

Arnold Zweig

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Question: The first thing that I want to do and I can set my audio levels while you're doing this is just get your first, middle and last name on tapes and the spelling of it.

Answer: It's just Arnold Z-W-E-I-G.

Question: Great... All right. Now you were born, where?

Answer: In Danzig.

Question: Which is Germany... was Germany.

Answer: Danzig was in 1928 when I was born, Danzig was a free city; it was then under the protectorate of the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. And that's what it was; and it had its own currency, it had its own post office; it was within the Polish Corridor what was known as the Polish Corridor. It was surrounded on all sides by Poland and that's where I lived until the war broke out in 1939.

Question: Now, is that when you moved to, got moved to...

Answer: Then shortly after the war broke out and even, even all along, while in the '30's, '36, I was going to the school there, there was already a lot of Nazi activity going on there. In the area where we lived, it was sort of at the edge of the... Danzig, itself, was a territory as well as Danzig. The territory had a capitol, which was the city of Danzig. There were other surrounding little areas like Oliva and Sopot and other things on the Baltic Sea but the capitol itself was Danzig. It maintained by agreement; it did have a Polish gymnasium, a high school and a Polish post office was there; and it had its own currency and it was ruled by a Senate. But there was a lot of activity going on in '36 and '37; Nazi, the brown shirts, were demonstrating and marching and then they had torch parades, etc., etc. Even while I was going to school I kept a low profile there. Pretty soon there were signs appearing in stores: no Jews allowed in the cafes and in other things and in parks, and kids would throw rocks when I was coming home, walking home from school and that kind of thing and. Somewhere along in '38 when what was in Germany was known as the Kristallnacht. Windows were broken; the synagogue was damaged, set on fire and this was happening all over Germany, but on September 1, '39, I was in Danzig. Well, as a matter of fact, there was a special relationship for the people in Danzig that you could take a commuter train, you could buy a monthly ticket to go to the nearby twenty-minute train ride to the nearby resort, summer resort. The Polish port, the Polish port next door to Danzig was Gdynia which the Germans renamed Gotenhafen. And there was also a small town called Orlovo which Orlovo in Polish means Eagle. (Inaudible) The Germans renamed it Adlerhorst, Eagle... whatever where Eagles roost, something like that. But it was within a short train ride, as I said you buy a months ticket and just go back and forth.

Question: I'll stop for a sec. (Cell phone interrupts) So you were telling about travel.

Answer: Well, the travel was very convenient and in the summertime, my family, my Father, my Mother and I would take the train and we'd go to Orlovo and we even, we'd rent a cottage. They were just... the beaches were so much nicer, it

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was more convenient for spending the summer there. So we'd go and rent a cottage, just a couple of rooms, whitewashed rooms and just do that. Well anyway, on September 1...

Question: (Cell phone interrupts) No... come on...

Answer: Anyway you can do what you wanna do. You can probably edit it some... erase it. But it was more convenient to go there. On September 1, 1939, the first thing in the morning there was some shooting, there was some pops, you could see pops of flak, anti-aircraft type shooting and things and I guess, I was only eleven years old at the time and it was...World War II broke out and the shooting started and people that were there vacationing from all over the place, they were leaving on the train; they were laying on the roof of the railroad cars, they were hanging on the outside of the running boards. These were the old-fashioned railroad cars, passenger cars with each compartment had an outside door and they had running boards so people were hanging on; everybody's trying to scramble back to get back where they were going. The border was closed and we got back to Danzig to where we lived by a cab driving through detours here and there we got back. Well, pretty soon the Polish... the Polish campaign didn't last but a week. Everything was occupied and pretty soon, a ghetto was established, laws were established in Poland for Jews where they had to live and couldn't do this, that and the other. There were proclamations posted on wherever...In Danzig itself, we were rounded up one day, put into a railroad car and sent to the ghetto, in Łódź, where we spent 'till August, '44.

Question: Now was the ghetto?

Answer: The ghetto was the old, was the old...I went to the ghetto in Łódź, which was a seat, you might say of the textile industry in Poland. Major cities were Warsaw which was the capitol, Łódź was a major textile industry city and what they had done, is they had just surrounded the old portion of Łódź, like if you take Ballard and you put a barbwire fence around Ballard, they surrounded the old portion of Łódź and created a ghetto and moved everybody in they moved those people that lived there ... they moved them out and they moved people in. Now the European, as well as Poland, a lot of, a major, four or five-story buildings, U-shaped, you might say it was a huge door, huge barn like type door that a truck could drive in and it had apartments, front, left rear, right rear and these were filled with people, six to a room, four to a room, crammed in and whoever lived was evacuated out of there and it became a place to live. Łódź itself had a large Polish-Jewish population that was.. wound up in there plus people were shipped in from Czechoslovakia, people were shipped in from other occupied countries and we wound up in there and to the best of my recollection which I've confirmed by digging out. I found a book with photography, a big huge book about the Łódź ghetto. There were 165,000 people in the ghetto.

