**Manny Chulew: Oral History Transcript**

Name: Mendel (Manny) Chulew (1924 – )

Birth Place: Rymanow, Poland

Arrived in Wisconsin: 1952, Kenosha

Project Name: Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust

**Biography:**
Mendel (Manny) Chulew was born on January 5, 1924, in Rymanow, Poland. Its pre-war population was more than 90 percent Jewish. Manny was the son of a small business owner. As war approached in September 1939, Manny’s family fled east into Russian-occupied Poland to escape persecution. Late in 1940, Soviet authorities shipped the Chulews’ to work camps in Siberia along with over 50,000 other Polish Jewish refugees.

When the Germans attacked on Russia in June 1941, the Siberian refugees were released. The Chulew family made their way to Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, where they lived until 1946. On their return trip to Poland, Manny’s mother died in Lublin. They continued their journey only to find that every Jew in their city had been killed. The family reached a displaced persons camp at Steyr, Austria, and spent nearly five years in various camps before immigrating to New York in December 1951.

Manny’s uncle convinced the family to join him in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in the summer of 1952. Within a month of their arrival, the family opened Chulew Furniture. In 1960 they acquired Barr Furniture, which they operated for the next several decades. Manny became a well-known member of the Kenosha business community and married Lenore Shain of Chicago in 1956. The couple had two daughters.

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

Tape 1, Side 1
- Family background and Jewish community in Rymanow, Poland, 1920s
- Religious life and education before World War II
- Jewish sports teams and Zionist organizations
- Pioneer Polish immigrants to Haifa, Israel
Tape 1, Side 2
- Jewish refugees from Germany flee to Rymanow, late 1930s
- Outbreak of war and German occupation of Rymanow
- Family flees to Lesko and Ustryyki Dolne (Poland) and Lvov (Ukraine)
- Deciding to return to Rymanow rather than become Soviet citizens

Tape 2, Side 1
- Chulew family is forced to board train to Siberia instead of returning home
- Living conditions, religious life in Siberian labor camps
- Released in summer of 1941, Chulew family goes to Tashkent
- Flees train, ends up in Dzambul (Kazakhstan)

Tape 2, Side 2
- Polish Jewish refugees number 50,000 in Dzambul, 1941–1946
- Manny returns to Europe in the spring of 1946, learns the fate of Jews
- Deciding to leave Europe, living at displaced persons camp in Steyr (Austria)
- Social and religious life in various displaced persons camps

Tape 3, Side 1
- Employment with Jewish Distribution Committee helping refugees emigrate
- Sponsored by uncle in the U.S., Manny arrives in New York Dec 1, 1951
- Uncle helps Manny reach Kenosha, Wisconsin, in July 1952
- First years in Kenosha, marriage, and children

Tape 3, Side 2
- Chulews family life and parenting
- Jewish community in Kenosha in the 1950s and 1960s
- Manny’s reaction to American Nazi demonstrations
- His thoughts on American culture and politics

Tape 4, Side 1
- Anti-Semitism in the U.S.
- Manny’s visits to Israel and Poland
- Value of survivors speaking out
- Manny hopes for peace in Israel

About the Interview Process:
The interview was conducted by archivist Sara Leuchter during two sessions at the Chulew home in Kenosha on October 8 and 9, 1980. The first session lasted two hours. The second session lasted one hour and five minutes.

During each session, Manny was quite apprehensive about speaking into the microphone. He was reluctant to provide any details or make any comments that he felt might jeopardize his reputation in Kenosha’s Jewish community. His interview, therefore, is shorter than many others conducted by the project. It proceeds largely in chronological order.
Transcript

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

Key

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TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SL: What I would like to ask you about is some information on your family background. I'd like to know your date of birth, your place of birth, the names of your parents, and if you can remember, when they were born and where they were born. Start out with you.

MC: Well, I was born January 5th, 1924 in Rymanow, which is in Galicia, Poland, and I have two brothers, one older, Burof, and one younger, Ezra. My father's name was Jacob, my mother's name was Malcha.

SL: Do you know her maiden name?

MC: Weinstein.

SL: And a, do you remember the year at least when either one of your parents were born?

MC: Yes, my mother was born in 1897, no, in 1894. My father was born in 1897.

SL: And, do you know where they were born?

MC: In Rymanow.

SL: Was the family in Rymanow for quite a long period of time?

MC: Yes, as far, as long as I remember. I don’t know how far back though.

SL: Do you have any idea, anything about your grandparents? Do you remember their names?

MC: I remember my mother's father. His name was Yesal Weinstein.

SL: What do you remember about him?
MC: Well, we lived in the same house. It was kind of a duplex, and we were very close, we saw each other every day almost, and his business was taking people to the railroad station and from the railroad station by horse and carriage.

SL: So he had, did you ever ride in that?

MC: Yes.

SL: Would you go with him sometimes to the train station?

MC: Yes.

SL: Do you recall anything else about your other grandparents, at least their names?

MC: No.

SL: On your father’s side, you don’t know what their names were?

MC: No.

SL: How old were you when your grandfather died?

MC: My grandfather was still alive when we left Poland.

SL: Oh He was?

MC: Yes, and he stayed behind in Rymanow. And he was killed by the Nazis during the war. We don’t know exactly how or when, but it was between 1941 and 1945 sometime. He was the only one who stayed behind.

SL: What was your father’s occupation?

MC: My father had the kerosene, oil, and gasoline business, which was mostly wholesale and some retail.

SL: Did he operate outside of Rymanow?

MC: We would supply kerosene to the surrounding villages, the farmers. What do you… The stores would buy from us.

SL: Did you have a big delivery wagon of some sort?

MC: No, they would pick it up.

SL: They came to you?
MC: They came to us for it.

SL: How was it stored?

MC: In barrels.

SL: Were they, how big, do you recall how big they were?

MC: About 200 liters in a barrel.

SL: So your father’s business then, was it on a large property?

MC: No, it was a small warehouse, and we had a gasoline station, and the only one in town. And we would sell gasoline retail to cars that would drive by.

SL: Were there very many?

MC: Well, not too many in town, but we lived on a main highway so called, and people that would go from one city to the other had to go through Rymanow, and they would stop and get some gas.

SL: Can you remember at all a price at one time that you sold it for?

MC: Yeah, it was about 62 groszy, which was half a złoty, and at the time I think it was about five złoty to the dollar.

SL: For a liter?

MC: For a liter, yeah.

SL: Did your family have an automobile?

MC: No. There was one automobile in town that was privately owned, there were some barons that lived in the area and they had some automobiles, then they had some buses that would bring people from the railroad stations to a resort area there, where we lived three kilometers from our home town was a Rymanów-Zdrój which was a resort area. And they were very famous barons living there, the name was Potoski, they were very famous throughout Poland, and they owned the entire resort.

SL: Did your mother have any kind of occupation other than in the house?

MC: My mother was very active in the business, helping my father.

SL: Was it viewed as unusual for her to be in the business world?
MC: No, there were many women helping their husbands in the business.
SL: And, did you work there as a child?
MC: Yes, I did.
SL: Now you told me you had two brothers, one older and one younger.
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: Could you tell me again their names and if you recall the years that they were born?
MC: Buroff(?) was born in 1922 and Ezra was born in 1928.
SL: Do you have any special recollections of doing things together when you were young?
MC: Not really, we were all, we all had different friends, and we all did different things, not too much together. We all had different interests.
SL: What was your interest?
MC: I was mainly interested in helping my parents in the business. I was also interested in Hebrew school, and also active in the Jewish organizations, the Zionist organization.
SL: I am going to go back to that, especially the Jewish life that you had in Rymanow, I would like to just ask you some more questions about your family.
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: Did you have any cousins in the area, was it a large family that lived in Rymanow?
MC: Yes, we had my father’s brother and his family, and they had six children who are now living in Israel.
SL: They survived the war?
MC: They survived, yes. They were also in Russia and then they came back to Germany and from Germany they went to Israel, and they live right now in Rehovot in Israel.
SL: And were there any cousins on your mother’s side?
MC: No.
SL: What about in outlying communities?
MC: No.
SL: So it was just really the two families.

MC: Well we also, my mother also had a sister that lived in another city, which was maybe an hour from, by train, from Rymanow.

SL: What was her name, do you recall?

MC: I forgot her name. Leah, Leah.

SL: Was she married?

MC: Yes.

SL: So you had cousins then.

MC: The cousin is living now in New York. One cousin.

SL: Did you have any family or close friends in the United States before the war?

MC: Yes, my mother had a brother living, Heinie Weinstein in New York City, and my father had two brothers, one in Mamaroneck, New York, and one in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

SL: What was the name of your uncle in Kenosha?

MC: Charlie Heim, and the one in New York was Ian, they call him Herr Eight Chulew? He kept his name?

MC: Chulew, yes.

SL: What was he doing, how did he get to Kenosha?

MC: I don’t really know, I think he came here because there was another family from Rymanow living in Kenosha. And he remained here.

SL: Did you have a lot of contact with them before the war or also with the cousin in New York?

MC: Not too much, as I remember.

SL: Could you describe to me the way your house, your home looked in Rymanow?

MC: It was a log house and large enough for two families. We lived on one side and my grandfather and his son lived on the other side. There was also a stable for the horses attached to the house and a place for the carriages to be stored and the roof was a shingle roof—wood shingles.
SL: Was it one-story?
MC: One-story.

SL: Did you and your brothers share a room?
MC: Yes.

SL: Was your father’s business located close to the house?
MC: Yes, it was. Everything was walking distance.

SL: And how big a community was Rymanow? What did it look like?
MC: The Jewish community was basically on a hill, it was located, and it was like five blocks square where most of the Jewish people lived. The buildings were two-story buildings. Downstairs would be stores and they would live upstairs on the second floor.

SL: Was this located then outside of the center part of the city?
MC: No, right in the center.

SL: The Jewish area?
MC: Yes, it was in the center.

SL: Could you offhand recall how many Jewish families lived in Rymanow?
MC: I would say between 1,500 and 2,000, probably.

SL: And out of a population of how many?
MC: This was probably the majority, maybe 90 percent of the population was Jewish. There were very few non-Jews living in this particular area, but they lived in the surrounding areas there were non-Jewish people.

SL: What did the town itself look like?
MC: There was a marketplace, and the stores I mentioned, about five blocks square. That was the whole town.

SL: What was the surrounding countryside like?
MC: The countryside was, in one direction it was hilly, wooded area, and then it was flat and a lot of farms.
SL: Would you spend any time out in the country? Did you ever go hiking or biking, anything like that?

MC: Yes, we did go to—we had two resorts. One was Rymanów-Zdrój and one was Iwonicz. We would walk there on Saturday afternoons. One was like three kilometers, the other one was about seven kilometers—walking distance—and we did it quite often.

SL: What type of activity would you do there?

MC: Just go there and maybe get together in the woods with other young boys and girls and we would sing and dance, make fire or have some lectures.

SL: This was a strictly Jewish thing to do with your friends. You did this with other Jewish kids?

MC: Yes.

SL: Did you move to any other cities before the outbreak of the war?

MC: No.

SL: I want to ask you a couple questions about your pre-war religious life. Obviously you lived in a community in which there was a great number of Jewish kids and there was Zionist activities as you said before. Was synagogue attendance pretty regular?

MC: I would say 90 percent attended the synagogues.

SL: How often would you go?

MC: Every Friday night, every Saturday, and every holiday without exception. There were four synagogues and they would usually be filled to capacity on Saturdays and holidays.

SL: Were they all Orthodox?

MC: There was nothing else but Orthodox.

SL: Can you remember what your synagogue looked like?

MC: Well, we had four synagogues and each one was a little bit different.

SL: Would you have membership in any one synagogue or you could go to, it didn’t matter which in particular?
MC: We belonged to one, but we would also visit the others. We had an uncle in one and another uncle in another one, and we would go and visit with them, and they were all joining each other, I mean next to each other, three in one area.

SL: What did they look like, do you remember?

