Transcript of a 1991 Interview with the parents of Norman Klenicki, Max and Rachel, documenting their memories of life before, during, and since the Holocaust

Asterisk (*) denotes when a name or place has been inferred through the interview and other research, but not confirmed.

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Joan: [It's] October 23, 1991, and we're sitting in the home of Max and Rachel Klenicki. And I'm Joan Minnock*, and we're all related, and that will come out as we go along. And we're here to hear the story of Max and Rachel's life, essentially.

Rachel: Where might we begin?

Joan: Well, begin at the beginning.

Rachel: I was born in a town called Slonim…

Max: Louder.

Male voice off camera: Yeah, you need to speak, really, speak quite louder

00:45

Rachel: I was born in Slonim* in 1923. My father's name was Chaim Gendler* and my mother is Helen. I was the oldest—I <u>am</u> the oldest, sorry, of three children. I have a sister, younger than me, and an older brother. They were all killed during the Holocaust. My sister and my brother in Auschwitz.

Joan: What were their names?

Rachel: My sister's name was Rosie, Rayzel, we called her Rosie, and my brother's name was Schemmel It was the name of my mother's father.

Male voice off camera: Your mother's….

Rachel My mother's father. Schlemel. And my sister was named after my father's grandmother Rayzel. And there were many, many Rayzels in the family.

Joan: Still are.

Rachel: Yeah, and still are. This was—I understand, from what they told me, I never, I didn't know her, that she was very beloved by everybody. I mean, her home, it was like an open door, and everybody could come. And she listened to everybody and greeted everybody. And she was not wealthy at all, she had very little. But the whole family knew they could always come to her. My father was next to the oldest in this family. There were three sisters. The oldest one was

Pesche*, it's Chiam, a cousin of mine, who's still alive, his mother. Then there was a sister, Penin*. This sister Kodys* who lived in Israel, who went to Israel in the 30's, who realized that Poland was not a good place to be, took her family, and left and went to Israel, and that is how she survived. And one more sister, Doba* She was the youngest one. We all lived in the same neighborhood, all near each other. Yeah. And all of us, did the same thing. My father had a leather factory, and the two other sisters, they all had leather factories. A "garbowanie" it was called.

Joan: And what did they make?

Max: There's a name for it in English.

Joan: Tanning?

Rachel Tanning, right. This is exactly what it is. And it originated in Krynica*. Krynica* is a town where (name unclear) comes from. He is now in Israel, he comes from there. And this is why he would say "Chiam Gendler*," my father's name,

3:27
Joan: (Unclear-same name as above) from (unclear)

Rachel: Right, nobody would know this, but they called us by Krynica (Krinic), they would say Chiam Krynic. Which meant that we originated in Krynica* And for generations, this is what they did, they were all leather makers. We lived in the back of the town because in town you could not have a—what's that name, what do you call it?

Joan: Factory? A tannery?

Rachel: Right, a tannery. Because in back of town…

Max: Outskirts…

Rachel: Outskirts. There's a little bit, I remember, always being surrounded with family. We were always all children together. I don't know if they always got along well, but they just were always with each other. From one house to another. They would go just down the block, they were half a block apart, all of us. [4:22 Pause] Our—My father worked very, very, very hard. I can hardly see him ever relaxing except at Shabbat. He was always working. We children saw him only when he used to come home very tired, and Shabbat. He loved to have us around, this was his day of rest. When he came from *shul* [synagogue], we all had to be there. We ate all together. It was a very, very warm atmosphere, a very pleasant home to be in. The father worked very hard, we children had everything. We had private education, all three of us went to private school. We had tutors at home, tutoring. My father had very little education. My mother had a lot more, but for us, they wanted us to have a good education. I went to private gymnasium; my sister went to a private gymnasium. My brother, who was little then, went to a private Hebrew school. [To Max] It was called a Heder*. [5:31 Wipes eyes]. It's hard.

Joan: Yeah. You're doing well.

Rachel: Every Yom Tov and every holiday, the family came together. It used to be like a circle, always in somebody else's house. I still remember my grandmother, my father's mother. She was a very, very bright woman. So, she was sick with diabetes, and most of the time she was in bed. She had the gangrene and could not walk around. But nothing in the family was done without her ok. My father couldn't do a thing without taking Grandma's advice, and her advice was always a good one. She was very, very bright. I remember my Grandma died—I was very young yet. [6:23, Pause, wipes eyes]. I remember, too, when my aunt Kodys*, went to Israel. Her two daughters were born at home, one of them, Shoshanna, who has since passed away, was {unintelligible)…we went to school together. And the nice part was, after the summer, before Pesach, we had a river just across our town. It was a beautiful town. The river and a canal just parted the town in two halves. And the river was frozen, all through the winter. But before Pesach, the ice melted, and the water used to spill, so that we could not go to school, because there was so much water. So, we slept all in my Aunt Kodys' house, this was the end of the last Horef (winter). And we couldn't hardly wait for this time of the year to come, so we were always together, but somehow it meant to us an awful lot to be there. Misha, Shanna, Tova, Chaim, Hennie had two daughters, too. Chaim had two sisters and a little brother. His mother died very young and they were orphaned, and they were left, small children. Father used to take care of them, but mostly, they took care of themselves. They had an older sister, Rosie, who was very, very bright. She was the only one admitted to a...[To Max in Polish], how do you say it.

Max: To a Federal…

Rachel: To a Federal High School, which was very unusual, because Jews were not allowed there, but she was so bright they admitted her. And he had one more sister, who was learning a trade in Bialystok…

Max: Not a Federal, a State

Rachel A state?

Joan: A state school

Rachel And then it was Chaim's brother who because circumstances were so bad that Herschel left home and went (unintelligible) to Argentina. And he survived there. He lived there, he has passed away since.

Joan: When did he pass away?

Rachel: (To Max) He passed away how many years now, four or five years?
(This conversation overlaps)
Max: More

Rachel: More?

Max: Ten years

Joan: And Chaim lives in Germany?

Rachel: Yes

Joan: In Munich?

Rachel: In Munich. Herschel came to see us when we came to the United States, shortly before your Bar Mitzvah (pointing to David). You don't remember? Herschel and his wife came. I remember looking for a hall with him for your Bar Mitzvah. He came to see us—he was here twice. He came to your Bar Mitzvah, too if I'm not mistaken, right? (To Max) Was Herschel there…?

Max: No

Rachel: At Norm's

Max: (Nods)

Rachel: At Norman's Bar Mitzvah

9:00
Joan: I remember, we met them somewhere, Herschel and I, my brother, met them somewhere along the way, and we used to call them Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum.

Rachel: Herschel and Chiam? (Max chuckles)

Joan: Yup, that's what we used to call them.

(Laughter)

Max: You used to call them what?

Joan: Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum from *Alice in Wonderland*.

(Laughter)

Rachel: Yeah. And then, all these good things…

Max: Came to an end.

9:36
Rachel (nodding): Came to an end. And the war broke out.

Joan: But before we go on to talk about the war, maybe we could talk a little bit about other relatives.

Rachel: Ok

Joan: About your relationship with the family of Grodek*, and what that was like

Rachel: I do remember, I know, I remember very well, that my father used to tell us that his brother's brother lives in Grodek*

Joan: His brother's…

Rachel: His father's brother. Which was my grandfather's brother. This was your mother's…

Joan: Great uncle.

Rachel: Right. This was your mother's father. My grandfather and your grandfather were brothers.

Joan: And he was a great uncle.

10:19
Rachel: Right. My grandfather was killed by the first Germans. They walked in and they hit him over his head, and he never recovered. The first Germans. During the First World War. Yeah. This was the nice first Germans.

Joan: The nice ones.

Rachel: But my father used to tell us there was a big family in Grodek*. He told us, I remember he told us that there was, like, they had 5-6 children, I don't—I was too young to remember exactly, but I think—how many children were there in your mother's family, between 5 and 6…?

