

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

SAMUEL SHERRON

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Nora Levin
Date: December 11, 1983

© 1998
Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

SS - Samuel Sherron [interviewee]

NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]

Date: December 11, 1983

Tape one, side one:

NL: Mr. Sherron, would you give us your address please? [address] Thank you. This is Nora Levin interviewing on December 11, 1983. Mr. Sherron, would you be good enough to tell us a little about your earliest memories of your childhood, and name of the town where you were born, and your date of birth and a little about your family?

SS: Yes, I was born in a town called Skuodas, S-K-U-O-D-A-S, Lithuania. That is near the Latvian border. It was Lithuania but on the Latvian border. The reason, I lived, we lived actually in a town called Schweksna, S-C-H-W-E-K-S-N-A, but since the town burned down, my mother went in her home town where she came from and gave birth to me. I was youngest in the family. I had two sisters that were older than me.

NL: And what was your date of birth?

SS: My date of birth is March 27th, 1932.

NL: And the names of your sisters?

SS: Dora, or Dvorah, and Rachel, Rochel.

NL: And your mother's name?

SS: My mother's name was Rivka or Rebecca.

NL: And father's name?

SS: And my father's name was Shaya, Shaya Herzl, and the last name was Oscherowitz O-S-C-H-E-R-O-W-I-T-Z.

NL: And your father's work?

SS: Well, my grandfather, which I am named after, he was a merchant. He used to buy flax and the seed of the flax, and export this to England and Germany and to Russia, but when my grandfather passed away, my father took over the business and he did the same thing until, of course, till the, the Russians came in in 1940, and then he worked for the Russians.

NL: Yes, we'll get to that. Now...

SS: My father had--we were altogether in our family about 76 or 77 members.

NL: Cousins and such.

SS: Cousins, and my father had two brothers, one of them was a rabbi in Vilna, Rabbi, Rav Oscherowitz, and one was also a merchant. And then he had one sister, she had a drug store, which is apothecary, and the other ones were housewives. One had a shoestore. There were about four sisters.

NL: So your family was middle-class.

SS: Yes.

NL: You were fairly prosperous.

SS: Yes, yes.

NL: And you enjoyed a good standard of living?

SS: Yes, fairly, because my grandfather used to hold the money for the whole town [unclear] the synagogue of the city, of the town.

NL: What were your relations with your playmates when you were a youngster? Did you have any non-Jewish playmates?

SS: Yes, I had. I had one, one that was very close. In fact, he is the one that survived. In fact, he was in the German Army.

NL: Is that so?

SS: He was the one--I played with him because they also had an apothecary, and they were very close to me, and we went to school together, but mostly there were Jewish children and we went to school together and *cheder* and...

NL: You went to *cheder* first?

SS: Yes. I went to *cheder*. I started going to *cheder* at the age of almost five, and I went to *shul* every day. There was a very religious man by the name of Nosen [phonetic]. He was, he didn't have no children and they kind of adopted me, and I stayed there more than anywhere else, and I went to *cheder* till from the morning till the night. Late at night we used to come home with the *Laterne*, lantern.

NL: Yes. So it was an Orthodox Jewish community?

SS: Yes, it was.

NL: Strictly religious community?

SS: Very strictly, strictly Orthodox, yes.

NL: And about how many Jews were in the town? Do you have any...

SS: I would say about, close to, well, families was about 120. There could have been about 350, 400 Jews in the *shtetl*.

NL: But a small percentage of the whole population? Or, was it largely a Jewish...?

SS: It was, in our town there was, I would say, maybe 35% Jews.

NL: So it was a small town?

SS: A small town, yes.

NL: Now, when did you go, when did you start public school?

SS: Public school I started at the age of six, and that was a Jewish school, public school.

NL: I see.

SS: And then you went till about twelve o'clock or one o'clock and then you went to *cheder*.

NL: I see. And this is what most of the Jewish children did?

SS: Most of the Jewish children did, yes.

NL: So you learned Lithuanian, of course.

SS: Yes, we learned Lithuanian and then we learned, when the Russian came in, we learned Russian. That was a little later.

NL: Yes. Now what can you say about the relations between your parents, let's say, and other Jewish adults and the non-Jews in the town?

SS: Well, in the non-Jews, there was a very good relationship, although there was a lot of antisemitism in Lithuania, but we had a President and a Parliament, and we were not persecuted per se, like pogroms or anything like that, but there were incidents, because they always said "dirty Jew", and when they get mad, but...

NL: When you speak about the President...

SS: He was not bad to the Jewish people.

NL: I see.

SS: His name was Smetona, and I think that he died in the United States.

NL: I see. But there was social and, I guess, political discrimination?

SS: Yes, there was.

NL: Quotas and...

SS: Yes, there was always discrimination but not--we did not feel it as bad as...

NL: In Poland.

SS: In Poland, perhaps, or any other areas. This was, of course, 1918, or since after the war when Lithuania became independent.

NL: Independent, yes.

SS: Because before, they belonged to the Czar. In fact my father was an officer in the Czar's army.

NL: Now, you went to public school, then, until you were about nine, I guess, eight or nine?

SS: Yes, at the age of--well, actually, afterwards, after I finished, I went to a non-Jewish school and then I went to *cheder* afterwards, because you only had in the Jewish schools, only so much. You could only go up to a second grade.

NL: I understand. Now, when the Germans marched into Poland in 1939...

SS: Yes?

NL: Was your family at all aware of the significance of that? Were they worried?

SS: We were worried what was going on, we knew that Jews were getting beaten up and hurt in Germany, because we were on the border, right on the border; in fact, the German border was five miles away. Lithuania had a portion of, called East Prussia, Memel, Memelgebiet, or in Lithuania was Klaipeda and that part was taken from the Lithuanians. The Germans took it away in 1938, I believe it was, and all the Jews had to leave and they went, of course, to Israel or to Lithuania.

NL: So you knew that German Jews were suffering.

SS: Right. We knew that they were suffering, but we did not know that this could happen to us, because in 1940 the Russians came in, and we thought the Russian is

a giant. That could never happen to us and and, therefore, but you were worried, and we also had a lot of Polish Jews that came from Poland, escaped into Lithuania.

NL: I see. They thought they would find refuge.

SS: They would find refuge because the Russians were there.

NL: Right. So, then, in '39 you didn't feel any particular crisis?

SS: No.

NL: And the Russians came in in 1940...

SS: They had also a pact. And they made a pact that the Russians will stay wherever they stay, and they will get the Lemberg area, Galicia, and he would allow him to--Non-Aggression Pact act, but that, of course, didn't last too long, just a year.

NL: Right. Now, what were some of the early measures that were taken by the Russians that affected your family?

SS: Well, when the Russians came in, being my father was well-to-do, first of all they confiscated the house that we have, and then they put us into a certain area in the house, and they moved in their Communist Party because we had a tremendous big apartment and with a big hall. And that was built in 1938, the house, so they took this away and, then, finally they were told that they would have to move out altogether, but this happened--the war broke out with Germany, so they did not get a chance, and we did not have to move out, yet...

NL: I see.

SS: Until the Germans came in.

NL: And then your father became an employee?

SS: He became an employee of the, of one of these--for the Soviet Union.

NL: For the Soviet Government.

SS: Government, yes.

NL: Now, how did the Soviet presence affect Jewish life? Do you recall?

