench. They were laying before us, those hundreds of people, and we were sitting on a benches, three men. And I was one of them.

JF: You had mentioned before that the *Mogen Dovid* were two separate triangles?

KK: Yes, two separate triangles, so put on that it looked like a Jewish star, like a *Mogen Dovid*.

JF: And the color...?

KK: The color was red, one triangle was red and one was yellow. Yellow is Jewish, the *Juden Fleck* [patch] you know, the yellow *Fleck*, and red. Some had *aber* [but] black *Fleck*...parts, black triangles. Those were Jews who were already arrested once in a while. One cannot criminals, they named them a-social. A-social was not a normal person...he lives off others of other's peoples.

JF: Like a petty criminal?

KK: Yes, like a, what they say in *Rusland* [Russia], [how do you call] the sort? Yes people were done that had regular work, live from little petty things,[9] or little *Krumme Sachen* [petty crimes]. They had a black triangle and a yellow on top.

JF: And the ones that had the red piece were considered political Jews?

KK: Because we were political Jews, because we were Polish Jews and still in Germany like, you know. We had to live there in Poland. Then some Jews had green on red...green on yellow—yellow for Jew and green was criminal. That's why Jews were already arrested...were in maybe prison. Not much. Jews are not this type of people in general, who are in prisons. Saved my life, maybe, this episode. All my years in concentration camp I had so little chain of little luck, since I would never live six years in concentration camp. I wasn't this strong enough. One luck was that I was always a small eater. I could live with little bread, a little bit, with a little bit water soup. Another thing was, I was a tailor. It saved my life in this moment. A third thing is, I wasn't married. I was a single person. I not have to think what happened to my wife: What is with my wife? What is with my children? I am here, where are they? Living, or what, knowing you couldn't go to them. We couldn't wrote to them. After a month in concentration camp we could wrote the first postal card. [But] we should put...only wrote what they said. We should write, "I am all right, I am here and here barrack and so and so. [I am] fine, and I hope you feel good, you're all right." What they said, we should write, we wrote.

JF: And who could you send that to?

KK: To my family, to my father, to my sister.

JF: Were you able to hear from them after you gave them your location?

KK: Not right away, not right away. The first postal card after a month, we could wrote to them so that they know where we are. They didn't know. They took us out of beds,

[9]Perhaps, "parasites."

they didn't know what happened to us. At night, we could take the straw sack down and spread them on the floor and could lay on them. But there were so many people, there wasn't enough room for each person to lay like a human being, on the straw sack. You couldn't lay like this, how impossible, there wasn't enough room to lay straight on your back. You have to lay on the side, on one side, and the next person has to lay *fast* [almost] on your side. The *Blockaltest* [block supervisor], this murderer, every day he had a couple deaths. He has to show them the results...the dead people were laying outside barracks after they were dead.

JF: The block elder you mentioned was a criminal?

KK: A criminal, yes, a real murderer.

JF: Not a Jew.

KK: No, no, not a Jew. There were no Jewish block elders in Sachsenhausen. He had a piece of bread in his hand, and everybody has to lay tight on the other one.

JF: With your knees drawn up?

KK: The knees maybe like this. A little bit drawn up...not straight. And one, the next one has to lay hard on us. He hit me or the other. Like you see a sardine in a box, but a sardine look nice. We were laying like this. One on the other. You could hardly breathe. And when you want to turn, we have to call each other the whole length, we have to call, we wants to turn the other side. So we all has to turn. But one has to go out...on the toilet, once in the while in the night. We had only one little cover to cover us. So he stand up, this...till he could get up, he was so tight on the other one, till he had the power to get up, to get loose from those people, he went to the toilet, he came back. He has no place where to lay down. Right away the place was filled up already. He begged the people, "Please let me in again, let me lay down." Nobody wants to let him in again. He was standing and crying, *nebbish*. That happened every night; every night the same thing. People got up and wants to go to the toilet, come back, couldn't find their place anymore. You couldn't put on light, there was no light. And then the S.S. came sometimes at night with a flashlight to the window and looked. When they saw one of us prisoners laying there maybe stretched his arm or what, made a little motion, you know. "Oh the Jews don't sleep, how can they sleep, let's go in and throw them out." So we had to go out—all of us out, middle of the night because maybe one man raised his arm...out of the barracks on hands, in hands...lay down outside and roll. Rolling, we have to roll, like children, holding up a hands. We had to roll.

JF: You were only wearing what?

KK: A shirt.

JF: A shirt, that's all.

KK: A shirt, that's all. We are rolling, rolling, and they hit us until a couple were dead. Couple two, three, were dead. This happened *fast* [almost] every night. They came and had fun with us. Then they had one or two targets, elderly Jews, and hit them until they were dead. So we saw the dead every day for [before] your eyes. Work, they had no work for us. There was no work.

JF: You were still sewing on the stars, at that point?

KK: Yes, but then come one point where there were no more sewing, but then there was different story. They saw that the people were get so sore, that they had wounds and the pus was setting in. So they had to find another thing. We had to, all four of us has to go in the toilet. In the men's room.

JF: All of you?

KK: Yes, all of us from one room in this side, this toilet from the other side barrack—their toilet. Two toilets. And we had to stay in those toilets. And they pressed us in. One and the other, one and the other. Until we were staying like this. Could hardly raise the chest.

JF: You were standing, packed into this...room?

KK: Yes, standing the whole day. This was the working hours, we had to stay there.

JF: This included you, at this point you were no longer sewing?

KK: I was there, too. People wants to go to the toilet. They couldn't. The toilets were there, but they couldn't move, because we were pressed one on the other. You could hardly breathe. Some people took their hands, you know, to have a little bit distance from the other men, you know, but it was terrible. Staying in one place, you know. The toilet was there but no one could go on the toilet. Because we were standing like this. People made in the pants, it was a stinking terrible thing. The windows were closed, the doors were closed...they couldn't get out, the doors was closed. They pressed the door on us. The *Blockaltest* you know. They pressed the door, it was so full packed, they could hardly close the door, on us.

JF: It was the block elder who put you in here, the S.S. would not...they were also there.

KK: This was their plan to do it. They didn't came in then. They couldn't come in. They had no room to go in there. This was weeks and weeks like this. Then my legs began to get wounds and start to...from those shoes. From those worn out shoes with those cleats. My feet began to get sore and I had big wounds on my feet.

JF: You were standing in this room?

KK: Yes.

JF: From the time you got up in the morning.

KK: Yes, we eat our breakfast, our very generous breakfast, and then we had to go in there. That was the working hours.

JF: That was how many hours?

KK: Around eight hours or so. Until 5 o'clock at night. Five o'clock, and then they let us out, we could hardly walk, because we were standing. We were counted again. 180 Jews *angetreten zum* [falling in] to *Appell*. Ten deaths laying next to us...ten dead. Naked. I don't tell you everything, don't think, if I can tell you everything, we stay here until tomorrow. I can't tell you everything. It's impossible. Then the war was against

Norway. Yes, they conquered Norway, the Nazis. Norway's people are *stark* [strong] against S.S., against the Nazis. They started to do everything to boycott them, to hit the Germans where they could bring them in a fight, you know, [murder them]. We got prisoners from Norway, because Norway they had an N and an O on the chest, next to their triangle. Then we saw many different kind of people from other countries. On the *Platz* [square][10] on the *Grosseplatz*...This counting was first only for the barracks. We saw nobody. Only we could see to the next barracks, that's all. Later on we were counted the whole camp the whole concentration camp were counted on a big, big free place.

JF: Were you also sewing the Norwegian...?

KK: No, no, no...only for the Jewish barracks, for mine barracks. Barrack No. 37. In other barracks was maybe the same thing. This took long with those *Mogen Dovids*, maybe 100 people. A couple days. How can you sew with those wet fingers, you could hardly hold the needle in your hands, from the heat. So I became those wounds here in my leg. I can show you still those big knobs here on my leg.

JF: You still have a big knob on your leg?

KK: I don't know if you can see anything.

JF: From the rubbing of the shoes?

KK: Yes, from the wounds on my legs. I don't know if you can see something.

JF: Yes, I can see.

KK: This was from here, till here.

JF: The whole back of your heel.

KK: Like a hand, so big things, a hole, with green, green.

JF: It was green.

KK: With green, swollen and pus. On the other side was not much. Only this leg.

JF: Was there any question about having it treated at all?

KK: So we tried to go to the *Revier*. *Revier* is the hospital. *Revier*. The only thing what they could do to give us paper, bandages *aus* [of] paper, so they put paper bandages on...but nothing else. Not medicine or so nothing. So after those days in the toilet they was thinking to put the people who couldn't walk—I couldn't walk—put them outside, not direct outside the camp, it was still inside, *aber* [but] on a place where nobody came. From the whole camp it was...from the camp, the...the dirt, I don't know what. We have to lay there. No far from them, on the floor, and the big...*Hitze* [heat] the heat was terrible, it was already Summer, 1940. For the Polish prisoners...they were all free...there was nothing in Poland. They only worked a little bit, right? In Poland, the Polish Jews.

JF: Were you able to talk to any of the prisoners from the other countries?

KK: No, impossible. Was not possible.

JF: Were you able to get any information as to what was going on outside this camp?

[10][Later on we were counted on a big Platz.]

KK: Yes, a little, a little bit. What you hear from other prisoners, talking, you know. Yes, a little bit from the war going on, you know.

JF: That's how you got your information?

KK: Yes, yes, yes.

JF: Were you able through that year to hear anything significant from your family?

KK: Nothing.

JF: You got no mail at all?

KK: Yes, I got mail, but they couldn't write either. When they wrote something what the S.S. didn't like, they made a big black stamp on it, CENSORED. A big stamp, CENSORED. So you couldn't read what they really wrote, what they didn't like. Every letter was censored. Refuse from the camp there was the refuse, was *stapled* [piled] on one place at the edge of the camp, and they put us there. Next to this. Hundreds and thousands of flies came, and the flies smelled our wounds, the pus, went insides and put their eggs up.

JF: So this is lice?

KK: No lice. Flies, the flies were flying and smelled our wounds and...

JF: And laid their eggs.

KK: And laid their eggs. The sun hit our legs and I had such a *Blasen* [blisters].

Tape two, side two:

JF: You were saying that the sun hit the wound on your leg...on your ankle...

KK: We became sunburned on parts of our body from the sun. We had big water *Blasen* [blisters] on the legs...water blisters *aber* [but] high up. Then suddenly we looked, worms, we had full with worms on our wound. The legs were full with worms, white worms, maybe an inch long. We had to put them down. But *im Moment* [at the moment] it felt not too bad, it was *ekelich* [disgusting], terrible feeling...but the worms eat the pus, they eat the pus from those sores, those wounds.

JF: Yes.

KK: It was a good feeling, you know.

JF: So that they actually removed some of the pus?

KK: Yes they removed...they were actually living from those pus. You were not a human being any more, you were like a piece of animal, without a brain, who couldn't think anymore...only the little thoughts were on this little bit food in the evening, what you get.

JF: You were still getting the same rations that you described before?

KK: Yes, yes. A piece of margarine, one pound margarine was parted in nine parts. I'm not sure exactly, but I think it was nine parts. It was like for every person, was a piece of margarine like my finger is to put on this bread.

JF: Your thoughts then were of the food you described and of the watching the worms or the flies and the process of what was happening to your...

KK: This is what the S.S. wants from all those prisoners. That they shouldn't think anymore. They should only be like a piece of wood, you know, without brains. Only to listen to the command.

JF: Now you had been in the camp a year...?

KK: Less than a year. When I just told you.

JF: When you found that your brain was no longer working?

KK: Practically, practically not.

JF: It was a year?

KK: Less than a year, less than a year. It was June 1940. We were thinking nothing. You couldn't think anymore. You were like a piece of animal, what has to go in *Reihe und Glied* [rank and file]. If you go one *Schritt* [step] out, right away, they hit you, they shoot at you, the S.S. As a matter of fact, when we marched to work, when we were marching they took our camps away from us and throw them to the electric wires. Then they said, "*Jude*, go pick up your caps." They took our caps and threw them there. The poor Jew went to pick up his cap, and from the watchdogs they shoot him. Because they said he wants to run away.

