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Sigmund Mandelbaum Interview

October 16, 1999

Sigmund, what was your name at birth?

Solomon, Solomon Mandelbaum.

Do you want to spell that?

Jewish name.

Do you think that you can spell that?

You want, yeah, you want the, put it down in American?

Yes, yes.

It would be Sigmund.

Okay, so, Sigmund?

Sigmund Mandelbaum. S-I-G-M-U-N-D. Mandelbaum is M-A-N-D-E-L-B-A-U-M.

Oh, there's no "E" in it? It's not M-A-N-D-L-E?

D-E

Yeah, okay.

D-E-L-B-A-U-M.

Oh, D-E-L-B-A-U-M, oh alright, okay. And, when were you born?

November the 15th, 1910.

Okay. And in what city?

Dzialoszyce.

How do you spell that?

D-Z... give me, let me put it down for you.

Let's see, put it down here, D-Z-I-A-L-O-S-Z-Y-C-E, and that was in Poland? Okay. Do you have any idea what the population was of your city?

Around 3,000 population.

3000? What percentage was Jewish?

About 75%.

Oh my, 75%, wow.

Did I tell you about the school? Do you want me to start with the school?

Yeah, we'll get there in a minute. Were you born at home? Were you born inside the house?

In Dzialoszyce, I was born in Dzialoszyce.

Were you born in a hospital or in your house?

There were no hospitals.

Okay, so you were born in your...

A midwife.

By a midwife, okay. You haven't, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Yes, two older brothers and two sisters.

And, what were their...

Jack's father was my brother. [referring to his nephew Jack Mandelbaum].

Jack's father was your brother? Okay. What were their names?

One's name... the oldest brother was named Jonas, Jonas, and Jack's father was Max, Milo, Max.

And your two sisters?

And the sisters, one was Miriam and one is Minda.

What were your parents' names?

My mother's name was Esther and my father's name was Chaim.

Do you have any idea how they met? No idea, okay.

I don't know, in those days it was sometimes is by a *shadchan*, the matchmaker, that's most of time.

Yeah. What was your father's occupation?

My father was, first of all, we are business people, we were business people. We were always in business. We had a ready to wear and the, most our customers were farmers, farmers. So my father was, he used to travel to Lodz to bring goods for our store and we also had sewing machines in our store, in the back room where we did our own sewing, for ladies' and men's shirts and underwear. And when I was, oh, you're asking for my, about my father. Besides this, he was authorized by government to get money from merchants for the little town to get occupation licenses and a lot of them things and he took it to a, like to Jefferson City [reference to a local capital or regional hub – in this case the state capital of Missouri] and, and all this, then he brought it back and he got paid for it, because it didn't pay for an individual to go to Jefferson City to get his occupation license. My father was authorized to take all them applications and also with my oldest brother, worked together and we had at home like a little office. And when I was little, we all used to help out. My mother and my sister would, it came like right after the first of the year, we had to count monies and help with applications, so he can take it to our next... to the like, like Jefferson City, and to issue from over there and then bring it back to the merchants and he got paid for it. And besides this, he had another occupation, he was a natural talent at sign painter. He didn't go to school with a sign painter. In action I used to help him undercoating and do a lot of things, and because my mother was the main one in this, in our business. She was the main one, the businesswoman. My father, of course, he helped, he was, he went to Lodz buying goods for, for the store and he also did the government items and he also painted signs. Besides this, he helped in the store. So, he had several occupations. Because we, we were always good income people.

So you were like middle, middle income or were you...?

I would, I would say a good income people. We had enough. We always had enough of everything.

And did you live in a house or was it an apartment?

Yes, our own home.

A house?

Yeah.

And give me an idea of what the house looked like? Was it...?

You know when I went to Poland, you know I went to Poland?

Yes I heard about that, yeah.

The house is still standing.

Oh my gosh.

Nobody lives in it, but it's still standing locked up because in our little town, like I said, we had about 75% Jewish people and after the evacuation by the Germans, the most farmers didn't have to leave their farms. They stayed on the farm and the few non-Jewish people in the little town, there were not enough to occupy the vacant homes. So, whatever there was left, and was not disturbed by maybe rain or whatever it is just stayed there. After I came back, I was sorry I didn't go in the house because it was locked up, so Jack said, "What's no use, might be more heartbreaking." Because, I'll tell you after, after we go to... after the Poland.

Yeah, we'll talk about it. Did you have grandparents?

I remember, I remember my grandmother because she lived in our home. She had the business my mother took over from her. So she stayed until she passed on in our home. No, there wasn't like your old age home so whatever it is. Children stayed with parents until they, they deceased. And I remember my father's father, my grandfather, I remember him. They had... they had a little drug store and then like pharmacy, like a little pharmacy and they even grew their own plants to make prescriptions, my grandparents, the old time way. Because you take here and you go into a pharmacy, he don't make a prescription, he has everything ready made. You see, over there, the doctor prescribed the ingredients you'd - you went to the pharmacy and the pharmacy made it. So my father was also a president of two welfare organizations and the... we supplied them some with milk or whatever there is, whatever they could, and he was authorized by the doctors that he could - like for instance, he went to a poor family and they needed a prescription maybe would cost ten, fifteen dollars, but the doctor gave him the ingredients and he was authorized to go to pharmacy, get the ingredients, maybe for a dollar and a half, and he made it for the poor people. He was very knowledgeable in biology. We had a lot, a lot of doctors books. Yeah, we were... It's hard to say what kind of family we were. It's, it's even friend and families.

Sounds very. very unusual. Exceptional. Were your parents religious Jews? Were you brought up in a religious home?

In a what?

Religious? Were you Orthodox, were you considered Orthodox Jews?

Orthodox, yes. Sure. See my father was for over forty years a *hazan*. You know what a *hazan* is?

Sure, a cantor.

In the *shul*, without pay, we didn't want to get paid. An [unclear]. An [unclear] *hazan*. He, he performed when I was about seven years old. I helped my father in, in songs when he was performed services. And everybody knew and they used to call, you know there was a gallery in the *shul* on top where women were separated from men at the services, and everybody knew Chaim has his *yungelayt* with him. His *yungelayt* sings with Chaim. I was the *yungelayt*.

Right, the young... the young son.

Yes. We were an unusual family.

Gosh, so diverse.

You didn't find it no such thing.

My goodness. So you, you have fond memories of the Jewish holidays – Passover, and...?

Of course.

Was your mother a good cook? Was your mom a good cook?

Ma, she didn't have to cook much because we have two sisters and the older one and the young one both were cooking what we had. Our house contained of a lower, a lower apartment, a lower level which, there was a bakery in our home. We leased the bakery to other people, to a baker because we didn't, this was not our occupation. There was downstairs a bakery and, and this was leased. Then on the first floor, there was our business. And from the store there was a back room that was our kitchen. And all week we ate downstairs. We ate in, in the back of the kitchen. For the weekend, we were on upper level with living quarters. It was a nice house.

Yeah, it sounds like it.

Living quarters there.

Hmm, very nice. And what language - you spoke Polish in the home. Did you also speak Yiddish?