SS: Well, I remember that a lot of Jews already were afraid perhaps to pray, especially the younger people. They figured, well, maybe they would be seen, because they did not want, they didn't want these Jews, you know, to practice their religion. For that matter, any religion they were against, they were against any religion. But, in Lithuania, Judaism was very strong, and we didn't care whatever happens, we went to synagogue and, specially, people used to go three times a day, and on Saturdays, of course, it was always full. Everyone went and we didn't--at that time it wasn't yet strictly enforced by the Russians that we shouldn't go.

NL: Were you aware of any Jewish youth movements, Zionists or Bundists?

SS: Yes, we used to have *Betar* and *Zionistische*, different Zionist movements.

NL: And, were you part of any of these?

SS: No, I was...

NL: Or were you too young?

SS: Yes, I was too young.

NL: Did the Jews suffer under the Russian presence, or do you think they managed to exist fairly well?

SS: They managed to exist. They confiscated the big stores from the well-to-do, and they had to go to work. In fact, perhaps they worked in the same place what they owned in many cases.

NL: But as employees?

SS: But they put Lithuanians, you know, that were already in the Bolshevik, in the Communist movement, as overseers.

NL: Was there a lot of pressure, as far as you know, for Jews to join the party? And did some Jews join?

SS: No, it was not pressure, but a lot of the Jews wanted to join so they should be able to get a better "in" with the government.

NL: Right. Now, did your education change when the Russians came in?

SS: Well, the education system was such that you had to teach, it was mandatory Russian, and the system of classes was already different, because by us was first six grades in public and then you had to go from one to eight class *Gymnasium*. When the Russians came, when you finished school, five up to ten, you were out from *Gymnasium*. There was ten classes.

NL: Ten classes.

SS: Ten classes.

NL: So, you were in a Russian-type school for about a year.

SS: A year, yes.

NL: And I guess you learned Russian.

SS: Yes, at that time I learned. I already forgot a lot, but I still...

NL: But you learned it?

SS: I speak seven languages.

NL: Is that so?

SS: Yes.

NL: That is so remarkable. And was there much indoctrination? Were you aware that there was propaganda?

SS: Yes. There was indoctrination as far as the youth, Pioneer. In fact they wanted me to belong to the Pioneer, and maybe I even attended some Pioneer meetings, because my sisters--they were already, already, they were already older than I am, and they were talking about belonging to the--what do they call it, *Komsomol*, the youth, but it didn't materialize. It wasn't easy to get in because you had to bring up that you are, that you were from the *Proletariat*. If you were anywhere like my dad was, there was difficulties.

NL: A capitalist...

SS: Yes, and a lot of them, my father's, they sent to Siberia.

NL: Is that so?

SS: Yes, they did. But they didn't get to my father yet. I don't know what would have happened if they would have.

NL: Yes, there were some arrests and exiles?

SS: Yes, exiles, that's right.

NL: And I guess Zionist leaders also may have suffered?

SS: Yes, sure.

NL: Now, the war, of course, came very suddenly to the Soviet Union, in June. Do you remember when you felt the presence of an invasion?

SS: Yes, exactly, I remember distinctly, vividly. On June the 22nd, Sunday morning around three o'clock, being we lived only five miles away from the border, we heard that shelling upon our town and constantly, and then so we--my father gathered all of us together and we didn't know where to go, so we ran in the fields, you know. We wanted to go, because we knew if we gonna be caught by the Germans, it's not gonna good.

NL: You had no warning from any other...

SS: We didn't have no warning. In fact, the night before there was all the celebrations were made, because that was the day when the Russians came in into Lithuania, exactly a year ago, and that was supposed to actually be a celebration, and the Russians, they had these, they called it, in Russian *zelionye shapki*, green berets. There were these border patrol, and being it's on the Baltic Sea, we were close to the Baltic Sea, they had all by the tens and tens of thousands of soldiers, and we felt pretty secure. We thought that the Russians will defend, you know, and conquer Germany with no pain, with no problem, but it turned out otherwise, because when we went to the fields, we saw a lot of Russians with their rifles, you know, going back. Some of them were without an arm already, bandaged, you know, with the horses running by themselves. It was a whole thing...

NL: Chaos.

SS: Chaos, yes.

NL: So the Russians were retreating.

SS: They were retreating, and they were taken into prison by the thousands and thousands and thousands, and they also had a group of the soldiers, they were called the Workers' Group. They were, I think, from Manchuria, but they were Russians, and they were stationed in our area, and they also were in prison, and a couple of hours later we saw Germans already in our town, and we were surrounded everywhere and we couldn't go back neither here nor there. They were faster that--where could you run? Please! So what happens, it was that we had to go back to town, and in one week they told us, in the same week, they said the Lithuanians had already white bands and they marched, you know, because they were trying to take revenge because some of these--we had a few Jewish people that were in the Communist Party and they used to confiscate from them, you know, the grain, they confiscated not because they wanted it, because it was a government order,

and what they did is, for these people, the Communists, they stuffed them with grain down the throat and they suffocated. They, and then...

NL: They suffocated?

SS: And they shot a few girls that worked in the *Kommandantur*, in the German, in the Russian, in the Russian command post. They were only secretaries, you know, but still they knew exactly what it was and they took revenge from a lot of these Jewish people.

NL: It must have been horrendous.

SS: Yes, it was.

NL: So, then, what did your family do?

SS: We went back to town. We went back to our house, and then it came an order that all the Jews must go in the Jewish quarter, because there was a quarter called the Jewish Street where we went to *cheder* in school, and they took us all in that little, in that street, crammed everybody in, maybe six families into one, and that's the way--waiting what's going to happen, and in the meantime, daily, they were taking us to work. So--but it only happened until the 28th, the 22nd was when the war broke out and the 28th, the 27th was a Friday night, Friday afternoon, and they gathered all the Jews together at the Jewish synagogue and they said--when the Germans came, the SS came with the Lithuanians, and they went from town to town, the Lithuanians pointed out where all the Jews lived and where they were Jewish homes and they took them all, only men, to the synagogue. When they came into my house, they asked me, they asked my mother, and I laid down on the couch, you know, I didn't want to see them. I was afraid, so I covered myself, so when the SS came in they asked my mother, "Who is sleeping here?" And she said, "That's my little boy." And he says to my mother, "*Mitkommen!* Let him come along with us." And they took me and that's how I happened to survive, or else I would have stayed there with everybody else in that home town, which they were three months later, of course, they were all shot.

NL: They weren't deported? They were just shot in the town?

