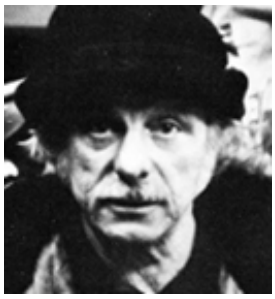
Walter Peltz: Oral History Transcript

www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Peltz.asp



Walter Peltz

Name: Walter Wolf Peltz (born Welwel Peltz) (1919 – 2003)

Birth Place: Warsaw, Poland

Arrived in Wisconsin: 1949, Milwaukee

Project Name: Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust

Biography:

Walter Wolf Peltz was born into a working-class family in Warsaw, Poland, on May 12, 1919. His area of the city later became the Warsaw Ghetto. Walter quit school at the age of 10 to help support his family. When war broke out in 1939, his home was destroyed and his family left starving.

To avoid arrest by the Gestapo, Walter fled to central Poland, near Lublin, where he was hidden by a Christian family for more than a year. Taken into custody in 1941, Walter survived four years in the concentration camps of Majdanek, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, and Dachau before being liberated by U.S. troops in May 1945.

Shortly after liberation, Walter married Rose Abraham, a Hungarian survivor of Dachau. They settled in Memmingen, Germany, opened a clothing store and, in 1946, had a son.

The family left Germany in April 1949, arriving in Milwaukee a month later where Walter quickly found work as a tailor. A daughter was born in 1952. Walter's wife died in 1968 and he remarried in 1972. Walter lectured frequently about the Holocaust until his death in 2003.

Audio Summary:

Below are the highlights of each tape. It is not a complete list of all topics discussed.

Tape 1, Side 1

- Family background
- Life in Warsaw in the 1920s and 1930s

Tape 1, Side 2

- Warsaw's Jewish community
- Family religious life
- Widespread anti-Semitism

Tape 2, Side 1

- Walter's school and friends
- Learning the tailor's trade
- Rise of Hitler and anti-Semitism

Tape 2, Side 2
- Germans invade Poland in 1939
- Warsaw under Nazi occupation
- Walter's escape from Warsaw

Tape 3, Side 1
- Hiding in the Underground
- Persecution of host families that helped him
- Walter kills a Nazi collaborator

Tape 3, Side 2
- Life with the Polish Underground
- Walter and comrades execute other collaborators
- Walter surrenders and is sent to Majdanek concentration camp

Tape 4, Side 1
- Descriptions of gas chambers
- Nazi sadism against prisoners
- Transfer to Auschwitz; brutalities and resistance there

Tape 4, Side 2
- Murders at Auschwitz
- Resistance at Auschwitz
- Attitudes toward life during these years

Tape 5, Side 1
- Solitary confinement
- Relations with German guards
- Smuggling

Tape 5, Side 2
- The nearby women's camp at Birkenau
- Attitudes toward death and survival
- Resistance at Birkenau

Tape 6, Side 1
- Escape attempts and resistance at Auschwitz
- Sachsenhausen and Dachau
- Walter's learns the fate of his family
- Thoughts on the Warsaw Uprising of 1944

Tape 6, Side 2
- Meeting his future wife at Dachau
- Walter’s liberation
- Postwar Nazi hunting
- Resettlement at Memmingen, Germany

Tape 7, Side 1
- Displaced persons camps in Germany
- Leaving Germany
- Immigrating to the U.S.

Tape 7, Side 2
- First impression of the U.S.
- Early years in Milwaukee
- Family life

Tape 8, Side 1
- Life as a new immigrant in Milwaukee
- Walter opens his own businesses

Tape 8, Side 2
- Family life
- Starting a scrap metal business

Tape 9, Side 1
- Children and family life
- Involvement in anti-Nazi organizations
- The New American Club (survivors' organization)

Tape 9, Side 2
- Walter's religious views
- Milwaukee's Jewish community
- Speaking about the Holocaust

Tape 10, Side 1 (no Side 2)
- Attitudes toward American culture
- Traveling home to Poland
- Trips to Israel
- Attitudes toward the depictions of the Holocaust at Auschwitz

About the Interview Process:

The interview was conducted by archivist Sara Leuchter on February 26-27 and March 10, 1980 in the Peltz living room. The three sessions totaled more than 10 hours.

During the conversations, Walter paced back and forth, often gesturing enthusiastically and providing compelling details. Walter was able to relate his experiences in minute detail. His memory for names and events was extraordinary. His interview is particularly vivid.

Teachers should note that this interview contains many graphic accounts of horrifying cruelty and violence that may not be suitable for younger students.

Audio and Transcript Details:

Interview Dates
- Feb 26, 1980; Feb 27, 1980; Mar 10, 1980

Interview Location
- Peltz home, Mequon, Wisconsin

Interviewer
- Archivist Sara Leuchter

Original Sound Recording Format

- 10 qty. 60-minute audio cassette tapes

Length of Interviews

- 3 interviews, total approximately 10 hours

Transcript Length

- 185 pages

Rights and Permissions

- Any document may be printed or downloaded to a computer or portable device at no cost for nonprofit educational use by teachers, students and researchers. Nothing may be reproduced in any format for commercial purposes without prior permission.

Pictures:

WHI Image ID 57057

WHI Image ID 57077

WHI Image ID 57059

WHI Image ID 57078

WHI Image ID 57079

WHI Image ID 57080

Transcript

The following transcript is from the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. It is an unedited, firsthand account of the Nazi persecution of the Jews before and during World War II. Portions of this interview may not be suitable for younger or more sensitive audiences. It is unlawful to republish this text without written permission from the Wisconsin Historical Society, except for nonprofit educational use.

Teachers should note that this interview contains many graphic accounts of horrifying cruelty and violence that may not be suitable for younger students.

Key

SL Sara Leuchter, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist
WP Walter Peltz, Holocaust survivor

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SL: I'd like to start with just some information on your family background. When and where you were born, and the names of your parents and their dates and places of birth if you can remember that?

WP: First I want to give you my date of birth. I was born May 12, 1919, in the capital of Poland, Warsaw. My parents, I don't remember exactly when they were born. My father, I believe, was born in 1899. And my mother was about two years younger. My grandparents, I can't give you any dates when they were born.

SL: What were your grandparents' names?

WP: Well, the first names, my father's father, his first name was Moshe and my grandmother's name was Feige. My mother's father was Wolf and my mother's mother was Shaindle.

SL: And what was her maiden name?

WP: Austerlitz. That's not a common name. You don't hear the name very often. That's a very historical name. This was her maiden name.

SL: What were the names of your parents?

WP: My father was Aaron Yitzhak, my mother was Chaya Sura in Yiddish.

SL: Do you have any idea where your parents were born?

WP: I don't know. My father's background was from Germany but my mother was born in Poland. And I guess my mother's parents are from Poland. But with a name like that, maybe not, I don't know. My grandfather probably wasn't from Poland. I doubt it if he was from Poland. I'm sure. But we never looked into it. Who was thinking about it, to look back and try to find out the family tree? Well, we did not. I think most people didn't even care, didn't even think about it. We had more different and more important things to think about and worry about than that.

SL: Did you know any of your grandparents?

WP: Yes, I did. I did know my father's father. He passed away when I was four years old, and my mother's mother, she passed away when I was eleven years old.

SL: Did either of them live in Warsaw?

WP: Yes, they both lived in Warsaw.

SL: How often did you see them?

WP: Well, my grandmother, my mother's mother I did see very often because we lived together in the same apartment till I was about nine or ten years old. Besides that, I did see her everyday, sure. Very often, very often, very often, yes.

SL: Do you have any special memories of her?

WP: An awful lot of memories. First of all I was the oldest grandson. There were four sisters. My grandmother had four daughters. My mother happened to be the oldest daughter. And I was the oldest grandson so to her I was like the apple of her eye. I couldn't do anything wrong. And if anybody came and told any stories about me, what I did something wrong, she didn't believe it anyway. I did love her very much. There's a lot of stories that I can sit and tell about when she got sick. That's a funny thing you know. When she got sick, I was at that time a little over ten years old. She was treated for different sicknesses, aches and pains, and the wind up was that she had cancer. But you can imagine, she was my grandmother. When she passed away, she was fifty-one years old, and at that time, I thought that she was pretty old, when I was so young. And as a matter of fact, while I talk to you I got the picture in

front of me, the way she looked, and in comparison, at that time maybe she was fifty years old. She looked like today somebody, a lady at ninety. Hard-working. My grandpa got killed. He fell down from a scaffold. He was an artist in his work and after he fell down from that scaffold he still lived two years. But I didn't know him. As a matter of fact I was named after him. I was born when he passed away, I guess the same year or the following year. So that's what the story is.

SL: Were you named after your grandfather Wolf?

WP: Yes.

SL: Was your name Wolf?

WP: My middle name is still Wolf. I still carry his name, yes.

SL: Is Walter an anglicized name or was Walter really your name?

WP: No, it was Wolf. You probably know, Wolf, in Hebrew it's Zev. That is actually my first name, Zev.

SL: Could you tell me something about the memories that you have of your parents?

WP: Probably if you ask anybody, any son of parents, they're going to tell you that his parents were the best and they were the most beautiful and I think that's what I had. They were poor, very poor. My father had a good trade but that trade did vanish because he was a woodcarver and he made handmade furniture. I remember when I was a little boy. But, it was very hard for him to make a living for us. But they were beautiful. They were very sincere, honest and very good parents. There's a lot of times that I think today to myself, and not actually today. It goes back a few years ago. I think to myself the pains that they probably had and the heartaches that they had five children and the children were crying that they were hungry and they didn't have the food to provide them. And this is something that's very often in my mind. Regardless if I have good times. Especially when I have good times, especially when I go on vacations, especially when I go to weddings or parties whatever it is. It's a funny thing. It's the truth, it always is in back of my mind. So they were very good. Well, they tried very hard. My youth wasn't as good. The most important things that the growing children should have we didn't have.

SL: Such as?

WP: As food, that's the most important thing, the nourishment. That was very, very, very little and very bad.

SL: Did your mother work at all?

WP: No. My mother didn't work. You probably know, in Europe, regardless how bad it was, the women didn't work in my times. Besides that, she had to take care of five children. There wasn't such a thing, even jobs available. There were not even jobs available, see.

SL: Could you give me the names of your brothers and sisters and the years of their birth?

WP: Yes. My younger sister's name was Feige in Yiddish. She was named after my grandmother too, and she was born in 1922. But I don't remember the dates.

SL: That's fine.

WP: That's right. My brother was Moshe. He was, again, named after my grandfather and he was born 1925. I had a sister, a beautiful little sister, she was so beautiful that they couldn't paint a nicer picture. Her name was Machla. Actually, my father used to call her Margalin. And my little sister, the youngest, was born 1931 and her name was Belle.

SL: When was Machla born?

WP: 1929, sorry if I didn't mention it. She was born 1929. I was born 1919; and my sister, 1921; my brother, 1925; Machla was born 1929, and the youngest one was in 1929.

SL: 1931?

WP: 1931, Machla was in 1929, yes I'm sorry. I'm getting mixed up [laughs].

SL: Can you give me any special recollections of your brothers and sisters?

WP: The recollections, most of them was heartbreaking. Well, there were good ones too. Not too many but there were good ones, too. First of all, as little girls or my younger sister, they didn't have any proper clothes, but they were nice children, good children. There was a lot of problems with schooling. I didn't go to school, very little. My sister start to work at the early age. I don't know if I mentioned it, I started to work when I was a little over ten years. Ten and-a-half years old, I was already a member of a union. So my sister had to find a job and help the family. I was the oldest, so they respected me very much. They

did respected me for being their older brother and they always say they expect something from me because I was working. And as little as I could afford to buy things for them, I did. But later on I used to buy them shoes and dresses, whatever I could, socks. And then they were secondhand. I couldn't afford to buy them any new ones. Later on, when I was already about sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old, it was a little bit easier for me because I made a little bit more money. So I did help support my family, though I didn't live any more at home. Because all the time when I lived home, I did donate all my earnings to my parents. Besides that, I used to have side jobs. I used to carry packages from the supermarkets. We didn't call them supermarkets, they were regular grocery stores. And my aunt had a store, which it was left from my grandmother. On Thursday, the women used to shop for Friday and for the weekend, for Saturday, so I used to make a little extra money. I used to be fixing the electricity and bicycles, whatever I could, so I made extra money and that did help them very much. Whatever I could with. So they did looked up to me, and I mentioned it before, though I didn't live with them, sure. My mother's younger sister wasn't bad off. Her husband made a good living, he was the head of a newspaper. A Jewish newspaper in Warsaw.

SL: What was the name of the newspaper?

WP: *Di Naye Folkstsaytung.* So they were pretty good off. So she decided that I should move in with them because I didn't have a chance to save any money for myself to buy some halfway decent clothes because, after all, I was getting--my aunt thought I'm getting older and that's the time to go out on dates. So she gave me free room and board. And whenever I made money, I did help support my family. The rest I saved so I could buy — I made my first brand-new suit when I was about seventeen years old. I believe my first shoes was when I was fifteen years old.

SL: You made it yourself?

WP: Yes, me and another few guys that I worked with. This was after the season when it was slack. We didn't have so much work to do so we used to work on our own clothes, yes.

SL: What was your aunt's name and her married name?

WP: Well, her name was the same first name as my little sister has, Belle. But her last name, married name, was Vilensky.

SL: What was her husband's name?

WP: Motl, Mordechai. It's actually the same.

SL: What other relatives did you have then living in Warsaw?

WP: I had quite a few. Of course my mother's sisters. They were married.

SL: Do you recall their names?

WP: Yes. I had one aunt which I never knew that this in the United States it's spelt and it sounds like an Irish name, was Obreian. That is true. They were not such a poor people. His father was a veterinarian and they were pretty good off. They had some riding horses and some animals and he was a veterinarian. It was at one of the biggest breweries in Poland and the brewery was in Warsaw. At those years that they had those big horses that — like they show pictures here from what is that brewery here, Hamms I believe — they used to have those big horse drawing wagons with the beer.

SL: Don't you mean Budweiser?

WP: Budweiser, yes. It shows you that I know very much about the beer! Budweiser that is corect. He used to take care of the horses and they had a lot of horses. So they were pretty well off.

SL: What was his name?

WP: Obreian. And my other aunt and uncle — Lefkowicz was his name — he was a manager in a huge paper and cardboard company. Actually, it was a German company. I even remember the name. Chanchuch was its name, because before the war, I guess it was 1936 or 1935, my father was out of work and my uncle gave him a job in that company. So he worked there for just a couple of years. Again, my father's sister lived in Warsaw and her husband. They had two children, a boy and a girl. He was a baker. And I had of course a lot of cousins. And I had some family in Paris, France, where my father had a — I had another uncle and an aunt from my father's side, my father's brother. His name was Peltz.

SL: In Warsaw?

WP: Warsaw, yes. He was a manager in a big chocolate factory. There's a whole story behind it. This man amongst all the whole family, he was the most educated person, next to my mother's younger sister. She was a teacher. He did try to make his career in the army. But I'll never forget, he was quite a number of years there, but in order for him to stay in the army they tried to force him to give up his religion. So he would not give up the religion. Then he pulled out. He quit. So he got this job in that factory. Was a very big factory and for a Jew to get a job like that was unheard of, but he got the job. He was capable of doing it properly.

SL: Do you know exactly what job he had there?

WP: He was the manager over the whole thing. He was very liked there too. I remember that they would — he had a very good job. Of course he had five children, also. He had a nice place to live, a nice apartment, he had a beautiful wife. Very nice. Very beautiful, very nice.

SL: How close were you with your cousins?

WP: Very close. I think can't be any closer. Again, I was the oldest cousin, so well, they always lived with the idea that I will protect them, that if somebody does any harm to them, which was true. And we lived very close. I want you to realize one thing. In Europe, I would say most of the families lived very close. Regardless if they lived way near or far, there was a closer-knit family relation than it is here probably. And again, I'll come back to my family in Paris. My father had two brothers and a sister. They had first cousins, which were well off they were. Some of them were in the clothing business in Paris. They were pretty beautiful people, very nice people.

SL: Did you see them at all?

WP: Yes I did see them, not very often. I had a chance that one of my father's brothers came in 1934 to Poland from France for a visit. I think it was in 1934 when they had the World's Fair in Paris. He tried to talk in my father and my mother that he should take me with him. They didn't have any children, that particular uncle and aunt. And after talking for days and days they decided to let me go, till the last

minute. When I was ready to leave, to say good-bye, they changed their mind. So that was the last time I've seen him. And I did see my father's sister several times, not too many times.

SL: Did you have any relatives in the United States?

WP: No ma'am.

SL: Any friends? Did you have any contact with anyone at all in the States?

WP: No, no ma'am, never.

SL: I want to go back to a couple things about your father. Number one, do you recall your father telling you any stories about WWI?

WP: My father wasn't that old. My father was only twenty years older than me. He was in the Polish army. He was not in the Second World War, but he was in the Polish army after Poland took over. When I was born, he was in the service at that time. But there's a long story behind it. He deserted and he went back to Germany. That's a story he told me several times. When he used to tell the story to us, my mother used to cry, because he deserted. He hated it. I don't know if you know, then and later, though a Jew was in uniform, he was in the service, still they tried to push him around and kick him around because he was a Jew. This anti-Semitism was terrible, big in Poland. So he hated it so he deserted and went to Germany. And my mother and me supposed to follow but I was a little infant at that time. So my mother decided that she's going to go to Germany, but at those years she couldn't go legally through the borders so she had to go through the border illegal. She got caught with me and they arrested her. She tried again but my father got sick and tired of being alone there without us so he gave himself up and they threw him in jail for nine months. He was in jail because he deserted. He was lucky, they could have shot him, too. I don't know what the outcome was, why, but he was nine months in jail.

SL: Your father you said was a woodcarver. Was your father self-employed, or did he ever work in a factory situation?

WP: No. My grandfather had the same trade, two other brothers, too. They were working for themselves. They used to make, they used to build like fancy furniture. Furniture that was made was very expensive furniture. All the hand work, and hand-carved they used to make. If you recall, many years ago there was those tables with those big round legs and the all different designs and the bedroom sets. Actually, they had special bedroom sets. Bedroom sets consisted of a lot more things than it is here. And so on and so forth. But in the 1930s they came out with a new style. You can imagine Poland with a new style! Well, of course there were people that had a lot of money, they could afford. So, they had the new styles and they came out with furniture which it was plain, so they did not require anymore all this work. So they did make wooden toys for children. But it didn't work out. My grandpa at that time passed away, and the whole thing was dissolved. I think that's when it started.

SL: What kind of wood did they use?

WP: I can't tell you. I don't know what kind of wood. One thing I recall whatever they used, what was unique, they didn't have any electricity. I remember it vividly. They had some kind of a contraption that they used to put in a piece of wood, and work with their foot like a sewing machine, and the thing used to turn around. Actually, it was like a lathe…

SL: With a pedal?

WP: With a pedal. I think two of them used to pedal it, you see. I remember that. When my grandpa died, I was four years old. I'll never forget.

SL: Did your father ever teach you any of the art of carving wood?

WP: Oh, yes. Well, we used to, like a father. I did it with my children, too. He'd take a knife and pound and carve on wood. But I've got a little bit in me when it comes to woodworking, carving or whatever it is. But I never did actually have the love for it. I love to work with wood, I like to build things, but I actually didn't have the love for it, no. I always did live with the dream and idea when I was younger to become an electrician, a mechanic or a plumber or whatever it is. But I always hated what I did learn. The tailoring, I hated it. I just hate it with a passion but I didn't have a choice because, I don't know if you're

aware of it, in Europe — and I heard from people the same thing was here too, many years ago. In Europe if a young boy wanted to learn a trade, he had to go for an apprenticeship for three years for free, for nothing and they used to work twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen hours a day. At tailoring, when I did go to work, after a few months my boss started to pay me $5.00 a week and that was a lot of money, so I could help my parents. So therefore I couldn't quit and go out and work and to do something else. And I hated it. I did hated tailoring.

SL: I'm going to turn the tape over and [inaudible].

WP: Good.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

WP: I hope you're not going no place.

SL: I've got plenty of time. Why did you go into tailoring to begin with? You didn't realize at first that you were going to get paid the $5.00 a week, so why did you start working as a tailor?

WP: That was my father's suggestion, you know, because the guy that I worked for was my father's friend, so therefore he found a job for me. The only way to find a job was, we had this particular newspaper that was very famous. It's very similar like the Milwaukee Journal here or Sentinel, they got those want ads, they're looking for certain trades and so on and so forth. This paper was a Jewish paper and it was printed in Polish and they had the same paper in Yiddish, too. Anybody who needed somebody to work, if they put an ad, they put it in that paper. So you had to get up early in the morning at 5:30, 5:00 in the morning, wait till the paper came out, it was an early paper, and start to look for a job. There was no transportation, so if the job was fifty blocks away or thirty blocks, you had to run [laughs]. Well, that was very tough, very tough. So my father found me the job and it was his suggestion.

SL: Do you recall the name of that newspaper that you mentioned?

WP: Yes I do recall the name. The name of the newspaper was *The Express*. That was a well known paper in Poland, in Warsaw. We had a lot of newspapers. Now that I was in Israel several times. In Israel they got a lot of newspapers, too, and those magazines. I think no other country has so many. And we had in Poland the same thing. We had in Poland, I don't know — Humpty Dumpty Jewish newspapers and magazines and a morning paper and a morning paper and an afternoon paper and a late edition newspaper and an extra. More newspapers than a person could handle.

SL: I'd like to ask you a couple questions about the area in which you lived. First of all, could you describe to me the place where you lived, were you in a house or an apartment?

WP: Well, if you want to call it an apartment — In Warsaw, I would say the city wasn't as big as Milwaukee. Maybe it was a lot smaller than Milwaukee. But the buildings that they had there were up. There wasn't

such a thing as single families. The apartment [building] that we lived in, there was 478 families. Can you imagine? It was like a city by itself. That's true, that's correct.

SL: One building?

WP: One building. But I don't want you to be under the impression that each family had five-six rooms. No. The majority only one single room or two rooms, a room and-a-half, they called it. Of course, there was in one the front of the building. If there were two, three stories let's say, the first story of the building was never carved, the second, third, fourth, the fifth the front there, where the ritzy-pitzy people used to live, and they used to have three or four rooms. But other than that, there was only one-room apartments. There were 478 families in this particular building and we lived in one room.

SL: Five children, two adults and a grandmother?

WP: Five children, two — and my grandmother and one aunt.

SL: Did you sleep on the floor or did you have beds that folded into the walls?

WP: There were only two regular beds. No, there were only two regular beds, and there were four people to a bed. And, of course, at night we did have those collapsible beds like — you got them here, some of them. You can buy them here.

SL: A cot?

WP: Well, you can call it a cot if you would like to. But they were special built that they did collapse in a very small package.

SL: So you could put it away during the day?

WP: Correct. Well, and on the floor too, there was no shame — on the floor. So I was raised in one room, that's all.

SL: What did you do for a kitchen? Was it in the corner of the room?

WP: Yes the kitchen was in the corner of the room is right it was stationary. The kitchen was built out of bricks and stone, that's it. And they had some tiles around, if there was a fancy kitchen, they had tiles around. It had an oven for baking and the only thing you used for fuel is wood and coal. I made the

statement before, of course, there were some places like, of course people that they had more money and they lived in more rooms, they had beautiful kitchens, nice kitchens with big stoves. The stove did work on wood and coal and gas, the combination. They were beautiful. I don't want you to be under the impression that people didn't live — some of them did live beautiful, there's no question about it.

SL: How did you heat the apartment?

WP: This was a big problem, the biggest problem really. In the wintertime it was just horrible. You couldn't leave a glass of water on the table, because it did freeze during the night. My mother, she rest in peace, used to get up. And [when] we were children, that was the horrible thing in the morning, to get up. You couldn't stick out your foot because it was so cold in the room. So she used to get up an hour earlier, or half an hour earlier, to start a fire and like a belly pot, whatever you're calling it here. We had [a pot] made out of steel and the thing used to get red hot and keep a little warm, and that's how we got dressed. And that thing didn't burn all day long. You couldn't afford to burn it all day long. And the bigger, at other apartments, they had an oven built — as a matter of fact, I've seen some here, too, and I've seen some in Israel, too — that was built out of tiles, it was built into the wall. It was the whole height from the wall and the width was about three feet which the other side did go in another room. So if you heated it in this side that did heat another room, too. And this used to keep heat for about twenty-four hours or eighteen hours. This was filled up with coal and wood, the same way. But the majority of the people did have to heat constantly in order to keep warm. Now, I'm talking about a city like Warsaw, which it was a big city. You can imagine like the way people lived in smaller towns. Ah, it was horrible, worse yet, worse yet.

SL: Did you have outhouses behind the apartment building?

WP: Well let me--no, we didn't have no outhouses. We couldn't have an outhouse. I'll tell you what it was. In the building, first of all, they had — it was a courtyard. The way the buildings were built, it had a courtyard. The building was built square, like, let's say, four buildings put together, and the center was

hollow. The center was the courtyard. The children used to play. And on the courtyard was one door to go and in which it was a bathroom.

SL: One bathroom?

WP: The bathroom had only two seats, two toilets. Men or women used to go into the same toilet.

SL: For 478 people there were two toilets?

WP: Not all of them, but some people that lived on the higher floors, fourth and fifth, so two or three or four families had only a toilet. No bathroom, forget about it, only a toilet, that's it, period. But the majority of people had to go down in the morning was lines, a line to go into the bathroom. That's it. Well, that's the way it was.

SL: Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

WP: Predominantly, yes, Jewish neighborhoods. We did live in an area where mostly Jewish people that lived.

SL: Were your immediate neighbors in the apartment building mostly Jewish?

WP: Yes. We had some Christians, too, as neighbors, on one side there were two families, Christians, and on the other side, Jews. There were a few of them, but mostly Jewish people lived in the area.

SL: Didn't you have the type of open-air markets in the streets?

WP: No, not in Warsaw. They had open-air markets, designated places, like a bazaar or whatever you call it, or markets, which they were huge, very huge. But almost every building had a grocery store that they lived up from the people living there, see. They had a grocery store and a store that sold fuel, like coal and wood, and there was a plumber, and there was an electrician and a shoemaker, a shoe repair. This was actually almost in every building. And stores used to sell kerosene and soap or whatnot. No, in Europe you had — for example, like here if you go into a drugstore you can buy from soup to nuts. And if you go in today in any store they keep a lot of stuff that they sell. See in Europe it wasn't that way. In Europe a grocery store had only groceries; forget about anything else. And a dairy store sold only dairy, like milk and eggs and cream, whatever, what goes with it. A fuel store only sold fuel. And a

drugstore was a drugstore. They didn't sell anything else but drugs. So it was a little bit different. Even today it's the same way.

SL: What was the name of the street that you lived on?

WP: I was born on a street by the name of Dzielna. This street became famous now after the war. As a matter of fact, when I was back three years ago, exactly three years ago, the street is still there because the street has a jail, mostly for political prisoners. And during the war, during the Nazi occupation, that place there served them, they killed a lot of people there, a lot of Jews and non-Jews, as a matter of fact. And I don't know if you are aware that Warsaw was terrible, that it was razed, was bombed, they didn't leave one building there. Everything is rebuilt, anyway. But the part from the jail, a part of it, is still there, which they made a shrine out of it, so they didn't change the street's name. Other than that a lot of streets were changed. So the street's name was Dzielna.

SL: Now this is the apartment building you lived in you said you were born and you lived there, you remained there, that's where your family lived.

WP: Yes.

SL: What was the surrounding area like, was it basically apartment buildings, or were there also office buildings?

WP: There wasn't such a thing as office buildings. Everything was apartment buildings, and the buildings were built one next to another, close. There was no alleys like we got here, or a block. They were built very close to each other and there were four-, five-, six-story buildings. They were huge buildings.

SL: Did you ever have the opportunity to go outside Warsaw on a school vacation or something?

WP: Well, I'll be very frank with you. When I did go to school, I only did go once away. This school had like a camp, summer camp. But it costed a lot of money to send the children. I think that the school paid for me half at that time, or the whole thing, I don't recall. I was sent for four weeks away to that camp.

SL: Where was that?

WP: It's a funny thing that you ask me where it was. Where that camp was, when the Nazis did occupy Poland, there where Triblinka was where they killed so many people.

SL: Was that the same place that you went to camp?

WP: That's correct. That was a huge area there, a huge area that was for resorts and for in the summer there whatever it was. The Nazis after a while built that concentration camp, Treblinka, the death camp, You heard about it, I'm sure. That was Zeglembia. The name there was Treblinka but in Polish it was Zeglembia. I still remember vividly that address when I did write home cards to my parents, was [Zaremba Kostierna? 14:45].

SL: What did it look like there, how totally different was it from what you experienced in the city?

WP: Oh, it was entirely different, of course. Open spaces, farm land, beautiful, and the camp site and the camp buildings and the big dining rooms and the sleeping areas. And we used to go out on hikes. It was an experience that I never had in my life, see? And the food — most important thing — the food. I never had so much food in my life. I never knew that I get up in the morning, I'll have a breakfast. I had a breakfast and I had lunch and then supper. As a matter of fact I was eating so much that I got sick. I used to eat whatever leftovers that was left on the table and chocolate milk! Oh my gosh. When I was a youngster, chocolate milk, my gosh, I used to dream about chocolate milk [laughs]. Or eggs or some other food. Well, it wasn't so easy.

SL: What about your religious life growing up? How religious were you?

WP: Well, I would actually like to go into it and explain to you something [about], you know, what did happen to our religious life, my background. My grandmother was very religious, a very religious person. Amongst the Jewish population around the area they used to call her a rebitsin.[1] They used to call her some other names which pertained to religious things. She was very religious, strictly religious. My father's father was fanatic. I remember that he used to *daven*.[2] Let me explain to you something,

[1] Yiddish, literally for "the rabbi's wife." Often sarcastically applied to a woman who acts excessively pious.

[2] Yiddish for 'pray'.

that in Warsaw, a city like that, even small cities, they had places where they used to pray, we used to call it the *shtiebel*, but they had synagogues, too. You see for people to go to a synagogue and he lived someplace, was so far to walk — transportation, forget about it. So my grandfather used to, like you call here, the cantor, he used to be there leading the services. He was very religious. My father and the family, they were very versed in Hebrew, and they were very religious. But something did happen. I'll tell you what did happen. I don't know if you were aware of or if you ever heard about it, you probably did. In 1932 or 1933 it was, around the area, they did forbid the Jewish ritual of meat. It was a lady, a no-good Nazi, at that time, Jew hater, that she was. Madame [Kristerova?][3] was her name. Can you imagine? I still remember even their names. Something like that, how can you forget? The government did forbid the Jewish ritual.

SL: The slaughtering?

WP: The slaughtering, correct, kosher slaughtering, correct. Now, I would like to explain to you something. Before they forbid the slaughtering, a pound—I'm trying to reverse it, try to figure out kilograms to pounds, there's a slight bit, 2 pounds 2 onces or 2 pounds 1 once is a kilogram, give or take a little bit. Way before the war, a pound of meat, kosher meat, was fifty-five cents. I'm figuring in American money, so you get an idea.

SL: What was in zlotys?

WP: It was more in zlotys, much more, but I'm figuring. Well, let me say this: regardless, at that time in Poland I think that fifty-five cents in Poland was more than the fifty-five cents here in the United States because if you compare — and I did compare — in those years the wages that people did earn and the buying power. It was funny thing. I did look into it for many years. I'll give you one example. Of course, I know the people in those years the people used to work for three, four dollars a week. We used to pay eight to nine dollars a month rent. For an apartment. I know that. I hope that you are aware of that, because I did talk to lot of people. When I came to this country I told to lot of people. They told me

[3] Kosher slaughtering was restricted in Poland in 1936. In 1938 the bill was revived, but the war intervened before it could be voted upon by the Senate. Mrs. Prystor was the leading advocate.

stories and I did ask. They use to buy here for fifteen cents twelve cents a pound of beef here. Liver they give it for free. If you bought of beef they give up to two pounds of liver for free. Now was pound of fifteen cents beef here and fifty five cents there. Our buying power was less than it was here. The rent was more expensive than it is here what was here. We could not, as a family, afford to eat meat every day anyway. If we ate meat, that little [meat] that we ate, my mother used to buy for the weekend for Friday. She couldn't afford to buy a chicken. The poor woman used to buy all the insides and the feet and the wings and what have you, because it was cheap. And maybe once a week she used to buy a piece of meat for my father because he worked so hard. So when this did happen, meat, kosher meat, jumped more than half — more as much as what was. It was a $1.10; it went to $2.40 a kilogram. So my father — I'll never forget this — my father said to my mother, "I don't know what's going to be now. How in the world can we afford to buy meat, or anything?" He says, "Before we couldn't afford." And my mother — I'll never forget, cried. She says, "Well, that piece of beef that I used to make for you before, I can't do it now." So my father snapped out of it and says to my mother, "Well, if there's a God," he says, "he knows that we cannot afford to buy that black-market meat." So he says to my mother, "You go ahead and buy nonkosher meat and make it kosher yourself." And that's how it started. My father didn't care no more, to go to the temple as much. It started to cool off. And it was something — there were neighbors people had to worry about and family to worry about and children to worry about, but as the time went by, as the time went by, you know, it got more free and free and free. I even caught my father smoking a cigarette on Saturday. So, that's my background of religion.

SL: How old were you at the time you caught him smoking on Shabbes?

WP: How old I was? I was about, I would say about maybe fourteen or fifteen years old. I did not make any remarks. When I left house it was different.

SL: So it was already a few years after the that?

WP: Yes, sure. I was about fourteen or fifteen years old. That's right. Well, I didn't make any remarks. You know, what I did at home and when I went away from home is two different things.

SL: What kind of traditions though did you keep in the house? Did your mother light candles?

WP: Oh yes. The traditions were going on as it was. This was not any different. The same things, she was lighting candles, same as it was before.

SL: Were Jewish holidays celebrated with any more fanfare than a regular daily event?

WP: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely.

SL: With your cousins?

WP: Oh absolutely, absolutely. It was celebrated. Of course it was, sure. A holiday was a holiday. You could walk the streets in the neighborhood and you can tell it was a holiday. Would you believe that the goyim[4] used to say, when it came, let's say for example, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, they had to close their stores, too, because the streets were so dead. Oh holidays, sure, of course. Everybody looked forward to a holiday. Of course, when you were children you always pray to God and pray that you get a new pair of shoes or some new clothes and you could walk out, like other children used to go on the street and show off with their clothes.

SL: So taking the place of, say in this country, of toys for children having importance?

WP: Toys — forget about toys, toys. We used to make our own toys. But again there were people that they used to buy toys. You know, there were beautiful stores, they used to sell all those things. People did buy it. There was, of course, a small majority of people that could afford to spend the money on those things.

SL: Did you attend the *cheder*?

WP: Yes, I did.

SL: For how long?

WP: I did go to a *cheder*, and I did go to public school, the few short years what I did. But most of my background, my Yiddish background, is self-taught. I read and write Jewish perfectly. I read and write Hebrew. That most of it I taught myself. I didn't have a chance to go to school. I did try to go at night

[4] Yiddish for 'non-Jews'.

school, but that was impossible. There were fights, there were beatings every night. Oh, three times a week we did go, beatings every night, did three nights with the Christian guys, and their anti-Semitism was just horrible, just horrible. You know, it's a funny thing. You know, amongst our people, needless to say, either they don't remember, either they forgot, or either they are ashamed to tell their stories. A lot of times we get together and we talk about it. There's some other people, not many, but a few, will make a statement that they didn't know about it, [that] there were anti-Semites. Well, this is a lot of baloney. Like everybody tells the story, stories how rich they were and God knows what they did. I don't want to go into it. Because I think a lot of people lived with a lot of illusions and dreams. In Poland, the anti-Semites, they were the worst in any place on this earth. If you couldn't fight back, you were lost. You were afraid to walk on the streets. You were afraid to walk out when it was dark outside. That's all.

SL: I want to stop the tape, but I want to continue talking about anti-Semitism.

WP: Good.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SL: Now you've told me before a few times that your Polish education was not such a long duration. How many years did you go to school?

WP: Well, I went to school altogether a little over three years.

SL: You went to a Polish school?

WP: It's a public school. There were Jewish children and non-Jewish children.

SL: Was it taught in Polish?

WP: Yes.

SL: How many languages did you speak when you were growing up?

WP: As I was growing up I was speaking Polish and Yiddish.

SL: Yiddish in the house?

WP: Yes, we did speak Yiddish and German.

SL: Now where was the German speaking coming from?

WP: Well, from my father's side.

SL: Did your mother also speak German?

WP: No. My father always used to throw in German words. He used to talk, converse in German, too.

SL: Was there any kind of compulsory education for you in Poland?

WP: There was compulsory education, there was. We started to go to school at age seven. There was compulsory, but it wasn't so compulsory that they did something to the parents or fine them by not sending their children to school see. Therefore, we had so many illiterate people in Poland.

SL: So when you left school at age ten were you breaking the law?

WP: I did broke the law but nothing has been done to it.

SL: How long did you have to go to school by law? What was it really, the compulsory age?

WP: By law till age fourteen — seven years to school. From seven till seven, so at the age fourteen. And then, if you could afford to the parents send you — here there's a high school. By us, in Poland, there

was the regular school and high school together. I think the education system was entirely different than it is here. I don't know how it is today but those years it was different.

