

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
LEGACY PROJECT**

MEMOIRIST: MARTY STORCH
INTERVIEWERS: SARA GHITIS
RUTH EINSTEIN
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LOCATION: ATLANTA, GEORGIA

INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Disk 1>

Sara: Could you please state your name?

Marty: My name is Marty Storch [Motek Sztorch].

Sara: Where were you born?

Marty: I was born in Poland, not far from the German border in a city called Ozorkow.¹

Sara: What's your date of birth?

Marty: January 6, 1924.

Sara: What were the names of your parents?

Marty: My father's was Moishe. My mother, which I lost when I was three years of age, was Miriam [Lewkowicz Sztorch]. Shall I name the brothers and sisters? One we have lost in Russia, Rudi [Ruben], was the oldest child. I had a sister, Fajga, and a stepmother, Nacha. [Nacha] was very nice, just like my own mother. Then I had my brother Jack [Itsik or Icek], who passed away just a couple years ago [in 2001], and another brother, Will [Volek (Willi)], which we lost right

¹ Ozorkow [Poland: Ozorków] was a textile manufacturing community in central Poland, 26 kilometers (16 miles) northwest of Lodz. Before World War II, Ozorkow was less than 150 kilometers (less than 95 miles) east of the German border. At the outbreak of World War II, the town had about 15,000 inhabitants, including just over 5,000 Jews and the rest being about equal parts German and Polish.

after the war. He had typhus and we could not save his life.² We lost him right after the war.

Then I had a sister, Eva [Evie (Chaya)]. I told you the whole story with her. [The Germans] took her to Chelmo,³ which is not popular among the people. It was a terrible place where they took away all the kids and the older people. They were all got massacred in Chelmno.⁴ I visited [Chelmno] not long ago, four-and-a-half years ago. Then we went back, Jack and I, and set up memorials featuring everyone.

My sister Fajga and my stepmother were drowned in the [Baltic] waters before liberation when the Germans liquidated their camp.⁵ Two young ladies who survived and knew us before [the war]—they came from my hometown—told us after the liberation. They came back to Ozorkow so that we would be aware that my sister and my stepmother were drowned.

Jack and I traveled all over. [We went] to [find] my father's name in the cemetery in Lodz where he was killed. We put up a big plaque with his name and when we lost him. My

² As the Allied forces advanced in the winter of 1944, Jack and Will were among the prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau forced on a Death March. Jack and Volek managed to escape and fled into the Black Forest—a mountainous region in southwest Germany, bordering France. Three weeks later, French troops liberated them, but Will died on May 1, 1945 from either typhus or typhoid fever. Typhoid fever and typhus are different diseases that are caused by different bacteria, although the symptoms are similar and both result in death when untreated. Both were common in the camps due to hygienic conditions and the constant infestation by lice. Will is buried in a cemetery just over the border of Switzerland.

³ Chelmno was the first death camp in Poland. It was opened in December 1941. The Jews were brought to the village of Chelmno to a manor house, where they were told to take off their clothes and leave their belongings. Then they were loaded onto trucks about 50 to 70 at a time. The trucks were specially modified so that the exhaust gas didn't go out the tailpipe but was directed up into the sealed cargo area where the Jews were loaded. As the truck drove from the village to the campsite where the mass graves were the Jews died of carbon monoxide poisoning or suffocation. When the truck arrived at the forest camp the bodies were unloaded, thrown into the mass graves and then the truck returned for more. It took about 20 minutes to make the one-way trip. Many of the Jews murdered there came from Lodz. In March 1943 it was closed and the graves dug up, the bodies burned and the ashes returned to the pits. Then in April 1944 it was opened again briefly to receive and murder the last Jews from Lodz. Altogether, at least 125,000 Jews were murdered there although the number is probably higher.

⁴ On April 25, 1942, armed Gendarmes and SS men sorted the Jews in the Orzokow ghetto into two groups. About half of the ghetto population—mostly young children and adolescents—were sent on trucks to the Chelmno extermination camp.

⁵ Editor's note: Marty says "Italian waters" in the interview, but it is far more likely that he means the Baltic Sea. Between late 1943 and March 1945, about 10,000 Jews from Italy were sent to concentration and extermination camps in central and Eastern Europe, particularly to Auschwitz-Birkenau. However, Jews from Poland generally stayed in Poland, where many of the concentration and extermination camps were.

brother Will is at a beautiful cemetery, which we pay for every ten years, its upkeep. It's beautifully kept up. In Chelmno is our name also, for our sister, for loved ones. That took care of the whole family. It's sad, but that was our life.

Sara: Let's go back to the early years.

Marty: Sure.

Sara: What kind of work did your father do?

Marty: My father was very successful. I won't get into details because it would be a long story. My father was here in America when he was 16 years of age. He was here eleven years. He was well educated. He spoke six languages. He came back [to Poland] because he was homesick. He lost his brother. He had a brother who was with him, too. I'm named after him. The homesickness drove him crazy. He returned to Poland. He came back. He had a wholesale food business. Then he built apartments and he was very successful. We had a beautiful home.

Sara: In what year did he go back to Poland from America?

Marty: He went back in 1917 to Poland. It was probably 1901 [that he left for America] . . . because I was too young to register everything. He was in the United States for eleven years. That's what I remember. We had a beautiful home.

Sara: Where? Do you know what street?

Marty: In Ozorkow. It was a very nice home; a very nice life. We always had a maid. We actually were very fortunate with good parents and a lovely . . . We had a happy family. We loved one another. Then came the time as we grew older . . . the antisemitic movement came along and we had to live with that. We didn't want to take on the abuses. We used to have good

friends—Polish friends and Germans. There were quite a few [Germans living in Ozorkow].

They were our friends before the war, before the Nazis, the dark clouds came across the border.⁶

Sara: You said there was antisemitism before the Nazis came. Do you remember any episodes that happened?

Marty: No, the antisemitic movement came right after 1933 when Adolf Hitler came to power.

Sara: What do you remember?

Marty: I remember that we had many friends that immediately turned against us. We had to fight for survival. We didn't want to take home our abuses to our parents, to put more pressure on them. We lived a terrible life and a terrible experience. We started realizing that we were no longer citizens of Poland, that we were second-class citizens. We were getting abused and we didn't have any kind of help from no direction. We had to live a terrible life. Then it got worse as Hitler started approaching our countries. [Across] the European continent was very bad.

Sara: Do you remember something specific happening in terms of the Nazi era arriving? What memories come to your mind?

Marty: I probably don't remember what I ate last night for dinner, but the days that I have lived through, every day, names which I associate with *kapos* and leaders, I remember every day of my life.⁷ I remember the Germans came in September 1939.⁸ For two or three weeks everything

⁶ The antisemitic atmosphere increased in Poland during the 1930's. During that time, attacks on Jews increased. In 1935 and 1936, the synagogue and Jewish cemetery were vandalized and damaged. An economic boycott of Jewish businesses was in full force by 1937. After the German occupation in September 1939, the Polish and German populations in Ozorkow turned openly against the Jews.

⁷ To assist in managing the large communities within concentration or labor camps, German authorities installed a hierarchy of administrative units under their control. A *kapo* was a prisoner in a concentration camp who was assigned by the SS guards to supervise forced labor or carry out administrative tasks in the camp. *Kapos* were generally criminals. The *kapo* system minimized costs by allowing the camps to function with fewer SS personnel. It was designed to turn victim against victim, as the *kapos* were pitted against their fellow prisoners in order to maintain the favor of their SS guards.

⁸ World War II began when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Fierce battles over Ozorkow took place and many residents—including Jews—were killed. Initially the Germans were forced to retreat, but finally took the city on September 5 or 7, 1939.

was normal. Then they came to unload our food [stock from the business] in trucks and took it away. They left receipts, but we never got paid for it because we were Jewish.

Then every day you would see different regulations and rules posted on walls and especially for Jews.⁹ First of all, they ordered us to wear the yellow star immediately. There was the restriction where we couldn't walk the streets after 5:00 p.m. That was in the wintertime. Then it got quite worse. We couldn't even walk on the sidewalks. We experienced a heck of a time. In a small city of 27,000 people, we had one-third were Jews—a great population of Jews. We suffered the consequences.

A short time after all those [restrictions] we went through, [the Germans] began hanging [Jews] throughout the [Polish] cities.¹⁰ They grabbed young Jewish boys. One was a step-uncle of mine, who had been a high-ranking official in the army, and ten other people. They hanged them and then took their equipment to another city immediately. [On the day of the hanging,] we had to leave our doors open and the families had to come to the place where the hangings were taking place. We had to witness. Not to leave any kids . . . The doors had to be open. Also there were strong antisemitic radicals.¹¹ If anybody [tried to] hide, the family would suffer the consequences. Nobody wanted to play with the Germans. It was . . .

⁹ As German forces entered Poland, the Jews they encountered were immediately singled out for abuse or massacre. Anti-Jewish persecutions were introduced that impoverished and separated Jews from their Polish neighbors. After the German occupation of Poland, restrictions were immediately placed on Jewish communities that were meant to economically and socially isolate them. The Germans decreed that every Jewish business must have a German *Treühandler* [German: trustee]. In November 1939, all Jewish bank accounts in German-occupied Poland were frozen and Jews were limited in the amount of money they could withdraw. All Jews in German-occupied Poland were also forced to wear an armband or yellow star on their clothing to identify them as Jews. There were heavy penalties for those caught not wearing it. An open ghetto was established in Orzokow in the summer of 1941.

¹⁰ On April 25, 1942, the Germans ordered that 8 or 10 Jews be publicly hanged on the market square, forcing the Jewish Police to participate in the executions.

¹¹ Marty is likely referring to the Endeks [Polish: *Endecja*], the National Democratic party of Poland, which was created in 1897. The party was ideologically antisemitic and fascist, calling for a Polish-speaking Catholic Poland.

Then came where we had to unite the youngsters and come to the schoolyard—15 to 18 years old—and [were told] to bring our little belongings, too, immediately. Definitely nobody would have taken any chances of jeopardizing their families, by not doing what we had to. They sent us to West Prussia.¹² We traveled a couple of days and we worked the *Deutsche Autobahn*, which were the German expressways.¹³ As young as we were, it was terrible.¹⁴

Sara: When you say, “we,” what was happening with your father? Was he with you?

Marty: No. I’d left already. They took me away from my father. Later, I found out that my father was killed in February 1944 by the *Kripo*.¹⁵ I know the [name of the] man who killed my father.

Sara: Who is that?

Marty: The man?

Sara: Yes.

Marty: A German from Czechoslovakia, a *VolksDeutsche*.¹⁶ His name is slipping my mind, but usually it comes to me . . . Sotto.

Sara: Your father was taken away earlier?

¹² *West Prussia* is used as a general name for the historical region around the city of Gdansk in northern Poland.

¹³ A string of camps were built in Upper Silesia after 1940 along the length of the proposed German *autobahn* (highway) into Poland. The Jews sent to Annaberg and the other camps in the system originally helped to build the new highway. The camps were run by the SS *Organisation Schmelt*. About 1.4 million laborers—among them concentration camp prisoners, prisoners-of-war and compulsory laborers from occupied countries—were also employed in Germany by the civil and military engineering group, *Organisation Todt*, was responsible for a huge range of large-scale construction projects including building the *Autobahn* (highway) network in Germany.

¹⁴ In the spring of 1941, several hundred young Jews mostly between the ages of 17 and 21 were rounded up and sent to forced labor camps near Gdansk and Poznan.