JF: Was there anyone at this time, Mr. Kupferberg, who tried to escape, who did so?

KK: Oh yes, oh yes.

JF: Then what happened?

KK: Then we were counted. One prisoner was missing. They had *genau* [exactly] the number, how many prisoners were there. And when the *Appell*, the count, came, and one prisoner was missing, they let us stay on the big place, the whole camp. Every barrack extra, every barrack *fürsich* [separately]. And this took sometimes a whole night till they found this prisoner.

JF: And then what would they do?

KK: *Entweder* [either] the prisoner was hiding in the camp somewhere, so then they killed him. We were staying the whole night on the *Appell Platz*...without food. Then after the counting, all this, we go back to our barracks and became [got] our little bit water soup.

JF: They would shoot the prisoner if...?

KK: This prisoner, they shoot. If they find them outside, he came back as a piece of meat only. A bloody mess of meat, you couldn't recognize him anymore. Then the dogs were eating him. If outside the camp, they let the dogs loose, and the dog find him, this prisoner, where he was sitting, hiding.

JF: So by the time he got back...?

KK: Then they brought him in on a stretcher and the whole camp had to march by this prisoner, to look at him. They forced us to look at him. On this piece of bloody mess, so *zerfressen* [eaten up] was he from the dogs. Or they hanged him *vor* [in front of] the whole camp, on a gallow, they hung him up and the whole camp has to look.

JF: How often did that happen, how often do you think someone tried to escape?

KK: It happened every second day, maybe. Some people had enough, *entweder* [either] outside the camp, like I said when he was working, and tried to hide somewhere to escape at night. Daytime he wants to hide and the night he wants to run away. But they catch them...nobody was running away. Always they found him and when it was kilometers away from the camp.

JF: Now during this time...?

KK: There was no Jew...it was always a *goy* that run away, not Jewish people.

JF: The Jews did not try to run away?

KK: No, some Jews were very...got crazy. They were thinking on their families, all the time.

JF: When you say they got crazy, what do you mean?

KK: They start to scream. Loud scream like a crazy person. We know why, because he was thinking of his wife and children. What happen to them.

JF: What would happen to him if he would scream?

KK: They hit him, and then when it got dark, he ran to the electric wires, to the barbed wire around the camp and touched the electric wire and he got electrocuted. In the morning when we got up, we looked out the window we saw hanging people like spins,

spins in a net, a spin, you know what I mean? Hanging in the net, attached to this electric wires.

JF: Like a moth or a butterfly...?

KK: Like a spin, spin net.

JF: Oh, a spider web...

KK: Yes, a spider web. He was hanging like this in the wires. Touched to the wires. And they had to take off the power...the S.S. had to take off the power and then we had to take them down. Everyday.

JF: Everyday, someone.

KK: Everyday you saw, two or three, or four hanging in those wires. People to do suicide and they run to the electric wires, got electrocuted.

JF: Was there any group of people who carried on any prayers in the camp? Was there any opportunity for religious...?

KK: No, no opportunity. We were so busy to watch ourselves that we didn't get killed, that we had no prayers. Someone...some *fromm* [pious] Jews were there remember ed...you didn't know what day it was. After a little while you lose your track, if it is Thursday, Friday what month or date. One of the Jews said tomorrow is Yom Kippur. Some people start to cry and start *davening*. When they were in our barracks, you know.

JF: What happened then? You had talked about June of 1940, it was the point at which your feet were so infected.

KK: Full of those worms...what the flies put their eggs in you know. But like I said, on one side, you feel *Ekel* [disgust], but the other you feel that the wounds start to hurt not so much anymore. Those worms eat the pus from those sores. In September 1939...

JF: You mean 1941...I'm sorry 1940.

KK: 1940. After I was a little bit less than a year there, September 1st or the 2nd, and on the 13th it would be a year. They put us in cattle trains—all those people that couldn't walk, some with sores, with wounds, put us in cattle cars and sent us to Dachau, around twenty kilometers or what from Munich, not far.

JF: About how long were you on that train, then?

KK: Oh, these train I was 24 hours.

JF: About how many men do you think were with you?

KK: In every cattle car were about 50 or 60 prisoners. It was a very long train. Air came into two little windows on the ceiling. With iron gates. You couldn't get out, you know. Those doors were closed...they didn't let us out when we wanted to go to the toilet, so we had to make in the cattle car.

JF: Was there a guard with you on the train?

KK: No, no, maybe there were guards, but they were not on those cattle cars; there was no room for them. They were in regular wagons, the guards. They were there. When the train stopped they went out and watched so nobody *irgendwie* [somehow] tried

to escape. We came to Dachau. First they treated us not bad. They put people with wounds, they put us in hospital, in beds.

JF: Were they treating you with medicine?

KK: They treat us with medicine.

JF: Who were the doctors?

KK: Prisoners.

JF: Jewish?

KK: No, no, *goyish*. Jews were not allowed to have such good jobs where they could work under a roof. Put us in bed, put bandages around our legs and give us medicine. Nor oral medicine—for the leg, they drenched us in a jello[11] solution.

JF: A jello solution?

KK: Yes, I don't know what it was. Disinfectant, I think what it was.

JF: And the oral medication, do you have any idea what it was?

KK: No, not oral medication, only the leg they treated.

JF: Oh, they didn't give you anything by mouth?

KK: No, no, not by the mouth.

JF: I'm sorry, they did something...this jello type solution?

KK: They drenched the bandages with this solution.

JF: I see.

KK: And we could lay there. The leg was up in the air like this. It was resting.

JF: How long do you think your feet had been infected by the time you got to Dachau? How long a period of time?

KK: Period of time?

JF: From June or earlier than June?

KK: From May 1940.

JF: To September?

KK: May '40 this we came to Dachau was...

JF: From May to September of that year...

KK: And then September and then we came to Dachau with those bandages, those wounds, and then we came into hospital and they treat us very nicely there.

JF: Was your food any better at that point?

KK: After a little while the wound started to heal. Shortly before the wound started to heal, it was only like a quarter big, they threw us out.

JF: They took you out of the infirmary, or hospital.

KK: Yes, the *Fuss* [foot] was still bandaged, but the wound was smaller. Outside we could go into barracks. And then the hell started. All the Jews were automatically in the *Straf* [penal] company.

JF: The *Straf* company?

[11]Perhaps "yellow."

KK: *Straf* Company...this is a certain type of group of people, of prisoners who were treated worse than the others...punished. The whole camp has to work six days a week. On Sunday, it was a day of rest. We Jews had to work all seven days of the week.

JF: This *Straf* company...what does that word mean?

KK: Punishment...this is a group of people they were extra punished, because they were Jews. We had to dig ditches outside the camp. Dachau is a camp, what is outside filled with a big ditch with water. First is there electric wire, then is a big deep ditch with water. It's very deep, the water. If you want to escape, you drowned in this water.

JF: Is that the ditch that you were digging?

KK: No, no, this is only the situation what Dachau was. Then you go outside the camp, you go over a little bridge, you saw the water *ringsum* [around] and then we walked on those fields outside Dachau.

JF: Outside of Dachau, were there homes or...?

KK: No, only fields.

JF: Only fields. As close as this was to Munich, this was empty farmland...

KK: This camp was isolated from houses...you saw nothing, only fields.

JF: So there were not farmers...

KK: Far away you could see the Alps...from far away. Dachau is 800 meters over the sea-level high. We have to dig ditches. Those ditches were for drainage for the fields to put water on the fields, and then they let the water through to those ditches. And the water wasn't very high, maybe like this here. So maybe two feet deep. We have to dig ditches and till the ground with spades; put the spade in and till the ground. We working in long rows one next to each other. In the evening when we want to go march back to the barracks to the camp, the S.S. was standing there and threw many from us in those ditches.

JF: They threw some of you into those ditches?

KK: Yes, those prisoners. And the water was only till here, so they struggled out of those ditches...and some of them they didn't let out. They hit them when they struggled to come out. They hit them with [not clear] over their heads, and they got unconscious when they were hit on the head and fell in this little bit of water and drowned. That we saw everyday. Everyday two or three or four of us, drowned in this water.

JF: Would they pick these people at random?

KK: At random, they didn't like their faces, or what. So one day one of the S.S. men called me, "Come here, you dirty Jew." With his fist he hit me and I fell *Kopf* over [head first] into those water. And I stumbled out, and he called me again. I was standing to attention. I was standing like this. Wet, wet.

JF: With your arms next to your side?

KK: And he give me again a hit with his fist, and again I fell into this ditch. But he didn't hit me with a spade, not me. When I came out of the water, and the Doberman dogs come on, it bit me in the legs, and I was standing with pain where the dogs bit me and then he said, "Back to work." Nothing happened to me...only I had bleeding wounds from

those dogs...and were wet. And I was still working. But many of my friends died this way. In this little bit water, wouldn't let them get out, hit them on the heads with the iron parts of the shovel.

JF: When you were working in these fields, were you still in those German uniforms that you had been given in Sachsenhausen?

KK: No, in Dachau we became [got] striped uniforms. Blue and white striped uniforms. Pants the same.

JF: And also with stars, the same colors?

KK: With the stars on them.

JF: I hope this tape is good.

KK: I'm sure it will be. Go ahead.

JF: We worked seven days a week. One day we had to go to the *Appell Platz*, the *Platz* where they count those prisoners. All the prisoners were in there. Everybody takes off their uniform, put them together in a nice bundle and put *vor* [in front of] your feet, they were saying there. There is going to be a selection.

KK: How long has this been since you arrived at Dachau?

JF: Maybe a couple of months later...maybe May, or April of 1941. Suddenly we saw far away naked women running...it was far away, but I could see it was women, naked. Running for the S.S....the S.S. was standing and they were running...was a selection of women...far away, of the same place, but far away. I don't know what happened to them. But we could see the naked women, and we were standing naked, for hours, and then the sun went away, and...it got cloudy, you know. The sun hid under the clouds. Under the clouds we start to freezing, you know. When the sun was there we were happy, it was warm. When the clouds came, the sun was hiding behind the clouds. Hours and hours, we had to put on our clothes, and we had to go back to our barracks.

KK: You mean there was no selection?

JF: Nothing, nothing. The S.S. saw us and said, "I don't want to see the dirt anymore. I had enough of this dirt," so we heard him say this. This is only a short episode. The whole camp was filled with lice. People came with the shirts from the wash barrack where they wash our laundry. The shirts were still with little eggs from lice. They came already infested with eggs from lice. Clothing lice.

KK: They washed your uniforms?

JF: Yes, sure, once in a while...not the uniforms, only the shirts. They became [got] every two weeks clean shirts...I told you before my English is not good...I am a tailor, a tailor has to work, not to talk, right? I had to sew here in America. When I was a salesman, I could learn easier English, but I wasn't. So be became [got] lice. Infested with lice. The whole barracks were alive with lice. My whole body, not only mine, all the others, were full from lice, we scratched, the nails, where we scratched. After weeks and weeks when we were tortured with this lice, we were sitting there. In the evening after dinner we have to click the lice to kill them. Big lice. They took around two barracks for people were so

infested with lice and the bodies were so scratched bloody, they took us, burned our prisoner clothing and put us in other barracks. To heal us, or what, our bodies. They put us on those straw, burlap bags with straw and we had to lay there a whole day, doing nothing. Only like naked. They give one to another shirt, I don't know what it was. Every two or three days they came in, with some salve and we had to, a black salve, and put this on our bodies. It smelled like tar, like tar. We have to put this on our bodies...Food they only give us a piece of bread and water. That's all.

KK: That's all you had each day?

JF: Each day, for eight days. Bread and water. They [punished us yet] because we had lice. Our fault.

KK: You were punished because you had lice?

JF: Yes, like, yes, yes, because of this.

KK: Before that time you had gotten a little bit more food?