Yiddish, strictly Yiddish.

Strictly Yiddish?

Yes.

You didn't speak Polish?

Only when we needed it, but in home, it was strictly Yiddish.

So was *Shabbat* a very special time every week?

***Shabbos* was never, the store was never open, *Shabbos*. Strictly Yiddish. When, when it came Friday night, and we upstairs there was a balcony open across the street from our store, there was a promenade. You know what a promenade is?**

Yes.

People after dinner took a walk with friends and everything and came summertime, we opened the doors from the balcony, we sing *zmirot*. You know what *zmir* is?

No.

After the, after, after we eat then Jewish songs.

Oh, the grace after meals.

Yes. And, and people were stopping to hear because we sing like, like a family. I was there, my two sisters, my mother, my oldest brother, we all sang together. It was like a choir. You never, you never saw them kind of families, there no such thing now.

Yeah, that's so true. So...

So how we live now after losing all this is just miraculous. They say an old saying that a human being is, is harder than hard casted steel. You can believe it. But if I can live now and had raised a beautiful family, have a beautiful home, and everything is just miraculous, is just like Jack the same way. Can you imagine he is one left from his family. I am the only one left from my family. We lost all the family.

I know, it's unbelievable. Okay, let's talk about you as a young child, growing up and starting school.

When I was seven years old, they didn't let me in in the first grade. Why? Because I knew too much. You see by having an office in our home with, with my father and oldest brother had the side occupation for different things for government items, I learned by this. So when I was

seven, I knew reading, writing, multiplication. So I, I knew too much for first grade. They didn't let me in the first grade. So what I had to do, I had to pass an exam then they took me in the second grade. But in second grade, I had problems on the recess, when you go out, my class, my age boys were in a different yard. I had to go with the bigger boys because I was in second grade.

Right, so what happened?

I had to put up with it. Then I went to the third grade, but I didn't finish because I was busy in the store helping out and everything. So we had at home a teacher. A tutor came to the house, which was teaching me and my sister and a cousin, all three. My sister went to school, but by a tutor come into me, we all learned together.

That is so interesting. Now, now did you go to Hebrew school? Did you go to *cheder*?

Yes. Sure. Yes.

Okay, so you were tutored in your home for how many years?

Let's see, it was for quite a while because see, when I was about eleven, twelve years old, I was already sitting and sewing for our business. Twelve years old, I was sitting at the sewing machine and sewing shirts and underwear because we had, we had other ones also, I wasn't the one only. We had several of them, several sewing machines, but I was a young tot, twelve years old and I already helped. I also helped a lot of times my oldest brother, he was secretary for the Jewish Institute in Dzialoszyce. I helped him a lot at times. You see, his papers had to be every... every year had to be approved by the government. You know, you know government papers they, you had two holes and there was a little cord and it had sealed where no page could be torn out to, to duplicate. In a lot of times, if there was a, it had to meet with by the penny you know? A lot of times, I had to help find a penny. I had to help him find a penny.

Oh my gosh.

To even out, the government wouldn't accept it because there couldn't be anything less or more. It has to be even. So, like I say, I had a very turbulent life.

Yeah, so you worked, you were working hard as a young boy.

Yes.

You worked very hard.

Oh yes. And then, and then, the... I, like I say I grew up young, I matured young. When I was about thirteen years old, I didn't like the little town, there was not enough life for me. 3000 population. So our brother, the third from me, like Jack's father, he lived in Lodz, and the...

when I was about thirteen, he went to the army. So, I left my parents and I went over to Lodz. Can you imagine thirteen years old I had a bundle clothes with me for the first time I saw the big train, and can you imagine from a little town, from 3000 population, to a half a million population? Lodz is a very big manufacturing town. It was the biggest manufacturing town in the whole Europe - Lodz. Textile. And when I came over there, my sister-in-law bought some specialty machines because in their home, they had specialty machines for finishing ladies underwear. I imagine you's, you a lady, you know that some shirts in the old country used to have like half a penny finishes.

Um hum - scallop, yeah.

Half a penny?

Yeah.

I, I by knowing sewing, I went over there and I helped her, to live in a big town. Can you imagine nobody picked me up from the station? I a little tot had to find my way to the home.

So that had to be quite an experience for you, huh?

Like I said, it's not too alike.

What did you think when you got off the train and you're in this you know...?

Nothing.

...bustling town?

I looked for, for like I said excitement, for big because I didn't care for the little town. I was too energetic for my age. I didn't like it, I want more.

So did you like Lodz? Did you like living there?

Oh yeah, sure, why not? I lived with my brother, he was in the army, but I helped my sister-in-law you know and the... I didn't need the pay. I was there - I got clothes, I got food, I got everything and it helped her and it helped me.

Did Lodz have a big Jewish population?

Oh yeah, sure, there were a lot, I don't know how much, but it was a big Jewish population. Sure.

And so what did you do for entertainment? What did you do for...?

We went to movies, yeah it was a big town. We went to movies and the, is about all I needed.

Did they have a Jewish theater?

Yes, yes there was a Jewish theater.

And they had several synagogues or...?

Several synagogues.

Several.

There was a Temple and there were several synagogues, a lot of Jewish population.

Now, were most of the Jews religious Jews?

Religious schools?

Religious Jews? Were they mostly religious Jews or modern Jews?

They had different kinds.

All kinds.

Sure, the same, the same like, like New York.

Okay.

You have Brooklyn - you have a lot of very special Jewish people and you have other Jewish people who live in New York. The same thing with Lodz. They had a lot of a lot of *Hasidim* and a lot of Jewish which was not as, not as deep involved, you know. And they had they had the theological schools. It was a very interesting city, Lodz. Very interesting.

And your sister-in-law, did she live in an apartment or was it a house?

They had there, there wasn't like here, most people live in apartments. Very few people owned homes. Mostly had apartments and live in apartments.

Okay, so when you were in Lodz, you worked with your sister-in-law...

I worked with my sister-in-law for quite a while.

So your education was over?

Yes.

That was over. Okay, so how long were you in Lodz?

In Lodz I was coming and going several times because I worked there till about maybe I was fifteen or something like this. Then, I head up - my heart told me to learn a trade. I want to learn a trade. To learn a trade, it was against my parents' will. They, because our family knew only business and in those days, for a family like ours to, to have a trade was like an embarrassment. Because children grew up, they helped their parents in business, then they opened their own business.

But you could already work at a sewing machine.

Yes.

You didn't consider that a trade?

No. This is, this is - it's a something different you know, for our business.

Okay.

But the goal learn a trade, I want to learn because I knew a little bit about painting I want to learn to be a painter.

A sign painter?

No.

Artistic painter?

Homes.

Oh, a house painter.

House painter.

Yes, okay.

Yes. And so I left Lodz and I went to a city like Bedzin.

That's where my father's from.

Huh?

My father was from Bedzin.

Yes and they, and they, Goldie Gottlieb's husband was from Bedzin. His sister goes to our synagogue, to KI. You know...

But what's her name?

I don't know her name, but the...

Yeah, okay, I think I do.