SS: In town. That's what happened. We were to the synagogue. In the synagogue, when I came already, I saw my father, I saw the rabbi, I saw many other people. They continued to bring young men, strong people and also the old, some of the old, and there was a few young like me, and there they had a doctor from the town, and he was a good man. His name was Dr. Velunis [phonetic]. He was a Lithuanian, and we asked him, "Are they going to shoot us?" And he motioned to us like this. He had to examine every one of us and we were examined down on the first floor, and upstairs there was the woman's part where the women used to *daven*, pray, so there was a big stairs, and as we finished, first of all, there was a barber. He made--town barber, and an antisemite, too. He made us a cross, this way and this way in our hair, so they called it *Lausenstrasse*, you know, for lice a promenade, and then we got beatings. From here as we go up each stair, there was an SS guy with a whip. Till we go up there, you know, they really, they really let us have it and they told us to bring along whatever rings we had, gold, you know. And that

was Friday night. The rabbi, the rabbi's beard was cut, and they gave another Jew, which he happened to survive that Jew, he's still in--as far as I know he's still alive in Florida--I met him a couple of months ago. They told him to hold the rabbi's--they cut his beard and they told him to hold the hair in his hands, and this man had to put a torch to his hair and burn it. They had to ship our Torahs, the books, the prayer books, the shawl, the *taletsim*, everything on the ground, and they told us to tramp on it, you know, walk on it in the back of the synagogue for about a couple of hours with all kinds of calisthenics, and with your arms and crawling on the ground and jumping, and each time if you didn't do the way they told you, they tortured. They threw dollars, American dollars, and *rubles* on the ground, to see if somebody of us, being we are already in pain and agony and being tortured, to see if some of us will pick it up. It was laying around purposely as a temptation. Can you imagine their sadistic minds? So, we were there until Saturday morning, and Saturday morning, before they took us out--we didn't know where we were going--and they told all these women to come to bring us food, so the women came and brought us, you know, *Shabbes* food, they didn't know what is going to happen to us. [Mr. S. is agitated. Taping is stopped.] So when these women came with the food, they thought they would be able to see us, and as they approached the gate that was close to the synagogue, the SS started to shoot over their heads, so they thought they were going to be shot, so they ran away. They went back; they wouldn't let them see us. And, therefore, one of these White Band Lithuanians that is now in Chicago, he brought it up a package for me from my mother. Some food.

NL: Some food.

SS: Some food but they, they took it away afterwards anyway.

NL: But he tried?

SS: He tried, yes. But he was with the Band, he was like one of them, like the others, yeah, he went from town to town and house to house pointing out where the Jews are.

NL: He knew you in town and he was trying to do a little favor?

SS: He knew me because I played with him.

NL: I see.

SS: In fact, I saved his life in the big pond. We were going skating and he fell in, and I held onto him until his uncle came and rescued him because he was also small.

NL: He was trying to repay you...

SS: If not, he would have been dead, if I didn't hold on, and I could have, could have fallen in myself. So, Saturday morning the trucks came along and they took us and they loaded us all up, and they took us to a camp in, near Heydekrug [or Heidekrug] in Germany.

NL: Do you know how you would spell that?

SS: H-E-Y-D-E-K-R-U-G.

NL: In Germany?

SS: Yes, it's not far from Memel.

NL: From Memel?

SS: Yes. There was an SS captain by the name of Dr. Scholl [phonetic]. He had a big brick factory and he had a big farm, and he wanted us, he got permission for the Jews to work for him, and, of course, we were under the SS guards.

NL: And your father was with you?

SS: My father was with me.

NL: Was he still rather husky?

SS: Oh yes, my father was very strong and husky and physical, yes, and when we got there in the, in Heydekrug, they subdivided us to various different, five miles away, another camp, 50 miles to another camp, but he was the one in charge of the whole, of the whole group that he took out from Schweksna.

NL: Were there any other children of your age there?

SS: Just about--a little older, maybe 12 or 13, about three or four.

NL: And, what did you do?

SS: Well, when I got into the camp, they saw me what I am, and they asked me, the guard, that was not the main guard, he was a lieutenant, he made me to clean his apartment, clean his shoes, bring food to the, to the guards, and that kind of, that kind of work, light work, peel potatoes...

NL: You were really an exception? How do you understand the reasons why you were kept there?

SS: I don't know why.

NL: It was a chance.

SS: It was a chance, why they kept me I'll never know. To this day I don't know. Maybe--[unclear] *Reboyne Shel Oylem* [God, The Lord] had a purpose, I don't know, I really don't know.

NL: Really uncanny. So you worked at these odd jobs...

SS: I remember, yes, and my father and everybody else, they worked on the streets. They used to dig ditches and making the ground, level off the ground. Then we worked also in the gravel factories. And every month there was selections.

NL: Every month?

SS: Every month. So they selected who didn't, and they used to ask, "Who wants to go home?" But, of course, there was no home. They was actually being shot.

NL: But lots of people fell.

SS: Oh [unclear]--me and my father, my father wanted to go home, so they put his name down, to send him, but then this guard that I cleaned his shoes, I asked him, I said, "My father is going home, and I would like to go with him if I could." He says, "No, you we need yet, you cannot go," but this was already, it was every month, and then the 28th of Elul, which is just one day before Rosh Hashana, we learned from the people that the border was already opened, you know Germans was already in Lithuania, we learned that all the women and children, they told them to gather together and bring their jewelry,

and possessions, whatever clothes, they are going to see the men, us, that were taken to work. They put them all in trucks. The Lithuanians drove the trucks, and the SS were there and they took them from our town. Six kilometers out in the woods, there were already the ditches digged, and the SS troopers, and the Germans and the Lithuanians, they were drunk, were already drunk, they had machine guns ready. They told them to undress in front of the graves, to get all of the possessions, took everything away, and they machine gunned everyone of them to death. Some of them were even alive and they buried them alive. The blood came through the ground the next, the next morning.

NL: How did you hear about this?

SS: From the Lithuanians at camp.

NL: At camp.

SS: At camp. They used to work in Germany also, they used to go back and forth and they used to drop, when they walked by, they dropped a note when they walked by and that's the way we found out, and a lot we found out after the war because...

NL: Excuse me. Now, what made your father change his mind? These reports, or did his superior?

SS: All right. When he wouldn't let me go and I said, "Since I cannot go, can my father stay?" So he let him stay.

NL: You said, "Can my father stay?"

SS: Yes, and because I had contact with him. I could talk to him. Because, you know, usually you cannot talk to them, but being that I, that I cleaned...

NL: You did personal services for him.

SS: That's right. And then I used to sometimes get leftovers, you know, what he used to throw out and I used to take it. He didn't see those things, you know.

NL: He never saw it.

SS: But I, and I used to give them to my father, and my uncle at that time was still there, because that was before Auschwitz. That was from '41 to '43. I was already two years...

NL: You were here at Heydekrug.

SS: At Heydekrug, from '41 to '43. And then it came...

NL: You stayed on as this personal valet?

SS: No, later on already I already worked on the field also, because I worked with a guy from, he was also a party man but he was also a civilian, and I used to work with him. They used to measure the roads and there was tabloids [phonetic], and I used to carry the tabloids for him in the rain and the cold, you know, and once...

NL: You were still the youngest?

SS: I was still the youngest. Once, I went with food, for the, to bring the food back, and they let me go alone, without a guard, to bring the food for the guards, from the kitchen, from the SS kitchen, and I used to go into a house, there was one house that the woman was very sympathetic and she used to give me bread...

NL: Is that so.

SS: But one day it was raining...

NL: A German woman?

SS: A German, oh, yes. She was, you see, she was an older person. There was quite a few of them, you know, they were very good but they couldn't do nothing. They used to make believe they dropped something and it used to be bread.

NL: In the field?

SS: In the field where we worked. You know, we worked like a gang group, so when I walked in there, I used to go in there, she used to give me soup, and used to give me bread, and I used to put it in there, and one day it was raining and for some reason the guards--came with the *Kommando*...

Tape one, side two:

NL: This is tape one, side two, continuing our interview with Mr. Sherron.