Joan: Nine.

Rachel: Nine…he only knew five and six.

Joan: We can't account for all of them. I don't know… (Overlapping dialogue)

Rachel: One I remember died very young of TB or something. That is what I remember. He was (unintelligible)

Joan: There was Peshe, and then there was Sam, and then there was Emma—

Rachel: Pesche was Chiam's mother's name

Joan: That's another name that…

Rachel: In Argentina, Chiam's brother named his daughter Pesche, too. Pesche and Raisa were all over.

Joan: So then there were the three oldest, and then the two youngest were ?? who lived in Canada, and then my mother, ok, that's five. And then there was Herschel, who stayed in Germany. And then there were three other children. A little girl named Rachel, or Rachel (pronunciation difference) or something like that, and two other…

Rachel: One I know that died…I think (overlapping dialogue). I remember though that my father said they have to leave home at an early age. The children left home. Why, I don't remember, but I remember that he said that they left. Not many of them were left in Grodek.

Joan: Right.

(Overlapping dialogue)

Joan: Because Peshe came first, and then Sam, and then later they brought over…

Rachel: She brought them over, I think, she brought them over.

Joan: She brought everybody over.

Rachel: Peshe? You remember Peshe? Yeah?

12:30

Rachel: And then I remember there was a family in Krynic. This family I remember very well. Why do I remember? I don't know if you met, there was an uncle (background noise cancels out words). He lived in France.

Joan: Was that who I met when I was in France? I met somebody.

Rachel: Yeah, because I remember when you went…

Joan: I met somebody when I was France, and I think it was (unintelligible)

Rachel: I think I gave you a name (overlapping dialogue)

12:58

Rachel: He was an expert at—how do you say it—at getting water, when there was very little to get the water, he was the expert to—

Joan: Dig wells.

Rachel: Dig wells, yes. And this is what his father did, but his father had no education. But whenever there was a problem, they called him (unclear). What means pointy? I don't know, but (overlapping dialogue, unclear)

13:26

Rachel: Everybody had a surname by us. There was nobody who didn't.

Joan: Or a nickname?

Rachel: Nickname, right.

Max: I wouldn't say everybody…

Rachel: But almost everybody. Then I remember we had a family in Bialystok. The family in Bialystok, again, that's true.. And they had parents, too…

Joan: What were their names?

Rachel: Their name was Plavsky*. This was not from the Gendler, this was from my Grandmother's side.

Joan: This was from your Grandmother's side.

Rachel: Right. The name was Plavsky.

Joan: But from the Gendler side there was just in Krynica…

Rachel: In Krynica…In Grodek…

Joan: And Grodek…

Rachel: And there was an uncle who lived in either Lithuania or in Latvia, I don't remember. He was a big Rabbi, and in the drawer where we had the Segula and the books was a Megillah that he wrote. And it was like (unclear) but in a leather cover. He wrote the Megillah.

Max: What kind?

Rachel: I don't remember. I only know that none of us was supposed to touch it. It was only show piece, and when people came, it was like, they were so proud, they would say this is, this was written by Harav.

Max: He wasn't (unclear), he couldn't write a Megillah.

14:50

Rachel: To me it was, at that age—I was a little girl, I don't know. But everybody was very proud of it, very proud. I do remember, once, somebody came to us from Grodek. Who it was a don't remember, but I know it was a cousin. She passed by because we had a train on the way, she stayed only a short while, and left quick. Who it was, I can't remember. I don't remember very clearly, but somebody was there.

Joan: So, you didn't have very much to do with the relatives in Grodek?

Rachel: No.

Joan: It was, like, a separate thing?

Rachel: Separate.

Joan: You didn't know my mother as a child? It was only when you…

Rachel: I didn't know you mother when I came here.

Joan: Right. I…

Rachel: Do you remember how it happened?

Joan: I do remember how it happened! I remember that as one of the very special days of my childhood. When you were coming, I can still remember waiting outside 1444 Park Place for you to come, and that was a very exciting day. It was a wonderful story, there was…

Max: And I can remember your mother found out about us through the information from somebody from Israel.

Rachel: Esther! No! Esther!

Joan: Esther! Was it Feinberg?

Rachel: Feinberg, through Esther Feinberg.

Max: That's right.

Joan: A neighbor in the building, who had been in the camps.

Max: Yes.

Joan: And then one night they were sitting around, and they were talking about their maiden…do you want to hear this story?

Max: And we knew them from Germany.

Joan: And one night, the two Esthers were talking about maiden names. (Some overlapping dialogue) And my mother said, "My name is Gendler." And she looked, and she said, "Gendler…I know somebody with that name. They live a few blocks, she lives a few blocks away from me here." That was really something. And I can remember this day as a child, like it's clear as if it was yesterday. And that…waiting for you to come.

Rachel: And I remember … what the excitement, to find someone who was so alone, so alone in—how many years after we were hear did it happen?

Max: I think it happened in 1950.

17:00

Rachel: We cane in 1949. And we had absolutely nobody (overlapping dialogue)…

Joan: Maybe a little bit later.

Rachel: He was (pointing to David) he was—do you remember when we went all together? No, you were too little. (Overlapping dialogue)

Joan: I think maybe he was in a carriage.

Rachel: He was in a carriage? He was a year old.

Joan: I remember you pushing the carriage to come to our house.

Max: I think it could be a little later…

Joan: A little bit later…

Max: Not much…

Joan: Not much…Since I was older than six…

Max: Maybe '50 or '51.

Rachel: You were tiny little.

Joan: I was tiny little? Well, alright, you probably remember much better than I. I remember thinking I was a slightly bigger—maybe I was six.

Max:'50 or '51.

Rachel: Maybe '51.

Joan: Alright, so I was six or seven. Alright.

Rachel: And Herschel, how old was Herschel?

Joan: He's four years younger than I am.

Rachel: Right.

Max: Because Norman was born in '54…

Rachel: And your mother went with me when Norman was born.

Max: And I remember that we knew Esther, maybe, several years.

Rachel: Right. And what can I tell you, that no body…

Max: I would say '50.

Rachel: …was as good to us as your mother and father. It was such a good feeling. They had a car, remember the old car? And we used to go to the park. What was the park, Highland Park?

Max: No, Rockaway.

Rachel: Rocakway Park?

Max: It's Rockaway Beach. We went—your father took us to Rockaway Beach. And Herschel and Chaim, I remember, we had, as a matter of fact we still have the picture.

Rachel: We do?

Max: Yeah, they are riding some kind of a …

Joan: Oh, I think I know what picture that is…

David: I remember being in Rockaway Playland with Herschel (overlapping dialogue)

Max: Rockaway Playland! And then, also, your father took us—

Rachel: Highland Park!

Max: No, they took us to Bear Mountains.

Rachel: I only remember that Daddy was a very nervous driver, and your Mother used to beg him all the time "Please leave" (?)

Joan: (Laughs) She used to make him more nervous, right?

Rachel: Oh sure, more nervous! (Laughs) And we always used to come to each other.

Joan: I remember your apartment.

(Film break)

19:20

Rachel: There is one thing that's stuck to my mind: though the family didn't see each other very often, I mean maybe didn't at all, because it was not easy to go from town to town. It was very hard, and none of them could very well afford it, or had the time, or had the means. But there was always such a feeling that 'this is our family.' There were not many Gendlers. The name…

Joan: It's a very unusual name?

Rachel: It comes from 'Handler'

Joan: It does?

Rachel: Right.

Joan: I went to graduate school with a woman named Handler.

Rachel: Really?

Joan: Yeah.

Rachel: Why they made it into 'Gendler,' 'Handler' is somebody who handles. You know? But there were not many Gendlers. There were only, you could count them on your fingers.

Joan: Really?