Yes.

Yeah.

And when I told her where I was in Bedzin, it's so tiny, she knew right away. It was the best painter, the best contract in town.

Oh my gosh. Isn't that something?

She knew right away. This was the best contract. Now, by having in my heart to learn a trade, against my parents' will, in those days you had to pay a contractor to teach you the trade. Not like here. Over here, if you apprenticed the first day you start working right away you get paid. Maybe you don't get full scale, but you get paid. Over there, different. Over there, you had to learn the trade for three years and then pass an exam in all different things. But where I worked, with the contractor, I was so talented that, how could I make a living you know? Parents didn't give me any money and I had a cousin there... they had a brush factory. They didn't let me stay there because she said, "You have rich parents, you don't have to be here." For them it's also an embarrassing, I was learning a trade. It was Poland, is not here. Here, you can be a shoe maker and your son can become president. Not over there. So, I had to stay and sleep in basements. I had no money to pay and the painter had a friend which they have a basement. I slept there. Very poor condition, but how did I have to eat? I was so talented that when my painter finished an apartment, we had to take out the tools. I got the tips. He let me take out the tools, clean out after the job so I can get the tips. From the tips I lived. But when I worked for him for about a year, he was so happy with me that he bought me a suit clothes. In those days, our type of people we didn't go and buy a ready-made suit or shoes. Everything was tailor made. Shoes were tailor made. I never wore ready-made shoes. Everything was tailor made. A suit, and then I painted a room in our home. So they were very happy. Other contractors take two copies of the design, but I paint it and painted other homes never came out the same. Never came out the same because I was so talented.

And you liked what you were doing? You liked painting?

I, I don't know, the heart told me to learn a trade. Then I when I was about, about eighteen, I tried to go, you know, was with the group, we tried to go to Israel. So we smuggled, I smuggled to Czechoslovakia from Poland and the... we had some relatives, rabbis there. I stayed there

for a while and I also had a distant relative in Czechoslovakia and Bernau. I don't know where you know what it is. He was a, a cantor. How he became a cantor there is in, in Lem... in Lemberg, you know what Lemberg is? Lvov, like Ukraine you know? Lemberg. He was an, a opera star, but the antisemites in Poland were so great that they gave him a choice, he was singing in the opera and he was a cantor in a synagogue. So they were ashamed of it. So they gave him a choice, either you want to remain opera star in our opera or you got to give up this and be a cantor, what you want? So he chose to give up the opera and be a cantor and from there, Czechoslovakia hired him over there. So I received a letter from my, from my father, right away I have to come home. What happened? They got a, a draft card, I have to register to the army.

Now what year was this?

About eighteen years, when I was about eighteen.

So it was in 1928 or so? Is that right? Was it about 1928?

Yeah, this would be about that. Yeah. And so otherwise, he said if you don't come home, you be, you be a deserter. You'd be considered a deserter. So what did a son do? I left and came home, because from Czechoslovakia, I tried to go to Italy, from Italy to Israel, but this was disrupted. I couldn't do it. And from there I came home, I was a while there, and then I went back to Lodz.

But now did you go into the army?

They didn't, they didn't, they didn't take me.

They didn't take you?

No, they didn't take me.

So that was lucky.

So I went back to Lodz and I have the - my brother was meantime out of the service already you know and I had other cousins and had other relatives in Lodz. My father's two brothers lived there in Lodz. And I, I was traveling with some of them in the country with goods, yard goods. They would travel with yard goods and the... I spent there quite a few years with them. And, and then my brother moved to, to Gdynia. Jack's father. He had customers over there all around, he moved over there and then with the, with the two partners they opened a fish processing factory.

A cannery?

Cannery. yes. So I worked with them over there for a while and the - I worked at there til about 1935. We, we knew that my mother wasn't feeling well. We used to send home different

packages of fruits and a lot of things, but in 1935, we received a telegram right away to come home. So we got the telegram about five o'clock, seven o'clock we took the express train, myself and my brother came home and my mother had passed on. They waited with the funeral. It was a Thursday, Friday morning, we went home, we came home and there was the funeral. So my brother went back later and I remained for a while in Dzialoszyce because my father was by himself, you know, and the business still was business, so I was there for a while at home. And then, after a while, he remarried. His sister talked him in – he remarried and, and I went back to Lodz. In Lodz, I was there clear to the war, to the, to the year when the war started, to 1939.

And so how old were you then in 1939?

In 1939, I was twenty-nine years old.

Okay and you didn't have a steady girlfriend or...?

Nothing, no.

Did you date? Did you go out with women every now and then?

No.

No.

You see, I was so strong in my, in my, in myself, even I raised myself without parents, practically, and never got in into mischievous things. I never got into smoking, drinking, gambling or anything. I stayed sober all them years by myself. Self-controlled. Nobody had to tell me anything, but the... I was dressed well. You know in those days, I had manicure. I had a golden ring. I wore very... very, very, very well kept out. And then so when the war started, September, you know it 1939. What, what did we do? Everybody from Lodz walked to Warsaw by foot.

Oh my gosh, do you remember how long that took?

We went, I went to Warsaw then.

Do you remember how long it took - you actually walked to Warsaw?

I don't remember how long it took, but we went the whole, whole group.

The whole Jewish community? Or no, no the whole the whole community went.

Sure, not just Jewish people, but everybody. But, but younger people thought maybe go to Warsaw and join the army. But coming there, we went into the quarters to join the army, they said, "We thank you for it, but everything is gone," everything was lost already. You know it

didn't take the Germans long to occupy Poland. So I was there a few days and the - I saw the Germans come again, the Germans try to, to impress people. They handed out bread and this and that and wherever I stayed, one night, the second night they bombed it, you know. A lot of it was destroyed in Warsaw. So I went back to Lodz. From Warsaw, I went back to Lodz. And then we went to Dzialoszyce.

So you went back to your hometown?

Back to the hometown.

And this was still 1939?

I was home in Dz-... it was also, yes, all this was 1939. And we came back to Dzialoszyce and that was there clear til the evacuation.

And so how long was it, so you were there, when was the evacuation?

I think in about 1942.

Oh okay, so you were in your hometown about three years?

Just, just about three years. Two, three years. And from there we were evacuated, so what, what happened is they, they called everybody had to come out to the square.

All the Jews?

Yes and, and the... for the elder people, now we had to... they marched us down to the train. There was a little train. To the train, but for the older people, they had horse and buggies. They claim they going to take them on the horse and buggy down to train so they don't have to walk. But what they did, the day before, they dug a big grave near the cemetery and instead take them down with the horse and buggy to the train, they took them over to the cemetery and they shot them over there. That's what happened to my father and my family. My father, my step-mother, my uncle...

Your sisters?

No. We went down to the, to the train.

Yeah, 'cause they were young.

Only the elder people, took them over there. This why when I went to Poland now, was for the purpose to at least, to memorialize my father.

Is the area marked?

In Poland? You cannot tell, everything is overgrown after so many years. Even the regular cemetery where my mother, where my mother was buried, you couldn't tell anything. Everything's overgrown. But there was a little gate made, you know it, and memorialized it. I figured as long as I'm alive, at least I go back and just memorialize my father.