SL: What kind of education did your brothers and sisters receive?

WP: Nothing. Only my younger sister, she did go to school. My brother did go to school for a short time.

SL: Were your friends mostly Jewish kids?

WP: Yes, I would say so. I had some non-Jewish friends, too. But, of course, we were raised together and their homes were like our homes, and our homes was to them like their homes. That was right. We were close, there's no question about it. But it still, that word "Jew" was still in their mind.

SL: Could they distinguish you physically as being a Jew?

WP: They did yes. It's a funny thing about those Polish people [laughs]. Let me say this to you if I may. I found out one thing: that any person who's against somebody, who's got a hatred born in him or in her, they can distinguish people. There's no question about it. A Polack could smell a Jew a mile away, regardless if your eyes were blue or your hair blonde. The same thing with the other countries that they had those anti-Semites. You can't even be here in the United States, okay? There's a lot of foreign people coming from different parts of Europe, Christians. They'll recognize you that you are a Jew right away, regardless. You know it's happened to me many a times, right here. A lot of people always said they had a hard time to recognize me for a Jew. You know, my younger years, I got blue eyes and I was blonde. But they talk to you, they tell you right away, "Oh, you're a Polish Jew." They'll recognize you, there's no question about it.

SL: Did you wear any Jewish traditional dress?

WP: Never. I never did wear any Jewish traditional dresses, never.

SL: So they couldn't tell by that.

WP: No, I never did. I never did wear a cap on my head. I was dressed like anybody else.

SL: Was this more or less the result of living in a city rather than in shtetl area?

WP: No I wouldn't say that. There were a lot of young people even in the stethels that used to dress the same as I did. Oh yes sure.

SL: Were there also a quite few religious [people] in the city who would dress in a traditional way?

WP: Oh yes there were. Oh a lot.

SL: Was that in a different neighborhood?

WP: No, not necessarily. Same neighborhood, sure.

SL: Going back to the anti-Semitism you faced while growing up. What kind of form would it take? Beatings, or just vocal harrasment?

WP: Well, either. There were vocal harassments [and] beatings. They tried to go out and have good times and try to beat Jews. This always happened during the weekend. But there were legally groups, organizations, which were Jew haters. You probably are aware or heard about. Or if not, you're probably going to be surprised. You know, students in Poland — the Christian students — they were organized by some kind of organization against the Jews. It came to a point, and I'm not talking the Hitler era, I'm talking before Hitler's era, and they were organized. They used to go to certain neighborhoods and stand in front of Jewish stores, and they used to carry signs that [said that] the Christians should not buy from Jews. They should not support the Jews. And their slogan was, "[?]"[5] — that means "Everybody goes to themselves for whatever he needs. He should not buy from a Jew, he should go buy from a Christian." They used to paint stars on the windows. They used to break windows throwing rocks. The police didn't do very much about it. So it was legally organized.

SL: Were you yourself ever attacked or beaten?

WP: Well, I'll tell you one thing. If they were not beaten for me, they never beat me. I want you to know that. I was always involved. I always was a leader and always had a group and we all used to go attack them. And I mean attack. I want you to know that I was stabbed, knifed four times.

SL: At what age?

[5] Polish words here, tape 2, side 1, 6:55.

WP: At a very young age, I want you to know. I never did walk the streets without a weapon in my pocket. I always had a weapon in my pocket, I want you to know. Though it was forbidden. But who did care? I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I walked the street and I [had] seen a group or a hoodlum or whoever it is, attacks a Jew that I should take off and run away or hide. No, that never happened. I always got involved, I want you to know. That's not only me, but a lot of us.

SL: Can you recall your parents ever giving you advice or warning you about getting mixed up [in fights]?

WP: Yes. My father always used to tell me, "Hit them first — always. Never duck, and never run away." He was the same way. I remember when I was little he used to do the same thing. He used to stand up for his rights, used to fight. He never told me not to get hit and run away. Never.

SL: Did Jews have less protection by the police?

WP: Absolutely, absolutely. There's no question about it, no question about it.

SL: And as far as your legal rights as Jews in Poland, how did that differ?

WP: What legal rights?

SL: You had none at all?

WP: There was, but who went for legal rights? And on a Sunday when those Polacks used to get drunk, this was their only recreation. What did they do the first thing? "Let's go out and beat Jews." And I mean there was blood on the street. And when they used to run to the police… We didn't have any telephones like we've got here in this country, [where] you run to the telephone and call the police. You couldn't [do that in Poland]. You had to go to the police department. And in some instances the police department could have been ten, fifteen blocks away. So if you had a bicycle, you can ride. You see a policemen, [you] used to go to them and tell them that a bunch of drunks are beating Jews, so he asked, "How many Jews are dead? If there's none dead, we don't even go there." So the Jews had to take care of themselves.

SL: Did you belong to any political or social groups?

WP: Yes I did. Political, I belong to the union. The union was a political organization. As a matter of fact, that political organization still exist[s] here in this country.

SL: Can you tell me something about the union you belong to in Warsaw?

WP: Yes I can. That was the tailor's union. They had a big population, of course. There were lots of Jews who were shoemakers and tailors. They was very well organized. I think the union I know of in Europe that I belong to [was organized]. And they were in worst circumstances than the unions here in this country. I think that the unions in this [country] should have come to learn how to run a union in Poland from the Jews in those years. I want you to know that. [Our] work I was protected. I don't mean the means there were against the bosses, against the places that we worked. It was entirely different. I did belong here to the union for a short time, and I have seen the difference that was between here and Poland. Here it is about money. It's a big business. It's multi-million-dollar business. As a matter of fact, the leader form the union died in this country. He was lucky to get away. Two of them. The guy by the name of Mr. Himmelfarb? He was the leader of the union. He died in Chicago after the war.

SL: It was not necessarily a Jewish union?

WL: No. I would say this here the union I belong to was strictly Jewish. Local strictly Jewish.

SL: How many members would you say were in your union?

WL: I can't tell you. I don't know. It was quite a bit.

SL: What kind of accomplishment it was for you at age ten and-a-half to become a member? Was this quite unusual?

WP: Otherwise I couldn't [have] got a job.

SL: Were you considered to be a very young member, or was it not too unusual?

WP: When you became a member to the union at the young age, automatically they drafted you [to] sort of speak to the organization. Let's say like this we got here the B'nai B'rith? There is BBYO. There is another group. There is another group and there is the higher group 'til you became B'nai B'rith? The same thing happen there. They did make use of you members. They did organize them and the young

members. Besides, they had organization meetings. That's way how those came together. There were girls, too. It was entirely separate thing. They used to go out, they used to teach speech and whatever. It was beautiful. It was very nice. So to speak, they took boys and girls off the streets.

SL: Did women belong to the union?

WP: Oh sure. There were girl tailors, too.

SL: Did you pay membership?

WP: Yes we did.

SL: How much it was?

WP: I do not remember, but I think it was according to earnings. They took certain percentage. You paid every week.

SL: Did they provide you with any kind of protection, in much the same the unions do here?

WL: Yes, they did.

SL: When you went on strike, was there any compensation?

WL: Yes. I do remember that one I time I lived through a strike. That was a strike, not only Warsaw, it was national strike. Tailor strike. Because I think the wages that they had established for certain qualifications was lower, and the same thing. And the other thing, the people that they used to make ready clothes for [in] certain stores, they had certain groups. Group number one, number two, three, four, five, six. And the tailoring, how much they take per slacks or a coat, etc. And they that worked in the shops, they did earned their wages according to their qualifications again. That was well organized. That was very good. But the only problem was, for example, if a young man, like me, worked in a shop, and there were 11 people at that time, there was very little chance to work yourself up. The only time you could work yourself up is if somebody left the job, or God forbid, died, or whatever happen. You could go a step higher. Other than that, it's very hard, very hard.

SL: Was the leadership very powerful?

WP: Yes, it was. That was powerful. Well, I don't mean powerful to a certain extent that you were afraid, no not all. But I think it was more discipline.

SL Did you belong to the union through your entire employee life (in Poland)?

WP: Yes, 'til the war started in 1939.

SL: Were there tailors who did not belong to the union?

WP: Oh yes.

SL: Did they have harder time finding work?

WP: I wouldn't think so. If he found a job in a union shop, he had to become a member. If the man who run the shop needed a man and if this was a union shop, he went through the union. But some shops who did not belong to the union, if they decided to belong to the union and if their boss was not against it, they did sign up for the union. I think that the boss himself belong[ed] to a union. They [bosses] had a separate union.

SL: What was it exactly about tailoring that you disliked so much?

WP: I dislike it for one reason one particular reason. Sitting around the place. And always under a roof and the conditions. Person got the idea, of course… We are talking about the conditions at those years in this country, they had those sweat shops, and there were probably worse conditions, too. As long as we did not know about and did not see it, [it] was a different story. The conditions, and all the problems, and everybody pushed you around. For example, when I was a young boy, I started to work. I had to be responsible for those big shots that came to work. And I had to go to buy them breakfast everyday. I worked on a fourth floor and I could go ten times an hour up and down. I used to go to the grocery store and buy them some breakfast, because we had a break at 9:30 in the morning. In Europe, we did not have lunch like here at twelve o'clock. In Europe we eat our main meal in the afternoon. We took off everyday I would say around 2:30 to three o'clock for an hour to go eat our main meal. So I had to see to it that we got tea and that the water is boiled. If this guy did not like what I brought, I had to go down and exchange. Sometimes I forgot to bring something. This was a problem. I had the responsibility of

keeping the place clean. When we started to work at eight o'clock in the morning, I had to walk three hours. Would you believe it? Do you know at what time I had to get up? I did not have any transportation. The same at night. When everybody thorough working I had to clean the place. It took me an hour, hour and half sometimes, and at night I had to start to walk home. It was anything else but from bed to work, bed to work, 'til I did grow up and got alone. It was different.

SL: When you moved to your uncle's and aunt's house was it closer?

WP: It was closer. It was the whole idea. It was about half the way closer than where my parents lived.

SL: Do you recall on what street your uncle and aunt lived?

WP: They live on [Gelne]? We moved away from [Gelne]. It is funny thing people from generation to generation on the same street. They did not own anything. They lived on the street. They knew the neighbors, families.

SL: Were either one of those residences on the area that become a part of the ghetto?

WP: Yes the whole area became a part of the ghetto.

SL: Do you recall any fears of Nazi occupation regarding what it would mean to your union? Did you feel the Nazis would threaten your union?

WP: There were no unions when Nazis occupied Poland.

SL: Was is something you thought might happen?

WP: No, never did think about it. When they came, Nazi's occupation, forget about everything. The union strong, not strong. Police department, whatever it is, everything was nulled. Everything went to pieces. That is all.

SL: I would like to start to talk about the gathering clouds in Europe. You were working as a tailor then. Do you recall when Hitler became someone that people began to talk about or felt threatened about? Was it directly after his getting into German government in 1933, or did it take a little bit longer?

WP: Jews were threatened before. I said it before, I want you to know one thing. See, when Hitler came to power in 1933, it's true, in the beginning the papers wrote that Hitler is crazy, nuts. That he is a half

Jew. And they used to paint pictures that he is a devil. A short time later everything had to stop. If somebody insulted Hitler, though it was not occupied, Hitler was in Germany, and if someone insulted Hitler, the Polish government throw him in jail. So they started something. Anti-Semites started to live up to everything. Why? Because they call the police. "The Jew just insulted Hitler!" And they threw a Jew in jail. Tell the Jewish population, you know, the people that they were more [knowing] to the government would start to intervene to the government and police department, can you do it? Let's say people with bigger names had to go to police and [change their names]. Any Tom, Dick or Harry could point a finger at Jew and said he just insulated Hitler and they [were thrown] in jail for it. They were looking for those things. As a matter of fact, it came to a point there was an article in the paper that this anti-Semite called the police and pointed to a Jew that he overheard him saying things about Hitler, but the man was mute. He could not even talk. It was the truth. And the Polacks, if they had a fight with a Jew, they would tell "Hey, just wait 'til Hitler comes here." They wouldn't even talk about the war. The Christian population lived with the idea that they were against Jews, and that they should come to Poland. Why in the world did the Nazis build all the concentration and death camps in Poland? Why they didn't build them in France? Why they didn't [build] them in Czechoslovakia? Czechoslovakia they took before Poland. Why they didn't they build them in Germany? Why they did build them in Poland?

SL: You are asking me why?

WP: Yes, why?

SL: First of all, most of the Jews lived in Poland. But also the cooperation of the Polish government…

WP: That's correct. The Polish government, the Polish population. This was the only country that did cooperated with them that they can build these concentration camps. Would you believe when they came to Poland, they had blueprints for every concentration camp sites, looked up on the way to built them. If you go Auschwitz today, you'll see that they got one area there under glass. A miniature build Auschwitz. And brick that Germans brought with them from Germany when they occupied Poland. Can you imagine they came with the blueprints? Right and what to built and what to do? That's all.

Therefore, they are building them in Poland. You see though the Polacks hated the Nazis. Because on the count of the Jews, they did cooperate with them. There is another thing involved. They gave them a free hand. If they evacuated the Jews from certain cities, streets, they gave Polacks a free hand. They can rob and take away anything they want. They didn't dream of anything better.

SL: Did you talk amongst your Jewish friends after Hitler came to power about the possible threat to you as Jews from him?

WP: Well, my dear lady, let me say this to you. Nobody believed this is gonna to happen for once. We knew that's gonna be tough times. Its gonna be hard labor, whatever it is, but nobody did think or dream this is gonna happen nobody. Of course, people don't believe today. It is impossible for a human mind to believe those things. Lot of people still are asking the questions, if it is true. But for human, it is impossible to understand this.

SL: Where you picking up any radio broadcast of Hitler?

WP: Who had a radio? Who had a radio? In the building that we lived in, there was among of us of 478 families that lived in the building. How many people do you think had a radio? Two. Yes we did pick up. We did listen if somebody put a radio in the window. And hundreds and hundreds people were standing outside listen to it. Sure we did pick up, but we laughed at him. We laughed at him. How they can do it? That's way they get after us.

SL: Okay, I'm going to turn the tape over.

WP: [Laughs].

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1

TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SL: As 1939 approached, did you have any indication at all that Germany was planning to attack Poland?

WL: No, I doubt it. We did not have any indication whatsoever. I'll never forget, I did walk with my girlfriend at that time and it was a beautiful day. The sun was shinning and I was in the street. Across the street was Jewish cemetery. Of course, this was a route to walk to the street where my parents used to live. When my parents moved, we used to live on [Gelne], and as we walked on this side [there] was a big monument place where they used to make those monuments. And all of sudden we heard some shooting going on, airplanes were roaring. We did not know what it was. And the people around there came up and looked up and thought, "That's maneuvers." Nobody knew that Germans is attacking Poland. But about ten blocks from there, there was an open market. And so we read in the paper in the afternoon that a few people got killed in the open market from the pieces of that, the anti-aircraft, shoot up, fell down, and then they came down with an extra, that the Germans attacked Poland. We did nothing about (it). That's how it started.

SL: That day was 1st of September, 1939?

WP: Yes, correct.

SL: How man days did it take before Germans got to Warsaw?

WP: It took them about four weeks to take over the whole country, because they crossed border right into Poland. There was no fighting at all. Poland was not prepared at all. They did not have anything. They were trying to fight such a mighty army with horses and wagons and the rifles from the First World War

WP: After Germans divided up Czechoslovakia, you still did not feel in Poland that you were threatened?

WP: No. You mean when they took over Czechoslovakia? At that time they did not [do] anything to the Jews. The only thing we heard they did to the Jews in Germany, as the Crystal Night, among the other things, and they boycotted some Jewish stores. We have seen pictures at the news that they smashed windows. That they painted the star of David in some windows. In 1937, mind you they did open the gates, and they did threw [them] over the borders, [the] Jews, from Germany to Poland. They threw

[them] in[to] Bojdzin, this border town between Germany and Poland. Those were Jews immigrated from Poland to Germany during the years. Those were the Jews who they did open the border and told them to leave. And that they could take so much. There were no killings going on. This was right in the beginning. Well, we did live with they idea they maybe did not want people from Poland there, and Polish Jews, and told them to go back Poland, see. But we still lived with the idea, "This is not gonna happen." What he [Hitler] preached and said in his speeches, like I told you before, we laugh at it. It was hard to believe in it. And we did not believe in it 'til they took over Poland. You probably know that Poland was divided amongst the Nazis and the Russians at the certain point. We did live in Warsaw when they did take over Warsaw, that's all.

SL: Could you tell that the Nazis were going to enter the city before they came? Could you hear gunfire?

WP: Absolutely, sure. Warsaw is divided with the water, with the Vistula [River]. We had several bridges there. Of course, the Nazis weren't out of sight. They were bombarding Warsaw twenty-four hours a day. They didn't stop. Day and night, day and night. There wasn't a house that wasn't hit, and they were shelling it from the other side of the Vistula. Now they were digging trenches every twenty feet away on the streets, trenches and whatnot. Once it came through that they did come through the streets like, gosh, like thunder and brutal. Right away they've seen on the streets Jews with the long beards. The guys used to run out and take out those bayonets and cut off their beards and beating. Right away they started. And after a while they did start to round up. First they demanded from the Jewish organization that they did lead the people there. The Jewish population in Poland, Warsaw, before the war, they had the list from every Jew in the city. So they have to right away to start [sending] so many people a day to work. And that's how they did, after a while, take people and start to build the camps, first labor camps, then concentration camps. Then, when people started to escape — this was right in the beginning, mind you, 1939 going on 1940 — that people did run away from those camps, coming back. Of course, they didn't have those fences and electric wirings, and telling what they're

doing there. First of all, they don't feed people and make them work so hard, from early in the morning ‘til late at night. And kicking and beating and shooting and killing. Nobody did want to believe.

SL: When the Nazis occupied Warsaw, did you try to get back to your family? Did you get back to your house?

WP: I did. Sure, absolutely I did. This was the time when I did go through hell. I did escape, this was the second time, and I went through the Russian border.

SL: What was the first time?

WP: The first time I didn't come back, no. The first time I didn't come back. I didn't have the chance to come back.

SL: I don’t understand. Were you arrested?

WP: I was arrested, absolutely. I was arrested the first time and they took me to a place which I worked there for a few days — about a week, I worked there. We used to take out some monuments from the cemetery. But I escaped from there. I went through the Russian border, and I went to Russia. I did sign up to go to the coal mines to Ural [Mountains], and then they took us, a whole bunch of us, they kept us in an area where it used to be like summer cottages. There was no heat and it was cold already. This was 1939 going on 1940, in the wintertime. Then, after being with them, I was six weeks there altogether. I was [there] six weeks. I decided then not to go because I was afraid that I'm going to go away, and my parents and none of my family will know where I am. So we were laying on the floor, we had like a small cottage, very small. It was nothing — no furniture, nothing there. It was very cold, no heat. We were eight of us laying on the floor with some straw, hay, and I didn't know exactly what time it was. It was dark, there was no light, and I decided to go back. I made up my mind. I thought maybe I'm going to go save some of my family. Well, of course, at that time I was young. Day to day I got more tougher, harder. So I got up and the guy next to me says to me, "Where are you going?" I told him I got to go out to the bathroom. This was the last time they saw me and I saw them. Then my journey started, to go back. And there was no transportation. It was cold, it was horrible, and I didn't know

which direction to go. Then it took me, I don't know how many days. I just can't tell you exactly how long it took me to go back to the border. And I got caught by the Russians. They kept me for three days. They kept us in a big huge, and it was a farm, they kept us in not a barn but in a place where they keep all the hay and the corn and whateverit is[hayloft].

SL: A silo?

WP: Not a silo. In Poland they haven't got any silos. Besides the barn they've got a—let's put it this way, like the top of the barn…

SL: A loft?

WP: Yes, a loft. So until they got, I don't know how many people, several hundred men and women. But to make a long story short, they let us go through the border. And then we came into that border town in Poland. I did go through the border. So I came into this town. I think I still remember the town's name — that's immaterial. Now, it was at night, at what time it was, I don't know. We didn't have any watches or anything. I was chosen from the group to go find out when the train is going to leave for Warsaw because they felt I don't look like a Jew. That nobody's going to stop me. But I got stopped. I got stopped. I got beaten up by one Nazi. I didn't know that was a law that was forbidden that you cannot go through the railroad track. And I was afraid to go through where the road was by the railroad track was, because there was a guard. There were two guards there, and I was afraid they were going to stop me and ask me for some papers. And I didn't have any papers. So what I did is — I did go through, there was a fence, a short fence, and I went through the fence and I started to walk through the railroad track and all of a sudden somebody shouts "Halt." So I stopped. I turned around, there was a Nazi in a uniform and he had a whip in his hand and he kept his gun in his hand. I was standing still. I want you to know, I felt that everything is dying in me. I was afraid. So he came up closer to me and he started to talk to me in German, and I don't say a word to him. I don't have to understand it. And he talks to me again in German. He says to me, "You know that it is forbidden by anybody to cross the railroad tracks, especially at night." And I didn't say anything. All of a sudden he starts to talk to me in

Polish. Then I told him that I'm sorry, I didn't know. So he asked me, "Are you a Jew?" I says, "No." But he let me go. Then I came to the station to find out when the train is leaving. They told me that at 2:00 a.m. Now coming back, I had to go through to the road where the two Nazis were standing there. But I went through whistling and they didn't stop me. I was lucky. There's a story to it behind it, too. When I walked in there to the building, to the station, and I looked in through the window, there was a bunch of hoodlums waiting for the train when the Jews come that they can beat them and take away everything from them. They were sitting there smoking and drinking and playing cards. When I walked in there, all of a sudden like somebody would give them an order, all of them turned around their heads to look at me. I tell you one thing, if I didn't get a heart attack, then I am built from steel. But I got the tickets and I went back. At two o'clock the train is supposed to leave for Warsaw, 2:00 a.m. in the morning. I went back to the guys. And we were in a house, because when we went through the border and we seen this light in a house. We walked in this house. [There] was an old lady. We begged her that she should let us stay until the train will come. But she did. She made us even tea also. So when the train came, like from the ground, from all over, people started to come to the train in the thousands. I never seen something like it. I didn't know where those people were hiding — men, women, and children. And everybody started to pile in. There was only three cars, that's all. I was lucky. I pushed myself through inside, other guys, and people were crawling up on the top between and on the steps, all over. The train took off, if it was two o'clock, if it's late, I don't know. It took off for Warsaw. And as the train started to move, and about fifteen or twenty minutes later, a bunch of hoodlums, Polish guys, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, who knows, with about a half a dozen Nazis with flashlights. It was dark in the cars, looking for Jews. This was the first how do you do, the first experience. So the Germans couldn't recognize who were the Jews, because some people pretended they were sleeping. And the Polacks, whenever they pointed a finger, "This is a Jew." If it's a woman and child or whatever it is, or man, now, the first thing: they had the privilege to take off everything. If you had a watch, if you had good boots, the clothes. And they dragged them to the door and pushed

them out as the train was traveling forty-fifty miles an hour. This was the first experience. And they did it, God knows, maybe for about two, two and-a-half hours, or three hours, I don't know. Finally we arrived to Warsaw in the next day, in the morning, I don't know what time it was, if it was six o'clock in the morning, seven o'clock in the morning, I don't know. And I came to Warsaw. Then when I started to look for my parents, I went back to the neighborhood that we lived [in] and that big building was bombed and it was burned, it was nothing — a pile of bricks, that's all. After a few days I found out where they are staying or living. They lived in a hole in the ground, which was supposed to have been an air shelter. I crawled in there and then there my mother was laying on the ground with some straw under her and a candle was glowing. Then I came in and I came closer; she looked at me and she says to me, "Why in the hell did you came back for?" I says to her, "You don't even know where I came from. You don't even know where I was." I says, "Here I came back." I says, "I risked my life. I came back from so far — for a reason I came back. I want to try to help you and the rest of the family." So she says to me, "You cannot help us anymore. This is it." She was laying, hungry, swollen, cold. And then as I talked to her my little younger sister walked in. The only things that she had on — it was so cold outside — was from a bag, one of those potato bags, those woven bags, a hole cut out for the little thin hands and no shoes. Holding her hands like that, and didn't even see me, ignored me, running over to my mother. She was so happy that she found — there were rotten potato peelings in the garbage. So my mother says to me, "See this here? So you better take off. Maybe you'll be the one to save yourself." I wanted to see the rest of the family, which I did. Well, I talked to them, and the next day the Gestapo was after me. But I didn't have that choice. Either I had to make up my mind to leave. I was trying, at that time, with my brother, my brother was in a group that they did try to sabotage and fight them, which they did. I failed to tell you before I left, me and my brother did hide a bunch of hand grenades and handguns and whatnot, even a few machine guns, too. So my brother was involved in a group, and I thought maybe I'll get involved too. But the reason that the Polish police and the Gestapo was after me is that somebody pointed a finger at me probably. But I've seen death is closing up on me —

hungry, no money. I didn't have anything to eat. I was sitting a whole night long on a bench. You know for how long I didn't take off my clothes and I didn't wash myself? I had lice that they were eating me up alive. So I talked to my father and my sister that time. I had to make the decision and to go.

SL: Did you see your family again after that?

WP: No.

SL: Never saw them again?

WP: No, no.

SL: Never heard anything about them?

WP: No. So, early in the morning I said goodbye to them. And I left and I was walking. It was so cold. Maybe it wasn't that cold, but it was cold for me. I was hungry, and as I walked, I walked about, I don't know, maybe fifteen or twenty [minutes] or a half an hour. My plan was to go — I had to go through the cemetery in order to omit a lot of those, you know, the Germans and the police had their stands, they asked for papers. So in order to avoid them I had to go around through the cemetery. Go through a fence and go through the cemetery so I would come out to a different street, which I knew my way around. So I was walking, and all of a sudden I turned and looked. I seen my little sister is following me. This is not the youngest, before the youngest. So I stopped and I call her [sighs]. I says to her, "Machla, where are you going? Why do you following me?" She starts to cry terribly. She says to me, "Please," she says to me, "take me with you. I want to live, too." I says, "Honey, I don't know if I'm going to be alive. I don't know where I'm going, and I certainly can't take you, I just can't." So she got so hysterical that she threw herself on the sidewalk and she started to pound her head on that cement. She was bleeding terrible and I had to leave her there and went away. That was the last time I saw her. And so, then my journey started.

SL: Do you remember what time, when it was exactly that you were in Warsaw?

WP: I don't know, I don't know. I can't tell you. I think if I'll tell you I'll lie to you. Certain things I don't recollect at all. When it comes to dates, no.

SL: Did you ever go back to Warsaw after you left at that point?

WP: No ma'am. The last time I was was three years ago [1977].

SL: What happened to you once you got out of the city? Did you get someplace where you were hiding or was it almost immediately that you were captured?

WP: No, I was not. That was the time that I got caught by the storm troopers. They caught me. They got a hold of me. I didn't have any papers and they asked me for [ausweis?[6]] and they beat me that time until I was unconscious, you see. Then I came into a little town that I told you, you asked me what was with this lady that I told you she blessed me and so forth, well the point was this, I came into a town by the name of Miechow [in the region of] Wrablesky, which I was there, with my wife there, and I stayed over. I went into some Jewish people there, and I was hungry. I begged them for food. They were afraid even to help me. So somebody advised me to go to some kind of a Jewish man, a butcher. They gave me his name that he is in charge of the Jews around there. So I went to him and I begged him. I says, "Please." I says, "I haven't eaten. I have been beaten." I didn't have any shoes on. I gave away my shoes for a piece of bread. I didn't have any shoes — barefoot. I says, "Please help me." I told him I run away and so on and so forth. I couldn't go through the whole story. So he gave me a piece of paper, he says to me, go to so and so, here and there. He says, "They'll help you." So I says to him — and I seen on the stove was cooking — I says, "Please, why do you send me away? Give me some warm water and a piece of bread." He says, "No, go over there." So I went over there where he sent me. They wouldn't give me anything. They told me that they ate supper. Whatever they ate, they haven't got anything. So I went back to this guy. And as I was ready to knock on the door again, somebody gets a hold of my hand. And so that guy starts to knock at the door and somebody looks out through a curtain. I seen into the window, and he comes fast to the door, opens up the door, he greets this man like he would have been God knows who. If I wanted to come in, he doesn't let me in. So this guy says to him, "Let in that guy." So he lets me in. So he says to his wife, in Yiddish, "Give him a piece

[6] Tape 2, side, 2, 23:35.

of bread and let him go." And then when they go into another room, this guy gets up and calls me in, and I didn't know he was a German you see. I found out after a while he was a German. He says to me, "Who are you?" So I told him. You know I start to cry, I just couldn't take it anymore. I started to cry horrible, terrible. So that guy says to him, "You know, I've been observing this boy," he says, "for the last two hours, walking around the streets." And I couldn't walk anymore. I had blisters on my feet, I was sick. I wouldn't care if somebody would have done away with me that time. "I observed that this boy is going around the streets from this house and that house," he says. "What's going on?" So I start to cry, and I told him, "I'm so hungry. I haven't eaten for days and I got beaten up." You know, you could have told that I was beaten up. And I came here to ask for some help, some bread, and they send me from one place to another. Finally, I says, that guy wouldn't, they wouldn't help me. So this guy, this guy that got a hold of my hand, the German, which I didn't know he was a German, he was dressed in a suit, he says to this guy, he called him by his name, and he says to him, "Take a look here." He says, "How long do you thing that that guy is going to last? How long do you think he's got to live?" So he puts his hand around my neck, I must have looked awful at that time, and he says to him, "Take a look. You mean to tell me you send him away. Couldn't you afford to give him something warm to eat?" He's a *goy*, a German. He was a Polish German, a *Volksdeutsch*, they called him. So he says to [the man's] wife, "Come on, give him some food." [The man] says, "Wait a minute, don't give him anything." [The German] says to me, "Come with me." You know, that guy took me to his house and gave me food. Would you believe it?

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2

TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SL: Okay, why don't you just continue telling me about that story when you were fed by that German?

WP: Yes. After I got through eating there, this man gave me, on a piece of paper, an address. And he told me I should go to these people. And they were Jewish people. And that they'll give me shelter for a night or so. So I did go to those people. When I presented them with that piece of paper and that name of this man, they were very helpful for one reason. Because probably of fear. And this man knew the Jews around very well in this town because he lived there. But when the Germans came in, they did occupy that town, he became an official there. Therefore, his word was taken by everybody, I suppose. So those people told me to go in the attic. They told me I could stay overnight, but the whole night long I was sick because of the food that I ate and I didn't eat previously for a few days. So evidently I ate either too much or too fast and I got sick during the night, terrible sick. I thought that this was it. And I didn't have any help or anybody to do something for me. So the next day, it was early in the morning, I did get up and I did thank those people for letting me stay overnight. And then I took off to the next little town. Maybe I should go into details in that because the journey to this next town was very horrible for me to me because I did meet with a lot of Nazis, that they were right there on the highway. They were making headquarters in the woods and they had some tables out and maps, and I had to go through them. There wasn't any other way, and I was afraid if I'll go through they'll recognize me and this is going to be it. So I did hang around for quite a while in the area until I seen two children walking with two loaves of bread under their arm and one canister of milk. So while I was sitting there, so they stopped to start to talk to me and this little boy asked me if I'm hungry. I says, "Well, son, yes, I am hungry." So he gave me the loaf of bread — he offered me the loaf of bread that I should tear off a piece, which I didn't want to do it. But one thing I asked him, I asked him where do they go? So they told me they're going home to the next town. That's the town that I wanted to go to. The reason for it because I was told that there was some Jewish people there.

SL: Do you remember the name of that town?

WP: Yes, this is the town when I came into Miechow, they called it. So that boy and that little girl, after I told them, "I'll tell you what. I'm going there, too. Do you mind if I'll help you carry that container with the milk?" And they gave it to me, so they were walking next to me and I was carrying the container of milk and did go through all those Nazis and they thought that I'm probably part of them, so they didn't even pay attention to me. But as we went through, about a half a mile later I gave them back that milk and I thanked them very much and I took off. I came into this town, assured there was still Jewish people there, and I did go into some people and talk to them. As a matter of fact, this one family, a very well-to-do family, let me stay overnight in a barn. He had cows. I think he had a farm, a large farm. Besides that he had a business. He used to sell feed and corn and what have you. So he let me stay overnight, the first night. As a matter of fact, I was there about two or three nights, but I did go out on the road as finding some work. I wanted to get a hold of some kind of a family that would accept me that I can stay with them. So a few days later I came into this particular house and I asked for work. So this lady started to ask me some questions: who I was, from where I am. And she recognized me that I am a Jew. So, she told me, "Well, I tell you, I would like to help you very much, but if I can trust you — and I hope I can — I've got a Jewish boy," she says, "which I'm trying to hide here, and two I wouldn't be able to do it." So she says to me, "Wait a minute. I think that I can send you someplace. They are very well-to-do people." And those were type of people they called them in Polish, a Jesits [7]. These was people that they had a lot of farms and they had some of their own sugar factory and some other factories and whatnot. And they had a lot of slaves, actually, people from the farms who used to come to work with their wives and their children. For pay they used to give them some potatoes and whatnot. But that's not the point. The point is that I told the lady that I can't go this afternoon because it was quite a distance and there was no transportation. I had to walk. So I told her I'd probably go the next day. What I think I did fail to say to you, you know, when I left Warsaw, my father and my younger sister decided that they will follow me, they'll come and meet with me. We made a point where to meet

[7] Polish, tape 3, side 1, 6:10.

because my father told me that he found out from some other people in the area that I was going that the Jews hadn't got that bad yet. They still work and so on and so forth. So we did actually head for the area, to the area of Lublin, it's another big city in Poland, and around the area there is a town by the name of [Tamblin?], which it is a port city. So my father thought maybe we'll go there and we'll find work because it's a port city and whatever we'll be able to make will help the rest of the family. As a matter of fact, I met with my father and my sister [Belle]. Now, as the days went by, a few days went by, when I came back from the road, I mentioned I went to look for work, and, of course, the farmers used to give me some bread and potatoes or whatever they could help me with, and we did, during the time, send two packages to Poland for my mother and the rest of the children. We did send it to a neighbor, a Christian, a guy by the name of Jozef Vehov. He was a shoemaker, and he did take the package and took it to my mother. But he did send a letter to my father under the address that we were staying at, that he should not send any packages anymore because he cannot do it anymore. He is afraid, [for] which, well, I couldn't blame him. But to make a long story short, a few days, I think the following week, my father met a woman. She came to the town and told my father that my mother passed away. That then was the end. So my father and my sister said they're going back, they cannot leave the children alone. So having a meeting with them, so we decided, I talked to my father, I says, "Why should you go back?" You see, my sister was a young girl at the time, and she passed by for an Aryan and not for a Jew also. So I says to him, "Let her go back and see what is what, and then we'll decide." Well, I talked her into it. So in the meantime my sister did leave for Warsaw. That was only about 140-some kilometers to walk, it wasn't too bad [sarcastically]. It was terrible. So my father did stay in that barn. But the Jewish family, they let him stay. And I found a job, because this lady that I stopped previously before and that she told me that she's got a Jewish boy, she gave me that address to the type of people. The following day, or the second day, third day it was, I did go to them. And then I came to that place, and I did go in through that gate where I was met by two Doberman pinschers. And as they took off towards me, the lady — I started to holler — called them back. And finally she

walked up to me, she asked me what she can do for me. So I told her that Mrs. so and so sent me here, that I might find some work. So, she says to me, "Why don't you follow me?" So I did and we came in the rear of the house, it was a beautiful, beautiful big house, it looked like the White House, with pillars, just beautiful. That was unusual to see a house like that in an area where such poverty was. And then she walked in, a few minutes later she came out with the lady, the lady at that time she was about in her early sixties, and she asked me some questions. And another thing I didn't know that you got to kiss her hand, and well, it's a whole story behind it. And the way I looked was just horrible, horrible. My clothes were shabby and torn, it was just terrible. And they recognized me right away that I'm a Jew. There's no question about it. So I asked her, I begged her to let me stay. I'm willing to do any work that they'll ask me to do. I don't want any money, only a roof over my head and some food. So they did take me in, and they took so beautiful care of me like I would have been their own son. But [that's] then when the problem started. They had cows, they had thirty-six cows. And I used to take care of the cows, used to take them out on their field for feeding. There was an incident that this guy, a guy by the name of [Kusick?]. They probably did smell me out that I'm a Jew. And his wife pointed her finger at me. Why? Because there was an incident that over four hundred Nazis and Polish police came around there, because they claim that there's a lot of people hiding out in the woods. There were some large woods. And there were two families living about twelve kilometers away. There were Jewish people still living there on a farm. And they had visitors from the United States, two girls. And when the Nazis came around there, they took them out and killed them. Took them out on a little hill and machine gunned them all, the whole family, which I was told the next day. But that part of it, what I tried to tell about that guy by the name of [Kusick?] was, when we heard the shooting early in the morning, we didn't know what was going on. But we've seen from far away people running from one end to another. So the lady that I worked for, her son-in-law came home for the weekend, and he was a judge in another town not too far away from there. So he says to me, "Son, we don't know what's going on. You better take off and hide some place. But," he says, "I'll tell you what. Why don't you go out on

the field and after a while we'll send out the cows, so on the field you are free. Whatever might happen, you got time to run away." Which that was very nice of them. But to make a long story short, there's a lot of things involved. When I got up in the morning, it was still so early and I walked out by myself. I did sit down on a chopped-down tree. And I fall asleep. I almost got caught by the Nazis at that time. It was a miracle that they didn't catch me. So I walked out to the place where they supposed to send me out [with] the cows, and the cows were there already. While the cows were out there — you know, they're animals, they always like to go in places that they shouldn't. This man, that [Kusick?], bought from us. The people that I worked [for], they used to have a big field. They used to cut up soft coal from the ground, and I used to be in charge of it. I used to measure it. They call it a print, if it makes any difference. When they cut out that soft coal, and it looked like large bricks, you had to put them on the top of each other with air in between so the wind dries them out. So while I wasn't there, the cows did go between them and they tipped over some of them, of his. So when I came out there, the first thing, they start to curse me and call me a Jew. "Take a look what your cows did," so on and so forth, and all of a sudden his blood started to boil and he says that he's going to go out on the road and tell the Nazis that I'm a Jew. Well, I begged him not to do and he started to go toward the road. That was about, I would say, about a half a mile away from the road. Well I got in a rage and I beat him. So [beat] up that he died. Well, I suppose it was me or him, one of the two. He didn't die right away. I hit him a few times so hard, and it was right on a point where there were two holes. There were fish ponds there, and he fell into a fish pond. And I did get a hold of a big rock, and I let that rock go on him, too, on the top of it. And while I did it, I actually didn't know what I'm doing, but it was too late. I says to myself, "My gosh, what did I do?" So I jumped in the pond and I did drag him out and he was still alive, and he was crying and telling me that I killed him. So I says to him, "How could I kill you that you're still alive? But if you're not going to shut up, I will." So I told him, "How come you wanted to go to the Nazis and tell them that I'm a Jew, that they should kill me for nothing. I begged you not to do." I says, "If they stampeded or they ruined a bushel of that soft coal, I would have given you ten, fifteen bushels."