¹⁵ The *Kriminalpolizei* [German], also known as the ‘kripo,’ were the German criminal police during World War II. While the Secret State Police (Gestapo), which investigated political opposition, and the Criminal Police (Kripo), which handled all other types of criminal activity. The Kripo was given limitless power for surveillance and was authorized to seize persons on the mere suspicion of criminal activity. As with those held by the Gestapo under protective custody, those held by the Kripo under preventive arrest had no right to appeal or access to a lawyer, and their arrests were not liable to judicial review. They were generally interned directly in a concentration camp.

¹⁶ *Volksdeutsche* is a term the German government used beginning in the twentieth century to describe Germans living or born outside of Germany, regardless of citizenship. The term was also applied to Poles with German ancestry or relatives.

Marty: He was taken to the *Kripo* . . .

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Sara: I asked you at what point you lost your father.

Marty: Right. I was not there because they sent me away [to Prussia] on February 22, 1940.

They sent me off to the *Deutscheautobahn* to work the German highways.¹⁷ I left my family. I didn't have any kind of communication with my family. I was homesick. I'd never been away from them. It was driving me crazy and by the end of 1940 they sent me back home with twelve others. I got home.

I worked as an electrician for a short period of time. My family was still there [in Ozorkow]. Then they liquidated the ghetto in Ozorkow.¹⁸ There was a ghetto already. They took away the Jews' homes. Everybody had to go to the big city of Lodz [Poland].¹⁹ I was only there a short while. My family I left [in Lodz]. I was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.²⁰ I have not seen

¹⁷ The *Autobahn* is a federal controlled-access highway system in Germany. Construction was begun before Hitler came to power, but the Nazis appropriated the project and the *Autobahn* became one of the Nazi regime's showpieces. Multiple *Autobahn* (also called the *Reichsautobahn*) routes were planned into Poland. One ran through northern Poland (and the region known as Prussia) and was to connect Berlin with Königsberg [German: Königsberg; today it is known as Kaliningrad, Russia). Another route was to connect Berlin with Poznan [Polish: Poznań], a city in central western Poland. By late 1941, construction on the *Autobahn* had ceased almost entirely, as focus was shifted to other war-related projects.

¹⁸ On May 21-22, 1942, 1,387 Jews were sent to Lodz as laborers. A final selection took place in August 1942. More workers were selected for the Lodz ghetto and all the others were killed.

¹⁹ Lodz [Polish: Łódź] was a large textile manufacturing city and Jewish cultural center about 75 miles from Warsaw and approximately 230 kilometers (143 miles) east of the German border. The Germans occupied it on September 8, 1939. On December 10, 1939, a ghetto was established on 4.13 square kilometers (almost 1.6 square miles) in the northern neighborhoods of the city. The living conditions in the ghetto, including food rations, were very poor because the ghetto was hermetically sealed. The mortality rate was very high. Waves of Jews from the surrounding area and Western Europe were pushed into the Lodz ghetto making the total number of Jews who passed through it at over 200,000. After a series of Aktions in 1942, the ghetto was turned into a work camp and by August 1944 the ghetto had been completely liquidated. Some Jews were sent to a temporarily re-opened Chelmno and murdered. Most were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

²⁰ Auschwitz-Birkenau was a network of camps built and operated by Germany just outside the Polish town of Oswiecim (renamed 'Auschwitz' by the Germans) in Polish areas annexed by Germany during World War II. It is estimated that the SS and police deported at a minimum 1.3 million people (approximately 1.1 million of which were Jews) to the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex between 1940 and 1945. Camp authorities murdered 1.1 million of these prisoners.

anybody [since then]—just my brother Jack. I left everybody behind. That’s a time I will never forget.

When I was liberated, I didn’t know where I was going [to go]. [I was] hungry and filthy. We felt just like two-legged animals after we got out of the camp . . . When you looked in the mirror, you didn’t recognize yourself. The insects have eaten me alive. The hunger . . . you could not eat anything, because the [body’s] system just didn’t work. I had enough understanding not to eat any heavy food.²¹ I would have paid the consequences. I recuperated after a week or so and I started looking like a human being again. My desperation to go back [home], where I came from, was just . . . I couldn’t get over it. Every hour was too long to see who survived. I wanted to fly home. There was no communication for a period of three and a half years. After almost three months, I struggled [to get home]. Some trains [were working], going from city to city. I had some nice Germans that took me 40 or 50 miles. They sympathized with us because they knew we were displaced persons, we wore those honorable . . . like medals.

Finally, I arrived [home] after a long period of time and asked my neighbors. First of all, I went to my house. Poles were already living there. I looked around. I asked the Poles if they’d seen anybody from my family. They said, “No.” Nobody was there. I’ll never forget I stood there near our house and I looked up to the Almighty and I said, “They might throw me in the garbage can. Nobody’s going to miss me.” I didn’t know what happened to my whole family. It was very sad.

I knew a Jewish fellow. We had grown up together. He [got his] his home back. Nobody was living there. We both [lived in] the house for a short period of time. My depression

²¹ After liberation, camp survivors faced a long and difficult road to recovery. Survivors were so weak, emaciated, or sick that thousands died in the weeks after liberation. Eating foods that were too rich or complex for survivors’ bodies to handle could exasperate years of malnutrition and starvation, resulting in sickness or death.

was terrible, extremely high from walking the streets where you had been surrounded with love, and now you were surrounded with hate. You reached a point where you [realized you] just didn't belong there any longer. Sad, very sad. Then I went back to Germany.

Before all that happened, [I had been] in Auschwitz-Birkenau for a long period of time. I was there 13 months. In 1943, [I found] two of the brothers. My brothers Jack and Will met me in Auschwitz-Birkenau. This happened once in a million. There were millions of people and everybody looked the same. Even brothers didn't recognize one another. They hadn't seen me for a long period of time. We spent a couple of weeks seeing each other every day. I worked as an electrician [in Auschwitz-Birkenau] too. Finally, I realized that tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, we were leaving the camp. There was already a sign on our block—about 1,500 youngsters I'd been with—that we would get our rations at four o'clock in the morning and we'd be ready to go, to leave to Gorlitz [Germany].²²

I had a good friend with me [named Bob Schlaffer]. We always organized together. If we found a rotten potato, we'd share it. Whatever we found, we shared. I said, "Bob,"—my brain still worked—"we're not going. We'll run away." I said, "Why? We've been here a long time—thirteen months." Before they send out youngsters to Germany, they set up tables with white tablecloths, a doctor, and interviewers. First of all, they [gave the prisoners a] physical, [and

²² Gorlitz [German: Görlitz] was a Jewish forced labor camp also known as '*Biesnitzer Grund*.' It was located in Biesnitz, a village southwest of Gorlitz, which is a town in present-day eastern Germany, on the Polish border. The camp was under the control of *Organisation Schmelt* from May 1943 to January 1944. In August 1944, the camp had become a sub-camp of Gross-Rosen and 225 Jewish prisoners were sent to Gorlitz from Auschwitz-Birkenau. Between 500 and 800 Jews from the dissolved Lodz ghetto arrived in the camp via Auschwitz-Birkenau on September 5, 1944. By December 1944, approximately 1,500 male and female prisoners were in the camp. Some of the prisoners made armored vehicles and others worked in a brick-making factory. The living and food conditions were terrible and the death rate was very high. The camp was forcibly evacuated on February 18, 1945 as the Russian army advanced. The march took three weeks and wound through the villages of Kunnerwitz, Friedersdorf, Sohland and Alterndorf to Rennersdorf. When they arrived at Rennersdorf, the Germans decided they wanted all the prisoners back at Gorlitz and they were marched back. The Russians liberated the camp on May 8, 1945.

checked out] your health. They didn't want to send nobody to Germany with some sickness. Then they interviewed you, [asking], "Can you speak German?" or "What kind of work can you do?" They didn't want to send just anybody there. They eliminated some. I said, "You know what, Bob? We didn't go through those exams and if somebody doesn't go through those exams, it's [not a good] thing." We ran away. We hung around Block 16. We stole a little, whatever we could do to survive. Before that happened, when my brain thought about all those experiences, I told my brothers, "I'm leaving tomorrow to Muhlhausen."²³

My brother Jack had a very good memory. In the meantime, he was liberated in [Germany] near the French border, earlier than I was. I was liberated on May 5, 1945. He traveled to Muhlhausen where [he thought I was]. They had already a committee set up—lost and found. Everybody was looking for survivors. Jack got up there. He went to the Jewish committee [who was coordinating the list of survivors] and asked them, "What happened with the youngsters? In the beginning of 1944, [the Germans] sent 1,500 or 1,600 youngsters [from Auschwitz-Birkenau] down here." They said, "Do you speak Yiddish?" He said, "Yes." They said, "Do you know how to say *Kaddish*?" which is the prayer when somebody dies.²⁴ He said, "Yes." They said, "We'll give you directions. We'll escort you. We'll take you near the cemetery where each and every one was machine-gunned." My brother said *Kaddish* and he said, "Well, now I don't have anybody."

²³ Muhlhausen [German: Mühlhausen] was part of the Buchenwald group of sub-camps. The prisoners worked in the Geratbau GmbH, a subsidiary of the clock making firm Thiel, Ruhla, which manufactured timers and precision instruments, and the *Junkers* aircraft company, which produced detonators and precision instruments.

²⁴ *Kaddish* [Hebrew: holy] is a hymn of praises to G-d found in the Jewish prayer service that is recited aloud while standing. The central theme of the *Kaddish* is the magnification and sanctification of G-d's name. Mourner's *Kaddish* is said at all prayer services and certain other occasions. Following the death of a parent, child, spouse, or sibling it is customary to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish* in the presence of a congregation daily for 30 days, or 11 months in the case of a parent, and then at every anniversary of the death. It is important to note that the Mourner's *Kaddish* does not mention death at all, but instead praises G-d.

Being in Gorlitz, the youngsters knew me. They knew my name from home. They were all mostly from Lodz. We were neighborly, [having lived] just 25 kilometers [15 miles] from one another. They knew me by name. They knew I'm an electrician.

My brother Jack used to travel. [Survivors] didn't have to pay anything on the trains. He went on the train [with our] cousin, Rubin Lansky. They both were travelling, going to the French Zone and whatever, just to make a living. He introduced [himself to] everybody. Jack was a lively fellow. Everybody used to shake hands. [Jack would say,] "I'm Jack Storch. I'm from France . . ." [One day, he met someone who said,] "Did you say Storch? Did you have a brother, a short fellow?" He said, "Marty?" [The man said,] "Yeah, Marty. He was electrician in our camp." My brother knew that I loved electrical work, which I had learned from my oldest brother [Rubin], the one who got killed in Baranovichi, Russia.²⁵ They stopped [their journey on] the train and went east to Poland. It took them a few days. They came and met one of the fellows—there were very few who survived. [Jack and Ruben] said, "Is Marty here? Is he alive?" They said, "Yes, Marty's here."

When we got together, I believe we never quit till the day he died. The door was always open. We always talked about what happened 50 or 60 years ago, and what has happened, and how I have balanced my way of life and thinking about it. After he died, we took the body home in our city.²⁶ After my brother passed away, the doors were closed. It was very sad because we met a couple of times a week. He came to the office and we went out for lunch. We enjoyed [talking about it]. The bitter animosity came out of our system. It was all right to talk about it.