And I'm curious, how big is the town now, your hometown?

Is town?

How many people live there now?

Right now, you know we all you could see, there's no businesses anymore because all the businesses were Jewish. Jewish businesses. And the, all you see a bunch of poor people, they sitting on the, on the steps and just run down. You know, the places which I remembered, there was some Gentile, a couple of restaurants and whatever, they were gone, nothing there. And, and, the... the, even the city hall where it used to be was broke down was nothing there, just in a little house farther there. Our synagogue was destroyed.

In your hometown that you went - that you visited just a few months ago. Another question I would like to ask you, you went to your house and it was all locked up, but who, who owns that house? Is that house still considered your family's house?

Yeah, but who going to buy it? Nobody to buy it.

But it is still your property?

Yeah.

Huh. Amazing.

See Jack was also there during the war. You know when they moved out from Lodz [sic – means Gdynia], see, they came to us, to stay there.

Well what was it like going back to your hometown? It must have been very emotional for you?

Oh, of course.

Was it a hard, hard thing to do?

It what is, is all I want to do as long as I'm alive. I try to do it to see what's left.

Were you surprised to see what the town looked like?

Sure. Nobody to see, anybody which I knew. I, I went with Jack to all the places where there was a pharmacy, there was a notary public, nothing was left in Dzialoszyce, because when we, when we flew out from here, we went to Warsaw. From Warsaw we went to Lodz. And in Lodz I went with Jack to the places where his parents used to live before they went to, to Gdynia, where they lived there. His grandparents, where they lived, see I knew all them places there. Everything was broke down. Everything was broke down, you couldn't recognize anything. Very much dis-disturbed. Very much.

Now this was your first time on an airplane?

Yes. The first time, I was never on a plane.

Did you...

I liked it.

Good.

Of course, Jack got first class.

That makes a difference, that helps.

First class, it was very beautiful and it took us from, from... from Chicago took about nine hours to Warsaw. And there, there was, you know, lot was in the Polish, Polish the, the... the airplanes are Polish. And on the plane, you could tell there were a lot of Polacks. With they gave them a lot of drinking, a lot of, they always came around to drink and I never touch anything, you know. And for me, it was a little bit hard, because I forgot Polish completely.

Really?

Sure, if you don't use it for fifty some years, you, you forget it. Even Jewish - I don't speak Jewish either. Very little because when we came over here, but helped me to learn the American language is because I didn't have a chance to go too much to school here because I had to go to school at night and go to work. When I came over here, I, I moved in first of all...

Wait wait, tell me what happened to you - the Germans...

After we came out of the camp?

Yeah, after the camps.

I was - I was in Auschwitz for twenty-seven months.

Was that the first camp you went to?

Yes.

Okay.

Because before went there, first time when we were evacuated, we went to Plaszow. From Plaszow we escaped and went back home and was hiding - hidden out on a farm. But, when I heard what happened to next farmers there, what they did, there were other Jewish people hidden there what they did... (phone rings). Pardon me.

(Recording restarts)...camp then you then you went...

On a farm.

Yeah, you were hiding on a farm.

And the, what they did, the merchants trusted the farmers and some were hidden on farmers, on the farms and so they gave them all the goods they had so they hide them. So what, what the farmers did, what we found out, they killed the whole family. I knew them, you know, they...

The farmers actually killed the people?

Yes.

The farmers killed the people.

They killed them, so they can keep their goods you know. Leather goods and things like this. So when we hear this, we escaped from the farm where we were and we walked to Krakow. Everybody went a different direction. I went to Krakow. And when I came to Krakow, the, the Germ - a German got ahold of me and took me to the, to the square. It was already encircle like a ghetto. From there, they took us to Auschwitz. On the way to Auschwitz, on open trucks, for no reason at all, they took two young men down in the field and just shot them. For no reason at all. Just shot them. They took us to Auschwitz and we were there. We came in about 3000 people from Krakow. All who came into the camp was 500. 2,500 they took to the Krematorias and gassed them and killed them. This was, this was the mark which they tattooed me. And I was there for about twenty seven months. Before we left, we left there they took, there was a barrack - a full barrack with gypsies. One night they took all of them to the Krematoria and gassed them. The other night, there was a whole barrack with Czechoslovakian people, Jewish-Czechoslovakian. What they did, the women and the men in one barrack and the toilets, there was an open toilet. Men and women together. And one night, they took the whole barrack to the Krematoria and killed them all. Now you going back to this what, what my heart told me, to learn painting. This painting saved my life in the camp. This why I'm here now. For this painting.

Oh my goodness.

I was in a group with twelve of painters. We painted SS officers' kitchens, all different things we painted, we had a chance sometimes to get an extra loaf of bread, an extra piece of bread. You see, when some SS officers - they lock the door when they brought their, their ration from the kitchen and they were so satisfied with our work they gave us the soup to eat and sometimes they gave us a half a loaf of bread because so satisfied. You see, up till now, when any, any you know, I'll tell you later. But the, from there, we went to Stuttgart. I imagine this was the time when they start moving, moving prisoners because they, they killed out the Czechoslovakian barrack, the gypsies and they start moving, you know because the American troops chased them one side, Russia chased them on the other side. So I went to Stuttgart, I was there for a while. From Stuttgart, I went to Buchenwald - no to Ohrdruf, where Jack's father died - and then to Buchenwald. From Buchenwald, they sent us to Theresienstadt, to Czechoslovakia. On the way there, there was so everything so down, with dirt and filth and hunger, we slept on the dead. There were deads on the, on the, on the train and we slept on it. Then we came to Theresienstadt, where they, the... the Russian liberated us. They came to Theresienstadt. After we got cleaned up, a lot of us got sick of typhoid fever, which I got sick of typhoid fever from the dirt, the filth and the hunger. I was three days unconscious.

In a hospital? Did they put you in a hospital?

Yes, yes and the, after I came out, meantime, people danced on the street, were liberated, I was unconscious. After I came out... no medication, nothing. You know what Russia gave you? Russian rye bread. Can you imagine on, on intestines raw from everything, no medication, they figured either you live or you died. In fact, after liberation, a lot of people died from typhoid fever. You know typhoid fever was a very dangerous illness and a lot of people couldn't take it. I was lucky, I lived through, and from there, we, I was there for a few weeks at this hospital because I want to thank them for helping me and the - I knew a little bit biology and, and nursery and things like this, so I helped them. And from there, we were about maybe a month or so. They said we going to go to Israel, they're going to take us to Israel. So we took the train, and we went to, I think Frankfurt, and then they found out we cannot get into Israel. Because England hadn't occupied Israel, you know? So, anybody who want to get through there, had to smuggle in to Israel and if they caught them, they send them to Cyprus, to another camp. So we decided we not going to go. So they send us - we went back to Landsberg in Germany. Over there, they had a little, a little joint, little camp and, and they, we had food and everything and they, I became guardian in the, in the, in this little camp with a few other ones. And they, they brought us clothes and they supposed to get fifty pair shoes so we can have. So what, they what they brought is five pair good shoes and four or five worn out shoes from the army. Somebody got the money for it, you know? I got a pair of shoes because I was a little higher official, you know? I had a pair of shoes. And we had to go and, and they wait three o'clock in the morning and wait to get a portion of horsemeat so we can have something. I was the cook with another one, I had a friend that we stayed together and they, we made stew and, and, and hamburger and things like this from, from horsemeat. This was a

luxury item, a delicacy, you know? And this had to stay three o'clock in the morning. But I found out about Jack, that he is in Frankfurt. And my two second cousins, Erik Mandelbaum and Bob. You know Erik?