Question: A big city ... I mean a mid-sized city.

Answer: Oh, the city was big and this is just the old, the old portion of the city that was put in with barbwire fence. There was, there were factories established, there was a square in the ghetto which was the interchange between the German and the ghetto authorities. There was ghetto authorities established; there was a ghetto police, there was ghetto money and there was an interchange between the German SS, Gestapo.. whatever German management and the ghetto management

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that where things, where anything took place. There were factories established; apartment houses were converted into factories; walls were broken through, sewing machines. You name it, the ghetto people could produce it. There were factories making shoes; there were factories sewing uniforms; there were factories... metal factories working.

Somewhere along the line, in 19 ... I don't exactly whether it was '41, '42, somewhere along the line, there was some kind of an action that all children up to a certain age were to be handed over to the Germans, and nobody handed over any children so they said, well at least the ghetto police couldn't accomplish this task so they said well you can't we will. There was a curfew that lasted for a week or so; they came in with lorries, surrounded a block of houses, came in, made everybody... fired a few shots, made everybody come down into the back yard. Remember these buildings are U-shaped, so they each had a courtyard in the back, everybody would line up; then they sent the German police with the ghetto police went up from top to bottom, went through each empty apartment looking for anything and then they took all the kids that were up to, say up to ten years old and just moved them out and while they were inspecting some people that they didn't like or whatever, they moved them right out onto the truck, the lorry, the waiting trucks and when one was full the next one rolled up and it was done systematically and that was some action that cleared out. There were a few kids left where people had drugged them; they had put them in between floors, between false floors, in false bottoms of boxes, of cabinets, whatever. There were very few, the majority were gone. And then supposedly there were letters of... somebody had heard from somebody that from somebody else that the kids are in some place and they're in good shape; somebody had received a postcard. The bottom line was the kids went to Auschwitz or to some other crematorium and they went to the same system as people that were continuously rounded up every now and then. There were people in the ghetto that received notices that they have to show up for work or they had to report to a certain station that supposedly go on transport. The transport was that they went to some Auschwitz, Dachau, Birkenau, Belsen..., Bergen-Belsen or someplace and they were eliminated.

Now the whole system was... the ghetto was supplied with food by ration cards. The ghetto was divided into precincts; each precinct had its own, so-called store where you would get your ration every two weeks with your coupons and you'd get one loaf of bread per person, like two kilogram, four pounds per person every eight days and you'd get a hundred gram... every fourteen days you'd get maybe a hundred gram of brown sugar, a hundred gram of oil, two liters of vinegar... two pounds or a kilo, kilo and a half of soda, washing kind of soda. The groceries was a starvation diet. You get maybe some potatoes and that happened in... the system the way it worked if the people that were supposed to go on transport didn't show up they would simply send a notice to their precinct supply store, cross their name off the list so they couldn't come with the ration card and get anymore rations. So what happened, a lot of the people that had large families, they wound up that seven people were feeding eight people. They just shared and whoever they were after many people didn't sleep in the same place the same night because they were lookin for them and they were walking around with their face bandaged like if they had a big toothache so they wouldn't be recognized. The one way or the other people were rounded up continuously during this process was always going. But that's the way it was.

I wound up workin in a metal factory, zinc-plating, nickel-plating, etc. They were making, we were making little steel; we were making grommets, grommets that go, like it's a big rivet; it looks like a tiny little hat without a bottom. Then it has a plain ring that becomes the rivet portion of these grommets that go into tarps, like big military tarps for trucks, and all of that... this all had to be, we zinc plated millions of

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them. Okay, that's what I was doing. My Mother was workin in one of these apartment houses, broken through walls, turned into a factory, standing on the second or third floor there, in a big room with straw... braiding straw into a braid about that wide.. and so many endless yards that were put into coils while these straw strings were sent to some other place where they were sewn together with carpet needles and into boots that were to go over the military boots for the soldiers on the Russian front to keep their feet from freezing. And other people were workin in the same kind of converted... working making uniforms that were convertible uniforms, they were white on the one side and if you turn 'em they were green, the typical German Army uniform, again the white was for the snow countries, for the Russian front.. and shoe. Everything was made that, fine; that's the way that ghetto life was. It was a starvation diet, and there was no communication with the outside world.