²⁵ Baranovichi [Polish: Baranowicze; Russian: Baranavichy] is a city in present-day western Belarus. From 1921 to 1939 it was in Poland. On the eve of World War II, 12,000 Jews lived in Baranovichi. After the German and Russian invasion of Poland in 1939, it was under Soviet rule until the Germans captured the city on June 27, 1941. Hundreds of Jews were killed immediately and a ghetto was soon established and by December 1942, the city was declared *Judenrein* [German: free of Jews].

²⁶ It is unclear what Marty is referring to here. When Jack died on September 24, 2001, he was buried at Arlington Memorial Park in Sandy Springs, Georgia.

Now there's nobody to talk to because most of the survivors don't want to talk about it, which I have experienced. They used to come down in here. Eight or nine survivors used to come down here and play cards and no one wanted to hear about it, what they suffered. They just kept it in and burned up inside. I love to. I have experienced . . . I used to go to schools and lecture and give them all my bad memories. It alleviated me from [the memory of] the atrocities and the depression. I felt great. When I walked out from lecturing, I was a different fellow. I felt much better than when I started. I'm still enjoying it. That was the life.

Sara: Marty, I want to go back a little bit.

Marty: Yes.

Sara: Describe what your life was like when you were working on the *Autobahn*. What exactly did you do?

Marty: [The Germans] took us by truck. Most of us worked with German civilian supervisors, to cut down the trees and to chop up the surrounding ground. We had little train-like steel cars and we had to load [the dirt and stones] on them—then they took off and unloaded them somewhere—and digging. We used to go early in the morning. We worked out there ten or twelve hours [each day] in the bitter cold. [It was] very cold [when] we worked. At the time, in those years when they sent me out, there was no trouble having good food. I mean [enough] to get by with. We were not hungry. We could go and take a shower. It didn't last long. The homesickness drove me home. I was then sorry when I came home.

Sara: What was the name of the place [where you worked on the *Autobahn*]?

Marty: *West Deutscheautobahn*.²⁷ There was another name to it. They called it ‘West Prussia’ in Polish.

Sara: Where did you live? Where did you live while you were working at this place?

Marty: We lived in barracks—not as many as [the Germans pushed into a barracks] in Auschwitz-Birkenau, but probably sixty or seventy men were living [in each barrack]. We had to crawl up the lower and upper beds, three stories. It was not the worst . . . as we experienced in later years.

Sara: When you went to Auschwitz-Birkenau, do you remember your arrival? How did you get to Auschwitz-Birennau?

Marty: When [the Germans] came and took the rest of the youngsters who were left in the Ozorkow ghetto, there were not many. They got them all organized and sent them away. We didn’t know where we were going. They sent us to Lodz to a place called Czarnieckiego Street, [which was] a terrible prison.²⁸ They spoke Polish up there, but we didn’t understand their language. How horrible it was! The biggest robbers, killers, and what have you. We went over there. We spent two weeks until we were ordered one day on trains, into boxcars. They took us up there. It took us two-and-a-half days to get to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Sara: What time of the year was it?

Marty: [I arrived in] Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943.²⁹

²⁷ Marty maybe referring to the West *Autobahn* (known as the “A1”), which was the first *Autobahn* to be built on Austrian territory. Construction began near Salzburg, Vienna in 1938. It was to run east-west to Linz, Austria but was not completed until after World War II.

²⁸ In October 1940, the Lodz ghetto’s Central Prison was established in on Czarnieckiego Street. The prison consisted of several brick and wooden buildings surrounded by a wall and a wire fence. The prison was managed by the Jewish police force and housed Jews who were suspected of crime such as theft or bribery. Poles caught trading goods illegally or smuggling food to the ghetto were occasionally sent to the prison. The *Kripo* also sent Jews to the prison who were found smuggling or escaping. The location was also an assembly point for people destined for the Nazi labor and death camps.

²⁹ Between January 1, 1943 and March 31, 1943, German SS and police authorities deported approximately 105,000 Jews from Lodz to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Sara: Was it summer, winter . . .

Marty: No, February. It was real cold. In Europe, [February] is real cold. The hunger started then already. As we arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau, I'll never forget that. There was a blowing of whistles from the *Gestapo*,³⁰ all the doors were opened in the boxcars, and we were mishandled. They sure gave us a workout. I was not hit badly but so many were and split their heads. It was a tragedy.

Sara: Who were you with?

Marty: Nobody from my family. I was by myself. I had left my brothers behind me. They were sent out right then when they liquidated the ghetto in Lodz. They sent away everybody—my sister, my stepmother, my brothers . . . Nobody was anymore. They were in Lodz at that time. I didn't hear from them.

Sara: Do you remember the selection process?

Marty: Which selection are you talking about? I've seen so many . . .

Sara: Upon arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Marty: In Auschwitz-Birkenau, the selection [was] terrible. That's a story that will never be erased in my mind. The picture . . . I worked [in Auschwitz-Birkenau] as an electrician. We could go to all departments—me and my friend. He committed suicide. We had more access to more places than anybody else. We walked around, changed light bulbs, fixed whatever, talked to the Germans. I spoke German better at the time than I speak English now. I knew the

³⁰ An abbreviation of *Geheime Staatspolizei*, which means "Secret State Police." It was established in 1934 and placed under Heinrich Himmler. With virtually unlimited powers, it was highly feared. The *Gestapo* acted to oppress and persecute Jews and other opponents of the Nazis, including rounding up Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps.

doctors—Doctor Kremer,³¹ Heidenreich,³² and Maurer,³³ the ones who did experiments on the youngsters they took out from the selection.³⁴ Let me explain how the selection took place. The minute the boxcars were opened the hundreds [of people in each] were unloaded on one spot on the left-hand side at the entrance to Auschwitz-Birkenau. It probably took about a half hour or an hour. Josef Mengele came out with the doctors which I have named and made a selection.³⁵ We didn't know [what was happening] because we had just come in. We didn't know what went on in Auschwitz-Birkenau. They selected [some people to go to] the left and [some to go to] the right side. Whoever went to the right, survived. [If they went to] the left, they were supposed to go to destruction. We could see elderly people [sent to the left] and they ripped away precious kids from their mother's arm.

³¹ SS-Obersturmführer Johann Paul Kremer, M.D., Ph.D., (1883-1965) was an assistant professor at the University of Münster. As a physician of the Waffen SS, Kremer was ordered to Auschwitz-Birkenau on August 30, 1942, where he replaced a doctor who had fallen sick. He carried out his duties there only for a short time—less than 3 months. His job was to assess prisoners attempting to gain admission to the hospital. Kremer ordered most of them killed by phenol injection. He selected prisoners who struck him as particularly good experimental material, and questioned them just before their deaths, as they lay on the autopsy table awaiting injection, about such personal details as their weight before arrest and any medicines they had used recently. In some cases, he ordered these prisoners photographed.

³² No information could be found on Doctor Heidenreich.

³³ No information could be found on Doctor Maurer.

³⁴ During World War II, a number of German physicians conducted medical experiments on concentration camp prisoners. They performed these studies without the consent of the victims, who suffered indescribable pain, mutilation, permanent disability, or, in many cases, death as a result. The unethical experiments carried out may be divided into three categories. One category consists of experiments aimed at facilitating the survival of Axis military personnel. In the second category, experiments were aimed at developing and testing treatment methods, including pharmaceuticals, for injuries or illnesses encountered in the field by German military personnel. The third category sought to advance the racial and ideological tenets of the Nazi Party's worldview. Josef Mengele's experiments at Auschwitz-Birkenau are perhaps the most infamous example of such experiments. The most notorious experiments involved freezing, high altitude, poison, tuberculosis, transplants, sterilization, artificial insemination, seawater, and experiments on twins. Many physicians worked at Auschwitz-Birkenau during its existence. Medical staff routinely performed selections of prisoners at the arrival ramp, determining who would be retained for work, who would be sent to the gas chambers, and sometimes, as in the case of Josef Mengele, who would be used in medical experiments.

³⁵ Josef Mengele was born in 1911. He became a doctor and joined the SS. He was notorious for being one of the physicians who sorted newly arrived prisoners on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, picking out those he wanted for his medical experiments—especially twins—thus earning him the nickname the 'Angel of Death.' Many survivors recall being selected by Mengele, but caution should be used because Mengele only arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau on May 24, 1943.

A scene that will never be erased in mind until the last minute of my life—and why it struck me, I don't know—there came a transport from France of probably a dozen kids [all wearing] the same clothes. They must have taken them from a school. [They all had] the same hats. They were beautiful kids, *Yiddishe* [Jewish] kids, girls and boys, at least a dozen. [I cannot forget] how they ripped away those beautiful kids in mid-day and how they hurt the mothers. Some didn't give up their kids, so they [were sent to the gas chambers] along with the kids. That scene . . . I looked up to the Almighty. Then I was still full of belief. I just couldn't get over how this could happen, what a human being will do to one another because of nationality. This will never be erased in my mind. I have seen the bottles of gas. It was terrible. I could see the trucks loading up the bones, liquid, whatever they make, [and] how they brought in the Zyklon B.³⁶ Nobody [was supposed to] see that. I could see the high-ranking *Gestapo* [officers]. [Once, some] motorcycles came in with machine guns [mounted on them], followed by some big Mercedes, real beauties with tinted glass so you couldn't see in. They were around where the crematoria and the gas chambers were. I'm sure [whoever was behind] the tinted glass, they could see what goes on, what happened, what they were doing with our people.

Sara: How old were you at this point?

Marty: I was 19 already. I was 15 when I went to work on the *Autobahn*. When I got in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943, I was already 19 years of age.

³⁶ Zyklon B was originally used in Germany before and during World War II for disinfection and pest extermination in ships, buildings and machinery. After the end of August 1941, Zyklon B was used in Auschwitz, first experimentally, and then routinely, as an agent of mass annihilation.

Sara: Did you get a number?³⁷

Marty: Yes, but not [right then] . . . When we arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau in February 1943, there were two more trains behind us were waiting: one from Czechoslovakia and the other from Hungary. We met those people later. They were in a hurry and nobody got numbers [at that time], but they gave us identification slips. My number was 5-7-1-3-5.

Sara: Could you repeat your number?

Marty: 5-7-1-3-5. I'll never forget that. Nobody can erase it. I was at Emory University about five or six years ago.³⁸ I got the paper where I was standing, looking at pictures of survivors. I saw how close my number was [the survivors in the picture who had numbers in the range of] 56 and 57,000. I thought, "Oh, my G-d. I wonder: Have I've ever seen them?" Am I behind them? So close, but millions went through Auschwitz-Birkenau.

I have wondered many times about how the mind works living under those circumstances, under hunger, filth . . . The only thing that goes through your mind is you want to survive because of the rest of your family. Otherwise, I don't know. If I had been aware that my family had disappeared from the world, I don't believe that I would have been so desperate [to survive]. I was real desperate. There were many times I had a fever. I couldn't stand up and had no appetite. I sold my bread twice—in Auschwitz-Birkenau, when you have sold your bread, then you know it's the end of your life—for cigarettes.

³⁷ During the Holocaust, concentration camp prisoners received tattoos only at one location: the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp complex. Tattooing was introduced at Auschwitz in the autumn of 1941 for Soviet prisoners of war. In March 1942, tattoos were used to identify prisoners at Auschwitz II (Birkenau). By the spring of 1943, the SS authorities throughout the entire Auschwitz complex adopted the practice of tattooing almost all previously registered and newly arrived prisoners, including female prisoners. Prisoners were given tattoos on their forearms of their camp serial number, which was also sewn onto their uniforms. Only prisoners selected for work were registered and given serial numbers; those that were sent directly to the gas chambers were not registered or given tattoos.