SS: So, when I saw them going back and I was supposed to go bring them the food, I turned around because I had some bread on me. I turned around and I went back to the camp so, and then they started, the guards started to shoot at me, because, you know, we had a yellow patch on the back. We had to have a yellow patch on the back and on the arm, and they saw so they one of the Jewish people, it was the, a *Lagerführer*, not a *Lagerführer*, he was a, like a *Kapo*, but we didn't have a *Kapos* there, so he says, "Don't shoot. He's going back because he sees us," so they stopped shooting. When I came back, the guard told this, this, the *Lagerführer*, the commander of the camp, what happened, what I did, so he, and that was the one that I cleaned his shoes and his rooms and everything else, he told me that I should *melden*, I should report. And I reported and they lined up all the Jews, you know in line, and he gave me ten beatings with his, with his, not with his, his fist, his whip, and my father had to see this, and you know, next day I was black and blue, oh, I collapsed on the floor. I was a kid, and then, "From then on in from now on," he says, "that will happen to every one of you if you are going to do something like this." So, then, of course, we knew that nobody else...

NL: Could you go to the clinic or was there any way that you could...

SS: There was no clinic. We didn't have no clinic there.

NL: There was no care.

SS: No, no, nothing, no care, no care, and incidentally, that commander of the whole group that took us out, that had permission to keep those Jews for his purpose, he was a doctor himself. He was a doctor, but I do remember that in one, in one case that he treated a Jew. He must have been about 19 or 20 years old. He broke his arm, and he put his arm in a splint for some reason. He himself, he himself, maybe he wants to practice to see what's what, I don't know. You know it was very difficult to figure them out. It was very difficult. Here I am, you know, cleaning his room and shining his shoes, and when it came for me to get a beating, he beat me good. He didn't give me one or two, he gave me ten for having a piece of bread. So, that was, we were there till 1943, but these things were back and forth. Then we wanted to get clothes, we didn't have no clothes. We saw clothes that came from our homes, you know. They send it to us, and we also saw clothes that people wore when they were taken from us back home, so we knew what happened to them. What they did, is that they took them to the border in the same area and that's where everybody got shot. In 1943, I think it was around June or July, there came an order that all the Jews has to be liquidated. I mean has to be, has to be free, Germany has to be free from all the Jews in this area. So they put us, they gathered us from all these camps, from Heydekrug into the main camp, which was Heydekrug itself, and we were for two days in a, in a barn. Now we didn't know what was going on but we knew it's no good. We figured something is--we thought we're going to be shot, also. Finally, Dr. Scholl came along and

he said, "Since you are good workers, you are going to a very good place that you will really enjoy being there. You'll be all together. I'm giving you a good recommendation that, that you are one of the best workers that I had, and you will enjoy where you are at." We didn't know where we went. We were traveling, but we were put in the cattle trains; we were traveling for about eight days and, of course, my uncle--he was shorter, he was unshaven--and of course, some of the others, and from our transport there were about 500 people, we came, and that was Auschwitz, Birkenau. There was a selection, left, right, left, right, and my uncle, of course, he went to the left. My father was to the right. They sent me also to the left, which was the truck, and I thought by truck would be much better, but I wanted to be with my father and I saw my father on the other side. In that back and forth, back and forth, I jumped down that truck, I went back to the group that had to be selected yet, and this time, an SS man pointed me to the right, and that was where the *Kommandos*, where they made the selections. I went into the group to be walking in, and I was right next to my father, and we went into the camp. I thought, you know, walking would be more difficult than on the truck, but as it turned out, it was, it was better, and when we came into the camp, we saw women with violins, and I remember distinctly the march even today in my ears, and I thought this was heaven. You know, for two years we were already in a slave camp with hunger and beatings prior to that in Heydekrug, and you know what they used to do in Heydekrug Camp? In the middle of the night the SA and the SS used to come in, and they used to make us "Up, down, up, down," from our bunks and make all kinds of calisthenics, sports, they called it.

NL: In the middle of the night.

SS: In the middle of the night, three o'clock and they used to bang with the butts, you know, into the doors and you know when you heard them, we right away, and this was going on for two years, for two years. Finally, when we got into this camp, we thought this is going to be heaven, and then when we got into this camp, first of all, they gave us right away a number and they told us to go into a *Entlausung*, which is a delousing place, and when we went in there, we saw, of course, these showers and everything else. It could have been a different shower, too, you know. Thank God, but, this was the real, and they gave us with cold water, and then they disinfected us and they gave us the striped clothes, the first time we had striped clothes. Prior to that we had civilian clothes, with, with the yellow badge, and then we went in a quarantine. We were in Birkenau in the quarantine with the Gypsies, and well, the Gypsies were in one *Block*, we were in another *Block*, and after that, we worked, after the quarantine we used to go and work then in different, for I.G. Farben, different areas.

NL: Let me ask you this. You were still probably the youngest?

SS: I was 11 years old. When I got to Auschwitz I was 11 years old.

NL: There were no other children that age?

SS: Well, yes, there were, there were. There were some.

NL: Did they sleep with the men, did they sleep with the men in the same bunks?

SS: In the same bunks as far as I know.

NL: They didn't have a separate bunk for children?

SS: I was told that there was a separate bunk for children, that there were younger children.

NL: There were younger children.

SS: There were younger children, but they were separately. The way I heard, I mean, I don't know, but I didn't see it myself.

NL: But you stayed with your father?

SS: I stayed with my father and there was another few from, from when we went on the, on the regular, on the detail work, to do, to do the work. Actually we got, they gave us a, our *Kommando* was *Gleisanschluss* crematorium. What does that mean? It means that, instead of the, when the train comes in from all of the transports, instead for them to go by truck into the crematorium, into the gas chamber, we build, our *Kommando* built tracks, so instead of going by selection, they should be able to go in right into the gas chamber.

NL: And you worked in that detail?

SS: I worked in the detail, and we saw every day coming from Greece, transports. I will never forget as long as I am going to live, there was one transport came in in Auschwitz, everybody from Saloniki, everybody was dead; there was probably a convoy of about maybe 25 to 30 trucks, at least. There was one girl alive. She was sitting on the top of a dead pile of the dead corpses from the transport, because they must have been probably about two weeks on the transport, and she also went in. It stands out in my eyes, you know, her face, and she went, also went into the gas chamber. Of course, the other ones, they didn't have to gas them any more, because they were dead, but they just probably took off the gold and the clothes, and they went straight into the, into the crematorium.

NL: You worked with your father on those details?

SS: On these details. Not only with my father, but with some of our group, too, and...

NL: It's a wonder you didn't go mad.

SS: [groans] Did you know what I used to do? When they used to finish up the, the food, they used to give us, you know, potato, potato peels, sometimes you saw a potato, sometimes not, you know the rations what they gave us in Auschwitz or Birkenau, I'm sure that you are very well aware. I used to with, I remember with this finger, I used to go in, into this pot, they had a big pot, you know, to carry, when they carried these foods, and I used to clean it out like this, you know, and try to scoop up whatever I can. They used to give us cigarette rations. You see, my dad did not smoke and I did not, I used to sell...

NL: Cigarette rations?

SS: They gave cigarettes, yes.

NL: But no food.