We had no communication; we didn't know anything about anything. So this went on until sometime in 1944, towards the middle of '44, like in July, there was another mass type of, well there was another communication that was sent and people, Germans came into the factories and said well, the Russian front is comin closer. That's when we heard that the Russians were involved, that there was a Russian front and since you have been working with us contributing to the war effort, if the Russians come in, you'll be severely punished; therefore we have decided to relocate you, your family and the factory intact to a safer place and come to a relocation center. Well, that was good for a few days; a few people went to the relocation center and that didn't end. People didn't... that didn't work very well. Then they came out with an incentive; you're going to get 10 pounds of sugar and you're going to get this. The end result was that another curfew was established and people were systematically rounded up, block by block by block, into the lorry, out to the train station, on a railroad car and away to someplace. And yes, they were relocating the factories. Yes, they were taking the machinery; they were dismantling the machinery; the people went one place, the machinery went some other place. That's the way it was.

That's the way I found myself with my Mother and my Father in August, end of August of 1944, being rounded up again... and yes, take your valuables; you can take 25 kilo with you and have that ready, and so on, so on. We found ourselves in a railroad car with some eighty-ninety people... car was sealed, left and the next morning we were in Auschwitz. We recognized it as Auschwitz where we were. The boxcars were opened and all hell broke loose. We're jumpin off from the heights of the boxcar onto the siding; it was just the... it was out in the middle of nowhere... in the distance you could see barbed wire fences as far as your eye could see, and you could see people in white and blue striped rags standing there in the distance away from the fence looking. And other, other people in striped suits like that started running through, trying to organize; there was bedlam. People... women and some children that were born later and some that did not, that were older at the time when the action was in '41. In the meanwhile men and women were separated into two cues and SS runnin around with dogs and with riding crops.. and nobody would tell you what's happening, what's goin on. Everything was quick, quick, quick. And women were disappearing into the line; that's the last time I saw my Mother... she disappeared with all the other women until the turn came for ourselves. And I stood in front of some huge SS guy that was just waving his crop, this way, that way, this way, that... Yeah, just you don't... I don't know what, what criteria he had to move people but I was moved in one direction and it was the last car; the railroad car was there. There was the railroad track; I started walkin in that direction towards the woods; there were brick buildings with brick chimneys you could see in the distance. I was walking in that direction; my Father was behind me; he was going in that

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direction and there was another SS guy that was standing there and when I was walkin and I approached the railroad track, all of a sudden he grabbed me by the back of the neck, by my collar and he yanked me back and asked me how old I was. Well, one of the prisoners as it opened the cars that we had a chance to ask what's goin on, what's going on, all he told me is if they ask you how old you are, tell 'em you're eighteen and don't tell 'em you're Father and son, all right, just tell 'em you're eighteen. Yep, that's all he said. Well, when this fellow stopped me, I came to attention, looked him straight in the eye and told him eighteen; and he took me and just shoved me over there with all these other people and I just ducked and ran and tried to hide amongst the people going in that direction. And that's the way I wound up going to the processing into the camp. People that went that way went to the, straight to the crematorium ... they were gone that day.

Question: Where did your Dad go?

Answer: He went that way. In the meanwhile, but he was hesitantly walkin, lookin back what is happening to me and I just joined him and ducked in with all the other people that were goin that way and just kept my, really low ... I was sixteen at the time and I was, most of my height that I have I have reached after the war. I grew a full head after the war so I was scrawny and small in the first place. And I just, what reason how and why I don't know, I just managed to go through. We went, we wound up on a... all day, on a parking lot sittin sort of on the ground in front of a t-shaped brick building that was the de-lousing, the processing station and I guess we waited for the women to be processed. And after they were done, we went in there. We came to the first room where we were stripped naked. The only thing they told us to keep was the shoes and belts, or glasses if you wore them and then we went to the next room which was a long hallway where they had barbers shaving your hair, all your body hair was shaved and you were moved on and moved on... and all of this took hours, hours. By the time we went through that building, got shaved and all that, we took a cold shower and came out the other end wet, got a towel and then we came back and you walked past a stack of pants, jackets and some sort of home sewn together rag that was supposed to serve as underwear and two pieces of bootie shaped material sewn together in the middle to form a bootie to be as a sock to wear over your shoes and by the middle of the night ... who knows whether the moon was up ... we were out back on the other side of that building on another parking lot standing in rows of five until we literally dropped to the floor and just set there till in the morning we were marched into one of the camps. Auschwitz, there was barbed wire... as I told you, as far as you could see, barbed wire. There was one camp that was " C " Camp, "D" Camp, "E" Camp. They was just one next to the other. They were separated by concrete, curved pillars with about 20 to 23 strands of barbed wire on each concrete pillar was a floodlight. And in order to not get to the light there was another separate, lower barbed wire fence, two-three feet on this side as well as on the other side. Supposedly these fences were electrified which I wasn't about to find out. At the corner of each of these rows of fences was a big tower and I'm sure you've seen movies of this ... sort of a square lookout with a guard and a gun that you could look down this way and that way and there was one on each corner. Inside this enclosure of one camp there were about 36 barracks, even numbered this way and uneven on the other side. Each barrack before the war was a stable for the Polish Calvary for horses; it was actually housing horses. There were, the first night that we got into one of these blocks as they call them, there were about 1200, as good as I remember.. there were about 1200 of us in one of those blocks that normally held not more than supposedly forty horses.