JF: Yes, before we got regular prisoner food, with the water soup, you know. Sometimes they called it like spinach, because there were green leaves in the water. Never a piece of potato, except in the winter time. They give us frozen potatoes. Frozen. The *Schweine* [pigs] what they didn't eat, they give it to us. When they open up those *Kessel* [pots] where the food was, the smell was terrible, but we eat it, what could we do, we had nothing else. We eat those frozen glass potatoes, like glass they were frozen.

KK: What were your barracks like in Dachau, as opposed to Sachsenhausen?

JF: They're bigger barracks there. The Jews were not mixed up with other prisoners. Jews were in their own barracks. Bigger barracks than in Sachsenhausen. And they had one barracks was with Polish...with Catholic priests. Young priests.

KK: The whole barrack was filled with priests?

JF: Yes, yes...with Catholic priests. But they had it good. They became [got] better food, they became [got] the food what the S.S. got, from outside the camp...and they treated them better, but they were prisoners. Had their own church in their barrack.

KK: How long do you think these priests were there?

JF: A certain time, maybe a year or...only in Dachau I saw this. They had to exercise, they had to run like the soldiers run. Some were looking good except they had no hair, like we were.

KK: They were also in prison uniforms?

JF: Yes, yes.

KK: But you heard that they were Catholic priests?

JF: Yes, they were Catholic priests, all of them, in the extra barracks. They had a church, too, in the barrack, and better food, too. They eat the same food that the S.S. soldiers were eating.

KK: Was there any difference in Dachau as far as religion was concerned? There still was no opportunity or...prayers going on privately?

JF: No, not at all, no religion. Maybe privately, but not for us. We worked seven days a week. We were half dead when we came home from work. And in the winter time the nose was running in the soup and we eat it. The nose was running in the soup and we eat it. The whole day sometimes you worked in the rain and came home in the barracks with your wet clothing and in the morning, after you slept you put on the wet clothing again. There was no occasion to dry them, you know. You put your wet clothing on and you worked again a whole day. One day, I was working with prisoners digging the field. Turning the dirt. One of the posts, S.S. posts were watching us, called. He called me. With the finger. I came near; he said not a word. "Your number." I showed him my number. He wrote the number down. I know I was maybe talking to mine neighbor, a couple of words, but I wasn't standing still and talk to him. I worked, so I was working and talking, maybe bent my head...

Tape three, side one:

JF: You were telling me that you had been stopped for talking while you were working?

KK: Yes, I didn't know what it meant, but he wrote my number down. In the evening, my number was called up and one of the S.S. men told me I was talking at work and I get *dafü r* [for that] punished, one hour hanging.

JF: One hour of hanging?

KK: One hour of hanging.

JF: What did that mean?

KK: They put me with hands on the back. Hands have to be like this. Crossed behind your back. Then they put a chain around the hands and around the wrists and I had to stand up off a little step-ladder, had to step on top of this, and he put, in the air was a big *Balken* [beam] with a ring and the end of the chain came through this ring, you put the chain from my hands, a round chain, through this ring and tighten it, then he throwed, with the foot, he throw the little step-ladder away and I started to hang like this. The hands go up higher and higher till you were hanging like this.

JF: You were bent over and your hands were behind your back?

KK: Behind your back and hanging in the air, around two feet from the floor. Two or three feet from the floor. This was a whole row with prisoners. Not only me. And they had maybe 30 or 20 prisoners that they hanged at the same time. The S.S. was sitting across from us playing cards, with their watch on the table so they see when our time was up to take us down. The pain is unbelievable. The pain. The shoulder...socket go out. And you were hanging there...And the *Schweiss* [sweat] is the right word? When you perspire for...*Angst* [fear] you think you have to die. Your feeling...you get wet, your body is perspired. The drops fell down from your face on your chest. And the pains [unbearable]. You can't stand it. And people start to scream. In different kinds of languages. "Momma, mia," and the Polish in Polish...[started to scream]. I wasn't screaming, I was seeing what they do. The S.S. come to those prisoners who was screaming and with their feet, they were kicking them so that they were swinging on their chains through the air. And the pain was worser then. So I see what they did to them, I want to scream too. "Let me out, let me out of here, let me go." But I see they did to the other. Then you see, this is like eternity, one hour, to hang like this. And then to see [how] the prisoners who helps them—the S.S. comes on with this little step-ladder and put it under every prisoner's feet so that he could setp on it and then he opened the chain and let them down. Until he comes to you, you feel like...this waiting till they let you go down, is terrible. So they let you down and you're sitting there with the hands like this.

JF: Behind you?

KK: Behind me, but then it is impossible to take the hands to the front. They are like a piece of wood. The hands were like without life, the arms.

JF: Even though the chains had been removed?

KK: Yes. The hands are still there like this, and so we marched to our barracks like this, we tried to take the hands to the front but we couldn't. We march to our barracks and the [fellow] prisoners massaged the arms and they slowly came a little bit alive again. Slowly we could move the arms to the front again. This was number one. And I had the pleasure to hang twice.

JF: What was the other offense for which...?

KK: The other offense was they said the prisoners...we were working, we should [report] for a certain work. And I went, on the [not clear] the German, I went, and some wouldn't work, wouldn't go. So they forced them. And when they had a bundle of people together they said, "We'll show you. You don't want to work." I said, "Sure we want to work. I am one of the first that said I want to go. [He wrote everyone down—all the numbers.] One hour hanging. But this second time I had an easier feeling, because I know how this tastes...how this hanging felt. When you know what happened to you, when you know, you feel different. If you don't know your feelings is another thing, is another one, if you know what happens to you.

JF: You were not quite as afraid?

KK: Yes, that is what I mean. I wasn't so quite afraid anymore. I know about what I went through the experience once, so I was thinking, "O.K., what can you do?" They treat you like a prisoner, you come *vor* [before] S.S. men, higher S.S. men, *Reichsfü hrer* Himmler, you are sentenced to hang, one hour on a chain in the air because you did this, [refused] to work. Nothing you could do, nothing. Many of my friends hanged once, but I was hanging twice. And, we were lucky, because before this whole thing was, they were hanging the people outside the camp on the wood...on the trees. There were nails in the trees and they hanged the prisoners there in the woods. Most of them came never back. They killed them [or what].

JF: Why did those prisoners not last through the hanging in the woods? They would kill them afterwards?

KK: Then they killed them. They were screaming. Was nobody there for a witness.

JF: But when they did it in the camp...?

KK: In the camp we were in the *Badeanstalt* [baths]...in a big hole where we came in the showers. In the showers was a big *Balken* [beam] across the hall, you know, what keeps the roof, a beam, a big beam, with rings [through] where the chain came [through]. It was a long row with maybe 30 little rings, in those beams, and we were hanging all this in a row, maybe 20, 25 or 30 people.

JF: So you think that because it was done in this room that there were witnesses, and therefore, the men were not killed, as well as hung?

KK: Yes, yes. Then they never came back, many from us—this was before my time. Before I had this experience. There were men sentenced to hang. They went away

and we never saw them again. They never came back to our barracks. And some prisoners...fro perspiring, they were wet and the cold wind hit them...they got pneumonia, they say, from the wet perspiration, and they hanging one hour...and the cold wind hit them. Understand Dachau is 800 meters up over sea-level...When there is a wind, there is a wind.

JF: What happened with your shoulders after these episodes?

KK: The [fellow] prisoners make massaging our arms, our shoulders in the barracks...

JF: The massaging got the arms back in the socket? In your shoulder?

KK: Yes, yes. Then I know exactly, after maybe an hour or two, the life starts to come and again you feel the blood in the arms and you could move your arms slowly [again] and bring them to the front. You could raise the arms, not much, but you could, your arms could come from the back to the front again. Slowly after a long while, there came life again in the shoulders. You were normal again. Only you saw those big cut-ins from those chains.

JF: The scars around your wrists?

KK: The scars, deep scars insides...Suddenly, they put us on trains and sent about 400 of us Jews back to Buchenwald. Not back to Buchenwald, not back to Sachsenhausen, to Buchenwald.

JF: When was this?

KK: This was after I was a year-and-a-half.

JF: This was in September...?

KK: In September '41, no wait a minute, in September '41 I came to Buchenwald. It was *fast* [almost] a year there in Dachau.

JF: Why do you think they moved you?

KK: I don't know. Day to day, I don't know. Why they took me for medical experiments on my body in Buchenwald? Why Mengele was sitting on the desk and made a selection from us from Dachau when we came to Buchenwald? Only he made to me like this, and to others he made this. One, this was for life, this was for death. I don't know till today, why.

JF: Selection at Buchenwald happened right away, as soon as you arrived?

KK: Maybe a week later. Mr. Mengele, you heard of him, came to Buchenwald and gave a *Gastspielrolle* [star performance] and he was selecting us prisoners. We came from Dachau. The whole this is this. When Auschwitz with those gas chambers, were ready to *mein* [my] time when I was an invalid in 1940, they would have sent us right away to Auschwitz to gas. [But] Auschwitz wasn't ready in 1940. And in 1941 it [just] started, so they sent us to Buchenwald. [Lies on] a hill. The [not clear] barrack, it was called. And Buchenwald lies not far from Weimar. The city Weimar. Weimar is the city from those *gross*, *gross* German, big Germans, *Dichters*, poets. Goethe, you heard from Goethe, Schiller, they were living there. In Weimar, not to this time, maybe 100 years before and this was Buchenwald, next to Weimar. We had to run up to Buchenwald. They hit us, too.

When I came to Buchenwald, my legs were like elephant legs. Full with water [to my belly].

JF: Your stomach also?

KK: No, [till] here. Entire legs were swollen up with water. Like this. After the [not clear], Mr. Mengele came—I didn't know then—afterwards I know—and we came in in groups of about 100 in a big room. He was sitting on a desk with legs down with his white coat, like the doctors have, and under were his boots sticking out. And one after the other has to come *vor* [before] him, not so near, around like this, we have to stand at attention. He looked only at your face. He looked only at your face, not at your body. He looked you straight in the eyes, and he didn't talk. He made only a wave with the hand, like this, or this, this or this. So suddenly we were in two groups: one group was in this corner, and one group was in the other corner. And we looked at each other. We didn't know what that means. Then suddenly they took this group across from us where we were standing, they took this group away...the other group. We never saw them again. A couple of my best friends were [there]. And we could go back to the barracks.

JF: And you did not know at that point what was happening?

KK: No, no, we didn't. Not only to me, to me, not only to me, if I talk I talk not only for me for other prisoners too. This way...

JF: To the right?

KK: To the right. This to the left, means dead. You know, they killed them very easily. They put a needle with air in their veins. And they died instantly on the emboli, you know the air goes to the heart.

JF: How did you find out that's what they did to the prisoners?

KK: Later on, I find out.

JF: After the war?

KK: Not after the war.

JF: While you were still in the camp?

KK: In the camp, heard it from these personnel, were prisoners, too. Sanitation...some of these prisoners were working in the hospitals...they told. They talked. All this goings on news from prisoner to prisoner. From ear to ear, from mouth to mouth. In Buchenwald I worked, I *schlepped* trees. I schlepped trees. You know what *schlepped* means in English? Carrying trees. Two prisoners, one tree.

JF: You cut them down or you just...?

KK: No, no. They were cut down. They were laying in the woods in a place where no trees were; they were laid out, so [thrown about]. This were [only] Jews did that, only Jews. And I remember this was the first Christmas Day 1941. I was there only a couple months.

JF: In Buchenwald?

KK: In Buchenwald. We had to go out...the whole camp has holiday. The Jews had to go out carrying trees. And when you came to those trees, the S.S. was hitting you.