MC: Well, one was what they called the Rabbi’s [Yiddish?] and that was a large building with the sanctuary for men and then for women and the rabbi lived upstairs, and they also had horses and carriages and they would perform weddings in the middle of town. That was a large synagogue. Then there was one in between, a shul,¹ that shul was very famous in Rymanow, and it was decorated several years before the war by a very famous artist from Warsaw and it was very beautifully done.

SL: Do you remember the name of the artist?

MC: No. It was done in 1934, ‘35. A man who lived in Rymanow and his sons lived in New York and they would send money to the parents, and a lot of money was donated by this man who was a member of that shul.

SL: Did you have a lot of traditions in the home, Jewish traditions?

MC: We would celebrate every Friday night. We would be all together as a family for Friday night dinner, which was a special meal. Also Saturday at noon after services— cholemt² would be part of it. And we’d celebrate every holiday with all the trimmings— sukkahs.³

SL: Did you build a sukkah?

MC: Yes.

SL: I assume then that you kept kosher and your mother lit candles and?

MC: Yes. I would say everybody kept kosher, because there were several Jewish butchers, butcher shops, where you could purchase meat every day, fresh.

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¹Yiddish for synagogue.
²A stew traditionally served on the Sabbath.
³Open-air booths built to celebrate the Jewish fall harvest holiday, Sukkot.
SL: Did you attend the cheder? 

MC: Yes, I started the cheder at a very early age and attended— I don't know for how many years.

SL: Where was it held? Was it in a special building?

MC: Usually it was at the rabbi's house, the teacher's house, in his apartment.

SL: Was it after school?

MC: Well, cheder starts before school, maybe when you're three or four years old you start cheder.

SL: Were the classes held in the afternoons after school or weekends? When would you attend?

MC: Well, before you'd start public school they would be in the morning. But then we also had Hebrew school, which was in the evening after public school.

SL: And how did they differ?

MC: The difference is Hebrew you learn the language, to speak, and cheder is you learn the alef-bet and the humash and the Talmud.

SL: Were there any girls allowed in the cheder?

MC: No, there were boys only.

SL: What about in the Hebrew school, any girls?

MC: I don't recall any girls there, no.

SL: Were there any members of your family who were nonreligious?

MC: No. They were all religious.

SL: Did you wear a traditional Orthodox Jewish garb?

MC: One uncle did; the rest of us wore regular clothing.

SL: Did you have the side curls?

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4A one-room school, usually attended between ages three and thirteen, in which students were taught Jewish texts and language.

5Hebrew alphabet.

6A book that contains the five books of the Torah, divided into weekly portions, with readings from the prophets (haftorahs).

7The authoritative body of Jewish tradition.
MC: No.

SL: So that you weren’t Hasidic in the way you looked?

MC: No, we looked as modern as today.

SL: Still, could the Polish kids pick you out, did they know who was Jewish and who wasn’t?

MC: At school they knew who was Jewish and who wasn’t, and sometimes they would pick on Jewish boys.

SL: I wanted to ask you about the education that you had before the war. First of all, how long did you attend school, up to what age?

MC: I had seven years of public school until I was thirteen years.

SL: Was that a graduation of some sort? Did you attend for as long as you had to?

MC: Yes, I finished public school and then I went to evening school, which was commercial school. A handlen schulen⁸.

SL: What did you study?

MC: Business.

SL: Business administration, that type of thing?

MC: Yes, in the evening.

SL: At the age of thirteen you were going to that kind of school?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: You attended a public school, Polish public school?

MC: Yes.

SL: What types of things did you learn? What was the curriculum?

MC: We learned everything, just like here all the way up to high school. In addition to that, we had Jewish religion taught in public schools.

SL: How is that possible that the Polish school would teach Jewish religion?

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⁸Probably a trade school, in Yiddish.
MC: The non-Jews would have a priest teaching them their religion, and the Jewish kids had the Jewish teacher and it was taught in Polish language. It was mostly Jewish history, and that was our religion hour.

SL: So I guess that was the way then that the Poles would know who were the Jewish kids, because they were the ones who weren't in the classes?

MC: Right. They would know when we came into school. Here was a prayer and the Jewish boys and girls wouldn't pray.

SL: Why not?

MC: Because it was a religious Catholic prayer.

SL: Were you allowed to abstain from the prayers?

MC: Yes.

SL: Tell me about the friends that you had in school, were they Jewish, non-Jewish, a mixture?

MC: I would say, only Jewish friends.

SL: What types of things would you do with them, what memories do you have of doing things with your friends?

MC: Well, we would belong to the same organizations and we would go to the same Hebrew schools after school and we would play soccer or ping pong.

SL: As far as the cultural activities went, were sports and important part of your lifestyle?

MC: Yes, it was very important. Soccer was very popular, and we had Jewish teams, and ping pong was also very popular as a ball games.

SL: And now you were telling me a little bit about that before. That's the first time I've come across anyone talking about ping pong. Was it something that a lot of people participated in?

MC: Yes. Most boys and girls enjoyed playing it.

SL: And you said that you had one in the clubhouse or something that you had?

MC: We had the Jewish Zionist organizations, who had a ping pong table.
Were there many Jewish organizations at the time?

There were at least four or five Zionist organizations.

Did you have membership in any one, specific one?

I had membership in several of them. Not at the same time. We would go where, we would belong where the activities were more interesting.

Do you recall off-hand the names of any of those organizations?

Well, one was the Betar, which was in the Menachem Begin Party, one was the Hashamir Hatzir, which was a Leftist organization, and one was Bnei Akiva which was a religious organization.

Were your parents active in Zionist or Jewish political organizations?

Not too much, not that I can recall.

Did they at any time discourage you from your participation?

No, no they didn’t.

Do you recall any pioneers from Rymanow who went to Israel in the ‘30’s?

I know many. One of them was my uncle, my mother’s brother who left in the ‘30’s. He lives in Haifa.

Did they come back during your childhood to try to drum up some support to go to Israel? To Palestine?

No, he never returned to Poland, but we used to receive letters from him, and then the war broke out so we went, wound up in Russia.

Were there any members, maybe people that you didn’t know, but members of the organizations who had been in Palestine and came to Rymanow to try to get people interested in going there?

There were many people interested, and there was always a drive to get these members, to go on a sharah(?) and to train them in life, and so on.

Did you have any interest at that point of going to Israel?

I had an interest but I was too young to leave. Usually you would leave at age eighteen, nineteen where you were able to do some heavy work there. Like construction.
SL: Were they looking for people to assist in building kibbutzim?  

MC: You have to have special training to go to Israel to be able to take the climate and the physical heavy work.  

SL: So, would you characterize your life in Rymanow, when you were a child, as being, as revolving around a Jewish cultural lifestyle?  

MC: Well, we were very involved in school and after school in the Jewish organizations, and then holidays, and the synagogue. It was a very active Jewish life.  

SL: I am going to interrupt you so I can turn the tape over.  

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

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9Plural of kibbutz, a community settlement, usually agricultural, organized under collectivist principles.
SL: You mentioned to me before that you figured that there may have been about 90 percent of the population in town of Jews. What was the contact you had with the non-Jewish population of Rymanow?

MC: First of all, in school there were non-Jewish children, and also from the surrounding areas. They would come to town to buy clothing and food and many stores from the villages would also come and buy from the wholesalers, their food supplies and take it back to the villages. They would also bring fruits, vegetables, butter, cheese, they would bring to the market. Chickens. So every Monday there would be a market place where they would bring from the farms, they would bring things to sell to the people, and in turn they would buy clothing or food in town.

SL: So the market was then, there was an interaction between Jew and non-Jew in the market?

MC: Yes.

SL: Were any of your father’s customers non-Jewish?

MC: Many non-Jewish customers from the surrounding villages.

SL: Did your father ever feel that they were anti-Semitic towards him?

MC: Some and some were friendly.

SL: Do you recall any specific instances of anti-Semitism as you were growing up there?

MC: Nothing in particular really.

SL: Did you ever hear about pogroms or riots that had happened in Rymanow before you were born? Or anything that would lead you to believe that the people were capable of violence towards Jews?

MC: Not in Rymanow, but I have heard that it happened in Russia and other parts of Poland, but before the war started I was aware of the anti-Semitic newspapers. We also received many German refugees who were forced to cross Jewish German refugees, who were forced out of Germany in 1937, ‘38. And the Jewish community in Rymanow received many.
SL: Did you identify yourself as being a Pole or a Polish Jew, or a Jew? How did you see yourself in this community?

MC: Well, we knew we were Jewish, but we also knew, we were also loyal to the Polish country, like on holiday times, we would have a special prayer for the president of Poland, which was very customary to do.

SL: Did you speak Yiddish in the home?

MC: Yes, we spoke Yiddish in the home.

SL: What about with your Jewish friends?

MC: Yiddish, mostly.

SL: And I assume then that your schooling was in Polish?

MC: Yes.

SL: Did you speak any other languages?

MC: Hebrew.

SL: Any Russian or German were you familiar with?

MC: No, not before the war.

SL: Now Rymanow at one time had been under the jurisdiction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

MC: Yes.

SL: Was there any kind of German cultural influence in town?

MC: No, not that I know of.

SL: The more well-to-do people were more upper class Poles than, reflecting a Polish lifestyle rather than a German one?

MC: Well, the more educated, they tried to speak more of the Polish language at home, rather than Jewish.

SL: Was there a hierarchy in the Jewish community? Were there Jewish professionals and Jewish upper-class people, or were you all more or less one, social and economic level?
MC: No, I would say there were business people which were considered in a class of itself, then the tradesmen, they would associate among themselves, and then the professional, lawyers and doctors, would be together. They would also friends among themselves.

SL: Now, as the storm clouds were growing in Europe after Hitler took over in '33, what kind of news were you receiving in and of what actually was happening in Germany?

MC: We were aware of what was going on in Germany, but then in 1933, I was only nine years old, and I didn’t know what I absorbed of it. But I knew more as I grew older.

SL: How would you find out about what was going on?

MC: We had newspapers, Polish and Jewish newspapers, and we would also listen to the radio.

SL: Would you hear Hitler’s speeches broadcast? Could you pick that up from calling on any German?

MC: Yes. But I don’t recall identifying too much with it.

SL: What kind of a feeling was there about what was happening in Germany? Did you talk about being threatened by that at all by that or how did you react to the Hitler situation in Germany?

MC: I think people in Poland felt pretty safe. Nobody expected the Germans to take Poland though.

SL: What about Hitler’s threats against the Jews? First of all, were you aware of any threats of his?

MC: Well, like I said before, when they evicted many Polish Jews from Germany, Polish communities, the Jewish communities in Poland received many refugees before the war.

SL: Were they telling you first-hand what they had experienced as far as anti-Semitism?

MC: Not really. All they...I was aware of that they were brought to the border and they just had to leave the country at the time.

SL: Do you recall your own reaction to feeling threatened as a Jew because of Hitler?

MC: Well, there was a lot of propaganda in Poland itself and the anti-Semitic newspapers became very vocal before the war, and we felt threatened—just maybe a year or two before the war.

SL: Did you feel a growing hostility and anti-Semitic feeling from the Poles, or was the threat mainly from the Germans, the chance of German occupation?
MC: No, mostly the Poles we were afraid of because they lived in the community and they were enticed by these anti-Jewish newspapers.

SL: What types of things would happen that began to make you fearful that the Poles were becoming more anti-Semitic?

MC: The articles in the newspapers were very vocal against Jewish ritual things and there were many articles that were anti-Jewish.

SL: Did your father lose any customers, for example, or was there more hostility on a personal level?

MC: Our business it was the only business in town of that kind and if they needed gasoline they almost had to purchase it from us.

SL: So, right around the time the war broke out then, in September of 1939, were you still going to technical school in the evenings, business school in the evenings?

MC: Yes.

SL: And what did you do during the day? What type of work were you doing?

MC: Helping my father in the business. But going back to the other question, I remember now when one of the barons tried to buy gasoline directly from the manufacturer from the manufacturer, from the refinery, and he was turned down. He was told that they have a representative in Rymanow and he would have to deal through the representative. He tried to avoid buying it from a Jewish merchant.