SS: No food. They used to give us, I think, three or four cigarettes a day, a week. I used to sell, my father did too, sell those cigarettes for bread, and there was people that did not care about food, they didn't care if they lived or died or what happened to them. They wanted that smoke and cigarettes, and they, they went fast.

NL: And you were able to swap your cigarettes?

SS: Oh yes, I sold mine. I was so hungry. I was constantly hungry. There wasn't a day that I didn't suffer from hunger and, you know, hunger pain is, is so severe that, that, you know, and in the cold, you used to stay, four o'clock in the morning, they made us to get up. Gong was four o'clock in the morning. After that they made us stay in line, used to eat fast to drink up that coffee *Ersatz* that they used to give you...

NL: The *Appell*?

SS: Right. And then right in line for three hours, for two hours, two-and-a-half hours, it varied, and God forbid, if somebody was missing, you'd stay until they found him whether he was dead or alive. There was even an order that everyone of them, when he goes out to bring some dead back, and if somebody, lots of them died, when they came back, this person, this dead person had to be accounted for in line, which is so the number could be recorded that this is dead. And then in...

NL: Take a few minutes--And how was Father managing?

SS: Well, my father was, by then he was already weaker and he didn't feel too good. He was a very strong man. He weighed maybe 210 pounds, and he was tall, was a six-footer, you know. So finally there came an order that, from Auschwitz that they are looking for Jews that do not speak Polish, that are not from Poland.

NL: When was this?

SS: That was also in, was in '43, later in '43. At that time they asked us, "Who wants to go to another camp?" And I said to my Dad, "Let's run from here, wherever it is, it couldn't be worse than this is." So we volunteered and lots of other people volunteered. Incidentally, when we got to Auschwitz, from the whole group, there remained 180 people, from the 500. The rest of them went already into the, into the crematorium. And after the quarantine, after we worked, they were selected to go to Warsaw, and they took only Jews that do not speak Polish. Being Lithuanians, they did not know that Polish and Russian is the same, and we didn't volunteer anything. We were taken out with a group; there was Hungarian Jews, some Hungarians. There was not many Hungarians in '43 in Auschwitz. They went in '44 later on. There was a few Lithuanians, there was only our group of Lithuanians, the Lithuanians that were in the Kovno Ghetto, we were from them far, far away and they were not even, they did not even know that we exist, a camp into East Prussia. They were with their families until 1944 in the Kovno Ghetto, and then they were liquidated, you know, some of them in the Ninth Fort,¹ a [unclear] that I am sure that you

¹Ninth Fort was a killing site on the outskirts of Kovno where thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews, were murdered by Germans and Lithuanians during the German occupation.

are familiar with. But with us, we were the first ones right from the beginning without our, of course, our families were already also gone.

NL: This was the end of '43, after...

SS: In '43, yes. They took us and then we didn't know where we were going. They took all of the French Jews, but these French Jews, they were also from Polish, Polish descent, you know.

NL: Foreign Jews?

SS: Yes, foreign Jews. But they didn't know that. So there were Holland Jews, from Holland. We had Holland a lot, too, and all these Jews they do not supposedly speak Polish.

NL: And about how many were you?

SS: We were about 5,000.

NL: 5,000?

SS: Five thousand they took and we didn't know where we were, but they were, they took us in the cattle trains and, of course, the SS were right in front. They kept the whole front for themselves, but we were, and it was about four days, I think, we were traveling, and when we got, we found out, let out, we didn't know where we were. We see a, a...

NL: A field of rubble.

SS: There was rubble and everything was full of it all around, and then we saw a place where they left us off and that was a jail, and that jail we found out is the name Pawiak. And we were there for about, I think, four or five weeks. While being there, we went and we built barracks in the ghetto. That happened to be Warsaw, incidentally. And we found it out it was Warsaw.

NL: You knew, of course, that the ghetto had been destroyed?

SS: No, we did not know. We didn't know a thing. We were, we completely didn't know. In fact we didn't get no correspondence, we didn't know how the war was going. We only know that when the Germans are mad, it must be bad for them. We kind of, you know, assumed that way. But prior to that, while we were in Auschwitz, they made us write letters back home. Maybe they want to find out if somebody is alive yet or whatever. I wrote a letter to my cousin in Kovno, where she was, and you know, my cousin received that letter.

NL: What did you have to write?

SS: That we are fine, that, well we knew that they are going to censor it, read every line that we write, we are working, we are all together and everything is nice, the food is very good and we enjoy being where we are.

NL: They may have wanted to use it for propaganda?

SS: Maybe, whatever it was, but that letter came in Kovno Ghetto to my cousin. She happened to survive, too, but she was in Kovno Ghetto. She was in Stutthof and then she, from Stutthof, of course, she was liberated. I don't know in what camp. She is now in

Phoenix, Arizona. But from when we got to Warsaw, we built barracks and we were transferred from there into the barracks. That barracks that we built, it was near the *Umschlagplatz* in Warsaw. They, near the *Judenrat*, they called that *Konzentrationslager Warschau*. That was K.L. Warsaw. We built crematoriums in Warsaw. The *Obersturmbandführer*, the commander, just came from Lublin, Maidanek. They had liquidated Lublin at that particular time, *Obersturmbandführer* Weiss with his clique, and they brought all of them to us, and they were in charge of that concentration camp.

NL: And were Jews then gassed?

SS: Not yet. You see, it wasn't finished yet, because that was in '43, and in '43 we got used to, when people died in Warsaw, they got new transports, brought in new ones from various areas and then it started in '44, they started to come in from Auschwitz, Hungarian Jews. So we had Hungarian Jews there, but not Polish-speaking, but some of them, there was from Czechoslovakia, which is Slovak, is very similar. They spoke Polish. We cleaned the ghetto. We cut those, those, we knocked out all the cement around the bricks, cleaned it up so they wanted to probably rebuild the whole area.

NL: And destroy the evidence?

SS: That is correct. Destroy the evidence, or whatever. We were, there was hell there. Everybody died from typhus, spots typhus, black fever. One morning I contacted that, too. I was out for four weeks. Now, they took me away to the so-called *Revier* they called it, it was a hospital, so-called hospital. Now that hospital in itself was smelling from the stench of the people. You know, there was no sanitary conditions.

NL: No water?

SS: The straw sacks, you know, where we were sleeping, was infested with bacteria, with everything. I do not know what happened to me because I do not remember a thing in those four weeks that I was in that *Revier*.

NL: You were perhaps in a delirium?

SS: I don't know what happened to me, but I know that after, they brought me back to the barracks that I was originally.

NL: And you were better? You must have been...

SS: Yes, I felt better. I felt stronger. And, then, there was a French Jew that was in charge of that barracks, and he sent me to work in the kitchen, in the prison kitchen for the barracks, and while I was there, a few months, I used to get extra soup. I used to give it to my father and...

NL: A little more food.

SS: A little more food. In fact, if I hadn't helped my father, he wouldn't be alive today. And then one day there was a selection, and they was going to take everybody, so I went to the *Kapo* of the kitchen, and he was a German a German, he was a criminal. He had a green triangle, you see, which I'm sure you probably heard about it. There were different colors. There was homosexuals. I think that they had black, or there were also

Jehovah's Witnesses. I'm sorry, homosexuals had pink. Black was for the ones that were saboteurs, I think...

NL: And socialists.