You know that didn't mean a thing to me. But to make a long story short, at noontime [I] had to take the cows back, so his wife was afraid that he should come back. He had only one cow, which I did allow him to keep him on that field that belonged to the people that I worked for. And I seen her from far away coming, it was already noontime, and all of my cows, the thirty-six cows, did lay down on the pasture. So I says to him, his first name was "[Watzek?], if you going to tell your wife that I did it to you, I want you to know one thing, I'll finish you and your wife." I says, "I haven't got anything to lose." He says, "What should I say?" So I told him that we heard the shooting and we both — I was wet and he was wet — that we both jumped in the pond and you fell and hit your head on a rock. Because his head got so swollen, it was bleeding. I couldn't stop his bleeding. But when she came closer, my heart was beating like I just can't tell you. When she came closer she saw, my heart was beating she started to cry and scream and she asked me what had happened. So he told her that he jumped in the pond with me and he got hurt. So finally she told him, "Don't come home because the Germans are running around. They're arresting people," and so on and so forth. So she did went home and brought some bandages back, white pieces of cloth, or whatever it is, and some remedies, and she put [them] around his head. But in the meantime, I was afraid to keep the cows. All the cows delaying, that they probably might hint that something is wrong, you know? So I took a lot of courage and I took my whip, and I start to give a signal to the cows and they start to take off, and I went behind them. As I let them in the barn, I came into the kitchen, and the kitchen was a huge kitchen in that particular place, and the whole kitchen was filled with Nazis and Polish police waiting to be served lunch from the people. Well, I want you to know one thing. This was a terrible ordeal for me to go through, but I didn't know what to do with myself. So finally I did, I went into the barn. And outside next to the barn there were two Nazis with machine guns. And in the front, there, were people. Not just with guns. They had a few of those cottages around there, but there was like a river. So I went there and I was sitting. I didn't take the cows out anymore because they had to be taken out about an hour later. Finally, it was around 3:30 in the afternoon, or three o'clock, something like that, they took off. So when they took off, I came

into the house. And I told them that the ordeal that I had with this guy. He was hated by everybody. He wasn't liked by nobody. This man was a thief, he was no good. I know he was a poor guy, but he was no good. The first thing that this man, her son-in-law, his name was Vadslav Skoblesky. He was a judge. The first thing he asked me, "Is he alive?" I says, "Yes." He says, "It's no good. He's got to be finished. Otherwise you're going to have a problem, and we going to have a problem." So, we had to finish him.

SL: The time that you went back to the house to take the cows he had not told his wife that it was really you?

WP: He did not, he was afraid. He probably was afraid. So the same day we had to finish him see, and we did.

SL: Did you do it by yourself or with other people?

WP: I was involved and the judge, and somebody else was involved. Somebody else was involved, a third party was involved, was somebody who served the government. So when they took away her husband, they took him away. So she said that the man that I work for, it is his fault, because they took him away and killed him. She didn't know who did it, but she thought that they killed him. So this lady came up to me on the street one day, she says to me, "Please, they call me Mikhelis? “Please, they killed my husband, and I'm going to go to the police [to] tell them that he's holding a Jew. You better escape. I'm warning you." She didn't have anything against me. So I says to her, "Well, you're not going to do anything to them wrong. You're going to do it to me. I'm going to lose everything what I've got." They are rich. They know people in the government. They buy themselves out, nothing is going to happen to them, but only to me. "Please," I says, "don't do it." She says to me, "Nobody's going to stop me." Towards the weekend, it was in the afternoon, I don't know what time it was, I never knew what time it was, didn't have a watch or anything. The only time the people could tell time is looking at the sky. The chief of the police came from the city, which I did know him, he knew me, too, and I was right there to try to take out a pail of water from the well. So when he came in through the gate and towards the

house, I said hello to him and he said hello to me. But the way he said hello to me I kind of didn't like it. I didn't take two minutes. The girl that worked inside came out. She says to me that the Mrs. wants to see me. So when I walked in the chief was holding some papers, and she had tears in her eyes, she was crying, and her daughter was there. But of course the son-in-law wasn't there, the judge, he was in this town. He only came home once in two weeks. She was crying, and he says to me, "Is it true that you are a Jew?" I said yes. He says to me that Mrs. [Kusick?] came in and did sign an affidavit that I'm a Jew and they are holding a Jew. I says, "Well, she did told me that she's going to do it, but I didn't believe her. She claims that it's our fault that her husband got killed." He says, "Yes, that's what she says." So he says to me, "What can I do?" I says, "I don't know." I says, "At least give me a chance to run away." He says to me, "For my sake you don't have to run away, but if she goes to somebody higher than me I can't do nothing." So he took out the papers and tore them up and threw them in the garbage and about a few minutes later he left.

SL: You didn't deny that you were a Jew?

WP: I couldn't deny, I just couldn't. It would have been worse for me. If I would deny that I am not a Jew, then I had to prove it or go to court or whatever it was — not even court, go to the German government there, whatever it was, I don't know what was involved. But I would have to prove that I am not a Jew, and I couldn't prove it. I didn't have any papers. I was in the midst of making a passport, a false passport. A cane card that Christians used to carry, with the picture you see.

SL: If they had discovered that you were circumcised, would they have known that you were a Jew?

WP: Absolutely, 100 percent.

SL: So there wasn't much way —

WP: Not much way at all. As long as you brought it up, in this country, of course, a lot of Christians are circumcised. In Poland there wasn't such a thing, and anybody who was circumcised was a Jew and the only way if you told them that you were not a Jew, and if they wanted to find out, they'd ask you to let down your pants, that's all. That was all it take. To make a long story short, a few days later I was out

with a team of horses. She came up to me and she says to me, with those words, "I want you to know that now I'm going to the Gestapo. I can see that the chief of the police didn't do anything. They probably bribed him." I says, "Please don't do it." So I thought maybe I would scare her. She says to me, "You can kill me, you can scare me, you can do anything to me. I am left with a little girl and they killed my husband and I don't care what's happening to me." So she made up her mind that she wants to harm them, not me. But in the meantime she did more harm to me. In order for her to go to the Gestapo she had to go about forty-four kilometers to a place by the name of Kamionka. A time went by, if it was two weeks or eight days or ten days or fifteen days, I don't know exactly, I was sitting eating lunch and a neighbor farmer was there waiting for me, that I should finish lunch, he wanted me to come over to his house to cut up a pants for a son of his. A guy by the name of [Stibiersky? Tape 3, side 1, 27:40].

SL: Can I interrupt you for a second?

WP: Yes, please.

SL: I have to turn the tape off.

WP: Yes, please.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1

TAPE 3, SIDE 2

WP: So the lady came into the kitchen and her face was terrible worried. She says to me, "Son, I just looked out to the window. On the street that I've seen there's so many Nazis and Polish police and I don't know what it is." So I says to her, "Well, it's not the first time." And as she walked out from the kitchen to the dining room, a farmer's son by the name of [Yankovsky?] ran into the kitchen and he says to me, "Please," he says, "run away." He says, "There's a bunch of Nazis outside, and the police, they're asking about you." So I did run to the window, I wanted to get out of the window, there were two Nazis with machine guns right in front of the window. I ran to the door, I looked out through the door, as I came to the door and looked out the door, the whole house was surrounded with Nazis with machine guns. And I've seen, this is the end. But at the last moment, it happened so fast, from the kitchen there was a door, it was like a storeroom. Of course they didn't have then refrigeration those years then, so they used to keep a lot of things. It was a room about the size I would say about maybe twelve by twenty [feet]. It was going so fast and I started to think what to do. They had a big, huge box there that they used to keep certain things. So I opened up the box, I wanted to jump into the box, but the last minute I says, well, maybe it's no good. So I jumped over the box and I squeezed myself in between the box and the wall. And as I did, I heard in the hallway those heavy boots and running in and breaking everything, a bunch of Nazis. And they got a hold of that guy, Mr. [Shtibersky?], that was waiting for me to come over to his house and cut up pants for his son. And the first thing, "Where's the Jew? Where's the Jew?" That's the first thing. And he says, "I don't know, I don't raise no Jew here." And then the lady came in and she spoke fluent German. Then they started to beat her and I heard — I didn't see, but I heard — everything that's going on. Believe it or not, I would like to make the remark, you see when they came they came to farmers, the Nazis used to come with big long heavy wires with a point that they used to go and poke in hay or in the barns and so on and so forth. When I squeezed myself through that box and there was a door behind me, they came and poked. It's a good thing the first thing to open up that door from that box. When they opened up the box, they cover up that

between the wall that I was squeezed in. And next to me was a stepladder. And on the top of the stepladder, a short stepladder, were piled up nice and straight, those potato bags. But what they did to this man — that man saw me running into this room and jumping over the box and hiding — what they did to this man. He was not a youngster by that time. He must have been in his sixties. They took him outside and made him undress in the nude, put him towards the wall, they had two guys with guns in front of him. And the Nazi told him, if he's not going to tell where I am, they are going to kill him. And he didn't tell. They didn't kill him; they took him with them. Well, it was going on for hours and hours and hours. Finally, when they were writing their report, the lady of the house was crying horrible. And this one Nazi, of course, probably he was the leader of the whole group, made a remark. "Well, your son-in-law, he's a judge. And you've been hiding a Jew here. You know what's going to happen to him." But she says, "But I didn't know that he was a Jew. He was such a nice boy." And they start to beat her because she tried to defend me. "So where did he escape if he is not here?" So she said, "Maybe he found out that you are here so he ran over to the water" — I mentioned before there was, not a lake, a river — "and from the river he ran into the woods." But they did buy this story. Now when they left, it was towards evening already. But I couldn't move. I was dead. I felt like I'm paralyzed from fear. Do you believe that they closed the door and with a flashlight they looked, they try to look over where I am?

SL: Who was this?

WP: The Nazis, and I felt everything is dying in me. And do you know what saved me? He leaned toward that stepladder with those bags and all the bags piled up on me. When they left I couldn't get out. When the lady came in and she cried, she says, "Please, son" — she called me "son" — "why don't you come out?" When I pushed away that stepladder and I seen her face, the way she looked, bleeding, her eyes swollen, you know that I thought maybe I would have been better if they would have caught me. But when I crawled out from there she was crying over me. "Where are you going to go? You heard that they mentioned that they'll see me around. They'll come and kill all of us. You know that they mean business now. I don't know what's going to happen to my son-in-law" — you know, all that story. She

says to me, "Where are you going to go now?" I says, "I don't know." She says to me, "Why don't you hang around until my son-in-law will come for the weekend." She still tried to help me. And they did help me. I want you to know. They jeopardized their lives. The son-in-law came. And I was hiding. And I was sleeping a whole week long by a family that we visited, me and my wife, a family by the name of Royek. This man took out his children from the bed and put them on the floor and gave me the bed. That's unbelievable. This has only happened one out of millions. This old man that I told you before, [the one] they had undressed and tried to shoot him because he didn't tell them where I was, they released him during the night, and I got a hold of him on the road. And when I saw somebody coming, I didn't know it was him. When he come closer, I could tell [it was him] because it was a nice night. So I says to him, I started to call out, "Mr. [Shibersky?], it's you?" He says, "Yes." So he says to me, "Oh Jesus." He says, "Thank God that you are alive. They didn't caught you." He says, "They just released me." And he walked from the city back in the dark. But the judge says to me told me, [that] he came back Friday. I want you to know that they risked their lives. He says to me, "Son, unfortunately that happened. There's two ways that you can save yourself. Either go to Russia, try to get to through the border," he says. "That's that, anyway," he says, "What have you got to lose? Or to get a hold of a passport and go to Germany as an alien, as a worker." So I says to him, "Well, as an alien to go to Germany, I haven't got a chance. I'm going to try probably to go to the Russian border." He says to me, "I would like to draw you a map and the directions where to go, but I'm afraid. If I draw you a map," he says, "if they'll catch you they'll torture you, and you'll have to tell them that I did it or somebody else did it." So he says to me, "I'll tell you what I'm going to try to do. The only thing is if you want to draw a map yourself, I'll draw it on the paper, [and then] I'll destroy it after a while." But I did, I drew a map on my pelvis, see. So, I still did hang around for a while there. There's another thing was involved there that I didn't mention before. I think if I should go, day after day, day after day, and hour after hour. I think it would have to use up God knows how many cassettes, those tapes. I mentioned before that [Jankowski? 10:35]. That boy who ran into the house and warned me that the Nazis are after me. They

were three brothers and a sister. One of the brothers was in hands by the Nazis. The Nazis did organize groups that they should go out and catch Jews. You probably heard of it. They gave them an incentive for it. For bringing in so many Jews they got a bicycle. For bringing in so many Jews they got this and got that. So one of his brothers got involved in that. They only went and looked for the Jews at night. The Nazis did not roam around at nights, they were afraid. So what they did, at a certain point they used to hang up a piece of steel, a part from the plow. They called it a lemienc. When they hit it you could hear it for miles, and then they used to wake up the rest of them, and then they did catch the Jews. It was one evening before I did escape. We heard a commotion middle of the night and that judge was home at that time for the weekend. He came in to the room where I slept and he saw that I'm trying to get dressed. He says to me, "Son, don't go out. Let me go out, take a look what it is the commotion first. Don't show yourself." So I did. He came in a few minutes later, says to me, "Please don't go out." So he says to me, "The gang caught two Jewish children." He told me whose children they were. The boy was fifteen and the girl was thirteen, and they did belong to this man that I tell you that he let me stay in his barn in the town and my father did stay. They were very nice, very well-to-do, people. The children came to see some farmers that they know for some food. So this goddamn SOB got a hold of them with the group. And when that judge was outside, he got cursed from others. So he says, "What can I do? I'm afraid to let them go because now somebody will go to the Nazis and point a finger at me that I caught two Jews and let them go" — which that did happen. He asked that judge what to do. Said that judge, "I can't tell you. As much as you are afraid to let them go that somebody's going to point the finger at you, I'm afraid that somebody's going to point the finger at me." So what did I do? In the split moment, I made up my mind I'm going to get dressed and go out. You see, I didn't know what was going on. When I came out, there were about eight or ten farmers outside. Young guys, those hoodlums, which they did sign up with the Nazis for hunting Jews. And they all knew me, see. And those children were shivering and crying. You've never seen something like it. So I did go out and I went up. I says, "Why in the hell don't you let go those children [go]? Let them go." He says, "I'm afraid

to let them go. Somebody will point the finger." I said, "So you point the finger at me that I made you let them go." He says, "I can't let them go." I says, "If you're not going to let go of those children, you're going to pay with your life for it, I want you to know." It didn't help. You know what they did to the children? They tightened them down with a rope, took them into town. Those goddamn Nazis, they gave them over to the police and to the Nazis. They dug a hole and buried them alive. You know what I did? I don't know if I should even tell you, it should be recorded. I think I shouldn't.

SL: [inaudible]. Did you kill that man?

WP: Well, I did something worse than that.

SL: If you don't want to talk about it that's all right.

WP: No, no. I can't talk about it. If this is recorded I can't even tell you that. I did some things that if I wouldn't have done it, I think I wouldn't be able to live with myself. And then I took off. Then my life got miserable, more miserable. But I'll tell you what I tried to do. When I left there, I tried to get hooked up with a band. There were Jews and Christians that they were hiding out in the woods there. They started to form a group against to sabotage the Nazis. How did I know of that group? They found out about me and they came and offered me that I should join them, and I wouldn't join them. I told them, "Well, I got a roof over my head and I'm working hard and I got food and I don't want to [join]." The leader of the group says to me, "Remember, now is the time you should come with us. When the time will come that you will come to us, we're not going to accept you. We need you now." But I decided I'm not going to go, and they wouldn't accept me after a while, that's the truth. They almost killed me. I insisted that they should take me, and they wouldn't take me. They beat me so I was unconscious. I didn't even know what had happened. When I woke up, I opened up my eyes. That was in the morning, and I was laying in the side of the highway in a ditch, all bleeding. They wouldn't take me. He told me — before they started to beat me — he told me, "Four weeks from now, exactly four weeks," he says. And he told me what day it's going to be, "If you're going to stay here in this corner, we'll be here, we'll accept you. Other than that, no [we won't accept you.]" So I says to him, "I'm not going to last four weeks." So I

made a remark to him. "I'll rather die from a bullet of you guys than from the Nazis. I don't want to get killed by the Nazis." No, they wouldn't take me.

SL: Before you left this Polish family, was this when you were blessed by the woman?

WP: That's right, because when I came back and I came into this house, they were all crying. And this particular lady [was crying, too], so I made a remark. I says, "I am not going to see my twenty-first birthday." So this old lady says to me, "Don't be so sure." I says, "I am positive, sure, that I am not going to see my twenty-first birthday." So they ask me, "Where are you going to go?" I says, "I don't know where I'm going to go." And I didn't. And even if I had something in mind, I didn't want to even mention that. So she says to me, "Before you go, can I bless you?" I says, "Yes, you can." So she placed her hands on my head and blessed me. This is the lady that I've seen three years ago.

SL: Why don't you tell me a little bit about that?

WP: I didn't even recognize her. She was so shriveled up. My wife was so surprised and, oh, it was just horrible. And a beautiful reunion.

SL: You hadn't seen them from the moment?

WP: That's right. They didn't know that I'm alive, but I would like to tell you what happened. The mayor of the whole area there — I am trying to remember his name at the moment — I forgot. In the middle of the night, I don't know what time it was, I forgot to tell you what the judge told me. When I left, the judge says to me, "I would like to give you a little advice. Do you know that wherever you're going to go there's going to be guys trying to going to get a hold of you and to get their incentive for you, whatever it is promised to them. During the day you are not going to show yourself." Which it's true, I was hiding during the day wherever I could. So he says to me, "I would like to give you a little advice what to do, and you'll see this is going to help you." He was a very smart person. "Get a hold of a stick, a branch from a tree," he says, "not very long." He says, "The length of a rifle. Take a piece of string, a rope, and tighten it and carry it on your shoulder. That this thing should stick out, from far away they should think that you carry a rifle." And believe me — that helped me. I walked all over, and they were afraid of me.

When I came into the next little town, where a mayor lived, and I went to his house. I knocked at the door, nobody answered. But prior to that, I went closer to his house. I've seen somebody jumped out of his window, and it was him. He thought somebody comes with a gun. So I called him by his name. But to make a long story short, he took me into his house. He was very nice. And she was crying, and the children, and they knew me very good. Everybody felt sorry for me. But it came to a point — I want to you know one thing — that all those good people got together. They had a meeting. For pity they wanted to kill me. For pity they found a place where to dig a hole for me and bury me instead the Nazis would kill me. And I was tipped off by this man that I mentioned before, Mr. Royek, he says to me, "Please, get away," he says, "otherwise you're not going to live." And he told me what he was, what they're trying to do to me. And then I took off and I got out of their hair. But I didn't mention before was, that the lady from the house thought I suffered so much, she told me, "In case you haven't got where to sleep, where to stay, knock three times on my window so I'll know that you are here." She left me a key underneath the steps that I could go in. And I mentioned before that she had those two cottages, that I should stay in the cottage in the morning when she knew that I was [there] she used to bring the food. But I'll tell you what I did to those people. On account of me they all went to hell. When I gave myself up and when they brought me to Majdanek, when I was in Majdanek already, I don't know for for how many months, I was under *Appell*. They used to count us before they let us into the barracks, in the morning and in the day.

SL: The roll call.

WP: The roll call. And as I was standing on the roll call, from the next barrack I've seen the people who were standing there. And somebody looks so familiar to me. I couldn't wait till it was over. And when it was over I ran over there. And here was the mayor of the city. They pointed a finger that he helped me, and they threw him in the concentration camp on account of that. Him and two brothers. They arrested their father, too, but their father was in his late eighties so they left him there. They took his two sons. Those two sons were the people. They gave me a gun, a revolver with ammunition to carry in my

pocket. And that thing saved me from a lot of things, too. And on account of me, they were in the concentration camp. The people that I worked for had to give up everything. They killed the old lady. She died after while from that she suffered. They took away that son-in-law, that judge, and her daughter and till today nobody knows where they are. They probably took them to concentration camp and killed them, too. Everything on account of me. And some other people suffered on account of because they tried to help me. Now, I mentioned before when they were in Majdanek. About six or eight months later, they took them out. They put them in — this was their gimmick, the Nazis' trick — they took them out and they told them that they had their punishment already. What they did! That they're going to go home. They gave them clothes. They put on clothes, and everybody thought that they're home. But when I came back three years ago, I found out that they never came home. They killed them, and they never knew that they were in Majdanek. The family of those people didn't even know where their whereabouts were. That's the way they operated. But, in 1951 or 1952, when I came to this country in 1949, I did write a letter to Poland to that Mr. Royek telling him that I am alive and that he should tell the others that I am alive. The letter, the response that I got, I could see that that letter was nothing than with tears. I did help those people, for a short time. All of a sudden I'm getting a letter and it tells me in the letter that he does not want to write to me anymore and I shouldn't write to him anymore. This was it. Another thing was mentioned in the letter, that I'm going for a trip very far, far away, and this was the end. Prior to that, I did send them a cow, two bicycles for their sons and fuel for one winter. And I didn't know that they're alive till I saw. They told me that they took them away — the Communists. This was already the Communists. The point is that, of course, coming back to Majdanek, and I mentioned that I was in Majdanek about thirteen or more months.

SL: Do you remember exactly when it was that you arrived in Majdanek?

WP: No, I don't. This is something that I did black out from my mind because I never knew when it was Monday, I never knew when it was Saturday, and I never knew what date it was. I didn't.

SL: You gave yourself up on the road and then they sent you to Majdanek?

WP: I tried to give myself up because I couldn't take it anymore. I was bitten by dogs. I was sick. I had a blood poison, I couldn't go to a doctor. I was filthy and dirty. I didn't take off my clothes for weeks or months. I had so many bugs in me that I just couldn't take it anymore. I was thinking of committing suicide but I couldn't do it. I carried with me a loaded gun. If I may I would like to give you one incident if I may.

SL: Okay, I'm going to change tapes because we're just about at the end.

WP: Yes

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 2

TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SL: Now you told me that you were in Majdanek for thirteen months and from there you went to Auschwitz. I'd like to be able to ask you some things about life in the camps, if it was radically different from one camp to the next and you feel you want be able to tell me about what it was like in Majdanek and then how it differed in Auschwitz and the following camps. Certainly feel free to do it that way but I just want to get kind of an idea of what it was that you faced everyday. First of all, was Majdanek just for men, or were there any women there?

WP: Well, there were men and women.

SL: What kind of barracks did you live in?

WP: The barracks were wooden barracks. Those barracks were designed – actually, I think — that we were told is for stables, for horses. You asked me a question about the difference of living in Majdanek or in Auschwitz. I want you to know Majdanek was a concentration camp — a death camp. Majdanek was the camp that was built and started to exist before Auschwitz; which Auschwitz they started to build in 1940. It was early enough. See, in Majdanek they did kill a lot of people, but that wasn't an organized kill, like it was in Auschwitz. The crematoriums or the gas chambers or so on and so forth were entirely different, where Auschwitz was more modernized and mechanized and so on and so forth. Now the fear in Auschwitz and the fear in Majdanek was about the same. I think it was worse in Majdanek than it was in Auschwitz. Auschwitz had a bigger population of people, working force, than Majdanek had. Majdanek was a smaller concentration camp. But I think in the short time that they did kill people there, they did their share very good. Now, and this was in the beginning. In Majdanek they killed a lot of Christians, too, not only Jews. And my being there I've seen a lot of things happen, terrible, horrible things. For example, I worked for about — I don't know — maybe two or two and-a-half or three months, give or take, I don't remember. Like I mentioned before, my mind does not remember dates or hours or time. [I] worked very close to the crematoriums where they used to gas people. It was very, very simple. I'll tell you a little bit about it if you don't mind.

SL: Please do.

WP: For example, they had that gas chamber. The gas chamber that they had isn't the gas chamber that you've seen pictures of, like in Auschwitz and so on and so forth. The gas chamber was almost what they did portray in "Holocaust," in the movie. They did built a building, if you want to call it a building. It was made out of concrete. And it was the size, I would say, a little larger than a two-car garage. And it had two doors — a double door in the front and a double door in the rear. And they had signs, like people should think they going to take a bath, to the bath. They make the men go from the rear and the women in the front with the children. They made the men undress in the nude in the rear and the same thing to the women, but when they started to push them inside and beat them and kick them that they should go inside, they all were in the same room. Under the ceiling they had those shower heads. About twenty-five feet away from there, twenty feet or twenty-five feet away from that particular building or garage or whatever you want to call it, they had a man-made mountain from dirt which they did dug out from holes where they used to burn the bodies. They didn't have the crematorium in the beginning like Auschwitz had. They had holes, about four of them, which each hole did absorb up to ten thousand people a day. Now the gas chamber, when they pushed in the people there, I mention the man-made mountain was 25 feet away. Behind that man-made mountain was a big trailer, a black trailer. There from the trailer was hoses connected to that building. When they piled up all the people in that room, there was one Nazi in the front and one Nazi in the rear with a pail of lime. And they did seal off the doors, they sealed off. This was right in the beginning, you know, which it wasn't so organized. But they tried -- they killed people. So when they did sealed off the doors, one of the Nazis gave a signal to somebody who was there in that trailer or whatever it is. It didn't take a minute or so [until] the motors started to roar. And evidently carbon monoxide — or whatever it was from that trailer in through those hoses — did go into that room. The one Nazi in the front did look on the door, [there] was a thermometer — some kind of device, looked like a thermometer — and he was watching that thermometer to see to a certain degree that it came. It only took minutes. So he gave another signal to

the trailer, and they stopped the motors. The roaring of the motors! And it did actually sound like jets. And they waited a few minutes. And then to the right was an electric switch, a big electric switch. I found out, coming closer to it, that the [way the] electric switch worked is [that] inside the building were two suction fans built in on the wall. And the roof had a chimney on each side, which the smell and the poison the suction fans did pull out. Now, you can imagine when they open up those doors, you could see, well, the people were laying on top of each other, they were blue. For some reason or another some people had their teeth bitten into the next person's body. They must have gone through a terrible pain or God knows what, and on the wall, though they were concrete, you could see people with their fingers scratching blood on the wall. One time there were writing on the wall from blood and it did say, in Yiddish, that the Jews — "[sounds like: der Juden come ?]"[8]. That means that Jews should take a revenge on those murderers. And when this was over a tractor came with trailers, two trailers, and the people used to load those bodies on those trailers like herrings. Heads and heads to feet. They used to put them one over another until they loaded up and they took them in. The closer they went to those holes that were there — which I mentioned before they burned them holes — there were big bags. And they used to unload them there and put them in sections and the top as high as there were dead bodies. The top — the body, was a man or a woman or child, whatever it was — they used to put on that the thumb a tag: when they were gassed, the date. And they sprayed them with a chemical — it was a horrible smell — that the bodies should not smell. They gassed so many people, and those holes couldn't absorb so many bodies. That's how they did gas and burn the people in Majdanek. Besides that, they used to kill people on the jobs, when we used to go out to work. If the *Kommando*[9] was 400 or 475 men, the Nazi who used to count us — of course there were more Nazis around — he used to holler in German, "Today, fifty." So we knew that they're going to kill seventy-five to one hundred. Or, "Today, seventy-five." So they, what did they do? When we used to come to work, those

[8] Yiddish, tape 4, side 1, 8:05.

[9] German for 'squad' or 'work group'.

goddamn — excuse, I shouldn't say God, I mean it makes me kind of a little bit mad — those murderers used to take out those big heavy handles from the picks that you work with. And they used to carry it behind them, and used to choose their victims. As you were standing — you couldn't look around — and as you were standing with your shovel working, they went behind you and hit you right here, where your end of your spine is and your neck, so hard with their hands that the people used to just tip over, that's all. And I worked a few months under that *Kommando*. That *Kommando* was by the name of [sounds like: *kodje kommendatur*? 10:25]. If I would tell you, the work that it was there; there was nothing but to kill and eliminate people. They didn't need our work there in that particular place. Of course, others worked in factories or ammunition factories, whatever it is. Which, they helped build the Nazi machine. They didn't have no choice. But this particular work was nothing more than an elimination of people.

SL: This was not a forced labor camp in such that you would leave the camp during the day? You had to stay there?

WP: Absolutely. It was nothing but a death camp. There was nothing but murder, murder, murder. You were not sure that if you went to the latrine that you're going to come back alive. You were not sure if you would run to get a little water for drinking that somebody's not going to kill you. Even Sunday when we didn't work, they used to come and take us out on the field and make gymnastic with us. And if somebody couldn't, they killed. And they had fun with it and they laughed. And they took movies and they took pictures. If the war was going good for them, that wasn't good for us. If the war went bad for them, it was worse for us. They always took it out on the prisoners.

SL: Did you have a daily routine in which you got up at a certain time every morning?

WP: Yes, absolutely.

SL: Did you get up and have a roll call every morning?

WP: Yes, absolutely.

SL: What type of work would you do during the day?

WP: We did go out to work. We dug a hole. They put in garbage in the hole and they told us to cover up the garbage. So there was dirt left from the previous hole. So they told us to dig another hole and bury this dirt. So we had more dirt left. So they start to beat us because we had dirt left. Now, some other people worked in, like I mentioned, the ammunition factories. I did work for a short time there, too. They worked in the factories. They used to make their uniforms or shoes, or field work. [For] the majority of them, that time was a thing like the Jewish bible reads, like it used to be years ago, the slavery in Egypt, with those big boulders and the big stones. They had eight, ten men or women pulling one of those huge wagons that a team of horses used to pull. And used to load it up full with those rocks and boulders. And they made us pull those. And a Nazi used to go with a big whip and beat us to run faster with it. We had to unload it. So what do you think they did? We piled up a mountain with those rocks and stones. What do you think they did with it? They start to bring in from Poland. Christians. Polish people with their families. They did to them the same thing that they did to us. First of all, they kept them for about four or five days on a field, no barracks, no roof, no nothing. If it rain or shine, whatever it is. Didn't feed them, took away their children from them, [and] separated after a while the women. They brought in the men to the camp. They gave each a sledge hammer. They made them undress half in the nude, sitting in the sun and pounding with that hammer on those rocks, a whole day long. You should have seen what did happen to those people. They didn't have to gas them. They just tipped over. They wouldn't let them go to take a drink of water. Just the same thing with the Jews. The same thing. And they start to get like balloons, swollen from the heat. Well, that's what they did. That was the work. Now, of course they had a factory. They made mattresses from the hair that they cut off from the people. They did make clothes and mattresses and what not. So they had work for everybody. For the ones that were alive and breathing.

SL: What kind of food did you get, and how often were you fed?

WP: Oh, food, if you want to call it food. In Majdanek we got in the beginning a loaf of bread. First of all, the bread was made out of chestnut flour. Chestnuts, they used to grind chestnuts. If the bread was a half

a day old, it turned green. It was very heavy. They gave us a loaf of bread for four people. That bread went down from four people to 20 people a day. The soup that they gave us was horrible. I think the pigs wouldn't eat it. They ate the potatoes and they cooked the peelings for us and they were not washed. If you ate them you had sand in your mouth. So you had to steal. Now, see I was fortunate enough. For a short time we did go out. There was, I believe, about a couple of hundred people. We did go out to work to the city of Lublin in a big lumberyard. Who owned that lumber yard, I don't know till today. But the managerial people were Polish people. They were very nice people. And I think this was a lumberyard probably was taken over from the government. Therefore, they had requested prisoners to come to work there. So we start to get in contact with civilian people. You know, a lot of Polish people came to look at us. They looked at us like we were crazy or came out from a zoo or what not, the way we were dressed with those stripes and so on and so forth. And we had Nazis with machine guns all around us. Let me make a remark to you. That the soldiers — that they did watch us — were not Germans. They were Lithuanians. They were worse than the Nazis. They were worse than to us than the Nazis. They were murderers, blood-suckers, that you have never seen something like that in your life. Never have you seen something like that. I mean it very sincerely. And they used to beat us and kill and kick. They could have done anything they want to do with us, and they did. But what we tried to do is to bribe them, and we did. Many of them we did bribe because we had access to some other people, to get some jewelry, you know, which they took away from people. They worked there, they used to steal. They couldn't do nothing with it. So what we used to do, we'd start to get in touch with civilian people so they used to bring us some food and we used to give them anything that we had, anything that we could steal out from the concentration camp. So was bread and they used to bring us soup, or whatever they could. But this didn't go on for a long time because, as we worked there, we started to plan to escape. It wasn't easy to escape from there, but you could bribe the guards. We could escape because you worked right in the city. Wherever we worked in the lumber yard, you could see people walking on the sidewalks. We were in the city. Almost free — but I'm talking about

something which was in the beginning. So we did decide to escape. We couldn't escape the way we were because we were wearing the striped suits. We had to have civilian clothes. I want you to know that every day that we went out to work, and I mentioned before that Nazi was counting us. We were five abreast. The guy used to call out "fifty" or "seventy-five" or whatever it is when we used to go out to work. But not at this work. Not at the lumberyard, the previous work. So we had to walk out, in order that they wanted to see that we didn't carry any civilian clothes underneath. We had to let down our pants and walk with the pants down and with the jacket up showing that we didn't carry any civilian clothes. But we did get a hold of civilian clothes. We did.

SL: How was this accomplished?

WP: Well, from the outside.

SL: From this kind of smuggling or whatever?

WP: Sure, that's right. But, what happened was this here. See they did count us in the morning. They did count us at noontime. From the morning till noon was a short distance. From noon till six o'clock was six hours. So we had stashed away the civilian clothes in the lumberyard in certain areas. We supposed to escape this day in the afternoon. We were working in partners, two people. We used to carry lumber, what's necessary and unnecessary, the material. So this boy, a fellow by the name of — I remember even his name — of course, he did write a book about it. I had this book and I had borrowed to somebody. And I forgot who it was and never got it back.

SL: Do you remember the name of the book?

WP: Yes, *My Escape from Majdanek*. But his name is Pepper. In Polish, it's Piepsc. And this was his name. And [on] the cover of the book is a picture of a man with the striped uniforms. So this guy was involved with us. Instead to wait until the afternoon, he did escape before noon. And at noon time, when we got in, they counted us. One was missing, and this was the end. I hate to tell you what they did to us. First of all, this guy's partner that worked with him, they did torment that guy. He should say where he is. He didn't know. So what they did in front of us? First of all, when they found out one is missing, they

gathered us all together, pushed us in a— one of those -- a hole. That camp commandant came, and he was a murderer. He was riding on a white horse. He came with his white horse. So they took this guy who worked with him. And in front of us, it was, asked him where he is. And he cried, said he doesn't know. So what did they do? They tied his hands behind him, they made a rope and they threw that rope over one of those rafters and they pulled him up on his hands. How long can you last. And not only that, they beat him and on top of that and kicked him. And with whips. When they did let him down he was dead. Now, what did they do to us? When we came back to the camp they did interrupt the work. Every one of us got seventy-five. They had this table. They put you in the table, first with the feet and after a while with the hand that you couldn't move. I got a slide of it, I got a picture of it. The table is still there. They had several, not only one, and it was round. So they had two guys with whips, a left-handed and a right-handed. You only felt till three, four, and after a while you got paralyzed. You didn't even feel it. I still got marks. Three guys died right away of it. And this was the end. We didn't go out to work anymore. And we were blacklisted as convicts. Therefore, if they made any selections to send somebody to other camps — which was from one death camp to another, which it didn't mean a thing — they would never take us. And the only way we could get away from Majdanek, we didn't know where we were going to go. When I went to Auschwitz, I didn't go to Auschwitz because they wanted me to go. When they made the selection, they chose the people to go to Auschwitz, our group from that Kommando was locked up in the barrack. They wouldn't let us out. What they did is this here. They took out all the men on that field, they made them undress in the nude, and a bunch of Nazis, high ranking officers and low ranking officers, they did chose who goes to Auschwitz. We didn't know that we're going to wind up in Auschwitz. So they did take the people that they chose to leave on this side. Now, what we did is this here. We did break open the door from the rear barrack, and I said “Who's got the guts to get out?” Only about half a dozen, or maybe nine of us, we took off all our clothes, left it in the barracks, ran out in the nude and mingled with the other nude people. And that's how we did get out. We marched in the nude till about a mile to a station that they had. They give you the clothes, a

pair of pants, a shirt or whatever it was, a pair of shoes. This is the way I did get out from from Majdanek. Now we didn't go directly from Majdanek to Auschwitz. From Majdanek they took us to a different camp. This was to Germany, to Oranienburg, and then from Oranienburg to Sachsenhausen. Wait a minute, no, I made a mistake, I'm sorry. No, we did go direct from Majdanek to Auschwitz. I just got ahead a little bit too much. We did go by train.