SL: What do you remember about the actual outbreak of the war, that day, September 1st, 1939?

MC: I remember the bombings. I heard that just about every major city and major airport were bombed the same day and only a week later the Germans occupied our hometown.

SL: So you were aware then really even on that first day that the invasion had begun?

MC: Yes.

SL: Even though they didn’t get to Rymanow until a week later?

MC: We were hoping that the Polish army could hold off much longer than they did. We did not think that it would be finished in a short week or two.
SL: What was that initial period like when the Nazis first came into Rymanow? What do you remember about what happened then?

MC: I remember the date. We were all in basements awaiting the German army and there were some Polish soldiers in the hills resisting the German army, and when they finally entered the city they went house to house and asked everybody to gather in the market square and especially the Jews. And they felt that the Jews, that the civilian population, resisted the German army and we were told that they were going to shoot every other person or every fifth person, we were not quite sure. Then they discovered a few Polish soldiers in the mountains and they let us go back home.

SL: How soon after that did the Nazis start picking out Jews for work, for labor or that type of thing?

MC: Oh, just about a day or two after they took the city. They lined up some Jewish people to help clean up the courthouse, to fix, to repair a bridge that was mined by the Poles when they left and similar other jobs.

SL: And how were they picking Jews, just right off the street?

MC: Yes, they were just picking them off the street.

SL: Did you have to do any of that labor?

MC: Yes, I did.

SL: What did you do?

MC: I was cleaning the courthouse and my brother was repairing the bridge.

SL: Were they very violent toward you even in the first couple days?

MC: No, they were friendly, and they were not violent at all.

SL: Did you have any type of feeling of anxiety?

MC: At first, in the beginning they were very friendly. As a matter of fact, I was asked to sell out some cigarettes and tobacco, which was owned by a neighbor of ours who was a Pole, and being Jewish I was able to communicate with the German soldiers. And they were polite and they paid for everything that they purchased and we had no reason to be afraid. Except when it was all sold out, they wanted
more, and they threatened our lives if we didn’t come up with—they wanted to be sure that we didn’t hide any, didn’t hold back any tobacco from them.

SL: You made a very interesting statement, you said being Jewish they knew were you could communicate with the Germans. Is that because of the Yiddish that you spoke the similarity between Yiddish and German?

MC: Yes, but that Pole was a former veteran, Polish veteran, and he hated the Germans and he could not communicate with them and he asked me to do it for him. He was our next-door neighbor.

SL: Was your house occupied by the Germans at any time while you were still there?

MC: No, but they did come to look for gasoline and oil and we happened to have a little bit left for ourselves and they took it away.

SL: Did they make any mass arrests of leading citizens in town, Jewish or non-Jewish?

MC: No.

SL: How soon after that did you move to Lesko?

MC: About three weeks after we lived with the Germans they announced one day that every Jew will have to leave or be killed, and we took them seriously, and we left for a nearby village and stayed overnight, and then one of the families who find out what happened the next day, and everything remained quiet. They did not go through with their threat. But we still decided to keep on going and we left with a horse and buggy and several uncles with our belongings, and we left the other side of the River San, which became the Russian side of Poland.

SL: Okay, I have a couple questions about that move. Number one, you mentioned earlier, your grandfather did not go with you.

MC: No.

SL: Why could you not convince him to go?
MC: Because he was up in years and he just didn’t think that they would do anything to him. Many people believed that they would take maybe younger men and leave the women and older men and children alone.

SL: What types of goods were you able to take with you? What belongings did you take?

MC: We couldn’t take very much because we only had one carriage and there were at least four families. So we took the most necessary things, like clothing, and left everything behind or took it to the neighbors, to the non-Jewish neighbors with the hope that we would return in a few weeks.

SL: So there was the feeling then that you were going to come back?

MC: Yes. We were sure that once the war was over that we would return home.

SL: And again, was the end of the war something that you thought was in the foreseeable future?

MC: We hoped so.

SL: So then you made the journey with your parents, your two brothers, the family cousins with the six children?

MC: Yes.

SL: And you said four families. Were a couple friends then?

MC: There was another uncle, my mother’s sister, and another uncle, my mother’s brother.

SL: And the journey was then made on foot?

MC: On foot.

SL: With the carriage being loaded with the belongings?

MC: Yes.

SL: Were you able to cross into the Russian side with little resistance from them?

MC: Some people were luckier than others, but they did ask questions and some were searched, but we were lucky and they let us to through the border without that.

SL: So you knew at that time that that was the border? You knew the Russians were on the other side of the river?
MC: At the time the Russians were not there yet. They were coming in like the following day or two.

SL: But you knew that would be the Russians?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: And how close were you to the River San?

MC: Maybe 20 kilometers from Rymanow.

SL: So it was really a day's journey, a day's journey?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: You settled, you told me you settled then in this border town of Lesko.

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: How long did you remain there?

MC: A couple of months that I remember.

SL: Do you recall what you were doing there, what type of life you had there for those couple of months?

MC: There was nothing to do, we just had to wait and be registered to the authorities and see what gonna happen.

SL: Was there a steady stream of Jews crossing the river?

MC: Yes.

SL: Did many other people from Rymanow join you?

MC: Uh huh.

SL: Did they give you and indication of what was happening to the Jews in Rymanow?

MC: Well, most had left that same day, and the others stayed behind.

SL: Did any who had stayed behind and stayed for a month or two months ever make it across the river to let you know what was happening there in the following months?

MC: Most of them remained in Rymanow because they did not go through with the threat and they felt they were safe at the time.

SL: Why did you leave Lesko? What precipitated that?
MC: Because it was a border town and the Russians did not allow us to stay there. So we had to go to the next town which was Ustrzyki Dolne.

SL: How long a journey was that?

MC: Maybe an hour or two.

SL: Again, did you go through the same thing, packing your belongings in the carriage?

MC: Uh huh.

SL: You still had the carriage?

MC: Uh huh.

SL: How were you able to survive in Lesko even for those few months? Did you have enough money to buy food?

MC: I don’t really recall how, if they supported us or we must have had some things with us.

SL: Did all the Jews that were living in Lesko go with you to Ustrzyki Dolne?

MC: No, only the refugees that came from the other side were forced to leave, but the people that originally lived in that town were allowed to stay.

SL: How did the non-Jewish population receive you once you entered the town?

MC: They were very friendly and they did what they could for the people that came across.

SL: Do you have any idea what the total number of Jewish refugees were that eventually lived with you in Ustrzyki Dolne?

MC: All of them didn’t stay in Ustrzyki Dolne. They were all spread throughout the whole area. It could have been a quarter of million people.

SL: How long did you remain there?

MC: For almost a year.

SL: Do you recall what was going on during that period of time as far as what you were doing on a day to day basis or how you were managing to survive?
MC: It was very difficult to get jobs. Some people were able to get some jobs, and others just had to make it on a day-to-day basis.

SL: Did your father get a job?

MC: No.

SL: What, were you doing any kind of physical labor?

MC: Not physical labor, but I, we would buy some meat and other produce from farmers and take it to another city and sell it and buy clothing there and cigarettes and tobacco and bring it back and we sell it to the farmers, and this is how we made a living.

SL: Ran a little bit of a business. So the Russians gave you enough freedom to go from village to village.

MC: But it was against the law, yeah, but being that I was fifteen years of age and I had a school identification card and I would go to the other city which was Lebouf (?) a big city telling the Russians that I was going to school there and I was able to get by with that.

SL: Where were you living? Did you have some sort of house or apartments?

MC: We lived in an attic apartment in a house. The Jewish people rented it to us.

SL: Now “we” meaning, again was this your cousin’s involved in this too.

MC: No, just our family, and the cousins lived in another place.

SL: Was there any semblance of a Jewish community there of refugees?

Did you remain friendly, did you have any friendships with refugees?

MC: Yes, we did. We also had relatives, our cousins. My aunt had a brother living there before the war in that town.

SL: Was there a religious life that went on during all this?

MC: Yes.

SL: And, what kind of news were you receiving about what was happening on the Polish side?

MC: Most of the news was that everything was quiet and they didn’t hurt anybody and many were invited to come back. And our grandfather asked us to come back.
So you were corresponding then with them?

We were receiving some messages and I am not sure how, but we were aware of what was going on at the time.

Why did you decide not to go back?

We decided to go back, we registered to go back because the Russians registered all the Jewish people that came across from the Germans and they asked if they wanted to become Russian citizens or if they wanted to go back. And the majority wanted to go back.

Because it seemed that nothing had happened?

That the danger was over.

Were the Russians treating you well when you were there?

They were treating us the same as their own citizens.

Was there a lot of propaganda directed toward you to make you feel that becoming a Russian citizen would be to your advantage?

Yes.

What would they do in that way?

Well, the reason we refused to become citizens they shipped us out to Siberia because they felt that they couldn't trust us, that we didn't want to become citizens.

Well, as far as the propaganda that they were spreading, how was this accomplished, you know? How were they trying to get you to believe that being a Russian citizen would be good for you?

Well, most people just did not believe the propaganda and they wanted to go back where they came from because they didn't want to part with their hometown. They wanted to go back home.

Did the Russians promise you anything special if you became a Russian citizen?

No, not that I know of.

But was the propaganda carried out through newspapers or radio broadcasts or was it more subtle?
MC: The only propaganda that I know maybe it would be easier to get a job for being a Russian citizen, probably.

SL: Were they offering that same type of choice to the non-Jewish Poles who were living there? Offering them Russian citizenship?

MC: The Poles did not leave at that time, from the German side.

SL: What about the Poles who were living in the occupied territory that was under the Russians?

MC: They were treated the same as the Jews living in that territory.

SL: But were they given the option to choose Soviet citizenship if they wanted?

MC: They automatically became Soviet citizens.

SL: Oh, so it really only had to do with those people who had come over from the other side?

MC: Um hmm.

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

MC: Okay.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2
SL: Well, you mentioned before that you were asked by the Russians to choose either Russian citizenship or to return to Poland. Was that the option you were given?

MC: Um hmm.

SL: And your family chose to go back. Well, what was the outcome of that then?

MC: Well, we were asked to fill out applications and the questions asked were if we want to become citizens or go back to where we came from, and the majority decided to go back and the answer was, several weeks later they came with a big truck in front of our house and gave us half an hour to pack up, load up our belongings, and they took us to the train station and there was a train waiting with boxcars and we were loaded into the cars and shipped out deep into Russia.

SL: Did they at any time indicate that you were going into Russia or did you feel that you were going back to Poland?

MC: Well, we knew the direction we were going was to Russia.

SL: Once you got on the train?

MC: Once we were on the train.

SL: But before that you then thought they were shipping you back to Poland?

MC: Well, we were pretty sure, no, that we were going to Russia.

SL: Why did you think that?

MC: We just had that feeling.

SL: And why do you think they did ship you that way? Why do you think that they either didn’t send you back or let you stay there?

MC: Well, I don’t know if they had really the intentions of sending us ever back. They just wanted to find out how we felt about becoming Russian citizens and they felt because we refused to become Russian citizens, that if you are not for Russia you are against Russia, and we were considered undesirables, and that’s why they shipped us to Siberia.
SL: When did this happen? Do you recall when this was?
MC: It was in the fall of 1940.
SL: So it was a long time before the Germans invaded Russia? The Russians and the Germans were allies at that time.
MC: Yes.
SL: Did you know anyone who was living with you in Ustrzyki Dolne who accepted Soviet citizenship?
MC: No, I didn’t, no.
SL: Do you have any estimations of how many people were on that train with you?
MC: It was a long train with about fifty to a boxcar, maybe thirty boxcars.
SL: So then it was basically the people that you knew who were living in that town, Jews who were living in that town?
MC: Yes. Um hmm
SL: Could you describe that trip?
MC: Well, the trip took about four weeks. We would stop at different stations and get some food rations, mostly soup or hot water, and we would get a chance to clean up, wash up, and we kept going.
SL: What kind of accommodations did you have on the train? Was it just an empty boxcar?
MC: Empty boxcar with shelves. People would sleep on the floor and on the shelves.
SL: What kind of treatment did you have the Russians on the train?
MC: They were friendly.
SL: What about the people who would happen to be at the train station when you stopped?
MC: They would be very friendly also and they would feel sorry for us. They did not know what was going to happen to us. They would offer food and clothing.
SL: At any time were you told where you were going?
MC: No.
SL: A trip of four weeks must have seemed interminable. Did you have this feeling that you were never going to get off that train?