No, I don't know Erik.

Erik and Bob Mandelbaum. Bob passed away here. So I went over there to Frankfurt and, and I met Jack. And from then on, we stayed together. We, we didn't live from the camp food. We got us an apartment in Salzheim and we start doing a little business - big business and things like this. And we start living on our own. And then Jack always reminds me, when we lived in Salzheim, we, we had to buy on the black market everything you know? Because over there, we supposed to get chocolate and cigarettes and a lot - and canned meats and everything. We went over to the headquarters for our ration, they said got lost. Where did you find it next day? On the black market. But we didn't get it. You think, you think a lot of, wasn't stolen. A lot of people made big millions of dollars during the war supplying goods. They got paid for it and they didn't deliver it. But we got the... while we lived there, we got acquainted with the, with the Jewish... is the Consulate - whatever it was - and we found out that we could go to America. So we registered and, and they, we came over here. This was on, on June 24, 1946, we came to New York. And in New York, the Jewish Institute supplied us with food and, and lodging and after, after four days, they took us, split the boys, half here [referring to Kansas City] and half to Detroit. So they had assigned me to Detroit and Jack with my other cousins here. So I, I told them, I said, "He's the only one I have from my family alive, I'd like to be with him together." So they, they cooperated and took somebody else, exchanged and I went with Jack here. So, when we came here, on, on the Union Station we had to wait outside the Union Station - there was a bench was sitting and waiting for the, for the social worker to come pick us up, because we didn't have anybody here. Here to our surprise, while we were sitting there, he came down, and, and a uniformed soldier and reached out for, for a hand-out. We were so disappointed everybody said in America money grows on the trees. Here an American wants a hand-out. We couldn't figure it out. So we had whatever we had, we had a quarter some, we didn't turn him down, we gave him. And from there, they picked us up and we stayed at the, what to see, the, the... not Carlton...

Downtown?

The uh, in a hotel. We stayed in a hotel...

The Ambassador?

31st and Troost, across the street from the LaSalle.

Oh, I don't know. What year was this?

In '46.

So you came here in '46.

'46 we came over here. We came to Kansas City June the 2- the 26th. 24th to New York and by 26th, we were already here.

Gosh, so what was your, did you like Kansas City once you got here?

I didn't know anybody here, but we came down. I, we got acquainted with Mrs. Ziegler. The Ziegler family, I don't know if you know anybody?

No.

You know Helen Loeffler?

Yeah.

Her mother.

Her mother?

Yeah they lived about, about 5th and Admiral Boulevard. You know where this is?

Yeah, we lived at 1201 Admiral.

I lived with, you know Mrs. Tishk?

Yeah.

Harry Tishk?

Yeah Harry, sure.

I lived with his mother for a year, 1211 East.

Yeah, see we were neighbors.

East, East Admiral Boulevard.

That's right. That's right, my parents...

You know, across the street was a *shul*.

Yes, my parents knew the Tishkes pretty well.

Harry, Harry used to come to me to bed. He was five years old.

Oh, how cute!

For me, to sleep with me so I can - he, he had a brother in New York. The brother send him little books, reading books for five year olds, so I tried to learn how to read in order to speak. So I couldn't read much, but I knew a little bit, I learned a little bit from, from school here.

So you went to school? English school?

At the Jewish Community Center. The night classes. So I taught him how to read, he taught me how to speak. He was five years old, we worked together. But one time, he comes home, he said, "I know how to read." He was then in kindergarten or something. So I wondered, I said, "I'll find out if he knows how to read." So what I did, I pointed right there, I said, "What is this?" I stunned him, he didn't know what, he memorized everything. Until today whenever we get together, he never forgets this. I pointed him and made him read and he couldn't read. You know, his wife is a professor at the dentist's, at the dentistry.

Yeah, I know Maxine. I know her, nice family. A nice couple.

But when, when they came down to Jewish, to Jewish Institute there was after, after Helen's sister, Maureen, you know Maureen?

What's her last name?

I don't know her last name is, Pullman, Sammy they used to have a little grocery store.

Agran?

Agran.

Yeah, I know Maureen. That's her sister?

This is the younger, the younger sister. Because her brother Eddie, you knew Eddie or not?

No.

He's a professor and his son is a professor too. Very intelligent people.

Yeah, must be.

And Sophie was just here because she held, held the [unclear] married his daughter. So they were here from Florida.

Oh how nice.

Yeah, they are related. So I went down there and the - after all the registration, went through with everything you know? Social Security card and everything. So I told, there was is the secretary's name was Glucken. I said, "Mr. Glucken, I'd like to go to work." He looked at me, he said, "Mr. Mandelbaum, didn't you work enough in concentration camp?" He said, "You know that we are responsible for you for five years. The government has nothing to do with you. The gov- the government didn't bring you over, the Jewish Institute brought you over. The Joint, you know, brought you over so the government had nothing to do with you. We are responsible for five years." He said, "You don't need to go to work yet." So I told him, I said, "Mr. Glucken, I come from a family where we used to give, not to take." He was very impressed. He said, "We have some come over, we have to find them apartments and furniture and everything, but you are single. We don't have to worry about you. We can support you very easily." I said, "No." So right away, I start work. You remember Rival Manufacture Company? I start working for them. Seventy-five cents an hour.

What were you doing?

What year?

At the factory? For Rival's, what were you doing?

There a production lines. I used to be the specialist in grinding. You know, there's a casting, you know what casting is? After the casting, there comes a machine where they chopped off the rough pieces, then it comes to grinding. To grind it down for painting. I was a specialist on it.

That's neat.

Over there. They- there was people they made fun, they said Jewish people don't know how to work. We showed them that our group, we started to work. We made in a period of time of two weeks or so, we made twice as much than the previous group. And they I, I saved them, belts were this wide, a foot, foot wide, I saved them forty dollars a week just on belts because if you grind something, and, and it tears out a piece from a belt from the rough edges, you got to take off the belt. Because if you use it, it can kick back and kill you. So I found a way where I can grind several times in each side before I go to the center, so they didn't do it, the *goyim* didn't do it. They, they ground and, and anytime it tore out a piece, they threw away the belt. So I saved them forty dollars just in belts a week. You know, the owner was Jewish. So I came in, I asked him for a dime a raise. So he said, "Mr. Mandelbaum, I cannot do it." I said, "Why?" He said, "If I give you a raise a dime, I have to open the contract and give everybody a raise." I couldn't, I couldn't understand what he meant, but for me it wasn't enough. So I quit. So comes back again to the painting. I went over to the painters' union, so they didn't want to take me in because I was not apprenticed in this country. So I had to pass an exam. So I had to call five contractors to examine me. So I knew more than all them together. So,

but the, I couldn't get in the union, it was then a think, one hundred and fifty dollars entry fee. I didn't have the money. So Mr. Glucken came over because I was at DP so we paid half. And, and the, from seventy-five cents an hour I start making two and a quarter an hour.