SS: And Jews had red and yellow, which was the star of David. We had on the left and over the heart here and also on the pants on the right side, with your number out.

NL: By the way, did the Gypsies have a special insignia, do you know, the Gypsies?

SS: The Gypsies had also a, but I do not remember what it was.

NL: Did you have any contact with the Gypsies?

SS: No, we did not, we did not. They were on the other side. Although we could have talked to them, it was only a barbed wire. But we didn't dare. We had, we saw Russian soldiers there, prisoners of war. They died like flies. They mistreated them in the beginning. It was, you know, they were losing the war at that time, I think, Paulus' Sixth Army or Fourth Army, I don't know which one. The Germans, from Field Marshal Paulus, they retreated and they were getting a beating, and that's why it was the worst for everybody. So, anyway, there was a selection in Warsaw and I went to this, and I said, "Can you do something? My father shouldn't have to go." So he sent me to one of the guys that was also a Czechoslovak Jew. He was the one that had all these figures about how many Jews are here, how many Jews are there, and he was hidden in the, where all the foods are hidden, in such a room, storage, until the selection was over, and when the selection was over they let him out, but a lot from our camp that came from Lithuania went with that selection. I think somewhere near Breslau they sent them. Not a single person survived. All dead. So now, I don't know what happened. Maybe they just took them out and killed them, or whatever. Never one survived, and then we were there until 1944.

NL: You were able to get your father a special designation? He wasn't...

SS: No, he worked, he worked the same as everybody else, the same detail, but yet on that day when there was this selection, I asked if something could be done...

NL: And so this man...?

SS: Right. He figured that since I was a child, you know, little, he figured that I needed somebody.

NL: Another person.

SS: A Czechoslovak Jew, yes. And then, what happened was, he came out afterwards, you know, and went back to work with everybody else, and happened another case that he survived. While we were in Auschwitz, that I forgot to mention to you, every Sunday, every Sunday, there was selections. I remember Dr. Mengele coming up to me once. He used to go with a lot of officers, you know, and when I stood up, you know, and I was, and I made myself like this...

NL: As tall as you could.

SS: Tall, and you know, he says to me in German, "*Du brauchst Dich garnicht gross machen. Ich sehe was Du bist.*" "You don't have to make yourself big. I see what you are..." But he passed by...

NL: And you weren't an especially tall...

SS: No. But they asked me how old I am, and I said, I said that I am 15. I lied about my age because, you see, when you are in camp, being that you are undernourished, and you know, you could get away with a lie a little bit.

NL: But you knew enough to know you had to lie. Survival was...

SS: We know so much, you know. When you are in such a situation as a child, you know, somehow your brains works differently and you remember vividly. You remember details, and that's what happened. In these selections, what they used to do one day for recreation, we used to take our jackets, our jackets upside down, put through our arms through this way and button up in the back and here they used to load us up with stones, and we used to carry from the camp to the outside of the camp for about 10, 15 yards and then back for three to four hours every Sunday, just to make us, you know, suffer.

NL: Sadistic.

SS: Sadistically, and all kinds of sports. They taught us how to put the heads up and the heads down, you know, how to approach an officer, which way with the right gestures. Otherwise, you know, if you didn't do the right way, right away you got slapped. We saw all kinds of tortures and beatings in the barracks. You know, there was, in Auschwitz, the barracks there was one long barrack and then supposedly was heat that was supposed to go through. They used to make us jump in the middle of the night. They used to come in, "Up and down and up and down," and the boards used to fall on the noses, you know, we used to get, it's unbelievable what we went through. It's so inhumane what one human being can do to another, and yet such a people that, you know, gave us Beethoven, Goethe. It's...

NL: It's baffling.

SS: It's baffling, yes.

NL: Now, excuse me. I just want to ask you this, Mr. Sherron.

SS: Yes?

NL: Were there Lithuanian or Ukrainian guards who also perpetrated...

SS: Yes, I wanted to mention this. While we were in Birkenau, one day we were sitting there, you know, the sun was coming down and it was in the quarantine, I hear whistling, the Lithuanian hymn. I says, "My God, what is going on here? I mean, that could not be a Lithuanian..." And, by golly, there were Lithuanians, there were Ukrainians. There were the guards on those guard houses, you know, around the camp, and we used to go in and out, and it was marked "*Arbeit macht frei*," and all that.

NL: So, these auxiliaries, they were...

SS: They were worse than the Germans even, some of them. Some of them were much, much worse, and another thing, while we were in Auschwitz, they used to, in the

morning, they used to call the prisoners to come to the, to the gate, to the wires, you know, to the gate. Usually, when you don't know, you come fresh, you know, as a prisoner, when a German calls you, you come, but you had the right not to go, because if you did go, they had the right to shoot you, and that's what they did. They used to call people. You used to see hundreds and hundreds and hundreds every morning lying flat on the ground, dead, because they used to call them, you know, and as they went, they shot them. We used to hear during the night all kinds of, during the night hours, shots.

NL: How did you learn, not to?

SS: The people that they were there before told us, "Don't do it, don't do it, don't go."

NL: So you had to know when to respond and when not to respond?

SS: Respond. When to respond and when not to respond, you know, and some of them couldn't judge at the same time, and that was a human being's life was a fly. A dog was more important to them than a human being.

NL: They did it for the sport?

SS: They did it for the sport. Just to torture you, to ridicule you. They used to call you all kinds of names and they didn't call you by the name, they called you by the number, and they called you *Sau Schwein*, pig and all that kind of numbers, I mean names. So, we were there till 1944. Now in 1944, the Russians approached the Weichsel River in Warsaw, and there was talk that they were going to send us away. Actually, what they wanted, they wanted to kill us right there and then, but the *Bürgermeister* came, and he said, the *Gauleiter*, rather, came, and he said, "The Russians are too close. I don't want anything to happen to the concentration camp, Warsaw, in the camp. Take them out of here because it is too close, and when this is getting out, they are going to annihilate everything. The Russians are too close." So what they did, they left about 200 people behind and they took all of us in away. We walked from Warsaw to a town named Kutno. That is on the way to Lodz.

NL: Can you spell it please?

SS: K-U-T-N-O.

NL: And was this in the summer?

SS: That was in the summer. When the first people walked--you know, it's a group of 5,000, the ones in the back just couldn't keep up, because by the time they came to get the first step, they might be like from here to, you know, four, five blocks away. So the ones in the back, luckily we were more or less towards the front, you know, we had not much food, we didn't have no, nothing to drink, so we walked day and night. Well, actually at night they didn't let us walk, but it was very close to night. We used to dig the ground where we stood over the night to get water, and would you believe that we had water? We digged and we got water. One place we marched from Warsaw, we came to a town called Otwok and there was a big, big river, and they says, "You can go into the and drink that water," and everybody jumped right in, and as everybody started to jump in, they started

to machine gun, to shoot and everybody started to run right away out because we wanted to, it was so hot. You know, we couldn't, we couldn't.

Tape two, side one:

NL: This is a continuation of our interview with Mr. Samuel Sherron, tape two, side one. Just before we get to the *Einsatzgruppen*, could you tell us how many days you were on this march from Warsaw?

SS: On this march to Warsaw, we were about three to four days, from Warsaw to Kutno. We didn't know what town we are going, but Kutno was the last one. We got finally on the road. When we got to Kutno, we slept overnight; it was raining, pouring, and we were in the fields, open, and the guards were around us, and they put us into the cattle trains, 110 to a cattle train, and the front doors were right open for themselves, and we were cut off on the sides. We could not even stand, we just had to sit one, you know...

