

Transcript:

Sam Weinreich

A35

68min11s

Sam Weinreich: This is a short synopsis on the time when we went in to live into the ghetto because as you see they—they confiscated some valuables from us and I'm trying to recover some remuneration from the Nazis what they have taken away from us because my family did have four stores in Lodz, Poland in the city of Lodz rather.

Interviewer: Have you been able to recover anything?

Sam Weinreich: So far not a penny. They keep on postponing the dates, then you file paper and then they're gonna make up their mind to -- whether they will distribute any money for the valuables that taken away from us, no guarantee for anything. So far, nothing happened. Maybe they wait for me to kick the bucket. Then they'll have a good excuse. "Too late. He's not here anymore."

Interviewer: Well I would give -- keep your children on it and see if they can kind of pick up for you. You just want to come and listen? Feel free to have a sit.

Interviewee 2: I still have a little time.

Interviewer: Oh, sure, well feel free. Have a seat.

Interviewee 2: You are -- you are not interviewing yet?

Interviewer: Yes. No sit down, sit down, we're friendly. Okay, what we're gonna do and this is what -- this is what we did with Freda. We're gonna speak to you a little bit about your childhood in Poland. A little bit about growing up, new family, we're gonna talk about your time in the ghetto and—and then we're gonna go in to talking about Auschwitz and—and some of the... Dachau, right?

Sam Weinreich: Yeah.

Interviewer: We're gonna talk about the camps and then we're gonna talk about liberation and a little bit about your life after liberation. What brought you to Memphis? I do have some of the information already. I know Freda mentioned you married in the DP camp and you came – they assigned you to Memphis. So there is some information having the benefit of just speaking to your wife but I always find that even when we speak to husbands and wives that had similar experiences and some that were even in camps together their individual feelings and experience were so different. So don't worry about repeating any information or anything like that everything, take the time that you need. I'm gonna stop you at some points as we're talking so I can get some understanding and clarification. I'm wanting to know information about the camps, the ghetto and your life of course but I'm also interested and I find that people are interested in wanting to know other things. They want to know where your faith was during this time. They want to know what kept you alive. They want to know how you survive and what you were thinking. So think about those things as you're talking because those are things that even I want to know as a religious Jew. I want to know how you did or didn't hold on to your faith.

Sam Weinreich: Well, I'm shameful there are 11 people in my own house.

Interviewer: So let's talk about your childhood in Poland.

Sam Weinreich: Well, I lived in Lodz, Poland, I remember, all our lives. My family was well established in Poland and I didn't know of any other places we lived anywhere. My father had a furniture and antique shop, a lot of used furniture. In other words we had four stores in the city of Memphis. My other brothers had also furniture stores and antique shop. Before the

war after finishing public school most of the people did not attend high school, they couldn't afford it. It had to be paid for, and after finishing at 14 years old, people had to find a job to be able to help the family provide. My family being a furniture business thought probably I'm also gonna be in some kind of furniture business or some kind of trade so I went to work for my brother. Older brother had a furniture store and antique shop on the same street [unintelligible 0:04:41.2]. I went to work for him as furniture polisher, furniture finisher. They had carpenters, made the furniture and we had a shop where they finish the furniture. So I work away for quite a while. When the war broke out in 1939, September 1, 1939 the war between Germany and Poland started. I was designated to be a watchman at the front gate from the tenement house where we lived because our store was a little further back in the same address, the same street but it was a one story house where we lived upstairs. Downstairs we had the furniture store and then it was a big apartment house four stories high where I was designated to watch at the front gate in case incendiary fire bomb will fall and I had sacks of sand trying to kill the fire. So in the middle of the night, that's the second night of the war, a guy on a bicycle came to the doors and went to house to house, "Wake up all of the people who are here because the German army is coming here in the morning. They already broke to the lines, everyone and able body people should go toward the capital --" which was Warsaw -- and over there the Poles will put up a stand." Well being of military age while I, myself, had been in military yet, me and my younger brother had -- brother was two years younger than myself -- decided to leave out, of course the panic at home, people leaving, people saying goodbye, getting dressed, it was 12-11 o'clock at night. I don't remember exactly now but later and middle night and we decided to kiss everybody goodbye and leave toward Warsaw. We didn't know what's gonna happen. We knew that Hitler is after the Jews because we read in the paper that he prepared himself towards war. I also listened to the news, we knew that he promised he will not attack any other country and Ribbentrop gave a promise to the -- to the world that the English minister came back and he said here is a paper, Hitler's signature there will be no more war but he attacked Poland.

Interviewer: And this was in 19...?

Sam Weinreich: September 1, 1939 when the war started in Poland.

Interviewer: This is when you had received the paper? That's what I was asking. When did he bring back the paper?

Sam Weinreich: What paper?

Interviewer: The one that said Hitler signed and said he would not go to...?

Sam Weinreich: No, this was earlier, earlier this must have been in 30...sometime -- Hitler was already started in '35 when Hitlerism came to Germany, this must have been in '37, '38...