That's more like it.

I worked a little while and then Mrs. Ziegler, Helen's mother, introduced me to my wife. They had a little haberdashery you know? A little store. Got acquainted.

What's your wife's name?

My wife's name is Helen.

Helen.

Yeah and we got acquainted and she had a brother in, in Kansas. He had a department store. She worked for him then. And the, but we got, we got married the 29th of 1948. I was here, let's see, not quite a year and a half. Married, but while working in the painting, it was in the wintertime, you know after February, there was no work. Because what they did, I was a newcomer so the newcomer if there was no work, they let you go. And the old ones they tried to keep. So when they got another job, they hired a few more and then they let you go when they are through with it. So I said, "This is not a good thing for me." I said, "I can not support a wife on this." So, Helen's husband, he was partners with Julius Loeffler. You know Julius Loeffler? Did you know?

I don't think so.

You know Dorothy Loeffler? Dr. Friedman's sister.

I don't know them.

Anyway, they had a little store, 24th and Woodland and they want to sell it because they want a bigger store, 23rd and Benton. So I accumulated thousand dollars, my wife accumulated thousand dollars, we bought this little store.

But what kind of store was it?

24th, was a little grocery store.

Grocery store okay, yeah.

Now, I didn't know the language, I didn't know the goods, but we bought a little store. He promised me, Helen's husband, promise - said, "I stay with you a month and I'll teach you." And of course my wife, she knew American you know, but it was hundred percent colored

people. So I said to my wife, "How am I going to recognize who's who?" She said, "You'll learn faces." But Adolph Loeffler instead of staying with me a month, he stayed two days. So I, I came over to my wife and I start crying. She said, "Honey, why are you crying?" I said, "Do you realize what I have invested and what you have invested together? If we fail, who's going to give us anything?" We didn't have anybody to give us anything. And she said, "Honey, I trust you. You'll make it." Those are the words she said. I'll never forget it. She said, "I trust you. You'll make it." And thank God we made it.

So...

She had so much confidence in me.

That's something.

So I was here a year and a half, but I already had accomplished, I worked, I got married and I bought a business. You know what is it? From June 26, 19- 1946 to November 14, 1948.

Unbelievable.

A year and a half.

Amazing. That's really something to be proud of. So you, how long did you own that business?

Down there, 24th and Woodland, I was six and a half years. From there, we made money and we bought a house, 72nd and Troost. The house was \$17,250.00. We paid down half, we paid \$8,000.00 down. In those years, \$8,000.00 down. The reason we bought the house, we were first to buy it. My wife, after we owned the store five years or so, I figured it's good to raise a family. I wasn't a young man anymore, you know? So she was expecting we lived on the fourth floor and you know, with a baby, to walk up to the fourth floor was hard. We tried to go around and find apartments anybody who was, who found out with an expecting mother never want to rent you. And we looked Sunday morning in the papers, wherever we came it was already gone. So we found out later, that people who looked for something came down to the Union Station and got the papers Saturday night. The paper comes out Saturday night. See we didn't know this. So if we couldn't find anything, so the same Helen Loeffler introduced us to a contractor which lived next street to her. His name was Price, Sam Price. You know the Price brothers?

Sure.

They own Willow Creek and a lot of them. So the father, all children got married, he built next street 73rd. He built a smaller house and took us fifteen minutes we bought the house. \$17,250.00, we paid down \$8,000.00, we paid half right away on it. Because the little store we made money was no room to enlarge, no parking, nothing. So after about six years or so, we said, "We don't have room where to go with it. We look for a bigger store." And you know the time then, chain stores built stores if anyplace Milgram built, Safeway followed, if Safeway

built, Kroger followed or A&P. So a lot of them little merchants died out. They couldn't make it. But I, I said, "I'm - they not going to kill me." I looked for a bigger store. I found a store 79th and Prospect. And over there, on the rent, you know, there was merchandise only for \$8,000.00. The men had, had a run-down store. No floor, not no air conditioning, nothing. A lazy man. So, I had to do everything from scratch to build this store. So what I did, I didn't hire a lawyer to write up papers, I was dictating how I want a lease. I figured I made a lease for five years. During the five years yet, on the lease I put down rent if I buy payments in the amount of everything. Because if I wouldn't, let's say I build up the store, let's say he, he wanted in the beginning about thirty some thousand dollars. I build it up, later that's forty thousand dollars. It's worth more money. So I wrote everything in a contract which I dictated. This we have one. In anytime, during the five years, I can buy it. I put down a down payment and everything. To the three years, I bought the building. And I had eighteen car parking. It wasn't enough. So, I was there, I don't remember, four, five years, I had to put down first a floor, I had to put air conditioning, there was wooden shelving. Every, every year, I didn't do everything one time. Every year did a little bit. My wife always said, "Honey, you just, you just put in money here." I said, "If I don't improve it, in those days, chain stores opened left and right and people go to, to Grand Openings and they've come back to a store run down what they going to think?" Had to keep up with it. So this I continued doing it and then after a few years, I saw eighteen car parking is not enough. So, a lot next door was for sale, hundred feet front, by hundred and forty deep. I bought this and gave me, instead eighteen car parking, gave me forty-two car parking. And I added a building 2,500 square feet to make it 10,000 square feet.

10,000?

With the warehouse on the side.

Um hum.

Where did I get the money? You need money. So I had a meat supplier, he was the Vice President or, or, I think on the Board of Directors of Di-of the Directors on the Brotherhood State Bank. You know where Brotherhood State Bank is? 50 Minnesota. So I called him up, his name was Semble, Mike Semble. I said, "Mr. Semble, I need \$90,000.00." He said, "What you need \$90,000.00 for?" I said, "I want enlarge the building, I need it and I need more parking. I have no collateral." You know, I didn't have anything, no collateral. He said, "When do you need the money?" I said, "As soon I can get it." He said, "Bring down your wife." Well, I signed it and got \$90,000.00. But then - then he said, "How, how..." the Vice President was Zellemeier. He said, "How you going to pay it?" He said, "How much do I have to pay?" They said, "\$1,500.00 a month." So I said, "Mr. Zellemeier, I cannot obligate myself with \$1,500.00 a month. I don't know if business will improve by enlarging, all I can obligate myself with half, \$750.00" So he liked it. Because I said, "If I'll obligate myself with \$1,500.00 and I cannot pay, how am I going to look?" So he liked what I suggested and they agreed on it. And so I got the loan and I got the building and then I came up with an idea to make extra money. On the \$750.00, there was \$250.00 principal, \$500.00 interest. A third was

the principle, two thirds was the interest. So what I thought of it as soon as I start getting a little - a few feathers on my back, I went down and I gave him \$2,500.00, ten principals. And I saved \$5,000.00 interest. My wife didn't believe me this. You know what I did? I had to take her down to the bank to tell her. They would tell her that I know what I'm doing. So several times, I made \$5,000.00 each time.