Rachel: Yeah. And it was always a feeling that the family in Grodek, and we, and the family in Krynica, this was it. But we knew about it. Daddy was always sure where the Gendlers are and who the Gendlers are.

20:17: FILM BREAK

Rachel: (Mid-sentence): If they knew each other, I don't know.

Joan: No, there's little sense that…

Rachel: I don't know.

Male voice off camera: Because I remember Grandma Emma talk about tailors from Krynica.

Rachel: Yeah, Grandma Emma. I remember that I, like, through a dream. I don't remember, who said it? That your mother's mother didn't talk.

Joan: Right.

Rachel: This—like, through a dream. When she was deaf (overlapping dialogue) …and all the children were talking.

Joan: Yeah.

Rachel: All the children were fine about it.

Joan: The one person in the family—

Max: How do you remember?

Rachel: That she didn't talk? (Overlapping dialogue) Yes. I told Esther. I didn't feel comfortable to approach your mother and ask her. But one day I got (shrugs) and I asked her, and she said yes, it was true.

Joan: The only person who I know who has maybe some of that is Arlene from—

Rachel: Disroyal's daughter.

Joan: Who has a hearing problem. I never knew that might be…

Rachel: Esther grew up with a mother who was…what? Deaf?

David: Deaf and dumb.

Rachel: Yeah. And they all grew up perfect.

21:33: FILM BREAK

Joan: Also here tonight are David Chaim Klenicki, the son of Rachel and Max

(Discussion between Joan, David and Alan about holding camera)

(Some unclear background discussion regarding camera)

Rachel: And she always wanted the family to be together. She was the one who kept everybody together. She had them always over o her house. She always used to bring them—I don't know how she managed it, but she always managed to bring the family together. It was very important to her.

Joan: Yup.

Rachel: Yup. Family meant to her an awful lot. But now, I stopped when war broke out. When the war broke out, I had just finished high school. War broke out on the day—on the night—when I finished high school. I remember coming home, I laid down to sleep, and in the morning my father woke us up and said, "Children, we have to get up, go and get some food, because the war just broke out."

Max: June 21, 1941.

Rachel: 1941. June 21, 1941.

Max: We're talking when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union.

23:23

Rachel: Right. (Pause). Since then, I lost my whole family. We had to leave our hometown.

Joan: How long did you stay in your hometown before you left? I mean, what happened after June 21? What happened in the next few weeks?

Rachel: The Germans came in, they threw us out from our homes.

Joan: What happened the night—the day or night?—what happened when they threw you out?

Rachel: It was terrible. The German Army came—

David: Where was your home, exactly?

Rachel: Our home was in Slonim. And we lived at the back of the town. The address is (speaks in Polish). I don't know how to say it. It was in Polish. They came, and they didn't throw us out. The gave an order—there was a Jewish Politiform—and they gave an order that all Jews are to leave their homes and to move in on the two sides of the river. This is where it started. The river was in the middle of the town, and the two sides of the river we had to live. We had my mother's brother who lived with us, with a wife and two children. We had my father's sister Doba*, with a little girl, whose name was Szeba* (?), and we had the other aunt with two daughters living with us, and with her husband. We all lived—it was a big, big house.

Joan: How—how many…This was not the house that you lived in?

Rachel: This was in our house where we lived in—

Joan: This was a regular house.

Rachel: A regular house. This house in (unclear; overlapping dialogue).

Joan: How big a house was it?

Rachel: It was a big house.

Joan: How many rooms did it have?

Rachel: (Shrugs) I don't know.

Joan: A guess?

Rachel: (Thinks) Maybe five. I don't remember.

Joan: Ok.

Rachel: Rooms (Counts in Polish)

Joan: What were they, those rooms?

Rachel: It was the rooms where we slept, and there was *stalovitz*

Joan: What is "stalovitz"?

Rachel: (Turns to Max) "Stalovitz"?

Max: It's a living room.

Rachel: Like a living room, with a big kitchen, there was a room—

Max: A living room…Actually, it was more like (thinks) a dining room. A dining area.

Rachel: Right. Like a dining room?

Max: Sure.

Rachel: The big table was there.

Max: The living room was the salonki.

Rachel: Salonki. And then we had a small room, and that's where we did our homework. And all three of us slept in one room, and we were quite happy with it, we didn't need separate rooms. It was a pleasure. We didn't have any problems. And we had to leave home. An order came and we had to move. We moved out and we moved into the ghetto. And my father decided that he wanted to get out. First, he decided we are going to get out of the ghetto. And we had a neighbor, who was very, very good to us, and this neighbor (unclear)—where we were going to go? We were going to do to the little Reich, which went to Germany…?

Max: And it wasn't just a neighbor, it was a gentile neighbor,

26:31

Rachel: A gentile neighbor who took us out of town, and he risked his own life.

Max: A non-Jew

Rachel: A non-Jew, and he—

Joan: What was his name?

Rachel: His name was Yuri Daridov. But he grew up with my father, he lived with us all these years, we were friends with his children. From generation to generation, we lived in the same houses, and we just lived there. And he took us in a wagon with hay, is it 'hay', sopna?

Joan: 'Hay,' yeah. That's right.

Max: Hay, hay.

Rachel: And he took us across the border, across the border was called "The Little Reich"

Max: The Third Reich.

Rachel: The Third Reich.

Max: The territory, they split the territory when they occupied the eastern part of Poland. We belonged before the war to the Soviet Union. Certain parts of the territory, they incorporated into the Third Reich. Now, it was, this was like a part, belonging—

Joan: (Overlapping) Like an annexation?

Max: Yeah, like it was annexed into Germany, into the Third Reich.

Joan: Why?

Max: Why? I don't know.

Rachel (overlapping): There was information that it would be better. I really don't know.

Max: Now, the part where she lived (indicating Rachel), it was belonged—it wasn't considered the Third Reich. So, the conditions were much worse over there, than—

(27:54)

Rachel: First of all, when they came to our town, the Nazis said that our town was a town full of Communists, and they eliminated one by one. The killing in my town way probably the worst. They took—

Joan: Did you ever see anyone killed?

Rachel: Did I ever see anyone killed? (Shakes head) No I didn't. But I could—

Max: She couldn't. If she could see—

Rachel: Then I would be killed myself.

Max: (Overlapping) She wouldn't be there.

Rachel: Like I know that they took my father's brother, and they, out of town they took 1,200 men, it's call (unclear, but probably Petralevichi Hill)*.. And they took them out of town, and they said they are taking them to work, but they never returned. But the workers who went to Petralevichi, this grave—

Max: The pits.

Rachel:Yeah —found the head, and brought it back. And this was my father's brother's head. And I remember when they brought it in—

Joan: You remember seeing this?

Rachel: The head? Yes?

Joan: That's terrible.

28:44

Rachel: (Sighs) And then, after the war, I met a man who was working for my father. He was working for us. (To Chaim) Remember the one we used to hang out at, he used to come to us, Chaim, I don't know if you remember.

Chaim: Yeah, I remember.

Rachel: He used to come to us Friday night, and he was with his daughter and his wife, and he fell into the grave, but he was alive.

Max: Into the pit.

Rachel: Into the pit. Nothing hit him. He was alive. His wife was killed and his daughter. And he crawled out from this pit, and he came back to the ghetto. And he had a piece of his daughter's dress in his hand. And he survived the war. I don't remember how he survived.

Max: (Unclear) He was in (unclear)

Rachel: (Unclear) And after the war, believe it or not, I met this man on (unclear)

Joan: No kidding?

Rachel: He was not—

Max: He was not all there.

Rachel: He was not all there.

Max: After all that he had been through.

Rachel: He used to look at Chaim and he wouldn't be well, and he used to see Daddy. I mean, he looks very much like my father used to be, very much, because my father was like—even the gray hair here (gestures to head), he looks a lot like—

David: It runs in the family.

Rachel: It runs in the family.