³⁸ Emory University is a private university in Atlanta. It was founded in 1836 by a small group of Methodists and named in honor of Methodist bishop John Emory and is one of the top ranked universities in the United States today.

Sara: You said you had a fever. Did you get sick?

Marty: Terrible fever.

Sara: From what?

Marty: I don't know until this day. Bob helped me. I was still alive. He was still alive. He said, "Marty, get strong." The only thing we could do was go to the washhouse, cold as it was, to wash with cold water, and take newspapers, and wipe up the shit so the insects wouldn't eat us. With newspapers, we wiped one another.

Sara: You have mentioned G-d. Do you come from a religious family?

Marty: A very conservative family. The conservative way of life in Europe . . . I would compare it with Orthodox life here in America, because my father wouldn't work Saturday or any holidays. We had to go with my father to the synagogue. All the ceremonies like we have here, let's say in Beth Jacob or whatever, we had that kind of life back then. We were called 'conservatives' because my father didn't have any *peyes* [Yiddish: side locks or side curls] or long hair. [He was] a modern man, but we had strong beliefs. I used to go after school for two or three hours to the *cheder* [Hebrew: religious school]. The rabbi injected so much belief into you about your religion, about your beliefs. You lived with it. You [were] injected with it through and through, but the disappointments in life, comes the other way around. It's a great disappointment. It comes to you. [When I was in the camps, I wondered,] "G-d almighty, why did the rabbi inject into me so much love and [how] we are just the chosen [people]?" I said, "How?" I looked up and asked [G-d], "How chosen are we?"

Sara: Do you remember the name of the rabbi?

Marty: No.

Sara: What about the synagogue? Is it still there?

Marty: The synagogue has been rebuilt. I don't remember the name of the synagogue and I don't remember my rabbi.³⁹ He had one eye in which he was blind. He was the rabbi which taught my father and my father's brothers. He was a very elderly man . . . but he had such strength to inject in you whatever he wants to. I've never forgotten, but I was very disappointed [in my faith] because of the Holocaust and what is going to happen.

Sara: Do you remember the address of your home in Ozorkow?

Marty: In Ozorkow? Yes. *Ozorkow rynek piętnaście* [Polish: Orkowo market number fifteen]. This was our home, where we lived. *Rynek* means 'market.' Number 15. We had a business in the front and then we lived behind. It was our house.

Sara: Is it still there?

Marty: No. They took it off. My wife's seen it, too. The only house they took off the *Rynek* was our house. They looked for valuables and digged—the Pollacks. They told us they were digging up there for weeks, looking for any money my father had left.

Sara: You said that after Auschwitz-Birkenau you were sent into Germany.

Marty: They sent me . . . As I said, instead of sending me to Muhlhausen, they sent me to Gorlitz. In Gorlitz, the situation was rough too because of the [bombing from Allied air raids]. You could hear the bombardments. I worked in the shop with Hungarian girls in Gorlitz. I was an electric welder and I was supposed to work with those girls. My master was wonderful in the beginning, but the worse the situation got in the war, the worse he got with us. I understood later. Whenever the girls did something wrong, I was guilty of it. I explained to him, "They don't understand me and I don't understand them," but he didn't take 'no' for an answer. The hate was in there already because of the war. Then we'd hear the bombardments. We didn't have any kind

³⁹ In addition to two large synagogues—the Great Synagogue and the Bet ha-Midrash—there were *shtieblach* [Hasidic houses of prayer] in Ozorkow. The last rabbi of the community was Rabbi David Behr.

of communication with the outside world—none whatsoever. For a long time I thought that Germany had already occupied the whole world. We didn't know anything. We sometimes [found out] the dates because we found a [news]paper, *Die Stürmer*.⁴⁰ It came to the camps. In every camp, you could find *Der Stürmer*. That's the hate paper. [It had] so much hate in it. When we picked up one, we could see a date—what year it is and what month we're living in. That was life.

Sara: What were the conditions in Gorlitz? In what conditions did you live there?

Marty: In Gorlitz?

Sara: Was there food? Where did you sleep?

Marty: Our system was already immune . . . just to stay alive, we didn't have to eat a lot. After you come from Auschwitz-Birkenau, whatever you get, you are happy with. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, the little soup that we got at 3:00 p.m. was not regular soup. I wonder what the Germans put in there. In the morning, when we got to the roll call . . . at 4:00 a.m., we stood [until] 6:00 a.m. in the bitter cold. We didn't feel anything. We wanted our bread. Nobody . . . very seldom . . . [Within] five minutes, we got rid of the bread.

The situation . . . It's so difficult to describe. At many occasions, I think that I'm dreaming about it, about all what I lived through. [I think] it was only a dream—a bad dream—but it's a reality. Every day of my life, I live with it. As far as religion is concerned, for quite awhile I lived an empty life. I did not want to distribute this to my kids. I told them, "This I do believe." I didn't want my kids to grow up and [have my experiences] take them off the tracks. Then it would be very tough for me to put them back. Living an empty life is terrible. I lived for quite a few years where I looked up and started looking up more and more. I said, "If I've done

⁴⁰ *Der Stürmer* [German: The Striker] was a weekly German tabloid-format newspaper published by Julius Streicher from 1923 almost continuously through to the end of World War II. It was notoriously antisemitic.

something wrong and asked for forgiveness . . .” Then I got struck quite a few years ago with cancer . . . and the doctors had a consortium. They gave me six months to live. I was [positive] about it. They said, “How can you be [positive]? They are doctors and they said you’ve got cancer and you’ve got six months to love. Now you feel [positive]?”

I realized I only had a little time left to show my kids the background of my life. I took Rhona and her daughter [Shannon] back to Europe, to get to my hometown, and talk to the people. I still have some friends [in Ozorkow] now. They didn’t let us even go to the hotel. We slept in their home. [I showed them] the way that we had lived and told her about my father. [He] was well known in the city. I wanted the kids to know the background of our life. Then we went to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I took them to Chelmno. I took them to Lodz, to the Yiddish cemetery, and showed her all the names including my father’s name. She could see in Chelmno the name [on the memorial] my brother and I set up. I wanted my kids to get a picture of the life we lived.

I still have in my collection from my granddaughter a four-page letter. It was a wet envelope when she sent it to me. She tells me up there, “Grandpa, every night when I’m go to bed, I am crying. The long crying that I’m enduring is because of the life that you have lived. We are so proud of you.” I’m not soft by nature, but if I read her letter, I am dropping tears [crying]. There’s a grandchild of mine who knows the inner story of my life, what I have paid, and [how I] survived those terrible times. That’s my life.

Sara: Marty, where were you when liberation came?

Marty: Gorlitz.

Sara: Will you talk about that day?

Marty: Let me go back a little. When the [Russian front] started getting near . . . the liquidation of the Germans . . . our survival. We could hear the bombardments throughout the last week—

terrible bombardments. We knew that something was going on. For me, working around the camp every day [I could see] the outside. I could see two Jeeps came near the *Scharführer* [German: squad leader]⁴¹ . . . the leaders in the camp. I can see him with the little beards. Two Jeeps came. Two or three German soldiers walked up . . . to the Jeep. There came in two more Jeeps with Russian soldiers. I recognized them right away [because of] the short fur [coats] and what have you [that they were wearing]. They took parachutes [with them]. One came with parachutes, so I figured [the Germans] must have caught them parachuting in somewhere, but that's not my business. I'd done my business. I'd done my work. They escorted them to where they got the laundry—not the SS, but the guards. We have a few hundred guards there. There were steps to walk down. [My friend and I who worked as electricians] worked up there. Nobody could go in there but we had the right to go in. Probably a half-hour after they had arrived in Gorlitz, we could hear some shots—probably ten shots. I figured, “Those boys . . . If I would have just known their parents [I would have] told them not to wait for their sons. [I would have told them] what happened. I'm the only witness. We're the only witnesses to how their kids disappeared.” [They] were so beautiful—three or four of them. Those kind of memories you got injected with. To see what happened, it was terrible. The liquidation . . .

We got up one day before the arrival of the Russians. We were liberated by the Russians. We could see a movement of trucks. In the office where the *Scharführer* was, there was something wrong. The light was not on. We could see there was something wrong. [The Germans] disappeared on the night of May 4 and 5, 1945. In the morning, when we got up, there was nobody was at the gates to watch us. We could open the gates and walk out. Then we could

⁴¹ *Scharführer* [German: squad leader] was a title or rank used in early twentieth century German military terminology, but is most recognizable as a rank of the SS and title of the SA.

hear tanks arriving, surrounding the whole area. They didn't know who we are. They came in and had one soldier who spoke Yiddish.

Sara: The soldiers were Russian?

Marty: The Russians. They came in, opened the gates, [but they] didn't let anybody [out]. They didn't want the sickness to spread. We went through all sorts of examinations and they took quite a few to the hospitals. They treated us beautifully—not like the [Germans]. They gave us soft food. After we got cleaned up and started being normal human beings, they let us go.

After we went out—probably about a dozen young fellows—we went into a farm. We were not far away from farms. We were completely away from a city. We went to a farm. The Germans were prepared always. In the cellars, they had so much food. I wanted to be smart and didn't let them eat meat or what have you. I don't know from where I got [that idea]. We just ate very light things. We always had so many breads and cooked . . . We just nibbled on that. Everybody got strong. We didn't lose any boys until we start disappearing, going back to Lodz and going back to Orzokow.

Sara: When did you find out what happened to other members of your family?

Marty: After the war. When my brother [Jack] and I were doing business and we were successful in Germany through hard work . . . Our hard work definitely . . . In Germany, there was two ways of [making a] living if you wanted to survive. It was either to deal on the black market and make your own living, or to go to the German [DP camps] that [the Allies] set up for

the displaced persons and living with thousands of other survivors, waiting for the handouts.⁴²

You could stay up there. Every Friday, they handed out a little money, cigarettes, food . . . It came through our organization . . .

Sara: The Joint?⁴³

Marty: The [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee]. I told my brother, “This could be our life? We stood five-and-a-half years in the lines to receive a little food. We will stand now back in lines? We’re going to live on welfare [with] no education or doing anything?” We decided that we wouldn’t accept anything. We made a good living, going to France and buying liquor, bringing it to Germany, selling it to the Americans. We were making good money. We bought American cigarettes and sold them in Munich [Germany]. There were no cigarettes [in Munich], so we made triple the money. We had more money than we needed. That was the reason that we traveled and tried to set up memorials for my whole family. We had a good life. We were once in court. The judge said, “Well, I can’t do nothing. What you’re doing is actually not illegal. You’re making a living. You don’t kill anybody. You don’t sell any drugs or harmful food to the soldiers.” They couldn’t even have a case against us.

Sara: Marty, what members of your family perished in the war?

⁴² When hostilities ended on May 8, 1945 in Europe, liberated Jews plagued by illness and exhaustion, emerged from concentration camps and hiding places to discover a world in which they had no place. Bereft of home and family, and reluctant to return to their pre-war homelands, these Jews were joined in a matter of months by more than 150,000 other Jews fleeing fierce antisemitism in Poland, Hungary, Romania and Russia. Allied forces established temporary facilities (displaced persons camps) in camps and urban centers across Germany, Austria, and Italy. From 1945 to 1952, more than 250,000 Jewish displaced persons (DPs) lived in the DP camps. Allied authorities and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) administered these facilities. Eventually, DPs were repatriated to their home countries, reestablished themselves in new countries or immigrated outside of Europe. Most of the DP camps were closed by 1950.