MC: We knew that Russia was a large country and it just took that long to get there.

SL: Did you have a deepening feeling every single day that you were still on that train that you going deeper and deeper and deeper into Russia?

MC: Yes, we were aware of that.

SL: Was it very scary?

MC: We made the best of it.

SL: Did you feel at any time that your fate, at this particular time, that your fate was with the Russians was still better off than it would have been under the Germans?

MC: No, not at that time. We felt that we wished we hadn't left our hometown at that point.

SL: What exactly happened when the train finally got to a destination? Where were you and what happened immediately at that time?

MC: We were unloaded from the trains and there were trucks waiting there and we were distributed to different areas in Siberia. We didn't all wind up in one place. There were camps waiting for us in different places.

SL: Was your family separated or did you manage to stay together?

MC: We were separated from our uncle and aunt and cousins.

SL: Do you recall the name of the camp that you first went to, the district you were in, anything?

MC: I remember the name was Novostroyka, the name of the camp, and the nearby town was Suzun, and Semipalatinsk was the railroad station.

SL: How long did you remain in that camp, the first camp?

MC: For several months and then transferred to another camp.

SL: How many camps did you eventually go to?

MC: Two that I remember.
Were they basically the same?

Different type of work.

Okay, why don’t you tell me about the work and then you can tell me how they differed in the work that you did.

The first one was basically cutting trees or chopping wood or working on construction, and the second camp was mainly to take the sap out of the trees. That was the main job there.

Did you get any payment for this labor?

Yes. We were paid a very small amount of money, plus ration of bread and some food.

Were women and men doing the same kind of work there?

Yes.

Were you able to live with your family in some sort of barrack with the family or were you segregated?

No, we were living as a family together.

In what type of housing situation?

It was a wooden barrack and we were given one room to a family, with a stove in the room.

Were you given adequate firewood?

We would have to provide our firewood, to go out, cut down some trees.

Was your mother forced to do the same type of physical labor that you were?

I don't think my mother was working at the time.

Do you have an estimate of how many people were in the camp with you at the same time?

I would guess at least five hundred or more.

All Jewish?

Yes. The first camp was all Jewish. The second was mixed with non-Jews.

How far were the two camps from one another?

Maybe ten, fifteen kilometers.

Do you have any idea why they moved you from the first camp?
MC: They needed people there or they consolidated—I’m not sure why it was done.

SL: What kind of contact did you have with the Russian guards?

MC: Well, there was maybe one or two in charge of the camp, and as a rule they were friendly as long as you did your work, as you showed up for work. But they would go to the barracks, to the rooms, and check every morning if everybody that was supposed to be out working was working.

SL: Did you at any time go into the neighboring villages?

MC: Yes, we did.

SL: Were you allowed to do this or did you do this on the sly?

MC: No, we did this without permission.

SL: Why would you go into those villages?

MC: We went in to exchange some clothing that we had brought from Europe, from Poland, exchange it for potatoes or bread or other food.

SL: What was their reaction to you? Did they regard you as prisoners?

MC: Well, we were not exactly prisoners. It wasn’t a prison. We were not guarded constantly. But they knew we couldn’t escape. It was a camp and there was somebody in charge of it, but there were no guards with guns holding against us.

SL: Did you think about escaping from the camp?

MC: There was no way to escape.

SL: Why wouldn’t there be a way to escape if there were no armed guards?

MC: First of all, it was 150 kilometers from a railroad station, and you cannot get on a train in Russia without—at that time you couldn’t get on a train without police permission, and we hadn’t we did not have any identification, like a passport. So we would be caught immediately just trying to get on a train, and then where would you go? At least we were as a family there and we were hoping that someday we can leave it together.

SL: Did you ever meet any Jews-Soviet Jews in the villages?
MC: Not in Siberia, there weren’t any Russian Jews.

SL: Did you have adequate clothing, adequate protection against the cold?

MC: Well, we tried to do with whatever we had and supplement with rags on your feet or whatever you could get to keep warm.

SL: Did the Russians ever give you any additional clothing?

MC: Not that I recall.

SL: Did you feel there was any kind of concern about you by the Russians? That you had enough to eat, that you had enough clothing, that you had enough wood, or did they just dump you there and kind of forget about you other than getting the labor out of you?

MC: Well, the conditions were the same as they treated the Russian citizens. We would receive the same rations in food, except we were not used to this type of work and the living conditions, where the Russians were able to supplement their food with a garden or living on a farm or other means.

SL: So the rations then were inadequate?

MC: Inadequate, definitely.

SL: Do you recall what you would be able to eat during a single day?

MC: Well, it was mainly bread and soup, and it was never enough. We would finish our bread—by noon we would be finished with it.

SL: Did they hand it out to you? Did your mother pick it up at a kitchen or something?

MC: Yeah, we would have to go to a place in the camp to get it.

SL: So you ate in your own little barrack or whatever it was, there was no communal dining?

MC: Yes, right. No.

SL: What about the hygiene, the cleanliness of the area?

MC: It was good. We all kept it pretty clean, I would say—best we could.

SL: Did you have outhouses, adequate sanitation facilities?

MC: Yes.
SL: Running water?
MC: No running water.
SL: Did you have a well or a pump?
MC: A pump.
SL: Did you have any electricity?
MC: No.
SL: What did you use? Candles?
MC: Kerosene lamps.
SL: Kerosene. Did the Russians give you kerosene as part of the rations?
MC: Yes.
SL: What about the news of the war, were you able to find out what was going on?
MC: No, we didn’t. We had to depend on the news from the Russian authorities.
SL: Do you remember what they were telling you? What, you know, how they said the war was going?
MC: Well, it wasn’t exactly the truth, but there were some people who had short-wave radios and they were able to pick up news from England and spread the news around.
SL: So then you, well, came back there in the fall of 1940, then you would have heard I suppose of quite a bit of German invasions of Western Europe.
MC: Well, we were told about the invasion, and a meeting was called and we were threatened at the time if we didn’t fill our norms, didn’t do our work properly, that we would be punished and told that we would hang from the branches if we didn’t fulfill our norms, but then a week later another meeting was called and we were told that we were free to leave Siberia.
SL: So this was at the very end of the imprisonment, the exile whatever which one?
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: Were those short-wave radios illegal?
MC: Yes.
SL: What kind of punishment would the people have received if the radios were found?
MC: They could be imprisoned.
SL: At any point during your exile in Siberia, were you or any of your family members imprisoned?
MC: No.
SL: Were you able to have any type of cultural life there?
MC: Well, we tried to do it, we would compose some songs and have some dances, but not very much really.
SL: Was there an interaction with the rest of the people there?
MC: Yes.
SL: How would you characterize the age of the people?
MC: There was a mixture of all ages because we were taken as entire families, so you had grandparents, and parents, and children, the same group.
SL: Did you have any idea during that time that there was any Jewish persecution going on in the occupied territories.
MC: No, we were not aware of it.
SL: How did you view your own potential freedom? When did you think that you would be released?
MC: We did not have any idea, and we were not encouraged by the Russians. They told us that that was it.
SL: That you were going to be staying there for a very long time.
MC: Right.
SL: How did you deal with that?
MC: There was not much we could do. There were always rumors that something good was going to happen where we would be released. But some of the rumors had no bearings.
SL: What about your religious practices, were you able to maintain any semblance of religious practices?
MC: Not officially. It was all done underground. They did not allow any assemblance.
SL: Why didn’t they?
MC: That's the Russian, that's the law in Russia, you cannot congregate for religious or other purposes.

SL: Were there any rabbis who were there?

MC: Yes.

SL: So you were able to conduct illicit services?

MC: Right.

SL: How often did you do it?

MC: As often as it was necessary.

SL: Again, as far as the religious thing went, did people ever talk about what was happening in so far as the religious, who had control, that's not a very good way to put it. Was it ever talked about as far as an abandonment of God, say for you because you had been taken away, was that ever discussed?

MC: No, I think there was always some hope that something was gonna happen where we would survive. At least some people believed that, and some gave up hope.

SL: Did anything in particular happen to those who gave up hope? Could you tell who they were?

MC: I know of many people that died in the camps there.

SL: By their own hand, or.....

MC: They did not commit suicide. They just gave up hope and they just didn't last very long.

SL: Were you forbidden any contact with the women that were there?

MC: With our own women?

SL: Not with your mother say, but the younger women that were there?

MC: No.

SL: Was there any marriage taking place or was there cohabitation?

MC: I don’t recall any marriage, I don’t think so.

SL: Could you describe to me a typical day? What time you got up, and how long you had to work.
MC: A typical day would be getting up like 6-6:30 in the morning and start at 7:00 and work ‘til about 5 o’clock, and sometimes we had two shifts, and we would work like early in the morning and late in the evening.

SL: What would you do on the evening if you only worked until 5:00?

MC: Just come home, eat, rest, and congregate with the rest of the people.

SL: Do you remember what you would talk about? What conversations were about?

MC: I think on everybody’s mind was how soon we would get out of there, and how we were gonna survive while we were there.

SL: Well, could you explain then the circumstances surrounding your departure from Siberia? When and how did that occur?

MC: That was after the Germans attacked Russia. We were told we were free to leave and we managed to get on a truck to the railroad station, went to Novosibirsk, where the trains started out going to Alma Ata and Tashkent, in that direction.

SL: Southward, was that?

MC: Which is in Asia. And we were able to get on one of the trains and went as far as Alma Ata, but we were not allowed to stay there because that was the capital of Kazakhstan. Then we took another train to Dzambul and stayed there for several years.

SL: Now can I back up a little bit get some information about exactly that period when they said you could/were free? Was that totally unexpected? They just called you together and…

MC: Yes, it was very unexpected. But what we did is move into a village first and we got a job there in a kolkhoz, which is a community which is like a kibbutz in Israel where all the farmers worked together. And we were working there for several weeks but then we decided to leave.

SL: Did they give you any explanation as to why they were setting you free?
MC: The way I understood it [was] that they had some kind of an agreement with the Polish government in exile, that the Polish citizens would fight with the Russians against the Germans and that there was a Polish army organized in that exile.

SL: Did they ask you if you would join the Polish army?

MC: Not at that particular time.

SL: Do you know people who volunteered to fight in the Polish army?

MC: Yes, and one of them was Menachem Begin.

SL: Was he in a camp with you?

MC: Not with us, but he was in a similar camp at that particular time.

SL: Did they tell you at that time they brought you together that Germany in had in fact attacked Russia?

MC: Yes.

SL: Were you surprised?

MC: Yes.

SL: Now, who made that trip with you to Kazakhstan?

MC: My parents and my brothers. We went as a family.

SL: Did you ever regain or figure out the whereabouts of your uncle and your cousins?

MC: Yes, we found out they were maybe twenty kilometers from our camp, but we never were able to see them.

SL: I am confused in a certain way about the trip that you made by train. Did you have to pay for the ride [train trip to Alma Ata]?

MC: No. This was a time when Russian citizens became refugees and they were leaving Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and Kiev, and they would escape from those areas and there were many refugees waiting at the railroad station in Novosibirsk and the trains that were formed there, these were freight trains, freight cars, and we were allowed to get on one of the trains without paying.