Joan: Yeah (chuckles).

Rachel: (Unclear, reference to Herschel). And we went to this town, my father decided to go to the partisans. The town that we went to was called (unclear—plane overhead). This is where Shamil* comes from. Shamil is from this town. My mother and my cousin (unclear)

David: (Unclear)

Joan: Yeah

Chaim: When the plane is going over—

Joan: Yeah

Max: I hear the plane sound.

30:35

Rachel: (Waits for plane sound to die down) I was there with my mother, my sister, and my little brother. After a while, we heard that that sąsiedztwo (nieghborhood) will be destroyed and will be eliminated, so we moved on to (unclear, possible Kokotów). It was another town where my mother had family. And there, they put us in the bunkers…what are bunkers?

David and Max: Bunkers

Max: What kind of bunkers were they? I mean—were they military bunkers?

Rachel: Military bunkers, where they kept supplies for military. I mean, not bunkers where you had aid and windows. And my mother was there with me, and my sister, and my brother. It was terrible, just terrible. A terrible time of war. There was no food at all. It was just horrible. And one day, they brought in bread—wagons and wagons of bread. So, we all ran to bread. Me, my mother, holding all three of us. And we went straight to the wagons. I don't even remember us going to the wagons. And suddenly we heard shooting. My mother was shot in her leg (pause). They took her out from there. They said they were taking her to hospital. I met the doctor, Dr. Reznick (?), who was the one working in this hospital. I've never seen—

Max: He's still alive.

Rachel: He's still alive, this guy.

Max: Dr. Reznick (?)

32:02

Rachel: I'd never see my mother again. Then the three of us were left. I was the oldest. Me, my sister, and my little brother. No means to survive. But we knew how to knit. And one day, they told us—

Joan: Who were you living with?

Rachel: Nothing—in the bunker.

Joan: Just in the bunker.

Rachel: Yeah.

Joan: There was nobody else around?

Rachel: (Wipes eyes) The family that we came to, I think something happened to them before, because none of them—Dietz (?) he came to us after the war, I think he escaped, his brother was killed and (wipes nose, unclear).

Joan: How old were you, Rachel?

Rachel: Well, I was born in 1923, how old was I in 1940--?

Max: '41

Rachel: '42. It was '42 now.

Max: 1941:

Rachel: 42. It was ’42 now. How old was I? How old?

Joan: Almost twenty years old.

Rachel: Nineteen.

Joan: Yeah.

Max: No, you were there in 1943?

33:09

Rachel: In 1943, we went to Auschwitz.

Max: Oh, so 1942—the end of 1942.

Rachel: The end of 1942. So, they were looking for people who knew how to knit. And we knew how to knit. Mother always taught us how. And we were knitting gloves with five fingers for the soldiers.

Max: For the German Army.

Rachel: For the German Army. And belts (gestures to soldier) to carry the ammunition. And we worked so hard that our hands used to bleed when we came at night home, with the extra piece of bread that we got. We couldn’t hold our hands. My sister’s hands were worse than mine. (Rubs hands) Just knitting. All bleeding. And the next day we got up and we went back. I remember my little brother got sick, we had nothing for him, and my sister, who was very, very bright and very capable asked an assessor if he could give her a piece of flannel. He did give her a piece of flannel; I remember him sucking on the piece of flannel. Anyway, he got better. And my father was with the partisan nearby. But I forgot to say this before, while we were still living with our family, my was caught—the partisans were caught. What happened is a doctor from town, a Jewish doctor—

Joan: What town was this in?

Rachel: Miłkowice (?)

Max: (Speaking in Polish)

Rachel: (Responds in Polish). A Jewish doctor—a partisan was wounded by the Germans. They were all constantly looking for them. And he came in, and the Jewish doctor helped him. He bandaged him. This partisan was caught, later, again by the Germans. And they took out all the Jewish doctors and shot them. And they caught my father, this—ah! (Sighs, covers eyes). This is

hard. My father decided that God knows what would happen to us, he wanted to see us once. So, he had sent a non-Jew, a non-Jew came to where we were, and he told us we should go to this-and-this place, and my father will come out to see us. Meanwhile, my father was caught. (Pause)

Joan: And did you wait nights?

35:24

Rachel: We went back, and the Judenrat—what was the Judenrat?

Max: It was the Jewish committee that was, that they assigned, the Germans. It was the Jewish committee that they were responsible for everything. I mean, whenever they needed contributions to be made, or anything else (overlapping dialogue), they would take care of it.

Rachel: (Overlapping dialogue) They were called to dig pits, to bury the partisans and bury the doctors. And this is how we know—I remember it was Chol HaMoed Sukkot*, and some people who knew my father came to pay, like, a Shiva (or Shivka?) because everybody knew what happened, since this was the doctors from town and the partisans. I do remember a non-Jew who was (pause, wipes eyes) who was there with them told us that my father was fasting on Yom Kippur, and he gave him a piece of bread later on, and he had some honey. He told us the story. And how do I remember the story? Because the same man came to take my little brother. And I just decided he can't. That whatever happens to us, we would be all together. I didn't tell you before—before we left Slonim, we had two passports. For non-Jews, Daddy makes two passports for us, as Aryans, as Non-Jews.

Max: Aryan (clarify pronunciation)

Rachel: Aryan. Which, a German helped us make them. He was not an SS man, he was a Wehrmacht.

Max: A regular soldier.

Rachel: A regular soldier. I suppose my father paid him a fortune for it, but we had never used them. They threw them out when we came to Auschwitz. It was no use. My sister—I could not, because I have such a Semitic look, but my sister looked really like a shik (shiksa), because she was blonde with blue eyes.

Joan: How old was she when you were in the bunker?

Rachel: A difference of a year and nine months.

Joan: And your brother?

37:39

Rachel: This is a big difference. About nine years. (Pause, David says something unintelligible). And then one day they eliminated the bunker and they took us all to Auschwitz. It was the most horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible journey. How long did we go, did it take us? I don't know. Whatever you see, whatever you say, it was worse than what they showed. We came through…

Joan: What was worse?

Rachel: The journey to Auschwitz.

Joan: What was it like?

Rachel: It was horrible. It was January (to Max) January? We came in January?

Max: January, the end of January.

Rachel: Yeah, Janaury. It was bitter, bitter cold. There was no, no food.

Max: (Overlapping) Because we came…we came at the end of January…beginning of February

Rachel: (Overlapping) They came later.

Max: She told me it was almost the same time.

Rachel: Almost. Like, you came after. Because I remember the girls from Brusheney?

Max: Yes

Rachel: I was there when they came, and she became my…

Max: (Overlapping) Oh, so you came probably in the middle of January?

Rachel: In the middle of January.

Joan: So, you met in Auschwitz?

Rachel: No

Max: (Overlapping) No

Joan: You knew each other?

Rachel: No. You couldn't…I never knew a town like his exist.

Max: We met after the war.

Rachel (Overlapping): I knew the town like his exist, but I didn't know, I was never there. [38:55] And when they brought us to—to Auschwitz, we didn't know why they brought us there, I was standing there with my sister and my little brother. They lined us all up like you see, and somebody said that all children have to go, we were at the right, they had to go to the left. He didn't want to leave us. He kept running back and saying that he's (to Max) garbarz* (begins crying)

Max: That he's a tanner.

Rachel: That he's a tanner. He has a trade. He was altogether—

Max: How old was he?

Rachel: He was born in 1931.

Max: 1931, so he was twelve or thirteen years old?

Rachel: Yeah, he kept running, he didn't want to go, and they come and pushed him. Me and my sister they took from our side, and they gave us the number, they shaved us, and put us into Auschwitz. (Pause). I do remember my father gave us all, before we left home, he gave everybody some money. This money was, like, gold pieces.

Max: Gold pieces? Russian gold pieces?