⁴³ The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (commonly called “the Joint”) is a worldwide Jewish relief organization headquartered in New York. It was established in 1914. After World War II, the Joint provided desperately needed supplies and necessities to survivors inside and outside of DP camps in Eastern Europe, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

Marty: Died in the war? Let's go to the first one. Rubin, Rubi, my oldest brother [was murdered] in Baranovichi. He [would have been] a very successful boy, if he would have been in America. Let me tell you about him a little . . . a short story. When he was three years of age, he already played the violin. When he [was four], we lost our mother. I was then very young. It was an interruption of a year. At five, he started back up again. He could play the violin to make you cry. When he joined the Maccabees [a Zionist youth club], there was an orchestra of around 25 players. They had a concertmaster who played the violin. When Rubin [joined], he was [given the] honor to play at his side. We were so proud of our brother. He was very knowledgeable.

[Rubin] was the first one. He had a friend, Chaim Tuczynski. He was a high-ranking officer also. He went to France right after the war, but before he went to France, he came to Ozorkow and told [Jack] and I—we both were up there, too—"I been with Rubin. He was accidentally killed." When the Germans came in [to Baranovichi], they were shooting people at random. Rubin was out in the street when they killed him. He took care of my brother.

Then the second . . . I don't know if she was second or [Rubin] was second. I didn't have the dates. Our Eva was about six, going on seven. She was a beautiful child. I have the picture. [The Germans] took her to Chelmno. We knew well and good that they didn't take the kids for entertainment or give them Kindergarten schools and what have you. It was on our mind what happened. We didn't want to bring it out and talk about it, but everybody knew what happened to the kids. She was number two.

Then my father—which I find out after the war who killed him—was in 1944. I didn't know the date my stepmother and my sister, Fajga, [died]. We never asked, but it was right [before or] close to the liberation. I don't have a date, but evidently it must have been very close

[to the end of the war]. [The Germans] went out and dumped the old ship that was from the camp, [when] they liquidated the camp.⁴⁴

Sara: You said they drowned?

Marty: They drowned them, yes. The two girls [who were with them and survived], the Waldman sisters—I will never forget all those [names]: Chaim Tuczynski, my brother's friend, and the two Waldman sisters—somehow got out and swam to the [shore] and were hiding. They have a whole story. They survived. That was the finale of my sister and my stepmother.

Sara: Why were they on a ship? Where were they going?

Marty: [The Germans] liquidated their small camp. It must have been bound for Germany, probably a day or two [before] liberation. [The Germans] turned the whole ship upside down. It's an old piece of . . .

Sara: How did it happen that you came to the United States?

Marty: I have always lived my life thinking about my father. He always taught us so much about [living a] beautiful life, even then, in those days, he told us. We couldn't understand. They had the milk and the bread outside of the door. Him and his brother, they both lived together and [went to] school. They used to go after work to school. He educated himself. When he talked about America, I always was in love with it.

⁴⁴ It is unclear which camp Marty's sister and stepmother were evacuated from and difficult to determine which ship they were on. As Allied forces advanced in the winter and spring of 1945, the Germans evacuated many prisoners from camps in the area around Danzig [Polish: Gdansk] near the Baltic Sea in northern Poland, particularly Stutthof. In some cases, the prisoners were deliberately marched into the sea and machine-gunned. In other instances, the prisoners were loaded onto ships and barges to be sent to the Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg, Germany. Some of those ships and barges were sunk deliberately and some were sunk during bombing raids. Some 7,000 prisoners in Neuengamme were then evacuated just days before the war ended in early May 1945 and forced to march to the nearby port of Lubeck, where they were loaded onto several old freighters. The Germans intended to take the ships into the Baltic Sea and sink them, but before they could leave the harbor, British aircraft mistook the ships for German transports, bombed the ships and they sank. Almost all the prisoners on the ships died.

Some high-ranking officers from Germany, when they came to our house while I was still there, they spoke to my father in English, which I did not understand a word of. I just admired my father. He spoke [German] as [fluently as] I would speak Yiddish or Polish. The high-ranking officer always was laughing and hugged my father. I don't know what they were talking about, but it was an experience. I always thought about, "If I could follow in my father's footsteps . . ." I didn't think about the success or whatever, but I couldn't complain . . . through hard work, like my father. I believe I followed the footsteps of my father. I'll never forget those days and the looks of them.

Sara: Who helped you get here? Who helped you immigrate?

Marty: [Jack and I] came on our own. We didn't come on any kind of . . . We had a cousin, Rubin Lansky, who has since died, and Lola [his wife] . . .⁴⁵ He was my cousin. He signed the papers [guaranteeing that] if I would have failed, that he was liable.⁴⁶ They had a little money already and [they assumed] liability for sponsoring us, that we wouldn't fall to the government to provide us with [welfare]. It was very easy. We came here as easy as could be.

Sara: From where did you sail?

Marty: We came from Bremenhaven [Germany] because we were in Germany at the time.⁴⁷ I didn't want to be in Poland because . . . every stone and every street had such bad memories.

⁴⁵ Rubin and Lola Borkowska Lansky were Polish Holocaust survivors who met in New York following World War II. They married in 1947 and moved to Atlanta in 1953. Their stories are available from the Cuba Family Archives of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum at <https://www.thebreman.org/Research/Cuba-Family-Archives/Oral-Histories/ArticleType/ArticleView/ArticleID/869> and <https://www.thebreman.org/Research/Cuba-Family-Archives/Oral-Histories/ArticleType/ArticleView/ArticleID/770>.

⁴⁶ An Affidavit of Support and Sponsorship was among the criteria applicants seeking an entry visa into the United States during the 1930's and 1940's had to meet. This required two sponsors, who were United States citizens or had permanent resident status. Sponsors had to provide proof of their financial status (Federal tax returns and an affidavit from their bank and employer) to ensure that the immigrants would not become dependent upon social welfare programs.

⁴⁷ Bremerhaven is a port city on Germany's North Sea coast. Between 1830 and 1974, the city was Germany's largest passenger port handling transatlantic traffic.

[After I returned to Poland after the war] I went back to Germany. [Jack and I] made a living there until the last minute of our being in Europe, until we came to America.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Sara: You were saying that you sailed from Bremerhaven?

Marty: Yes. From Bremerhaven, it took us probably . . . six or seven days. We came to New York [City, New York].⁴⁸ Our cousin, Rubin Lansky, picked us up. We spent with them [Rubin and Lola] a couple of weeks. I went to Paterson, New Jersey, where my father [had lived].⁴⁹ Actually [when my father first came to America] he had lived in Detroit, Michigan,⁵⁰ but when he got homesick and wanted to go home, his friends—he must have had five or six friends; they came together with my father and my uncle—the one who died. They wanted to take his homesickness out of his mind. They said, “Why don’t you come to New Jersey? Here we’ll be all together and you’ll probably get your life going.” My father spent a year in Paterson, New Jersey [where] he worked in a factory. The other fellows, a couple of them—one is named Pasirstein and one is Blum—[were still] in Paterson, New Jersey. I’m sure their kids are there, but they are not. When I came, they were already [very old]. They got me good jobs as electrician. I told them not to do me any favors. I didn’t come in empty-handed anyway. We came with a little money. We didn’t need a handout. We got a beautiful apartment. I bought an apartment and furnished it right away in Paterson.

I had an aunt and uncle here [in Atlanta]. They came to New Jersey and they said, “Marty, we’re not leaving until you come with us.” They told me at the time, in New Jersey

⁴⁸ Marty, Dora, Mary, and Jack Storch sailed from Bremerhaven, Germany on September 18, 1949 aboard the General J. H. McRae. They arrived in the United States in New York City, New York on September 28, 1949.

⁴⁹ Paterson is a city in northeastern New Jersey, approximately 20 miles northwest of New York City, New York.

⁵⁰ Detroit is the largest city in the midwestern state of Michigan in the United States. In the mid and late twentieth century, it was known as an industrial powerhouse and as “Motor City” for its ties to the auto industry.

when I told Mr. Blum, “I’m going to Atlanta, Georgia,” he said, “You’re going back to where you came from.” [He reminded me that in Georgia] there was the Ku Klux Klan, and it was terrible to live in Georgia.⁵¹ I started getting confused about what to do with my life, but I said, “They’re not leaving until I sell out everything and go.” It took probably a week of time and they stayed up there. I sold the apartment and we moved to Atlanta.

Sara: How were you received as refugee from the war? How did people really . . .

Marty: I didn’t feel like a refugee. I didn’t feel like a refugee, because when I had met . . . nobody handed a penny out to me, nor would I ever accept a penny from anybody because I would have fell down.

Sara: So they treated you . . .

Marty: Everybody was beautiful, wonderful. When I came to Paterson, New Jersey, Mr. Blum immediately [got me started] work as an electrician. His son was in the office, already grown. I told him, “Look, don’t feel sorrow or pity for me. I came with a little money. I can still survive.”

Sara: What year was this?

Marty: It was at the end of 1949. He needed me and I worked [for him] until I had to tell him, “I’m going to Atlanta, Georgia.” I came here with my family, stayed with them probably a week, and I got on my own.

Sara: You say “we.” You were with your brother?

Marty: My brother was already here in Atlanta. Then we found out why my uncle and aunt came up [to Paterson]. They were from my stepmother’s side. They had a daughter and my brother, Jack, was not married. They wanted us to be up there and to hook up their daughter with

⁵¹ The Ku Klux Klan (or Knights of the Ku Klux Klan today) is a white supremacist, white nationalist, anti-immigration, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-black secret society, whose methods included terrorism and murder. It was founded in the South in the 1860’s and then died out and come back several times, most notably in the 1920’s when membership soared again, and then again in the 1960’s during the civil rights era. It is still in existence.

Jack. It didn't work out, anyway. [Our uncle] had a factory on Mitchell Street, a tailor shop.⁵² He had about 50 people working there. He got some money for me and for my brother.⁵³ We had trouble then getting it. We just split after being here for about three or four months. He tried to take advantage.

I went and worked for Lockheed for a short while with my credentials I brought.⁵⁴ Then I said, "No, I don't have to have Lockheed. I can go in business." I started my own business immediately. By 1950, I was already in business here in Atlanta.

Sara: What business?

Marty: Restaurant business and a bar, and drinks, and that nature.

Sara: Did you own a restaurant?

Marty: Yes, my brother and I. It was at 411 Marietta Street. Very rough place, there were fights every day. We were there over five years under the name 'French.'⁵⁵ No one knew that we were Jews, even the ones with whom we dealt like Mr. Siegel, who was in the meat business. We [didn't want them to know that we] are a Jewish boy. He said, "You know, Marty, we always think that you're Jewish." Finally, when we were just about to quit . . . we didn't want to be the smart guy, so we told him.

⁵² Mitchell Street is in Downtown Atlanta, Georgia in an area that was part of Atlanta's original business district thanks in part to its proximity to the city's main railroad station. Mitchell Street is also part of a historic district known as Hotel Row.

⁵³ Marty may be referring to financial assistance that was sometimes provided to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust by organizations such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or "Joint") and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). The passenger manifest for the ship on which Marty, Dora, Mary and Jack Storch arrived in the United States on indicates that they were DPs and that their trip was sponsored by HIAS. HIAS was founded in 1881. Its original purpose was the help the constant flow of Jewish immigrants from Russian in relocating. After World War II, they assisted 167,000 Jews to leave DP camps and emigrate to the United States, Canada, Australia, and South America.