Interviewer: So a couple of years later he attacked, after he promised he wouldn't.

Sam Weinreich: He attacked Poland. Yes. He ordered ahead -- Austria and I believed he already had Czechoslovakia but Poland was the next victim. So...

Interviewer: Did you know what's happening since Austria and Czechoslovakia and obviously the German Jews had already started to undergo a lot of the abuse, did you know what was going on?

Sam Weinreich: Yes, we did. The papers were writing all about it. Matter of fact, I had a brother from... one of my brother-in-laws came -- he lived in Germany and he had a long citizenship from Poland. He was thrown out from Germany, then he came to [unintelligible 0:08:56.3] and they kept him in a some kind of camp so we knew that he's not a friend of ours. So after we kissed everybody goodbye we went towards Warsaw. The streets were full of people. We could not move hardly and -- but this was the middle of the night and early morning the airplanes coming down and started shooting at the people with machine guns into the civilian population. So we find that people realized that they cannot walk in daytime. We scattered and we tried to go into the field, sleep in daytime and walk at night because the fliers could not fly at night. We walked to Warsaw I believe for two or three days, me and my younger brother. We finally came to Warsaw -- I forgot -- about 60 kilometers or miles I don't remember exactly what it was, the distance.

Interviewer: How old were you at this time?

Sam Weinreich: I believe I was about 20 years old, 19 or 20 years old.

Interviewer: And your younger brother?

Sam Weinreich: My younger brother two years younger about 17.

Interviewer: The rest of your family stayed in Lodz.

Sam Weinreich: The rest of my family lived in Lodz, yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sam Weinreich: Right after the war started one of my older sisters, she had a boyfriend on the verge of getting married so my father let -- she wanted to leave and she want to go to the other side, to -- oh I'm sorry this was later, this was later after we came into ghetto. I'm sorry I talked about her.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Sam Weinreich: I'm getting things mixed up.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Sam Weinreich: But anyhow I went on the road and the fliers were shooting down people so we rested in daytime, we came to Warsaw, the city was burning, the people in Warsaw said, "Why are you all coming over here? We don't have any bread for you all." They didn't even welcome us. They didn't want us anymore because they didn't even know about putting on a stand. Later on we find out that—that guy on the bicycle, that courier was a spy. They wanted to create panic on the road so the Polish Army could not pull back, could not escape because the German Army at that time started the blitzkrieg and they -- all the firepower, everything—everything just everything in city we approached was burning already. My grandfather lived at Warsaw. We came to our grandfather and we stayed with him. He lived on a four story apartment building. At the time when the war started they were afraid to be in there apartment upstairs because artillery were shooting into Warsaw that they punch holes in the building. A lot of people got killed so they stayed downstairs in an apartment together with other tenants. We were—were so tired from walking and didn't care what's gonna happen so we went into their apartment upstairs, we fell dead asleep. I don't know how much later because we were dead asleep... When we woke up part of the building was torn down by a bomb. We had to walk down from upstairs on blocks on ruins, come down from the fourth floor, part of the step was gone, stuff like that. They finally announced on the radios that the city doesn't have any bread, please all the people who came into Warsaw, go back to where you came from. The lines are free and everything will be okay because they're trying to get rid of us because they could not feed us anymore. They were getting artillery. Two weeks later, of course, Warsaw fell but while they told us to go back again... We heard that our city is already taken over from Germans and we decided to go back to Lodz. Coming back to Lodz, we walked on the road. We've seen German army on motorcycles, on all kinds of these jeep wagons coming through. One time they caught everybody, they've taken everybody into a big barn. They said that somebody cut their communication line. You know the communication line they had cable wires all the way strung on the side of the roads. Some of us evidently cut their lines. So they accused all of us that some of you cut the communication line. They arrested all of us. They put us in a big barn. They put out the rumor that they're gonna set the barn on fire. You just imagine the people in that barn thought we're gonna be burned alive. Well this was dusk and from pain and fear we lay down and we fell asleep one next to the other. It was awful. Packed full of people. But in the morning when daylight came, they let us out, let us go back and we walked back home – I don't remember exactly, I believe a day, a day and a half we came back home. The family embraced us because a lot of people got killed on the road. My sister told us every day they went to the cemetery to look, to identify bodies that they thought maybe we are dead by then but we came back home and we stayed home. The people in the city, the German put up a billboard that every merchant have to keep their stores back open, make life back to normal. Of course they caught people on the streets to... Because the Polish army had horses, they needed people to try to tend to the horses. I got caught one time in the

street, they taken me over there to try to clean up after the horses. I worked there whole day didn't get any food but I came back home, glad to see me back home, everything was fine. So by opening up the stores my brother, he was older than I am, he was afraid to stay in the store. So I stayed in the store in the front some time at my brother store and my other brother stayed in my father's store. My other two brothers, my sister, my brother had another store somewhere else, in other part of the city and also... We had four stores. The Nazis came in to our store – I said that in the paper – and they had taken – they said they up picked stuff, everything what they felt like they should have and they didn't even bother about paying for it. I had to carry some of the stuff out to their jeeps, to their little wagons, military wagons and if didn't walk fast enough I got kicked in my behind. So anyhow this was life going on like this...