It has to go fast because they want to have their holidays. They don't want to get out of the camp. We had to go fast. Take a tree, you can't select the tree. You have to take the first best tree, put them on the shoulder, one man in the front, one man on the back and we have to bring them somewhere else, maybe 500 meters far away to another place, and throw them down. Crazy things. After the fourth round, we got both a tree and this was to our luck was a small tree. Not a thick tree. Because they hit us, we have to grab the first tree we could take, we select. Ahhh, one of the S.S. men on the way to carry the trees saw us. "Throw the tree away. Come here. You Jew, you dirty Jew, take a small tree, ehh?" and with a leather glove his fist hit me in the mouth. And the blood was coming all over me. I was full with blood. And I felt that all my teeth upstairs were loose. I was working *schlepping* trees and the blood was coming down on me. My whole uniform was full with blood. I came back to the barracks and they saw me with the blood. "What happened? What happened?" I told them. They put me down to the *Revier*...the hospital barrack. And the doctor was to open my mouth and said the teeth has to come out.

JF: Your teeth?

KK: Yes, they couldn't grow anymore. They took the teeth out. All the teeth up front here, five or six teeth here...What happened then? Then come the Russian prisoners in the camp. They had so much Russian prisoners, they put them next to our camp, that they could see each other. What they did to them was only that they didn't give them food, those prisoners, those Russian prisoners.

JF: They didn't give them food?

KK: No, they let them stay outside. In the [not clear] in the snow in the rain. No barracks, they let them stay outside there.

JF: These were Russian...?

KK: These were Russian war prisoners.

JF: These were Jews...or were they soldiers...?

KK: No, no, not Jews, in uniform. In the Russian uniform [there were Jews, too.]

JF: Prisoners of war.

KK: Prisoners of war. And we at night time took a piece of bread from our mouths, saved up a piece of bread and threw it over to the other side. And gave them a little bit from our bread. and then the S.S. saw this. And the whole camp, three days no bread. [For] punishment...why we fed the Russians. Three days no bread [that went] on and on, three days no bread, two days no bread, one day no bread. Every week was something, because they saw that we sympathized with the Russians. Then one day it came a *Befehl* [order] the Jews who wants to learn to be a mason. Know a mason, a bricklayer. Should keep their hands up. I keep up my hands. I wasn't afraid for work, but of course I am a worker. Put up my hands, and around 200 were selected, what they said they want to be masons and the rest of the whole camp, all the Jewish prisoners, who didn't raise their hands, they sent away to Auschwitz. In the whole camp, there are 200 Jewish prisoners left, who want to learn to be masons, bricklayers.

JF: Two hundred out of how many?

KK: There were four Jewish barracks in Buchenwald. Around 800 Jewish prisoners. Two hundred left because they said they want to be...they selected from us 200. They went around, the S.S. and when they didn't like your face, "Come here, you're too old, you are too old to learn." Out...all went to Auschwitz. Many died in Auschwitz. So I learned bricklayer, to be a bricklayer. I felt very good. They give us a little bit more to eat, food, only soup they give us, more, no bread, soup, two...cups. And we learned to be a mason outside the camp, to build houses. We built factories outside the camp. Maybe a kilometer from the camp. Every morning we have to go marching through the gates, you know, and the *Kapo* said, "Two hundred *Juden Schweine* [Jewish pigs]...[march].

JF: In the area where Buchenwald was located, did you have to go through a populated area to get to this location?

KK: Yes, when we came from the station, from the railroad station, and march to the camp, there were people looking at us out the windows. But they didn't say nothing.

JF: And what about when you went to work, when you were building this factory? Did you have to do...

KK: No, nothing to do with civilian...it was still within in the camp wooded area. Yes, we built big factories there. Not high, only one story high.

JF: What kind of factories do you think these were?

KK: First we didn't know for what it is, but later they built war material [munitions] rifles, [very modern] rifles, so stuff like this. But not Jewish prisoners work there, only *goyim*, only Christian. Jewish prisoners say they didn't want to do this. It was very interesting. And the S.S. went around and around and tried to hit us. The *Kapo*...you know what a *Kapo* is? The *Vorarbeiter*...foreman was a nice *goy*. A nice human man.

JF: Your *Kapo* was nice...?

KK: There was a *Maurermeister*, a master of bricklayers. He could learn us, because he know this work. He was a very nice man. He watched over us. [So the S.S. would leave us alone].

JF: The S.S. were not there?

KK: Yes, yes, sure it was outside the camp. They were always running around looking for people so they can kill them, or hit them. But they saw us working. We worked, we mixed the mortar, and you know, learned to do this, how to mix the mortar with sand and with water, how to lay the bricks and to watch them that they're straight with a...You look up to see your building straight. This way or this way. Level. Then lines were put so you can see [if] your work is straight. You feel good, you know, because you felt like more like a human being. You do something. No crazy work [like] in Sachsenhausen where you had to put the jacket [backwards] with the sleeves the front or the back here and the buttons in the back and we had to take up the piece of jacket. So like this, should be...and another prisoner puts sand in your lap. And you have to keep it like this. To hold and run from one place to another. Senseless work, without sense.

JF: In Sachsenhausen you were carrying sand in the jackets?

KK: Sand in the jacket, and the buttons were in the back.

JF: Yes, made like an apron?

KK: An apron, yes. And you have to run and put it on another heap. Only to make us busy, you know.

JF: You did that before your leg became infested?

KK: Yes, yes...I can't tell you every little thing, this is impossible. It would take two days to sit here. And they put a blind, a blindfold on us, when you're running you couldn't see. You fell over the S.S. man's leg. And you lost the sand. "You dirty Jew, you lost the material. This is expensive material." And they hit them. In Buchenwald, I learned to be a mason. Another miracle comes now. We were building a higher building, we were up in the air, to build the walls higher. Was all trees, then planks where we could put our mortar things, and we were building, high up in the air. And one day the whole thing fell off, fell together. It collapsed. It wasn't built right. And I fell like this high up in the air, and certainly like a hand, keeps me up.

Tape three, side two:

JF: The scaffolding had collapsed...

KK: Scaffolding, I forget those words, scaffolding collapsed and everybody was falling down with the [not clear] bricks, the mortar fell down. It wasn't very high, around 10 meters, 10 meter high in the air. Not too bad, but you hurt yourself when you fell down, believe me! Suddenly, I was hanging in the air. I think, "My God, what's this?" You hang. My jacket was...the tree was through my jacket and keep me from falling down.

JF: A tree limb?

KK: A tree limb, yes. This scaffolding was *aus* [from] trees and then there were square pieces of wood, and then a piece of wood where you can stand on, you know. This collapsed. I got saved from this. I tell you, this is all my life. Little miracles. Saved me six years and I came out alive. So we built those factories that made a lot of material for the war and I think lots of sabotage, we heard from the prisoners.

JF: You heard from the prisoners?

KK: From the prisoners...they work outside, in those factories what we build. They made sabotage.

JF: Now these were not Jewish prisoners? Right?

KK: No *goyish*.

JF: They were sabotaging the...war materials?

KK: The Communists, a lot of Communists in the concentration camp.

JF: The Communists?

KK: The Communist prisoners. Germans. They made big sabotage [you can't imagine]. One morning, this was January 5, not morning. We came back from work, to the barracks back. We eat [a wonderful] dinner. Was only one *Gang* [course], not three *Gänge* [courses], [no soup, meat] only one *Gang*. Suddenly my number come through the loud speaker. Every barrack had a loud speaker. To give the orders, the S.S....my number, and another man's number comes out. [immediately to the *Revier* [hospital]] The [block supervisor] had to bring us [to the] *Revier*. In Buchenwald they were Jewish barracks and the *Blockalteste* was a Jew, too. They are a political prisoner, not a criminal. There were criminal Jews, too, there. Not in my barrack.

JF: This was in January of 1942. The first January that you were...

KK: 1942, now wait a minute, wait a minute it was maybe '43. Exactly I can't tell you...after so many years...

JF: Yes, it's hard.

KK: The dates get mixed up. I know it was January 5...I think it was '43. January, '43.

JF: In other words, you had been in Buchenwald for over a year when this happened?

KK: From September 1942 to...a year-and-a-half, like. A year-and-a-half.

JF: Yes.

KK: So it was '43. It was '43. It was the worst winter. The worst winter was this, '43. The *Blockalteste* brought us down [to the] *Revier*, this hospital complex, and he told us, "You have to stay here, you can't go back to your barracks. We gonna make experiments on you. Medical experiments on you." And I [not clear]. What is this? So they put us in an extra barrack, was still in the camp but isolated from the other barracks. Extra wire around. And they told us they want to make experiments on us, because there is an order from Berlin. They want to make us sick with a certain type of sickness and when we get healed from this sickness...this is right?...they gonna take our blood out from us and give our blood to the soldiers on the Russian front. Then the soldiers on the Russian front, German soldiers, died like flies there, on *Flecktyphus* [spotted fever]. They got infested with lice and the lice produced this sickness...the *Flecktyphus*. And they want to save their soldiers; many died there, and they want to make experiment with us prisoners and when we get through the sickness, our blood is then immune from this sickness, take our blood and give it to the Russians, on the Russian front to the German soldiers. And to save them. They first treat us very nicely, each one had a bed, like in a hospital. Give us better food...not better food, more food, than the rest of the camp. And outside we saw through the windows in the snow and cold, the prisoners fall like the flies. The prisoners died from the cold. The work was always outside, most of the work outside. And we were warm, we were warm. The barracks were warm, heated, and we came more food. They wanted to make us a little bit stronger so that we could stand the sickness that they gonna put in us. Around a month later, they put the sickness in our bodies. The camp doctor, Dr. Dink, his name...

JF: Dr. Dink?

KK: Dr. Ding, that was his name. D-I-N-G. *Obersturmbandfü hrer*, three stars, or four stars. He [vaccinated] us. No, not with a needle, with a knife. He put a scalpel in, [this little container, with the sickness] cut with the scalpel four times under the skin. Cut it in.

JF: And the typhus he got from a...

KK: From a little [container], terrible looking things. Not a solution...like, like meat [rotten meat, or what]. [It didn't even smell.] And when he came to me his scalpel fell out of his hand. And he said, "Now I'm going to put gloves on." He had no gloves. Afterwards we never saw him back again. Maybe [he infected himself] with the solution.

JF: Maybe he got some on his own hands?

KK: Yes, on his hand, yes.

JF: Now this doctor put the solution on all of you?

KK: On all of the prisoners...we were not all Jews. We were about a quarter Jews.

JF: About how many?

KK: About 150 men, people. The Jews were by themselves again, the Jews were extra, always extra...not with the others together.

JF: Now this was about February of 1943, then, about a month later?

KK: Around a month later, yes...February. I think it was 1943. Then they put bandages over those injections, those holes, you know, that we shouldn't come with our fingers, touch it or scratch it. After nine days, everybody got sick. Really exactly nine days. One hour earlier, one hour later, but we all got sick after nine days. Terrible headache, high fever, around, what you say, the highest fever is here is maybe 104° or 105° ? So high fever. The body swells and start to became spots. This is the spotted fever, the *Flecktyphus*. And we were laying in our beds like half dead. Pain was terrible, the headache, and some sanitation prisoners put cold compresses on our heads. They treat us very nice. They couldn't do much but they put cold compresses on our heads. They came different kinds of medicine we have to swallow. Different kinds of tablets. Then needles, different kinds of needles and injections. But the fever was so high that many of those prisoners couldn't stand it. The heart went out. Died. I lived through it. After two weeks, the headache went down and I was all right again.

JF: Did you have any idea when they called you, what you were in for? With these experiments?

KK: In the moment not, moment not. When they come down and said they were going to make experiments on our body, we feel very bad, we were thinking we are like rats now, [or] mice or guinea pigs like. We were thinking we never come out alive from it. What could we do? You are in their hands. Why me, why my number? Hundred, [hundred-eighty] people in the barrack, why my name? Why my number? Until today, I like to know why. Why me? My other friend got a cold the first night. We were in a cold house. Ice cold. We had nothing to cover. Was not organized right away, you know. It was a very ice cold house, many got a bad cold. They throw them out. People with a cold, they didn't take. Throw them out.

JF: How long did you have typhus?