⁵⁴ The Lockheed Corporation (originally the Loughead Aircraft Manufacturing Company) was an American aerospace company. Lockheed was founded in 1912 and later merged with Martin Marietta to form Lockheed Martin in 1995.

⁵⁵ In 1953, there was a "French & Crawford, Inc." at 404 Marietta Street in Atlanta, Georgia, but it is unclear if this is the name of Jack and Marty's business.

Sara: How were you received by the Jewish community in Atlanta?

Marty: I had very little connection with it when I came, but immediately I went to the synagogue.

Sara: What synagogue?

Marty: Ahavath Achim.⁵⁶ That was right in 1950.

Sara: Who was the rabbi at that time?

Marty: Rabbi [Harry] Epstein.⁵⁷ I loved it. I took off sometimes on Saturdays and went to the *shul* [Yiddish: synagogue] because it was so much in my mind to say *Kaddish* in silence for my loved ones. The prayers . . . that's what had driven me to the synagogue. I owed them something and that's all I could do—just [say] a prayer over there. I enjoyed it very much. I met some people. They were very nice. Some of them felt sorry for me. I said, "Don't feel sorry for me. I survived."

Sara: Where was your first home? Where did you live when you first came here?

Marty: I bought a house on Rankin Street off of Boulevard. It was a very popular area with the Jewish population then.⁵⁸ Then I sold the house. We went to Spring Valley off of Highland

⁵⁶ Ahavath Achim was founded in 1887 in a small room on Gilmer Street. In 1901 they moved to a permanent building at the corner of Piedmont and Gilmer Street. In 1921, the congregation constructed a synagogue at Washington Street and Woodward Avenue. The final service in that building was held in 1958 to make way for construction of the Downtown Connector (the concurrent section of Interstate 75 and Interstate 85 through Atlanta). The synagogue moved to its current location on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1958.

⁵⁷ In 1928 Rabbi Harry Epstein (1903-2003) served as the rabbi of Ahavath Achim from 1928 to 1982. Under his leadership the congregation began to shift to Conservatism, which they adopted in 1952. Rabbi Epstein retired in 1982, becoming Rabbi Emeritus and Rabbi Arnold Goodman assumed the rabbinic post.

⁵⁸ Marty is referring to an area known as Old Fourth Ward, a historic neighborhood on the east side of Atlanta, Georgia, United States.

Avenue, right across from Shearith Israel.⁵⁹ A brand new house. Mr. Kuniansky drove me by and I went in.⁶⁰ It was beautiful. I bought it the same day with a handshake.

Sara: Did you ever think about going to Israel?

Marty: I've been three times.

Sara: When you left Europe, was Israel a possibility for you?

Marty: I was confused. That was a time where we were confused. So many [Jews] from Germany went to Israel. I just didn't know where to go. The only thing [that made me choose the United States] . . . the background of my father's life has driven me here. Otherwise, I don't know. I probably would be in Israel.

Sara: After the restaurant business, what did you do?

Marty: I sold the restaurant in 1955. My brother and I met some people. One was in real estate—was an agent—and said, “Well, you're successful boys.” We were young then. [They said,] “We've got a good grocery store [for sale] on Fairlie Street.” It was in the black neighborhood but very popular because you had all the students and faculties and all that.⁶¹ We looked at it. It was [owned by] a Jewish fellow, Mr. Handmaker. It used to be a Colonial—a big store.⁶² We loved it. He showed us the books. My brother and I said, “Yeah, we can make a good

⁵⁹ Founded in 1904, Shearith Israel began as a congregation that met in the homes of congregants until 1906 when they began using a Methodist church on Hunter Street. After World War II, Rabbi Tobias Geffen moved the congregation to University Drive, where it became the first synagogue in DeKalb County. In the 1960's, they removed the barrier between the men and women's sections in the sanctuary, and officially became affiliated with the Conservative movement in 2002.

⁶⁰ Marty may be referring to Max Kuniansky, who was heavily involved in Atlanta real estate, in particular commercial properties, and whose story is available from the Cuba Family Archives of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum at <https://www.thebreman.org/Research/Cuba-Family-Archives/Oral-Histories/ID/871/Kuniansky-Max>.

⁶¹ The Fairlie–Poplar district is part of the central business district in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Georgia State University is located along the district's southeastern edge and Sweet Auburn, a historically African-American neighborhood, is on the district's eastern edge.

⁶² Colonial Stores, Inc. was founded in 1901 and was one of the nation's largest supermarket operators for much of the twentieth century. At one point, the company had over 500 stores operating in 11 states, including Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Maryland, Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. By the 1970's, the company had been sold, renamed and began to close locations.

living.” The people who’d worked a long time up there, we spoke with them. They didn’t have such a good opinion about the owner. When some black people came in—usually on the weekends—the kids got to be in the front . . . He was discriminating. I said, “Jack, let’s take a try.” We bought the store. We had it ten years. I had it very easy because I had Jewish managers . . . one a Mr. Diamond and one . . . I got his daughter living [next door]. She is a neighbor. Her father worked . . . he retired and they worked for us . . . Mr. Goethe-Silverman. I didn’t [have to] work hard.

I started getting out [looking] for something else to do. I started building apartments. I went to Decatur [Georgia] and I built 150 apartments.⁶³ I took great chances in life and here, but with hard work and use a little brain, it might click. I done the right things through hard work. Nobody has given me anything.

I’ve got to tell you one story. I have a picture—one of these days I’ll show it to you—where my wife [Dora (Dorothy) Gutman Storch] and I are sitting and my kids are behind me. Mark, my son, was still a little fellow. We are at the German Consulate here. We used to get letters for settling our case for settling as the heirs about [reparations] for loss of education, loss of parents, lost whatever.⁶⁴ Finally they called us in [to the consulate to ask] why they don’t get an answer in Germany. I had a lawyer in Germany, Heinz Ludwig. Finally I got letters to come

⁶³ Decatur is a city in Georgia, northeast of Atlanta.

⁶⁴ Between 1945 and 1947, the Allied governments enacted various legislation dealing with reparations to be paid to the victims of Nazi oppression. The Jewish Agency presented the first official claim to the Allied governments in September 1945. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) was established in October 1951 to help with individual claims against Germany arising from the Holocaust. The Claims Conference initially recovered \$100 million from West Germany, with direct compensation to Holocaust survivors paid in installments. In 1952, the government of West Germany reached an agreement with the state of Israel and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany to pay reparations for material losses and injuries incurred during the Holocaust. Three separate German laws, known as the West German Federal Indemnification Laws, were adopted in 1953, 1956, and 1965. They further provided for compensation in the form of one-time payments and monthly pensions to Holocaust survivors. In the years since, other agreements for reparations have also been reached.

to the Consulate. They interviewed me, and my kids were there and my wife – she was in a camp.⁶⁵ We were supposed to get a regular monthly check of so much. [They wanted me] to sign a letter that I was relieving the Nazi Party and Germany from all the atrocities I've been through, including my education and all the other stipulations in German. I had thought about it before they called me. They wanted to settle with me. I told the Consul I would not sign [such a letter], never in my life, even if I don't get a penny from Germany.

My kids were very disappointed, but when we got home I told them to sit down and, “Let me talk to you. I want you to picture one thing: on the first of the month, Mama's going to the mailbox to get the envelopes with the checks—her check and my check. Mama's going to go out and buy a piece of jewelry or some good steaks and groceries or whatever. And that night when we going to have dinner, if Mama puts that beautiful steak on a plate, I probably would drop some tears because I had sold out my loved ones. I'd rather eat a piece of bread on a napkin without butter than to have a guilty conscience because of money.” I was never money hungry because I know I can make a living. They were always wondering. I didn't want them to know more. I explained to them how I would have felt. They told me, “It's your life and that's the way you feel. You're 100 percent right.” Not many have refused those situations. I got by without [the reparation money] and I raised my kids without having Germany to pay me for the atrocities they have . . . the execution of my relatives, and my family, my closest dears. Not for money, no.

Sara: You got married at some point.

Marty: When I came, I had a little trouble with the Russians. I had imitated one. It's a long story, but I'll make it short. When my brother came in Gorlitz, I was in prison. The Russians

⁶⁵ Dora (Dorothy) Gutman Storch (1922/1924 - 2009) was born in Lodz, Poland. She and her sister were the only survivors of their family. Her parents, one sister, and a younger brother were murdered during World War II. Her story is available from the Cuba Family Archives of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum at <http://archive.thebreman.org/detail.php?type=related&kv=11994&t=objects>.

arrested me. I was wearing a captain's uniform with the little [insignia on it], an outfit, and a gun and everything else. I worked with the Russians. We used to go to Germany and get stuff which they needed. We were caught on the train by NKGB detectives.⁶⁶ They arrested me. When I went to court, the judge was a Jew. I explained to him I had been in concentration camp, I was released from the Nazis, and I wanted to be with the Russians. He released me. He said that this would be a case that under normal circumstances that would get 10 or 15 years, but he released me. The same day, I told my brother and Rubin Lansky, "We've got to leave [Poland]. I'm afraid they will pick me up." I have taken many, many chances in my life. Then you get a little smarter not to do those kind of things.

Sara: Where did you meet your wife?

Marty: My wife knew a couple of girls who lived in my hometown [Ozorkow]. My wife was from Lodz. She came to Ozorkow to meet with those girls. She was a beautiful girl. She's still pretty, but she was a beauty. And we met.

Sara: You met where?

Marty: In Ozorkow. Then I had that problem with the Russians and [unintelligible; third video, 20:29; sounds like "all massa"]. Then I went back to Lodz. [My wife] had a sister [Miriam, who had also survived], too. Then [Jack, Rubin, and I] decided right away to leave Poland to go to Germany. I told her, "Come on. We go together. You should go with us to Germany—with my brother and Rubi [Rubin Lansky]." Her sister said, "What, are you taking her for a secretary? You got to get married. You aren't going to take my sister." So we got married. You can imagine the ceremony that we had, just a rabbi and probably three people. We

⁶⁶ The People's Commissariat for State Security [Russian: *Народный комиссариат государственной безопасности*] or NKGB, was the name of the Soviet secret police, intelligence and counter-intelligence force that existed from February 3, 1941 to July 20, 1941, and again from 1943 to 1946, before being renamed the Ministry for State Security (MGB).

got married. We went [directly] to the railroad station and moved from city to city. Then we came here to America.

Sara: What year did you get married?

Marty: The same year I was released. On October 7, [1945]. That was just a few months after my liberation. Then I didn't want to disappoint anybody or myself . . . Now let's talk like grown up people: living under the circumstances that I have lived, my normal activities . . . I didn't have any. It did surprise me then. I didn't want to mislead anybody or mislead a wife . . . I believe the Almighty was good to me in giving me back my life. That took quite a bit—about eight or nine months till I became . . . probably the vitamins . . . the body had resisted everything. I'd been through a situation that's just so difficult to describe. When I was liberated, the friend, Rushek—he had the home in Orzokow . . . We were there. He had a nice home with three bedrooms. Girls came who had been liberated from the camps. They lived with us. We both didn't have any kind of attraction, nothing to even think about it. [The women] could take a shower with you and you wouldn't think about . . . normal life. Those experiences I went through . . . It's a terrible feeling. You don't feel that you exist anymore. You're just living, that's all.

Sara: Tell me about your children.

Marty: I was very busy while my kids grew up. I wanted to make a good living for them, which I did. They were real nice. They gave us back some pleasure when they went to colleges. Mary got all "A's." She went to [college in] Oklahoma and then to another college . . .