Interviewer: Let me stop you right here. When I read the story I'm always intrigue to find the righteous gentiles where ever they are and I find it interesting that you talked about one man that you remember, a high ranking military man...

Sam Weinreich: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: And what did he say to you?

Sam Weinreich: Well upstairs... Well he actually contacted my brother. He was the owner of the store. He confiscated the first floor apartment upstairs above the store. He was an elderly person. He must have been a high official in the German army because he had a lot of medals on him and his hat had a lot of brass on and gold. So he told them, "Look I know that some of our people are misbehaving, what they're doing over here, but you know I would like to pick up some stuff from you. I don't mind paying, but don't charge me too much." So he did pick out some items and we carried it off to his apartment. He was a real nice guy. He felt sorry what happening to us but that's all he could do. I assume he must have been afraid for his own skin. Anyhow, that's how life went on, because, from five o'clock in the evening till next morning at eight o'clock, no Jew could have been found in the street. We had to be at home. One morning my father directed myself and my brother across the street from our store in a basement, a large basement on that tall tenement house. We had a warehouse where we kept some of the furniture, old furniture what farmers came and they gave us coal, they gave us potatoes for it which we couldn't sell – it wasn't fit for a lot of people – and we kept some of

that furniture there. My father directed us to dig over there in the basement, a big hole to accommodate three cases of valuables. After five o'clock – must have been seven or eight o'clock in the evening – when it was dark, we carried the cases across the street and we buried them into that ground and we covered the ground back up and put some foliage on top like nobody could identify them. We told that, between ourselves, that whoever is gonna live, through this war at least we know that there are some valuables back in there. I didn't know what is inside in these cases. For awhile, we used to get a ration. While we were still living in our homes. It was cold it was like that the war started in September that it must have been already December or January. It was the coldest winter I remember. In Poland we used to heat the apartments with coal. The stores use to sell the coal. People had to form a line outside and people picking up coal, everybody standing in line. One morning my father directed me to go out. "We're running out of coal go out and stand in line." Six o'clock in the morning I got up and standing in the line to try to get to the store to get – I don't know how far I was in the line. People freezing cold. By eight o'clock before they open the store a Gendarme came to try and to hold all day in the line so a lot of this Poles were so unfaithful to us "Jude, Jude" they pointed out the Jews which stand in the line, they throw us out from the line. The German, the Gendarme, "Raus!" he threw us out and I went back home without coal. Well, luckily, we were merchants. We gave the janitor extra money – double – and he brought us the coal. But what about some of the people who could not do all of this stuff? They froze. That time was terrible. Until one day they directed us that we have to vacate our homes where we lived all our life, our stores, anything and go to one part of the city which was the worst part of the city, like the slum part of the city, I would say. They gathered all the Jews into one area and they created a ghetto where they surrounded it with barb wire. My family was designated one room. At that time my – I forgot how many people because one of my sisters, she had a boyfriend, she want to get married and she said that she's not going into that ghetto. She going to go to a different city where they said they're not going to close the ghetto because they knew that they going to lock up our ghetto. She was afraid that they're not going to let us out later. So she and her husband and one of my brothers went to a different ghetto and one of my sisters make a quick marriage and she married and she went on the other side because at that time I believe Russia already taken over half of Poland and Germany came to a halt at the Vistula, at the river which runs all the way through Poland. Russian divided half of Poland to Germany and half of Poland they taken over. So my sister who got married in a quick marriage, she went on the other side towards Russia. She said, "Over there, they will not come," but there was no time; she came back home. She could not stand the communist over there because they're living in the streets. There were people from all over coming over there. She could not. She came back home. Anyhow we got into the ghetto, I don't remember exactly I believe in April, 1940 I believed they closed the ghetto. The ghetto was surrounded with wires and Gendarmes every so often and no one ever dared to go out from the ghetto.

Interviewer: What efforts did your family make as close as they possibly could to try to keep some semblance of family life in the ghetto? Let me help you a little bit. Some families had Shabat services, some families had reading groups, some families had older men teaching the children religious history. Were you able to have any of these things?

Sam Weinreich: No.

Interviewer: Nothing?

Sam Weinreich: No. We...

Interviewer: And—and I say that in secret.