SL: It was a freight train?
MC: Yes.
SL: Were you carrying anything with you, any belongings?
MC: Very little.
SL: Did you have any money at all?
MC: No.
SL: How did you manage to get food during this trip?
MC: We must have had a little bit of money that we were able just to get some bread and some necessary things.
SL: How long a trip was it?
MC: A couple of days, I think.
SL: You knew that you were heading to Kazakhstan?
MC: Yes.
SL: How did you know anything about Kazakhstan?
MC: Well, we knew that this was a warmer climate there and it seemed like the majority of people who left Siberia went to that area.
SL: I am checking the tape. It looks like we are going to run out, so I am going to stop it now.
MC: Mm hmm.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1
At that time then when you finally were released from the camp. Did you then get any indication of the actual military situation of the war?

We didn’t know exactly what was going down, but we realized when we got to Novosibirsk that there were many Russian refugees from the Ukraine leaving, and that the Germans were attacking.

Did they say anything as to what was happening to the Jews in that area?

Not at that time yet. That was in 1941; that was early.

When did you finally hear about what was happening to the Jews?

We heard much later, and what we heard, we did not believe that it was actually happening. We were sure that it was Russian propaganda.

So it wasn’t until you finally returned to Europe that you were really faced with it?

Yes.

Now let’s talk a little bit about Dzambul. How long did you stay there?

From 1941 to 1946.

The bulk of the war was that period.

Mm hmm.

Where did you live?

We lived in several rooms, one room we would rent from the Russian people at that time.

What kind of work were you doing, how were you surviving?

I had many different jobs. I was working in a bakery and the railroad station and the distillery. Several different jobs.

Was this typical of the refugees’ situation, working there, people going from job to job?

No, it depends what was available. You would have to apply for it as the jobs were available, just like the Russians.

What kind of contact did you have with the natives there?
Where we were living we were renting from the natives, and we would also have contact with them at work.

How did you communicate with them?

Well, by then we spoke Russian fluently. It was no problem communicating.

So they were speaking Russian, too?

Right.

Were they more Asian in character?

There were many Russians, but there were some Kazakhs, which are Muslims, and they are more Asian. But most of them spoke Russian in addition to speaking their language, which was the Kazakh language.

Did you ever learn to speak any of that?

Yes, we learned that too.

How did they react to you? Did they, first of all, did they know that you were Jewish? Did they know what that meant?

Most of them knew, and as a rule they accepted, and they were, most of them were friendly.

Do you think you were just viewed among with all the others as just being refugees?

In a way, yes.

How many people do you think were there in Dzambul with refugees?

Well, in Dzambul I would estimate maybe fifty thousand Jews from Poland, but there were many Russian Jews also that came from Ukraine that settled in Dzambul.

Did you have your own Polish-Jewish community?

There was a Polish committee and also the American Joint was active there and helping with some food and clothing.

During the war?
SL: Did you still believe you were in a period of transition, that you were eventually going to go back to Poland?

MC: That was the hope, but they were still trying to get us to become Russian citizens, which we opposed until the end, and some of us were arrested, put in jail, because they refused to become Russian citizens.

SL: Were you in jail at all?

MC: I was lucky not to be in jail.

SL: You mentioned that your father and brother were in prison, right?

MC: Well, for other reasons.

SL: For other reasons? [laugher from MC] Do you want to tell me what they were?

MC: For selling a pound of sugar—my brother was sentenced to seven years in prison.

SL: For selling a pound of sugar illegally?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: Did he get out or did he spend seven years in jail there?

MC: He did get out after a year-and-a-half.

SL: He spent a year-and-a-half in prison?

MC: Mm hmm. Not the prison itself, they have camps, work/labor camps that they send you to.

SL: Was it, were you able to visit him or have any contact with him?

MC: No, he was a thousand, two thousand miles away from us.

SL: Where, where was he? Which direction, north, south, east?

MC: The direction was back towards Novosibirsk where we came from.

SL: They were sending them back?

MC: Kinda in the middle there somewhere. I forgot the name.

SL: How did you ever hook back up with him?
MC: Well, we were communicating, we were able to communicate with him by mail, and we would send food there, bread, we would dry it and send it to him, and tobacco, and we also had lawyers that worked for his release. Then he was released after a year-and-a-half. He had another trial.

SL: And he returned to Dzambul?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: Did he tell you about how he was treated there? Was he mistreated?

MC: He was treated the same as all the others in the camp.

SL: Which was badly?

MC: Which was hard work, and it's not the _______ there, the prison, but he had some friends he knew from Dzambul. One of them was a Russian barber who was there, sentenced for three years for bribing a policeman and he was able to save his food and tobacco so it wouldn't be taken away from him, the packages that he would receive, so it wouldn't be taken away from the other prisoners. And he would get favors also from the guards that had given him some tobacco.

SL: While you were living in Dzambul, did you have any social or cultural activities?

MC: Very little, except on holidays that the Jews had put together and their services in private homes.

SL: Again, were you doing this at the risk of being arrested for the religious congregation?

MC: Yes, but we were pretty confident that nothing would happen because we were in large numbers.

SL: Were there a lot of Russian officers around, soldiers around?

MC: No, police, regular police, no soldiers.

SL: Did you manage to strike up some friendships with some people that were there?

MC: Yes. We had quite a few Russian friends through work.

SL: How would you characterize the life that you had there? Were you at all happy, or were you satisfied with things?

MC: We were not satisfied that we had to struggle to get mainly enough food to survive while we were there.
SL: Was your mother working?

MC: No.

SL: So basically you were doing odd jobs here and there and just trying to make enough money to survive on a daily basis or a weekly basis?

MC: Well, I was working for long periods on one job because we were there five years, so on one job I was working maybe two or three years, but in the beginning, I tried some jobs that didn't last very long.

SL: How could a city just absorb fifty thousand people, job-wise, food-wise, housing-wise?

MC: Well, people didn't rent houses, but they tried to get a room with the other families someplace.

SL: Do you think there was sympathy in that area because of the plight of refugees? People were more apt to try to find jobs for people?

MC: There was a committee to try to settle the refugees.

SL: And you don't think there was any hostility from the natives that there was this great influx of people?

MC: No.

SL: What did the city look like? What do you remember about its physical appearance?

MC: The houses were a lot of them mud houses with roofs covered with straw. It's a primitive town, but there were some fairly nice buildings. It was very large, spread out.

SL: Did you ever travel to any other cities?

MC: No, we were not allowed to travel by train—only by special permission from the police.

SL: What kind of climate was it?

MC: It was cold in the winter, but not very cold, and warm in the summer. It's more like the Middle East climate.

SL: Were there mostly family groups that were living there as refugees, among the refugee population?

MC: There were a lot of families, but there were also a lot of single people that left alone.

SL: What kind of news were you receiving about the war? How were you receiving it?

MC: There were newspapers and radio, which was only one station.
SL: Were you allowed to have a radio?

MC: We were allowed, but we didn’t have one. We would just listen to a loudspeaker.

SL: Oh, in the square or something?

MC: Oh, at work they would have them.

SL: A loudspeaker broadcasting right from the radio?

MC: Yeah.

SL: What was the kind of talk amongst people, refugees?

MC: I think everybody was trying to survive and hoping to get back home.

SL: Well, how did you finally leave there? What happened?

MC: Well, we were registered before the war came to an end, and they organized again trains to return everybody home.

SL: So even though the Russians tried for years and years to get you to accept Soviet citizenship, once the war was over they shipped you back to Poland, they didn’t force you to stay there?

MC: No, because they occupied part of Poland, and there was an agreement between the Polish government and the Russians to allow all Polish citizens to return to Poland.

SL: Now your hometown thought was really not, was not, or wasn’t in the section that was occupied by the Russians and is still part of Russian jurisdiction?

MC: Now it’s Poland, but it is under Russian jurisdiction almost. It’s not Russia, it’s Poland, but it was occupied by the Russians.

SL: When was this return trip to Poland made? How soon after the war?

MC: That was in the spring of 1946.

SL: So you had to wait a whole year really after the war came to an end.

MC: Yes.

SL: Was it really tough to wait that long to get back?

MC: Very. But some people managed to get out earlier by illegal means.
SL: And again, you still at that point did not know what had happened to the European Jews?

MC: Well, we had an idea but we still couldn’t believe what really happened.

SL: Once you made the trip to Poland, how was it accomplished and by what means?

MC: By train. Again, freight trains, and we wound up in Silesia, which was the part that was occupied by Poland from Germany, was formerly Germany.

SL: Did you try to get back to Rymanow?

MC: No, we were afraid to go back because there were no Jewish people living there and we were afraid of the Poles, that they would feel we came to get our properties and that they would do some harm to us.

SL: How did you know there weren’t any Jews left?

MC: We knew that nobody was left.

SL: By the time you got to Silesia then you had learned what the fate of the Jews in Europe?

MC: Yes, we knew then, and we also could communicate with our town, or some people did communicate.

We knew that there was nobody was living there, as far as the Jewish people.

SL: How long did you stay in Silesia?

MC: About six months.

SL: Were you in a DP camp or just in a town?

MC: No, that was in a town. We lived with our uncle and we also joined a kibbutz there, a Mizrachi kibbutz.

SL: Do you recall the name of the town that you stayed in?

MC: It was Wałbrzych; Waldenburg was the German name.

SL: Why did you join this Mizrachi kibbutz?

MC: Well, there was a drive at the time going on with the Zionist organizations tried to get young people to join all the Zionist organizations, and I had two uncles that were very active in the Mizrachi. We also wanted to be able to have services for kaddish¹⁰ purposes because we lost our mother on the way back from Russia. She died in Lublin in 1946.

¹⁰The Jewish prayer of mourning.
SL: That was on the train on the way back?
MC: On the way back.
SL: Was it a sudden thing or had she been ill for awhile?
MC: No, she got sick in Russia, and when she came back we discovered she had cancer and we waited in Lublin for four weeks and she passed away.
SL: After you got to Silesia, did you make any decision as to what eventually was going to happen. You didn’t want to return to Rymanow. Did you think about either Palestine or to the States? Was it something that you talked about?
MC: Yes, we were able to write to New York to my mother’s brother, to my father’s brother and they suggested that we leave to the American zone in Austria, Germany or Italy, and that they would do everything they could to get us to the United States even though they thought at the time was six months to 18 months.
SL: So, what did you do, where did you go?
MC: Well, we left for Austria and waited in Austria for five years to come to the United States.
SL: How did you make the trip to Austria?
MC: Again, it was arranged by the Jewish organizations to cross the border. It was all prearranged. We went to Czechoslovakia into a camp and we stayed there for several days, and then to Vienna, which was a transient camp, and from Vienna to Steyr, which became more permanent.
SL: Do you remember when exactly it was that you got to Steyr? Was it still in ’46? Late in ’46?
MC: In ’46, right in the fall.
SL: Now you mentioned to me in the pre-interview that you were in Steyr, but you were also in several other DP camps.
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: Did you remain in Steyr for the longest period of time out of all those camps?
MC: Well, we had two camps in Steyr, and they liquidated one and consolidated us into the second and then they moved us to Lynch, but for the longest time I would say we were in Steyr.

SL: How long a period of time was that?

MC: Maybe four years. Let’s see, um, three years, I would change that.

SL: What type of housing did you have there?

MC: First in Steyr was a former factory, musical instruments, and there were large apartment buildings and factory buildings where we were housed. The second one was a, used for the Austrian soldiers used before it was a camp.

SL: Did you live still with your family, remained as a family unit?

MC: Yes, mm hmm.

SL: What about your rations, what type of food were you receiving?

MC: In the camps? In the beginning it was supported by the American army. And they would give us bread and cooked meals, and some canned sardines and meat. It was enough food.

SL: You felt that after you had lived on so little for years before that, that the rations you were getting after you left the camp were a lot better?

MC: Was much better, yes.

SL: What kind of cultural activities did you have there at the camp? I know you told me you were quite active in organizations that were going on there. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

MC: Well, we had synagogues and we had organizations that tried to have meetings, we had concerts, we had soccer teams, and ping pong again, lectures, a variety of different things. We were also able to go the city, to a movie, to a play, to see a soccer game.

SL: Was it a pretty active place? People were really trying to make a pretty solid life there, even though it was somewhat semi-permanent?