Sara: That's your oldest child?

Marty: Yes.

Sara: What's her name?

Marty: Mary. She's a beautiful girl. She [studied] journalism up there but she didn't stick to her profession. When she finished, she started working for the English . . .

Sara: Consulate?

Marty: Yes, the Consulate. She worked there for quite awhile. Now she is doing her own business. She is successful. The only thing what's wrong: I could not teach her how to hold onto a dollar, how to [save] a dollar for tomorrow, for rainy days. Money is no . . . It goes. If she goes on a plane, she's got to go first-class. [She has] that kind of life. If the sticker says it's too cheap, she's not going to buy it, but if she sees a big number . . . I could not correct this. That's her way of life. I let her live that life. I'm not going to inject my way of life anymore. She's not listening anyway.

Rhona [is] completely different. She was at University of Denver, a very good student.⁶⁷ I used to send them always at week's end money. Both of them had cars and private living. Mary, I sent her money every week. Rhona said, "Dad, don't send me any money." She worked after school. She was different. [She said,] "Dad, we know it costs you so much money, you paying for rent and cars. Don't be shorting a dollar or don't take away anything from yourself. You enjoy it." That's the way I started learning [about] my kids. I was busy [when they were younger] in the food business or whatever to provide them a good life—which I didn't have. But nobody was guilty . . . my parents were not guilty of my life. They tried to . . .

Up to this day, Rhona is one of the greatest help to me. She does all the insurance and all the bills. You reach an age where things get away from you . . . the liabilities and . . . maybe because I'm not working. She does most everything for me, or I'm probably getting lazy. She's a sweet girl.

⁶⁷ The University of Denver is a private American university located in Denver, Colorado.

My son [graduated from] the University of Florida.⁶⁸ He became a lawyer. He got a law degree. He's a very good boy. He works hard. He makes a good living but also likes fancy things. But it's all right as long as he doesn't ask me to throw away the money. I'm successful with the kids.

Sara: Have you shared your story with your children? Did you tell your children what you went through during the war?

Marty: Each and every one knows. I have written a manuscript. I'm going to leave this with my kids. My kids are aware of [my experiences during the Holocaust]. They went to Europe. They've seen Auschwitz-Birkenau. They read about all the atrocities, what happened. They are very [knowledgeable about] our survival—their mother's and mine. You never know how deep it's reached them—our stories—but we've done our part. We gave them a good life. None of my children can say that we deprived them of having everything that they needed. I have worked to give them always a clean, nice home and what have you. We're proud of that.

Sara: When you look at the world today, as a survivor, what thoughts come to your mind?

Marty: It comes to my mind that the world is still . . . it's under pressure and if we sit still on an atomic bomb or a very dangerous situation of our life . . . I read everything that goes on politically because of the future of our kids, how we are standing. I don't see any bright . . . what goes on politically in the world. We still aggravate . . . When you read about Iran, they want to wipe the Jews off the earth.⁶⁹ I wonder, "Why? What have I done, being a Jew, to go through all that kind of life?" Or the others don't want [Jews] to live in Israel. We're just a nationality. We're just a religion. What kind of life? We don't kill or rob. Why don't you leave us alone?

⁶⁸ The University of Florida is an American public research university in Gainesville, Florida.

⁶⁹ Former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad frequently denied the Holocaust. In a December 2005 speech, he accused Israel of fabricating the Holocaust for its own political agenda.

Yes, it's very depressing because I lived a depressing way of life. It does bother me terribly, but you've got to leave this behind and think of good things.

Sara: What do you want to say to future generations?

Marty: To the future generations—which I do lecture—as far as . . . I inject in them love. So many students do ask me always questions such as, “Do you hate Germany?” or, do I carry hate? I explain to them that hate is a terrible thing. It's not written who you hate. If you're going to hate, you'll hate everybody and everything, from my experiences.” [I tell them], “No, I don't.” You cannot blame the whole world or Nazi Germany for what they did to me and millions of others. I try to inject in them love instead of the bad atrocities. I [tell them] about my parents and how we grew up in a free world [and] until the Depression came, our life.⁷⁰ In my case, I tell them also the way I live and when I left my parents . . . up till this day, I don't remember if I ever hugged my mother and my father and said, “Mom, I love you,” or if I did the same to my father. I live with a guilty feeling because of that.

I inject in them love. I got so many letters in response. Mothers and others have written to me, which I enjoy reading those letters. I've got so many of them. One describes to me her life, the life of a child in Norcross, Gwinnet County [Georgia]. I had been in the school [there]. I'll just take one for instance about a young lady—probably about 17 or 18 years of age because she drives a car. Her mother described her life. She got home with the car, came into the kitchen, and didn't say 'hello' to her mother. The books she went and throwed in the living room. Her tennis shoes went flying. She went right to her room [and stayed] on the telephone until her dad

⁷⁰ World War I had a long-term impact on Europe's economy and financial stability. Postwar inflation spiraled into hyperinflation by the 1920's and European banks struggled to stay open. Exasperating the situation were skyrocketing unemployment rates. By 1929, with the crash of the American stock market, until about 1939, the entire Western world was engulfed in an economic downturn that had immediately visible political and social ramifications, including increased antisemitism and the rise of power in Germany of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party (or Nazi Party).

came home from work. That was going on. That was her life. One day she came home, gave mom a hug, and a kiss, and said, “Mom, I love you.” Her mother turned red on the face and said, “What happened? What did you do? You commit something?” She couldn’t get over it. [Her daughter] said, “No, mom, I didn’t do anything. I’ll tell you later.” She was kinda dripping tears. She said, “I hope Mr. Storch has still got my name written down.” When I got the letters [the students wrote after the lecture from] the school teacher—she’s not a teacher, she’s a historian—[the girl] said, “I hope Mr. Storch would remember me sitting in the front row, wearing a white sweater, and I was crying.” I didn’t remember. She wrote that letter. Then when her father came home, the same thing, the same day. She gave her father a hug. The father said, “What goes on in that house?” He thought the same thing that mom did: that she’s in trouble. She said, “No.”

When they went out for dinner, they sat down, and she explained my life, how I grew up, being her age, and what I’ve been through, and that I possess so much love—it’s a beautiful letter—and injecting into people love instead of hating anybody . . .

It’s a beautiful letter. She came by here and her mother, too. My wife met her. Very nice, white-collar [professional] people. They came in a beautiful Cadillac. You know how you [would] feel when you get those kinds of letters. I got so many of them, of which I’m proud. That was my life.

Ruth: Marty, you were in your home with your parents for really such a short amount of time in your life. What do you think your parents taught you that was helpful to you as you went on your own?

Marty: I was young at the time. My parents . . . remembering the times what we went through right when I was barely a teenager . . . the Depression and the hate had arisen at the wrong time of my life. They did realize that we were in trouble and that we were facing a very hard time—

especially the Poles with the Germans. Don't forget: I used to go to movies and so did others. At the previews, they showed [newsreels which showed] the strength of Nazi Germany: those airplanes, the tanks—My G-d!—and the army, and the thousands of Gestapo soldiers walking . . . [I thought,] “How can we compare with our Polish army of horses and wagons? How can we survive?” I felt the *Hitlerjugend* [German: Hitler youth]—the youngsters of Nazi Germany—could have probably won the European continent.⁷¹ It was very confusing. We were very discouraged. We could see the reality that would take place in Europe. My parents were too busy thinking about our future because they could see a terrible cloud. I've thought many times of it because [my father] injected in us a lot about America, his life . . . This I had from my father. Otherwise . . . [it] just hit in the wrong time of my life.

Ruth: With those experiences behind you, what did you try to teach your children as they were growing up?

Marty: At the time, I don't believe I had any thoughts about it. I think I thought our survival could be difficult. I'll tell you why. I was 11 years old when *Kristallnacht* took place on [November 9] 1938.⁷² I had seen that and heard about it. I was interested in what went on in the world politically. [I knew about] how many [Jews] got killed—[even those] who they had so many medals and recognition from Germany for fighting in the First World War—and how they

⁷¹ The Hitler Youth [German: *Hitlerjugend*] was a youth organization of the Nazi Party in Germany. It existed from 1922 to 1945. It was modeled after its adult counterpart, the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), and was paramilitary in organization. It was for males 14 to 18 years of age. There was another section for young boys called *Deutsches Jungvolk* and a girls' section called *Bund Deutscher Madel* [German: Association of German Girls]. The Hitler Youth were viewed as future “Aryan supermen” and were indoctrinated as such. The Hitler Youth put emphasis on physical and military training. The Hitler Youth emphasized sports as a means of preparing boys for service as soldiers in the armed forces or, later, in the SS. They had uniforms like the SA with similar ranks and insignia. It also served to indoctrinate students with the National Socialist worldview.

⁷² On November 8 and 9, 1938, the Nazis started a state-sponsored nationwide pogrom. Across the country (and in Austria) Jewish synagogues, homes and businesses were looted and burned, Jews were attacked on the streets and 91 were killed. Thousands of Jewish men were sent to concentration camps for several weeks and released only when they agreed to leave the country as soon as possible. The Jews were made to pay for the damages to their premises. The pogrom was called ‘*Kristallnacht*,’ which means ‘Night of Broken Glass,’ because of all the damage done to Jewish shop windows.

were mistreated.⁷³ They killed so many. This was a great disturbance for me. Then I watched the voyage of the *St. Louis*, how the whole world had refused to let in a few little Jews.⁷⁴ On the other side, how we been loved because we survived . . . You had such confusion. I said, “A few little Jews? They won’t even let us stay on the ocean! They said, ‘You better go back to Germany.’” Probably the majority is not aware of what has happened to the ones [on the *St. Louis*], the 700 and some. They came back [to Germany]. No one has survived.

Ruth: From the *St. Louis*?

Marty: Just a few that England let in, Holland, and Belgium. The rest didn’t survive. We kept up with it. It’s so much overloaded with bitter memories, not like the ordinary world thinking about. We just a different kind of breed.

Ruth: What was it like for you to become a father? Were you worried about having children or were you looking forward to it?

Marty: I was very confused. Being here, I was older. I don’t know which direction to go. The antisemitism was here when we came here. I had to hide my Jewish name as a businessman. Like they told me in Paterson, New Jersey, “You’re going back to the life you have lived in Europe before the war.” That was very confusing. On the other hand, you take the good things . . . that I could provide my kids with a good life. If this hadn’t been the case, I probably wouldn’t have

⁷³ Some of the first anti-Jewish measures taken in Germany included a series of laws in 1933, which expelled all “non-Aryans” (defined as anyone with a Jewish parent or grandparent) from civil service, barred Jews from practicing as lawyers or physicians, and restricted Jewish enrollment in German high schools. Initially, exceptions were made for German veterans of World War I and their children. These exceptions reinforced the way many veterans identified themselves—as Germans rather than as Jews—and created a false and short-lived sense of security. Eventually, all German Jews—regardless of their earlier service to their country—were disenfranchised and suffered under the increasing anti-Jewish laws and abuses.

⁷⁴ The *SS St. Louis* was a German ocean liner most notable for a single voyage which began on May 13, 1939, in which her captain, Gustav Schröder, tried to find homes for 936 German-Jewish refugees, after they were denied entry to Cuba (even though they had valid visas), the United States and Canada. The ship with its Jewish refugees was forced to return to Europe where the passengers were admitted to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The 288 passengers who were accepted by the United Kingdom survived. Of the 620 who were returned to continental Europe, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum estimates that the Germans murdered 254.

had a child. You got to think those kinds of things with a sober mind, not just jumping to any conclusion. That's my way of life.