Rachel: Da. And it was tied with, in a ball of yarn. I couldn't bring mine in, but my sister brought hers in under her armpit, I don't know how, but when we came to the sauna where they shaved our hair and they undress us, and she hid it under a rock. And we went through and when we got out, maybe two or three days later, and she found it, she had…it was of no use to us. We didn't know what to do with it…nothing. She was with me for a short while. They used to make selections. But while she was with me, she used to go out especially at night, do extra work. The extra work was horrible. To empty the bouts? With (in Polish to Max) human refuse.

David: The latrines? The bathrooms?

Joan: The bathrooms?

Max and Rachel: Yes.

Rachel: To bring a piece, an extra piece of bread. A piece of bread, she used to give me a piece and Sally, a friend from my hometown who survived, and herself. And then one day they made the selection. Selection man…

Max: STUFF HERE

[41:37]

Rachel: They lined us all up in the middle of the street and they made a selection. And they took me and my sister, to this block, twenty-foot five, from there they sent us to the gas chamber. Which was—it didn't mean anything. We were so tired that it didn't really—

Max: They took your sister (unintelligible)?

Rachel: No, me and her. But before they let us in, he asked I remember (speaks in Polish)…how do you…?

Max: What is the relation?

Rachel: What is the relation? So, I went to say, "we're sisters." They said, "Oh," and pushed one out. Me pushed out, and her to kill. The pleasure, the luxury of going together, was too much. And I didn't get the memory, but I met SOMETHING HERE on the 25th block, and she remembered that they were letting out a few, she was the one they let out, the ones who were still able to walk, they took them out, and my sister, and she passed out from hunger, on line, they put her back in. And then I was left all alone. (Pause) The pain of losing everybody, separately (shakes head, pause).

[43:13]

David: How long were you in Auschwitz?

Rachel: How long was I, until…1943 until '45?

Max: From beginning of '43 to, uh, to '45, but you weren't in Auschwitz until '45?

Rachel: No (overlapping), I went to Bergen-Belsen.

Max: (Overlapping): When Auschwitz was evacuated in in 19…when was is? In January of '45, they started to evacuate Auschwitz, and sent away the inmates to Germany. It's what they called the 'Dead March'. They were marched, some—a lot of inmates were supposed to walk something like three weeks always. So...

Rachel: They knew that they were losing the war already.

Max: Yeah. She probably, I imagine that she left Auschwitz around the same time.

[44:23]

Rachel: Yeah, they took us to Bergen-Belsen.

Max: (Overlapping) In January.

Rachel: (Overlapping) By open trains, in January. Open trains that they used for transporting coal. It was horrible. And the BUG BURSTS were even worse . But, before, I don't know. I

believe there's such a thing as fate. Because, if not for fate, why am I still here and no one else is? While I was in Auschwitz, I was beaten so severely that everybody took me for dead. I was laying there, completely unconscious—

David: What was the situation, how did that come about that you were beaten?

[45:04]

Rachel: That I was beaten? Well, it was a foggy day, we didn't go out to work, we used to go to work every day. So, they used to line us up and the little soup that they gave us, the hot water, was given to us while we were standing there (to Max in Polish, Max responds), they kept on counting us and counting us and counting us...

David: (Unintelligible)

Max: I mean, when they line up—

David: (Overlapping): Roll call

Max: Huh?

David: A roll call

Max: A roll call. That's what I said that it was. It was a roll call in the morning and a roll call at night after you came from work, and uh, because they were constantly, they weren't afraid, but some people tried to escape. It was always a roll call.

Rachel: And I went to get my little soup. I was very skinny, I had a striped thing and I had a rope here (indicates her left side with right hand) with a little pull where I had the soup. But the SS men that were there said I already ate. I didn't. So, I said, "No, I didn't." Because I didn't. He said, "I'm lying?" And he beat me up so severely—all I remember is he started beating me. Then I was unconscious. And I didn't remember for how long until Muni* come to us, when did she come to us? In March—

Max: Who?

Rachel: Muni*? Who told us about it.

Max: She came to us…

Rachel: Sure. On the fourth floor. When I just came out from the hospital, after Norman was born.

Max: After Norman was born.

Rachel: After Norman was born. A friend of mine who was there with me and remembered this. I was not well, I was sick in the hospital. And I had trouble and doctors kept on calling me, "was I ever kicked on the head?" and I didn't remember. Her husband was a doctor, and her brother was a doctor. She came to the house, and she told me, "Did you ever tell the doctor what happened to you?" And she remembered and she told me that they dragged me (sighs) to a, it was called a revere*, it was for sick people, where they kept sick people. They dragged me over there, they put water over me. And I met another girl who was with me, Sophie Kranostein* and she remembers me laying there between the dead. Somehow, I crawled out, and here I am. And I survived. And I was left with a bad, bad sickness. They injured my head.

[47:42]

David: Was that common that they would beat people for no reason? For no reason?

Rachel: Oh! Notorious. No reason at all.

David: So, most of the people that you knew were beaten at one time or another?

Rachel: I have seen Laké's* little sister being torn apart by dogs. We were all standing to. No reason.

David: They just set the dogs on her?

Rachel: Yes.

Joan: Did she die?

Rachel: Yes. She was younger.

Max: (Overlapping): And there was no reason they provoked her.

Rachel: They provoked her, and what did I, I just said that I didn't eat, I didn't, I was so skinny, I was skeleton with nothing, no hair.

Max: (At same time): Just—just like she said, she didn't get her food yet, so he said, 'You call me a liar, right?' That's how easy it was.

David: It was their entertainment.

Max: That's right.

Rachel: I do remember that his boots, you know, and the shoes he had, it was like a piece of metal. I remember it was glaring, like—

Joan: Spurs?

Rachel: I don't know what it was.

Joan (?): Spurs?

Max: The boots had, were, had very heavy nails (gestures to the sole of his right shoe).

Joan: Studs?

Max: Yeah, I don't know what you called them.

Rachel: But I'll tell you something, there were people who were very good. On this journey to Bergen-Belsen, it was terrible, I was very sick. I had two abscesses in my throat (unintelligible), big, a high fever, this was how I probably met my husband. I met a girl who was from Gruzheny***, her name is Shifra*, she's still alive. And she covered me up always with her body. She protect me. It's good that she did, because everybody was not very good there, not very nice. People were sitting on top of each other. And she held me, she dragged me on her shoulder, and brought me into Bergen-Belsen. I don't think without her I would have made it to Bergen-Belsen, I probably would have died on the way.

Alan (Behind camera): I'm sure there were a lot of people who did that on the way there.

Rachel: Oh! No, Shula?! It was horrible, horrible. Oh!

Max: A lot of people didn't make it to their destination.

Rachel: (Overlapping) It was snowing, it was frozen, and open, open.

Max: (Overlapping): They used to open up the cattle cars…many, many dead bodies would be taken out before those who were still alive could get out of the cars. So, um…

(Rachel and Joan talking, unintelligible).

[50:11]

Rachel: You know what I don't remember where I was? Liberation.

Max: What?

Rachel: How we were liberated. I remember the English Army came in, but where we were…

Max: (Overlapping): You were liberated in beginning of April, probably.

Rachel: I remember the English soldiers came, this much I remember.

Max: The end of March, or beginning of April.

Rachel: Beginning of April.

Max: All those camps were liberated.

Rachel: And then, the most horrible thing had happened. You realize you are all alone. That there's nobody, nobody, nobody left. That there's no path. And there's no place to go, no people to see.

Max: (To David) I was liberated…

David: (To Max) Which camp were you liberated from?

Max: I was liberated from…

Rachel: Where? Czechoslovakia?