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Question: Wow...

Answer: And we were in there and then the local, the Kapos, the block leaders, took care of what the SS didn't do to you, the block leaders did. The block leaders were mostly Polish origin and they were Polish criminals. They were real criminals ... homosexuals, which was outlawed. They were in the camps too, but they were block leaders so the whole system was set up that anybody that hated anybody else... put them together so they'll do the dirty work as well. Some of the Polish Kapos were worse than the SS. Same was true for some of the Ukrainian SS; they were worse than the German SS. That's the way that was. Now, we spent there, we were counted at the crack of dawn. The first night we were in there I tell you what they did. They took shaggy, rug type blankets, spread them on the concrete and people stood in rows of five until they dropped. And there were 1200 people if you can visualize a bucket with fish how the fish laying in the bucket that's the way we laid on the floor in the barrack. And the barrack was sealed; there was no place where... if you had to go to the bathroom, it was difficult. As you went... entered the barrack at night you got a chunk of bread and a piece, maybe a spoonful of substitute, artificial honey and that was, that was your thing. And you slept at night on your shoes, hugging your bread because you wasn't sure that you were gonna have it in the morning. When people wanna survive it doesn't matter whether it's family or not family ...the instinct to survive is greater than any family ties. And at the crack of dawn you'd go out, you'd get counted, you didn't have a name, you didn't have a number. It was just so many people lined up for counting and when you were all at attention and counted.. the SS came with his clipboard and the block leader reported to him so many prisoners for counting and he checked them off and he moved off to the next, and so on. If the count was not right for one reason... there were too many people, you didn't have any place that was home; you didn't own anything so if you stopped in another barrack and you said well I'm gonna be in that barrack I mean you didn't have anything that you forgot to pack and take with you. So when it came to counting and one block leader said hey, I've got ten people too many and the other said I'm five short, well he took the first ten, rounded them up, or the five and said you five over there. So they got moved over there. Some poor old man went.. was in the barrack where they had a row... the barrack was nothing but a thirty holer to relieve yourself and one long sink was a trough of water running, for washing, and somebody passed out and didn't make it back to the barrack... well, they were short a number so they finally found some guy passed out in the toilet barrack or somewhere. If he wasn't dead then, he was dead by the time they found him and beat him... because it held up the counting and the numbers didn't jive. But that's the way that went.

At noon, they took a bunch of people and they sent them up front to the front portion of the camp where the kitchen was with a barrel... just a regular barrel that had two handles and they filled the barrel up from the kitchen with soup and they took five prisoners holding hands, making a human chain holding onto one handle and the other five, making another human chain holding the other handle and then the ten people carried this one barrel down to where they were going to their particular barrack where the barrack had a basket, wicker basket with enameled pots and pans and bowls and something like that... and the block leader, we'd form a line and the block leader would take one of the bowls and he ladled out some soup into this bowl ... 1, 2, 3, you five, you two, you three: here's your bowl. So now you had three people or four people hanging on to one bowl, no spoon, no nothing.. and everybody was watching everybody else so they don't take a bigger sip. And as I said, that's, that's when it didn't matter whether it was family or not family. Everybody was just anxious to get their sip of soup.

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Nothing in there was meant to be humane. It was all devised to degrade you to the lowest. And if there was quarreling, the same thing was in the morning, when they brought this so called black, hot liquid that was coffee, people being people, there was fighting and shoving and pushing ... didn't like it, he took the whole barrel and dumped the coffee and nobody got anything. That's the way that went. Every day they had, they had in that portion.. they had and we were in so called quarantine. The only work we did we went out with guards to the woods and picked up pieces of rock and carried them back and dropped them on a pile. This was what the exercise that we did; we didn't do any other work.