In Europe I didn't have much education. I gave myself credit, when I was back in Germany. I went to school for four and a half years after the work that we had done. I came in here with an engineering degree, which [got me the job at] Lockheed. I sent a copy of [my degree or certification to] Lockheed Industries. That's the reason I worked there. I speak six languages, too. I would give myself some little credit for survival and doing as well as I've done.

I helped lots of people. I recognize with so many. I have letters from people with whom I've done business for 15 years, and how they miss me in the business, and to call on them if [I need] anything, or to get together for lunch, or whatever. It makes me feel so great because it's terrible to have enemies. I've been through it. I was somebody's enemy and I was not guilty of anything. That's life.

Probably the Europeans are the ones who went through the camps. You got to think so much more reality because we didn't have any supervision when we grew up. In going through what kind of experiences in life that we've seen until we got out, and then we got busy with ourselves to get away and to become human beings, and the stability . . . It was not easy, in the honest way. It was not easy. We had to think a different way than others do. It's a harder life than somebody who has an uncle or *Mishpocha* [Yiddish: extended family] to help out or whatever. We didn't rely on anybody. This makes you proud in life. My brother had followed the same way and he was very successful.

Ruth: How did you become a human being after you described yourself as an animal when you came out of the camps?

Marty: When I start thinking under normal circumstances the way we lived, it was not surprising. I wouldn't say [another person] was an animal. I was one, too. For instance, if there were the German Shepherds from the Gestapo, chewing bones, and Bob and I went, after we run off the dogs, we took the same bones and we chewed them. That's normal for human being life? What could we get out of the bones? The mind didn't work anymore. Or find a potato and not to wash it or cut it in half and break it and eat it—a rotten potato? Now I'm going to the kitchen or right after the liberation, I looked at my fork and knife, which were clean. I lived a filthy life, this might . . . It changes you in many ways. Yes, we were in . . . If anybody would probably have felt sad for a survivor, if he'd been as long as I'd been up there, and had my experiences, that we lived like animals, that's too bad. I admit, yes, no comments, nothing . . . just a piece of bread and that's all.

Many instances, I was probably more lucky than others. I used to have civilians for whom I worked, electrical and what have you. They always . . . They sometimes pointed at the garbage can and they said, "Marty, take this out." He already pointed and I know what he meant. Inside was already, wrapped up in an old newspaper, a piece of bread with *schpech* [Yiddish: ?] or whatever it was. When I ate the sandwich, I thought I would live forever. Some of the others left a little soup. They said, "Go ahead. There's a little soup. Wash it out or eat it, whatever." They motioned to me [in secret] because they were afraid to help anybody. You had good-hearted people, too. They were just going through something they had to follow up. I didn't hate those people. How can you hate?

Ruth: In your experiences with the people who were more kind to you, did that help you trust people after the war?

Marty: Yes. I had an instance in Gorlitz—I don't know if I'd call it an incident—with the [local population]. I mean, I learned so much from the Germans. If you tell them what it's all about, why you're here . . . They took me one day to a lady. [Her husband] must have been a major in the *Gestapo* or whatever because she had a big radio and there were no televisions at the time. There's a picture with a terrible-looking [man], like a killer, with a *Gestapo* hat and uniform and medals. I didn't want to ask her anything. I got down in the cellar, and the engineer already put down where I got to chisel the wall. It's not walls like here, where you go through the sheet rock. Over there, you've got to chisel the wall for four inches and then to put plaster on it. I knew that work and he marked it [where I should chisel]. In the morning, they brought all the material for me to work, and brought me up there in the morning [around] 8:00, 7:00, whenever.

The first day, the lady didn't react to anything. The second day, I asked her for a broom and a dustpan. I wanted to clean up. She said, "No, you don't. You leave it as it is." She had somebody to come to clean the house. Then she said, "*Du sprichst Deutsch?*" [German: You speak German?]. [She wanted to know,] how do I speak German. I said, "I lived near the German border and I have so many German friends." She gave herself a little time and another day went by. She said, "Let me ask you something, confidentially: In the morning, very early in the morning, about 7:00," she said, "I can hear thousands of youngsters." We wore the Holland shoes [wooden clogs] and they're so loud where you walk the concrete. I see so many of you walking to work in different directions, and what our papers say is those are the kids—not to feel sorry for us—that we're the kids that they took away from parents who killed Germans, and they were abusing and stealing from Germans." I said, "My father didn't hurt anybody. I didn't hurt anybody. No, that's not true." I took a heck of a chance to deny or to have a confrontation, but I

could see that she was for real and we didn't care anyway. That's the reason that they don't feel sorry for us.

The same day, she made me some food and told me, "Leave it. Don't worry. If you'll be here another week, it doesn't matter. They've got no choice, but you be here." She gave me cereals like grits—they call it 'Manna' in Germany—with water, with milk, with whatever. I enjoyed that. You wouldn't believe it. Then she gave me, she said, "You have a friend with you there?" That was in Gorlitz. I said, "Yeah." She gave me a piece of bread so it would fit in my jacket. We didn't have any pockets in the outfits, but it fit where you tore up. I took it and helped a friend of mine there.

She was so polite. I was working up there for four weeks and the work was up there for one week. She wanted to just talk, and talk, and all about it. Then she talked about her husband. He was then in the Russian forces [at the Russian front], up there wherever they had the confrontation. Very nice lady. When I was liberated, I went up there. There was nobody in the whole house. Nobody. Otherwise I would have tried to see that she getting some kind of help from the Russians or whatever. I would've helped her. These experiences that you have, you pay back whatever somebody does for you.

Ruth: Have we missed anything? What else do you want to . . .

Marty: As I said, I forgot from yesterday everything, but I can see like it would be yesterday the faces. I can see Josef Mengele's face just as I get up and look. I had it once in the newspaper, in *The Atlanta Journal*.⁷⁵ I saved it. When I put my hand over his face . . . He could have killed two or three guys, take out a cigar and light it up. When I went and lay down—I still had human

⁷⁵ *The Atlanta Journal* was a newspaper established in 1883. In 1982, it combined with the *Atlanta Constitution* to become *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC). Today, the AJC is the only major daily newspaper in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia.

being understanding. I was not an animal at the time—I said, “How does that man lie down at night? He sees the blood running and all . . .” I saw one picture once, a fellow with a little soup. He grabbed soup from the barrels where they delivered it to the blocks. He went and scooped a little soup. They shot him. The man was lying with an open wound in his stomach and he was still drinking the soup, shaking, and fell asleep. How can that kind of thing be erased from your mind? I wonder how in the heck does that man [Mengele] lie down at night and have not a guilty feeling or . . . I just couldn’t understand. I probably was too young, because I’d never seen those kinds of atrocities. It couldn’t get through me—like living in another world. I experienced so many things. No, you live . . . the whole life is packed with atrocities and memories, which they are not pleasant. Lately, it’s worse for me—terrible.

Ruth: Why has it been harder as you’ve gotten older?

Marty: The leisure time, not being busy. See, it’s a year now since I’ve been out of business. I have had a very tough time. That’s the reason Rhona bought that dog. I’ve had him for a while. He helps me a great deal. I had trouble with my hip . . . [He is] a wonderful dog. We make over there [a fence] to block the pool and everything so the dogs cannot run away. I believe I have it back to be the mind occupied, get up in the morning to let her out, give it food. This keeps me kind of busy. I pet him and he plays with me, so the mind is working in a different direction than sitting and reading the paper or television. You don’t see anything encouraging or anything that would cheer you up. Again, we live in another world, a world of hate and whatever. It’s not pleasant.

The only thing that’s pleasant is when you’ve got your family, and you’ve got the kids, and grandkids who love you and care about. I care about them too. I helped them to grow up. I

supplied them with cars. I didn't want to put the pressure on my kids. I wanted to give something back in life because of my survival. I'm grateful to the kids, too.

My grandson gets off of work [and calls]. I said, "Where are you now?" He said, "I'm in the car, Pop." I said, "Will, please, wait till you get home." I just hate even to talk to Rhona in the car on the telephone. If somebody calls me, [I say,] "I go to a parking lot and I call you back." I don't. You know how the mind works, but he always calls back. My granddaughter calls every night when she gets home from school. They're loving and whatever. She's got a great personality, lovable child. She lectures on the Holocaust, too. She was at Emory with me once and lectured. Such a sweet girl. That is my biggest pleasure in the world—that the grandkids are giving back something. I've done for them in life and my pleasure couldn't be greater. I've done something good.

I help many people in here, newcomers, to come to Atlanta and helped them to get their stability. Some of them didn't appreciate it; some of them did. I brought some people from one family . . . He worked in fur. He was allergic to fur and couldn't work. His wife called me. We lived in Germany and we knew each other in Bamberg [Germany].⁷⁶ She said, "Marty, could you find something for Hermann to do? Something in Atlanta?" I was in the business and I said, "Yeah, why don't you come on?" They had one child. They brought the kid. She's in [Atlanta], married to a lawyer. Anyway, they'd gotten here. I found them a business. My brother and I went out and found them a business—a grocery business. She was a very smart operator, his wife. He was a tailor also, so he learned. He had patterns how to cut pork chops and all that. He learned and we helped them a lot. He came here, didn't have much money. I signed at the bank. It was

⁷⁶ Bamberg is a historic city in central Germany, located on the Main River, approximately 55 kilometers (34 miles) north of Nuremberg. After World War II, Bamberg was one of the largest cities in the northernmost part of the American zone of Germany, close to the Soviet zone.

the National Bank of Georgia. They used to ask me over there . . . I had the two Lester brothers [who would say,] “There’s a matter. You could get hit one of these days.” I was writing the checks for them, my liabilities. They paid back. I wouldn’t say I have lost anything.

But that particular one, they walked in at a lucky moment in their lives. They started making so much money that they didn’t know what to do. Mr. Hermann bought the whole building, with four stores and apartments upstairs. I was delighted. I was so delighted. There went by probably three or four years. I knew that lady from Norcross, Georgia, Miss Betty Bryant. She was a real estate lady. She said, “Marty, you know what? I’m surprised.” I bought once a piece of land in Gwinnett County. [Miss Bryant said,] “Miss Hermann bought a large piece of land, about 40 some acres of land, and Lansky and Bromberg . . .” She named me [other investors]. She knew all the Jews here in Atlanta. [Miss Bryant said,] “I’m surprised because she knew that you can afford to buy. And I’m surprised that she didn’t call you because it was such a good deal.” Then they sold it and made a few million dollars on it.

You just look back . . . Then I put my signature on it, not much money—six, seven thousand dollars—but it was a lot of money then, at the end of the 1950’s and the 1960’s. They could have just touched bases. Then my wife also [said,] “Look at that! Miss Hermann, she’d gotten up, you know, the Almighty, and never got in touch with you?” I said, “Well, forget about it.” I didn’t want to have animosity against her. Whenever she called, “I want to speak to my “darling,” you know, because I was so good to her.” Then there was no more ‘darling.’ You experience so many things in life, but especially I want to give back. I didn’t look for anybody to give me anything or pay me back, but sometimes people don’t do the right thing. It gets on you . . . but I can’t complain.

Ruth: Thank you very much.

Marty: I hope you got . . . you can do something with it. This is, I hope it's the [unintelligible] way...

Sara: It's great.

Ruth: Thank you.

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