Max: In Czechoslovakia. Leitmeritz. Leitmeritz, Czechoslovakia

(Overlapping voices, Rachel crosses in front of camera)

Max: I was liberated, I believe it was exactly May the 9th. I'm not sure, but I think so. It was exactly the date when Germany capitulated completely. (Car horn outside) I was, I was still sick, because I was (unintelligible). I got typhus. And I passed the crisis, you know, and I remember that the few French civil workers had been forced to come to work in Germany, so I remember they walked into the (phone rings in background) so-called hospital, it wasn't actually a hospital, it was just like a barracks, you know, where they kept the specially for typhus, we were sick with typhus. And they said in French—I couldn't understand them because I didn't know French—but there was some Jews from, I believe from Hungary, and they understood French, and they told me, "They just said that the Germans escaped, and that we are free now." And I think it was about May the 9th, or maybe a couple of days earlier.

Joan: Do you remember what you felt, Max?

Max: It's hard to remember what I felt. I'm sure that I felt happy.

Joan: I'm sure (chuckle)

Max: I felt happy, probably. And I remember one thing, that in order to make sure that what they were telling us, that it was the truth, I looked out through the window to see whether the SS and the machine guns were still on, they had those posts, where they had the machine guns. And I looked up, and I saw the machine gun, but there weren't any more SS. They just left the machine guns and they escaped.

Alan: What camp were you in?

[53:30]

Max: This was Leitmeritz, the German name for it was Leitmeritz, it was 60 kilometers from Prague in Czechoslovakia. And 7 kilometers from the famous Theresinstadtz, if you ever heard of Theresinstadtz.

Alan: (Overlapping) Yes

Max: This was a showcase, where they fooled the whole world, and actually they had theater over there, and they had all kinds of activities, and actually, (Rachel crosses back in front of camera) after a certain time, they used to take them to Auschwitz, to the gas chambers. So this was 7 kilometers. After the liberation, when I gained my strength already, and I was…I remember that I walked the 7 kilometers to Theresinstadtz, to see what Theresinstadtz was like. Because we knew about Theresinstadtz.

Rachel: Did you know that you were liberated, though?

Max: Of course—how could I have walked to Theresinstadtz?

Alan: How was your experience in the camp, compared to what was experienced…was it…

Max: Kind of similar.

Alan: (Overlapping): Kind of similar?

Max: Exactly the same.

Rachel: You had lost a big family, too?

Max: Exactly the same thing.

Alan: You lost your family there in the same way?

Max: They did it in the same way. We came to, we arrived at Auschwitz in, I think it was the first day of February, or the last day of January.

Rachel: You arrived with your brothers?

Max: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Max: So, I lost two brothers, whose names were Usher (Osher)* and Note**, and their wives, and their children, and my mother, and a lot of cousins and uncles.

Alan: Was this the first day, when you got there?

Max: Well, those who were sent to the gas chambers, and I believe it was—either it was the same night when we arrived, or it could be the next day, then I wouldn't be able to—

Alan: (Overlapping): But it was within a short period of time—

Max: (Overlapping): Yeah, it was probably not more than two days. Because the majority of our town that was selected to go to the chamber, they found none fit, not fit for labor. They couldn't get anything out of them, and the children and the older people, not speaking of sick people…

Alan: What was your awareness of the situation when you got to the camps?

Max: When I got to the camps, I can't remember. I know one thing—I remember one thing, that I was very thirsty. After several nights and days going by train. I don't know, I think it was two days and a night.

Rachel: No, it was one day.

Max: (Shrugs) Ok.

Alan: Did you know it was a death camp?

Max: I remember I was very thirsty. I had nothing, myself, everybody, tremendously thirsty. Not hungry, but thirsty. Because we were without water for…Huh?

Alan: Were you frightened?

Max: There was fright. We were frightened, confused, it was a nightmare. It was an unbelievable nightmare.

[57:07]

Alan: (Overlapping): Did you know it was a death camp?

Rachel: (Overlapping): No, we didn't, we had no idea.

Alan: (Overlapping) So you had no idea what was going on in there?

Rachel: No

Max: (Overlapping) We had no idea what was going on, but we saw who we saw and then what was going on.

Alan: What was that like?

Max: The way, the getting out of the trains, and the beating, and the terror and everything.

Rachel: Yeah, it was terrible. It was just—we can't even describe it.

Joan and Alan: Try

Max: (Overlapping): And we all tried to be calm.

Rachel: (Overlapping) I can't…I remember pushing and shoving. It was terrible, terrible.

Max: (Overlapping) Hollering, yelling, shouting.

Rachel: I remember the dogs. You remember the dogs out there?

Max: I remember the dogs. They came..

Rachel: German Shepherds?

Max: German Shepherds

Rachel: German Shepherds.

[58:04]

Max: Of course I remember, how could I not remember? It's hard to believe—I can't believe it that it really happened and I'm here.

Rachel: I'm just sitting now—they separated the women and the men. They took us all separately. I've never seen anybody whom I knew. We used to pass by the wall, and men used to be on the other side, but we were not allowed to talk.

David: What would happen if you talked?

Max: You could lose your life, too.

Rachel: You could endanger the next person.

Max: Or they could send you to a so-called—

Rachel: Straf kommado* (Punishment unit)

Max: Straf kommado *

Rachel: (Overlapping) Which is where I was

Max: Which is punishment outfit, where you had to do, to work, to do the hardest work, and with all kinds—

Rachel: (Overlapping): He unfortunately was at the worst places there were.

Max: Huh?

Rachel: You were in the worst camps there were. The coal mines, the worst.

Max: Auschwitz was the—how should I describe?— Auschwitz was the capital of all the camps around. And they had branch camps, labor camps around Auschwitz. And I'd say in the vicinity of about 20, 30, 40 kilometers from Auschwitz. And all those labor camps belonged to Auschwitz, they were like branches.

Alan: Would you describe it basically as a killing factory, were people were just killed systematically?

Max: Well, I wouldn't…

Rachel: (Overlapping) (Unintelligible)

Alan: Or was it more labor than that?

Max: Well, the smaller labor camps where I used to go, I was in several smaller labor camps, they were like death factories, because the work was very hard and the food was very little, and all kind of punishments.

Joan: (Overlapping) What kind of work was this? What kind of work?

Max: All kind of work.

Joan: Like?

[1:00:15]

Max: Like railroad, and the rails, we used to work, with one of the worst commanders.

Rachel: Where was this, in Bergen?

Max: No, this was in Auschwitz. Then there was building, and, just plain, what I wanted—oh yeah, I was on coal mines. There was a big coal mine down in Poland, Jaworzno*

Rachel: Jaworzno*

Max: I was there. And I was evacuated from there. The evacuations started in '45 in January, and they stated to evacuate all the camps and Auschwitz, too, I was evacuated. I remember, I came from work, it was around 2am 2:30am in the morning. I was working the night shift in the coal mines. And they didn't let us into the barracks, they just gave everybody a small portion of bread, and we started to walk. And this was the beginning of the death march.

Rachel: You did it—

Max: (Overlapping) I was under the impression that I walked for about three weeks, until we got to a certain place called Gross-Rosen*,

Rachel: (Overlapping): There was a camp, too, a death camp.

Max: (Overlapping): It was a death camp. There was a death camp, a terrible death camp. We stayed there overnight; it was the worst night I have ever lived through in my life.

Alan: Why? What happened to you?

Max: Oh, there were killings, and I was even afraid to lay down, to sleep. I was sleeping with my eyes open. And then they loaded us on cattle wagons, cattle cars, and I went, and they brought us to Leitmeritz. I remember when they opened the cattle cars in our, in the car that I was, that I came in, we couldn't get out, we couldn't get out from the car because there were more dead people than alive, and they had to remove the dead people first so that we could get out. This was, I think that we came to, that I was brought,

Rachel: (Overlapping) Bad things. (Unintelligible), ah come, he remembers this—

Max: (Overlapping) I got to Leitmeritz, probably the middle of February, I think so. I don't know exactly, but I remember that, to me, the march was like going on for three weeks in deep snow, cold.