But daily so called German. They were lookin for people to go to work in Germany and they were lookin at people like you're lookin if you want to buy a horse. They came in; they had some SS; there were some civilians; they had a group of people all of sudden standin around. They looked and take this one and that one. I take this one and that one, and off they went. This went on... I was there for... and in the interim I guess the Russian front was getting closer. There were air raids during the day; there were airplanes flying over. We could hear detonations of bombs being dropped wherever and things were becoming more and more hectic. As I said, no communication still, we didn't know what's going on. This is the end of '44. Well, they, one day. In the interim they've also again taken people out of these barracks to ship them out to someplace. There were not 1200 anymore in the barrack I was in; there were fewer now. One day they sealed everything off.. SS came in, made us all line up within the barrack and they took for the first time they made a list with names and they marched us out of the barrack in the afternoon to the delousing barrack where we took a shower. They took away the civilian clothes and they gave us striped clothes and a striped hat.. and they marched us right out to the front and kept us over night, isolated from everybody else and the next day they put us in a freight, in a box car and off we went. The boxcar took... we were in Auschwitz, the boxcar went to a small camp near Munich in Bavaria. It took us six days to get there. We spent more time standing on the siding someplace because there were, I guess there were military trains retreating, bringing military personnel back from Russia, comin back from those trains had priorities opposed to the trains like us. Somewhere along the line we parked on a siding in Prague.. outside the city of Prague on the siding and they went and organized.. they brought some baskets with bread and divided up because we hadn't had any food since we left. That piece of bread we got so they gave us some food. Eventually we wound up in a place called Kaufering, which is near Landsberg. We were marched three, four miles to a brand new camp and from that camp people were then moved out every day to work for the farmers, surrounding farmers, which was good; people got something to eat. They also were building an underground ammunition factory; way underground.. where people went and carried sacks of cement all day long to build whatever thing was built way underground. And a lot of the people were marched to a nearby airbase which was called Lager-Lechfeld, close to Lechfeld.. which was an airbase and they marched them back. And the same routine, count in the morning, count in the evening. And after awhile we were moved to another camp, a few kilometers down the road which again, but here now there were air raids; we were not too far from Augsburg where there was a Messerschmitt factory. There were airplanes flying over in formation like if you look at old war movies you see airplanes flying in formation, a whole bunch and then there's a space, then comes another formation, a space and then another formation. They were so high then, it looked like miniature little airplanes and I guess there were aluminum strips were falling. I guess today I know was chaff Sp.?? to divert whatever things, and they dropped leaflets; and you could hear the thuds of the bombs and you could see across the field you could see the smoke rising from the city of Augsburg, and wherever the bombing it was only

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25 miles as the crow flies from where the camp was. So things were happening. As I said this was late August. Then this camp was dissolved; we were moved to another camp and eventually in that camp, it got to the point that in the last... Things were happening so fast... there were airplanes coming, flying low at night, low flying aircraft. They were shooting at columns of tanks and military movements on the highway. Those were people that just, P-52's or whatever I think they were called. They were just chun.. come, shoot, but they... And one night we woke up and there were flares at four corners of the barbed wire fence of the camp like earmarking this as a don't touch this; this is saved ground ... don't shoot there, earmarking us. And things were happening; an order came from Dachau, The good thing about these smaller camps was that they had no crematorium. All you had to put up with is the SS and in this particular camp there was one SS guy that no matter what you did, no matter how, he was walking around with a piece of cable, like aluminum-twisted cable with insulation on it. Whenever I went by I got it; I didn't take the cap off fast enough; I didn't salute him right, whatever. He didn't need a reason and then every once in a while he'd start a conversation. It was sort of a conversation of one, and he was bragging about his wife that was if you'd seen my wife, all the gold teeth, I got them out, I got the gold out of the crematorium, out of the ashes myself. And, and he'd make statements, well, well, if... if the two of us... only one of us is gonna leave here, and he kept pointin to his revolver and takin the revolver out like... There was no discussion; there was no talkin back, whatever, yes, yes, yessir. That was it.

But then came an order from Dachau for some reason that all prisoners, able-bodied, were to be moved on a transport on trucks to be hauled to some place else; and this action started but it was interrupted. A great deal of prisoners were moved out and then all of a sudden an emissary from the Swiss Red Cross came in a limousine and, and the next thing we heard... that the Americans are 40 kilometers away. They'll be there in the morning. And, and by God the next morning there wasn't a single SS; there wasn't anybody there. The gates were open; everything, everybody was gone. And that's the first we heard that Americans were even ... we, we, we didn't hear about D Day. We didn't hear about Pearl Harbor; we didn't... we, we knew nothing. So then we, we, the gate, there was nobody at the gate so we walked out of the camp. We walked across the field; we walked to the highway; there were trucks after trucks after trucks with soldiers with helmets with netting on the helmets with leaves stuck in it. They were going and just waved at them and we couldn't talk to them and I jumped up on one truck and shook hands and tried to talk and then I realized I can't go; I've got to go back. I mean, my Father who was still with me was wondering probably where I am. So then, that went on all day and that was the 27th of April 1945, when I was liberated by the Americans.