SL: On a cattle car train?

WP: Yes, absolutely, yes, absolutely, a cattle car train, from Majdanek to Auschwitz. I think the journey took about three days or four days.

SL: Any food or water during the trip?

WP: Not at all. They wouldn't even let us out to the latrine. Terrible. And then we came to Auschwitz. In Auschwitz…

SL: Excuse me I'm going to have to turn the tape over.

WP: Okay.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1

TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SL: Before you start to tell me about Auschwitz, I want to know how come you decided to leave Majdanek? Did you just figure that anything was better than staying there?

WP: Well, I don't know. Actually we didn't know where they're going to take us. They could have taken us to the gas chambers, too, which they did the same way. But we felt that anything is better than Majdanek, right, probably. It did show you the will of to life. Try to do anything to save yourself, even if you didn't know what is going to happen, where you're going to wind up. I would like to come back to one thing. That this was a big deal, their politics, that they took us from Majdanek to Auschwitz. They needed us in Auschwitz like I needed the whole thing. They didn't have enough people in Auschwitz. They didn't have enough people. They killed so many people in Auschwitz. They didn't need 1500 men. But what did happen was this. Prior to that they did bring from Auschwitz to Majdanek, 1500 men and 1500 women, and mostly Greek people, and they claimed that they've got the malaria. So they brought them from Auschwitz to Majdanek to gas and kill. Till today I don't know their politics. But why did they do it? They could have killed them and gassed them and burned them in Auschwitz, and kill us, too. They didn't need us in Auschwitz, they had enough people there. But the matter of fact was, being for so many years and so long, even the Nazis didn't know you. Sometimes you got a hold of some that they trusted you or you talked to him or sometimes he told you some stories. See we always -- a lot of us people had somebody that you talked to, even from the Nazis. When we came to Auschwitz from Majdanek, the Nazis that had took the Jews to Majdanek told us the stories about it. After a while we were told that's true. When they brought the last two hundred women from Majdanek to Auschwitz — you probably heard about the story. It's written in a book, and I got this book here. I brought it with me from Auschwitz when I was. They brought two hundred ladies, and those ladies worked in Majdanek in a factory. They made brushes. And I think they were made out of human hair. And they were the last, almost the last to leave Majdanek to Auschwitz. When they left, what they did something there, it's unbelievable. While we were still there, and I mentioned before that they kept Polish people on a field.

There was coals or whatever it was. They did bring tractors, and they did overturn the ground like the farmers do when they till it, whatever you want to call it. So they did it. One day they put up posts and loud speakers. Would you believe that they took out 22,000 people, made them lay down with the face down on the ground, and run them, squeezed them in alive with tanks? They ran them over with the tanks. Squeezed them in the ground alive. It's unbelievable isn't it? That's true.

SL: Twenty-two thousand?

WP: Twenty-two thousand of them, yes, that's right. There's a big monument there now about that. Twenty-two thousand people. And those were told by the Nazis that did it. Now, coming back to the two hundred women. You see, when you came from Majdanek to Auschwitz like me and others, we had to be in a quarantine. They called that a quarantine. They said the Jews got typhoid and the Jews got lice and the Jews got diseases, whatnot. We had everything. Everything we had. When they brought those two hundred women from Majdanek, they put them in the the women's quarantine. There was A, B, C, D. D was that labor camp I was in. A was a quarantine for the women. Most of those women that came from Majdanek to Auschwitz, they were women from Warsaw and around there. Amongst those women was a lady. Which, I knew very good this particular lady. I knew some others, too. This particular lady, in Warsaw in the neighborhood that I lived, they used to have a strictly delicatessen store which they used to sell all sausages, and what not, and wieners. In the back they had a restaurant. Her mother's name was Chavele, I'll never forget. Everybody knew in the area that that delicatessen store is Chavele's. It's Chave; it's a Jewish name for a woman. Her daughter was the most beautiful person. She was blonde, too. We had a Nazi, in uniform, an officer, his name was Dillinger. Not Dillinger, Schillinger. I'm sorry, Schillinger. Dillinger was the murderer. But believe me, I don't go too far up amongst them. Maybe this Nazi was worse than the Dillinger here. Schillinger was his name. This man was a animal. The SS were afraid of him. He used to beat and kick the SS people, a lot of them. A murderer. You know what that guy used to do? When they brought in Jews, and he was involved, he used to have always these uniforms with sleeves up like a shirt. Sometimes he used to put on a white

apron, and he used to make shooting targets out of Jewish children. He used to take children by their little legs and hit them towards the wall. A murderer. Now why did I come to this name of Schillinger and this lady? When they brought them from Majdanek into Auschwitz, to Birkenau, to the quarantine, a truck came in and unloaded shingles for the barracks. Now those women were not allowed to go during the day to the barracks. They were getting dried out from the sun, their hunger, no food, no water, clothes were shabby and torn. So when they brought in the shingles and they unloaded the shingles next to a barrack, and when that truck left, some of those girls climbed up on the shingles and they did sit down on the shingles. That Schillinger saw that they climbed up on those shingles. He came in all around, came into the camp there, to that section, and started to beat and kick the women. Horrible. That they are ruining the shingles. But this woman had a lot of guts to go up to him and told him and says, "The shingles are more important than human beings. That you are killing so many." And she pointed her finger to the crematorium. So he hit her so hard that she fell to the ground and turned around and start to walk away. She ran after him, pulled out his own gun and killed him.

SL: Did you witness this or was this a story someone told you?

WP: It was not a story. I was right in the next section. I got the book here. I didn't even know it was in the book. It's in the book here. I got in the book.

SL: What book is this that you're talking about?

WP: I bought this in Auschwitz.

SL: Oh, the guide book.

WP: Yes.

SL: Yes, I read that also.

WP: This is not the guide book that I got.

SL: It's not the one that they hand out when you go and visit?

WP: No, no, no, no. In Auschwitz there's a book store. I bought a book. I didn't read those books yet. They were how they make their experiments on a lot of people and in this other book, they got stories in it,

the stories that I talk about it. That's exactly the stories that I talk about it, same thing, it's written in the book. And they tell the story about this woman and that Schillinger, too.

SL: And what then happened to her?

WP: They took all the two hundred women, they gassed them right away. They kept them there only for one reason, that they would kill them. Well, I think that you tried to ask me about in Birkenau, Auschwitz, what the daily routine was. The daily routine was the same thing it was in Majdanek. But, they did eliminate those things, [hollowing how many? 9:55]. That they should bring in. They didn't kill us at work in Auschwitz, they did not. Auschwitz was too big of a concentration camp that they should do those things. Of course the atrocities were going on: beatings and kickings and killings and shootings, yes. But, about the other things that that was in Auschwitz and Majdanek, it was not. Of course, the work that we did in Auschwitz was necessary work for them. The camp, Auschwitz and Birkenau, was a camp that was self-sustained. They had farmers, prisoners that they worked on the fields. They grew their own potatoes, the beans, whatever it was involved. They had cows which they worked and they provided milk and whatever it is for the Nazis. They had a tailor shop that they fixed uniforms and shoemakers and what not. From ammunition factories and you name it, everything was there.

SL: What kind of work did you do there?

WP: Well, a million and one work. Every time something else. You know, that's a funny thing about me. When they called carpenters, I was a carpenter; when they called electricians, I was an electrician; and when I was a tailor, I was a tailor. And at one time I had almost a problem about it. I did almost have a problem because I called and asked, "What are you?" I says, "I'm a tailor." I was a barber for two years, in order to get an extra little soup. I did everything and anything. The work, sure. Starting off, working on the ramp, cleaning up after they took away the Jews. Working in an ammunition factory packing bombs and unloading empty shells. And for working in the field. For quite a long time I worked as an organizer, as a thief for a group of thirty-five people that they work in the office, Jews and non-Jews. And a million different other things.

SL: How is it possible to have survived in Auschwitz for as long as you did for two years? Most people, as I understand it, did not survive that long there because the camp was basically an extermination camp.

WP: Well, there are people that survived longer than me. They are people right here in Milwaukee. I was together with them and they came to Auschwitz way before I did. See I've got a number from Auschwitz, 129,514. I've got a friends of mine here that they got numbers of 84,000 or 88,000. See that's quite a different. How did I survive? And I've been asked questions about it so many times. And I want you to know there is no answer for it. I haven't got an answer. There is no answer for it. Why and how. You see, I can only speak for myself. Now I did things, whatever I did was against the Nazis' law. I wasn't caught and I was lucky. When I was caught several times and I should have been killed for it and they didn't kill me. This is something. It's a puzzle. It puzzles me till today. Would you believe if I'm going to tell you, and I don't want to sound that I was a tough, but I was. I wasn't afraid of anybody. I did got like a solitary confinement. I did beat up a Nazi, an SS man. I almost killed him. I could have gotten killed just like that, and I wasn't. You know what I did, me and another guy? This is on the record. You know, his name was [Rishe? 14:10], I'll never forget. I mentioned before they always did pair two to get out and do some work. They took us once out to work and we were building in Birkenau the *Kartoffellagehalle*,[10] they called it. They built a big huge building which they did store like rutabaga. And that thing was smelling fifty miles away. They used to cook it for us and they used to store it in the ground in bins, whatever it was. In the beginning, we used to carry those boulders, like I told you. You know what they made us do. We used to take off the coat they used to gave us, had to turn them around in front here, tighten in back the two sleeves, and lift it up just like a carrier, and they used to load us up with boulders and we used to walk around like that for about a mile, a mile and-a-half. But this time they took us two guys. They march us out to dig a hole. They gave us so much time. We didn't know in the world how long it's going to take by us, how long it will take, or how long it did took. That we finish before, we got a beating. If we finish late, we got a beating. So we didn't know what to do. So

[10] German for the 'potato storage hall'.

here I'm working with this guy, and we have the Nazis walking around with their guns, of course. I want you to know about about every ten to fifteen or twenty Nazis was one Nazi with a police dog. And this young Nazi, I don't know how old he was, [the heck with him there? 13:50], was walking around with his gun, back and forth, and watching us. And the next one, next one. And here we are both working, digging that hole, and I was standing just like that, and he was standing facing me, you see. And we were working pretty hard, pretty fast. And all of a sudden we were in the hole about up to here already. Both lift up our heads and we talked to each other for a split second, and he noticed. You never have seen something, an outrage what had happened. That guy, he became an animal. He took off his gun and he start to run towards us hollering and cursing in German that we talked. And as he came close and he was holding his gun not by the stock, by the other end and he lifted it up and wanted to hit me. I ducked and I got a hold by the gun and pulled him in the hole. And we kicked the goddamn daylights out of him. You know what happened? My friend got a hold of the rifle, says to him, ["Yi shiester bayhaufen."? 17:00] That means, "I'm going to kill you like a piece you-know-what." So he says, "Bitte shön, please," just like that, "give me back my gun!" If any superior would have seen that a Jew took away the gun from him, you know what would happen to him? He would have gotten killed just like that.

SL: There were no other Nazis around?

WP: They didn't see it. They were about twenty, twenty-five feet away. And when he got out from the hole, I got a hold of the gun. I turned around, I throw the gun towards him. So when he got a hold of the gun he says to me and to him, "I'm going to get a hold of you, I'm going to kill you guys." In the meantime he cleaned himself up and he went back to his job. Wouldn't you know that he got a hold of me.

SL: I'm surprised you just didn't kill him on the spot.

WP: Now then would be a different story now. If we would have killed him, you know what would have happened? Not only we would have gotten killed — you know the famous thing that they did in case a

Nazi got harmed, not killed? If there were four hundred people, they took out either the fifth or the tenth, and the machine gun they killed them.

SL: So you were afraid of reprisals against a lot of people?

WP: Absolutely. I wasn't afraid as much as of myself. I became that way because I didn't gave a hoot what's going to happen to me, though I was fighting for my life. Do you follow me? Today it's easy for me to sit here on the sofa and talk about it. It's very easy I think for everybody. But the thoughts and the mind didn't work as good and as fast that works today. Forget about it. But the daily routines and the daily things that we've seen; we've seen what's happening. Actually, life to us, well, it didn't mean too much, though you wanted to live. Though you lived with hope to see maybe there was a miracle going to happen. And they're going to lose or there's going to be reprisals. Or what the world is going to say and what the world is going to do to them for the atrocities that they did to us. What I want to point out is this here. I did do things which was against the law. Everything was against the law, but still things like that, things [that] I didn't get caught [for]. And things that I got caught [for] and they didn't kill me. Now, I did [take] a chance for a long time. I'll tell you what happened. You probably hear about the selections that they made. And all of a sudden they start to holler in the morning [that] the Jews couldn't go to work. If the Jews couldn't go to work, we knew what's going to happen. So they tried to eliminate us. They used to take out guys that they were [at the camp] longer, bring the fresh ones, a whole manipulation. Now, how did they make those selections? We were five abreast and we had, I don't know, how many dozens of those big Nazis standing in front. And they used to look at your uniform and see that you wear a star with your number. They knew that you're a Jew, you see. So they did take it out and put the Jews separate. And right away was a guy. And put on the number and this was it. And at that time, at this particular case, they took out a lot of, a few thousand of us and nice strong guys. A few days later they took them to crematorium. But what I want to point out is this here. Being a tailor, I did do a lot of odd work. I used to do the tailoring. A lot of Christian prisoners, most of the Polish, used to get packages from home, food. Oh yes, they were allowed to receive food. This was

about twenty-two pounds of food every two weeks or every week, whatever. And you probably know most of them were illiterate. They couldn't write any letters. So the Jews were smarter, they knew how to write, and they used to write the letters from them. The letters, they were prefixed anyway. So what did happen? They used to give a piece of bread, a piece of onion, a piece of garlic. A piece of onion was like a million dollars. And I used to do a lot of tailoring for them. I got so fancy in writing those numbers, just beautiful. I used to write them with a ink pencil. I used to make wet with cloth. But the Jews used to have that the Star of David and the Christian only had the triangle. And I used to write the numbers, used to sew them up. So I used to make myself a piece of bread and I used to do it till 1:00, 2:00 o'clock in the morning. Everybody was sleeping and I used to do it, a long, long time. Now, what I want to point out is this here, what in the conjunction with the selections. You know what I did? I made up my mind that I'm not going to wear a Star of David. If they'll catch me they're going to kill me. So? They're going to kill me anyway. I took off my number from my coat, the number from my pants in the side, I throw them away. I took new ones with the triangle. I put on a "P" for Poland and I put my number on. And I didn't wear no Star of David. I walked through the selection. They look at me. They tell me to go. Now, if they would have caught me, this would have been, probably a 100 percent. But I took a chance. You know, there were some people that they knew me, they start to doubt if I'm a Jew or not. Honest because I didn't wear the Star of David. But the number that I had, see, my number. Everybody who was in the concentration camp in Auschwitz that did know, was interested in things, knew that I came from Majdanek, see. Because I can tell. If somebody's got a number, I can tell approximately where that person came from.

SL: You mean what camp they were in?

WP: Or from the outside or from cities, too. See they knew, everybody knew that most us numbers people have their [numbers] from Warsaw. Most Majdanek people were from Warsaw, and Jews from Czechoslovakia and Jews from Lithuanian.

SL: Why do you have a triangle below your number? I've not seen that before.

WP: [Laughs] Well, this is something else again now. I mentioned before the triangle. The Christians used to have a triangle. The Jews have a Star of David, but never tattooed on the arm, only on the number. Now you ask me a question what this is. I haven't got the slightest idea.

SL: That was just put on there at the same time as the number?

WP: The same time. Me, quite a few of us got it. Here in Milwaukee they got the same time. There's another guy here that's got 129,000, the same series here. Or there's another one, but this other one took off his number. He was an idiot, you know. He was ashamed of the number so he had a plastic surgery. He's got the same three digits, 129,000. That we used to sleep on the same barracks. There's a guy here by the name of Ben Lehrman, and he's got the same number. There is here in the city of Milwaukee, there's about maybe three, four, about four or five we got the same numbers. See, the three prefix number, now it was 127,000; 128,000 and 129,000. The three first numbers tells you exactly from where he came from, what concentration camp, from what camp to another, or from what area from Poland you came or the people from France. You know Christians had numbers, too, tattooed. [All had tattooed numbers] except the German Christians. You know, we had a lot of Germans, Christians, in the concentration camp too. I don't know if you're aware of it. They didn't have tattooed numbers. They had numbers but not tattooed.

SL: Do you know offhand what those specific numbers would be? You said you could tell where people were from, whar areas, camps, do you know what number corresponded to what?

WP: Yes. You see, because this goes according to the date and the year.

SL: Would you mind explaining that? Because it may be something that people may find very useful.

WP: Let's say, let's say that somebody is from Lodz and he came to Auschwitz. And they came a certain year and a certain month. You see, so they got this particular three prefix. You've see numbers here, isn't that correct? You see numbers here. Now, this is the second of a series of number. This was the third, fourth and fifth series. You see when they started the numbers here, the numbers started from number 1, I want you to know. I did know the guy had the number 2 and he was from Russia, a

Christian, not a Jew. I knew a guy with the number 508. You know the reason I remember a lot of these numbers because I did write them on their clothes, so I did remember those numbers. That's the only reason I know those numbers, you see. Now, the triangle, I don't know why. I do think certain groups came from Majdanek to Auschwitz, they got the triangle. I think so. I'm not sure, but I think so.

SL: You said that when they selected you, they wrote the number down according to what the number was on your uniform.

WP: No no no, if they selected you to go to death they wrote down your number.

SL: Right they checked from your uniform. Did they ever check the number on your arm?

WP: Absolutely, absolutely. You know that we every so often had to go through and they checked your number on the arm because some of that ink did wear off. So they had to be retattooed. Or they checked it, absolutely. They did. See, every prisoner had in the office — we called it a [Shreibshirer? 27:05] — had a card. The Jew had a big print all over the card, Juden,[11] and his name and his number and from where he came from. I worked for quite a while there so I knew that they had those cards. Now, the people that went to death didn't have any cards, didn't have any numbers. But the people who were in the concentration camp, the concentration in Auschwitz, they had the number, they had the card. See when the selection to kill them, they took off those cards and they made bundles according to the numbers and they had [inaudible 27:45]. You probably heard about it and read about it. One day before the Russians came in, what they tried to do is to burn those Karteikarten,[12]. What would you call them, those cards? They got a name for them. So they tried to burn, not to leave any evidence how many people that they killed.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 2

[11] German for 'Jews'.

[12] German for 'file cards'.

TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SL: I want to go back and ask you since you got kind of off track, about one thing. You said after you and your partner beat that Nazi guard, I think you were leading into telling me about being in solitary confinement, is that what happened to you after you beat that guard?

WP: Well, actually, I'm calling it solitary confinement. It was a barrack that they kept people which did something. In other words that was a barrack with people. They were separate from everybody. When we came from work they let us in there and this was it. In the morning we used to go out from work the first and come back the last. So I'm calling that solitary, yes, that's right. There was another thing involved, too, because it happened to me twice that I did it. And the second time it did happen, I had some people that did try to intervene that they shouldn't do anything to me. But, I was promised that they were going to kill me. Some prisoners wanted to do it to me. See because this was a German that I beat up, this was the second one that that I did. And he was a prisoner. I don't know if you are aware — we had in prison spies. There were Nazis. There were spies in Auschwitz. You probably talked to a lot of people and they didn't know about it.

We did poison three of them. That's right.

SL: They were informers?

WP: They were informers, correct, absolutely, in the barracks. You see, if you talked about it, they worked, they were treated, they were mistreated and everything. How did we found who it was? At the first time there was a guy, he spoke Polish. He was a Christian. And probably came to a point that they guy seen that he's going to get the rope. They took him out. A short while later we've seen him in a Nazi uniform you see. Now, we got tipped off by some other Nazis. They told us they had three or four inside that they don't belong there, that they are Nazis. They slept with us, they ate with us, they wore the same uniforms, they were mistreated, they shaved, they not shaved, filthy, dirty, the same way. And besides

that we had a like an FBI group in Auschwitz. They called it the *Politische Abteil*.[13] We had to. But don't forget one thing, they had to control a lot of people there and a lot of prisoners from all walks of life. So they probably tried to prevent a lot of things. Probably that's why they had them.

SL: How was it that you had so much contact with the Nazis themselves?

WP: I didn't have much contact because I at one time, when I was in Auschwitz, I did work for the Nazis. What did I work for the Nazis? There was a *Kommando* by the name of *SS Abortreiniger*. That means that we had to clean the toilets from the SS that they were in the barracks. And I was the only Jew working there. And there were 15 people. There was one Jew, there was Polish people, three Russians, and the rest were Germans, prisoners, but all Christians. There was a guy there, he was in charge. They called in German, the [*unterkrampff*? 4:35]. That means that he was in charge of a barrack, that he supplied a lot of things for the soldiers, and supplied for the Nazis for the SS, that they did brought in Jews from the outside, or Jews from other concentration camps. They had to go through the quarantine, they had to be washed and dressed and get some other uniforms because, after all, the Jews had a typhoid, like I mentioned before, and some other diseases. So they stayed over two, three nights there. So he used to supply them with pillows. They had special small, like cottages, put up for them. Now it was this here. That one day we were sitting in the barrack, it was lunch time, this Nazi the high-ranking officer came in, and he says, "Who speaks German?" Can you imagine? I'm the only Jew. There were Germans there, Germans, and I walked up to him and I had to stay stiff and I says, "I speak German. And not only I'm speaking German, I'm a tailor." And I I knew a tailor is — so, he says, "Fine." He took me into a barrack. In the front he had their room, but in that barrack was from A to Z from everything. So there was another guy working there, a prisoner, a Polish fellow, a very fine, intelligent man, and he was doing some book work there and I got in charge of the other stuff. Now, if this company needed, let's say, clean bed sheets or pillow cases, if they brought me twenty bed sheets and twenty pillow cases, and a piece of paper listed and that was signed by the commanding officer, I took

[13] German for 'political division'.

this from them and gave them clean ones and they had to sign a piece of paper. So I got in contact with a lot of it. Not only that, I started to do business there, see. If one of the soldiers came to me, says, "Hey, *Schneider*," — they called me *Schneider*, a tailor — "I need a couple of bulbs." I says, "Where is the ticket." He says, "I haven't got a ticket." I says, "What can you give me for it?" So I started to do business. So they brought me from sausage and everything. I don't know what they brought me. And I began to do business with them. So that's how I got to know of them. That's how I got to get a little personal with them. Would you believe — did I mention this officer who came in, his name was Alfred Mintz? I'll never forget his name. He was a Nazi and I shouldn't say that, he was in uniform, but he didn't have anything to do with the prisoners there. But he was a fine gentleman, I want you to know. That guy did the risks with me. He forgot himself that I'm a Jew. He forgot himself that I was a prisoner. He start to cry for me about his family, what has been going on. I don't know if you are aware that any those Nazis that there were in the concentration camp never had a furlough to go home to their families. Their wives could come to them. They gave them a room in a hotel for a couple or three days to have a good time and she went her way, home too. So he cried for me about his children, hadn't seen his children and so on and so forth. So she sent the packages, packages with cookies or some other stuff. You know, he forgot himself. I used to sit with him at the table, the same table, and eat with him cookies or some other things. If he would have been caught, you can imagine the problem. It came to a point that I used to open up his — he had like a wardrobe, he had his guns there — that I used to take out his guns and clean his guns. Would you believe it? I used to listen to the radio. Who in the world had access to a radio and listened to the news? He wouldn't let me take to the camp the newspaper. He was afraid that they'll catch me with the newspaper, they'll start to bet out from where I got it. But I could have found it in the garbage, too. I did take home newspapers, too. *Die Völkischer Beobachter*[14] was a newspaper issued by the Nazi government, and you read a lot of stuff that people didn't even know was going on outside.

[14] The official newspaper of the Nazi Party.

SL: Did you become somewhat famous in the camp for knowing what was going on on the outside?

WP: Well, I'll tell you what, no, a famous not. But we used to have discussions, to meet at the barrack. For some reason or another I was more aware than a lot of people were aware. Getting together with a lot of people, even here, which I do — I do lecture, I don't know if you know that — they're surprised that I remember vividly everything what was going on. They are surprised. They're surprised for another reason, that I can talk about it, which they can't. Let me say this to you, I don't want to sound that I am built out of steel, that I am tough. But it is very hard for me even today but it's easier than it was. Do you follow me? It was very hard for me. I want you to know this happened most of the time. I don't remember when it didn't happen, that I don't get emotional. I do get emotional. I can't help myself, you see. I can't help myself [sighs].

SL: What kind of news did you hear over the radio? Was it always of German victories?

WP: No. Well, there was German victories, too. You know I even heard the news about the ships that time, they were wandering around that no country would let them in with the Jews. Would you believe that?

SL: I didn't realize that was happening after 1939.

WP: Oh, absolutely. This was happening in 1943. In 1942 or 1943 it happened, absolutely. Oh yes, that's right.

SL: I thought they had just put an entire halt to emigration at that point.

WP: No, no, no, no, no. I don't know if you are aware of it. I can see you're not aware of it what I'm trying to say. If you recall, there were two ships with the Jews. This is not the Exodus.

SL: The St. Louis is that what you're talking about?

WP: I don't know if there was a *St. Louis*. There were two ships with Jews which England as far as the United States, South America wouldn't let them in. The United States, they went and the New York harbor wouldn't let them in because they were afraid they were spies. They wouldn't let them in and those Jews were killed. You know that. They were sunk in the ocean. That's right. This was in 1943, I believe.

SL: See I was not aware that any of that was happening after 1939.

WP: When did you think it did happen?

SL: Well, at that point there was no escape in any way and I don't know how they could have left in the ship.

WP: Oh yes there was. If you wanted an escape there was a lot of offers made from the German Nazi government, deals with the United States about trucks, about vehicles in the exchange of Jews. Did you hear about that? So I think that you're not aware of it. And Hitler was willing to release so many Jews, so many heads per vehicle. See, you're not aware of it.

SL: Even though Germany was at war with the United States?

WP: Absolutely, absolutely, sure, absolutely. Now this here Roosevelt, their so-called good president, Roosevelt was involved in that. Not to let in the Jews, you know. They intervened in New York. The Jewish organizations here in the United States that time. A lot of Jews from a lot of parts of the world. They would not let them in because they claimed that, there might be amongst the Jews on the ship, might be German spies. They were full of hops. They had more German spies here in this country than any place in the world. The Nazis were supported by the American dollars, I want you to know.

SL: Could go into some more detail about how big a smuggling organization was going on in the camp?

WP: Well, the smuggling organization -- smuggling out people or smuggling food?

SL: No, food, supplies — organizing is that what you called it.

WP: We called it "organizing" for stealing. It was going on. It was. Not on a big scale, but it did go on. I think this helped to survive a lot of people, too. An awful lot of people. We did participate one time, you know. You probably heard about it in Birkenau and Auschwitz. I'm talking about Auschwitz. Birkenau and Auschwitz, the same thing. You see if it was committed, to them it was a crime. If somebody tried to escape or somebody tried to do something, and it was committed, let's say if they had some hanging to do, they always used to call out all the Jews and they had to stay and watch. Whom did they hang? Jews. Who wanted to escape? Jews. Because if Christians did escape, the Russians, they never were

caught. They had help from the outside. A Jew never had any help — from who? He didn't have anybody outside. So they always used to make a big ceremony out of it. They were reading their sentence and so on and so forth and all the Jews had to watch, see. I don't know if I mentioned it before. Now you talked about smuggling. Let me give you this about [inaudible]. What did the people smuggle into the camp? I'm going to talk about myself. I don't want to talk about anybody else. I'm talking about myself. I think it would be unfair for me to talk about somebody else. I did smuggle. By smuggling anything you risked your life. There were people, they were smuggling lettuce. Lettuce from whom to whom? Let's say this father had a daughter or a wife in the women's camp. So she wrote to him a little letter and this guy did it. He did it only for pity. Didn't do it for anything. Who needed money or anything? Or if men did write a little letter. And I happen to know a lot of people did it and they risked their lives. If they did catch in your possession a piece of paper and a letter written from one place to another, this was it. Not only did they kill you, they tortured you. They wanted to know who did it and why you did it and they wanted you to tell who gave you the letter and if you told who gave you the letter this person went to hell too. Now, some people had access to smuggle food. So he had to smuggle out something from the camp. You didn't get food for nothing, you didn't get cigarettes for nothing, you didn't get what have you for nothing. You had to smuggle out from the camp. So what did you smuggle out from the camp? Money? You didn't. So you had to smuggle valuables. From where did you get the valuables? Everything was taken away. So we had prisoners, guys, that they worked at the barracks what they use to sort those valuables, to pack them and send them to Germany. Or, if you are aware or not aware, Germany --in Auschwitz, they had their own smelter. They used to take all the gold they used to take away from people and make into bars. And if you talk to a lot of prisoners there, they didn't even know about it. Not that I'm going to try to tell you that I'm smart, that I know about it. I just happen to know about it, see, because I was involved in certain things. So they had to take out something to sell in order to buy. Let's say I had a friend of mine that worked there. And this was true. I tried to look for this guy for years. I can't find him. I was told he lives in New York. I tried to look for him

in New York. I can't find him. A lot of people changed their names and a lot of people, I don't remember their names any more. I don't remember. If I would see him I'd probably recognize him. I was in New York several, several times. I got to tell you this little story, okay? And I was looking for a guy and I knew his name. And while I was in this guy's house, it was on a Friday night. Unfortunately he passed away about eight months ago. This was one of those pictures that you pulled it out, you know, the guy with the motorcycle? So we talked, it was eight o'clock. And for the first time I met his wife. He says to me, "We got a game tonight, a card game. Would you like to come with me?" I says, "I don't play cards and I'm going to be bored. I do not play cards. I don't like to play cards." So I says to him, "I'm going to be in New York for another day or two. Maybe we'll get together some tomorrow." He says to me, "I'll tell you what. I'm not going to play cards as long as you are here." I says, "I don't want to spoil your card game. I don't want to spoil the other guys' card game." But in the meantime when we talked, it started to get a little bit later. He is supposed to meet them in the house at eight o'clock, and it was after eight o'clock. There was a guy I was looking for, this particular guy, and I knew his name and I knew where he lived in New York. I've I talked to a lot of Jewish people, survivors. I don't know if you've seen New York, the homes that they got, one lives upstairs and one lives downstairs. And this particular guy lived upstairs. So I start to walk down the steps and as I came down the last step the door, right in front of you, the door opens up and this guy walks in. You know for how long I haven't seen that guy? That's unbelievable. I haven't seen that guy since 1945. As he opened up the door, tries to walk in and he looks at me, doesn't mean a thing, and he walks past me, I put my hand on the wall and I stopped him, I don't let him go. He didn't know what it was and he looks at me. I says to him, "Listen, don't you recognize me?" He looks at me and says, "No." I says, "Is your name so-and-so?" See, he changed his name. I told him who I was. And then the game was spoiled. They didn't play cards anymore. So let's go back again one thing to another. Let's go back about smuggling. Now this particular guy too, we worked together in the concentration camp smuggling. What did I smuggle? Whatever I could get. You know I did smuggle in from cigarettes to chocolate; from chocolate to sausage; from sausage to

whiskey and beer. So I'll tell you what happened to me once. What did I do? What did I smuggle it for? What could I have gotten for it? If I did smuggle cigarettes, I had cigarettes. Of course, there was a long, long time that I used to give away half of my ration only for a puff. I used to smoke, I used to be a heavy smoker.

SL: Were you allowed to smoke?

WP: No! No ma'am, not at all. But who cared? So, cigarettes I smuggled, so I had cigarettes. This was after a while. Chocolate, so I had chocolate. Whiskey and beer? Let me tell you something, what I did. The soldiers used to eat their rations, you know they're made out of aluminum with the handle, it takes apart in about three different dished…

SL: Mess kit?

WP: Mess kit, whatever it is. I had one. I took out everything from inside, only the cover was that high. I used to fill this up with brandy and mix it with beer. Where did I get the beer? And this was going on for quite a while. What did I do with it? Let me tell you what I did with it. I give it to the cell leader, to the block leader, to the barrack leader. I give it to this guy, to this guy. I gave it to the guy to the office. I gave it, and that is how I got to know a lot of people and if I was in trouble they tried to help me out. That was the whole thing behind it. In every day when we came in, the orchestra was playing. Even going out to work and coming back to work, and the guys were counting again. That guy who would lead that *Kommando* had to holler out, "This is *Kommando* So-and-So and so many *Häftlinger*. That means so many prisoners. And here I'm walking with two of those what do we call it…

SL: Mess kits.

WP: Two of those mess kits with whiskey and mixed with beer. And everyday for a long time. And sometimes something else. And all of a sudden, as you'd walk by, that guy who counts calls me over. And he was tipped off from somebody that I am carrying alcohol. And where the orchestra was playing was a little path with beautiful grass. Beautiful, oh, oh, oh. And he tells me to wait there and then another *Kommando* comes in and he counts again. When he gets through, turns around, "What have

you got there?" I says, "Beer." He says, "Where did you get the beer?" So I told him exactly from where I got it. I worked for the *SS Abortreiniger Kommando*, I told you I did work before. And I had an access to the canteen. I had such a hard job that I had to go for a walk with two dogs everyday for two hours. Can you imagine that? I had a hard job, too. And I had an access to the canteen to go to get leftovers for the dogs. And the guys who used to work in the canteen were prisoners. No Jews, only Christians, and they all knew me. They could have ate anything they want, but they couldn't take out anything from there. If they were to be caught only with a cracker they would kill them. But what they did with me is they made some hidings. They needed a tailor, a place to put in sausages and what not. When I used to come there when nobody was around to get food for the dogs, I didn't even give it to the dogs. It was too good for the dogs. So they used to sell beer. Now, when they used to put out the empty barrels with the beer, I used to turn them over and used to — there always was left in the barrels beer, correct? And that's what I told this this SS man, you see. I want you to know we could never underestimate those guys, those murderers, because if you were there for such a period of time that I was and the others, they knew you. They didn't know you by your name but they knew your face that you've been around there. They knew that we don't live from the ration from the camp. Forget about it, because I started to tell you before that we had to call out all those Jews, and they had this big meeting and he talked over the loud speaker and he says, "I know, according to our findings there's no prisoner can exist more between three and six months of our diets. And I know that there are prisoners here already a year, two and three years, and we know from where and how they exist." Sure they knew. There's no question about it. They called us *Verbrecher*.[15] Dillinger was a *Verbrecher*, you know. Al Capone was a *Verbrecher*. They called us *Verbrecher*. They were the gentleman but we were the *Verbrechers* there. So they knew what we are doing or smuggling in and so on and so forth. Now, so this guy asked me, "What have you got here?" I says I got beer. "How did you get it?" So I told him exactly. "I've got access. I work for *Herr Unterscharfuhrer* Mensch." He was a big name. "I got access to the canteen and I take

[15] "Criminal" in German.

the empty barrels and that's what it is." So he says to me, "Drink it." You know what happened? I didn't know what was going on with me, but when I opened up my eyes, it was the next day I was in the barrack. How in the world could I drink all two of those things with brandy? I couldn't. But he knew that I had brandy, and he had a picnic with me, see. Didn't do anything to me. Didn't do anything to me, mind you. You're talking about smuggling, I'll tell you another little story if I may. Okay?

SL: Okay I'm going to have to, believe it or not, turn the tape over again.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 1

TAPE 5, SIDE 2

WP: I would like to make a statement to you. You're talking about survival, and a lot of people are asking, me and others, probably. You know that I do lecture, and when we come into questions and answers, it never fails. People will ask me, "How did you survive? How come that you are alive, that so many people perished, and so many people they killed?" There's no answer to it. But I think in my estimation — of course everybody's got his own story to tell — I think everyone of us, regardless Jew or non-Jew, whoever was in the concentration camp and did survive, is a hero. He deserves nothing but he deserves a medal. I never did live with the idea that somebody owes me for it. They owe me something for it, that I did survive and did fought for my life for so many years and I did suffer so much. And I mean not only suffering because I was hungry, I mean there's aches and pains and heartaches of losing my whole family and seeing everyday the killings and the beatings and the gassing and those chimneys burning everyday. We deserve a medal. I want you to know it. And more so for one thing: that we became humans. Never did I believe, and others did believe, if a miracle happened, because we never did believe in it that we'll get free; that we will be human beings; that we'll be able to sit down and talk to other people intelligently. Or live like a human being. Never. So I think we deserve a medal. Not anything else, but a medal we deserve for it. Of course, we didn't do any favors to anybody else. I think the only favor probably that we did and do is by telling you the story and telling the other people the stories and telling those atrocities what was going on in order to prevent that shouldn't happen again. That's the only reason we deserve a medal [laughs].