Sam Weinreich: Yeah. No. We lived in the ghetto my family was designated a large room and all we had... pull-over bed, I don't know what you call, the little folding beds where we put up everything. How many people? My mother was still there, my father, myself, two of my sisters, I believe five people were still with us in the ghetto, when we went to the ghetto and we lived in that one room. Lodz was the longest working surviving ghetto and I worked in a furniture factory where they made chairs for the Germans, also finishing furniture. My father was at that time maybe around 50-52 years old, he did not work. Every person was designated to get a ration. The ration supposed to last for two weeks. Well, you could eat this ration in three days and some people did and they starved to death. The only thing was free and enough is water. A lot of people taken their piece of bread they got, they crumbed it up and put it in the water to make a soup out of it, so to speak, so they have more food. There was no coal, there was no wood to heat because they're little stoves. You have to just try and to cook on with wood and coal. So there were outhouses, there were fences outside and we didn't have toilets in homes like we have over here now. So there were outhouses. People taking all this stuff apart to have wood to heat. We taken furniture, broke furniture, knocked furniture apart to have enough to heat the room and cook something. The people who went to work did get a soup at the kitchen. We used to have a number where you worked just to get a soup at the kitchen and a soup at home. The two soups a day in that ration. Well a lot of people we could

see – I mean, dead people walking. Swollen people up in the streets, some of them died in the street. Everybody have to have a pot with him and a spoon, you could see people had to have with ropes instead of belt – they had the rope tied around, had a pot hanging over here with a spoon because if you don't have the pot and spoon and you couldn't get the soup. Whatever you want to get, you want to get a soup. My father was a person which couldn't go to work anymore because he didn't have a trade, he was a merchant, and so when people got liquidated he takes some of that furniture from them and he chopped it on wood to sell to people, pieces of wood to light fire at the house. When he had enough money, he bought himself a soup. A lot of people, even how hungry they were, they sold that piece of bread to buy cigarettes, believe it or not. Smoking was then a habit for a lot of people. We were four years in the ghetto, almost like a city, like what the government, Romkowski was the Älteste der Juden, was the chairman of the Jews, and he was asked by the Nazi's to bring out so many people. They got to have them. They had even Jewish policemen, the [unintelligible 0:28:40.3] commander they called it and they had to bring people out to [unintelligible 0:28:44.9] to send them out from the ghetto. Where they went at that time they didn't know. We thought maybe they go into work somewhere else, or whatever. Later on, of course, we find out what they done to these people. Every once in a while they made [unintelligible 0:29:02.9] they called this -- everyone didn't go to work that day. You had to stay in houses – the selection. The Nazi's came into their homes and they shoot three or four times in the air. Everyone from the apartment had to go down and they selected people. They looked at you, and if you weren't old enough or young enough, you went with them and the able-bodied people, of course, were useful to go to work. This was going on for about four years like this, in the Lodz ghetto. One day they came... What I'll say... [unintelligible 0:29:57.3], I forgot how you say this in English. They're gonna liquidate the ghetto. We're gonna be transferred into a better place where we will have more food. We gonna have plenty of work. Not to be worried about it. Really and truly being in the ghetto for so long because for us the war lasted five and a half years for the Polish Jews...

Interviewer: I'm gonna back you up a minute, just for a minute. I want to back you up.

Sam Weinreich: Alright.

Interviewer: Your mother died in the ghetto.

Sam Weinreich: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: A couple of your siblings.

Sam Weinreich: Yes. I left out some of the stuff.

Interviewer: It's okay. I just want to back you up.

Sam Weinreich: Yes.

Interviewer: Your mother starved to death.

Sam Weinreich: While we were in the ghetto I had a 13 year old sister, she was very developed at her age, like a grown up person and she didn't have the right food. She didn't have the right vitamins because food, of course, supply you life with vitamins and growing stuff. So a doctor came to the home and she said well, all that she needs is at the end of war, she can get the right food because if she don't have... Of course, she died several months later. My mother also died from hunger in the ghetto. So I was left, myself, my father and our oldest sister. When the Allied forces landed in Europe – it believe it must have been in '44 – and they came closer towards Poland the Germans decided to liquidate the ghetto. Evidently, they didn't want any witnesses.

Interviewer: Let me ask you something. Your mother and seven siblings, is that what you're saying, died in the ghetto.

Sam Weinreich: No. Some of them went to a different ghetto.

Interviewer: Some of... Okay.

Sam Weinreich: I don't know what happened to them but they're not here. Then after war I was the only one survivor. Out of the nine children, father, mother, I'm the only one survivor. After the war, no one survived. So what happened to them in the other ghetto, they thought that this ghetto gonna be locked up, they won't be able to get out ever. So they thought that other place where they... They run back over there because my brother-in-law was from a different city. My sister married a soldier. He was a soldier from a different city so he said, "Let's go where my family lives. Maybe over there they will not close the ghetto." So my younger brother who was two years younger from me went with them. So actually when they liquidated the Lodz ghetto there was only two, three people. The rest, yeah. One of my brother has also died in the ghetto from hunger. One of my older brothers died from the hunger in the ghetto. Chaim.

Interviewer: You were transported in 1944...

Sam Weinreich: 1944.

Interviewer: No, 1940.

Sam Weinreich: '44 into -- from the ghetto. 1940 went into the ghetto.

Interviewer: Right.

Sam Weinreich: In '44 we went out of the ghetto.

Interviewer: Auschwitz, and you went to Auschwitz.