Question: Did, did, when you, I mean history hindsight's always 20-20. Now when you say Auschwitz... a majority of people know what it is. When you got there, did you have the faintest idea what this was?

Answer: I hadn't the faintest idea of what this is; I had no idea. When we were talking, when we were talking in the ghetto we were kids; I remember I was 14 years old, 14-15, 13-14-15, working in this plating thing. Railroad cars would come into the factory and they opened a boxcar and with pitchforks they'd scrape out... a boxcar full of silverware ... knives, forks, spoons... Yes, but visualize a mountain full of tarnished silverware that you pull out with the rakes. Well, that came and it was sorted; it was sorted... it came to us. It was sorted by pattern; then it was... all silverware eventually has some kind of pattern that was made by some company; that this and that matched eventually. And we then re-worked it, silver plated it, re-

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did it from scratch to make it look like new after it was sorted, etc., etc. People in the ghetto that worked there as I said, we had all function, from shoemaking, from this making, from jewelers, from engravers. People working in metal factories did little government work; they fabricated, they made little, a little compact; we nickel plated the compact inside to become a mirror. And on the compact people wrote Łódź Ghetto 1943; engraved it and we silver-plated it for them. And so people had this. Well, among this silverware we also found paraphernalia like that and you're saying, where did this come from? Well, here we were kids and we rumored that supposedly they take people to basements; they gas them... and this belongs from these people that have continuously been disappearing out of the ghetto going on transport. And.. in my own mind, it's impossible; my mind didn't want to comprehend that this is possible. Germans, doing this, the country of Goethe and Heine and Mozart and Schiller, and known for... That's imposs... nah, those are fairy tales, trying to scare you ... bogeyman kind of stories. Even when I got to Auschwitz... but when I was in Auschwitz the first night that we were processed, I looked out and I could see out of the rectangular chimney that I'd seen out of the building I could see the flames coming out and when I asked one of the Kapos.. the other prisoners, what that is and he says "Look out, if you don't look out, you might wind up on the frying pan." There were four crematoria in Auschwitz.. and they were burning day and night, and you could smell the black smoke; you could see it in the daytime and you could smell the smell of it. And no, you wouldn't think that's possible, but that's the way it was. In hindsight, the way the whole thing was set up the way everything is, is that you were always led to believe that wherever you going, is going to be.. Germans are in the end they're going to be somehow humane. They're not going to harm; they just want you to work for them. So while they're not... fine. The thing was kept so secret that if there would have been any feedback of whatsoever, there would have been the greatest revolt and whatever. Well, there was the revolt in Warsaw and everybody died, but they took so many of the German Nazis with them... and that was the end result. I suppose today I'm saying, Never again. I will never go and that was the big question that the Israelis that were born in Israel ... the so-called Sabras ... they asked these questions at the Eichmann trials and at the other trials after the war. How could you let yourself be led to slaughter like sheep without... Well, the European Jewry was different from the native-born Israelis' that grew up differently and thought differently. The European Jews were thinking, well, as I said... Yeah, well, if we behave, if we cooperate, things will be all right. So maybe it's not the best but... and that was the whole key that they knew and that's the way people were led and went, one after the other without knowing what's happening. I'm saying, never again is this going to happen to me. If I'm gonna go, and if this ever came to pass, if I'm gonna go someplace, I'm gonna take somebody with me, believe me.

Question: So what was the attitude then? Because, again, it sounds almost similar to ... I mean, I don't mean to compare the two. Prior to 911 everybody thought oh a hijacker's just gonna take a plane and hijack it so don't attack the hijacker because it was, it was unconceivable.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Same thing here in a different way.

Answer: Absolutely.

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Question: What was the attitude though? I mean was there anger or was it just that we're just going to survive one step at a time or?

Answer: Well, ever... no, no. The main thing was that in the ghetto, and wherever you were in Auschwitz, the daily, the daily huddles, the daily discussion that people had was what they remembered what the wives used to cook the meal and what they... you were continuously starving, you were continuously starving. Oh ah, my wife used to make this cake, it used to be ah... Oh yeah, my wife used to do this... Oh, we used to have it... everything was talked about food. And, and, and, and everybody was glad they didn't see any of the SS. And once you got away from, from, from Auschwitz, and you got to the smaller camps, it was... it was... when you went out to the farmers, the farmers.. the Germans basically, they were okay themselves. They were in just as bad a shape as anybody else, but the farmers were better off than the city, than the city folk which had, had nothing. At least the farmers gave you some potatoes, some rutabagas or something that they let you sneak and eat. And depending on who the guards were, there were good guards and bad guards. Some guards took it upon themselves to beat you up or like this particular guy that no matter what you did, you got beat up and kicked. And others were, a lot of them, were there too that wanted to get it over with; they wanted to get home to their families see. I guess not everybody was gun ho.