Alan: What kind of food did you get from that march?

Max: (Shrugs) Water soup (chuckle)

Alan: How did you survive? How did you survive?

Rachel: (Overlapping): I'll tell you, fate. If you don't believe in fate, you have to believe in fate now.

Max: (Overlapping) I don't know. I don't know myself how I survived. They used to give us a piece of bread and a little hot soup.

Rachel: The soup was made from—what is it called (Polish)

Max: What kind of vegetable, I don't know what it was. It was so thin, it was just like water.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Like a round, like a melon

David: You had no coat (unclear)

Max: (Unintelligible)

Joan: What kind of shoes did you have?

Rachel: I had wooden shoes.

Joan: You had wooden shoes? What kind of shoes did you have?

Max: I had wooden shoes, and the wooden shoes was better than leather shoes.

Joan: Right

Max: (Overlapping) Because they kept you warm.

Joan: Right, they kept your feet warm.

Max: (Overlapping) And at the top of it, I used to find some—

Rachel: (Overlapping) Rags

Max: (Overlapping) No, newspapers

Rachel: Newspaper? I had rags. I never found any.

Max: I used to put the newspapers around my feet and then put them in the wooden shoe. It was hard to walk in the snow in wooden shoes, very hard.

Rachel: Right

Joan: They, they used to stick to the ground.

[1:04:15]

Alan: You didn't get gangrene or anything like that?

Max: No, no I didn't.

Rachel: You were very strong, you were very well fed at home, very well taken care of, we came from good—

Max: (Overlapping) No

Rachel: I think so. I think—how did people survive times like this?

Max: Maybe because we were used to a hard winter, like Poland was.

Rachel: (Overlapping) But nothing hard life like that.

Max: Because I know a lot of Jews who came from places like Italy…

Rachel: And Greece...

Max: Or Greece, where the climate was warm, and they had to march in this, and they—those who couldn't walk were shot on the spot.

Rachel: (Overlapping) They died, they died like flies. Like flies.

Max: And walking, you could see dead bodies all over.

Alan: They didn't bury the bodies, they just left them there?

Max: (Shrugs)

Rachel: No

Max: Some bodies were…you could hardly see them because they would go into the snow.

Rachel: And then there were bodies this high, and I'm looking out through the screen, and there were bodies, bodies, bodies, it was all we could see.

Alan: Who took the bodies from the gas chamber to the ovens? Was there a special detail for that?

Rachel: (Nods)

Max: Yeah, it was special commandos.

Rachel: And then they killed the,

Max: And then those commandos were sentenced to death, like, after a certain time. Because they were the witnesses, they didn't want to leave behind them. At a certain time, they used to kill them.

Rachel: But they had it much better. They gave them food, they had everything…

Max: (Overlapping) They had better living conditions

Rachel: Better living conditions

Max: But they paid with their lives later. I mean, you had no choice. They used to assign those people, they didn't choose.

[1:05:56]

Rachel: But how was it a few of them survived?

Max: Well, there was an uprising in one of the crematoriums, there was a famous uprising shortly before the evacuation.

Alan: Where was this?

Max: In Auschwitz. Because they had nothing to lose. Yeah, (to David, unintelligible). Because they knew that, you felt in the air that the war's coming to an end. And you felt in the air that they'll be probably liquidated all the scabs.

David: How did you feel it though? I mean, you had no source of news, did you overhear it—

Rachel: (Overlapping) You remember NAME

Max: We had no source of the news, but there was an underground. In Auschwitz, there was an underground, that's right, there was an underground and they had news

(Rachel is speaking, but I can't make out words)

David: What did they do—

Max: (Overlapping) I'll get you to read the book of my friend that sent me the book that the guy-

David: But where did they get their information from?

Max: They got it from outside. This was in Poland. Civilian, civilian—

David: Workers

Max and Rachel: Workers

Max: used to come to the camp and they used to leave.

David: The ones who claimed they didn't know what was going on.

Rachel: You know what I remember, I was already--

[1:07: 16]

Max: (Overlapping) I remember one time, we walked out from, this was when our camp NAME was bombed, the kitchen was bombed. And the civilian—we walked out from the mines, from the coal mines, we walked out from the coal mines, and they we had to shower, and after showering, you had to shower very fast—

Rachel: Where did you get the shower?

Max: Because from the coal mine, they had showers. They had showers, because after the coal mines, you are black, you had to shower. And after showering, you had to run as fast as possible not to be in the last rows, to be far removed, because if you were in the last rows, they were working with the German Shepherds, the SS behind you, and viciously, they let the dogs bite you.

Rachel: Oh, the dogs.

[1:08:19]

Rachel: You know what I remember, (unclear). We were never allowed to talk to men, but this man passed by, I was walking with Shifra* and we went to work, and he went to work, and he said to us in Yiddish: WORDS

Max: That means "Stick it out"

Joan: Yeah, "Keep it together"

Max: Yeah, "Stick together, it's time to get out," because—

Rachel: And we asked him how did he know, he said he found a piece of newspaper on the ground.

Max: Yeah, I used to find a piece of newspaper of the German paper, the so-called *Völkischer**. But between the lines, you could find out. And you knew from civilian workers that you worked together with. They used to tell you.

Rachel: (Overlapping) I had not seen any of these workers.

Max: As a matter of fact, when we were evacuated from the coal mines, Jaworzno, when we started to march, we could hear clearly the Russian artillery. Cleary, the Russian artillery.

Rachel: Alan, you asked what kind of work did we do.

Alan: Right

Rachel: You know, they used to take us to work in the morning, and they used to tell us to cut out pieces of the green grass, you know, the grass pieces? And to turn out clothes upside down so, and hold on like this (Rachel stands) one was standing on the, on high, on the top, and we used to throw the grass, and we were weak. It used to fall down and they used to beat us up, merciless. They used to cut trees. The trees were so big, we were so weak and so skinny, how do you carry those tress? I don't know.

Alan: What was the purpose of them giving you that?

Rachel: What were they cutting them to? I don't remember, but two of us carried a heavy, heavy tree.

David: Supplies?

Rachel: Me and Salza** carried the tree.

David: Was it supplies, or was it just putting you through the motions

Rachel: (In Polish to Max)

Max: Large trees?

(Overlapping dialogue)

David: The camps themselves encompass everything that was built there.

Joan: This big, Rachel?

Max: You wouldn't be able to carry it back with you

Rachel: Not a tree? We carried—

Max: (Overlapping) Bushes?

Rachel: Bushes, probably. But it was so heavy, when down. They gave us work that was just unbelievable, unbelievable.

[1:10:52]

Alan: Did any of the children survive?

Rachel: From Auschwitz?

Alan: From any of the camps.

Rachel: Oh, from family camps…not enough. No, there were no children survivors.

Alan: Because they were gassed the first day, the day they arrived.

Rachel: They were gassed…

Max: Children…

Rachel: Right, I tell you, my little brother, he was taken right away and put into the gas chamber. No, they didn't let any children survive. (To Max) Though Sally** looked like a child.

Max: Looked like a child? She was 14 years old, probably.

Rachel: 14 years old. She was from my hometown. She's still alive and she's in Philadelphia And when they put the numbers on, they put them in alphabetical order, and she was afraid to stay by herself (Camera closes in on tattoo on Rachel's arm). So, she changed her name from Levine** to Gottlieb** or something. So, I had 31968, my sister had "9", and she had "70". Next number to us. And she came with us in the camp, and she was with us for a while. And she's alive, she's alive. (Pause) Only a few. (Pause). I think the most painful…while we were there, we were all together. And it was like, brainwashed. The pain was terrible, but you didn't feel it. I think the most painful experience was when the war was over, and you started to realize…

Joan: What had happened

Rachel: What had happened. How horrible it is, why to care, what to do.

Max: I remember that—no. I remember—I don't think the first few weeks, or even the first few months you were aware, you realized completely what actually happened.