Yeah, you were smart. So now how long did you own that business?

On Prospect? Sixteen years.

Sixteen years.

In '69 I sold it. Because I worked hard like I say, I had to be everything. I worked eighty, ninety hours a week. I sold it to Les Jacobson. You know Jacobsons?

Yeah, sure.

Harvey's father? I didn't sell it to Harvey. So they had it a while and they didn't take care and they burned it up. I figured, I going to have rent in some percentage, I would be alright. Because you got six and a half years there, seventeen years here was what, twenty-two, twenty-three years in business. I thought I might rest a little bit. So you see, every week, especially in summertime, I had from old engines around in the store, I moved to the back on a rack, a steel rack, and they had to op-, be opened little windows with louvers so air can get in. So every, every, every week, I went out with the, with the little duster, a little broom and dusted off from the screens which accumulated, you know engines suck in air. So they sucked in dust from outside, leaves - this had to be cleaned off every week. So the air can get in, the motors can run. Otherwise, when they run hot - he didn't do it. He didn't do it and it burned up the units, they exploded.

That was it. So in 1969, then what did you do after you sold the business? You retired?

After I sold the business, no I couldn't retire. I, I bought, I bought apartments and I lost money too. I, I bought apartments Harrison Square in, in Olathe. And the... it was the time when the Air Force left for [UNCLEAR]. So what happened, they lived maybe a month or two to get behind in, in the rent, and then overnight they left and nobody knew what happened to them. You follow me? Transit, transit renters, you know? And then you had you had a bunch of them with children. What they did, they put the diapers in the toilets and they overflowed. Had to remove the carpets.

Oh boy, so that wasn't a good...

It was a very bad investment.

(Laughing) It was a disaster.

Then I start, I started managing the store on Sni A Bar for the, for the Hen House.

Oh, yeah.

And the, and the, I had a Jones managing the apartment and, and every month she came over, "Mr. Mandelbaum, we are short in the payments \$1,000.00." I had to take out \$1,000.00 and give it to make the payment. Then I found out, that this is not going to go nowhere, it going to empty out the rest of the money I have. So I just sold it. And, and I lost, I lost by \$50,000.00. I sold it to three doctors and they, they took it over, you know? And they paid me out and they sold it to us from the apartments. But the, after I was managing for the Hen House, then the Hen House sold their store on Sni A Bar road to AG Warehouse. And they - when I was in the grocery business, I was a member of AG. So when they sold the store to AG, I was managing, continue managing for AG the store. But after a year, when they were there, they decided they want sell the building and the store to a carpet place. Then they took me down to AG Warehouse and I was there for five years. At AG Warehouse. I was in charge of quality control, about \$1,000,000.00 with meat. I was in charge of quality control.

And, so that was back...

And, and in '75, I had to retire there because nobody could work there later than sixty-five years old. So '75, I had to retire. After I retired, came back to same thing, the painting.

(Laughing) That's good, you can always fall back on your painting.

The painting, then I was introduced to Soofer's Paint Company. You remember Soofer's Paint Company?

Yes, yes I do.

Not for painting homes, just for working in the paint business. I worked there for about sixteen years for them. Because I was a color specialist.

Oh, okay.

You know Mrs., what's her name, the photographer? What's her name?

Gloria?

Yes, but last name.

Feinstein.

Feinstein, yeah. When she met me, she reminded me that I used to make colors for her.

Really?

At Soofer's Paint. Yes. Yes. So I worked there for this many years.

Uh-huh, and how many children do you have?

Two.

Two. And how old are they?

How old? One is about forty-six and one is about forty-three.

Okay and...

One lives here in Kansas City, she works for the Hen House.

What's her name?

Elaine.

Elaine Mandelbaum.

Elaine, no her name is Ireland.

And so she's married?

This was her first marriage. But she divorced and she's married to another man, but she kept the name from the first marriage - Ireland. And then I have a daughter in Middletown, New York. She had two children.

So you have two grandchildren or more?

Two grandchildren.

Two grandchildren.

Only the one from New York.

Okay. Now let's see...

I worked, I worked a little bit for Sutherland Lumber Company.

Oh yeah, yeah.

In Martin City.

Oh, Martin City.

Yeah, but the, when my wife got sick you know? She constantly, she felt, she was lonesome by herself here. I had to quit and stay home with her.

So how long has that been? That you've been home now?

Well, this is about two years ago or so.

Two years ago, so you worked - you worked for a very, very long time yeah?

Yes, oh yeah. I could work even today if she would be alright. I could, I could, I could get a job the moment - the moment I say yes.

Now, we didn't talk about your experience in the Holocaust, but I'm curious, did you talk to your children about what happened to you during the war?

They know. They know.

Now have you ever been taped? Have you ever been...

I have - I have some, it not tape, pictures here, but I'm going to you know, you know Mark Mandelbaum. You know Mark?

Yeah, I know Mark.

He is make - he was with me in Poland and he is making three tapes, one for me, one for Elaine, and one for Cherie.

Yeah, that's good.

Yes, he said, he tried to have it on my birthday, yesterday was my birthday - my birthday, but the... he'll have it ready in a short time. I'll have tapes from it. But I have some pictures here. I would like to show you some.

Oh, yeah, I would love to see the pictures.

Would you like to see some?

Yeah, but I want to ask you a couple more questions, and then we'll look at them.

Alright. Sure.

Did your Holocaust experience affect your feeling toward Judaism?

No.

Okay.

No, even - even when I came over first, and we had our first dinner with Rabbi Solomon... Mrs. Solomon was here, is here this week.

I saw that.

Yeah.

The Chronicle.

Yes, is here, and I reminded here it was 43rd and, in Benton at their home, we had the first dinner over there with her and the... I had, I had asked Rabbi Solomon, I said, "The type of father I had, and he wasn't the only one, there were a lot of them there, there were rabbis and everything. Why should they have to leave in such a way? We know that nobody lives forever, because I feel this is the only, only one item in the world which is made right. That nobody can buy life for money. It don't make any different how much money you have, you cannot buy life for money. This is the only thing made just the way it's supposed to be." So I asked him, I said, "Rabbi, why a man like my father, which you couldn't... you couldn't ask for anything better, for a better type person with Judaism, with education, with everything, to be better than he is. Why a man like this had to die in such a tragic way?" He said, "Sigmund, I have no answer." I had to let it go with this. And then, when I got acquainted here, with Rabbi Mandel, I asked him the same question. He said the same thing. Had no answer. But what we had to do - we had to go on living and I sure wouldn't turn away from Judaism. Because Jack's son, the youngest one, Barry, you know anything of him?

Uh-huh.