Sam Weinreich: To Auschwitz.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Sam Weinreich: Well, when they told us that in certain streets there should not be a person because anyone who's gonna be caught in that certain area will be shot instantly. So we are afraid. They designated, certain streets... empty... Judenrein. "Nobody should be there." So then finally, almost to Auschwitz, I told my father, "Look, we don't get anymore ration. I hate to eat up that little food what you do have still left. Maybe I should go because the Nazis made us an offer. If you're gonna be transported to that other place, all the able-bodied people will be able to work, get enough food, deep into Germany. Maybe we'll survive." My sisters said, "I'm not leaving my father alone. I stay with him." So I put on my best clothes, my shoes and went towards the train. They told us to go to the train. Also, what they lured people with, they say, "You're gonna get a bread and honey once you get to the trains." When we got to the trains – we walked of course to the trains. It was quite awhile from where we use to live. We walked to the trains. We waited I don't remember how many days. We got on the trains – they were cattle cars. They closed us up in the cattle cars. It had a little window up on the top only with a little iron partition in it. Anyhow, for several days we were on the road. The train stopped, the train started, and finally we find out we are in Auschwitz. They opened the doors and there was a commotion. There was crying, people was running back and forth. They had Jewish couples and German SS people with dogs. We found out later one of the guys was Mengele, the guy who made the selection. He tell people, "One of them go this way, one of them go that way." Because I was young – at that time I was able-bodied enough, useful for them – they'll send me to another side. Of course, my wife told me that she wanted to go with her mother and one of the couples, one of the Jewish people whose work it was to be working over there for the German, he pulled her away from her mother because she's – no, she was a youngster. Her mother was already in the 50's, I assume. And she went to the other zone and she never seen her mother again. Anyhow, we went over there. They'd taken us into a large building. Of course, we were still dressed. I forgot to tell you, on these trains when we ate the bread and the honey, it was pitiful. It was burning with no water. A lot of people died right there because we were packed like sardines. From eating the bread and the honey, not just didn't have any water, but [unintelligible 0:36:34.6]. People peed all over, it was... The stench. Terrible. When they opened the doors over there, the air was so good. But then, the cry and the dogs barking and the "Over here! Over there!" They made such a... Unbelievable. We start crying because they pulled us away. I went to one direction, they taken us into a big building where they told us, "Undress." We had to leave all our clothes where you're standing and

groups they march us out of there naked, and down they take us, into another big warehouse building and they shaved us all the way. Wherever there was hair, it's gone. Shaved us, then we're gonna take a bath, and they've given us a cold shower. And it was cold. And we had to run into another place to – I don't know how many feet, but maybe 50, 60 feet away into another place where they gave us [supposedly 37:44] uniforms and I received a jacket and a pair of pants. The jacket with the blue stripes – you probably have seen it – and I had a number. This number was my name. So...

Interviewer: Do you remember your number?

Sam Weinreich: I have it, I have [unintelligible 0:37:58.8] I believe eighty-something. I have it written over there. I gave her the picture on it. I don't remember it by heart for awhile because it's been so many years...

Interviewer: What was your job at the camp?

Sam Weinreich: At Auschwitz, no job. Lucky me. I had only three days in Auschwitz. They've taken us into... Distribute these uniforms and they told us to run into a big warehouse where they packed full of people. We lay down on the stone in exhaustion, went to sleep. We heard crying, we heard all of this kind of stuff but didn't know what happened. But in the morning, soup time, we're gonna get food. We didn't have anything to eat the food. They had a big pail of soup and we had to form a line, and the line, I remember, was seven people. The first one got the soup and we had to drink without any spoons out of this soup. The people start drinking the soup. [unintelligible 0:39:09.5], hungry start fighting over the soup, the second one didn't get any, till it came to the last person didn't get any. I was three days in Auschwitz I didn't eat. Don't remember ever had a bite in my mouth. Nothing but from that train when I had the bread and...

Interviewer: When you were, let me stop you right now. When you were going through this, starving, the transport, the crowding, the cold, what did you think was happening to you?

Sam Weinreich: In a time like, this you are somebody else's... They'll tell you what to do and you obey. You don't know what you're gonna do.

Interviewer: You think you were just in a daze...

Sam Weinreich: I was in a daze. We didn't know. We knew we left family. We knew – who we cared. The bad part about it, in the ghetto while we were still with our family when we didn't get the ration – we had a scale, we had to weigh the bread – the parents should not get a crumb more than the next person. A lot of people kept the dead people, people who died, they kept them at home for three or four days to be able to get the ration for the dead person because they didn't want tell nobody he died. So they have a little more something to eat. The bread – you might call it bread, we called it bread. It was like a clay, but it was good, it filled your tummy. We ate stuff which is... Today, people would not even touch, but if you have an empty stomach you grasp at straws. So in Auschwitz I don't think I ever ate more than what I had on that train, but it was enough. But in Auschwitz, I don't even think we had water.

Interviewer: Did you pray?