SL: Did you have a group of friends in the concentration camp?

WP: Well, how can you call friends? I don't want to put you on the spot. Who had friends? Who was thinking about friends? Who was thinking about relatives? If there was a brother and a brother and a sister and a brother and a sister and a sister, the only thing people did live and breath and dream is food. That's the only thing. And I can tell you instances that you wouldn't believe. Would you believe that a father used to take away his child's bread, not knowing the consequences what's going to happen? That child is

going to die. Or their mother. Or the children doing to their parents. It's very hard to understand to make people understand as long as you are not in somebody else's' shoes, exactly, actually what is going on, and what hunger is. Hunger makes kill the other people. Hunger made people become cannibals. Hunger made do a lot of things that people did and they didn't even know that they were doing. Believe you me. But that's all, that's the answer I can give you for it.

SL: What kind of thoughts would you have about possible rescue or end of the war? Was it something you thought about?

WP: Not at all. We did very, very, very little think about it because we didn't believe that it's going to happen. The Nazis were going so strong and the fear that they put in us that we thought that the Nazis were built out of steel and if you're talking about religious or God, I'll tell you, I'll be very frank with you. We start to disbelieve. That we thought if there's a god, the god is with them, not with us anymore. So we never did actually believe or did talk about it, very little. Now, I would like to probably give you one incident that just came to my mind. I mentioned before that we had in Auschwitz that orchestra. You probably heard about it, a lot of people know about it. As a matter of fact, there's going to be a TV show about this lady that used to be in the ladies' orchestra that Vanessa Redgrave is going to take a part of that whole commotion about it. In a concentration camp as big as Auschwitz, you had people practically from all over the world. From all walks of life. From illiterate people to professors, from professors to musicians and artists and actors and actresses and whatnot. The orchestra leader from the men's orchestra — it was a thirty-five-piece orchestra — was from the philharmonic orchestra from Russia. For some reason or another, and I can't tell you why or what, that guy [vanished? 6:15]. So they did appointed another guy in his place. He was from France and he was a violin player. A very fine, fragile person. A very intelligent person. Now he was present, this particular man was present, I was with him at the same barrack in the same section with some others. And we were talking at this particular moment about being free. And this man, for some reason or another reason, he was always after us. He wanted to learn us French because he was from France. So he overheard that we were

talking about being free. This man said to us with those words, "Of course, right now in the conditions that we live, we would like to be free. But I want you to know one thing," he says. "Remember what I told you," and it's true and that is on my mind. "If it's going to be a time, if we going to be liberated, if there's going to be a miracle, so there's going to be a time that we going to envy the dead people." And he was right. He is right. I doubt if he's alive. He wasn't a youngster that time. And he was right. So we asked him why. He says, with those words, "What would you do when you are liberated tomorrow? Where will you go? Now you're going to look around see who is missing from your family, if anybody's alive. There isn't going to be any brothers or sisters or mothers or fathers or uncles and aunts. Where are you going to go?" And he was so right. Thousands of us were liberated. Now, it was a good point that they showed on the TV last week I believe, *L'Chaim*, that old film. Did you watch it? The whole thing was put together fine, beautiful. But to me — that's a funny thing — to me those things, it doesn't mean a thing. But the end was the most important thing. After the liberation, the Christians packed their packages and went home. A Jew didn't have no place where to go, didn't have any home. It's true. I was wandering the streets I want you to know. You know, I got married right after the liberation, May 9. And me and my wife at that time didn't have nowhere to go. We were walking around in a little town, didn't have any money, didn't have any food. Yes, I had a piece of bread that was so stale and old. Sitting on a curb and eating that piece of bread. Didn't have even a nickel to go buy some milk. Nothing. Didn't have no place where to go. Can you imagine the feeling of a person? That's very hard. I don't know. Well, you or anybody else can probably think about it. That's horrible. That is horrible. That is horrible. But how can you feel the feelings? You can't. Until today I never did envy anybody in my life, I want you to know. Many times, I think I told you in my youth, I didn't have food. I did cry my eyes out for a piece of bread. And after the war a while, the war and everything else, concentration camps, after the war, well, I did operate a black market. I made money. But the money didn't mean a thing to me. Nothing did anything to me. Nothing. Even today. When I came to this country I was penniless. I never did look out for somebody to give me a charity. I did go to work, I worked hard. Two jobs, two

and-a-half jobs. Sunday and Monday. I was young, I was eager, and I wanted to have things in my life. And thank God that this country is a country for opportunities. I wanted to prove to myself. And people used to ask me. I says, "I tried to prove something to myself. I was told that this country's got opportunities," which it is true, it has opportunities. It has. And if you want to call luck or not luck, whatever it is, I had very bad times here in this country. In this country, I had terrible times that I didn't have money to go buy a loaf of bread. There were sicknesses and so on and so forth. But thank God I'm out, I did go to work again and I live like a king and I think it's beautiful. But still I never did envy anybody when it came to material things. In those days when I didn't have a pair of shoes or a pair of pants. The only envy I had, and I have today too, is family. That's all. It isn't because somebody's got a brother and they're mad at each other, they don't talk to teach other. It happens. Or a sister, whatever it is. But my whole thinking, my whole soul is, "Well gosh, if I would have gotten my brother or my sister or whoever it is." Of course, parents don't live forever. Brothers and sisters don't live forever, but still that was a too early age that I lost everything. And the horrible times that I had, the bad days and nights even before the war. So actually I didn't have a good day in my life till I came to this country [sobs].

SL: If I may, I'd like to ask you just a few more questions.

WP: Ask me a lot of questions, yes, go ahead.

SL: Now Birchenau was the women's part of Auschwitz?

WP: No ma'am.

SL: It was different?

WP: Auschwitz and Birkenau was only a part a short distance.

SL: But the women were in Birkenau and the men in Auschwitz?

WP: No, no. Birkenau was in two parts. One wide street partitioned the men and the women. There was the ladies' concentration camps and the men concentration camp.

SL: In both places?

WP: In the same, yes, in both places. Sure, absolutely.

SL: That kind of contact did you have with them? Were you allowed any?

WP: Not at all. Not at all.

SL: Now you mentioned the fact that letters were being smuggled.

WP: That's right. You see, there were men going to work to the women's concentration camp. During the day, most of the women were out working but some were in the camp. And the men worked in the ladies' camp fixing whatever it was to fix there. The women didn't fix those things. The women didn't come to work to men's camp, but at work, some places where the women worked, some men could have communicated if they didn't get a hold of them, if the Nazis didn't see it. But that was not allowed to talk to women, not at all. But it was at the same area.

SL: From what you knew, were things were as bad in the women's camps as they were in the men's?

WP: I would say worse.

SL: Why?

WP: Because, well, let's call a spade a spade. A women is still a weaker sex. The women, most of them did break down faster than men. Of course the morality. They used let the women be in the nude, which, in a time, it didn't mean a thing. The women didn't care anymore. The men didn't care. We're going to give you an example. We never took a bath. This was in Birkenau. In the women's camp was a bath. A bath, you know, the same thing, the place they used to gas people there. Same thing the showers. You never knew if you're going to go in there if you're going to come out. So it was in the winter time, and bet you it must have been at that time about 22 below zero. I want to show you what they did, those murderers. They took the men's section — like I mentioned before, A, B, C, D it was — D was our labor camp. E was the gypsy camp. F was the *Krankenbau*,[16] like a hospital, which was nothing. G was the crematoriums, the gas chambers see. It must have been about 22 below zero. They made us undress in the nude, only leave on your shoes, and we have to go five abreast and they took us to the

[16] Mr. Peltz uses this term for the camp infirmary.

lady's camp for a bath. We didn't even know where we are going. So, when we marched out from the camp, we had to make a right turn and go I would say for about a half a mile. After a while, make a right turn, go another half a mile or three-quarters of a mile to the women's camp. So we didn't walk, they made us run. And in the nude. And it's cold, it was like in a fog. You couldn't see anything from the people, from their bodies. And then we came into the camp. They made us stand five abreast, now you are hot from running and the frost got a hold of you. How many people do you think got tipped over? Now, then, you were standing here five abreast, and across of you were women, the same way, in the nude. The same way with the shoes on. Then they made you took off the shoes, and the shoes put in front. So they took a section, make you go into that so-called bath, it was huge. And the SS there were standing with whips and beating you: "Faster, faster, faster!" So we came in inside, packed in. It was a [*Remwerang*? 17:25], it was like a down step where the showers were. There was a big valve. And they had fun! They laughed and they took pictures. They had a picnic. Now, and everybody was standing and trembling. He opened up the cold water, let it run for about a minute, and start to get us out, and wet. Now the women. The men had bath, and I'll tell you what they did to the women. The women were waiting outside in the nude. They made the women go in there. Now the women has a different problem — this was the *Onklause*.[17] You know what the *Onklause* means? If somebody had lice, so they unloused them. The men didn't have any hair, the women didn't have any hair. When the men came out from the bathroom, there was Nazis sitting on benches, and they had pails and the pail was that Zyklon[18] that they used to gas people. And they put it in the water and the water turned dark blue. And that thing was just like fire. The guys were wearing a big mitten, dipped it in that poison, and they told to spread their feet, and went with the mitten this way, this way, this way, and over the head. When they did it to the women, you should have heard the screaming that was going on. How many people do you think could survive this? Now you might talk to a lot of people and they might not tell you

[17] German for 'delousing'.

[18] Zyklon-B was the trade name of the poison which the Nazis used to gas their victims. It was originally developed as a pesticide.

the story. It might be not a lot of people are alive today that went through that. Those were the master race. And that's how they tried to eliminate a lot of people because they said the gas is getting too expensive and a bullet is too expensive.

SL: Was there any resistance at all?

WP: Well, I want you to know one thing if I may. Resistance, you're talking about resistance. If you heard or not, it is documented, the Jews did try once in Birkenau. You probably heard about it, and I was present, just like I'm just talking to you. What did they do and what did they win? Nothing. They did machine gun eighty-four young, strong men and I had the list of it. I wish I had them today, but I haven't got it. I had the list of all eighty-four. I want you to know that I was involved in it. So what did they accomplish? They killed one German and the German was a prisoner and he was a murderer. They threw him in alive. When they started a fire, when they did throw the gasoline on that crematorium, they did push him in alive. So big deal. They did make a resistance. Would you like to talk about resistance a little bit? I was in the conversations a lot of times with people. Especially when I do a lecture, not now as much but a few years ago, especially amongst young men and an older person. That they used to tell me that we did go like sheep to our death. "It wouldn't happen to me! It wouldn't happen to us! It wouldn't happen to them!" Bologna. Bologna, I want you to know that. How in the world can you try to fight back and to resist? How can you? If your hands are tied and you can't do nothing, your mind is sick? A lot of people don't even realize that that little food that we used to get was drugged. Our minds didn't work. As soon as we got off of their diet, and it happened to me — as soon as I got off their diet, or anybody, and start to organize food from the outside, their mind start to work. Now, every person was for himself. He tried to fight to survive every second, every hour, every day, every week. If people today can walk the streets of New York and see a man beats and stabs and kills a woman on the street and they walk and they don't even look at it, and the one that looked they didn't give a damn, how the heck can they call me a coward? Huh? Now I'm asking you a question: is it right? And I argue to people a lot now. A guy says to me, "If a Nazi would come up to me and wanted to take

me to the camp, watch here, I would hit him." Go ahead and [talk to Rige? 22:45]. He would hit him and he wouldn't let him take himself to the concentration camp or do anything what they wanted to do. It doesn't make sense to me. If you try to explain, they still cannot understand.

SL: Did you feel that your organizing and your smuggling was a form of resistance?

WP: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Anything that we did was a form of resistance.

SL: Surviving itself?

WP: Absolutely. Anything that we did. I got to tell you something. We talked about food today, and I mentioned before that we built a *Kartoffellagehalle*, a potato place. If you would believe what I'm going to tell you right now, they used to bring car loads of rutabaga or potatoes. Every fifteen, twenty feet was a Nazi with a machine gun when we did unload the potatoes. Though, would you believe now, the cars that they unloaded potatoes, they were about seventy-five feet away from the place that we used to work. The Nazis were about twenty feet away from us. Would you believe that fifty, hundred men start to run after the potatoes? Do you know how many got killed, machine gunned? Three quarters of them. A few came through with two, three potatoes in their pockets. That's no lie. I've seen it happen there all the time. Now, those people that got those two, three potatoes, that helped them survive, didn't it? But take a look how many people got killed. I did organize. One time I got some raw potatoes. Some people, if they found a raw potato, they eat it raw. I couldn't eat it raw. So I had about five or eight or ten potatoes, I didn't even remember. I was looking for a way how to bake them, cook them, fry them or whatever it is. It was in the winter time. It was very cold. And we were working at that time at the *Kartoffellagehalle*. The Nazis, every forty five feet, they had three or four or five put up. Like the crews doing the work here, they got trailers. So inside they got a little oven that warms and they got a desk and papers, whatever it is. The Nazis they put up for them little buildings. Those were portable buildings, or whatever you want to call it, made out of wood. But they had a big oven there that they used to use wood for keeping it warm. So they had a stack going to the chimney through the roof. I'm walking around with my potatoes and I'm working for a place where to cook it. Finally I looked up, I

seen the chimney and the smoke is coming out. So I got the idea, if I could go on that roof and put in the potatoes there. So I'll tell you what I did. I did find a piece of wire. I pushed the wire through the potatoes. I bent down the end that it shouldn't fall through and then I went behind the building and took a risk of my life to crawl on the building and go on the roof, hang down the potatoes, and jump off. And-a-half an hour later, I did the same thing, pulled out the potatoes, and I ate the potatoes. This I would say you call survival. But the moral of the story is: you did not think about the consequences. You didn't care about it. You follow me? Now you're calling about resistance, organizing. You couldn't do it. It's impossible. It is impossible.

SL: [inaudible].

WP: Yes.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 2

TAPE 6, SIDE 1

SL: We were talking about about resistance. I was wondering if there was anything else you would like to add?

WP: Yes I would certainly. I would like to tell you an incident, well not an incident a story. We lived with the idea, some of us, we thought how in the world could it have been done to make the people aware outside in other countries of what's going going on in the concentration camps, because we were under the impression the world does not know what's going on. So there were two young men. One guy was about in his late twenties, about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, one was about eight years younger, nine years younger, very fine two young men. And they decided to escape. Now, before I'm going to go any further, to escape from Auschwitz was almost impossible, especially for a Jew. You had to have help from the outside. You couldn't escape, say, "Well, I'm going to take off and run away," — no. Auschwitz and Birkenau and all the camps around and all the isolated land was forty kilometers around. The Nazis, besides the watch towers, they had eighteen other, they used to call it [Poststaffeten?[19]], whatever the heck it was. For example, if somebody was missing or did escape, they were on for forty-eight hours. Besides they used to let out those special trained dogs, the [Hundestaff?] they used to call it. Now, if a person had help, the only way he could probably achieve an escape was if he would have a hiding place for about three, four weeks and enough food and somebody to help them and then take off, he might have a chance if somebody would come and give him a false passport or so on and so forth, and clothing and money. But those two young men, now, when it comes to money and some other things there was no problem, for valuables there was no problem, but the help from the outside. Auschwitz is situated in an area in Poland which it is not too far away from the Czechoslovakian border. On a clear day you could see from Auschwitz to the Carpathian Mountains. Now, from Czechoslovakia is easier to go into Hungary because they border. In Hungary, at that time, had their whole Jewish population. As you probably know, Hungary was not invaded until 1944 by the

[19] German, tape 6, side 1, 2:10—see also three lines down.

Nazis, but though they had the Nazi organization in Hungary by the name of [Milosz?[20]], they used to call themselves. You must forgive me, you must be thinking "That guy must be the most educated guy, he knows all those things." [Laughs] Well, I'm not. The only reason I do know, like I told you before, I was interested in those things. Those two men did plan and they did achieve and they did escape and they vanished like in the air, but not for long. I got a very sad story to tell you about it and that's a true story. They did make their way through the Czechoslovakia and it took them a long time to do it. They made their way through from Czechoslovakia to Hungary and in Hungary they got in touch with the Jewish people, whoever was in charge, let's say like here, the federation or some other organization, to tell them what's going on that they did escape from Auschwitz and so on and so forth. You know what happened? They called the police and arrested them. They told them that they came here to put fear and to spread things that is not true. You know what happened to those two Jewish boys? They brought them back to Auschwitz. You know what the Nazis did to them? I'll tell you what they did to them. First of all, they made all the Jews come into that front, they put them down on two chairs, tightened them with ropes, and they killed them. Shot them right through the temple and they were sitting there dead for three days. This is because they risked their life and they tried to tell the world what's going on. People did not believe. To escape the Auschwitz, if somebody did escape, and achieve what they did, to go into another country, this was almost impossible. How they did it is beyond me. Till today I don't know how they did it. This is one incident. You're talking about resistance. The Jews were ready, at one Friday night, you know, when it came almost before the Jewish holidays, main holidays, then when they went up to the Jews and they did kill, that the sky was black from the smoke and the screams and the smell. On a Friday night, it was late at night, everybody was already in their beds, they're calling for the Jewish sentry. This was a time when they tried to eliminate the *Sonderkommando*. Did you ever hear about the *Sonderkommando*? They increased them from 250 labor force to 1,500 when they started to bring in the Jews from Lodz ghetto and Hungary, when the

[20] Name of Hungarian Nazi organization.

crematoriums and everything was working twenty-four hours a day, you know, they needed more help and after a while you'd start to slow down, they'd start to eliminate them. I don't know if you know about, if you heard about it. Then, this was the time when they made the uprising, they burned the crematorium. Why? Because when they took out the first transport of those people, telling them they're taking them to a labor camp, they loaded them up on cattle trains — can you imagine — drove around with them for hours, came back to Auschwitz and gassed them and buried them in Auschwitz. How did we found out? Through the soldiers. And then when they made the resistance — now on this Friday night when they called about the Jews to come to the front, then the Jews started at that time to get organized. We made homemade weapons. What was the homemade weapons? It was forbidden for us to carry any knives in the camps. Razors were only by the barbers, so we used to make weapons out of the blades. We used to put them on a stick, a row, like a bayonet from both sides. If somebody would come along — that's what we made was our weapons.

SL: How did you get those razor blades? Were they smuggled?

WP: We smuggled them in, we smuggled them in, sure, absolutely sure. We did smuggle them in. We did smuggle in some other things too, not only that. And we had homemade weapons, homemade knives, what have you. And this was going on for about two and-a-half hours and the last minute they gave up. At the last minute they gave up. Something must have been told to them from the informers or whatever it was, that the Jews in the camp were really trying to do something. And they called it off. So they did fight back, in every way. The guy who couldn't even lift a finger did fight back. I want you to know that we never put in a day's work. Whatever we could sabotage we did sabotage.

SL: Could you tell me something about the resistence that did take place, the uprising that did take place when they did destroy the crematorium?

WP: This was the time when they started to take out another transport from the *Sonderkommando*, from the people that they work in the crematoriums. Actually it was organized to do different, and I don't know until today the reason for it, that they did it right at noontime. At night, after we came back from work,

the fences were electrified. But when they had enemy airplanes coming through, they used to shut off the electricity because of course the lights had to go out, correct? This was planned to do then at night when they shut off the lights. Until today I don't know what went sour. They did it at about a quarter after twelve, and it was impossible for them to escape, impossible, because whatever wires they cut through — all of them with picks and shovels they cut through the wires — they went from one camp to another until they came out on the main road. The sirens start to blow, the Nazis came from all around the other side with motorcycles and cars. Can a man outrun a car or a motorcycle? Baloney. That's how they rounded them up and they machine gunned them.

SL: Did they destroy any buildings though? Were they successful in destroying any buildings?

WP: Yes. The only the building they destroyed was the crematorium.

SL: Did they blow it up?

WP: Yes. This was the crematorium number three. There were four. It was one, two, three, four.

SL: Were there reprisals against other people in the camp as well?

WP: No.

SL: They just shot the ones who escaped?

WP: Yes. There was no reprisals at all, not that I know of, no. There were no reprisals.

SL: Do you recall when this happened? It was fairly late in the operation of the camp, wasn't it?

WP: This was in 1944. You see the big transports, when they came in late 1944, when they did clean out the rest of the Jews in Poland and mainly from ghetto from Lodz, which there were a lot of Jews there, an awful lot of people there, which they'd lie to them that they going to take them to a labor camp. They told them to bring their sewing machines, their utensils, and whatnot and pieces of furniture to make them believe that that's the way their politics was, and the Hungarian Jews when they did occupy Hungary. When they started to bring the Hungarian Jews, was the horrible thing again. They gassed and burned a lot of people.

SL: Many of those people who arrived on the later transports, they had much less of a chance to survive. Were most of them taken directly to the crematoriums?

WP: Well, yes and no. Yes, they did, that's true. That is true. But they still did take out some people for the labor force. You know, I want you to know one thing, in 19 -- I think in the end of 1943, beginning of 1944, when they used to bring people from the outside they used to bring them to the station in Auschwitz, I think I told you when I was being punished, I was working with the labor force of 470 guys, that we built the railroad track from Auschwitz station right into the front of the crematoriums. If they did not load people at Auschwitz station they had to transport them from there to their crematoriums. Or the younger ones they used to go by foot, used to kick them and beat them and whatnot. But then they didn't have to use any trucks or any vehicles. This way they used to bring the people right in front, only a half a block, three-quarters of a block from the crematoriums into the gas chambers. They used to unload them, like I mentioned before, the white strip here was the latest concentration camp, the men's, and the track was coming right here from the center. I got pictures of it and I've seen it first time when I went to Israel to Yad Vashem and I showed my wife exactly — if you've seen any pictures from Birkenau and Auschwitz they got that long building that's got those two gates, ever seen those? Those were the gates where the train used to go out through and I used to work there.

SL: What happened to make you leave the camp? What was the reason that you left Auschwitz? You said you went to Oranienburg…

WP: I didn't make anything, I didn't have no power for it.

SL: Oh, no, that was a bad way of putting it. What were the circumstances around your leaving Auschwitz?

WP: I think the circumstances were was because I think is of the Germans going down steps because the Russians, I think, in 1944 took over part of Poland, they went into Poland, and they still lived with the idea to the last minute that they can wipe off the traces from their atrocities, but they did see, and I don't know how they could do it but they lived with the idea. So as closer came they did evacuate a lot of concentration camps, take them into Germany.

SL: So your leaving there was part of the forced evacuation of camps?

WP: Absolutely.

SL: Were you made to destroy the camp physically before you left?

WP: No, we didn't do anything. No, I guess I can't tell you. They did not destroy it. What I knew and heard about was that the camp Auschwitz was mined around, that was mined. But they didn't do anything because I was there three years ago and the camp is still there.

SL: How did they transport you between the camps that you went to?

WP: Cattle trains, that's right. We had -- it was very bad. When we came to the destination, the first thing when they opened each car that came through a gate there was on each side, left and right, every five feet a Nazi either with a whip or a stick and we had to run through and they used to beat us and kick us and some of them had their head split open. This was the hello coming into the other camp. But we were not too long in Oranienburg and Auschwi -- Sachsenhausen. I would say altogether maybe five or six months. You see Oranienburg and Sachsenhausen, those concentration camps, in comparison to the others, were like resorts. They were more for political people and Sachsenhausen they had that old French government, even Leon Blum was there in designated barracks. You probably heard about that the Nazis did make a lot of counterfeit money, American dollars. The mint still claims they still float around and they can't tell if they are counterfeited or not. They made American dollars and the English and the Swiss pounds and they made it there in Sachsenhausen. They had a special building where they did keep their people that they were in that field or whatever it is and I happen to know one guy, passed away a few years ago in Israel, a gentleman by the name of [inaudible], a very fine gentleman, he worked there in that mint that they used to make the counterfeit.

SL: You managed to survive somewhat on the food you managed to smuggle in and as you said before you couldn't live on the rations…

WP: Oh absolutely no, it's impossible.

SL: Was there the same thing that happened at Oranienburg and Sachsenhausen?

WP: No, no. No valuables in Sachsenhausen, I didn't have the chance to smuggle. We didn't go out to work outside. That camp was more secluded. That was an entirely different camp, that your ration bread, your ration, was given out through the kitchen from a window and when you went in the morning to your work you got a meat sandwich wrapped in a piece of paper, at least that was something. We didn't know or we didn't see. And the quarters, the sleeping quarters, the barracks, was entirely different. We had tables inside and when they served you soup they served it in metal dishes at the table. It was entirely different. That was more so like a political or model camp you know. Though they had chain gangs in those camps, which we couldn't talk to those people. They were separated from everybody and they used to work in chains the whole day long. In that place that they used to walk around the chain gang from the walking those chains. I thought when I used to see a movie and I've seen those prisoners used to carry that big steel ball, whatever it was, that's what I've seen there. So was so worn out that they were about two, three feet deeper than the level from the ground, sure yes.

SL: Was there as much killing going on in these camps?

WP: No, not at all.

SL: Were there any crematoriums?

WP: See, if they had a crematorium, they only had for the people that had died, see, because they couldn't afford to have cemeteries. But they did burn people. But mass gassing, no, not at all, not at all.

SL: And then under what circumstances did you leave Sachsenhausen?

WP: Same circumstances that I left the others.

SL: They were evacuating the camps?

WP: They evacuated certain people because in those camps they did build at that time a lot of ammunition and sophisticated weapons. As a matter of fact, the V-1 and the V-2 [rockets] was built there see. So they had underground factories [like] that I've never seen in my life and on the surface was nothing. But underneath was like cities. You never seen something like it.

SL: And did they have Jews working in them?

WP: Oh absolutely. The prisoners, they had a lot of Christians, a lot of people that were there from Holland, they were Christians mainly and there's some other Christians, Polacks and whatnot, Russians. I want you to know, for some reason or another they treated the Russian prisoners just like the Jews. They were horrible to them, too, terrible, terrible. And the Polacks, the Christian Polacks, too — to anybody, whoever was in, what's the difference, whoever was in.

SL: Once you got to Dachau, how long were you there, again before you were marched away? Was it a long period?

WP: I would say about almost a year.

SL: In Dachau?

WP: Yes.

SL: And how were things in Dachau compared to what you had gone through previously?

WP: Dachau was still in comparison to Auschwitz and Majdanek was entirely different, too. That wasn't as bad as was those camps. There wasn't mass murder, mass killings, but people died from a lot of diseases you know— malnutrition diseases.

SL: Did you get into a smuggling operation again in Dachau?

WP: Very little, I did, but very little. There was nothing to take out from the camp. There was old prisoners; there was nobody coming from the outside that used to bring their jewelry and some other stuff.

SL: So how was your food intake then?

WP: Horrible, horrible. Just horrible.

SL: You went back to pretty meager rations?

WP: Oh, terrible. When I was liberated I was a little over ninety pounds. I think if I would have to stay there another — we did count and come up to certain degrees: "When I'm going to die? And others?" Because the population at the camp was so much and every day so many died. And besides that malnutrition, we had a typhoid epidemic in the camp. We didn't go out to work. We were in the quarantine and everyday about fifty or sixty or twenty-five died you see.

SL: Did you ever run into anybody that you knew from Warsaw in these camps?

WP: Oh yes, absolutely.

SL: Did you learn of the Warsaw ghetto uprising through them, is there any way you knew about it?

WP: Absolutely. They even told me about the tale end of my family and about my brother, that he was involved in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. He was an outside contact man. He got shot by the Nazis on the outside. Sure. My brother was a real fighter. He was, I wouldn't say just like me, but I think maybe more. He was a fighter. Oh yes, he was.

SL: Did you ever find out whether or not your sister made it back to Warsaw?

WP: My father did not but she made it. My father got shot before he went into Warsaw, but not my mother -- sister. She made it to go into Warsaw, yes. But they were all transported to Treblinka.

SL: Do you remember what you felt when you heard about the ghetto uprising?

WP: Well, I did feel wonderful about it, but I did feel very sad the outcome of it. Because they did bring into Majdanek in the part of 1943 that I was a lot of people that I know, neighbors of mine and people that I did know in Warsaw ghetto uprising. But very little of them did go with the transport that I did go on. I don't know what the whereabouts are, if they're alive or not. I still am in contact with a few people from Warsaw. Today, as a matter of fact, like I mentioned, in New Orleans and some other places. They went through the same period that I did go through.

SL: What kind of work were you doing at Dachau?

WP: Same thing, same work. Pulling wagons and stones and steeling and whatnot. All kind of work and road and everything. Whatever, whatever that took us to work. And of course, during the time, like I mentioned before, we didn't go out to work for quite a few months on account of that typhoid epidemic. So we were isolated. We didn't go out to work at all.

SL: At any time during your stay did you get very ill?

WP: Well, I was very sick at one time. I was afraid to stay in camp because this was the end. But I got to thank my friends that they used to help me go to work and help me to come back, otherwise I wouldn't

survive. I was very sick. I did run a high fever and until today, I don't know. Maybe I had typhoid fever that time, I don't even know because I was afraid to go to a doctor. If I would go to a doctor he would put me in the Krankenbau. This is it.

SL: Okay, I'm going to turn the tape over.

WP: Yes

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 1

TAPE 6, SIDE 2

SL: You met your wife in Dachau. How did you meet her under those circumstances?

WP: First of all, I met her when we were there in that labor camp. This was in 1944 and it was in the wintertime. I think either it was in November or December. I don't remember exactly what it was. So they brought in a group of marching men and women from Budapest. This was a famous -- infamous march. Eichmann was involved. It was documented and, of course, they have books about it, too. They were marching from Budapest into Germany. During the march a lot of them lost their lives. They they got killed or shot by the Nazis. They brought them in to the camp. That camp was divided in one corner for women. The men they let in with us, and the women they let in in that camp. But, when they brought them in it was just at that time a cold, terrible, and amongst all the women, and they all looked half-dead. They were wearing their own clothes, but I've seen this girl didn't have any shoes on, and I felt kind of sorry for her. But when they let them in in the barracks, and they didn't lock that camp, and I was -- like me, like others, were interested to those people that they came in just from the outside, in 1944, can you imagine that? And they were in no condition to talk to us anyway. I've seen some scenes that was just horrible. A lot of those girls, some of them got into the convulsion, and it was so cold. So I've seen this girl was shaking, was just terrible. A young girl, so I took off my jacket, my coat, and I covered her up and I walked out. I was afraid I'll get caught there. See, it was a forbidden for the men to go in there. And then I've seen her with no shoes. So what did I do? I did steal a pair of shoes, and the next following day I gave her the shoes. And I did organize some wood and I made a fire for them that they should warm up in that particular barrack. There were more barracks. See, I did in this barrack; some others helped out in the other barracks. There were a lot of boys. We knew the score. We exactly knew what's going to happen, what it is. That's how it started. After a while when they locked them up, we couldn't be in touch with them, but we used to see them at work, some of them. And we used to talk through the wires. That wasn't too far away that we could communicate through the wires and talk to them.

SL: They were Hungarian, right?

WP: Yes, oh yes.

SL: So you spoke Yiddish to them?

WP: Some of us spoke Yiddish, yes. But in the meantime I learned Hungarian. I was told that I'm pretty good in picking up — well whatever it was it's immaterial. So when they locked them up, they didn't have any running water or anything. So I used to help them with water too, whatever I could. I made a contraption. I did steal from the Nazis two pails and I threw one pail over the wires and I made a contraption from three boards. I nailed them together. I used to push them through the the electric wires, and I used to pour the water from one side and they used to catch it from the other side with the pail. I'll tell you, I did it. Why? Because they all knew me. They wouldn't dare tell me not to do it or not let me do it. I was too old of a convict that I did know my ways around. Where the heck did I get the water? I used to go to the kitchen. Nobody could come close to the kitchen. A lot of times the Nazis were around there. I got caught one time too, and I paid dearly for it. I used to get more beatings than you think. So I used to give them some water too, and that's the way it started. I used to get an extra piece of bread. We used to go out to work and we worked in the city, if it was cleaning the street or fixing whatever it is. There were some old women. You didn't see in Germany the young people. The young people, everybody was in service. There was older men and old women and they had that ration cards, too.

SL: What city was this?

WP: From the labor camp was Landsberg. So we used to go out in Landsberg. We used to work at the place where Hitler did write *Mein Kampf* when he was arrested in Landsberg am Lech, they call it. So the old woman used to walk by and throw a piece of bread or an apple or whatever it is to help. They used to help us, some of them. So, I used to bring home that apple and give it to this girl. Or I used to steal a few potatoes. I used to give this girl a potato, that girl a potato. Whatever I could, I could help her. So did the others, and that's the way it started. She had a sister with her, my wife, which she just died a

few months ago. And one day we came home from work. You're talking about wearing a shirt? I wore a shirt and till it'd fall apart, and then I looked for another one. And that shirt that I used to wear, it didn't fall apart. I don't know why. It was made from some kind of a material. It was so black like coal, dirty. So she says to me one day, "Why don't you give me that shirt and I'll try to wash it for you?" So I gave her the shirt and she washed it for me. Washed it. After it was washed it was worse than it was before. That thing was so filthy and dirty and stiff that you could put it on the floor and it would stand by itself. Honest to God. So that's the way it started.

SL: What was your wife's name?

WP: Rose.

SL: What was her maiden name?

WP: At home, Abraham. She came from a town. She lived in an area where it was Transylvania. One time it belonged to the Hungarians and one time to the Rumanians. They lived not far from the border. And the Hungarian, they used to call that [Nujwarod? 8:00]. And the Rumanians, they call it [Aradiamar? 8:00]. Which is translated the same thing. Today it belongs to the Rumanians. But when she came into the concentration camp, she lived in Budapest that time. That's where the Jews from Budapest they deported that time. So after the war, we got married, and my sister-in-law went back to the town that she came from because she heard that her boyfriend that she was engaged to is alive. And as a matter of fact, she went back and got married. We've seen the pictures. They've got a son. Their son is in Israel now and my brother-in-law's in Israel. They were devoted Communists. They were devoted Communists only for one reason: to exist. I got a letter from them in 1950. Their boy was born I guess in 1950 or 1949. She wrote me a letter that they haven't got no ways and means to live. He can't get a job because he doesn't belong to the Communist Party. He is a lithographic engineer. The baby at that time needed vitamins. I think that the child was sick, so she wrote me what kind of drugs and I did sent from here. But, he wrote in the letter, if he would sign up for the Communist Party he'll get a job. So I wrote him back. I says, "Listen to support the family, to put bread on the table, I'll do anything." So he

listened to me, signed up for the Communist Party, got a job. And he got a good job till he retired. His son grew up and of course he got a fantastic education, and he became a building engineer and devoted Communist. My sister-in-law and my brother-in-law — because when my wife went in 1966 home that time and she went back home to see a doctor, whatever it is, when my wife came back she was sick. She couldn't talk to them. The propaganda. They were so brainwashed it was just horrible, just horrible. After my wife passed away, my sister-in-law was sick too. She got leukemia. So she came to get medical help in Israel and then how it started. She had to leave her husband and her son and that Communist country. And then when I sent my daughter to Israel to meet her she never met her. But to make a long story short, the wind up of it is, my nephew was involved with some other people of designing a big building, and something went haywire with that building, and they blamed it on him that he made a mistake with this other guy. The government took that guy to court and threw him in a jail so he was afraid he could go to jail, too. So he did escaped Rumania and came to Israel and his father followed him and his mother, which she lived only in Israel a few months and passed away. But, coming back to my wife, probably you wanted to ask me that. We got married and I don't know if I did mention that, well, I was all mixed up. I got very mixed up. I became an alcoholic. I was drinking and I was going in very bad directions. I was young, I was bitter, and I was full of hate. And the the type of a person that I am, that almost wrecked me. I went into numerous fights, and dangerous fights and I decided that I'm going to give up my religion. And I talked in my wife to it. She didn't want it and we went to a convent. It was a Catholic convent. I decided, "Well, I'm not a religious man, anyway, but if I'm going to raise a family I don't want my children to be Jews." You know all that malarkey — "Why should they go through what I went through?" and so on and so forth. I was there for four weeks and I couldn't live with myself. I was thinking day and night if I'm doing the right thing, not doing the right thing. "Maybe I'll do it and see. If I don't like it, I can always come back," you know. But I start to look into it and I see that my wife was right. I decided not to. Then we settled in a small town in Germany.

SL: Can I backtrack just for a little while?

WP: Yes please.

SL: I wanted to ask you about your liberation. You were marched out of Dachau before you were liberated?

WP: Oh absolutely. We were marching for ten days and ten nights.

SL: And you were with your wife the whole time?

WP: Not with her, but we were marching on the same trail. Men and women didn't march together.

SL: How did you find her afterwards or what happened to you?