KK: The sickness around was two weeks long. The high fever and the doctors came from all over and civil [civilian] doctors and studied on us, from Berlin, from all over. Fat big, big men with white [not clear], you know, we had to turn, and they looked at us, everybody from back to back, they went. They looked at those spots. I said nothing. Among themselves they talked but I couldn't because I was terrible sick. After fourteen days the fever went away a little bit, one day after the other. It was everything normal. They made different kind of experiments. They took out of the spine, they put a needle in the spine, and took out fluid from the spine. Took out. I had the feeling that they took something out, not they put something in but they took something out. And many different kinds of medicine it was. And then we were sitting there till the end of May. and they threw us suddenly out. The Jews. I know why. They said, "Why should we take the Jews' blood and give this to our Aryan soldiers?" You understand? Our blood was [worthless] to them. Jewish blood.

JF: Did they ever take your blood to be used before that time?

KK: No, never.

JF: They never did?

KK: Never did. They made us immune to this sickness, to the typhus. But they didn't take the end result. They said we can't take the Jewish blood and give it to our Aryan Christian soldiers.

JF: So all that they ended up doing was extracting the fluid from your spinal column? Anything else?

KK: As I tell you, different kinds of medicine they put in us. Different kind. Every day they give us another needle, or another injection, another medicines. A little bit I forget already...already so many years back. They throw all the Jewish prisoners out. I was there around five months. From January till May. And then we came from out of this barrack and the other prisoners looked at us. We had such a heads. We looked like we came from the moon, like from another planet.

JF: Your heads were...?

KK: Were swollen, our bodies...we had no exercise. Never went out of the barracks, never in fresh air. We always had to sit around.

JF: How many of you do you think survived those experiments?

KK: Only a couple. A handful, maybe. I don't know what happened to the other prisoners, I can't tell you. To the Christian prisoners, I don't know. We saw them at night when they took out the dead. At the night they took out the dead. We looked out the window so nobody should see us. So when they saw us coming across the barracks, they shake their heads. [And as] punishment, that we were so [fat and full] from the food. You know, like you give us every day double rations of this *Wasser* [water]-food, you get swollen, you know. They put us in the quarry. Buchenwald has a big quarry. You know what a quarry is?

JF: Yes.

KK: Goes deep down and they break stones loose, and you, a prisoner, has to carry them [on] the shoulder up out of the quarry and put them somewhere on a place. They put us all in the quarry. And most of us died there. Carrying the heavy stones, they couldn't work fast, the S.S. hit them on the legs, so they should fall over their legs. They have to carry those stones up. The stones were so heavy. My leg broke open again. My foot. The old, old sores. Broke open again and started to bleed like hell. And I shout this to my foreman. "Look, look, my leg, I can't walk anymore."...The blood is coming out like hell and I showed him my leg and he was nice to me. He sent me out of the quarry. "I can't do this work," he said. He sent me out. Me, and maybe two or three others.

JF: How long were you there when you...?

KK: I was only three days there.

JF: Just three days.

KK: When my leg broke open. Why I wasn't used to walk, anyhow, then we were sitting around for five months. Sleeping, eating or sitting. We never came out of those isolation barracks, those experiment barracks. He let me go out. I came to the hospital with

this open leg and they treated me nice, again, put me in the bed with the leg up in the air and after two weeks, it starts to get smaller and smaller, and then they throw me out again.

JF: During this time were you in any communication with your family at all?

KK: Yes, I got letters from them. But there was nothing in there. When they wrote something they don't like, they make a censor stamp on it.

JF: You were still hearing from your father at this point?

KK: From my father, not. My father was taken 1943 out of the Old Age Home in Berlin and put on a wagon, and they put gas in the wagon, and they gassed him. In the wagon.

JF: You found this out after the...war?

KK: And then I looked all over, after the war where my father is, in some camp, but he was in no camp.

JF: He was put in an old age home?

KK: They took them out, people who couldn't walk. You know what they were put in? The [not clear] carbon monoxide from the motor. They let it in the wagon, closed the doors, there...were no windows, closed the doors and they suffocated from the gas of the motors. That's what they did. They didn't put them nowhere, all those people, that was in 1943 in June. My sister told me.

JF: So after you were in the hospital and recovered again from your wound from the quarry, from your leg opening up, what happened then?

KK: I went back to work.

JF: In the quarry?

KK: No, not in the quarry any more.

JF: Where did they put you then?

KK: Then I went to work as a mason again. Till one day in '44 in July, [bright] daylight time, around 1 o'clock, the American flyers came and bombarded Buchenwald. They made so a job you wouldn't believe it. It was this high, you know, you could see the flyers like a little point and in daylight, you know. Hundreds of American bombers. And suddenly the daylight came to night. Everything was dark. You couldn't see nothing but you heard the bombs falling. And you were laying under the beds. I don't know what happened. I had the day off, or what. I was in the camp, I don't know yet, at the moment I don't know why. I was insides. The floor was trembling with us, and the whole camp was not one bomb...yes, one bomb fell inside the *Lager* [camp], next to the crematorium. The crematorium wasn't hit but next to it was a big crater from the bombs. And outside was like a *Wü ste* [desert] you know what a *Wü ste* is...in English, like a desert. *Alles* [All] was a desert. [Everything was destroyed]. The whole thing is this: The Americans know that the camp, that the prisoners, in this time of day, come in the camp, from outsides. One o'clock, twelve-thirty was a whistle blowing outside and all the prisoners have to march in the camp for the lunch hour. If they have something to eat or nothing, lunch hour. It was only for the S.S. that they have rest, understand? The Americans know this. They know at this time

when we gonna bomb. All the prisoners in the camp. So that the prisoners didn't get hurt. And it was like so, the camp wasn't hurt, not one bomb. But around a week before the [bombing] they changed the rule. They said we leave them outside, the prisoner. No more coming in the camp. Let them stay outside for rest period. And the Americans didn't know this. They came and bombarded the camp, outside the camp and we had 600 dead prisoners.

JF: 600?

KK: Around 600 *tote* [dead] prisoners from the bombs.

JF: 600 died?

KK: Yes, many we never find. Maybe eight or ten from my barracks, we never find them.

JF: And this was the day you were inside the camp? For whatever reason?

KK: I was in the camp. So after the bombardment, after the air cleared and it got light again, the prisoners has to come and to collect all the dead people...dead bodies. And we went out with a big wagon. We were with horses you know, has to push the big *Leiter wagen* [farm wagon] and we came outside and the first thing that we saw outside the camp was this big symbol from the Nazism lay broken in fifteen pieces, maybe, on the floor. The big swastika with the big eagle, with the spread eagle, their symbol you know, a big ornament.

JF: A statue or a...outside the camp?

KK: Yes, outside the camp...big [not clear] and broken in a lot of little pieces. That's what we saw first. We were happy. And we came and saw those dead people. With their bellies open, with the inside out. Terrible, from the bombs, air pressure. Their belly burst and the intestines came out.

JF: Were there S.S. as well who were killed?

KK: Yes, the S.S. was killed, too. We saw many S.S. men. They were hiding somewhere, but they got killed inside. They were so burned that you could see [only half S.S. men.] From the head to here, the [breast] bones sticking out, with the uniform, with the steel helmet on it, the head was shrinking from the heat...the head was like this. But the helmet was still there, big. They didn't allow us to touch the S.S. men, the deads. We had big things to load those wagons full with arms, heads, with [half] bodies. It was terrible, to touch them and to throw them on the wagon, was terrible. Many Hungarian Jews, hundreds Hungarian Jews. They went out to work there, and this day died. I saw it on the *Mogen Dovids*. I know they were *Hungarische*. They had different uniforms, cleaner [and newer, you know? We had the old uniforms, but they had new ones.] And then we brought them back in the camp. Many we saw had [bullet holes] in their bodies, and they had little holes from *schiessen* [shooting]. We had Ukrainian S.S. this time in Buchenwald.

JF: You had what?

KK: Ukrainian S.S. The war was going on and they needed all the men they could get. The German S.S. and the Ukrainian S.S. They had brown uniforms on, brown with black...the cuffs are black. And they shoot at those prisoners. They only wants to hide

themselves, from the bombs. They shoot at them and we saw many with holes in the bellies, and in the head. So we put all the dead in the crematorium. The first time I saw the crematorium from the inside. [Piled the dead] Twice we went outside to bring them in. And then we had to wash our hands in that solution. I don't know what it was.

JF: After you touched the dead men?

KK: After we touched the dead. And we were happy. Still we were happy. Then everything outside what we had built with our hands, whole factories, there were nothing left. Were burning for days and days.

JF: The factories that you had built, were they ever put into operation?

KK: Sure, they were in operation. This is what they bombed in '44. They were in operation, burning, but I never forget the big hill with all those shoes from the Auschwitz from Maidanek, what big trains came and brought to Buchenwald shoes from those people what they gassed in Maidanek and Auschwitz.

JF: The mountains of shoes.

KK: The mountains of shoes, little, children's shoes, women's shoes, men's shoes.

JF: Those were also burned?

KK: Yes, outside the *Lager*. For days and days it was burning, from the bombs. The hill was so high, I tell you with cranes [they piled them up]. What they did, every...the prisoners of war done this, had to take little [piles] from shoes, in little buckets, one man in the front, one on the hand and had to bring this to our barrack and they took all the shoes apart. They find dollars in there, [hidden], diamonds among the shoes, you know. That's why they brought all these shoes...

Tape four, side one:

JF: You were describing to me the piles of shoes that were burning.

KK: Those shoes were burning because of the bombing. The bomb hit those hills with those shoes and they start to burn. The Nazis sent big freight trains from Poland, from the death camps to Buchenwald. The contents of those trains were shoes, clothing; men's clothing, women's clothing; hair, women's hair, hair from women, cut-up hair, eyeglasses. I think that's all that I remember. Then one day, we had to go to those trains and unload them. Take out the contents from those freight trains. We saw those black clothing from the Polish Jews, what the Jews would wear, in the Yiddish, [not clear] those black robes...We saw the dried blood on it...the dried blood on it was terrible. We had to sort them in ladies' clothing extra [separate] and men's clothing extra, but I don't know what they did with this. Looking for something in those suits...in those shoes, I know. We talked to those inmates who worked on those shoes in the barracks, [under] S.S. [supervision], they watched them what they were doing. They had to take the shoes apart with knives, take the soles apart to look for money, for diamonds, or something like this. And they really find something in those shoes.

JF: What did they do with what was left of the shoes after they searched them?

KK: Then they throw them away. They cut them apart and throw them away somewhere, but this was an immense hill, maybe 20 meters high the hill.

JF: Of these shoes?

KK: Of shoes.

JF: What happened, do you think, with the glasses and the hair you described?

KK: I don't know. I heard only that they take those women hair and they made felt out of it.

JF: Felt...cloth?

KK: Yes, felt, made shoes out of it...upper part for boots from those shoes. One day there came a big transport from Hungary...Hungary Jews. The Nazis went into Hungary, I don't know when, in mid-summer or spring of '44 and took all the Jews and sent them to Auschwitz or to other camps. Men who were a little bit younger sent to Buchenwald and this was before the bombing, what I tell you just now.

JF: Why were the younger men sent to Buchenwald?

KK: To work...that they should work. They sent them to camps...around Buchenwald there were many camps. Work, work camps. They were under the earth. They made them war material under the earth there, they had big factories in the earth, built in.

JF: The camps were under the ground?

KK: The camps not, but they work there, those prisoners, those inmates from the camps, worked in those mountains. I think this was the Hartz Mountains, in Germany.

JF: The Hartz Mountain.

KK: The mountain...a big hills [and] mountains. The Hartz Mountains.

JF: What kind of work were they doing?

KK: They worked on munitions, put in those [powder] munitions, you know in this powder...

JF: For the bullets?

KK: For the bullets, there is powder in there, but...

JF: The buildings that you worked on were not under the ground?

KK: No, they were outside, outside Buchenwald. Big, two for making war material.

JF: Was it after the bombing that they built these munitions factories under the ground, or had they always been there?

KK: They were there already. They built them in wartime. In those mountains and they treated them awful.

JF: They treated the Hungarians...

KK: Hungarian Jews, awful.

JF: What do you mean?

KK: They had to work hard in those mountains and were treated very bad. They gave them very little food and hit them all the time. They hit them at work they should work faster.