NL: Against the other.

SS: Against each other. We had some Greek Jews, and this I saw with my own eyes. There was, the thirst was unbelievable. The Greeks, they could not take it so much, you know, they drank their own urine, and you know urine is salty by itself, and I saw this with my own eyes. When we came, finally when we arrived with, we marched off with about 5000 inmates, we came to Dachau but maybe about two-and-a-half thousand. The others are all dead. When we got to Dachau after a week on the train, when we got to Dachau, there was a lot of selections then.

NL: Now, before we go into that, do you want to go back and tell us about the *Einsatzgruppen*?

SS: Oh, yes.

NL: ...jurisdiction. You were in Barbarossa.² [Mr. Sherron may have mentioned this while the tape was off.]

SS: Yes, well, the *Einsatzgruppen*. They were organized that they had Lithuanians, Ukrainians. Latvians, Estonians, with the SS behind the Gestapo and the *Sicherheitsdienst*.

NL: Security.

SS: Security. They went from town to town in every town in Lithuania, in Latvia, not so much in Estonia, because there wasn't so many Estonian Jews. In the Ukraine, in White Russia, Minsk, Pinsk, Vallamir [phonetic], all of these towns, and they were shooting Jews from, by the night. They used to take them out in masses, thousands of thousands of thousands. They, in fact, some of the guards used to go insane. The only way they could do it, is they used to make them drunk. Now these groups were organized before. In fact there was a, I learned that afterwards, there was a camp near Dresden. They were sent there in Saxonia, how to [unclear]...

²Operation Barbarossa was the code name for the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, in violation of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Four *Einsatzgruppen* units, mobile killing forces, were attached to the German army units.

NL: To be trained?

SS: To be trained for that particular details. They had a *Sonderkommando*, they called them. And they went, they went, that group *nach Osten*, [East], it was called Barbarossa--they probably killed, they killed over two million Jews that way alone, by going from town to town, and their hands were bloody.

NL: Now, did you hear about this or...

SS: Well, we could not see because we were already in concentration camps, but we heard already from eye witnesses that ran away from the, from the death graves.

NL: You heard it after the war?

SS: Right after the war. My cousin, in fact, my cousin ran away with the partisans. He fought in the woods and he mentioned that he saw, he saw, he knew what was going on in the Perony woods [Ponary].

NL: Near Vilna.

SS: Near Vilna.

NL: Yes, and in Babi Yar.

SS: In Babi Yar. Well, Babi Yar was already in the Ukraine. But that was specially...

NL: That was specially organized.

SS: Organized for that particular...

NL: They went with the German Army.

SS: With the German Army. So when we got to Warsaw, to Dachau, we were in Dachau for about a month, and then from Dachau we went to...

NL: What did you do there, Mr. Sherron?

SS: In Dachau we were, we were in transit, and tells us again what we can do and what we cannot do, like a quarantine.

NL: Did you get any better food?

SS: Not much, it was a little better than Warsaw but...

NL: Not enough?

SS: No, never enough.

NL: Never enough.

SS: You were *always* hungry and you walked around in hunger and in pain constantly, constantly. I weighed maybe about 60 pounds.

NL: At the end of the war?

SS: Yes, 60, 65 pounds.

NL: So from Dachau?

SS: So from Dachau they sent us to Mühldorf, M-Ü-H-L-D-O-R-F.

NL: The camp in Germany?

SS: The camp in Germany, Niedersachsen, Lower Saxony. No, *Nieder* Bavaria, Lower Bavaria, pardon me. That's quite a distance from Munich, because Munich is

Oberbayern, in Upper Bavaria. That was *Nieder* Bavaria. And there already we had our commander was an SS; not an SS but was a *Wehrmacht* captain, but his assistant was SS.

NL: I see.

SS: We built, we used to go to the *Hauptbaustelle*, the main work place. We built a building so when the *Luftwaffe* wants to repair their planes, they should be able to fly, I mean to taxi underneath, so they shouldn't be outside and being conspicuous or bombarded by the Allies. And we worked there two shifts, day and night. We carried the cement on our backs, and there where my father, I think, developed bronchial disease in his lungs from the dust, because he was very sick at the very end, before he died.

NL: Did you work under one of the big industrial enterprises like Farben?

SS: That must have been I. G. Farben because I didn't know what it was. It was called *Hauptbaustelle*. We did have those Yellow Hats there, and they were plain Germans, and they probably belonged to the party, I am sure.

NL: Did they work side by side with you?

SS: They didn't work. No, they gave the orders. They were the big shots.

NL: I see.

SS: We worked, only the inmates did the work.

NL: Were there non-Jewish workers?

SS: A few, very few non-Jews, also criminals. But not as much as we had in Warsaw or Auschwitz. In Warsaw, I think they had a whole barracks full just of Germans. There was a German barrack that Jews were not allowed to be with.

NL: And was the food here a little bit better, or a little more?

SS: Not more, but maybe it was a little bit better, but here again, you were still hungry, you were still hungry. And there we had already Jewish women that used to work also in the details in construction. We worked day and night and that was torture there. We used to have to carry those bags with cement and pour in with the water to mix, you know, the cement mixers, and from there we used to carry on these lighters [unclear] right into, you know, into the place, you know, and that consisted of iron and cement for the outside walls. We did not finish that job, because we were there only a year, and then, of course, in 1945, around April the 18th or the 20th, it became an order that we are going to be transferred and exchanged into the Alps, that everybody was going to be exchanged for German troops.

NL: You knew already the Germans were losing the war?

SS: Well, apparently we had that feeling that something is wrong, but we did not know. We only prayed one thing. We could not understand that there was a war going on, and we knew the Americans were involved--why could not this place be bombed? In Auschwitz more so than anywhere else because this was-- [Mr. Sherron began to sob here], like a machine that went day and night. So...

NL: They easily could have bombed it.

SS: They should have bombed it. And at that time, at least much more Jews would have been, we would have maybe been killed, but so what? At least so many Jews would have been alive, maybe millions, the Hungarian Jews that came late. For them it sure was plenty of time.

NL: There were over four hundred thousand that perished that could have been...

SS: That's right. So, finally they put us into a cattle trains, and we were traveling for a couple of days, and all of a sudden the doors were opened up and we were told that it was in Pocking, P-O-C-K-I-N-G, in Bavaria.

NL: In the Alps?

SS: Close to the Alps, yes.

NL: The doors were opened up.

SS: And they say, "You can go."

NL: Oh, my.

SS: So everybody was happy, and everybody was trying to jump and dance, and kiss whoever survived and then all of a sudden, you see the Germans coming, the *Luftwaffe*, no SS, the *Luftwaffe*.

NL: Bombing?

SS: No, no bombing. They surrounded us and they said, "You Jews, you escaped," and they put us all in a big field, and they had machine guns on the street, and they were ready to kill us, to shoot us. My father says to me, "Come, son, give me your hand, and if we will die, we will die together." And I gave him my hand, and then, excuse me [pause while Mr. Sherron composes himself] and then, the *Bürgermeister* from that town came and he said, "The Jews did not escape. They were told that they can leave." You see, but we didn't know what they know, what the *Bürgermeister* [mayor] did--the Americans were close by, they were close by.