MC: I would say the majority was inactive, but some people managed to get jobs and keep busy; others had to be entertained and a lot of them didn’t do too much.
SL: Did you get a job? Did you do any work that you were doing?
MC: I had several jobs, yes.

SL: What kind of things were you doing?
MC: I was labor man during one of them, and then I was working in the food supply, bread.

SL: Were you getting paid for any of this work?
MC: Mostly in food, additional food rations, no money.

SL: Why were you doing this? Did you want it to keep busy?
MC: Yes.

SL: Did you feel that you did keep busy?
MC: Yes.

SL: Did you have a lot of friends there in the camps? Did you make a lot of friends?
MC: Oh, yes, yes, quite a few.

SL: Were most of those people refugees also from the Siberian and central Asian experience, or were they from all over?
MC: Most of them were from Russian, but there were some that survived in Poland during the war.

SL: Again, how would you characterize the age of the people there, a mixture?
MC: Mixture, all the way from young to old.

SL: Was there a lot of marriage going on there, a lot of getting to know....
MC: Yes, in the camps during that period, quite a few people got married. My brother got married in the camp.

SL: Oh, did he? A woman that he met there in Steyr?
MC: Yes.

SL: What had been her experience?
MC: She was originally from Romania, and they came to Steyr, and he met her and they got married. Also a good friend of mine, whom we brought with us from Russia, who lost his parents in Poland, he also got married in Steyr, living now in New York.

SL: What types of religious practices were going on? You mentioned synagogues. They weren't actually buildings, synagogue buildings were they?

MC: No, they didn't build synagogues, but they would be, they would provide an area for a synagogue in the barracks. There would be at least two synagogues.

SL: What kind of contact did you have with the outside communities?

MC: We were able to go to the cities with Austrians, and even had some dealings with them.

SL: How did they react towards you?

MC: Basically friendly, in the beginning especially.

SL: Compassionate or feeling any kind of remorse for what had happened?

MC: Yes, they tried to apologize, but they had nothing to do with what happened. They were all nice people.

SL: What about the black market, was that a big operation there?

MC: Fairly good.

SL: What types of objects or goods were being traded?

MC: Well, food basically, and some clothing.

SL: Was that a major purpose for getting into the city, was to do some buying and selling?

MC: Well, people would sell sometimes their canned goods, and came and buy fresh meat or produce. So the Austrians were happy to buy the canned goods.

SL: And, so you were just there awaiting your quota to be, your number to come up?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: Did you have to go through a lengthy series of exams or paperwork to register?

MC: Yes, we had to register several times and at various places.
SL: Did you ever ask them why it was taking so long?
MC: The explanation was that they have to pass special laws, refugee laws, and also to wait your turn under the quota.

SL: One more thing that you mention that your father got remarried. Did he remarry in Steyr or in Europe?
MC: No, he met somebody there, but they officially got married here.

SL: But it was someone, it was also a survivor?
MC: Yes.

SL: And a, what is the name of her, his second wife?
MC: Zelda, her former name was Kramer.

SL: Was she Polish?
MC: Yes.

SL: Had she been, do you know when any of her experiences?
MC: She was in Russia, and left her husband, and had a son at the time about one year old. She was in the same camp in Steyr when they met my father.

SL: All right, well, I am going to have to end the tape.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2
SL: Okay, last night when we were talking we got as far as how things were in Steyr in DP camps. How long were you there?

MC: We were in two camps in Steyr for about three years, and then were transferred to Ebensburg which was near Linz, and after that we were transferred to, the last camp was in Osten.

SL: Did they differ dramatically from camp to camp or was life basically the same?

MC: It was basically the same. Ebensburg was a nicer camp. It had apartment buildings and very clean.

SL: What about jobs, did you have any jobs in the other camps?

MC: We did something but, [laughter], but I don’t remember what I did.

SL: Well you told me that you worked for the Joint\textsuperscript{11}.

MC: Yeah, I worked for some Joint there, yes.

SL: What did you do?

MC: I was in the immigration department and people would come with problems about their immigration, and I would try to help them.

SL: How did you get a job like that? Was it difficult to obtain that kind of job?

MC: It wasn’t easy, but I was offered the job. First it was to type, fill out forms, and from that I was promoted to take the problems from the people and after the Joint closed up in Linz and transferred to Salzburg, I would take the train every week and take all the problems people had and bring the answers for them from the Joint.

SL: Were these kinds of problems revolving around immigration to the United States?

MC: Mostly it was about immigration, yes.

SL: Would you come back with positive solutions to those problems?

MC: Sometimes there were solutions, and sometimes there was just, they were given some hope, you know, that the Joint would write to the proper authorities to see what they could do to help them.

\textsuperscript{11}American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.
SL: Did the Joint also help in providing food and materials for cultural activities and things to do?

MC: They were involved in supplementing food and also clothing, yes. And that was mainly for people who would do some work in the camp to get the additional rations.

SL: So, again, this is the payment that you got was the additional rations?

MC: From the Joint, yeah.

SL: Were there a lot of people working in these kind of capacities, or were you somewhat special because of that job?

MC: It was kinda special, not too many.

SL: People ever...

MC: They have some professional people, come from the United States and other places.

SL: Did some people feel that you have some pull with the Joint? You know, did they become more attached to you once they realized you might be able to help them?

MC: I was the only one left there that they had to talk to me if they wanted to present their problems, and I would try and do what I could to help them.

SL: After the war was over, excuse me, when you spent that time in the DP camps, did you have any time to try to trace what had happened to your own family in Europe?

MC: Well, we knew that nobody was left. Those that were left behind in our hometowns, they were not alive. But we found relatives that were in Russia and we made contact with them.

SL: What about the contact with your family in the United States after the war?

MC: We were able to correspond with them immediately from Poland and some representatives from the United States joined, came to Poland and they were searching out survivors and they offered assistance if we showed a letter to the man who was the representative from the Joint, and they gave us $100 in Poland at the time, and then he came back to New York and got the money back from my uncle.

SL: Were your relatives in the States sending you packages, food or clothing or money, any kind of help?
MC: Yes, they did. Through Austria.
SL: You were allowed to receive that?
MC: Yes.
SL: What were the circumstances then surrounding your departure? Why did you decide to go to the United States instead of some other countries?
MC: Mainly because we had my father and two brothers and my mother's brother lived here, and we felt that we wanted to be with the family.
SL: And you arrived in Steyr and the DP camps in ’46?
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: And what year did you finally leave for the United States?
MC: Nineteen fifty-one.
SL: Did you have to go through a large series of preparations before you could come to this country? Medical exams and that type of thing?
MC: Yes, there was the CIA investigations, medical examinations, but many series before that too.
SL: Did you have somebody in particular sponsor you?
MC: My uncle sent an affidavit from New York.
SL: Do you recall the date or week and time of year that you left Europe?
MC: We arrived in New York on December 1, 1951. It took us ten days.
SL: How did you make the trip?
MC: By boat.
SL: Where did you sail from?
MC: From Bremerhaven. It was an American Army boat. It would take soldiers to Germany and bring back refugees.
SL: Were there a lot of people on the boat that you knew?
MC: Yes.
SL: Mainly people from the DP camps?
MC: Yes.
SL: And did it sail into New York City?
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: Do you recall what you thought about when you first saw the Statue of Liberty?
MC: Well, it was very exciting to see New York, with all the lights and the tall buildings. And very scary.
[laughs]
SL: How long did they remain in New York City?
MC: About six months.
SL: What did you do during that time, where did you live?
MC: I was living with my uncle and we, I had a job on 47th Street and Fifth Avenue in a jewelry store as a shipping clerk.
SL: How did you know English in order to get a job like that?
MC: I learned in the camps before I left.
SL: You learned it on your own?
MC: Yes, I had some private lessons in Europe.
SL: So that you spoke well enough to be able to get a job almost immediately?
MC: Mm hmm..
SL: Did you come with the rest of your family?
MC: Yes.
SL: That was your father....
MC: My father and my two brothers, my one brother, one went to Israel.
SL: Which one was this?
MC: The older brother went to Israel from Steyr.
SL: And your step-mother, did your step-mother make the trip with you?
MC: No, she came before us.
SL: Mm hmm.
SL: They weren't married yet?
MC: No.
SL: Were you met by your uncle at the boat?
MC: Both uncles came to the boat.
SL: The one from Kenosha also came?
MC: No, my mother's brother and my father's brother in New York.
SL: Oh! In New York.
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: Did you remain in New York for that period of time with the intention that you were going to eventually come to Kenosha?
MC: No, we didn't know what we were gonna do at the time. We preferred to stay in New York, but it was very difficult to find good jobs and to get a good apartment. In Kenosha we had an opportunity to open up a business, so...
SL: What were your impressions of New York for the time that you were there?
MC: It was exciting, busy, taking the subway every morning to work. I was working, it was a very busy area, Fifth Avenue near the Rockefeller Center. But the job wasn't a very big paying job, but it was nice.
SL: How did you have the opportunity in Kenosha to start a business you have mentioned that? Did you know, when you were in New York did you know that you would have an opportunity to start a business if you came to Kenosha?
MC: My uncle from Kenosha came to New York and suggested that we come to Kenosha, and Uncle Abe, who lived in New York, helped us financially with some money, and Charlie, who lived in Kenosha, offered us an empty store to start some kind of a business. So we took him up on the offer and we came here.
SL: Okay, when did you arrive in Kenosha?

MC: I came first— it was sometime in July of 1952.

SL: Where was the first place that you lived?

MC: I lived with Uncle Charlie.

SL: Where was that? Do you remember the street?

MC: 62nd and 12th Avenue.

SL: And how soon after that did your father and stepmother arrive?

MC: About a month later, after we found an apartment for them.

SL: Okay so you were living with your Uncle Charlie, and they had their own separate apartment?

MC: No. After they came, I lived with them.


SL: So where was that apartment?

MC: On 60th Street and 19th Avenue.

SL: Tell me a little bit about the business. What did you first do? What kind of employment did you have?

MC: The business started out very slow. We didn’t know just what kind of business we were going to go in to. My uncle used to go into auction sales and buy rejected merchandise— seconds— and I didn’t like particularly that type of business. So we went to Jefferson, Wisconsin, no, let me think a minute, Janesville, Wisconsin, and my uncle had a brother-in-law there in the furniture business, and he introduced me to his brother-in-law, and we saw the operation of the furniture store and I was very much impressed, and I asked if it was possible to get the names of some suppliers, and they were very helpful. And we contacted people that were selling bedding, living room furniture, bedroom furniture, and we started the furniture store.

SL: And how soon was that after you had first come here?

MC: Maybe a month or...

SL: You didn’t waste any time. Did your uncle go into the business with you?
MC: He was just helping us. He didn't need it for himself. He helped us as much as he could.

SL: Well okay this was, who was exactly, who was in the business?

MC: My father and myself, and my uncle helped us in the beginning.

SL: What about your younger brother?

MC: He was still in school.

SL: Did he go to school in Kenosha, your younger brother?

MC: Yes.

SL: How many years did he go to school? He went to high school?

MC: Mm hmm.

SL: Where was the location of the furniture store when you first opened it?

MC: It was on 55th and 22nd Avenue.

SL: What was the name of it?

MC: Chulew Furniture.

SL: How did you eventually become Barr Furniture, which is what you are now?

MC: We had a chance to move downtown four years later, and we rented a store, a much larger store, downtown, and we stayed there for several years and then Barr Furniture was offered for sale. We bought that in 1960, and we kept the name because we still had our previous store under the Chulew name, and we felt that it would be confusing to have two stores under the Chulew name close by.

SL: And when did you finally close the Chulew Furniture store?

MC: In 1962.

SL: Was it tough for people to recognize you as Barr Furniture?

MC: There was some that would come because it was Barr Furniture and some would come because it was Chulew Furniture, but they knew us.

SL: Where is the store currently located?