WP: Well, we were marching towards the Alps, the border with Austria, to the Alps, and I did escape from there. I did escape one early morning with another friend — he's in New York now — and we met the Americans. But I did go back. She was there with her sister and the Nazis were still there. I was liberated by the Americans and I went back to the Nazis, see. There's a whole story behind it. I think you would have to make about ten tapes about it by itself. I went back there — as a matter of fact, we did get liberated the same day and it was about two o'clock in the afternoon. I did escape from them twice. Now, the same evening that we got the order, it was the middle of the night, I don't know what time it was exactly, that we got to get dressed they're going to evacuate us. Me and four guys decided to escape. We cut through the wires. Now you listen to this careful, I didn't tell you that. I organized the escape but they wouldn't go with me, let me go, if I want to take the two girls with us — my wife and her sister — [the men] they wouldn't go with me. Therefore, they went by themselves and I stayed with her. They were hidden by a guy by the name of Rudy. He was a big Gestapo guy, and he had a farm and he did hide those four guys in the farm until the Americans came. Now, the story is this here: Why would a Gestapo guy like him, he was hiding Jews. When the Americans came in they looked for him, he was a noted murderer. He thought that he's going to save these four Jews that he probably would get away with it. But the Americans trailed and hung that guy beside that he saved four Jews and I would have been with them there. So, therefore, I did go on the march, and I escaped twice, I came back, and, like I mentioned before, that's when the Americans came. So then I was attached to the Third Army. I was bitter, I was hunting after Nazis and I knew all my ways around there and I led them

to a lot of places and I did things which it was against the rules and regulations. I did organize that group that we used to go out to shooting sprees every night. We did, not horrible things, not enough, you know. So we were drinking very heavy, so my wife started to work on me and cried, she doesn't want me to do those things anymore because she's afraid. She says, "You live through the concentration camps and you're going to get killed or they'll throw you in jail." Well, it was true. Part of my gang was thrown in jail. They had a court, they were four weeks in jail and I sprung them from jail, believe it or not. I did. In the town of Wolfenshagen? I got in on a routine of which it was no good. In a way that's the way I felt about it because of all my aches and so on and so forth. But finally I gave up everything there. And we settled

[Words missing here?, tape 6, side 2, 16:50] . . . Yes, we went to France at that time, like I told you. We went through that little town, Memmingen, which we came back four weeks later. We came back and we settled there.

SL: Memmingen is in Germany?

WP: Yes.

SL: You went to France for a vacation of some sort?

WP: No, no, no. We went back to convert! [Laughs] I wanted to convert.

SL: Did you have any money at all when you settled in Memmingen?

WP: Not a penny. Not a nickel to my name. But we were supported from the United States government, from the UNRRA.[21] But in the end of 1945, I went to the local government and I applied, I wanted to go in business, which I did. In 1946, I opened up a store in that city.

SL: With monetary aid from UNRRA?

WP: Yes, aid. I opened up a store. I did sell men's and ladies' clothing and yard goods and infants' stuff. The store is still running today in my name. I didn't get anything out of it but it's still in my name.

SL: How big of a place was it?

[21] The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

WP: The store? Well, it wasn't a huge store. It wasn't a department store. It was a nice sized store. The building, that belonged to the government. I was there till I left for the United States.

SL: How did you feel about remaining in Germany?

WP: Well, let me explain you something. I didn't feel good about it at all. You see, I could have left Germany right after the war and I had the privilege to leave with the United States Third Army. But I didn't want to leave Europe. I was still living with idea that maybe I'll find somebody from my family. I was dreaming about it and I tried. I did go through the Red Cross and whatever there is a possibility, I did and I didn't find anybody. Actually I did decided to go to Israel that time. As a matter of fact I still got my papers and my passes. But I still got after a while a letter asking me if I would like to go to the United States.

SL: Where did the letter come from?

WP: From the United States government, from the government that, how do you call that government? Occupational government? From the occupational government. Because the quota came. There was a certain quota. So I decided to come here. But, as being a Jew, the IRRA took over, I think through Frankfort-am-Main. There was a friend of mine that he worked there. He's in Chicago now. He was a big wheel there. So he did transfer the whole thing to the IRRA and I came through that.

SL: When you were still in Europe, did you do any traveling through the countryside? I saw some pictures of you…

WP: Very much so. I did travel a lot.

SL: In search of your family?

WP: Part of search my family, yes, I did. Very much.

SL: Did the countryside look like there had just been a six-year war there or was it in fairly good shape?

WP: Nah. Those murderers are lucky, I want you to know. They've got the most beautiful country that you've ever seen. They live better than anybody else on this earth, believe me. It's one thing you can't take away from those murderers. They know how to organize and they're disciplined and everything else.

You know when Hitler came to power, they were howling that the population is big, they haven't got no room. This was a lot of propaganda. The people over there lived in better homes and housing than people lived here, those years here. Believe me, I know that. Fantastic, beautiful.

SL: Were you living with any other Jews in Memmingen?

WP: Oh yes, a lot of them.

SL: Did they share your feelings of not too happy about remaining in Germany?

WP: Well, they all left the same time, give or take a few months, a year. They all left. I've got a lot of people here in the City of Milwaukee from Memmingen, an awful lot of people here.

SL: Is that one of the reasons that you eventually came to Milwaukee?

WP: No. They came to Milwaukee because I was here.

SL: When you decided to emigrate, to come to the United States, what kind of procedure did you have to go through?

WP: Only medical examinations and that's it.

SL: How long did it take between the time you applied and the time that you left?

WP: In my case, very fast. With some other people it took a very long time. In my case it went very fast. A lot of people thought that I got somebody in and they came to me I should help them, which wasn't true.

SL: But yet you remained in Germany for several years.

WP: Four years.

SL: Why did you wait so long?

WP: Well that wasn't long. At that time, it wasn't long at all. The time that I spent and the time it took me I could have stayed there for another year or two. But I came to a point that I didn't want to be there anymore see. I didn't want to be there. I got too many times in trouble. I just couldn't see the way those Nazis were still be out free and having that life, and getting back everything they owned, and the Jews, that had came back to Germany, which it was taken away from them, had a hard time getting it back. You haven't got no idea what was going on there. Our military government there stunk. Literally stunk

because — maybe I shouldn't go into it because a lot of those guys used to send girls to them, having good times, and they did do anything for them they wanted to do. Even the Germans were not satisfied, because those old Nazis got back their jobs in the government and so on and so forth. On account of all those things. The American people are easygoing people. What the heck did they know? The one that they went through and they've seen what was going on, they pulled them out in Germany, and they sent in fresh young men from home. What the heck did they know? They came to Germany, they see the people are nice, they played up to them, and they had anything they want. They cater to them. So, that's the way it was actually.

SL: Did you go back to Warsaw after the war?

WP: No, no, no. I never had a desire till I went back three years ago. I only went back for one reason — to make that film. I'm going back. I'll go back again. I got to make that film.

SL: What film is this?

WP: I want to make a film for my own life, from the whole area that I just talked about it, from Warsaw and the camps and so on and so forth, that I can use in my work. I would love to have it.

SL: Well I think I'm going to stop. We're just about to the end of this tape and it's really…

WP: It's up to you.

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 2

TAPE 7, SIDE 1

SL: I want to talk to you about your life in Memmingen for those four years after the war. Why did you decide to go to that town and what type of life did you have, and that job?

WP: This is the time that me and my wife did hitchhike from Munich, Germany, that we decided to go to France. We did hitch-hike in trucks and coal trucks and open car trains. There was really no transportation at that time. So we used to stop in many of the small towns going through and one of the towns was Memmingen. Well of course, when we came into Memmingen there was a main street going out from the main highway. As I walked on the street with my wife, I've seen about three or four people, young men on the other side that I recognized. I recognized them, that I was in the camp with them. And there was one particular guy which I met there. They insisted that I shouldn't go no place. I should stay with him. Our mind was made up not to stay there. So we were invited to stay with them, in one this particular house, and we stayed overnight. The next day we did take off again and we left. When we decided to leave the monastery and we wanted to go to Paris, France, we couldn't get any tickets. I went to the French government, to a certain location, and they told us that they closed all the transportation for civilians going to Paris because they're using it for their own troops, for their soldiers. I asked him how long this will take. They told us about another three or four weeks. So then we decided to go back to Memmingen to wait the three, four weeks there and after a while take off again and go to France, on account of those people that we met there and I did know. So we did go back to Memmingen. It was quite a long distance. I guess we did hitch-hike about three or four days till we came back to this town. When we did arrive I did know from this one place where a few of those guys did live. So we stayed with them overnight. Now we had to go find a place where to live, where to stay. Each city had a branch from the local government. In Germany used to call it a *Wohnungsamt*.[22] Those people supposed to give you a place to stay or find a place for you. Me being after the concentration camp, I was thinking to myself that I don't have to go to them, that I got to find myself a place for

[22] German for 'housing office'.

myself. The next day I walked on the street and I've seen Polish guy with a Polish uniform. So I stopped him and I started to talk to him and I told him where I came from. I asked him if he knows by any chance where I can find a place where to stay, a room. This guy says to me, "I'll tell you what. I'm moving out. I've got a room with a family on street which was on a Moltke Strasse, I will never forget it, and I'm going to move out tonight. So as I move out, you can move in." So he told me approximately what time to be there and I did go. When I came there, he did moved out already. So I rang the doorbell with another guy and the lady wouldn't open up the door. She asked us, "What we want?" I told her I would like to get that room. To make a long story short I told her if she's not going to open up the room, that door, I'm going to break down the door. So finally she got scared of us and opened up the door. She says to me, "Please, I only can give you one room." I says, "That's what I want, is only one room." And she showed me that room. Actually, it was not a bedroom. It was more like a dining room. It had a table and chairs and a bed and some other stuff there. Fine, I was happy to get that room, so this guy, this friend of mine went and told my wife that we've got a room where to stay. She came. This was it. We did stayed overnight. Now, the next day, we didn't have any money or anything even to go buy a loaf of bread. But the next day, my wife did go out to look around, see what is what, because they told us that the local government is giving out those ration cards for food and so on and so forth. So she went. She wanted to go to register. As I was sitting in the room at the window, somebody knocked at the door. When I said, "Come in," two guys in long leather coats like the old Gestapo came in. The door was open, and the lady from the house was behind them. One guy says to me in a real high voice, "Who in the hell gave you the authority to come and take away that room?" So I was sitting on a chair. And the chair did belong to that set. Actually it was an old set like an antique, so I did break the chair on their heads in pieces and I closed the door. A few minutes later, they knock on the door. I says, "You better get away guys, because the next time, there isn't going to be anybody." I says, "You wouldn't be able to walk out from that house. You better get out of here." And I called them names, whatever did came into my mind. I told them, "What do you think, that Hitler is still in power?"

and so on and so forth. They told me that they are from the *Wohnungsamt*, and they came to investigate because the lady went there and told them that I went in and took away the room by myself. I didn't open up the door, so they go, "How long do you intend to stay?" I told him, "It might be a day or a month or a year or God knows what, and that's where I'm going to stay, here, and you better leave." And this was the end. The lady at the house gave us conditions that we cannot use their kitchen, we cannot use anything, but this didn't mean a thing to me. Only a couple of weeks went by and I took over the house, anyway. She was very pleased with us, because on account of us she had food. Otherwise, she was of starvation, because the rations that they got for the meat and bread and so on and so forth. When I got acquainted a little bit in the city, I used to go several times a week to the slaughter house where they used to kill cattle for meat. I used to get meat only for one day, more what they used to get for six months. Oh, they were afraid of me. Not only from me because I didn't care. I probably I was a little bit rough but well, I couldn't help myself. And so we did register in the city. We got some papers to stay there, and believe it or not when we lived there for the first six months, the lady wanted to sign over the house to me. She said she was willing to sign over the house that I should let her stay there in the house. She was an old maid and her sister lived with her or whatever it was. To make a long story…

SL: Was she going to sell you the house or just give it to you?

WP: No, no, no. She wanted to give it to me for a gift because she was afraid. If I'll move out she doesn't know who is going to come in, and she got to know me. I did help her, actually. When my wife gave birth to my son, to Andre, she took care of the baby. We didn't even have a problem of leaving the baby. Go or anyplace or travel, she used to take care of him. Finally, when I got the store, we both were traveling, so she used to take care of the baby. She turned out to be a very nice person. Of course, she was afraid of us, especially when I came and took away the room, and I was a little bit too rough, too. But we had about three blocks away the The American CIC. That was their secret police or whatever it was. Occupied that beautiful home, a single home, the most beautiful home in the city. I got

acquainted with the guys from the CIC and after a short time, a few months later, I found out that they going to move out from there. So I made up with them that they'll move out, I'll take over the house. And that's the way it was. So when I found out that they're going to move out, that was on a Friday, and I told the lady of the house, her name was Matilda, "You know, Matilda, we're going to move out. One room for us is not enough with a baby now. I got to have some more room, so we're going to get a house." So she started to cry. She says to me, "I'll give you the house. I'll move upstairs into the little room. You can have the house and everything else." She was so terrible. She was crying. But we did move out from there and we stayed in this house.

SL: The most beautiful house in town?

WP: The most beautiful house, yes. With a beautiful garden, a big garden. We stayed there for quite a while, almost to the time that we left for the United States.

SL: Did you have to pay rent to anybody or anything like that?

WP: I didn't pay no rent at all whatsoever.

SL: Nobody came to throw you out?

WP: They would not dare. Of course, not only for me, you know. Most of the people, the survivors from the concentration camps, Jew or non-Jew, whatever it was, this was the privilege that the occupational government saw to it that we should have. Of course, they had camps. We did belong to a camp. There was a camp on the outskirts of town.

SL: A DP camp?

WP: A DP camp it was. And that DP camp supplied us with a lot of things.

SL: Do you recall the name of that camp?

WP: They used to call it the *Flugplatz*. It means a airport. Actually it was a DP camp near the airport. It used to be occupied before by the Nazis. So we didn't live in the camp, we lived in private, but we had a lot of privileges in the town. And, of course, later on we got acquainted. People went in business, so on and so forth. And the police department and the mayor of the city actually found out that we were not

animals as such, that they could live with us. Of course, they did realize and understood our sore inside and the love that we had for them, that was enough. Because they did understand and they were willing to accommodate us and everything else.

SL: Could you tell me a little bit about that social club that you belonged to?

WP: Well the city again, gave us this in a building. It was a nice hall and it had a couple of offices and we made a club. We had a place where we'd gather and come for meetings and dances and whatnot. We even used it in the beginning for the holidays for like a temple. Of course, later on they gave us another hall in a hotel to conduct our services for the holidays. We used to play ping pong and cards and have entertainment come as it came. That's what kept us together, in that club.

SL: So it was a club of survivors.

WP: Only survivors, yes.

SL: Polish survivors or all kinds?

WP: All kinds, all kinds.

SL: Were they people living in Memmingen or were some of them coming from the DP camp as well?

WP: To the club? No, most people from Memmingen, from the town.

SL: Can you recall how many people belonged to that?

WP: I would say there was about a little over a hundred families. Some of them had small children after a while. I would say about 120 families. We had a club, not only that, we had an officials. We had a president and a vice-president and whatnot because we had to have somebody who was in charge of it and to represent us in certain things. It was very nice. We were not a burden to them at all, not at all.

SL: I think on the last tape we discussed about your store. I guess what I'd like to talk to you now is about the process of leaving Germany and coming to the United States. What type of procedure did you have to go through in order to be granted application?

WP: I could have gotten the privilege to leave Germany much earlier, but I didn't want to leave.

SL: Why not?

WP: I could have left Germany in 1945, 1946. The reason I didn't want to leave that time was because I was living with the idea, if somebody may be survived from my family or relatives, if I would leave for the United States, probably nobody would know where I was. Which I didn't find anybody anyway. I do not know if you are aware, but right in the beginning after the war, I think the United States, the IRRA, they did conduct that all over in Germany and some other countries a list from the survivors. What they did is they printed like a book, alphabetical, with names. People had access to it. They could see and look names and that's the way they found relatives and so on and so forth. The reason that I didn't leave was for that reason. But in 1949, I did receive again the papers asking me if I would like to immigrate to the United States, and then I did. I didn't liquidate my store. I did sign over the store to a family that they did work for me.

SL: Jewish family?

WP: No, no. They were German people. They were thrown out. They did came from Czechoslovakia. I don't know if you are aware that in 1945, and going on 1946, the Czechoslovakian government did pass a law that all the Germans that they lived there had to leave the country. They came to Germany, regardless how long did they live in Czechoslovakia. And this particular family had a daughter, and she worked for us and worked in my store. Her father at that time probably was in his fifties, and he had a lot of knowledge and background from that business that I had. So I promised him when we leave the country, I'll see to it that they will continue with the store, which they still do.

SL: What's the name of the store now?

WP: My name. Same name.

SL: Peltz?

WP: That's right.

SL: Did you go back and see it?

WP: No, I haven't got no desire to go to Germany. I had some other people they were there and they visited it, yes.

SL: What made you decide to go to Milwaukee? I understand you had some friends.

WP: Yes. A family left Germany about six months prior to what we did and they settled in Milwaukee.

SL: What were their names?

WP: Heinz [Same? 17:30] Mueller. Now they live in Los Angeles. They moved I guess in 1963 to Los Angeles. That's the reason we came to Milwaukee.

SL: Did they go to Milwaukee just through the HIAS?[23]

WP: Yes, correct.

SL: So you had no idea of what Milwaukee was like or anything about Wisconsin?

WP: Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, I did. That's a funny thing. While I was in Europe, I did read about Milwaukee. I didn't even know that I'm going to wind up in Milwaukee, and I remember Milwaukee had in 1947 a terrible snow. They had a terrible winter, and I recall I read it in the paper. That's how I got to know a little bit about Milwaukee, the background and the breweries and so on and so forth.

SL: You weren't afraid to come after you read about that bad winter?

WP: No, I wasn't. Hey, listen, we always had it, that I was used to it. It didn't mean a thing to me.

SL: When did you leave Memmingen for the United States?

WP: I left Memmingen in April because the procedure to go through all the doctors and special camps and whatnot, that was just horrible. Just horrible that they treated us like — they didn't have any faith in us, let's put it this way. We had to go through certain things. From one camp to another they took us. And finally we did arrive, May 30th, to the United States. I believe between four and six weeks they kept us in those camps, till we came to this country.

SL: How did you make the trip? By what?

WP: By ship.

SL: Where did you sail from?

WP: From Hamburg, Germany.

---

[23] The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

SL: Could you tell me something about the ship and the voyage?

WP: Yes, the ship, it was beautiful, was a luxury liner! Was 2200 people on the ship. It was just horrible, just horrible. It was a military ship. [Laughs]

SL: I though you were going to tell me it was great.

WP: I could write a book about the trip on the ship. First of all, it was so crowded, and everybody was so sick. Oh, it's unbelievable. Just unbelievable. I slept on a hammock, and so did hundreds of us. My gosh. I'll never forget, one night I felt that my stomach is just coming out through my mouth. When I opened up my eyes nobody was there and I heard that knocking. That was horrible. There was a storm and when I walked out from there, I've seen men half nude, nude. They were sick, they didn't know what they were doing. And women, too, the same thing. It was just horrible, just horrible.

SL: They were getting sick off the side of the boat or something?

WP: They were seasick. Oh, horrible.

SL: How long a trip was it?

WP: Nine days and ten nights.

SL: Was it mostly survivors on that ship?

WP: Yes.

SL: Anyone that you knew?

WP: Oh yes, sure. There were quite a few on the ship that we came together. They didn't come to Milwaukee, but they went in different directions. We still keep in touch with them, yes. Chicago, Kansas City, and New York and what not, yes.

SL: Who paid for your passage?

WP: I think the IRRA, or the IRO. I think so. I don't know.

SL: You didn't pay for it?

WP: I didn't pay for it, no.

SL: What types of things did you bring with you for Europe?

WP: We were only allowed to bring fifty pounds per person and we were three people: me and my wife and my little boy. And I had 1850 pounds, can you imagine? I had wooden boxes made, special crates for junk that I couldn't even use it here. And I think that I sent back to Europe, more than I brought with me. Some nice stuff we had. We had a lot of china, beautiful, nice stuff.

SL: These were things that you had acquired after the war?

WP: Oh yes, after the war.

SL: You had nothing salvaged from Warsaw?

WP: Oh no. We couldn't, there wasn't any way. First of all we didn't have anything in the beginning [laughs]!

SL: Now I know that you brought a bicycle over. Do you want to tell me a little bit about that?

WP: Amongst a lot of things, I brought two bicycles. One was a bicycle that I used to race in my younger years. This was the only sport I really loved and I enjoyed it, besides ping pong and soccer. But bicycle was my dream and I never had a chance to get one. It was impossible. They were so expensive and that was impossible. Well, when I used to get pennies and nickels and nickels and pennies when I worked and I did odd jobs, my first bike was a used one that I put together. And I am very mechanical inclined, always was, and I used to know how to fix and everything. But later on I used to race bicycles. I was on a team. I was the only Jewish boy.

SL: In Warsaw?

WP: In Warsaw, yes. And I did it for almost four years, believe it or not.

SL: Did you get paid?

WP: No, there was no pay for it. I did race with a lot of guys. Some of them were hoodlums, and we always used to have fights. There was a jealousy involved and there's a lot of behind it. But I really did enjoy it.

SL: How did your family feel about that? Was that considered something that a Jewish boy should do?

WP: My father was a — amongst other fathers, he didn't mind. He liked that. But most of the Jewish used to say to my father, "How in the world can you let your son with those [shkrutsen? 24:05], with the hoodlums go? They'll kill him. Oh, they'll beat him up." So my father always had faith in me that I'll take

care of myself. He was not actually afraid. But the only thing was, I did do some things like a lot of youngsters, and I took chances and my father didn't like it. He told me that if I'm not going to stop that he's going to make me stop riding the bike. I used to take some chances. Today, I wouldn't have done it, probably. And I would like to see my children, [see] that they should do what I did.

SL: What would you do?

WP: I did a lot of things I could have gotten killed or crippled. We used to go between two streetcars with the bike and ride on one wheel and some other stuff. And we used to play games on the bikes for money, and it was very dangerous, too. You know, when a person's young, especially — what the heck, I was raised on the street. I didn't know any better, believe you me. Of course, in my home, my father and my mother, the whole family, though we were so poor, but we had a lot of respect for the family, especially for my father and my mother and my grandmother. This was when I was younger. And you lived in such in a way that you wouldn't like to see that they should get hurt by you doing things, that maybe it was against their will. Though my father, I guess I mentioned it before, that I caught him smoking a cigarette on Saturday. But still he didn't like me to smoke on Saturday that somebody should see it. He says, "Well, why should the people talk about it?" But he didn't mind that I smoked on Saturday. He did not mind.

SL: I'm going to interrupt you because I'm going to turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE 7, SIDE 1

TAPE 7, SIDE 2

SL: Now this bicycle that you brought with you on the boat, was this a bicycle that you had bought in Memmingen?

WP: I bought this in Germany, absolutely. I couldn't have gotten way before, no.

SL: Did you race in Memmingen?

WP: Oh yes I did race. Not professionally, no. As a matter of fact, here's a guy here in Milwaukee that used to go with me, too. He had a bike, too.

SL: What's his name?

WP: Bill [Refil? Wevil? 1:00]. As a matter of fact, we are riding here bikes together, too.

SL: Are you racing at all now?

WP: No. You know, on Sunday we will go out for three, four hours riding the bikes. I'm too old for it now. As a matter of fact, when I came to Milwaukee in 1949 — of course, I was at that time 29 years old — they had a club here in West Allis, a racing club. They found out about me. They wanted me to join, but I never did. I was too busy raising my family and I was too much occupied to make a living and so on and so forth. But even today, I love to ride a bike. I got two of them. You've seen them. Amongst only a few sports that I did enjoy, the most was the bike.

SL: While you were making the trip to this country, what types of things did you rmember thinking about? Did you think about what your life would be like or were you still thinking about leaving all that behind you?

WP: I'll be very frank with you. I was very happy to leave everything behind me. I knew that I'm coming to a country, to a new world, and I'll have to roll up my sleeves and start everything from scratch. At least that little that I did know about the United States, and I think to me it was a lot, was that I know that I'm going to a country there's opportunities for everybody. That's what I was told and I read about it. And I think it's true. Because, well, when we came to New York, I was a little bit disappointed because my late wife and me made remarks about New York. We didn't even know what it was. We went for a tour

in, I think, the Bronx or whatever it was, and we seen such a filth and everything else and the garbages and everything. So I made a remark to my late wife. I says, "We're not in the United States now. We're going to go" — I just didn't believe. But, yes, it was. When we make the trip from New York by train to Milwaukee, and that's a beautiful thing happened. On the train was a lot of survivors, Jews and non-Jews, people going to relatives or friends or they were just brought over by certain Catholic organizations and Jewish organizations, what have you. But the most beautiful thing was, whenever the train did stop at the station, there were people to welcome us and give us tea or coffee and food, and they talked to us, and they asked us questions. It was just beautiful. When I came into Chicago, we had to wait for the train to go into Milwaukee, it was the same thing. There were ladies. They had again there's some tables and some coffee and doughnuts and it made us feel good. Finally we arrived to Milwaukee. When we arrived to Milwaukee, I was wearing a tag with my name. So did my late wife and my little boy. So this lady came up to us and she says to me, "Oh, you're Mr. Peltz. I'm waiting for you." It made me feel so good, so somebody's waiting for me. I didn't even know that lady.

SL: Do you recall her name?

WP: Yes, there was a Miss Goldberg.

SL: From the Jewish Family and Children's Service?

WP: I think so, yes.

SL: Can I interrupt you for a second? I want to just go back a little bit to New York before we get into Milwaukee. Do you recall having any kind of special thoughts when you saw the Statue of Liberty from on the boat?

WP: Oh, I guess not. I'm glad that you asked me that question. You know, we did arrive May 30, and I think May 30 is a national holiday.

SL: Memorial Day.

WP: Memorial Day, correct. So they would not unload us from the ship, and the ship was parked right across from the Statue of Liberty. I want you to know one thing. I mentioned it before that people were

sick on the ship and there was horrible things going on. But everybody changed so drastically that I've never seen. Such a happiness and a glowing of everybody's eyes. It was just something. It still is in me. And the next day, in the morning, to see during the day the Statue of Liberty, which it was always spoken about, but the feeling — I just can't tell you the feeling. I think all of us, I guess there were 2,200 people on the ship, I think everybody had goose pimples and everybody was pushing theirself to the front to see it. It was just a beautiful feeling. And when we came down from the ship where they kept our baggages according to the A, B, C's, so on and so forth, you know the peopole, it was just beautiful. It's very hard to explain. It was just a beautiful feeling.

SL: Did anybody meet you when you got off the ship?

WP: No.

SL: You mentioned that you went on a tour, but where were you staying and how did you get this tour?

WP: I didn't look. I don't know till today who the person was. They wouldn't let us out in the front. They were afraid that we get lost, and I think that they were right, too. So we remember before -- my name is Peltz, is a “P”, and they started from “A”, according to the “ABC.” And my boy was crying and we were so tired. It was just terrible. I don't recall now — of course, those people live today in Kansas City, too. So we were standing there talking. Finally I had a little problem there — not a problem, something that happened. On the ship, there were some Polish people, you see, and they thought they are in Poland and we are Jewish and that they can overpower us. On the ship was a Polish guy, he was wearing some kind of a uniform and he was in charge to take people to work on the ship and so on and so forth. It was nothing wrong with it. But me, I was so filled up with hate and sore. I says, "A Polack should call my name and take me to work? The hell! I'm not going to go to work. What the heck they going to do? Send me back? They wouldn't send me back. They're not going to do anything to me." So that guy was after me. He was after me. The men couldn't go visit the women on the ship.

SL: You weren't staying with your wife?

WP: No, they wouldn't let us, no. So this guy was in charge, and I don't know if he had a wife or somebody. My wife was downstairs in a cabin with another woman. Unfortunately that woman, a Christian woman, it was just horrible thing going on. Her little boy, five years old, got killed going on the ship, coming to this country. It was just horrible.

SL: He died on the ship?

WP: No, no, he got killed on the train coming. He fell out from the door from the train. So she was staying with my wife. My wife talked to her and so on and so forth. But I did go down, and as I went down, this guy walks out from another room. But it was forbidden for the men to go down, so he didn't have no business to go there, too. But he was after me, because always I told him that I'm not going to work and I'm not going to go to work. And I opened up my mouth and I insulted him a few times too. So he says to me, "What the heck are you doing here?" So I says, "What are you doing here? You aren't allowed to be here." [A word, a word? 9:05] I says, "I'll tell you what. Would you like to see the United States?" I says, "I've got news for you: you better get away, and forget about me. Otherwise you're not going to the United States through your eyes, I got news for you. I'm not going to take it from you." Now, when we got unloaded from the ship, he was afraid of me. I wanted to go after him. But what happened is this here. Somebody from an organization, I don't know if it was a religious organization or what, they came. Like the same thing, they gathered us they gathered them, too. So he made a nasty remark about me, you know, and I hit that guy. I did.

SL: You were close enough to hear him?

WP: Yes, I heard. Not he made the remark. He must have told this guy that came to get them. He was an American but he spoke Polish. And he probably told him about me, whatever it was, and he made a nasty remark. But to make a long story short, I went in brawl that time, and from the [IRO? 10:00] from the Jewish organization. See, they gathered us. So there was this man and he says to me and to my other friend and to my wife that he would like to go. It's going to take hours. They've seen that we

getting restless. It was terrible. So they took us for a ride in a car. This was the tour. So that's how I seen it.

SL: How many days did you stay in New York?

WP: About five, six hours.

SL: Then you went right to the train station?

WP: Yes, right from there to Milwaukee.

SL: Did you have any money at all?

WP: Yes, I had. I had $150 with me. That's all the money I had, yes. But it's a funny thing, I've got to tell you something. It's unbelievable. When we were riding on the train, of course the train had a restaurant, I couldn't speak any English. We had something to eat and I didn't even know how much to pay him. I didn't know which, if a dime is smaller, so worth less than a nickel! [Laughs] Well, it was okay. We arrived to Milwaukee, and like I mentioned before, this lady was waiting for us. It was beautiful. She took us in the car, gave us a tour of all Milwaukee, and took us to a room. I believe it was a rooming house on Marshall Street, on the lower east side. When we came into the room, there was on the table — oh my gosh — from bed sheets and pillow cases and towels, and the refrigerator was full of fruit and food. Oh, it was just beautiful. Then first thing I told her, I says, "I would like to get a job, I want to go to work." She says to me, "You just came. You've got time, don't worry about it. Relax, you don't have to work. You can relax for two or three months." I said, "Uh-uh, not me." And that's a matter of fact that was. On the third day, I found a job, by myself.

SL: You went out into the city to look for a job?

WP: Yes, I did.

SL: How did you communicate?

WP: Terrible. I got lost. Tell you what, oh, that's terrible. I had a terrible experience. We came into that room, I don't know what time it was exactly, but it got dark after a little bit. We were so happy and we took out some stuff. But I wanted to contact the people, Heinz Mueller and his family, that we are here.

I forgot to tell you, in the meantime, when we stopped in Chicago the people saw my name Peltz, they told me that some Peltzes came to Milwaukee, too. My gosh, I couldn't wait to come here because I thought maybe there's some relatives or whatever it is. But the next day I did contact those people. We got together and that's how we became friends, too.

SL: How did you contact them?

WP: I walked. Would you believe that? You know at that time I didn't know any distance. I walked from Marshall Street to Ninth Street and North Avenue. Would you believe it? That's how I got, that's how I got to the Mueller's, too. I walked.

SL: Were they surprised to see you or did they know you were going to be coming?

WP: They knew that we were coming but they didn't know what day. But I couldn't even communicate with them, tell them when we're going to be here.

SL: So did they provide you with some help in the first few months?

WP: Oh yes, oh absolutely.

SL: Did you stay on Marshall Street for a long time?

WP: No, very short time. From there they moved us to an apartment on 15th and Clyburn. I think it was the Stuarts Apartments, whatever it is. One room, it was no good. But I think about in the following couple of weeks I found a flat on Eleventh and North Avenue and we did stay there for over two years.

SL: What was this job then that you managed to get after just a few days?

WP: Oh, tailoring. Somebody told me that there's a pants factory on Third Street by the name of [Weinschel? 14:25]. So I got up early in the morning and this was on the third day. I had a piece of paper in my hand and I didn't know where to go. I had an address. As I was standing in front of the house, I've seen if somebody walks out in the morning to a car. So I start to run to that guy. He got afraid of me. I didn't know. He locked the doors from the car and I showed him that piece of paper through the window. So he probably realized that I am looking for an address. So I asked him if he speaks German, if he speaks Yiddish or if he speaks Polish or speaks Russian, whatever it was. So I think he did understand

what I was asking for and he gave me a ride on Third Street and dropped me off right in the house in front of [Weinschel]. When I came upstairs, again I walked up to a window and I speak to the lady. So I told her the same thing, German or whatever it is. Mr. [Weinschel] came out himself. I told him I just came from Europe and I'm a tailor, I'm looking for work. And as I talked to him, a short fellow walks by and he stops. He heard me talk Yiddish. So he says to me, "Are you looking for a job?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Come, I'll give you a job." And I worked for him for three years.

SL: For [Weinschel]?

WP: No, for the other man.

SL: Who is this other man?

WP: Jake Friedman. Was Friedman's Clothing Stores.

SL: Where was that located?

WP: In West Allis, where I am right now. I worked for him for three years.

SL: Were there any other immigrants working for him?

WP: No. I was the only immigrant, but I did take in another immigrant. He worked with me there, too.

SL: Who was that?

WP: A man by the name of Meyer Zachs.

SL: Is he still here?

WP: Oh he's here, sure. He's retired now. This a few weeks before I quit. I took him in there.

SL: Do you recall how much you were getting paid when you first started to work?

WP: Maybe I shouldn't talk about it because they took advantage of me, I want you to know.

SL: This is something that we want to find out about.

WP: They took advantage of me. I'll tell you what happened. You know, I was so happy to get a job, I was so happy whatever I did make because I am not the type — I think not only me. I think all of us that we came from Europe, we did not want to live on charity. Especially me. Me and charity didn't go together, see. So I was happy to find — when I came to work for him, he had beautiful stores. He had besides

me three people working in the tailor shop. When I started to work there, he fired one guy about a week later. He paid me a dollar an hour. He give me $36 a week I got for fifty-five or fifty hours a week. And I was happy with that because I had enough money to put food on the table. But he was good to me. He says to me, "You can work as many hours as you want." And didn't pay me for it, see? This guy that he fired was a man that I could communicate with. Spoke Polish. He was a Polish man. So he went to the union. He belonged to the union, probably told them the story, and about eight days later two guys came in and one guy speaks to me in German. He says to me that I can't work here. And I says, "Why? I need a job?" He says to me, "You can't. On account of you, he fired this other guy, and you are working here for nothing, and you don't belong to the union." So I says to him I would sign up for the union. I says, "I did belong to the union when I was ten and-a-half years old." And I told him that that's the way it was. So I says, "I cannot afford to leave the job. I got to have a job. I just came from Europe and I got a wife and a child. I got to pay rent." So he says to me, "Well, we'll let you work if you sign up for the union." I says, "Fine, I'll sign up for the union." So he asked me, "How much does he pay you?" And I told him. Oh, they almost flipped. He says, "The union scale is $1.68 an hour." So I says, "Fine." So they told me to come to the union. This was on a Thursday, I believe. I went there and it was on Third and Highland, the union, on the second floor. So they signed me up for the union and he told me, "He's got to pay you a $1.68 an hour and if you work more than forty hours he's got to pay overtime." Fine. So, I went to work and when the week was over he gave me the check and he was crying over me that I'm making so much money. But, it worked on me terrible. That man, he's dead now, but I still can tell the truth on a dead person, too. What that guy didn't do, it's unbelievable. He made me work so hard. I didn't realize he brought work from the other stores, fired the tailors from there, and made me do the work, see. I was working again fifty-five to sixty hours a week. Even on Sundays a lot of times and he didn't pay me. He paid me the regular but not overtime. So he told me, "I know that the union, I got to pay overtime. I'll keep the money for you. I'll save your money." Oh, the stinking — I knew what's going on but I couldn't say much. I was afraid to lose a job, see. But to make

a long story short, the girl that worked there and this other man, the presser, she was crying her eyes out. She says on account of me she's suffering too, that he brings that stuff from the other stores. But after about five, six months later I walked up to him and I says to him, "I'm quitting." He says, "Why? I'm paying you the union scale." I says, "It's not the money." I says, "If you want me to work, you better hire back your tailors there. I don't want to work. We can't do all the work." He did. He did hire the tailors back. But after another couple of months I got terrible sick. I had to go doctors and hospital. I was very sick.

SL: Sick as a result from?

WP: As a holdover back from Europe, and that aggravation that I had, and everything else. So I walked up to him, I says, "Jake, I cannot work for that money that you pay me. I just can't. And you're supposed to pay me overtime. You don't pay me even overtime." So he starts to holler on me. He called me a greenhorn. He called me a greenhorn and he couldn't even speak English, I want you to know. So he says to me, "What do you want?" I said, "I'll tell you what. First of all, I want you to pay me overtime, otherwise I don't want to work more than forty hours. And of I can't work more than forty hours, I'm going to quit. I'm gonna get another job. Second, I want to get $2.50 an hour." He says, "$2.50 an hour? You must be crazy!" I says, "Fine. I don't have to give you any notice, but I'm giving you notice, so you have enough time to find another tailor." He gave me $2.50 an hour. He gave me twice a year bonuses. I didn't even ask for it. I worked three years and I quit. I had some other problems. Well, I can't go into details with it because I think it's not right. He was a very difficult person to work for, a very difficult person. And I think he wasn't a youngster anymore but he was getting a little bit — I don't know, it was difficult, so I quit.