Sam Weinreich: And after three days I believe they've taken us out in a group they told us, we gonna go to a different camp and I was transferred into another slave labor camp. I was transferred to Kaufering. In Kaufering over there it was a camp where, I suppose, they brought sick people into that camp and there were a lot of doctors. The doctors were Jewish doctors from Czechoslovakia and from Hungary. They had it so figured out to work against our nerves, some of their leaders were Jews from different countries. They couldn't understand us, we couldn't understand them. They tried to make our life so miserable that they're trying to make animals out of us, we became animals. So in Kaufering there was a sick person's camp. People died like flies over there. In beginning, I helped pushing a wagon for dead people where they buried them in mass graves. They had holes picked, they put chlorine over them, a white powder like a chlorine, so they will not have some kind of diseases coming out of them and for awhile I was doing that. There was a one guy over there in our – by the way our camp was built with – we had a tarpaulin like a boy scout like tarpaulin. In the middle of the road they had dug about three or four... We walked down on the bottom. We lay down back and they gave us a blanket and we lived on the blanket, on the grass and this was our home in Kaufering, in camp.

In the morning, early in the morning they woke up, they gave us some coffee, later on they gave us a soup and one person from this, I believe 40 or 50 people in that little place... Tarpaulin? I forgot, how do you call a... I forgot.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 43:58] tarp.

Sam Weinreich: A tarpaulin but there's a name for that little...

Interviewer: Like a tent. A tent?

Sam Weinreich: A tent, that's right. A tent, that was it. One person in each tent was designated the leader of this group. This leader happened to be a guy which I knew. He played theater in our city. So he knew I was singing, I was taking part in the school in little shows so he knew these doctors who was attend to all of these people, wasn't everybody sick in this camp but a lot of people was sick so they had Jewish doctors over there. They were also part of the interned people. So on Sunday we didn't go out to work. You got to [unintelligible 0:44:53.2] so you can get help if you make \$31,500 a year, you have to be in the poverty line. Thank God I was always able to help myself, I didn't need no help. Now, this here what I'm trying to recover nothing yet.

Interviewer: You know I meant -- I meant about those...

Sam Weinreich: Now, in our city, while working for the Germans, not too long ago they had a law that they pay social security. We just now started getting the German social security, I think about a year ago, we started getting 252 Euros a month for the work which we did for the German people, for the German army. For this I went through... but, something else, I don't know. Memphis don't have some of these things. They have it in the larger cities. A matter of fact, by coincidence, we found that out.

Interviewer: Have you gone through the holocaust websites to see if they have the information on your family?

Sam Weinreich: I did. Well, up to about two years ago when my eyesight was still 20/20, I had a computer and I did go through a lot of these names. I never found out.

Interviewer: Never found your family?

Sam Weinreich: Nothing happened. But I filed papers with the Swiss government and this is why I had... You know I wish I show you that letter. It's a laughing matter. They tell me in that letter, while you providing all this information, all this paper automatically, this does not designate that you will be approved. See, after doing all this stuff, it's not a situation. So sometime you feel like, ah, it's... yeah I file so many papers, but so far, I found nothing.

Interviewer: Sure.

[technical]

Interviewer: Okay. You were talking about the tents, finding the person in the theater...

Sam Weinreich: In our tent, there was a person who played in Ararat, in a Jewish theater so he told me, "You know what? On Sunday we're not going out to work and these doctors in their tent, I go over there once in a while they give me extra piece of bread, a piece of soup because being the doctors they had a little more privilege than we did have, the ordinary guys. So they have a little extra bread you can better yourself. So he take me every Sunday back over there to the doctors camp and I used to sing for them. So I got an extra piece of soup, I mean a piece of bread, a soup. I had one of the songs which touched one of these doctors. I remember this doctor, a Czechoslovakian doctor. He cried every time I sung this song. He cried like a baby because it reminded him about his mother and that song I had to sing this song for him every time I went there, he cried, and I assumed this is how I survived because I had typhus, I went