MC: The old store?
SL: The one that you are in now.
MC: On Sheridan Road and 53rd Street.
SL: And that’s the building that you’ve been in since 1960?
MC: Yes.
SL: Let me just… during those first years in Kenosha, did you ever encounter any problems with anti-Semitism?
MC: Not really.
SL: You said not really, but is that...
MC: No, I would say no.
SL: Did you feel that you had the typical problems of a new immigrant, language problems or did you feel people were taking advantage of you because you weren’t familiar with the way of life?
MC: No. The store was in an Italian neighborhood, and once we established ourselves and made a few customers in the area, they were very nice to us and we had a good following in the area, and I never felt inferior to anybody.
SL: And the community never made you feel that you were different than they were?
MC: No, because there were not too many refugees that came from Europe to Kenosha—at least Jewish families.
SL: Did they ever acknowledge the fact that, were there ever any newspaper articles or anything about your arrival in Kenosha?
MC: No. No, but they would compliment us when they found out that we were in the States only six, seven months and we had a business. They thought it was very nice and they would be very complimentary.
SL: Did you have a lot of friends in those first couple of years, or was it difficult to meet a lot of people?
MC: We knew one family from our hometown, and they were very hospitable and they tried to make us feel comfortable here. But we also missed many other friends that we left behind in New York and the relatives we left in New York.
SL: Did you receive any kind of help at all from the Jewish community in Kenosha when you first came?

MC: No, we never asked for any help and it was never offered to us.

SL: Did they ever acknowledge you in any way? Did they come and ask you to join the synagogue or try to involve you in Jewish life in Kenosha?

MC: We came to the synagogue and became members. We offered to become members.

SL: Well, nowadays for instance there’s some resettlement of Russian families in Kenosha and they are getting some help from the Jewish community. Would you say that that was not the experience that you had when you first came?

MC: No, especially [because] we had relatives and the Jewish community did not feel obligated to help us. They felt that the relatives would take care of it. And we didn’t really need any help. We managed from the beginning to make a living on our own.

SL: Did you recall any special acts of kindness those first couple years or first year? Anything that really sticks out in your memory?

MC: Well, we have some non-Jewish friends that we know who were one of the first customers, and we’re still very good friends. They happen to be Italian people. They came to the store and they wanted to buy some furniture and they wanted to know if we would take any trade-ins, old furniture, and I told them that I would come and look what they had to trade in. I took my uncle’s car, and I went to their apartment and they were very hospitable. They offered me tea and cake and hard liquor and we had a nice conversation until about 11:00, 11:30 at night and my parents were concerned what happened to me. And then they showed me a couple of beds that they wanted to trade in and they asked me how much I would offer them. When I told them how much, they thought I was giving them too much, and they said, “You don’t have to give us so much. Just because you had a drink here, you don't have to feel obligated.” And I said, “I think the mattresses are clean, and I think I can sell them.” They bought furniture from us several times since, and we became very good friends, until today. They sent us many customers over the years.
SL: Would you mind telling me what their names are?
MC: Corradinis.
SL: Well, now I want to get into a couple questions about your married life. You came here as a single man, right?
MC: Yes.
SL: How did you meet your wife?
MC: It was a date. It was some friends of ours in Chicago who knew Lenore's grandparents, and the grandmother said, "Have I got a Jewish girl for you," and we made a date. We dated for several months and we got married in Chicago.
SL: Now I have a couple of vital questions. First of all, what is your wife's name and her maiden name and her date and place of birth?
MC: Lenore Shain and she was born in Chicago.
SL: What year was she born?
MC: Lenore, how old are you?
SL: Do you know approximately?
MC: She's about forty years old now.
SL: Well, you said you met her on a blind date through friends in Chicago.
MC: Mm hmm.
SL: How did you happen to have friends in Chicago? Who were they?
MC: They were relatives of my stepmother who worked in the factory, in a dress factory, with Lenore's grandmother. They happened to talk about us.
SL: What year were you married?
MC: 1956.
SL: So you were here for quite a long time here then as a bachelor?
MC: Four years.
SL: Did you ever socialize, did you socialize at all in the Kenosha community before you got married?

MC: Yes, I had some friends here. I would also go to Milwaukee quite often where I had quite a few friends there.

SL: And who were those friends that you had in Milwaukee?

MC: Also people that came from New York about the same time.

SL: Are some of them still in Milwaukee?

MC: They're still in Milwaukee .......

SL: Did your wife have an occupation or work in the house?

MC: She's also helping in the store. And she is a good tennis player.

SL: I want to ask you a little bit about your children. If you could give me their names, dates of birth, and places of birth.

MC: Marsha was born in January 23, 1957, and Natalie was born June 27, 1958.

SL: Both here in Kenosha?

MC: Both in the Kenosha.

SL: What are they doing now?

MC: Marsha is in Israel for a year, and Natalie is teaching in Neillsville, Wisconsin.

SL: What does she teach?

MC: She is teaching Special Education.

SL: And what occupation is Marsha involved in?

MC: Marsha graduated as a dietitian. She is working presently in a hotel in Ashkelon.\textsuperscript{12}

SL: Are both of them graduates of the University in Madison?

MC: Yes.

\textsuperscript{12}City in Israel.
SL: Now, the questions that I want to ask you from now on basically are questions we like to ask of everybody and their about your family situation and your home life and that type of information. There is one thing that I wanted to ask you, when was it that you moved into this house?


SL: Where were you living previous to this?

MC: We lived at first in an apartment on 20th Avenue and 65th Street, then we rented a house on 8th Avenue and 48th Street, 40th Street, 40th and 8th Avenue.

SL: And what’s the address here?

MC: 7840 Fifth Avenue.

SL: All right, now I would like to ask a few more questions, unless we run out of tape. Do you speak English in the home with your children and your wife?

MC: No?

SL: Do your children speak any other languages or know any other languages?

MC: They learned French and some Hebrew.

SL: In communicating with your mother-in-law, with your step-mother and your father, would they speak English or did they know any Yiddish or any Polish?

MC: The children would speak English, sometimes they would reply in Yiddish.

SL: But you don’t think they would know enough to be fluent?

MC: No.

SL: How much do you think your children know about your Holocaust experience?

MC: We’ve talked, I talked to them in the past about my experiences.

SL: Have they become more interested in it in the last few years? Do they ask a lot of things about your experiences?

MC: I think Marsha is learning a lot about it in Israel. She’s finding out and can identify more with it.

SL: Did they ever talk to your parents about their experiences?
MC: No, I don’t think so.

SL: Do you think your children may have faced any problems in school because your background is different than their friends?

MC: I don’t think they felt any different. They are American children, and I don’t think they thought of me as being different.

SL: I think I am going to turn the tape over now.

MC: I don’t think I gave them that impression. I didn’t act different, you know. We talked about it, but it wouldn’t be on a daily basis, it would be, you know, certain occasions, you know, we would just…and I think what they got from these conversations, to them it sounded like boy, that must have been a lot of fun doing all those different things. I never gave them the impression that there was a lot of suffering, a lot hardship. It sounded very daring and exciting, and like they would envy me rather than feel sorry for me that I had a chance to experience all these things and survive it, you know?

SL: I have to turn the tape.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1
TAPE 3, SIDE 2

SL: In comparison to other families, do you think your family is closer to one another than other American families?

MC: Well, we were very close. When my father was alive, we would have every, we would spend every Pesach together, and all the other holidays. We would go to shul as a family, we are still going together to synagogue, the temple, and of course we see each other every day in the stores, so we have to be close.

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

MC: I would say that I am, I am very concerned about the family.

SL: And why do you think that is?

MC: That is… Maybe it has something to do with my upbringing. I was very close to my family when I was growing up, and I feel very close to my children and my family.

SL: When your children were young, what were your greatest concerns for them?

MC: I wanted them to be well, to get a good education, and I was very busy at the time in the business and Lenore spent more time with the children than I did, but I would see them almost every day at noon for lunch, and in the evening, and I enjoyed when they were growing up very much. I took Marsha to a bar mitzvah when she was six months old on a plane to New Jersey, and we went too on vacations with the children, and I really enjoyed watching them grow up.

SL: Who are your closest friends nowadays? Are they mostly Jewish or non-Jewish?

MC: Socially, most of them are Jewish, but we also know a lot of non-Jewish people through the business and from living in the community.

SL: Are many of your Jewish friends also Holocaust survivors?

MC: Not in Kenosha. They aren’t any here. Just one family.

SL: So then, the Jewish friends that you have are not only from Kenosha but are in other cities as well?
MC: Well, in Kenosha most of the Jewish friends that we have are American-born. But we also keep in touch with some friends in New York and Israel.

SL: And also you mentioned that you have some friends in Milwaukee?

MC: In Milwaukee also.

SL: Do you see them often or is it contact mostly a letter and phone?

MC: We usually go out on occasions with some of them.

SL: Do you belong to any organizations of survivors or laubenshaf(?)?

MC: They don't have one here, the one laubenshaf(?) in New York, and I am not a member, but I do belong to the B'nai B'rith and I am also active in the B'nai Zedek, the synagogue, and the Hillel Temple.

SL: Now are those all Kenosha organizations?

MC: Kenosha Mm hmm. .

SL: The laubenshaf(?) that is in New York, is that the Romanov

MC: Yes.

SL: Well, what is, what is your contact with American-born Jews in Kenosha?

MC: We go out together for dinners or parties, we invite them to our house and they invite us to their homes, and also through the temple, and through the bond drive, or the night of Jewish appeal.

SL: What do you think their feelings are towards the Holocaust?

MC: I really couldn't tell you, I don't think it is being discussed very much.

SL: Have they not asked you at all about your experiences?

MC: Sometime in the past, but I don't think they want to hear too much about it.

SL: So it hasn't been something that comes up as a regular topic?

MC: Well, occasionally. I was asked to speak to the Sunday school children. They wanted to teach us. But as a rule, we don't discuss it too often.

SL: What do you think the feelings as far as the non-Jews that you know about the Holocaust?
MC: Some identify somewhat, and some don’t know much about it.
SL: Again, do they ever ask you questions about your experiences?
MC: Occasionally, yes.
SL: And what are the reactions when you tell them what you’ve gone through?
MC: It’s shock. They are shocked to hear what I have to say.
SL: Have you ever had any unpleasant experiences here in Kenosha with non-Jews?
MC: Not because I am Jewish.
SL: Mm hmm. You don’t feel that there is an anti-Semitic climate in Kenosha at all? You never thought?
MC: It was never shown directly to me, you know.
SL: Have you heard about it then on a second-hand level from the Jews in the community that you know?
MC: Not too much, directly.
SL: Well then, there has been a traditional animosity between the Eastern European Jews and the Western European Jews and they way they regard one another. Have you ever experienced this with Jews of Western European descent or Western European Jews when you were in Europe?
MC: Well, when we were, not really, no, because we were all from Eastern Europe, most of the Jews.
SL: Are the Jews that are here in Kenosha, are they from Western European families more than Eastern?
MC: No, most of them would be from Eastern European.
SL: So that you have not, then you really have not.
MC: There is no conflict, no, there is no conflict.
SL: Well, how do you think you would feel if your daughters married non-Jews? Is that a very painful subject to talk about?
MC: It would be very, it’s not a painful subject to talk about as long as it is somebody else [laughter], but if it is our daughters, I would be very concerned. I would be very unhappy, because we tried to survive as Jews all these years, and I certainly wouldn’t want to give it up now voluntarily.
SL: What is the size of the Jewish community in Kenosha?
MC: It's a little over a hundred families.
SL: Out of the population of what 70-80,000.
MC: Over 80,000, yeah.
SL: So it is pretty small then?
MC: Yes, very small.
SL: Did most of your, most of the friends of your daughters, were most of the friends of your daughters non-Jewish?
MC: In school, yes, but then they would go in the summertime, they would go to Oconomowoc, which is a Jewish camp and they would meet Jewish kids there. They have been going there for years.
SL: You told me that you belong to a few of the Jewish organizations in town, do you belong to any political or social clubs that aren't affiliated with the synagogue or the Jewish religion?
MC: No, I don't.
SL: I wanted to ask a few questions about your religious life now. How often do you attend synagogue?
MC: As often as there are services, and I participate, I did the services at B'nai Zedek Synagogue.
SL: Now, you don't have a regular rabbi then?
MC: No. We hire somebody for the high holidays, and the other services are done by myself and the rabbi, Dr. Rosen.
SL: Is that the only Synagogue in town?
MC: That's the only Conservative Synagogue. We also belong, we are also members of the Reformed Temple.
SL: Do you attend that one at all?
MC: Occasionally.
SL: What about traditions in the home? What have you maintained of Jewish … respect?
MC: Well, we celebrate all major holidays, with services, and we also go the store after the services.
SL: Do you keep kosher?
MC: We don’t keep kosher, but we don’t mix milk with meat or butter.
SL: Does your wife light candles on Friday nights with you?
MC: Yes, she does sometimes.
SL: What about your children’s Hebrew school education? Did they attend?
MC: They attended Hebrew school. They also learned Hebrew in college. And Marsha studied for six months in Iraq and Israel.
SL: Were they bat mitzvah either one of them?
MC: Bat mitzvah, they were confirmed.
SL: Confirmed from the temple.
MC: Confirmed from the temple yeah.
SL: How do you think your feelings about religion have changed since your Holocaust experience?
MC: I am not less religious and I am not more religious, but I like it for social reasons. I think it’s nice.
SL: Do you feel that you have changed your attitude in a belief in God because of the tragedy that happened?
MC: I don’t think so. No.
SL: Could you describe to me a typical day that you might have now in your life?
MC: A typical day would be getting up in the morning, going to the store, coming home for lunch, go back to the store, and come home in the evening, sometimes we take a walk, sometimes we take a ride. We go see some friends, or visit with my parents. That’s about it.
SL: What would you do in the evening if you stayed at home for example?
MC: Read the newspaper, watch television.
SL: What about a weekend? What would you do if you had a couple of days, or do you have a couple days, do you work on Saturdays often?
MC: Yes, we are open Saturday.
SL: So your weekend is really then just Sunday.
MC: Just Sunday, yeah.