JF: Do you think they treated the Hungarian Jews worse than...

KK: No, not worse than the others...not worse. And every day came in dead people from those outside camps.

JF: And what would they do with the dead that were brought in from those camps?

KK: They brought them to the crematorium and burned them there. Every day we had to work in those...from the S.S....the smoke came out from the burning people. It was a terrible smell. Months and months we have to smell...we always have to breathe it in...the smell from the dead people that they burned there. Buchenwald burned 53,000 people. After the liberation we had them all those, black and white, the amount of people that they burned.

JF: Could you get any news from the new prisoners as to what was happening in the rest of Europe?

KK: We don't have to get news from those prisoners. We get the news that the S.S. give us on radio in every barrack. Till today I can't understand, they give us all the news what's going on on the fronts. On the war fronts.

JF: On the wireless?

KK: On those war fronts. Where the war was going on. We know exactly where the Americans and we heard from Africa.

JF: The S.S. were telling you? You mentioned radios.

KK: Yes, in every barrack was loud speakers and the news came over those loud speakers. But till today, I can't understand it.

JF: Were these German stations?

KK: Yes, German stations...German luggage. Sure. We knew when "D" Day was, when the Americans landed in Normandy, and we were happy. We know when in Africa they got the end, the Rommel. England and the Americans conquered them...they had to retreat, the Germans...We know everything. When they landed in Italy...every day we heard the news. I don't know why they did this.

JF: So the German radio stations...?

KK: They gave us every day new hope that the end is near...

JF: Carried the defeats that were occurring?

KK: What's this?

JF: The German radio stations carried news of their own defeats?

KK: Yes, their own defeats. Maybe not enthusiastically, you know, that the Russian army defeated the German army by Stalingrad. This was the point where the war changed to the other side. You know, the Germans has to retreat and retreat and retreat. In January '45 they had to evacuate all those dead camps in Poland. The dead camps were only in Poland, not in Germany. They didn't want to have the Germans know everything. You know, those people are living not far from those camps, but in Poland it was possible. Because the Polish people are very big anti-Semites. For a couple pounds of sugar they told the Nazis where the Jews were hidden.

JF: Were there any other experiences that you had with people who tried to escape from Buchenwald?

KK: I think I told you one case, right? Where they brought in one. We had to stay a whole night because of one of the inmates were missing. They looked over the whole camp. Wasn't there. He must be outside. Outside they send the S.S. with dogs, with bloodhounds, and they find him and they send the bloodhounds on him, and the bloodhounds teared him, like in little pieces, this man. Then they brought him in, on a stretcher, in the camp, and put him on the *Appell Platz*, a big place where all the camp comes together, all the inmates, and they were counted. Every day, in the morning they were counted, and in the evening. And then, when one or two were missing, the whole camp has to stay there. Can't go back to the barracks and the little bit water soup got cold and we couldn't eat it. Sometimes, like I told you, we had to stay the whole night until they find this prisoner.

JF: Could there be any contact with any partisan groups?

KK: Not in Germany.

JF: Not in Germany.

KK: Not in Germany. I was only in German camps. In Poland, maybe it was a little bit different situation. There were thousands and thousands more people in those camps and the S.S. maybe couldn't oversee all of the prisoners so exactly. They had anyhow [with themselves] with the war. Every day they took out one more S.S. people from these

camps and sent them to the war front to fight the Russians and they put in Ukrainian people. Ukrainish S.S. They were worse than the German S.S.

JF: What did they do?

KK: They shoot the people. If you didn't go the straight way, you went a little bit to the side by marching, they shoot them. Many people got shot from them. I think I told you this before. After the bombing from Buchenwald, many prisoners and myself had to go outside the camp and collect all those dead prisoners and bring them back to the camp, to the crematorium. And we find many, many prisoners with shoot wounds, you see those little holes in those bodies.

JF: So the prisoners had been shot?

KK: Shot, yes, before they were bombed, they were shot. Because they tried to hide themselves from those bombs. It was only natural, but they shot them. And we had about 600 dead prisoners this day. In twenty minutes...this was the time when the bombing was. Only twenty minutes. And we had about 600 prisoners. Many we never could find from us Jewish prisoners...they worked outside the camp.

JF: Did you remember what month that was in 1944?

KK: I think it was July or June. It was very hot. Hot and clear with sunshine... nice day. We were afraid that there was going to be a reprisal against us in the camp, because of this bombing, but they did nothing to the people. And then in January '45 came prisoners from other camps, from Poland, back to the Germany. They has to evacuate those camps, they don't want that the prisoners shouldn't go and come in the hands from the Russians. They don't want to have no witnesses, you know, live witnesses, so they tried to shoot them. They couldn't shoot everybody, but who couldn't walk anymore, walk, you know, fell. They couldn't stand up, they shoot them, on the way. And many came back to Buchenwald, and many of those prisoners were before in Buchenwald, when I told you in '43 when they sent all the Jews away and left only the bricklayers in the camp. Our old friends, so to say, came back from Auschwitz and told us what's going on there.

JF: Was this the first time that you had heard of the gas chambers or had you known about them?

KK: No, we heard rumors, but now we had real witnesses, you know. *Kommando Kanada*, very famous *Kommando Kanada* in Auschwitz, was a commando for [of] maybe 50 people. Small commando, not many people, not many prisoners. And they had to take out the warm bodies from the gas chambers, take them out, open up their mouth and look over to see if they have gold teeth, take them out with little instruments, with pliers. And then they cut their hair from many women, dead women, and then they have to bring those dead people to crematoriums to burn them. They get burned.

JF: This was all done by the *Kanada Komando*?

KK: *Kanada Kommando*...the "*Keinerda*" of Germany. It's "nobody there"...the *Kommando Kanada*.

JF: Did they have any other jobs?

KK: No, this was their...those commando were isolated from the other camp... they were isolated from the other camp. They were living in an extra barrack after their work, but after maybe a month or two months, they took those prisoners from the *Kanada Kommando* and gassed them. Took new people, to do this job. So they had no witnesses, but we heard about it.

JF: Do you think any of the people from the *Kanada Kommando* survived?

KK: I don't know, I don't know. I heard only that they killed all those prisoners after a month or two months, they killed prisoners who were in the *Kommando*, and took other people, to do the work. They wouldn't have no witnesses, you know.

JF: What were your quarters like with the addition of these other prisoners from Auschwitz and other camps?

KK: They put those prisoners in another extra *Lager* what they build, next to our *Lager*. And this called] the *kleine Lager*. The little *Lager*. They put the prisoners in pritches [?]...like shelves, like a bookshelf in three or four levels. And they were laying there. Half dead, dead, for days till they could find the deads, dead people.

JF: They came from Auschwitz, primarily?

KK: They came from Auschwitz, and from other camps in Poland.

JF: You saw the insides of the barracks?

KK: I saw them, I went there once in a while, to look at this camp.

JF: And you were able to talk to these prisoners?

KK: We talk to them, yes.

JF: They weren't put in with you in your barracks? Your barracks were kept the same?

KK: No, our barracks were for our prisoners. Years and years we were living there.

JF: Was the treatment any different towards you and towards the new prisoners who came at that time?

KK: Their treatment was worse in the *kleine Lager*. They give them very little food and when they got sick they had no medical help. No help at all. They were laying there like animals to die. Nobody helped them. And the smell was terrible: you couldn't stay there very long. Only a couple of minutes in those barracks. And then came the end of the war. You hear it over the radio. The American army went into Cologne and they are there, and the English Army is there and we know the end is near. [And] the S.S. was a little bit different, too, a little bit. They know what's coming to them, you know, when the end is. And every night when the American flyers came over Germany, every night, there was always alarm, so the S.S. went to their bunkers, shelters, and the camp was [not clear] the prisoners...they couldn't go nowhere. Like I said, they only were flying over our camp. We heard the explosions from far away from the bombs and the whole earth was shaking...the whole barracks were shaking from those explosions. In the morning we saw

the burning cities from far way. Then, like I told you, Buchenwald lies on a hill and you could look far away in the valley from all sides.

JF: This was in what month that you saw the burning?

KK: This was in '45. Every night the flyers came. We couldn't sleep from those drone and the mortars. They were flying very high, [but it was] hundreds and hundreds of airplanes, those big, big bombers. B-9's, I forget what they were.

JF: The S.S., did their attitude of their treatment of you change as they realized that the war was coming to a close? In what way?

KK: Yes. In '45 they were a little bit milder to us, they didn't hit us so much. They were a little bit more human. This is my opinion. They were not so murderous actions, what they did to us. They looked away already a little, the other way, when they saw something what they really should do. They replaced those younger S.S. men, those murderers, with older S.S. men, in the 50's and 60's years old the S.S. In the watch towers, they took away all those young S.S. and put old men in there.

JF: And the younger men went to the front?

KK: Went to the front, to the front. They had not enough soldiers.

JF: That happened in 1945?

KK: Yes, in the beginning of 1945. Then we heard the noises from the cannons. Nearer and nearer, we heard that the Americans come nearer and nearer to the camp. And one day, was an order that all the Jewish prisoners, right way, has to come outside the barracks and to go into the big place where the counting always was. I went, too, and with me went maybe a handful of other old prisoners. We were the old prisoners, [that had been there] a lot of years there. And all those Jews from Hungary and so on went, too, off this place. All those new prisoners went, too. And we were staying there and we see nobody came, only a handful from us old prisoners were there and the other [were all] new prisoners that came from Hungary and all over, and from other camps. We were around and around, stand S.S. with heavy weapons, hand grenades on their belts and the rifles on their back with the bayonettes. I said, "My God, what's this? They gonna send us off [on] a march, a dead march or something." So when I talked to my friends and we said we're gonna try to get out of here. Back to the barracks. And we talked to one of those prisoners who had to watch us, and we talked to him and said, "We are old *lager Hasen*, old camp rabbits. We don't want to go, we're here six years in camp already, and now we should go on a march?" And he says, "You are right. I smuggle you back to your barracks." And he smuggled us [out] and watched [on all sides] and then he smuggled us back to the barracks.

JF: Who was this person?

KK: A prisoner.

JF: A Jewish prisoner?

KK: No, no, from the, like a trusty. The S.S. always had trusties.

JF: A non-Jewish political prisoner?

KK: Political prisoners, yes, yes. Buchenwald was a camp with more political prisoners. Like I told you before, Sachsenhausen, the Christian prisoners were most of them criminals. In Buchenwald it was different. They were political prisoners had the overhand in the camp. The S.S. has to deal with them if they want something from them. They were different than the murderers. They brought us back to the barracks and in the barracks we tried to hide ourselves somewhere. We...all different kinds of things we did. Two or three men from us took out through a manhole cover in the camp where the canalization is, the manhole cover and we went inside of those iron pieces where you can walk inside.

JF: There was a canal underneath? The sewers?

KK: The sewers, yes. We opened up the covers on top and went inside and then we took the cover and closed it again. We were standing inside and the S.S. went around and were looking for more Jewish prisoners, couldn't find us. We were standing all day. Then came the night and again the *Flieger* [air raid] alarm...

JF: The air raid?

KK: The air raids came with those sirens and the S.S. right away went out of the camp and went to their bunkers, to their shelters. Until the air was clean, so in the night we went out and we went to the barracks, looking for something to eat. The Christian prisoners helped us, give us piece of bread of what they had.

JF: How man...?

Tape four, side two:

JF: About how many of you...you described as handful of Jewish prisoners...about how many of you were there?

KK: In my part, where I was, there were four men.

JF: There were four of you who were hidden...

KK: Hidden in the sewer, those shafts, you know, on the bottom were water, but we weren't standing in the water. We were there, the person who was the deepest on the bottom and we stand one over the other and [there was] an iron built in those walls in the sewer where you could go up or down.

JF: Like a ladder?

KK: A ladder, yes.

JF: So the rest of the men in your barrack were still in the barrack?

KK: Yes. Many were still there.

JF: So you snuck out at night?