Question: What was your... now your Father had a textile business prior to this?

Answer: He had a textile factory in Germany, yes, and that was confiscated. That was just like when we were rounded up we just went and left the house, the furniture, whatever. We just wound up in the ghetto and wound up in an apartment with six ... some other people.

Question: What did it do to your Dad?

Answer: Nothing, we ... he worked too.. and he wound up working in the ghetto just like I did. I worked in the metal factory. He became, like a house, sanitary house administrator, inspector... made sure that the sanitary... Poland didn't have centralized canalization, or centralized sewage system. It was septic tanks ... concrete tanks that were pumped out in honey buckets. That was before the war the same way. There was very little centralized sewage system in the city of Łódź. So, the sewer, septic tank or the big concrete stuff was pumped out, the liquid was pumped out into the gutter. The Polish main streets were cobblestones that were shaped.. Curved with absolute, very deep gutters on either side and each house owner had a (Inaudible), a housekeeper that had to whitewash every weekend with chlori.. calcium, chloride calcium chloride, disinfect, whitewash this because at night they pumped out the sewers and it run down the gutters into some centralized, together with all the... you could see white and green and red liquids runnin in the sewers from the factories that who knows what color. But all, all whatever off wash.. was from industrial went down to some, down where the sewers went. So my Father wound up in the ghetto supervising and to make sure that all this is still.. to prevent outbreak of disease and you had human, human sewage details that pumped out. I tell you the way they pumped it out. They come with a big tank on a four-wheeled rubber tired truck pulled by ten human beings with belts ... they hook the hose into the tank where the sewage was ... they take a spray can, they had a spray can, they metered out like so much gasoline. They opened the lid and they sprayed the gasoline with the spray can into the open lid into the tank. They sprayed it in; then he took a piece of newspaper, lit with a match and threw it in and that thing went

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Bu-Bu-Bu-Bu. The gasoline thing that was in there burned but immediately it created a vacuum in the tank, and it sucked the lid tight. As long as it was burning the lid was flopping open, but when it was done burning the lid sucked tight. Then he opened the sludge valve and it sucked in the sewage out of the tank; and then he looked on the sight glass and he did the same; they repeated the same technique. They squirted some gasoline, atomized it in there, threw the paper in ... Bu-Bu-Bu-Bu ... and then they hauled it to some pit way out, the outskirts of some place in the ghetto where they backed in and emptied it. It was just a huge pit full of sewage ... open pit.

Question: So the health standards were not; you must have had a lot of sickness on top of...

Answer: They did have sickness. A lot of people died. People died from malnutrition. Somewhere in the '40's there was a severe winter. People were lying out on the field, frozen.. frozen, waiting to be buried, and they had people there with fires making fires over where the grave was gonna be.. to burn logs to create that the ground would thaw out so that, and people would notify on that day you come for the burial.

Question: Do you remember when you learned that the concentration camps were concentration camps? Was that after you got out or was that while you were...

Answer: I knew that there was a concentration camp and I was in it. I guess that's...

Question: And you knew they were gassing people?

Answer: Well, that's what they told me when I got to Auschwitz.

Question: What, you know...

Answer: You see, in Auschwitz, there were these people that opened... in Auschwitz, there were the people that opened the boxcars. They lived in the same camp ... they lived in a special barrack. They were well nourished. They opened the boxcars; they could take what was left in the boxcars. They could take from whatever they wanted so they had everything they wanted. They were well nourished; they were in good shape. The problem was that they also, not only opened the boxcars ... they worked at the crematorium; and also, periodically, they went through the system as well. But some of these, some of these talked. We approached them. They were like Gods. I mean, they were, compared to us, we were Musilmans Sp.?? We had nothing; we were skinny. These people were well nourished, fine, good shape. Yeah, but it didn't last for them forever either. But some said... said what's happening and you could see the, you could see the flames. What the procedure was thereafter, a lot of this I found out from people that did survive eventually they overthrew, there was some overthrowing of the crematoria, of the Auschwitz things towards the end. There was...things were getting hectic. The Russians were coming. The Americans were coming, things were collapsing. Well, then the people had a revolt and survived and they started traveling and pretty soon you found out what was happening.