SL: What would you do to relax?

MC: Sometimes we go to Chicago to visit Lenore's parents or her sister or some friends, or we go to Milwaukee, or visit here with some people, or play tennis sometimes.

SL: What are your hobbies or special interests?

MC: I spend most of my time in the business. I like to play ping pong, tennis. I like to walk, and I also like the synagogue.

SL: What well… You said, you mentioned a membership in the organizations, the Jewish organizations, but how much are you really involved with the synagogue? What do you do there?

MC: I am president of B’nai B’rith, but we are not very active in this town, so all I am doing is collecting the dues and sending it into the main office, but the last few years we haven’t been very active.

SL: Are you doing anything else then as far as the synagogue is going? It comes as more a social activity than it was…..

MC: Right, mm hmm.

SL: What type of interaction do you have with your neighbors here in this neighborhood?

MC: We are very friendly with all of them, but not too close.

SL: Ever have any neighborhood get-togethers or anything?

MC: No, but we see them in the summertime, outside and we are all very friendly.

SL: Have most of the people been in the neighborhood for as long a time as you have?

MC: Yes.

SL: What kinds of things do you like to read when you have the time?

MC: Newspapers, magazines, occasionally a book.

SL: Any special type of books?

MC: No.

SL: What newspapers and magazines do you receive at the house?
MC: We get the Chicago Tribune, Kenosha News, get the B’nai B’rith magazine, the Hadassah magazine, Newsweek, Time.

SL: Do you manage to get them all read? Do you spend a lot of time trying to catch up on the news?

MC: Yes.

SL: Have you read any books on the Holocaust?

MC: Not really, no.

SL: Is that by choice or has it just never come up?

MC: It seems it is something that is too familiar to me to have to read about it. I am too close to it to read about it.

SL: Did you watch the Holocaust television program?

MC: Yes, I did.

SL: What was your reaction to that?

MC: It was very unpleasant watching.

SL: Do you feel they did an adequate job or an inadequate job of portraying what happened?

MC: I don’t think they could have shown everything that happened, this was something for television so they did the best they could, I suppose.

SL: Did people become more interested in your own experiences after the show?

MC: In Kenosha you mean?

SL: Mm hmm.

MC: I don’t go around publicizing, you know, that I am a survivor, so there isn’t too much discussion about it.

SL: So with those that knew you are a survivor, they didn’t say anything more?

MC: Not too much, no.

SL: Where have you traveled in Wisconsin?

MC: Madison, the Dells, a lot of Wisconsin.
SL: Have you liked any part you know, in particular, much more than others?
MC: Well, it’s beautiful country. The entire state is nice.
SL: How about northern Wisconsin? I know you said that it reminded you of the forests in Siberia?
MC: It is similar, somewhat, and also similar to Poland where we lived, except this is much larger.
SL: I am sorry, what is much larger?
MC: Wisconsin than the area, you know, where we lived.
SL: Does Kenosha in any way remind you of Rymanow?
MC: No.
SL: A different type of city?
MC: It is not so much, it is not in any way similar.
SL: How satisfied are you with the cultural climate in Kenosha?
MC: I am not very satisfied with the Jewish activities. I miss it very much, because there are not many Jews living here and the activities are very rare. I miss that very much.
SL: Do you think you would have been happier living in an area that had a greater Jewish population?
MC: Much happier, yes.
SL: Do you ever really think about moving to an area like that?
MC: All the time.
SL: Why haven’t you moved yet?
MC: Because we are too involved here now that we have the business, we make a living here, and stay basically because of the business.
SL: Do you think that when the time comes for you to retire that you’ll want to leave?
MC: Definitely.
SL: Do you have any idea where you want to go?
MC: Where there is a lot of Jewish people.
SL: No particular place?
MC: I may like to go where it's warm in the wintertime, and where there is a large Jewish community.
SL: An active one?
MC: Active, possibly California or wouldn't mind Florida.
SL: What about the cultural activities in Kenosha, do you feel it offers you enough culturally?
MC: Well, we subscribe to concerts and the enrichment series at Parkside.
SL: Do you take advantage of your closeness in proximity to both Chicago and Milwaukee as far as culture?
MC: Yes, we go in quite often to see shows, plays, movies.
SL: How do you feel about living in Wisconsin with its high percentage of ethnic Germans?
MC: That doesn't bother us, there is no problem there.
SL: You don't feel that….
MC: There is a lot of Italians here that, in Kenosha, there are more Italians than Germans. You don't notice a large German population here. I think there are more of them in Milwaukee on the south side.
SL: Has it ever bothered you at all?
MC: No, because we lived in Austria for five years after the war, and the Austrians are considered Germans.
SL: What effort have you made to acquaint yourself with Wisconsin history?
MC: Just traveling.
SL: How do you feel you have contributed to the Wisconsin community?
MC: I think by having a business, and by dealing with a lot of people, and seeing to it that most of them are satisfied. There is a great satisfaction, we also pay a considerable amount in taxes in the state and to the federal government.
SL: Do you feel an obligation to Wisconsin for giving you an opportunity to start a new life?
MC: No, I don’t. I don’t feel an obligation to Wisconsin in particular.
SL: Would you feel more of an obligation toward this country as a whole?
MC: Yes, I feel grateful that I was allowed to come to this country, but once I was here, it was up to me to make the best of it, wherever I settled.

SL: What was your reaction when the American Nazi Party planned to march in Milwaukee?

MC: I was very concerned and upset, and I was ready to go and do what I could, you know, to stop them. I was very angry that anything like this could happen after what happened in Europe.

SL: Did you feel at all that, that even though this country is a democracy and encourages freedom of speech that that was overstepping?

MC: I felt that they should definitely not be allowed to march, in spite of this country being a democracy.

SL: How satisfactory do you find the American system of government to be?

MC: How?

SL: How satisfactory do you find it?

MC: Not very satisfactory, because if it is a free democracy, you have problems with it, like the Nazis. According to the Constitution, they have a constitutional right, but yet a lot of people that suffered so much would feel that this, these rights should not be given to people like that, but that’s democracy.

SL: Do you feel, do you feel on the whole thought that the system of government is better than the others that you have experienced?

MC: Definitely, yes. But I would say it’s far from perfection.

SL: And why? What could make it better?

MC: I feel [laughter]

SL: You don’t want to answer that question?

MC: No.

SL: Well, I’ll ask you another question then. How do you feel about the prominence of Jews in American society?

MC: I am very proud of it, that they are active. They represent many government organizations.

SL: What do you see as the most important issues that are facing America today?
MC: I am concerned, I am very concerned about the minorities, the blacks, the Mexicans, the Puerto Ricans, the destruction of the cities, the unemployed, which I feel is a big problem that will have to be solved.

SL: Anything else? Any other problems, major problems you see?

MC: I think this is a major problem.

SL: You are talking about the minorities and their relationship to the cities or towns?

MC: I am talking about blacks living in Chicago, Detroit and New York where they have very substandard conditions.

SL: And there hasn’t been any remedy to that?

MC: And we can’t find a remedy to educate them, to find employment for them, so they are resolved. We have a lot of crime and people that live around the areas are not safe because of it, so you can’t have people doing well and feeling safe, where a large percentage of the population is unemployed or on welfare.

SL: I think I probably have enough questions left to warrant putting on another tape, although I don’t have too many more, so I am going to turn the tape over now.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 2
SL: To what extent do you believe there is anti-Semitism in the United States today?

MC: Only what I read in the newspapers, but I was not affected directly.

SL: Well, as far as what you read, do you feel there is a great deal of anti-Semitism?

MC: I feel we have to be aware of what’s going on and be vigilant, and watch what’s going on.

SL: How secure do you feel as a Jew in America?

MC: I feel very secure, I don’t worry about it.

SL: What are your feelings about Germany and present-day Germans?

MC: It is very difficult to condemn every German that you see, because you can’t go on living the rest of your life hating everybody, so I am indifferent to it, because I just can’t accuse every German in the world. I don’t feel good what happened, but I don’t feel I can go on hating for the rest of my life.

SL: Have you ever received any restitution?

MC: No.

SL: How do you feel about it, would you, if you, you know, at one time you were able to receive it, did you decide you didn’t want it?

MC: No, most people that received it, they had to be in the concentration camps, and I was in Russia with the family.

SL: So it was never offered to you?

MC: It was never offered to us.

SL: Have you ever returned to Poland once you had come to this country?

MC: No.

SL: Do you think you would like to go back there at any time?

MC: With mixed emotions. I would like to go back, but I know it wouldn’t be a pleasure trip. I just, to take a look at what it is like today after. To visit my home town and the close-by towns.

SL: Have you ever been to Israel?
MC: Three times, yes.
SL: What was your reaction? How do you feel about Israel?
MC: I feel like I am home, that's where I belong.
SL: When we talked before about you possibly moving someplace else after you have retired, do you ever consider Israel as a possibility?
MC: Yes, very much. But it would be depending on my wife's wishes too. But I would like to live in Israel.
SL: Do you think it is easier for you now to talk about your experiences than it may have been five years ago?
MC: No, I don't think so. I always talked about it very freely.
SL: How do you feel about the increasing awareness in this country towards the Holocaust?
MC: I think it is very good not to forget and to be aware and to be vigilant and to watch for, so it doesn't happen again.
SL: How do you feel about the fact that part of the funding for this project has come from the federal government?
MC: Well, I think it has a great social value because of the fact people should know what happened so it wouldn't be repeated again.
SL: And this question, which is also along the same lines, is why do you feel that it is important for you to participate in an oral history project which is documentation on the Holocaust?
MC: I am going to give my time and my experience that other people can learn something from it.
SL: Well, I have come to the end of the questions that I wanted to ask you. Do you have anything additional if we missed anything, and you just you feel you want to say anything, feel free.
MC: I just hope we won't have any more Holocausts and that and it won't be necessary to have this type of a program in the future. I hope there will be peace in the world and in Israel.
SL: That's it?
MC: Yes, that's it.
SL: Thank you very much for doing this with me.

MC: You are welcome.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1

END OF TRANSCRIPT