through every little thing people can think of. If I'm still here, I don't know how. I feel I had a little better than any rest of the people because when we were laying on our little blankets we were like sardines put out on both sides. One side, the second side, and then the center was a place to walk through. In the morning when they woke us up for coffee, some people didn't even get up because the guy died next to you. Hundred and four fever, no medication, nothing. You have to be strong enough to go on, because you have high fever, I believe, for three days, then, all of a sudden, the fever leave you, you're okay. But I assumed this is how I survived that camp. I was in concentration camp, in slave camp. After this, I designated doing something else besides pushing these dead people. I couldn't take it so much to go out and push dead people with that little wagon to be buried, so I was designated to go out to work. They taken up most of the people from the camp to work and we walked, I don't know how far, but we walked to a place I called the company moll, M-O-L-L. We were building airplane hangars underground from concrete. They had steel wire, and with the steel wire, they pour concrete into it. It was for the Allied forces should not be able to bomb their air force underground. When I see now Iraq, all of these tunnels they have, I said, "I bet you the Germans must have built these tunnels for them," because they were real good about creating all of these tunnels with concrete over the top. So I was carrying fifty or I don't know what that sack of cement... I was carrying sacks of cement on my back, from one place where their pile of cement was laying – two people put the sacks on your shoulder – you had to walk with this all the way back to a cement mixer. They mixed it up, the cement, and they poured concrete for these hangars. So I worked there for quite a while. Didn't have shoes, just a piece of wood, whatever you can find. The shoes I had were long gone and the good shoes had to be left alone behind. One morning the authorities, the SS told us, "We're gonna liquidate this camp. Everyone take your blankets and go towards the train," and they opened up the the barbed wire which we were surrounded with. They open up a place for us to get out at the back and we walked toward the train. I don't know how many people were still left in that camp. Well, that camp in Kaufering was a branch of Dachau. Dachau had 12 concentration camps. This was the only one which was left after the war. So others of them, the people died out and they shipped them into this camp. So we walked towards the train, dead people walking, and everybody had their blanket over their head. We walked toward the train. We lay down on the grass, waiting on the train. We waited several days, I don't remember, finally the trains came. I remember seeing the trains – in the front of the trains were civilian people. After locomotive was civilian people. Evidently, Germans who run away from the areas where the Allied forces coming in, they were trying to ship themselves deeper into Germany because this was in Bavaria, Kaufering was on southern, southern Germany. So in the back, they still have cattle cars, but the cattle cars were open they weren't closed up. They were open cars, no ceiling on it. So they loaded whatever they could – us – into these cattle cars. After about 10, 15 minutes with the locomotive driving us, there come fliers start bombing, bombing the train. They bombed the locomotive. They stopped the

train, then we all got off – they had Gendarmes, of course, watching us. They yelled, “Get out,” and we got out and went off the road away from the train rails. We went and we seen a forest, a little forest. There was a young guy, I don’t know how old he must have been. When got off the train, I tell him, “Come on,” and take him with me because I had in mind my brother which I knew probably I won’t see anymore. I taken him under my wings, so to speak. We went deep into a forest and I told him, “You know what? I’m not going back, come hell, high water,” because I knew I heard a lot of shooting going on, a lot of bombs. I said, “It must be the end.” I believe, if they come they’ll bomb... Because many times when we were laying in the concentration camp I wonder – we’re seeing planes way up high, you know, you’re looking in the sky – “God, why don’t they bomb this place? Why don’t they kill us over here and with them too?” Nothing happened. So when they bombed this locomotive we went off the train, and I said, “I’m not going back anymore in that train. I don’t care what’s gonna happen.” And we went way deep into a very thick forest with our blankets and later we heard howling – “[unintelligible 0:55:05.7]” – they’re howling for the people to come back on the trains. We heard dog barking and they’re howling for the people to come back. “I’m not going back.” We lay down on the ground, me and that little boy and I tell him I’m not going back. In the rain we got wet, didn’t care. Hungry and wet we lay there till that boy said, I don’t know maybe two days later, that boy said, “I can’t take it anymore. Let’s get out of here. How long can we stay here? Till we die? They’re not going to find our corpses, even.” So we decided to crawl out of there. I could see a little house, a farm and a soldier walking back and forth, back and forth with his rifle on his shoulder. Couldn’t understand, was it Russian? Was it American? Was it anybody else? Was it German? But we couldn’t care, I was on my last grasp. So we finally crawled over here and we raised our hands going up there and, all of a sudden, we heard the guy talking English, so we knew we survived. Talking English. And you just imagined what we went through. Now we hear the Americans are here and we seen the American flag. So he said, “Lower your hands, don’t worry.” Couldn’t understand a word he was saying. They’re taking us, and we were full of lice, dirty and hungry and everything else. We were taken into a kitchen. We sit down on the floor. Some of the GI’s came in looking at us and they had their C-ration. Used to be a little, small can, a green can. I remember, they’re throwing down the little can, they’re gonna feed us, they knew we’re hungry. And that boy I had, he thought that they threw a grenade, the food ration, he thought it was a grenade. It was a can. We’ve never seen any can. So he started howling. He thought he was going... He was so excited that he start howling. They finally try to find a guy who can talk Polish or Yiddish because that’s the only two languages we knew. Or German because Yiddish is a little bit close to... We could understand the German more than the Poles because I talked German before because, in our store in Lodz, there were a lot of German Poles and they talk German. So I talked about 50, 60% German. I understood everything they said to me. So they finally found a Jewish military person who was a doctor in the army and he talked fluent Jewish. He came in and he had explained to us what