SL: I think I'm going to turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE 7, SIDE 2

TAPE 8, SIDE 1

SL: You told me that one of the reasons that forced you to leave was an anti-Semitic problem.

WP: Yes. I was practically the only Jewish man working there. There was this particular guy there and he was very anti-Semitic. He used to needle me with Hitler and singing songs and all that stuff, and I just couldn't take it. This was going on for quite a while, so I went to my boss and I told him that. He laughed at me, and he made some silly remarks on top of it. And that man that was, he a young man. He was going that time to law school to become an attorney, and he was working there in the store. I begged him, this guy. I called him by his name, I says, "Please, do me a favor. Don't do it. Please, don't do it. You got the wrong guy," I says. "One of those days I'll beat the daylights out of you, and your mother and father isn't going to recognize you." He used to eat apples and hide and throw me that whatchamacallit from the apples [inaudible]. Terrible. Till one day it came. He insulted me. I was sitting at the table sewing and he insulted me and that did it. I beat him terrible up. I hit him so many times that he fell on a glass cage and he required twenty some, twenty-nine stitches. And that did it. As a matter of fact, I became friends with the guy after a while. When he got married he came and invited me to the wedding. But this is not the point. When I quit, I did go to the union. When I walked into the union there, into the office, they were playing cards, those guys. So the one guy says to me, "What are you doing here?" I says, "I quit my job." He says, "Why?" So I says to him, "You know why. You were involved in a lot of those things." He says, "What are you going to do now?" I says, "That's why I'm here. I'm paying you the dues. I think that's why I'm here. I need a job." "We haven't got any jobs." So this other guy says, "Well, there's one opening at Robert Hall." So I says to him, "I'll tell you what. Robert Hall, to Robert Hall you can go to work, not me. I do not go to Robert Hall." "So what do you want to do?" He says, "The only job I'll take from you guys is a fitting job — a floor fitting job." He says, "What? We got men, they're waiting for a job like that for fifteen, twenty years." I says to him, "Well, they don't know how, but I do, and you know that I know." So [word to word? 3:20], I took out the union book and I tore it up in pieces and threw it right in his face. He says to me, "You'll never get a job from us!" I

says, "You hold your breath till I'll come and ask for a job." I went into the car and drove home. My wife didn't even know what was going on. This must have been around 10:00 in the morning. I came home, my late wife says to me, "What's the matter? Are you sick? Don't you feel good?" I says, "I feel good." She says, "What happened?" "I quit my job." She says, "Good for you. You needed a vacation anyway." She says, "I'm going to pack a lunch. Let's go to the lake." She was wonderful. So we did. But on the way, I stopped and I bought a newspaper, that Sentinel. I went to the lake and we spread out the blanket and I was reading the paper. I looked at the want ads in the business section. There was a tailor shop for sale. So I says to Rose, "I'll tell you what, honey. You stay here. I got to go into downtown for a few minutes. I'll be back in a few minutes." So I went downtown and bought the tailor shop.

SL: You didn't tell her you were going there?

WP: No, I didn't want to tell her. When I came back, I says to her, "I'll tell you what. I got some good news. I just bought a tailor shop." That's how I went into business.

SL: And where was it located?

WP: Right on Sixth Street, off Wisconsin Avenue, about a hundred feet. I was eight years in the tailor shop.

SL: Did you have anybody working under you?

WP: Sure.

SL: How many people?

WP: I had was one or two, three people at a time working with me.

SL: And what was it called?

WP: Walter's Tailor Shop.

SL: Did you stay in the apartment on 11th Street and North Avenue?

WP: Yes, we did stay there. We moved out from this apartment to another apartment on 12th Street, [a new site of? 5:35] Mt. Sinai Hospital. There was a couple apartments. They're not there anymore. We lived there for about a couple of years and from there we moved on 41st, North of Center Street.

SL: That's pretty much the Jewish neighborhood then.

WP: Yes, it was a Jewish neighborhood at that time, yes. In 1956, I bought a lot. In 1957, I moved into a brand new house.

SL: Did you build a house?

WP: Yes, in 1957. I moved in in March of 1957.

SL: Where was it located?

WP: On the corner of 68th and Murray. A duplex I did build. I lived there for twenty years.

SL: Until you moved into this place here?

WP: Yes. We sold it about three and-a-half years ago and we moved into this place.

SL: I'd like to go back to some of those earlier years in Milwaukee. You talked about where you lived and your first job. What about problems learning English? Did you have any or study at all?

WP: No problems at all. I didn't have a chance to go to school. I wanted to go to school but I didn't go. I started to go to school, but I just couldn't make it. I'll tell you, I didn't mention it before. I was working in my job and I had another job, tailoring also. In other words, at one time I had two and-a-half jobs. Well, unfortunately I was sick, and I missed a lot of work. Well, I had to support the family and needed money so I worked whatever I could make an extra dollar. I just worked. I did take home work to the house. I had a sewing machine and sometimes used to work till one, two o'clock in the morning in the house.

SL: What about your problems with the – you had no problems with learning English, you picked it up from the people you worked with?

WP: When I worked for Freidman's, they had an interpreter for me — only for about two and-a-half, three months, that's all. And after a while I start to pick up. Of course I do read a lot, I love to read, and I think television helped a little bit, too. You know, I didn't mention it before, either. Right away, when I started to work for Friedman's that time, I bought a brand new car. I lived in style. I bought brand new furniture, went into debt for $6800. But I paid off everything. I paid it off sooner than they did expected. So I had a car. I bought a 1949 Ford. In 1950, I bought a 1950 Chevrolet. In 1950, I traded

it in because my wife wanted to learn how to drive. It wasn't automatic. In 1950, I bought two cars. I sold the 1950 and bought a Pontiac with automatic transmission. So I lived in style. And the English wasn't bad. I don't want to sound that I — I don't even speak it right now or good either, but it's much easier and better what it was thirty years ago.

SL: Did you feel that you had the typical problems of the new immigrant as far as people taking advantage of you because you didn't speak English at the start?

WP: No, not at all. That was only thing. I think, on a whole, people don't take advantage of you. I don't think so. Those are only single cases. You cannot generalize. It's not true. There were some people that they did. There were some merchants that they were looking for somebody to take advantage. But a very, very, very few. The one that they did, they were not human, I want you to know. As a matter of fact, I did taught a lesson to one guy. He was an immigrant himself. He came prior, eleven years before I did. He was lucky that they left Europe before the whole, you know, Hitler was in power. But this guy tried to pull a few things and he got stopped.

SL: Did you have any problems when you got sick that time? Do you think they took advantage of you in the hospital?

WP: No, no, no. First of all, I want you to know it was beautiful. I want you to know that Mt. Sinai Hospital, the dispensary, they gave us free, and even the hospital. But I worked and I had insurance. No, no, no, no, no. I think on a whole that everybody was beautiful and is beautiful. There's no question about it. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that. Because of on account of one louse, I'm not going to generalize. Most people are the most beautiful people and I haven't got nothing but the best.

SL: Did you receive additional help from the Jewish Family and Children's Service?

WP: I did not want any help. You can even look up my records. I'll tell you what I did. You know, the Jewish Family Service at that time helped the new immigrants to buy a little used furniture, whatever. It was beautiful, and they helped me, too. I bought used furniture, but it was money thrown away. They helped me. They gave me $200.00. And I mentioned it before I bought brand new furniture. I did. I

did. I threw the old furniture away because I had to put in nails in the bed because I fell out from the bed at night. This is the only time they took advantage of you, with the used furniture. And the Jewish Family Service didn't know about it. They tried to help you and everything else. But the $200.00 that I received from them I gave them back and then some.

SL: When did you repay them?

WP: It didn't take very long. I tell you, I couldn't live with myself. Well, not only me, there were some others they did the same thing.

SL: But nonetheless you had appreciated that.

WP: Oh fantastic. I did appreciate it. I do appreciate even today. I worked with them when it was, and still today for the Jewish Family Service, with the federation, so on and so forth. They're doing beautiful things. There's no question about it. Beautiful.

SL: Who were the friends that you made in those early years? Were most of them survivors?

WP: I made, in the beginning and even today, a lot of American friends and the survivors. They used to call me a convert because I did associate, and still do, with a lot of American people — which, I think, in my estimation, I never made a mistake. Because a lot of those people, they still live a sheltered life till even today. And I don't say it's wrong. I do belong to the New American Club. I never gave up my people that I came from Europe. I see them all the time and I am with them but I lead my own life. Whatever I feel is fit for me.

SL: You envy them?

WP: I didn't say that I envy them, I am with them.

SL: Oh, okay. Do you recall any other special acts of kindness that were shown to you when you first got here?

WP: Yes. First of all, we met this family right in the beginning and we were kind of adopted to them. The most beautiful thing that ever happened to us.

SL: What are their names?

WP: Mr. and Mrs. Hurwitz. The most beautiful people.

SL: Jewish?

WP: Sure. Mr. Hurwitz is dead. He's been dead already for about sixteen years. The old lady is still alive, and I call them "Ma." And my children call her "Grandma." Her children, of course they're grown up. Unfortunately, she had a son, a doctor, a wonderful person. He was a urologist, one of the finest urologists. He died. Whenever we were together, still, they always introduce me as their brother and this was the most beautiful thing that had ever happened to me.

SL: How did you meet them?

WP: Well, when I moved into this apartment, they had a grocery store. We went the first evening that we settled there to shop for groceries. And we all fall in love.

SL: The first night you got to Milwaukee?

WP: The first night. And this is unbelievable. This old man should rest in peace. Has got two sons and a daughter. The daughter was married to this guy, he's dead. He was Morrey. He was one of my best friends. This old man, when I gave up the tailor shop in 1960 and I was sick — I went to Rochester at that time, with the Mayo brothers, and I thought I'm never going to come back. But I did come back. I gave up the tailor shop at that time. You know that this old man, every week we were together with all the rest of the children. The old lady used to make brunches, and I'll never forget that the doctor, his son, the oldest, he says, "Pa, when are you going to retire already? How come you don't retire?" So this man got up. He was always so quiet, and he got up. He says, "I'll retire if Walter takes over my part in the business." And then I almost cried. I says, "Pa, I'll never do that. Morrey worked so many years in the business. The business is his." You know what he says? He says, "I'll tell you what. Morrey doesn't like the business where he is right now." It was in the black neighborhood. He says, "You go ahead and look for another business. I want you two, with Morrey, to go in business together." Would you believe that I found a business, that this man gave me a check of $52,000? It's unbelievable, isn't it? It's true. When I build my first house, this man gave me $3000, and this is in 1956. You know how much $3000

was then? A fortune, isn't it? They were strange people to me, but I love it. When this man passed away, believe you me, I felt like my own father would have passed away. I mentioned that he gave me $3000 — I gave him back the $3000. I didn't accept from anybody anything. But up to this day — the lady is old, is eighty-three years old already, she's got another son and a daughter — we still are close. I want you to know that two years ago, and three years ago, four years ago, and five years ago, I wanted to take this lady with me to Israel. I told her that, even she is to go by herself, I was willing to buy her a ticket. Even today. When my daughter came for a visit from Israel with the little girl, the only home she had to go is to the bubbe, to her grandma. And she stayed with her. She has got her own grand-children. And she's got now two great-great children. And my daughter and my grandchildren, she feels more about the grandchildren than I do. It's unbelievable. This is the most beautiful thing that happened to us. Therefore a lot of people from the survivors were terrible jealous of me, that I found a family. This was something that I think it's for the books. If you meet some other people and if you go in a conversation, everybody knows in the city that.

SL: What was the Hurwitz' first name?

WP: The old man was Shimon, Sal.

SL: And what about his wife?

WP: Sarah. They used to have a grocery store for many, many years on Ninth -- Tenth and North Avenue. Beautiful people.

SL: When did you become naturalized?

WP: I couldn't wait for it. I did reach for the papers about six months before the five years went up. But I became naturalized in 1954. I became a citizen of this country, the United States. My best day.

SL: Why?

WP: I couldn't wait for it. Honest to God. I don't know. If you are not a citizen of this country, you got to go register every year. You feel like you wouldn't have belonged. This way, I felt and I still feel that I am part of it.

SL: You felt, once you had gotten here, you had made your choice and you really identified yourself as an American?

WP: Oh yes, absolutely. No question about it.

SL: Have you ever regretted coming here?

WP: I did regret for one thing: that my parents didn't come here forty years ago. That's the only thing what my regrets are. I wish they would have come here. When I came to this country — I got witnesses, believe you me — I did write back letters to Memmingen, to all my friends. Believe me, that time I lived only in one room. The letter that I did write back, when they came here, till today even, I didn't have any words for this country, or for Milwaukee, whatever it is. Beautiful. Especially for people like me, where I always was persecuted, even in Poland. Then you come into a country, and you work, you find a job. Nobody's asking you or telling you how much you should make, when you should make. As long as they obey your rules and your regulations. If you want to work twenty-four hours a day, nobody's going to stop you. If you want to have three jobs, nobody's going to stop you. You can go walk in a store with a cart and you got nothing, my gosh, from the best in food and clothing and everything. Where in the world can a person — even today, even right now at this moment, where we live in times that there are recession, and still it's the best country to live. There is no country that can compare himself to this country, regardless. A lot of people squawk that this is high and that is high. Of course we are paying for gasoline a $1.15 and a $1.20 a gallon. Four or five years ago, people paid in Europe for gasoline $2.00, $2.25 a gallon, and they make less money, and they don't live the way we are. If we still can go in today to the supermarkets, and you can buy everything under the sun. That's a shame that today — like for me, and I'm always telling my wife — it wasn't so long ago that I was dreaming for a piece of bread, and today I got to watch myself not to get fat because I got too much food. It's true. I am a patriot, I want you to know. You probably seen in front of my house, I got a flag pole and I fly the colors, I love them. It comes a holiday, I put up. I don't know if you notice this, when you were in my basement, how many flags I got. Did you notice this? That's true. I am. I love it. I love this country.

There's certain things that I disagree probably, but take a look at the privilege that I've got, that I can disagree, you see? If I lived in Poland I couldn't even disagree. I had to take it the way it is. If I didn't want to take it, I was in trouble. But a lot of people live with the idea that they got it coming, that's the way it is. They don't realize — and they're trying to spoil for themselves — how long it takes. A lot of people are telling me it takes a person like me to know the difference, and of course it does probably, a person like me to appreciate everything.

SL: I want to talk a little bit more about your job experience. You had your tailor shop you said until 1960, and then you sold it because you were ill?

WP: Yes.

SL: What did you do once you you recovered from your illness?

WP: Well, I did not recover from my illness right away. I went through quite a number of major surgeries. It started in 1951. I had a couple surgeries. I had a malignancy on my throat, that's why. I was operated twice. My last surgery I had in 1967. Of course, I am under doctor's care. I go once, twice a year for check-ups. And I have problems. I got 80 percent of my stomach removed. I had surgery on my stomach. I had a spinal surgery and amongst some others. So, when I came back from Rochester, I went into, bought a supermarket. I just got through telling you about those wonderful people. They had a supermarket. Pa Hurwitz told me, "Buy a supermarket," because he was in the supermarket. It was good for him. So I did buy — I want you to know, still with their help — bought a supermarket. And the supermarket was beautiful. I had two butchers. Well what the heck did I know about a supermarket, except go buy a loaf of bread? But if there's a will there's a way and if you want to learn you can learn. But I've seen it was no good for me. I bought the supermarket in an area where after six, seven months, eight months, the neighborhood started to change and I had a big problem. The colored, the black people started to move in the neighborhood. And so they came into the store, of course, and I had a lot of people there, white people, that they told me if I'm going to cater to the black, they're not going to come in. I says, "How in the world can I stop them? And how can I keep you? I can't." I says,

"By a register doesn't know, it's color blind. And I have bills and I got to pay. I cannot tell the people not to come in. On the contrary, I want them to come in." I had a big problem. I had to give it up. I lost over $5,000 and a year and-a-half of my time. I wasn't discouraged. I went from one extreme to another. I think I was in more businesses here that you can imagine. Whatever I did, I didn't starve. I paid my bills. We were dressed and I was driving. I had two cars, not one, and it was okay.

SL: I'm going to interrupt you to turn the tape over.

WP: Yeah.

END OF TAPE 8, SIDE 1

TAPE 8, SIDE 2

SL: After the failure of the supermarket business, then what happened?

WP: I hope you don't mind, because whatever I got to talk about it right now, it's kind of sad. Unfortunately, I got hit with sicknesses terrible. When I came back from Rochester in 1960, and when I did gave up the supermarket, I'm going to give you a brief. I was in the cleaning business. From the cleaning business I went to the car wrecking and parts business. Then when my late wife got sick, it was terrible. She got sick in a time that I didn't have any insurance because by changing businesses and jobs and so on and so forth I got caught with no insurance and then my problems started. Terrible. Not only financial, but heartaches, and my mind wasn't clear. She went through surgeries, surgery after surgery. I went through a horrible time, horrible time. Everyday was a different chapter. This was going on a little over eight years. I was in the car part business, I mentioned to you a minute ago, and the car wrecking business. I had to give it up. I did go work for an insurance company in order to get some insurance for my wife. I was told, after such a time I'll get some insurance for her, so I did go work for insurance company. And, of course, I did very well for a while, because I had to be constant calling home and see how she is. She was in and out in the hospitals. She was in Madison hospitals, in and out. And my finances were very, very low and nil. I had to borrow from day to day to live. I had to give up the insurance business. I didn't give it up right away because she got worse and worse. I couldn't afford to hire anybody to stay with her. My son graduated from high school. And he couldn't take it, and he went into the service. My little girl was thirteen years old, and she had ulcers already. My house is falling apart in pieces. Though my friends and this family helped, everything else, but it was a horrible times. So, I couldn't stay away at night. The insurance business did kept me at night, and I traveled part of the state. I was looking for something else. So I start to drive a truck part time and part time the insurance, and then it wasn't good because every time I called home I had to leave everything and go home because that poor woman was terrible. First of all it came to a point she couldn't help herself and it got worse. And believe you me she was I think one out of a 100 million. She never asked

for help or anything. As sick as she was, she tried to do everything by herself. I had to give up the insurance business. And I was driving a truck with that guy that I am partnership today. So I made up my mind, I talked to him. I says "How's about looking for a little business?" Money I didn't have. I thought that he had money, but he didn't have money either. So what happened? The house that I lived, I did have it refinanced already several times, and I couldn't get any money on it anymore. But I think that I owed more money on it that it was worth it because I needed money to pay bills and doctor bills and whatnot. I went through a hell, terrible. So, finally, to make a long story short, we found the business that I'm in now. And I needed $18,000 on my part. We needed for a down payment and some capitol to work, $18,000. And believe me, you can take my word for it, I didn't have eighteen pennies. I didn't have any money, period. I had friends. I got to tell you something. I had such a beautiful friends that I never did go asking for money. They come and offered me money and I had to borrow money. Do you know that one evening I had some people over in the house? I went into my bedroom at night to go to bed. I had there on the dresser kind of a piece of glass, a flat one, and I've seen that it is kind of crooked. I went there, there was $5000. I didn't know who left the money here for me. But I couldn't sleep and I couldn't live. I found out who left it. So I says to that person, "What in the world did you do?" The reason because he asked me months before that I should take money from him. Whenever I'll have money I'll pay him back. If not, that's good, too. So I was thinking maybe he left the money. I went to him and I'm sure that he gave the money. I found out that was him. I had to take the money from him. You know what happened? I kept the money for about a few months, I didn't touch a nickel, I gave it back. I was afraid, because I was into debts up to here. $153,000 for doctors and hospitals. Let me go back to the business. I needed $18,000 and I didn't know from where to go to get the money. I had a meeting with those people there and we bought the business. We put down a $1000 down payment and this given day we got to come with money. So I went to the bank where I had my mortgage. As a matter of fact, I got my mortgage with them for this house, too. I talked to the vice president and I cried. I told him, "This is my last chance." He says to me, "Walter, we can't give

you no money. My gosh, this house isn't worth that much." I says, "Please. You people are my last chance. Otherwise I don't know what I'm going to do." So he told me he's going to talk to the board of directors. They're going to have a meeting. "I haven't got time. I can't wait till next week. It's got to be done today or tomorrow." So he says to me, "Call me tomorrow." I didn't call them. I went there. You know, they gave me $10,000? That's how I got in business.

SL: What bank was this?

WP: Mutual Savings and Loan. If it wouldn't be for them — . You know I'm telling you, it sounds easy but, oh what I went through! It's unbelievable. I was on the verge to commit suicide. I just couldn't take it anymore. I just couldn't take it anymore, that's all. As a fighter I was, I just -- it came to a point that I couldn't eat and I couldn't sleep. That was the end. And here I had a wife, my wife was so sick. So when I bought the business I worked seven days a week and my late wife made a remark to me. She says to me, "I know what you're going through, and I think I caused the whole problems." I says, ""You didn't cause any problems. I know when I was sick and I was in the hospital so many times what did you do? You kept the house, you see that the children were fed, and you helped in the business, too. Didn't you do that? Yes, you did it for me. And I got an obligation to do ten times, a hundred times more for you." As a matter of fact that's what I did. So she says to me, "I think that now that you are in a good business but I'm not going to live. I'm not gonna be here to enjoy it." And that's the way it was. When she passed away, I was in debts up to here. I worked so hard, and believe you me that I only had enough money to pay my rent and my bills and eat. Whatever money I made, I paid my bills. If somebody would have come with a gun to my head and say, "Hey, make out a check for $20, otherwise I kill you," he'll have to kill me. This was going on for four years before I met Arleen. Of course, as a year or two years went by, and as times got better for me a little bit, I paid off more. Of course, I lived. I bought a new car and I went on vacation a little bit. When I met Arleen, when it got serious, I told her, "Honey, I cannot get married. Not me." I told her, "I've got bills to pay that I cannot afford. I just can't." I says "I can't live by myself." And it's true. I'm not the type of a person. I was four

years alone, believe you me, that's the longest four years of my life — besides the concentration camp. So, Arleen says to me, "I'll tell you what. If you feel that way, I'll stay in my job and help you pay the bills." She had a pretty good job. So I says to her, "I think I couldn't live with myself if I would have to send you to work and help me pay my bills, the bills that you haven't got have any responsibility. Those are my bills." But, we got married anyway. She came up with a gesture like that. She's a nice person. She's a wonderful girl. Wonderful, I want you to know. I think I was cursed on one side and I think I am blessed from another side. You know, we always like to say that once in a while, but I think I'm blessed with a beautiful person. So thank God everything worked out fine. I always made a remark, and I even told this to quite a few of my friends, at one time I was an alcoholic, I want you to know. I don't know if I mentioned it to you. This was after the war. But I got cured of it because for certain reasons. But when I had those bad times, and after my wife passed away and all those bills and everything else, I did make remarks to some friends of mine: "Someday that you're going to read in the paper an article that they found a drunken Jew in the gutters. It's going to be me." Believe me, that's the way I felt. But thank God, I did fight whoever it is. I don't owe anybody any money. I can walk around with my head high. I want you to know one thing. My attornies, my doctor, which I've been going for years, he got in touch with my attorney. Them two convinced me to declare bankruptcy. Otherwise, he says to me, "that man is falling apart." He says, "He's not going to last forever." And my attorney and another one and another attorney begged me, "Walter, declare bankruptcy. Save yourself. Save your life." I says, "I can't do it. The people were so nice to me and everybody, even from the doctor in the hospital, whoever it is — they all helped me." I says, "How in the world can I declare bankruptcy if they were so good to me and nice to me? Do you think if I would declare bankruptcy I'll be able to live with myself? I wouldn't." And I didn't declare bankruptcy. And I do not owe anybody a nickel, I want you to know.

SL: What business that you are in right now?

WP: What is the business? Well, today, they got a modern name for it — that's a recycling business. Between you and me it's a scrap yard! [Laughs] It provides me a living. I work hard; it provides me a living, thank God. I haven't got no gripes. It's beautiful to me.

SL: What's the name of it?

WP: Midwest Iron and Metal.

SL: And it's down in West Allis?

WP: It's down in West Allis and pretty soon I'm going to be on the northwest side. We are moving already to a newer location. A big, beautiful place.

SL: So business is doing better?

WP: It's good, always good. Not better. It's always good. I look in the mirror sometimes and I talk to myself. I want you to know that. Therefore I'm coming back to that what I mentioned before. We live in a country, there is not any other country like that in the world. Not because on account of my success. I had success when I worked as a tailor and when I came home and I've seen what I got in my refrigeration and in the winter time was nice and warm. My children were dressed; I had some nice furniture; I had a television set and a car. Not because of my success, believe you me. Because we live in a country that everybody has got the same chance. I want you to know that. And I've been telling this to a lot of my friends, a lot of people. And another thing you probably will find out. I did put in here, in the city of Milwaukee, a dozen or fifteen people in business, helping them go into business. I'm doing it right now at this moment, too. I'm helping a young man to go in business. The only way of helping is financially. I thank God I can do it and I'm doing it. Because there were a time that I needed help and people were nice to me, so I'm repaying it. I'm repaying it this way and in a lot of other ways, too.

SL: We've talked a little bit – we've talked somewhat actually about your late wife and your present wife and your children, but I'd like to get some concrete information. Okay first of all what was the name of your first wife and where and when was she born?

WP: My wife's name was Rose and she was in Hungary.

SL: What was her maiden name?

WP: Abraham.

SL: Do you remember what year she was born in?

WP: Yes, exactly. May 1, 1921.

SL: And we talked about this several nights ago, that how you met her at the end of the war.

WP: No. In the war, in the concentration camp.

SL: And you married her in May?

WP: Right after the war.

SL: What was the date?

WP: This was May 9. Officially, in the front of the Justice of the Peace, we got married November 17, 1945. See in Europe, was entirely different at that time. They did not recognize if you got married by a rabbi. Not that they didn't recognize, but that there was no such a thing that time as a marriage license and so on and so forth. So we had to go in front of the Justice of the Peace in Memmingen. This the only place — we were wondering around so that's what happened.

SL: Now your son Andre was born…

WP: In Germany.

SL: What was the date?

WP: He was born September 9, 1946.

SL: In Memmingen?

WP: Yes.

SL: And where was your daughter born?

WP: She was born here in this country, in Milwaukee.

SL: What is her name?

WP: Susan.

SL: What was her date of birth?

WP: She was born in August 7, 1952.

SL: What are your children up to these days?

WP: My daughter lives in Israel. She's married and she has two children. My son lives in Milwaukee here, in Mequon. He's got a wife and two children. And of course, I got Michael, goes with us.

SL: Okay, what is your daughter's husband's name?

WP: Yitzhak

SL: Last name?

WP: Stroli. S-t-r-o-l-i.

SL: That's not a -- is that an Israeli [name]?

WP: No, he's not an Israeli. He is from Hungary. He is a long distance relationship with us.

SL: Is he a child of survivors who settled in Israel after the war?

WP: Yes, yes.

SL: How did she meet him?

WP: She went to meet my wife's sister. Was very sick. Of course, she passed away. She came to Israel — at that time she lived in Romania — to get medical help. She had leukemia. And my daughter never met her, so I did send her to Israel to meet her, and then she met Yitzhak.

SL: And stayed there. How old are their children?

WP: Rachel is eight and Ronnie is four.

SL: Is Ronnie a boy or a girl?

WP: A boy.

SL: What about Andre's wife? What's her name?

WP: My daughter in law?

SL: Yeah [laughs].

WP: You just got a hold of me. Isn't that something, it blacked out on me! [Laughs] It's something, isn't it?

SL: How many kids do they have?

WP: Two.

SL: What are their names? How old are they?

WP: The children, one is four and one is six or seven months old. Joshua is the boy and Jennifer's the girl.

SL: What does your son do for a living?

WP: My son works for a competitor of mine. Yes, he used to be with me. He was with me for about eight years. After he got married, there was some circumstances that we couldn't get along, and this was it.

SL: Did either your son or daughter graduate from college?

WP: No. My son did go to college. As a matter of fact, he was ready to attend medical school, and unfortunately we had at that time an accident in my business. He had to go out from school and come and help me. My partner was in a terrible accident. He was laid up for thirteen months. He was nine months in the hospital. A truck exploded. It turned over and he escaped. Yes, he was lucky. He didn't want to go back to school, so he works now.

SL: Where does your daughter live, what part of Israel?

WP: She lives not far away from the airport, in Lod, on a farm.

SL: What does her husband do, is he a farmer?

WP: Yes. They raise geese and sheep. They got a nice place, a beautiful place.

SL: Do you see them often?

WP: Yes. The last time I've seen them is a little over three years ago, three years and two months ago. We intend to go in about another couple of months. We intend to go there, yes.

SL: Now I'd like you to tell me a little bit about your present wife. What is her name?

WP: Arleen.

SL: And what was her maiden name?

WP: Her maiden name is Arnstein.

SL: And she's a Milwaukee native?

WP: She's a Milwaukee native, yes.

SL: You're not going to like this, but I'm going to ask you.

WP: I know what you're going to ask me.

SL: When she was born?

WP: Yes.

SL: She's a bit younger than you, we'll put it that way.

WP: She's only a few years younger than me. Not many years. About twenty-two years.

SL: Okay, now when you met her she had a child from a previous marriage?

WP: Previous marriage, yes, absolutely.

SL: And you adopted him?

WP: Yes, I did.

SL: What's his name?

WP: Michael.

SL: How old is he now?

WP: He's going to be sixteen.

SL: So he's living with you in the house?

WP: Absolutely. Yes.

SL: Is your wife employed?

WP: Yes, by me [laughs]. Yes, she works for me for the past five years. She does my bookkeeping. She counts the money.

SL: She keeps you in line?

WP: Keeps me in line is right. But I want you to know one thing. It's the honest truth. A lot of people say, "How the heck can you have your wife working with you? How are you getting along? Most of the time it doesn't work out." I want you to know one thing. In my case it's different. When she is not at work, I feel terrible, I feel horrible. When she is at work, I feel wonderful. I'm a different person. And we get along

beautiful, just as good at work and at home in private life. I think it couldn't happen anything better to me than her. All my problems and all my troubles.

SL: How did you meet her?

WP: You really want to know? I'll tell you. I met her in a bar. But not exactly. A cousin of her's, which I've known for many years, tried to fix me up with her. I did hesitate to go out with her on account of the age. But I went out to eat, there was a restaurant here, Brothers Two on Downer. So I went out to eat with another fellow. And the manager, of that restaurant at that time, he's a man that I've know for many years. We had a couple of drinks and he says to me, "Walter, I'll tell you I would like you to meet somebody, which I've know her her whole life." Which is true. So I says to him, "I'll tell you what. Wait till we'll finish supper and I'll meet her." Downstairs they had a combo playing whatever it is. We went downstairs and she was sitting at the bar with another girl and some other people and he introduced her to me. It didn't ring a bell at all because I didn't know her name. And when he told her, "Arleen, I want you to meet Walter Peltz," she got all hysterical and she even fell off the chair. She says to me, "Are you the Peltz that they are trying to fix us up for such a long time?" I says, "Probably it is. Who's trying to fix us up?" So she tells me. I says, "Oh yes, that's right." And that's the way it is, that's the way it started. The next day early in the morning she called me up. And I saw her the following night and I got hooked. And I got news for you. It's the best thing that ever happened to me.

SL: How long ago were you married?

WP: It's eight years, exactly.

SL: What was the date?

WP: June 10.

SL: I'm going to have to change the tape.

WP: Please do so.

END OF TAPE 8, SIDE 2

TAPE 9, SIDE 1

SL: I want to ask you some questions first of all about your family, but I think what I'll do is if we can talk about the family that you had with your first wife, your children what it was like, then I'll ask you about that period. Did you and your first wife speak English in the house?

WP: Yes, we did.

SL: Do your children know Polish or Yiddish or anything else?

WP: No. They understood a little Yiddish but no Polish. I never spoke Polish in our home. As a matter of fact I speak very little Polish. I do speak Polish, don't get me wrong, but I haven't got no reason to speak Polish. Except if I got some people, customers, whatever it is, that they know that I speak Polish, they speak Polish to me.

SL: How much do your children know about your Holocaust experiences?

WP: They know a lot. My children are aware of my background almost just as much as I do. I did make them aware of it.

SL: And your wife's experiences, too.

WP: Oh yes, absolutely, sure. My children are, and they always were, aware. Sure.

SL: Do you think that they had any problems as they were growing up in school or with their friends because of your unusual family circumstances — no grandparents, no sisters or brothers, they didn't have any aunts or uncles, did they ever have any problems in school because of this?

WP: They did not have any problems with school. But I would say this here, as long as you mentioned it. They did ask me questions when they were little. That's why, therefore, I'm telling that we got this family, that we were adopted. They grew up with the idea that they got a grandmother and a grandfather, which they did — still call her "Grandma," and the children are the aunts and uncles, and their children, cousins. But they know that they're not real, but they live with the idea that they are. They did ask me questions about it. My son, or my little girl, when they were little, they couldn't understand. They used to ask me, "How come we haven't got and they've got?" You follow me? They

did ask those questions. I want you to know one thing. We did realize before this happened, it's going to happen. They did realize that because we did talk about it. I'm going to make a statement, I think I did made it. Whatever I'm talking about, that's about me, the way I felt, the way I feel. I know that most of the people, they feel the same way that I do. But I'm talking about myself. I only did envy, and still envy, those people that they got families, brothers and sisters. Money, no. I never did envy anybody any material things, because now I'm getting older. We all get older. Of course, I do realize that parents don't live forever. Brothers or sisters don't live forever. But what I missed in my life, this is beyond everything. I didn't have the feel of it, the warmth of it, what it means. I know that there are brothers and sisters, that they don't see each other for years, and they don't even talk to each other. I know I'm aware of it. But on the other hand, I know brothers and sisters that they're so nice and close and the children are close and their cousins and they come together, or if it's once a month or once a week or what have you. I never had the taste of it. I don't think that Joe Blow with his brother don't get along. I live with the idea that I would have gotten along with my brothers and sisters and their children, probably. That's what I miss and as I'm going to live I'm going to miss it.

SL: Do you see that your family is closer than other families that you see?

WP: No, not at all. Not at all. They're just as bad as anybody else. [Laughs] That's true.

SL: You don't see your experiences as having brought the family closer together?

WP: No, not whatsoever. Don't forget one thing. The children, whatever that happened, they don't feel that way. They are Americans and Americans, don't forget, they think different a little bit, too. What you did have did not see you miss it, but not so much. You miss it but not as much. You follow me?

SL: Do you see yourself as a more concerned parent than other people?

WP: I don't think so. I'm just as concerned as any other parents. I'm not, never was overprotective. I don't think so.

SL: Who are your close friends today? Are many of them survivors?

WP: Well, yes. I'll tell you one thing, the survivors are my family. What should I say? A lot of people ask that question because we are concerned for each other. I tell you, I've got some friends here in Milwaukee and some even in Chicago. As a matter of fact a couple was here yesterday from Illinois. But she lives with the idea that I'm her brother. I've got in Milwaukee the same thing. And I live with the idea that she is my sister. And I love them, I want you to know it. I love them with my whole heart as a brother and sister. And I think, therefore, whenever I travel or others, wherever we travel, we've got people. I mentioned it before. They're considered to be family. They're family; I am their family. If they've got something good happen to them. they'll call me and let me know. Or they'll come and visit, or I go visit them, or we meet some place. As a matter of fact, Sunday I talked to my friends in Detroit and we just saw each other in Florida, this was in January. Where are we going to meet? So, in May we're going to meet in Las Vegas. They're going to come there and some others and we'll meet in Las Vegas. We are always constantly in touch. One day, God forbid, when they are down you know, or same thing with me, or when they're happy, or if their children get married they'll invite us. We go to their weddings; they'll come to our parties. We keep in touch.

SL: Do you have friends who are American-born Jews?

WP: Yes, absolutely.

SL: And have you got Gentile friends as well?

WP: Absolutely. We got some Gentile friends, they've got a key to our house here. Whenever they come to town, they stay with us. Whenever we go to their town, we stay with them. As a matter of fact, we went in Florida, we stayed with them. We had reservations in an hotel and we couldn't stay. We had to stay with them.

SL: How is it that you have friends who live in Florida?

WP: No, they live in Milwaukee. See they live in Milwaukee, he's got a business here, but they move from Milwaukee to up north in Algoma, Wisconsin. They built a beautiful house there. So they come into Milwaukee maybe once a month. But right now they are for the winter in Florida. As a matter of fact he

came from Florida here. He stayed with us for about three, four days. He had some business to do. So he came, stays with us in the house. Not him. I got some others, as well. I am in the business. I love people, I want you to know. To me, absolutely, honest, it doesn't make no difference. I associate with whom I feel like that's the right person.

I got a lot of Jewish friends, sure, of course. I'm a Jew and I got a lot of Jewish friends. I got a lot of American friends, an awful lot of them. I belong to a lot of organizations. I want you to know that I belong to the Jewish War Veterans since I've been here in this country and I had a lot of functions. It doesn't matter. But I've been with them and through them I know a million people. I used to go out on conventions. I used to participate. Still do. But not as much as I used to.

SL: There has been a traditional animosity between Eastern European Jews and Western European Jews. The Western European Jews perhaps feeling that the Easterners were not as cultured, came from the shtetls, and didn't have as much of a sophistication. Is that something that you ever felt in Europe or you felt after the war?