So Jack came to me because I'm the only one he has. He came to me and he said, "Jack, ah Sig, you know what happened?" I said, "What happened?" He said, "Barry got together with a group and joined this group." I said, "What kind of group is it? What is it?" He said, "A group of Jewish - Jewish men and they *Hasidim*." So I said, "What is wrong with this? Aren't you happier he joined, he went this direction than God forbid, he would join a bunch, a bunch of dopes?" He didn't say anything anymore. He, until today, he remembers what I told him. He remembers import. But I learned from my parents, I know how to act. And in fact, when Barry comes in, he comes here with the children, you know? And this is way his life he wants to be. He's, he got a nice home, he makes a good living, he's well-educated and so what? He wants to be, live a certain Jewish life. It's his privilege. Why not? In fact, Jack is going over there for Thanksgiving.

Oh, nice – very nice.

So Jack will have some places to go to visit, he got St. Louis, and then John is going to England.

Oh really?

John planning to go to England. The company - the law firm will send him to England.

Oh, how nice. To what would you attribute your ability to adjust to a normal life after the war?

What?

How do you think you were able to lead a normal life after what you had been through?

It takes a lot of courage. Takes a lot of courage not to give up. Because this is the reason I survived, because I never gave up in camp. You have a lot of people over there which they, they gave up their ration bread for cigarettes. They went on the, on the group to work and maybe on the way, they, they found a potatoes patch. Over there, they ate it raw. When they ate raw potatoes, you get diarrhea and you have no medication to help you. And if you sick, they take you away to the hospital, you never come back. See this here?

Um hum.

When I was in the, in the barrack, and the *Lager* [UNCLEAR] from the barrack said for me and another boy to go to the kitchen and bring a kettle of soup for lunch, for dinner. So when we went over there, he picked up before I did, and he spilled the soup here and it build up burning like this. And, and the... I was lucky, I knew a doctor over there, he cut it around and put a, a patch on it where I can go to work. Because if you don't go to work, they pick you up and take you to the hospital and you don't come back anymore. You see, but I stayed away from these items - not smoking, not eating potato peels. But the night when I painted the kitchen there, he still was a Pole, but antisemitic. You know, in the kitchen sometime you could steal a piece of bread or whatever it is and that's what we tried to do and the, and the chef saw what I did, he reported to the *Lager* - from the, from the, from the camp. He was also a Pole. You know what happened? I got twenty lashes. I couldn't sit down for weeks. For trying to grab a piece of bread. So you wonder, how I lived through it. I had a man who used to help me with clothes, to get maybe a better shirt or something. He was from a little town, Pińczów, next to Działoszyce. My brother was, the oldest brother was over there, secretary to the Jewish community. He tried to escape with two other ones. They caught him and they hung him. They hung him. They had to take out the whole camp to watch it, where they hung him. I don't know, since I came over here, I said to myself, this is going to be my country. Here I want to live and here I want to die. In fact, this country was good to me. I have no complaints. One time, when I was in business, I was called in for, for audit. You know what an audit is? And I came over and we sat down and, and he knew who I was, so whatever there is and you know, I always paid taxes. I never was behind in taxes nothing. And they, he asked me what I think, like you say, what, what you think about the country this and that. I told him

how much I love it and everything. And I said, "I appreciate whatever, whatever anybody does." Because he asked me, "You pay so many, so much taxes, how do you like it?" I said, "I'll ask you a question. When you live in a home don't you have to pay rent? You live in a country, you expect the country to be kept up and protect you. You got somebody got to pay for it. You got to pay it." In fact, the government, you are the government. It's not like in Poland. Here, the people are the government. The time was when the hippies, you remember the hippies?

Sure.

They complained about this country. They said, "Oh, in Russia is better. Everything is better there." You know what I told my wife? I said, "If I have anything to do with it, I would buy them a ticket and have them go over there. You see how fast they'll come back." She said, "You hundred percent right." I said, "I know I'm right." Because when I was a young - a young man in Poland, I was befriended with, with others and even when I was in Lodz and worked also sometime in, in painting and there were groups hidden and active in communism. You know, in Poland, here communism is legal as long you don't interfere with the government, but in Poland, communism was illegal. It came May the 1st, usually a communist you know, a holiday and, and the, the hidden groups which played communist, they tried to celebrate, they tried to demonstrate and everything and you know what happened? Police knocked them out and arrested them and everything. And the, they want me to join communism. I said, "I'll never do it." What happened? In a lot of times, police got on their toes where they are, some escaped to Russia. They thought they safe over there. You know what happened to them? Russia put them over there in jail. He said, they said, "We don't need you here. We all are communism here. We need you there to be active." See this what they want. They want you to be the sucker. Fight for them. So I never joined.

So you're glad to be in America.

So what the, you know, I even one time, got a letter of appreciation from the audit for the respect for the, for the impression I made on them. What I thought of the government and the police. I said, "A lot of them hate police." I said, "What would happen if you wouldn't have a policeman on the street? What would happen? Shouldn't people feel wonderful when have somebody to protect them?"

Um hum. Sure. Well, I want to ask you one more question, and this will be the end of the interview. What lessons or lesson do you feel we should learn from the Holocaust?

From the Holocaust, I tell you something. When this Kosovo became, we had to fight the destruction. What happened over there, this should never happened. Because we lived it through. We know the pain, what they lived too. Because it same thing happened in Europe then. But, over here, the government was fighting the enemy. In Europe, when it started, we didn't have anyone to fight. When it started, if you remember the history, that the German Jews, in 19... was it, 1933 or 1935, came to the borders of the United States to let them in. [sic –

referring to the *St. Louis* in 1939.] **Roosevelt said no. They went to Cuba, didn't let them in. They had to go back, and what did they go to? To their death. See we didn't have anybody to protect us when Ger- when, when the Germans occupied Poland. Nobody. When did we actually get into war? When Japan start in, in, what was it in Hawaii?**

Uh-huh, that's right.

Then when they, when this country got into war, independent started. When they started hitting in, in Hawaii. But otherwise, it, it take, take, even - take the Red Cross. The Red Cross knew what going on. Why didn't they do anything? They want to have, let German have respect for the Red Cross. See nobody did anything.

Right.

They let us be destroyed. But they came, when they came - when they occupied, they found people dead, starving to death and they start feeding them good, they died from this and everything. Because people like this should be nourished gradually to health. But they so hungry, and, and, and armies, the, the American army thought they doing some good, they give them good food. A lot of good food. And by eating on, on, on a raw stomach, on a raw intestines, it killed them. It killed them. It's, it's, it's tragic to live through this and, and to be able to tell the story it's - I feel lucky, but my heart told me, even my parents were against it, but my heart told me to learn a trade. This trade saved me so many times.

Yeah – it's amazing.

There were so many times, so many times, I remember that my father was against it. My parents were against it. My cousin, this is my, my mother's brother's daughter, lived in Bedzin, they had a brush factory. Rich people. I couldn't have a meal with them. I couldn't, I couldn't stay with them. They were ashamed of me because I'm going to be a painter. I'm going to learn painting.

Well, I think I'm going to have to wrap it up, but thank you so much.

I hope I was some help to you, what you need. Just take out whatever you feel that's what you need and it's...