happened. He said, "The first thing, we're gonna wash you up, give you some other clothes," and later on they taken us into a place where they had other people already like us into a farm. Where in this farm were even Russians, Hungary people, people from different nationalities. They told us not to eat anything else but farina and milk, farina and milk and he told us in Yiddish, he said, "Do not eat anything people will give you because a lot of you people dying after the war." They lived through all of this and because they ate the wrong food – their stomach were shrunk, they weren't used to this kind of food – a lot of them died after the war from eating like a human. And on that farm they had us nothing but farina and milk. We were there, I don't know, two or three weeks. We finally gain a little strength, a little weight. We went out in that little farm out to look around, we find other people. We started asking, "Are there any women alive?" There were only men in there, we thought – never know there was any women because boys always want girls. So we looked around and we say, "We wonder are there still women around." So they told us over there in Landsberg there's a displaced persons camp, if you go over there, there's a lot of people over there like you. So we finally... The doctor who was in charge of this little farm, excuse me, the doctor told us, "Well, if you be strong enough, we'll take you to displaced persons camp." So he did. We went over there, Landsberg am Lech, and this [unintelligible 1:00:14.7] where the German army used to be and, over there, they had a displaced person's camp. And over there, we had mostly only Jews. Just like our own little country, like our own government. We had our own police. The police was mostly to keep out unwanted people coming in over there. They had doctors over there, and they had cooks over there. They fed us. In the morning, breakfast, supper and a ration every so often. And over there we gained a little strength and everything else. In that camp I started working as a displaced person's, a DP's police man and so one morning I heard that they're gonna register people to go to another country.

Interviewer: Just a moment one second.

Sam Weinreich: I didn't believe I'm gonna live to tell these stories.

Interviewer: So you got to the DP...

Sam Weinreich: One morning while I had guards – at night, early in the morning, someone told me that they're gonna open up this office over here. People start registering, going to

United States. I said, "I'm going anywhere just to get out of Germany." So I registered and I got home, I told my wife -- I was married already then. I married in September 3, 1946, a year after the war. So I told my wife, "We're going to America." She said, "You going to America, who do you have in America? You only have no one over there, why would you go there? People -- we have family over there, they're still over here and you're going to America?" I said, "I registered, I'll go. What do I have I to lose? I didn't cost me anything, I just registered." Well, while we were in the displace person camp, we created our own picture shows. We had a big theater. Like I said, I done a little singing and we had a choir. We were about 40-50 people, taking charge just like a normal life. So one day, there comes our paper that calls me to go to Munich because the headquarters from the registration was in Munich. So I just went on there about 50 kilometers to Munich with a train. Come to Munich they told me, "Well you are sponsored to go to America." I had to write down of course what kind of trade you know, what can you do? I will not fall to the people's support, that I can support myself. Of course, being in the furniture business I told them that I'm a furniture finisher and I can also fix stuff. Let me know what. So he said, "Well Memphis, Tennessee." Memphis, Tennessee, why Memphis? I don't have nobody in Memphis. I don't have nobody nowhere else but I heard about Chicago, Hollywood, I heard New York, why Memphis, I don't -- Memphis, are there any people, any Jews in Memphis? Memphis is a city? But then the guy said, "Look, don't worry, don't worry there are no borders over there. You don't like Memphis you can go to wherever you want to go." I taken that for granted so I was designated to go to Memphis. He told me, "You need to go to Memphis," because E. L. Bruce used to be a hardwood flooring company in Memphis over here and he says since I wordworked in [unintelligible 1:04:44.7] they thought I'll be able to work in... Memphis Furniture Factory used to be also a big factory. He said maybe I can find employment over there, but they didn't hire nobody when I came over here. So the Jewish Federation sponsored me to go to Memphis. The first several months the Jewish Federation helped me find an apartment and I went to work as a furniture finisher. I don't believe if somebody would have told me then that I'm gonna sit here and talk about that, I wouldn't bank on it that I could not survive the day but I'm lucky I came to Memphis and I'm established over here and of course right now I'm up, up in the age but I worked till I was 70 years old and I was prosperous so to speak. I have a family with children and grandchildren. This blessed country of ours tried to help the whole world though they hate us for it. That's it, what else can I tell you.

Interviewer: I am so honored that you chose to share this story with us.

Sam Weinreich: Well...

Interviewer: I know it was very difficult.

Sam Weinreich: Is there anything else you want to ask me?

Interviewer: No sir, if you'd like to take a couple of minutes...

Sam Weinreich: You know each person has his own – what happened to him, in different ways, different eyes, whatever. I know historians probably will come up with other stories but nobody can deny what these eyes have seen. It's unbelievable what one human can do to the other. People became animals and tear you apart for no reason, only because you were Jews. I thought "Live and let's live," but this was not the case with us. My family was well established. We had even at the time... Before the war we knew that the war is coming, that Hitler is coming in to Poland. We had customers even German people they were Polish, German ancestor Polish, they came and told my father, "Mr. Weinreich [unintelligible 1:07:22.4] try to do something about it because you know bad times are coming for you." And he said, "What can I do? I don't have no one else to go anyplace. where -- what will I do? Leave everything and leave my family, what can we do? Where will we go?" People weren't so mobile like we are over here now. People didn't had no cars for everything. The progress weren't like United State. Of course, people don't think back, the younger generation today don't look back, that 60, 70 years ago you didn't push a button to get instant everything.

Interviewer: Right.

Sam Weinreich: Today you got air-conditioning, you got heat, whatever you want to, you got coffee, you got this, everything is instant living. So anyhow...

Interviewer: Are you gonna be okay to take a portrait right now?

Sam Weinreich: I—I'm okay.

Interviewer: Okay.