KK: At night we went out. The air was clear, it was the raid, the air raid every night. We know no S.S. can do us nothing to us, so we went in the barracks and they gave us a piece of bread and a little bit something to eat and in the morning we went, when the day started to come, we....how do you say it...?

JF: The sun rose?

KK: The sun rose, we went down again in those sewers.

JF: And you say it was Christian prisoners who gave you food?

KK: Yes, what they had.

JF: These were Germans?

KK: Germans, yes, most of the time were Germans.

JF: How long were you hidden like this?

KK: A couple of days, around four or five days. And one day we couldn't stand it anymore, to stay there. The whole day to stay and hang there in the sewer. It was terrible. We were weak already, so we tried to go in the *kleine Lager*, the little *Lager* and to hide there in the daytime. The S.S. never came to the *kleine Lager*. They couldn't stand the smell there from those half-dead people there. But we couldn't stand the smell either. We tried to be there the whole day...but we had to survive, so we had to stay there in those barracks.

JF: Had the forced march occurred? Had they indeed taken these people that were counted that night and made them leave the camp?

KK: Yes, sure. They went on a march. I don't know where. Only to shoot them, I think. We never heard about them anymore. I can't tell you, but we know that they shoot them. Maybe some tried to escape on the way. Sure, maybe some of those prisoners escaped; the end was already near. One day, they said—it came an order over the loudspeaker— the S.S. should come out of the *Lager*. All S.S. personnel out of the camp. There was different kind of barracks where the S.S. was there, watched the prisoners, what

they do, they went them all out. Then they said to us, "Every prisoner has to stay in their barrack. Nobody has to come out." If we go out of the barracks, we got shot, they told us over the loudspeakers. When we hear explosions, we shouldn't run out of the barracks, then we get shot again. So we understand that they gonna bomb the whole camp, with their own airplanes, you know, bomb the camps so that we shouldn't fall into the hands of the American Army. Then we looked outside of the windows and we saw the S.S. running outside of the camp, in the woods, tearing up their stars, those swastikas, bands here on the arms, tear them down. Some took off the whole jacket, the whole uniform jacket and throw them up to on the floor. On horses, bicycles, in cars, they were running. And we know now it's come. Soon the hour when we are free. When the S.S. runs away and tears off everything what they have, all those stars, you know...The thunder noises from the war came nearer and nearer. You hear the cannons, and one day it was so near that we all had to lay down flat on our bellies in the barracks so that the [bullets] didn't hit us. This was so strong, that we heard always the noises from the guns...

JF: You were laying down so the bullets wouldn't hit you.

KK: Shouldn't hit us. Then came the American *Panzers* [tanks] and tore down the electric fences around the camps and we were free now. We didn't realize, but we were crying and laughing. It was a wonderful thing. We felt that we were born again. It was a wonderful thing, that we were born again, that we are human again and we went out and saw those American *Panzers* [tanks] tearing down those electric fences around the camp. They give us cigarettes, the soldiers, throw cigarettes out to us. But they wouldn't talk to us. The war was still going on. They had to go further, but they left a contingent of American soldiers, they left in the camp.

JF: That was what month?

KK: This was April 11, 1945. I can't forget this date, because it is my second birthday.

JF: Beautiful. Were they able to leave food for you as well?

KK: No, no, not those soldiers. This was the front soldiers. They had only to...the war was going on. They left, those *Panzers* left. We saw that it was the Third Army, Number 3 was on those tank. This was General Patton's army liberated us. And the next day, Roosevelt died. We all had to stay there and bend our heads and the American flag went to half mast. We were standing there, we were crying too. And then they sent a big, from the Red Cross, the American Red Cross, big ambulances to the camp. Maybe 50 or 60 trucks, ambulance-trucks and took out those prisoners from the camp, from the *kleine Lager*. Those half-dead, were only skeletons alive. They couldn't stay up anymore. Some of them were going on their hands and knees and they took them away. They were very happy. Then they brought in food from the American Army, food, but they didn't know what to do with us. They wanted to help us, but they give us food what we couldn't eat. It was fat, too much fat. It was all pieces of bacon, so you got a piece of bacon in your hand and you start to eat it. And the people with the big eyes, you know, the desire to eat, you

know, was bigger than the insides. You know, when they eat the fat food, those fat bacon—and they got sick. Their shrunken stomach couldn't take this food and they got sick. Many from our Jewish prisoners who got liberated from the American Army died, after the liberation, in the camp. We couldn't go nowhere. The war was still on. We had to live in the camp.

JF: What did you do? How much did you eat?

KK: I eat maybe one bite and I feel the fat was so...I couldn't eat it. I felt like you have to vomit from it. I couldn't eat it. I eat maybe one bite, and I tried another bite, but I couldn't eat it. My nature didn't take this, you know. I feel no good. I didn't eat it.

JF: Bacon was the main thing you were given?

KK: Yes, fat, fat meat they gave us. Really fat. They were thinking, the Americans were thinking they help us, they give a good thing to us. They give us food like this. But it wasn't good. Many died, many of my good friends were dead, was all those years together with them.

JF: How long were you in the camp like this during these last days?

KK: After the liberation, the war was still going on and we knew from the other side came the Russians. But the Russians stopped on the Elbe River in Germany. And the Americans went to this river and that was the end of it. We couldn't go away...around in June, in May was the capitulation from the German Army, in May, May 8, I think it was, the German Army capitulated, but we couldn't go no further because they said to us, "You can't go to the east, you can go to the west, to Cologne or to, in direction to France, but you can't go east. There are the Russians, they wouldn't let you through." So in between the liberation and going away from the camp, I worked for the American Red Cross in Weimar. Weimar is the next town, next big town to the camp Buchenwald. I worked there. Every day we were picked up by the American Army in trucks, and who want to, this was, you don't have to; if you don't want to, but I said I want to work. I am a tailor and I want to work. And they took us down to Weimar. There was a factory, a clothes factory, with civilian workers, and we worked there. We were sewing little boys' suits. They find a big *Lager* with material, the Americans, and they took this material out and we had to sew little boys' suits, for children. Suits, for children they found in those camps. There were many children there.

JF: Now you had...

KK: Till the end of the war they couldn't do nothing with those children...they had no time anymore to do something.

JF: There were children in Buchenwald throughout the war?

KK: Yes, only by the end, by the end. The last couple weeks only. Before the liberation.

JF: Only the last couple of weeks were there children?

KK: Yes, they brought them, they brought them to us.

JF: Where were those children from? Do you have any idea?

KK: They were from all over. From Hungary, from Poland, they had no fathers or mothers anymore.

JF: Before that time there had not been children in the camp, before that time?

KK: No, no, not by us.

JF: So you were living still in your barracks in Buchenwald. You were still wearing your stripes?

KK: Yes, sure we had our stripes.

JF: And you would work during the day in Weimar.

KK: I worked in Weimar. We were picked up by the American Army in trucks and went to Weimar. We worked the whole day there and in the evening, after eight hours, they brought us back to the cam.

JF: How did that feel, that month or so you were working?

KK: I felt wonderful...I felt like a human being again. And after the week was over, I got my wages paid out in German marks...

JF: From the American Army?

KK: No, no, from those bosses there. They were Germans. The factory belonged to Germans, but the oversight was from the American Army.

JF: So the Germans themselves were then paying you for this work?

KK: Yes.

JF: What were they like? What kind of treatment did you receive in those factories?

KK: They didn't talk to us...they didn't talk to us. We didn't care about them. We did our job, that's all. I worked on a machine and was sewing, that's all. In the evening, around five, they put us on trucks and we went back to the camp. The bookkeeping were all German people. And one day, that I forgot to tell you, the American Army forced every household in Weimar, two people from every household, has to go up in the camp, by feet. Not in trucks or so, they had to walk. They had to walk up the hill to the camp to see what was going on there all those years. To see the mountains of dead people in the crematorium laying outsides because they had not time to burn them. There was no coal enough for those ovens, anyhow. Thousands of people came up in the camp. Civil people from Weimar.

JF: Were you in the camp when these visits occurred?

KK: Yes, we were in the camp.

JF: What kinds of reactions did you see?

KK: We were hollering, but the American Army didn't let us go to them. We were standing all, thousands and thousands of prisoners and [in front of us stood] the American soldiers with the rifles and we saw those civil people coming in long march lines. Women, men, old men...

JF: Could you observe any of their reactions?

KK: They were afraid. They were crying. Crying, and begging that shouldn't do nothing to them. We were hollering and screaming on them. "We didn't know, we didn't

know"...they was always hollering. "We didn't know what was going on here...we didn't know...we were thinking is all criminals, all murders up there." Then the American soldiers forced them to go inside, all over and to see those dead people.

JF: Inside...?

KK: In those barracks where there were [still] mountains of dead people laying. This was all in the beginning, after the liberation, maybe ten days, fourteen days afterwards. And the war was stillgoing on. Some people wouldn't go in there. They forced them. They took them by the neck, threw them into those barracks to see what's going on there. Then they shout, "We all know about it, but we never saw it." Those lampshades what the Ilse Koch...She was the widow from the Commandant from Buchenwald. From the former Commandant from Buchenwald. She saw prisoners with big tattoos over their chest, over the back, big tattoos...sailors, most of them sailors. And she liked those pictures on them and she told her husband, "It would be nice when I get this skin from those prisoners, and we make nice lampshades out of those skins." And he followed her and took out those prisoners, sent them down to the hospital, to the prisoner hospital, and there were prisoners who killed them and took off their skin.

JF: Prisoners killed other prisoners?

KK: Prisoners killed them, with needles. I don't know what they put in those needles, but they killed them. And took the skin off and prepared the skin and made like a parchment out of the skin and fabricated lampshades. And this day, we saw the first time those two lampshades. Two lampshades they showed us, the American soldiers. That they find by her in her house.

JF: How many prisoners do you think were killed for the lampshades? Do you have any idea?

KK: I have no idea. They showed us only two lamps with those lampshades with those beautiful pictures on them...the tattoos.

JF: Had you heard about this before?

KK: Yes, we heard about it...prisoner talk...one to the other by mouth. But, we never saw it. She had switches on the wall, switches from human toes, big toes.

JF: How?

KK: Those switches, with toes sticking out. Turn toes.

JF: You mean the bone of the toe?

KK: No, the toes, the whole toes.

JF: The toe itself was preserved in the...

KK: The whole toe, and they made switches out of them...to turn on and off the light.

JF: And you saw all of this?

KK: She was a perverse woman. I saw her many times.

JF: You saw these in the home, you went into the home.

KK: No, I don't saw this. I saw only what the American soldiers showed us.

JF: But you did see her many times.

KK: I saw her many times walking between the prisoners.

JF: She would walk among the prisoners?

KK: Among the prisoners. We were working outside, digging ditches, or I don't know what it was for work, hard work, and she went. She was a little woman, fat woman with red hair, short, short hair. But we prisoners shouldn't look at her. If she saw a prisoner looking at her, she went to the S.S. and said, "These prisoners [insulted] me with his eyes." He insulted her with his eyes, and the S.S. man wrote down the number and they became [got] twenty-five lashes on the back.

JF: Why was she walking among the prisoners?

KK: She was a sadist, you know. She feel something about it when she could walk between the prisoners and they couldn't touch her. She was a sadist, that's why she made lampshades. And the American Army showed those German civil people from Weimar those lampshades and we saw them, too. And they showed us—she had made of some prisoners, heads, shrinking heads, they were like this, so big, black...with the eyes, with the teeth, but black.

JF: She shrunk heads.

KK: Not she did it, she give them order, and they did it for her.

JF: And what did she do with those heads?

KK: I don't know what she did with them, but they showed them to us. It's sometimes you see in cars, people will have this in front hanging this little head, shrunken, black. They showed them the crematorium with those hundreds of thousands of dead bodies, one piled on the other, high up like this from the floor, and we saw this, too, the first time. We never went there in the crematorium. Only dead people came there.

JF: This was the first time then that you had seen it?

KK: That I saw those mountains of dead prisoners [piled]...like wood, one over the other.