Question: Did ... were you tattooed?

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Answer: No. And at that time, at the night that we got out of there we came in and left in such a hurry that we did not, did not get tattooed either. Just rounded us up, all of us, out, up to the delousing, take the shower, get the different clothes, get out on the lot there.. they didn't bother to tattoo. We just moved right on out. Things went, as I said, that was towards the end of '44 and things were movin rapidly. Unknown of course to me, of what was happening. I was just movin with the flow, not knowing why and how come. But I certainly was glad I didn't get tattooed because I'm a chicken for sticking with needles anyway.

Question: How... It's interesting cause you brought up a couple of things ... the way they dehumanized you ... never using names. How long do you think you went that you didn't hear your name?

Answer: I was...Oh, never. I only had a number, even after they made that list in (Inaudible) I wound up as being a number and even then nobody cared... even then nobody cared. So long as you stood up in the morning and in the evening, got counted... everybody was accounted for they could care less whether you were Joe or Jim or anybody else.

Question: Do you think...

Answer: The first names that were made was when the Americans came in, eventually, the military, the occupation forces, the very first to move in that liberated us, that sat down.. and made down.. and made us an international ID card with my concentration camp No., with my name and my birth date, and the... which Army division it was that liberated us. That was the first document that I had, and there were no other documents until then.

Question: Do you think the hatred, which I assume the SS and some of the violent people you talked about, must have looked at you with a hatred. Do you think that that is a learned response or what creates that do you think?

Answer: I, I, I have no idea but I... A lot of the things that I know now, things that I know now I worked my way through William Shires who was a correspondent at the Nuremberg trials over there. William Shire wrote the book, several thousand.. it's 1500 pages, a paperback book: "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich". It's mostly documentary, but he's gone through and, in the training that the SS had gone through like supposedly the SS was for example, when they were trained, they were trained with a German Shepherd to become like one, bonded together. But in the ultimate test of the guy he had to kill the dog with his own hands to just prove that everything for the Führer but this is what I read there. I don't know ... I think the people that wound up being in the SS, those people that wound up there, the great majority of them, I believe.. this is my opinion, would have been criminal in the first place. And I guess, people tend to do bad much easier than to do good. There were a few that were entirely different; there were a few that changed their minds perhaps too in the later days, seeing they could see the handwriting on the wall in the last few months that tried to do good. That has happened too. But, and in the camp, in a lot of the camps that were liberated, a lot of the camps of what I see from newsreels and what I heard from other fellow prisoners that started traveling from camp to camp to camp to try and to look for survivors, for relatives, etc. In a lot of places they just poured out of the camp and went to town and just spilled out their anguish and let it out on the town. In other places, things were much more, not everybody was vindictive. I was in a small camp and things were

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organized. My Father was drafted because he did speak Polish; he did speak Russian. My Father grew up in Łódź before the war and when he was a child under Russian occupation he did speak and write Russian fluently. He spoke German of course and Polish.. and he somehow was drafted as the spokespeople for the handful of people in the camp where I was liberated and he went with the military authorities to the local Bürgermeister, the town mayor, and they tried to make this transition as smooth as possible. The village was 5,000 people; it's a village... All of the villages.. everybody came and all of a sudden. The surprising thing that everybody that we met had some Jewish relative at some time or another. My grandmother, my Father oh we didn't know, we didn't know.. nobody knew and they've continuously apologized. And I said, I finally said, Hey you don't have to explain to me, you don't have to apologize. You don't owe me anything. You don't have to say yes or no or you didn't know or you knew. I don't give a dam. At least that was my attitude. But on the day that the Americans rolled into that particular town, three kilometers from where the camp was, everybody wanted to have some prisoner from the camp move in. We have an extra room; you can live here. So everybody was absorbed into the village and as I said thereafter, wherever we traveled, oh yeah, my uncle was almost arrested by.. was almost put in a concentration camp. My grandmother on my Father's side was Jewish. I could care less who you were. I personally, my own feeling is, I don't think I could do anything to anybody except maybe to the guard that personally kicked me and beat me and I've toyed with the idea (Inaudible)... I've had the question in my mind since I traveled since '64, I've traveled to Germany on business two-three times a year, traveled by train, traveled by car. I was saying to myself: What would I do if I saw one of these guards in the train or someplace? I guess maybe my first thought would be maybe I'd go and slug 'em one and then the second thought would be No, I probably wouldn't. I probably would go and tell 'em remember me? And that's probably what I would do. I'm not the kind of person that would do bodily harm to anybody.

Question: Let me interrupt ... I've gotta switch tapes.