NL: So he wanted to save himself.

SS: I'm talking, about April already, maybe the 25th or 26th.

NL: Oh, close to the end.

SS: We didn't know nothing. So again they took us back into the group, into the trains.

NL: They responded to the *Bürgermeister*.

SS: Yes, they listened, and they did not kill us. They gathered us together again, and they put us back into the trains, and again started to go back and forth, back and forth. Then, and the Germans already had their machine guns on top, the Americans with their planes saw a transport with the machine guns on top--they thought it's a Army, German *Wehrmacht*--and they started to shoot up the train. They shot us up as we were running out, and they opened up the doors again so we should go underneath, the SS guards, and a lot of them got killed that way by the Americans, because these planes they came down low over our heads, and the bullets strayed. Then they gathered us back again and again into the trains, we went back, and we were going forward and we go back again; we knew that

something isn't right. We thought that maybe they would take us into the right place to let us out, and then that would be the end. I mean they shoot us. Finally, the 28th of April in a town called Seeshaupt, S-E-E-S-H-A-U-P-T, near Feldafing, or Mittenwald, or Garmisch, it's all in the same area, the doors were opened up. We were afraid to go because we thought maybe it was another trick, and we see a different kind of army, and then we saw that it was the USA. We started to jump, and then the Americans came over to us and they said, "Don't worry about it. You are free and you can do whatever you want." And they gave us rations, and they gave us food, and people started to drink. You know, they had evaporated milk, cans of milk, and a lot of them died. A lot of my friends...

NL: You knew enough not to eat or drink too much.

SS: I drink, too, but I figured I wait, I am free, I'll eat a little at a time, because I didn't want to stuff myself. I thought I'm still in camp, I'm going to put away a little bit away for later. You know it's a psychological thing. And then we were liberated right near Feldafing, at Seeshaupt. And from there we were transferred, of course. I was in Feldafing about one week, and then I went to Munich.

NL: Did you get some medical treatment? Did you and your father get some medical treatment?

SS: Yes, we got some medical treatment. My father got some medical treatment. Somebody went to [unclear]. There was a, for lung-sick people in Bavaria. My father was sent there. He was there for a while and he developed polycythemia,³ which is a very rich thick blood. Every month or whatever reached a certain grade #60, they have to take it out a bottle full to thin it out, but the doctor kept him a long time and later, of course, in the years he suffered a lot. He developed a heart obstruction and enlarged liver and spleen, and before he died in June at the age of 88, in fact, yesterday he would have been 89 years old would he have lived.

NL: Amazing. He must have been very hardy.

SS: Yes, yes, he was. And you know, to me he was, he was never old. I always see him as young, as I knew him. And, of course, my mother, she was a very educated person. She taught at the University of Riga.

NL: Before she was married?

SS: Yes, mathematics. Oh, yes. And her brother was an actor in the Jewish theater. He painted, he got a prize for painting Herzl's, Dr. Herzl's picture. He was very much involved in Zionism. So that was the story.

NL: You stayed with Father in Feldafing.

SS: Only one week.

NL: And then Munich. You went to Munich together.

SS: And then we went to Munich together, and then I somehow or other, I got involved with the American Army, and I was with the American Army.

NL: You were by then about 15?

³An abnormal increase in the number of red blood cells.

SS: Well, 15 or 16, and I came here at the age of 16. I told them, I lied to them, too. I wanted to be with the Americans, you know.

NL: Did you work with them or just...?

SS: I worked with them. I was, we used to confiscate cars from the Germans, from the Nazis, and give it to the military personnel. So actually I was in the Military Government. We used to go to Dachau. We had the SS troops there, prisoners. We used to get them to fix cars, and they were stationed in Dachau. I used to wear a uniform, oh yeah, with a gun and everything.

NL: A little bit of vengeance.

SS: Vengeance, but I didn't take no vengeance. But I should have. They wouldn't give me the same courtesy the way I gave it to them.

NL: Wouldn't.

SS: Of course not. And they say, "Me? I was a good SS man." The only man that was good was a dead one. You could tell. They had marking over here, too. One guy escaped from us, you know, but he was a mechanic. But you know, everybody says, "We were in the front, we were not behind." We knew exactly what was going on. And everybody says to me, "Samuel, in your opinion, do you think that the German population, they claimed that they did not know about this." And I'll say, I'll tell them that, "There was no German family that didn't have anyone on the Russian front. They came for vacation or whatever during the two or three years. They seen a lot. There is no way that they would not tell their wives or their brothers or sons, to the parents..."

NL: And train conductors.

SS: Exactly.

NL: And camp commanders.

SS: But on the other hand, now, they tell me, "How do you feel about the Germans now?" I must say this, these Germans, and you have a lot of them here, and you have a lot of the non-Germans that are here in the United States that actually killed Jewish children. They were guards, but you know, go find them. The dead people cannot come from the ground to point the finger, but the ones that we do know, they should get their punishment.

NL: Absolutely.

SS: Without fail. And now it's later, and they already lived so many more years.

NL: It's the terrible criminal neglect, criminal neglect of our government.

SS: That's right.

NL: They protected them since the '50's.

SS: Oh, absolutely they did.

NL: And, now...

SS: Did you hear about Barbie? Did you hear all these things? These are open facts.

NL: Oh yes. There are hundreds in this country.

SS: Hundreds.

NL: You see, and this Mrs. Holtzman unfortunately is no longer in Congress.

SS: Yes, she is not.

NL: She pushed it.

SS: But she pushed it, yes. And, you know, so many of them came in as D.P.s, as Displaced Persons.

NL: They lied.

SS: Some are in Chicago right now.

NL: And in Philadelphia.

SS: That's right. And I asked my, the guy that is in Chicago now, and I asked him, I said, "Look, you were there, maybe my mother, maybe my sisters survived. Maybe they are somewhere in Russia." He says, "No, I saw them on the truck." Now what does he got business to see them on the truck?

NL: He's saying that he saw your relatives?

SS: He saw them. My mother and my sisters on the truck.

NL: On the truck.

SS: To go to that main execution place, that execution spot. So he says, "Well," he says, "everybody was watching there. They was taking those poor Jews, you know, so, and that's what happened."

NL: Well, Mr. Sherron, I can't express our thanks deeply enough. Would you want to say a few words now to the young generation?

SS: Well, I can say this: that we must, as long as we are still alive and actually witnesses, live witnesses, to these murderous acts, and to the genocide, we must remember and tell our generations and our children and our children's children for generations to come, that this such a massacre, on the Jewish people should never come again, and not only to the Jewish people, but this could happen to anybody. Therefore, we must tell Jewish children and non-Jewish population that they should be on guard constantly against dictatorship, against such lunatics like you have now, Khadafi, or a few years back, you know, you had Idi Amin or Khomeini, still the same type. And for this you must guard ourselves because what the Jewish people suffered, six million of them, I don't think that ever in the history of mankind was actually a systematic killing and genocide ever happened what happened between 1935 and 1945 within the Hitler era.

NL: No precedent. No parallel.

SS: No precedent, and so many innocent women, children, old men, learned men, rabbis, professors, so many people that gave so much to humanity--and they were the first ones to go.

NL: Yes. Thank you again very much.

SS: Thank you for having me.