JF: It must have been incredibly difficult for you to have gone there.

KK: Yes, it was. It was. But we were without feeling anymore. You have no real feeling anymore when you're years and years and every day you see the dead [before] your eyes. You had really no feeling anymore. The only thing you had was a little bit food every night and we were thinking of to rest, to lay down, for a couple of hours...to sleep.

JF: It was like you withdrew a lot of your energy from feeling and from other worries.

KK: I had nothing to think, too, anymore. I knew my father was there, an old man, he died, I know. They took him away...I know this. It was on my mind. That's it. I was alone and not to care for anybody...I had no wife, no children.

JF: Do you think that helped?

KK: It helped me, sure, it helped me a lot from going crazy, to thinking every day what happened to your wife, what happened to your children?...I saw this every day,

for people who came into the camp and start to cry, thinking on their wives and hollering and crying and they tried to make them quiet and they wouldn't be quiet. They were screaming. It got real crazy like. Then in the morning we saw them hanging in the wires, in the electric wires...they went out of the barracks and ran straight to the electric [not clear] with [strong] electricity.

JF: The electric fence?

KK: Yes, and they had their hands on it, and right away they were stuck to it. The high voltage went through your body and they were hanging there. In the morning when we came out of the barracks we saw hanging three, four, five prisoners on those wires. They have to take off the power and we could take them down. Terrible.

JF: So this visit then occurred, of the people from Weimar, occurred about ten days or two weeks after the liberation?

KK: Two weeks after the liberation. The war was still on, but Weimar was free already, was [under] American military...occupation.

JF: And you worked in Weimar until May or...?

KK: I worked there until the beginning of June and then I tried to go back to Berlin where I came from. One day the Americans brought us near the border where the Russians were and we had to smuggle through the woods on the other side of the Russian occupation, Germany. We came to Dresden. Was a beautiful town before, but it was all bombed and laying in ruins.

JF: You were going on foot then?

KK: Yes, on foot. In Dresden we went on a train...the train was full, but we were sitting on top on the train. We were eight days until we came to Berlin.

JF: What do you mean on top?

KK: On top of the train...on the outside. On the roof of the trains we were sit t ing...Hundreds of prisoners. And the train was rolling and rolling...take eight days. Really it makes only ten hours, less than ten hours, took eight days to come to Berlin.

JF: Were the Americans able to provide you with some food?

KK: Not on the way...on the way not. Then we were in Russian occupation already. This part from Germany was under Russian occupation. Then I came back to Berlin and I came to a big place...everything...the houses were falling apart...everything was down. You don't know what way to go, to east or to west, no street signs anymore. It was like a desert. Once in a while there was a house still standing. And I came to the house where my sister was living...This was the only house in the whole street still standing. Isn't that something? Then I knocked on the door, I was heavy set, you know. I had good food from the American Army.

JF: You had gained weight already?

KK: Got better food, not those water-soups anymore and my head was like this big...And I knocked on the door and my brother-in-law opened and said, "What do you want?" And I said, "I'm your brother-in-law." He didn't recognize me. Then he called sister

and she recognized me. But it was like a wall between us, because I had other feelings and they had other feelings. I didn't feel like I come back to my sister because her husband was anyhow a *goy*.

Tape five, side one:

JF: You were describing your brother-in-law's reaction, and your sister's reaction to you coming to their home.

KK: It's only natural. We didn't see each other for six years, for the first time again.

JF: Had they been in their home all this time?

KK: They were all the time in their home.

JF: How did they escape?

KK: Because in Germany, when the head of the house is an Aryan and he has a Jewish wife, he saves her life because he was the head of the house.

JF: She did not convert?

KK: No, no. They're married, not in a church, not in a synagogue, civil marriage. And everybody had his own religion. But I didn't feel very good there with my sister in the house. First, they had nothing to eat. There were still the ration cards; the war was over, but they still had those ration cards. Only what she could give me to eat was little bit potatoes and little bit water soup like, again, I felt like I'm again in the concentration camp. She had nothing to eat, either. She made a little bit soup out of flour with a little bit sugar. That's what we eat as dinner. She has ration cards for meat, but there was no meat in those stores, in those butcher stores. And the first Friday night—I came around on Tuesday, June 12, I think it was...came back to Berlin. And the first Friday night I was thinking, I'm gonna look if I find more Jewish people. I went to the nearest synagogue. Certainly, I knew before that the Nazis burned all the synagogues in 1938, in November, so I came to the synagogue and the American bombs did the rest. So I was standing there and said to myself, "Where should I go now...should I go home, back to my sister's apartment or shall I go further looking for other Jewish people? My sister couldn't tell me, she was living like in isolation. She has no friends there [among the] other people.

JF: Was she accepted, do you think, by the other Germans, the non-Jewish Germans, whom they were living with?

KK: I don't know, I don't know. The only thing I know is that she was alive. She was thin and her face was small...they had not much to eat during the war time...but she was alive, that's all. So I want to go away back to the synagogue, I want to go away and then I hear from far away Friday night those Jewish songs, like you hear in the synagogue (hums softly)...those Friday night songs, and I went around the sound, and I came in the back of the synagogue was a big place, a free place, and there was a little chapel in the back. In the back, the singing was coming from there. I opened up the door and there was a little chapel, around thirty people, maybe, were there, ten or twelve women and the rest men, old men, and the *chazan* was singing. I was very happy. I find other Jews and I looked the people over and I looked across. The men were sitting on one side and the women on the other. It was an Orthodox place. And I looked and looked at my wife. My wife, I mean

I looked at her and I asked the man next to me if he knows this girl over there. And he said, "Yes, I know her. You want me to ask her. Have you...?" After the service we went out and he introduced me to this girl and we talked...I didn't talk much because I was ashamed of myself. I had no teeth, my upper teeth were out. You know, I think I told you this in my story that the Nazis, they had to take out my teeth because they were loose. No hair on my head...every two weeks we got our hair taken off, you know. As prisoners. And I wasn't nice dressed. Old suit on and here still was my number on the chest of the suit. Civil suit, and the name...no, no, not the number, "Buchenwald" had here a sign on it. And we talked a little bit and I brought her home where she was living. And I said "Good-bye" to her. And the next Friday night we saw each other again and so we met each other and became friends. That's it. And then we married...

JF: You married in Berlin?

KK: In Berlin, from an American Chaplain.

JF: When did you get married?

KK: We got married in Purim, 1946. American Chaplain married us in full uniform. Shuboff, his name was Shuboff. He was living in Boston, but he was stationed in Berlin. An American section in Berlin. Then when I came back to Berlin from concentration camp, Berlin was conquered from the Russian Army. The whole city of Berlin was conquered from the Russian Army. And after a couple of months, the Allied powers [divided] the city off in four parts. One was the Russian section, an American section, an English section and a French section. I was living certainly in the English section of Berlin. English part of Berlin. And we married and our daughter got born in December.

JF: She was born in Berlin?

KK: Yes, in Berlin. We got a nice apartment without windows, only cardboard on the windows, [exchange between Mr. K. and wife here]...Nice bedroom, kitchen and a toilet.

JF: Were you able to work?

KK: No...Yes...this I tell you. After we married my wife talked to her cousin. Her cousin was the president from the Jewish *Gemeinde* [congregation] in Berlin. And he give me a job as a clerk. So I was a clerk in the *Gemeinde*, yes.

JF: And your daughter was born, when?

KK: In December my daughter was born, and when my wife wants to buy a little bit milk for the baby, those Nazi women start to holler at her in the milk store. "*Komt die Juden*," the Jewish *belge*—a word like animals, like. "Come the Jewish *belge* and *trinkt* [drink] the little bit milk away." So both us said, "We can't live here anymore." The same Nazism comes out again after a year, you know, this starts to go [again], on top Nazis again. And the English soldiers weren't very nice to them.

JF: Which section of Berlin were you living in? Under whose control...the English?

KK: The English. Before, it was all Russian and the Nazis were all disappeared, they hid themselves in cellars, somewhere outside, in the country. And we said, "No, we cannot live here anymore. This is the same Nazis, the *selbe risches* [same anti-Semitism] again." We said, "We gonna go somewhere." So we were talking between us...to America we couldn't go, not the United States we couldn't go because you couldn't go out of the English section. If we were living in the American section, you could go to the United States, as a displaced person. After a certain time, the English section was open for immigration to the U.S. It opened up for immigration, so we could go to the U.S., in 1947.

JF: Now, you have shown me a prayer book that you received...

KK: After the liberation, first came the war troops, what had nothing to do, only fighting. And afterwards came a different kind of American soldiers. They take over the camp, we have visitors from the U.S., people with those big hats, those Texan hats came, and we looked at them. General Eisenhower was visiting the camps and members from Congress came to visit the camps, and they showed them everything. And we got Chaplains, American Chaplains came in uniform, Jewish Chaplains and the Christian Chaplains. Jewish Chaplains naturally came to us Jews, talking to us and then he put out a whole list from all those survivors...Jewish survivors from Buchenwald. My name was on the list. They sent this list to the U.S. and the list came to all the Jewish papers in the U.S. And my sister here in the U.S. saw on those lists that I am alive, and then she wrote to us. Then the Chaplain gave every Jew, he gave us a little *siddur* [prayer book] in Hebrew and in English translation. Until today I still have this little *siddur*.

JF: And the *siddur* is engraved or is dedicated to you...

KK: No, no, no, this is my handwriting. This is my handwriting. "*Zur Erinnerung an den tag der Befreiung*." In English: "In remembrance on the day of the liberation Weimar-Buchenwald, 11th day, April '45." I wrote this in here.

JF: This was the first time you say that religion was re-introduced into...

KK: To us...but I tell you the truth, I couldn't believe in God anymore. What my eyes saw...I couldn't believe there is a God in heaven can see this and do nothing. So, but my wife, she gave me back the belief in God again, after we met.

JF: Have you suffered much from the physical distress you had during the war, since your liberation?

KK: When I came to the U.S., my wounds broke open.

JF: On your feet?

KK: On my feet. You know I [not clear]. What, what's this? Sores, wounds...of [in] German they say wounds, wounded. Sores. I don't know, when you ask me "sore," I think sores only if you have a little bit skin like open.

JF: These were large ones.

KK: Large ones, I don't know why. My feet were swollen up and the wounds opened up.

JF: This was how many years after the war?

KK: '47, when I came to the U.S. in August. Maybe two months. Later, suddenly my feet broke open. And I went to the Mt. Sinai Hospital on 5th Street, 5th and Reed and they treated this.

JF: Were there any other repercussions of...?

KK: No, not at all, except my hearing. My hearing got worse and worse after the years...from those [hits] on the head.

JF: When they hit you on the head your hearing was affected?

KK: Yes.

JF: Were you aware of your hearing loss at the time in the camps?

KK: Not so much. You can't think in the camp. You don't think anymore. You are like a piece of meat. You eat your little bit water soup, your nose runs in the water soup and you eat it. You had no handkerchief in your pocket. You had nothing. You go on the toilet you have to clean yourself with the hand with water. There is no paper, toilet paper in those toilets.

JF: Is there anything else you want to add to what you've told us?

KK: I say only one thing. If I lived through six years alone [in] concentration camp, from '39 to '45, was the angel watching over me? Why me? Why he let me live so long?

JF: Why, do you think? What do you think kept you alive during those years?

KK: I don't know till today. I don't know, was the angel watching me? But [where] was the angel for the six million other Jews? So I don't know till today. But God [rewarded] me, give me like, for all my suffering, he give me a wonderful wife, but make a human being better out of me. She feeds me...first time I couldn't eat, she take a bite and put it to me in my mouth, because I couldn't eat without teeth...She made a human being back out of me. And I say today, "If God let me live, it must have a reason," so I try to do good things to other people. I help out and I go to old age homes when I have time...I have plenty of time now...I'm retired. To help people, to feed people, I shave those inmates in the old age homes. I do what I can to help people. I think it is my second life, I live now. Must have a purpose that God let me live. That's what I say.

JF: I'm very glad I could talk to you. Thank you so much.

KK: O.K.