WP: Absolutely.

SL: Is it something that you feel now with Jews even though you're really all Americans?

WP: I can't talk about myself, because I'm an outspoken person, and besides that, I'm trying to be with everybody, like I mentioned before, friends, that are close. But there is an animosity. Polish Jews with German Jews, German Jews with Polish Jews, Hungarian Jews, and what not and what have you. Let me say this to you if I may. There is no reason it should be that way, but it is. I think when a country like the United States here, there isn't such a thing that it was in Europe, *yikhes*, you know what *yikhes* is, your background. Because your father was a shoemaker, because your father was a *vasertreger* (a guy who used to carry water), a poor man, he was working hard to provide for his family, and this other guy had a little store and was a little better off, so he wouldn't like to see his children associate with this children or he come to the same place with him. That's the way it was. Now, now let's take this here. Let's take, let's compare the Polish Jews with the German Jews. First of all the German Jews they are

more like the Germans themselves, because they lived in a country which they had an opportunity to send their children to school and to be educated. There wasn't such a poverty that we had in Poland. In Poland we didn't have the privilege or the opportunity to have the education what they had, so they always looked down on us. They called us thieves, they called us all different kind of names. Now it's the same thing with the Hungarian and the Lithuanian Jews or what have you. Unfortunately that's the way it is. It shouldn't be but it is.

SL: Do you belong – well, you mentioned that you do belong to the New American Club.

WP: Yes.

SL: Are you an active member in this club?

WP: Not at this moment. I was. I was twice the president, was very active. There are certain reasons that I am not, but I do belong. I still go to their doings or gatherings or so on and so forth.

SL: Is this an extension of your feeling that survivors are really part of the family, that you feel very close to survivors?

WP: Not only that. Of course, in a way, yes, I feel very close to the survivors, any survivor, any Jew. But in this particular case, and that club and this little organization that we've got, there's 99.9% of survivors. And I don't feel because they are survivors I belong there. I belong there because there's a nice group. They're nice people. Beautiful people and I got a lot in common with them. There are agreements and disagreements in every organization, every place, whatever it is. I'm not going to tell you that I'm right, they're always wrong, but that's the way it is. But we get along, beautiful, beautiful.

SL: Do your American-born Jewish friends know anything about your Holocaust experiences?

WP: Yes, they do know very much because they knew my involvement, and the experiences that I went through here, and what I was involved in, and am involved. I was and still am involved in the anti-Nazi movement here in Milwaukee. Even as far as Skokie or even as far as New Orleans or Los Angeles. Very involved. Had a lot of unnecessary publicity. I'm proud and glad that we have, and had, the

organization. I think that if we make them miserable, and I would say that a big percentage in our doings they're not in existence today.

SL: I would like to go back to this question of the American born Jews, about your experiences. What do you think their reactions are when they hear your stories of what happened?

WP: Well, you ask me that question, and I am very glad that you asked me that. I would like to give you a couple comparisons to it. In the beginning, when I came to this country, I came to Milwaukee. Of course, everybody was interested to know what did go on, what it was, and so on and so forth. Of course, we went into discussions and I told them what it was. But the question that came up was that the American Jews were too sure of themselves, living in this country, that nothing can happen here to them, or nothing can happen here, or nothing can happen to them. Which I did disagree with them many a times. Furthermore, there was another thing. The American people, American Jews and non-Jews alike, lived and I think many of them live still with the same idea, telling me and telling others, telling other people that we did not fight the Nazis. We went to our death like sheep, and it wouldn't have happened to them. No, no. You know one guy walks up to me, says, "You see this fist? When a Nazi would come up to me, I would hit him!" So here you are. He's an idiot, see. So they came up and made some silly remarks which it didn't mean a thing. They did only agravated me, because this was remarks from people that they consider themselves the intelligent people, and they know. This, I think, didn't make sense to me. On the contrary. This was the only thing, that disagreement what we did have. And I used to fight them on that point. It came up in the 1950s, when George Lincoln Rockwell, the leader of the Nazi organization in the United States — if you recall, when the film Exodus was out and they did boycott that. They used to march in front of a lot of movies in certain cities and states, and the movie is supposed play, to come to a movie house in downtown Milwaukee. We got the news that George Lincoln Rockwell, with his group, was here in the Milwaukee downtown. So we did organize about 275 people. I don't want to go into details, but I want you to know one thing. George Lincoln Rockwell did not appear because we had all the police department. I was stopped by the police several

times. We did organize only 250 people from this side and we had about 500 from the other side. Then, when this had happened, I was at a meeting. Prior to that, there was a meeting at the *Jewish Forward*,[24] we were discussing that. I talked to them. I told them that we should get organized from the *Jewish Forward*, which they did. Now, one lead to another, and after a while, the Nazi organization received their chapter. They were legalized in West Virginia, if you recall that, and this got a hold of me. When I really did open up my mouth in several places and several times. Then I did talk to those same people which they say that couldn't happen in this country and so on and so forth. And then I used to needle them. Number one, but the result, today — let me tell you something. I had this friend coming up to me less than a year ago, he says to me, "You know, Walter, every time I see you I feel ashamed. I just can't look at your face." I says, "Why, Sam?" He says to me, "Do you remember when I used to fight you about this country?" That's true, he was one of them. He says, "I was wrong. I was very wrong." See the only [problem is here? 19:20]. Now they say, "I wouldn't say it cannot happen." I made the remark. Recently I spoke, and I was asked that question: "Do you think it can happen here in this country?" I said, "Very much so. Faster than you think." It can. I believe very strongly it can happen. If you would only know what's going on with the neo-Nazi organization in Europe and the neo-Nazi organization in this country, the way they're being supported, I think that you will open up your ears and eyes if I would tell you stories. But you live with the idea that in this country, as long as the government is level, it's okay. But, there's another thing going on now with this country, with Israel, that you can see what. It gives the element that is against the Jews, the anti-Semites, it gives them kind of a boost when things like that happens. You follow me? And that is the time when they're coming out from hiding, when things like that happen.

SL: When things like what happen?

[24] This is the title of an important New York Yiddish newspaper, but Mr. Peltz may be referring to another organization.

WP: Like right now, with Carter with Israel. Not Carter, whatever it is. This hurts me terrible. Terrible. You know this is a very downgrade for the Jews, that a government like that, they claim it's a mistake. It's not a mistake, I want you to know. A person's got to be stupid to say it was a mistake. No mistake.

SL: Are you talking about this vote in the Security Council?

WP: Correct. Amongst a lot of other things, see.

SL: Getting back to what I was talking about, the way other people feel about the Holocaust itself. What do you think that your non-Jewish friends think about the Holocaust?

WP: They're very hurt, very hurt. The people were not aware, and there are still in this country a lot of people, that they are not aware. But it did happen, I want you to know. People, first of all, let me make this statement to you, if I may. It's very hard for a human being to believe that things like that did happen, let's put it this way. It's very hard to believe. If you make them realize like this, that it was true — I'm talking about my friend. That he's a Christian. He's a Catholic. Would you believe what I'm going to tell you? He traveled with his wife, with me and my wife in Israel. I went to Israel, he says, "I want to go to Israel, too." I says, "Fine." We went to Israel together. We went to Poland together. He and me, that's right. This man, since then, buys Israeli bonds. Would you believe it? He's got more things in his house made in Israel and some other things than I, than an average Jew's got. Before Yom Kippur, I was elect to the temple, Rabbi Feldman's temple. Well, they needed to raise funds for the temple, so I was elected to it. Before Rosh Hashanah, he was staying with us in the house, and I had to go to a meeting. I came back. I did apologize to him. "I'm sorry," I said. "I had to go out to this meeting." I told him, "We got a problem with the temple. We need some money for the temple. You know, we only got so many members and the cost is so up and so on and so forth." You know what he says to me? "I'll send you a check for $200." He did. He did send the check for $200 for the temple. So what I want to try to point out is this here. See, he is associated with me. He never knew about those things. He didn't know what was going on. There's a lot of people don't know. And if they knew, they're misled, and if

they know they know very little. Therefore, there's me, and others like me, agreed to make them aware of what really did happen. So you can go on now.

SL: Your daughter is married to a Hungarian Israeli. Is your son married to a Jewish woman?

WP: Sure.

SL: How would you have felt if they wanted to marry non-Jews?

WP: Let me say this to you. I would have felt exactly the same way if my son would have married a girl, she would have been a Catholic, I would have felt just the same way her parents would have felt. Let this give you an idea. Later on you can think. The girls parents…

SL: Her parents probably wouldn't have been happy, is that what you're saying?

WP: Sure, that's right. I wouldn't have been happy, either. I want you to know one thing. I mean it very sincerely what I'm going to tell you. [machine turned off] I just brought up a point. I did spoke at the Jewish Community Camp in Fredonia to a group of teenagers on this subject.

SL: The subject of intermarriage?

WP: Intermarriage, that's correct.

SL: Can I interrupt you please?

WP: Yes.

SL: I want to turn the tape over.

WP: Okay, yes.

END OF TAPE 9, SIDE 1

TAPE 9, SIDE 2

SL: Going to talk to me about speaking to these kids about intermarriage.

WP: We did speak on that subject. Now what I want to point out is this here. I'm not going to sit here and tell you, that I am a Jew and that I'm better than a Christian. That I deserve more or better things than a Christian. No, I'm not going to tell you that. And I'm not going to tell you that this Christian boy or this Christian girl is worse than my son or my daughter. No. Maybe that's why so much — I'm just looking at one thing, the percentage and the average of mixed marriages. Of course, every year there's more and more mixed marriages. It might be fifty years from now, a hundred years from now, that people are not going to look as deep into it anymore. When it comes to religion, I'm not going to tell you that my religion's better than somebody else's. But I'm not going to take it that somebody's going to tell me that his religion is better than mine. I'm not a religious person. I believe because that there's probably a God. I did came to a point to one thing, that religion isn't anything than a fear put in a person. I think that a person, we got to have something to believe in. We've got to believe in something, that there's something. Either you are with a faith or when you are — a problem that you got to turn to. That's the only thing what I want to say. It's helps, your guess is just as good as mine.

SL: Well, how have your feelings about religion changed since your Holocaust experiences?

WP: My religion changed?

SL: How are your feelings about it changed?

WP: It's the same as it was before, because the questions that I did ask myself are the questions that thousands and thousands of people ask themself the way I did, and nobody can come up with an answer. Regardless who it is. Of course maybe those questions are too deep. It's the same thing that I'm going to come and say, "How come that red is red. Why isn't black the name red?" Same thing. I go to temple. I do go to temple. Sure, of course, I do. I don't want to be a hypocrite. In a way I am. I'm telling you true the way it is.

SL: Why would you see yourself as a hypocrite?

WP: Well, I'll say if a person goes to a temple, to a church, and you actually don't believe in it. Or, if there is such a thing, if a person commits a crime, or he does something else, does something that is against society, and he feels that he or she goes to the church or the synagogue and prays for forgiveness, and it's forgiven, that they can go out and do it again. I never knew about it. Never did I looked into it and never did I know that such a thing exists till the war. So, on top of it, it gave me a bitter taste of it. I'm observing. I was involved several times here with the parents, from the survivors, that their children got involved with children of different religions. I got involved in it. They asked me for it. And I told them the same thing. I says, "She belongs to parents and the parents love her just as much as you love your son. Why does it make your son better than her?" And I asked the girl's parents the same way. But it boils down to one thing is this, if I may say. You know, they used to say in Yiddish and Europe, you know a hanger, a hanger. You know a coat has got a hanger.

SL: A loop in the back?

WP: A loop in the back, we call it a hanger. A person who commits suicide, hangs himself, is a hanger. They always used to say, "Don't mention a hanger to a person who he had in his family a person who hanged himself." You follow me? It brings with bad memories. What I want to point out is this here — those two people got together and they got married: if somebody is a Lutheran or a Baptist, is a Christian. They all believe in Jesus Christ, correct? It's their privilege; it's their business. It's easier for a person like that to a turn a Catholic, or a Catholic to a Protestant, a Protestant to a Baptist, whatever it is, as long as they're Christians. It's almost the same thing. But they stay Christians, correct? Take a Jew. A Jew turns a Catholic. I watched just last night television, Goldwater, no wait a minute, that *60 Minutes*, Sunday. They did interview Goldwater. They introduced him, now listen to this careful, okay? "He's now an Episcopalian, but he is from the Jewish heritage." But he's always a Jew. Do you follow me? He is a Jew, regardless they introduced him to TV on the *60 Minutes*. They didn't say Goldwater, the Episcopalian. They said Goldwater, Episcopalian, his background is Jewish. That's what I want to point out to you. Those two kids got married, she's a Catholic, he's a Jew, or depends on whatever the

heck it is. Even if she changes her religion to become a Jew. Now so the mother and the father says, "As long as she turn" — well, why should she sacrifice and turn to be a Jew? Why shouldn't he turn to her religion — if there's such a thing, number one. And even if they turned — you probably know couples that they're intermarried, aren't they? You know some. Do you know that they're happy?

SL: In some cases, yes.

WP: All depends how long they are together.

SL: It also depends on how strong their Jewish belief is.

WP: Regardless. I'll tell you, can I tell you why? Can I go into it for a second? I got to tell you something, a little story. I want you to listen to me. Believe you me, and I mean it very sincerely, if I would have married a Gentile woman, I would have been in seclusion amongst Gentiles, and this would be it. I would probably bleed to death inside. But I would. And I know a lot of us did. I want you to know. Do you know that? I want you to know there's a statistic how many men or women, Jews, after the war got married, they did throw away their religion. They disguised themselves from their religion, they got families, and we know about quite a few of them. They don't go amongst the Jews. They belong to churches where their husbands belong with their wives and this is it. They'll live that way till they'll die and the generation of children will grow up. But do you know why they did it? [But I wanted did it? 8:30] I told you a story that time before when I was there in the farmer's, that old man, [the Sidworsky? 8:40], that they caught him [in Sittinger? 8:40]. You know this man lived with the idea and prayed to God if the war should end I should get married to his daughter. Her name is Helen. Here you are. He knew that I was a Jew. I want you to know one thing. If I would have been there, the war would have come to an end, I would have probably got married to her. I did like and I love him. I want you to know that. Maybe, therefore, this man helped me so much. Do you follow me? Maybe. I was thinking a lot of times about it. Maybe he did try, he did jeopardize his whole family to help me. Maybe he was thinking of that, who knows. But coming back, that's very hard and it's very tough, I want you to know, for a Jew. We are sensitive. If you would go amongst Christians and they will talk about Jews and they'll

make jokes about Jews. I don't give a damn thing who you are, you're not going to like it. It's the same thing, vice versa. My friend, I told you this is the only Christian that I feel free that I can talk anything I want. I can say you are a goy and I can say everything. He can say to me, too. But I got friends that I drink with them and I eat with them and I go to meetings and everything else and I am cramped sometimes. They will make jokes about Jews. They will make jokes, you know it. I'll make a joke about a goy too, but I watch myself. Life is not comfortable, I want you to know. Regardless if you live a year or a thousand years with a mixed-marriage person. And there are good ones and bad ones, and amongst the Jews are good ones and bad ones. I'm not trying to tell you that they are better. That's not an easy life, I want you to know. Now children. So you are Jewish, you got a father and a mother, they're Jewish, and you got children and your husband is a Catholic and he wants you to send the children to a Catholic school. What are you going to do? Are you going to tell him you wanna send them to Sunday School, to the Hebrew school? So what then? So you got to make up your mind. You say, "Well, we don't send him to no school." That's the way it starts.

SL: Getting back to the part that religion plays in your life right now. You said that you do go to synagogue [inaudible]. What synagogue do you belong to?

WP: Three.

SL: Why three?

WP: Why three? I believe in charity and supporting, that's why. Not because I am a good Jew, that I am going — now wait a minute. I just made a statement, "a good Jew." You don't have to be a good Jew to go to the synagogue seven days. In order to be a good Jew or a good Christian and a good Catholic, it isn't a good Catholic that it goes to a church everyday, or the good Jew that he goes to synagogue everyday. I belong to it because that helps support them, that's all.

SL: Did your children receive a religious school education?

WP: My son went to Hebrew school.

SL: Was he Bar Mitzvahed?

WP: Sure he was. My daughter didn't go at all.

SL: But she's living in Israel now?

WP: You know, would you believe? You probably know. Do you know that Israel's got big pig farms? People eat the ham and everything else. So living in Israel doesn't mean that she's got to be religious.

SL: No.

WP: She's not. She is not religious. Her husband is not religious. Another thing. You were in Israel, you mentioned it. Did you see on the holidays, on Saturday, how many Jews go to temple? Didn't you found out for yourself?

SL: [Laughs] Yes.

WP: Let me tell you something. I asked those questions and the answers that I got, they were right, you know. The Jewish prayer book says "the next year in Jerusalem," correct? Fine. They are in Jerusalem and there where it stops. That's what I got the answer.

SL: Do you keep the traditions in the home, light candles?

WP: I love the traditions. I love them.

SL: Holidays?

WP: Yes, I love them. Now, we're coming back now, you're talking about a tradition. Let's say at Passover. You're supposed to eat everything that's kosher for Passover, and if you didn't keep kosher for Passover — you only got the tradition, that's it. I love tradition.

SL: You mentioned before that you were active in many organizations. Could you just tell me what some of those organizations are?

WP: The Jewish War Veterans, for one; the New American Club; I belonged to a organization that they support the epilepsy children from Mt. Sinai Hospital, the epilepsy ward. You know, it's a big organization, I always forget the name. A lot of things black out from mind. And well some others, I do belong.

SL: What newspapers and magazines do you get here in the house?

WP: Magazines, get a lot of magazines. First of all, I got the *Near East Report*; I get the *Jerusalem Post*; I get the *Milwaukee Journal*; and I get these political magazines. I don't even remember their names. I'm getting several of them.

SL: I noticed that you have quite a bit of reading material.

WP: Yes. I do read. Books, I don't read. I can't read books, long stories I cannot. But magazines and papers, I do read, yes.

SL: Do you read mainly in English or in any other languages?

WP: Everything in English.

SL: Have you read any books on the Holocaust?

WP: No.

SL: Because you just don't read long books or because you just don't want to read those?

WP: You would name me a book and I'll tell you the story about it. Now my late wife, I got to tell you something. I don't know if you read or if you heard about that book, *Mila 18*?[25] I lived there. I lived down there in that neighborhood. All the people that they were involved, 90 percent I did know.

SL: Really?

WP: Sure, absolutely. My brother was there involved. My brother got killed there. Do you know, when my late wife read that book, she told me that she's reading something that is familiar to her, that the stories that I told her about, it's all there. I bought two books from Auschwitz I got. I never did look into it. Believe you me, I did. I should. I open up this way and there is stories that what I talk about it. One book I bought is about the experiments that they made on the people. This I didn't read yet at all. But some day. I bought them in English. They had them Polish, German and English. I bought them in English. I bought them in Auschwitz, in the concentration camps. They got a library, a bookstore where they sell.

[25] Mila 18 was both the headquarters of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance movement and the title of a novel by Leon Uris about the uprising.

SL: Did you watch the Holocaust television program?

WP: Yes, I did.

SL: What did you think about it?

WP: I think as artists, they did as artists a fantastic job. Beautiful.

SL: As artists?

WP: Yes.

SL: What do you mean by that?

WP: Well, I don't think there is anybody that they really can play or perform that really did happen. That's impossible. After that *Holocaust* that I've seen on the TV, I started to think about those movies I love to watch. Is the old movies and the westerns where the Indians and the white people used to fight. So I wonder, whatever that I have seen, I believe in that. That was true. That did happen. But that must have been much worse. It's the same thing with the *Holocaust*. You see, the *Holocaust* did portray actually what did happening and going on. Do you follow me? But there's a lot of things there which didn't belong. A lot of fiction that is — can you tell me now the sun is shining outside?

SL: No.

WP: No. That's the same thing. See, maybe they had to do that, and I did heard about it and read about it, that they had to put into it some fictions in it, too. But it was good. It gave the idea of the people what was going on.

SL: Do you feel that people became more interested in your experiences after watching that show?

WP: Yes, a 100 percent. I believe in it very strongly. I think that they should show it again and again. They did show it twice already. I think that they should show it again and again and again, because I think it's something that the people that didn't believe and people that couldn't imagine things, and they've seen it. There's a lot of fragments there. They actually tried to show and to make you realize what did happen. That's exactly the way it did happen. That's true. But, to me it's different. I speak on it,

because I come to a point, and I ask a lot of time the audience if they watched that *Holocaust*. So I go into certain fragments and I'll explain to them, yes.

SL: How ofter – let's talk a little on your public speaking on this. How long have you been doing this public speaking on the Holocaust?

WP: About a little over nine years.

SL: And why do you do it?

WP: It's the only reason I told you before: is to make the people aware. I don't get paid for it; I don't intend to get paid for it; I spend my own time. I do not represent anybody but myself.

SL: Where do you do the speaking?

WP: At any place that call. Schools, high schools, churches, synagogues and I'm going to be now on a panel to UW-M. Anyplace. I work with the school board. If there's any requests, I'm there.

SL: I'd like to ask you a few questions about Wisconsin. Have you traveled much in Wisconsin?

WP: Oh yes, I did.

SL: What parts of the state do you like the most?

WP: I tell you, it isn't such a thing that I like the most. I traveled north: it's beautiful. I traveled southwest: it's beautiful. I traveled south: it's beautiful. But the most time I did spend is up north. I think it's beautiful, very beautiful.

SL: North such as Door County?

WP: Door County. As a matter of fact I bought a farm there. I've got a farm.

SL: When did you buy this?

WP: When? It's about two and-a-half years ago. It's beautiful there. I just love the area there, too, just beautiful.

SL: How much does this area of Wisconsin remind you of your home in Europe?

WP: No, it doesn't remind me at all of my home, because I never seen trees and I never seen grass. I always lived in the big city which grass was a luxury. So it doesn't remind me at all, whatsoever.

SL: Now when you told me about that time that you went to a camp where Treblinka was built. Does area, that countryside area of Poland look similar to what is around here?

WP: Well, I think a farm area is a farm area. You know, it's a similarity, sure. I would compare the beauty of Wisconsin in certain areas in Poland, yes. But the beauty of Wisconsin I would compare it, Germany's got beautiful areas which I felt very, very much, too. So it's a very similarity. But my youth, where I was brought up, I didn't see those things.

SL: Is this something that you really like a lot now because it's something that you didn't have when you grew up?

WP: I love it. That's right, the nature, I just love it. Oh, I just love it.

SL: How much happier do you think you would have been living in a city that had a larger Jewish population?

WP: Well, I don't know. I never thought about it. I think I'm content. Well, I don't know. I think I couldn't live in a bigger city. Not any more. Like New York. I just couldn't take it. I don't think so.

SL: Why?

WP: I don't know. I was in New York several times. Even in Chicago they got an area where there's a lot of Jewish population. I'm talking about more Hasidic. No, I think I wouldn't be able to take it, not anymore.

SL: How do you like the climate in Wisconsin?

WP: I am satisfied. It's the same that I was used to all my life. We had in Europe the same seasons that we got here.

SL: Culturally, do you feel that Milwaukee offers you enough to do?

WP: Oh yes, absolutely, sure. Very, very satisfied.

SL: How do you feel about the fact that you're living in a state that Wisconsin has a great percentage of ethnic Germans in its population?

WP: I'll be very frank with you, it doesn't bother me, because — I think I mentioned it to you before, if I did — I do not live with hate because I doubt it. I think if I would live with hate, I couldn't live with myself. I couldn't go around and point out that well, this people I hate or they haven't got the right the exist or be here, that I couldn't mingle with them, because I don't. I don't hate. Of course I'm sore, let's put it this way. I got to sore which this is going to be with me the rest of my life. But I do not hate, because even the German population that live here, they cannot pay for their ancestors what they did. No, what's right is right.

SL: I'm going to have to change the tape again.

END OF TAPE 9, SIDE 2

TAPE 10, SIDE 1

SL: What kind of an effort have you made to become acquainted with Wisconsin history?

WP: Well, I didn't make very much of an effort, but I'll tell you what. I'm a reader. Once in a while, I get a hold of a book or a page from the encyclopedia. I learned during the years, that that gives me a lot of knowledge about a lot of things. I want to know how big Wisconsin is, or the population, and the productivity what they've got — this is — you don't have to look it up; you know what they are. But that's the only way I can find out. And by traveling. I love to travel.

SL: Do you feel that you've made a contribution to the Wisconsin community?

WP: Well, I think so. I made a contribution by being here. By working here. And I think the contribution that I made, and am still trying to do is, by creating, being a business, creating jobs, paying my taxes. I feel that I am an eligible citizen.

SL: Have you felt an obligation to Wisconsin for giving you an opportunity to start a new life?

WP: Yes. I do feel an obligation, not only to Wisconsin, to the country, because of giving me the opportunity of being here, and giving me the opportunity to share to be free and to enjoy life here.

SL: Wanting to go back a little bit to your involvement in the organization to prevent the Nazis from marching in Milwaukee. How did you go about doing that when they were planning to do that?

WP: We did march, *contra* marches against them. We did disturb them. We tried to do everything that was in our power. We even did work with the local government, police department, whatever we could do, and we tried very hard. We did.

SL: Were you a ringleader in that organization?

WP: I was a leader in a certain department, yes.

SL: How satisfactory do you find the American system of government to be?

WP: Local or national?

SL: Well, I'd say on a federal level.

WP: On a federal level, or a local level, I tell you. As an individual, right or wrong, you're always going to find something that is a dissatisfaction. In my person, the dissatisfaction in certain laws that they got, if it's national or in the state, there are certain that I disagree. But I might be wrong. And the disagreement that I've got is probably for either personal reasons or other reasons. But as a whole, I think the government is a pretty good government, no question about it.

SL: You've talked before about how you feel about the opportunities in the United States.

WP: Sure, absolutely, but like I mentioned it before, there's certain things that I disagree, but I'm not going to tell you who the hell am I to disagree. I thank God that it came a point in my life that I can say, "I disagree," and I'm not afraid of. There's certain things I don't like and I can speak out. But I might be wrong, who knows? They've even got a constitution and I think we've got to follow the Constitution. Sometimes probably a lot of things I overlook in certain directions. But you're talking to a person that, again like I mentioned before, I got a sore inside in myself that I feel there's a lot of things. When it comes to minorities, I think there's a lot of things wrong. Of course the government cannot make my neighbor love me because of my background, of my religious background, if he wants to hate me for it. The government can't do that. But that's the way it is. If I wouldn't like my neighbor for certain reasons, I would move. And this is a privilege that you can do it.

SL: What do you see are the most important issues facing this country today?

WP: The most important issue to be scared is that we are building up the biggest enemy for ourself. It's the communists, it's the Russians. That's the biggest threat that this country has right now. The other threat is inflation. This is, I think, very important. The third is oil, and I think there's dirty tricks being played, and it's going to be played because on account of the oil. So we are faced with a lot of problems. I think most of the problems could have been solved if they really would go after that. I'm not a politician. I am not a Republican; I'm not a Democrat. The privilege that I've got in this country is to vote so I vote for the person that I think that person's will do the right job.

SL: How do you feel about the prominence of Jews in American society, in the government?

WP: Well, I think that they haven't got any more prominence than anybody else. That's the way I feel. I think and a lot of places they've got even less prominence. They haven't got any more or less — maybe less prominence as a religious group or minority than any other group. I think that we even got less than a lot of other minorities. Of course, we've got a lot of leaders in our people. A lot of leaders. But I think we haven't got any [inaudible 7:00].

SL: What are your feelings – well, we talked about your feelings toward Germans and Germany today. You said you would not be able to go back there.

WP: No, I wouldn't go back there, because there's a lot of memories involved. I wouldn't say that I would like to go back sometimes, but I haven't got no desire to go there.

SL: What do you think your children feel about Germany?

WP: I think they feel pretty the same way I do. You know, all those years living with me and listening to me and everything else, I think it rubbed off. I haven't got -- the same thing — I haven't got a desire to go to Japan or to Russia or to them other countries. I haven't got the desire. Even Mexico. I haven't. I would love to travel this country. As much as I did travel, I haven't seen nothing yet. I would love to travel this country. This country's beautiful. I think we've got here God's given areas and nature that's nicer than any place else on this earth.

SL: Do you receive any restitution from Germany?

WP: Yes, I do.

SL: How often do you get it?

WP: Every month.

SL: Has it been something that you've been getting for quite a long time?

WP: Yes, I'm getting it since the late 1950's, I believe. Not enough. They never can pay back. I didn't even want to get the restitution from them. I was against it. I did fight it.

SL: What changed your mind about it?

WP: My mind changed is because, if I would have known the money to a different cause, that's a different story. I'm only getting is for my health reasons, that's all.

SL: Now you returned to Poland three years ago. Have you been back since?

WP: No.

SL: Plan to go back there again?

WP: Yes. I plan.

SL: When?

WP: Maybe when I go now to Israel.

SL: Is this in conjunction with the film that you're hoping to make?

WP: Yes, absolutely, yes. I hope I'll make the film. Otherwise, if not, I'm not going to go back there anymore.

SL: How many times have you been to Israel?

WP: About five times.

SL: How do you feel about it as a Jewish homeland?

WP: Well, I feel, I think it's beautiful. But I think the amazing is every time I go back there, the change. It's amazing what they did there. I think that those people accomplished something in thirty years which it took other countries three thousand years. I think it's beautiful.

SL: Do you feel a strong attachment to Israel?

WP: Yes, I do, very strong. I think I never felt as proud of being a Jew since Israel became a state.

SL: Do you ever have any guilt feelings that you didn't settle there yourself?

WP: Well, I would say once in a while, yes. Most of the time, no. I'll tell you, for selfish reasons. You know only for my background, that's the only reason. I'll show you, I've still got my pass from 1947 that I wanted to go to Israel -- 1948. I did want to go to Israel. But I had an opportunity to go here. I did come here, but this is only for selfishness, that's all.

SL: Do you think it's easier for you to talk about your experiences now than it five years ago or so?

WP: No, I wouldn't say that. I spoke then, I spoke today.

SL: Do you feel that the time has eased the pain for talking about it more, or have you always been really vocal about it?

WP: I always was. I guess I mentioned it to you, but it bothers me. It gets a hold of me, sure. It never fails. It never fails.

SL: Now when I first talked to you about this project I mentioned the fact that part of the funding we get is from the federal government in the form of a grant to us. How do you feel about the fact that the government is giving us some money?

WP: I think it's beautiful. I think it's about time that they did it. There's a saying that it's never too late, and that's true. But I think those things should have been done years ago. I felt and I still feel strong that in every school in the United States, in this country, the way they teach reading, writing, arithmetic, they should have taught the children and tell the the history about the Second World War and the Holocaust and what they did to humanity. Unfortunately this country was misled. They didn't tell the truth because the people here, this country was under the impression that the Nazis are only killing Jews. And as long as they're killing Jews, they didn't give a damn. But little by little, they found out and are finding out that they killed more Christians than Jews. The reason why they didn't tell the people, I don't know. I tried to find out and I can't find out and I don't know. I never will know. Because for some reasons the United States government then didn't tell the people the truth, what was going on. I heard a lot of stories. I talked to some people. I did investigate. I talked to a lot of people. Especially working people, people that belong in unions, and religious people, people that belong in churches. When the war was going on, I happen to know several cases where the priest in the church wouldn't talk about it, and people did confront him saying, "How come you don't talk about it?" They says, "I can't talk about it. There's reasons for it." If there were reasons, he was told not to talk about it.

SL: Why do you feel that it's important to participate in a project like this?

WP: What project?

SL: This oral history tape project [inaudible].

WP: I think it's very important for several reasons, you know. The average age of people that survived the Holocaust now is, I would say, between fifty-eight to sixty years. You give another ten, fifteen, twenty years from now, you're not going to have anybody to talk to about the Holocaust. And then, if they wanted to try to change history, then they're going to start to work and change it. See the Communist world is changing already. It did change, tried to change already. I think the work that you people do, and I hope they're doing it in other states, too, that things are being recorded and it's going to be available. The people can listen to it or read about it. I think this will live on and on and on. Another thing is the school system, libraries. You take the encyclopedia and you look about the Second World War and the concentration camp, the Holocaust, that makes me sick to my stomach. There's nothing there. About certain birds or butterflies or fish, they've got pages and pages and pages and pages, see. This is history that is very important. It's not there. So it shows you. And if people like you and a few others wouldn't do that work, I think it would be forgotten. It's going to be forgotten anyway, because when I was in Auschwitz just now, three years ago, in Poland and I've seen what's going on there, it's going to be forgotten. The Communist world is working very hard to change history, I want you to know. Propaganda. I've seen a film there which it made me sick. A lot of propaganda. And I came back and I had a meeting and I talked to the people, just recently, too. It took me to see what was wrong. And I talked to leaders here in the city from the federation, I told them that. They've been there several times and they didn't see it. It took me to see it. I've seen it. So.

SL: I've come to the end of the questions that I had prepared. I know there is certainly days and days of other stories you could tell me.

WP: Absolutely.

SL: However, if you feel we've left out something that was really important that you want to talk about.

WP: Well, I would like to tell you, if I may. Actually, we were the main stars during the war and the Holocaust, and they're trying to collect the Oscars. That's it. When I was in Auschwitz, they show every hour a film, and every hour it's in a different language. I think it's German, Polish, French and Russian.

And they show a film that's entitled, I think the film runs about fifty minutes or forty minutes. Whatever it is, that film is entitled, *The Liberation of Auschwitz from the Nazi Murderers by the Red Army*. It shows from the camp the people with the stripes and everything else. And it shows where the Red Army comes and they take over the camp, and you can see that it's a put up thing. Amongst the prisoners it shows there in the concentration camp that they're being liberated from the Russians, there isn't one person wears a Star of David. Number one. Number two, there's a long hallway in that building. This building was there before, too, when the Nazis did occupy it. But there's a long hallway in that building, and both sides of the walls there's double frames of pictures of survivors that did survive the concentration camp in Auschwitz. They haven't got all the pictures from everybody, but certain people that they got. It's about 8"x10" and I just cannot tell you how many they're hanging there. In the bottom is typewritten that this is Mrs. whatever it is, she was born in France, was liberated, and so and so. But one thing you can see: the picture's made in half, you can see the number here for every person, and the triangle. Not one Jew. Now, in the big square, in the garden, there is a black marble monument, which it reads, "The Nazi tyrants killed six million Russian and Poles and a million and-a-half children." Not a Jew. See? And the *Umschlagplatz* in Warsaw, where they used to gather the Jews and take them Treblinka and murder them, there's a building there, a building that belongs to the government, probably. I've got pictures of it, a little plaque, just a little plaque. It says in Yiddish, on one side in Polish, from this place the Nazis did take away so many people to their deaths. The day's going to come they'll take off that little plaque and this is it. Now, at one point in the square, they've got that big monument for the Warsaw ghetto uprise. It's beautiful. It's made out of marble. It's a very beautiful piece of architecture. In Auschwitz, the same thing. They didn't show any films. but they are trying to do is change history. There is no Jew mentioned. I'll tell you another thing what happened. Auschwitz has got one barrack which they call it the Jewish museum. I was there with Arleen and people come there on tours and they got guides. The most important thing is, and if a person wants to see actually things, he's got to go into the Jewish museum. I walked in with Arleen to the Jewish museum and this

was the first time I've seen a Minorah and I've seen tons of hair from people, even with skulls. I've seen the thousands and hundreds of thousands shoes — children's, men and women. Limbs and glasses, whatever the heck. They had a lot of *talesin*.[26] They showed what they did to the *talesin*. They showed what they did with the human hair for the people, the cloth they made and some other things, and some other inscriptions, whatever it is. A lot of stuff. Now, I was with Arleen in that barrack for about three-quarter of an hour going around, not thinking, reading the things. And all of a sudden I turned to Arleen. I says, "I'm afraid maybe they locked up the place. There's no people coming in." I says, "Let's get out." You know, you get carried away, you don't know what time it is. They might lock up the place and you're going to be stuck there. So as I walked out that, there's people walking around, and those tour guides. They got people going around. I walked out on the porch, up on a few steps, and stood there and watched what's going on. Do you know what they're doing? Those guides, they don't take in the people to the Jewish museum, I want you to know. They're going around it. They take you to wherever they want to take you. They are the stories I told here to people, see, and nothing is being done. And we are sending money there. I want you to know, to keep up everything.

SL: "We" who? The government?

WP: The government, correct. American dollars is keeping up the cemeteries there.

SL: We're going to run out pretty soon, I just, you know, if you want to wrap it up or anything else. So this is something that upsets you, the fact that the mention of the Jews is becoming less and less apparent.

WP: That's correct, absolutely. They are taking the credit for everything. They are building around hotels in Auschwitz, restaurants. They are making money on the top of it and they want to be the heroes, see? That's what it is. That's what I'm trying to tell you. People like you, or the job that you are doing, I think it's very, very, very important, and I mean it. Like I mentioned it before, twenty years from now, fifteen years from now, thirty years from now, like Arthur Butz[27], a lot of other Butzes will come up and write

[26] Jewish prayer shawls.

[27] Prominent Holocaust denier and author of *Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*.

books, and they'll change the whole thing. I hope this will keep it alive. That's the only thing that I can tell.

SL: Thank you very much for all the time.

WP: You're welcome. It was a pleasure.

END OF TAPE 10, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)

END OF TRANSCRIPT