Rachel: (Overlapping) No…not at first. Later on.

Max: You were busy, first of all, you were hungry. But you were busy with supplies.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Hungry and (unintelligible)

Joan: What happened? How did you get—what was the process by which you got the food? I mean, what happened when you were liberated?

Max: Well, the process was when…after the war, the Soviet Army occupied—not occupied, but liberated—Czechoslovakia. So, they first thing, all the sick people, since I had typhus, so they put us in a convalescent home or a recuperating—and I was there about a month.

Rachel: In hospital?

Max: No, no, it was—I was after the hospital. And they gave out better food—they gave us enough food. I mean, the Soviets were there, already. And after that, after that, I was on my way to Poland. I mean, they registered all the—the former Polish citizens. They asked me where I'm from, I said "From Poland." From Poland, I'm a Polish citizen. So, they organized a train, a repatriation train, going back to Poland. But being on that train, this was before Prague, before getting to Prague, and that train, myself and another man, I don't remember where he was from. He was from Poland, too, a Jew. He was together with me when I was, when we were sick together. So, we decided that we're not going back to Poland. So, we left the train, and we walked to the railroad station in Prague, to the main railroad station. And then the, those who were in charge in Polish started to yell, calling to us, "Hey, come back with us Jews!"

Rachel: You didn't go? This was after (unintelligible)

Max: They called us "come back!" And the one who called, who wanted us to come back, he had a pistol, a gun, right? He had the gun, right, and he was a big macher.**So but we didn't' work, we kept on walking.

Rachel: (Overlapping) And where did you walk? Where did you look?

Max: A we went, we walked into the railroad station, and all of a sudden, we came in touch with the free world. This was the—there were many people.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Normal people, normal people.

Max: (Overlapping) And there was a Red Cross station, and they gave out coffee and doughnuts and some snacks. And then, but this was only for a few hours. And next day, I could get more coffee and doughnuts (chuckles). But this was—somebody told me, I don't ever remember who suggested to me, to go and register at the labor department. And the labor department gave me a job with a Czechoslovakian farmer.

Rachel: And you were able to work? You had the care to work?

Max: Yeah, I was—I had a good job. He had also a plantation of cherries, so I used to (mimes picking a cherry)

(Joan laughs, Max chuckles)

Max: I used to take cherries out.

Rachel: (Overlapping) (Unclear)

Max: What I'll say, they treated me wonderful. They treated me wonderful; the food was unbelievable. And they knew where I came from and so on, and so they kept on pushing food on me. I worked there for about two weeks. And then after two weeks I decided (chuckles)—

Joan: Enough with the cherry-picking

[1:16:47]

Max: I had enough with the cherry, and the food and everything, and I went back to Prague. And in Prague then, the so-called Briha, it was called the Briha. These were Israeli, not Israeli yet, it wasn't Israel yet, it was Palestine.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Palestine

Max: It was the Jewish volunteers that came that worked around Europe, concentrating, and finding Jews who survived, and they used to take them to Austria, to Italy…

Rachel: (Overlapping) They also came Uncle Zedi**, one of them, once.

Max: (Overlapping)…and from Italy they used to transport them illegally to Palestine. So, with this kind of transport, I came to Italy. But we couldn't find, I mean, we had to stay hidden for a long time, because the illegal ships, the illegal boats were, in a word, too many. And they couldn't take all the refugees. So, I was sitting and sitting and then I decided that they said that a lot of my hometown people are in Germany. I didn't know who survived. I thought, I mean, I feel that somebody else survived, but in those days, I didn't know who survived. So, then we went through the Alps, by foot, through the Alps.

Joan: Through the Alps?

Max: Yeah. Through the—

Joan: You walked from Italy to Germany?

Max: No, we drove—from Italy, we went by train, we went by train to, um, I forgot the station, the last town, it's on the border between Italy and Austria, and this part of Austria was occupied by the French.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Bern?

Max: Because when we went down, when we went down to the village, we were arrested right away by the French (laughing) and we were put in jail (laughs).

Joan: (Laughs) Not for long, I take it. I didn't know this.

Max: No, not for long. For about, I think, for about 24 hours or maybe 48 hours.

Joan: Was it funny then?

Max: They didn't feed us, there wasn't food.

Rachel: The French weren't very nice.

Max: They weren't nice.

Rachel: They were not nice at all. They were *ptooey*

Max: I mean, not all the French that I meet, the soldiers….

Rachel: (Overlapping) You know what, he was there very fortunate. I was liberated by the English in Bergen-Belsen. And the Germans, before they left, they made sure to tell them that

this camp is infested with typhoid, and they were afraid to come in. For days, I had nothing; no food, no water, people were just dying. And finally, the English soldiers came in, and they had so little themselves because the transportation was poor, and the war was still going on. I remember the first time they gave us a can of meat.

Max: A can of what?

Rachel: Meat

Max: What is this canned meat?

Rachel: I had never seen canned meat, when have I ever seen canned meat? You open this can of meat, I was there and Broche**? And a few other girls, it was like, I don't think there's a delicacy on earth that would taste better than this. And then they gave us soup and they gave us cans of beans, and all of us got sick. So sick from those beans, but we couldn't stop eating. And slowly we started to need water, and they took us out from Bergen-Belsen and put us in a town nearby called Lingen**. And in this town, I still remember—oh, I had nothing to wear. So there was a girl who was still alive. The English gave us sheets—white sheets, linen sheets. She was a dressmaker, she made me a dress, a white dress from a sheet, a white sheet. And I remember when Herschel came, they looking for ?? (Herschel's wife?), Herschel and his brother-in-law. came to Bergen-Belsen, I didn't know who Herschel was, I didn't know who (Name) was. And he looked at me, his brother-in-law, and he invited me to go to a movie because I was wearing such a nice dress (laughs).

(General laughter)

Rachel: Anyway, they took us to Bergen-Belsen, the Russian Army came and asked which ones of us want to go back. Part of us went to suites, they took us to suites and they put us up in a sanitarium? How—

David: Sanitarium?

Max: You didn't go to Sweden.

Rachel: No

Max: I thought you said "they took us to Sweden"

Rachel: Oh, wherever they wanted to go. And I decided I'm going back to Russia. Maybe I'll find someone. And this Shifra that's in Philadelphia said—

Max: Where are you going?

Rachel: Where are you going? You know exactly what happened to each and every one of them.

Max: (Overlapping) They're in the cemetery.

Rachel: (Overlapping) And they know you're part of it, well, and they put you, she said, in a camp there. Where are you going? And she took me—this was in….(to Max: ciężarówka)

Max: What….

Rachel: The ciężarówka

Max: It was…trucks?

Rachel: Trucks. She took me over by force. And then, we stayed there for a few days, we had a little more food for a few weeks. And then, a man from me (Name) came

[1:22:37]

Joan: Where were you living? Where were you living during this time?

Rachel: Oh, they gave us, like, barracks, where the soldiers used to stay. Like, the German soldiers used to stay? It's like…

Max: Barracks

David: Barracks, the barracks were houses

Rachel: Houses, there were bathrooms

Max: Link houses

Rachel: Link houses, like, yeah.

Joan: What were the toilets like in the buildings?

Rachel: There were toilets? No, there was the street (to Max) we had to go in the street, there was a big toilet in the street.

Max: No, what are you talking about?

Rachel: No, I don't remember.

Max: Sure, there were toilets—

Rachel: (Overlapping) I don't remember. And then they came—

Max: (Overlapping) Because it was army houses, for the German.

Joan: No, no, I was asking in the camp.

David: In the camp.

Rachel: No, you don't. There was a big well standing—

Max: (Overlapping) This was in Birkenau. But in Auschwitz they had regular toilets. In Auschwitz they had regular toilets and washrooms.

Rachel: (Overlapping) In Birkenau by us, oh, and from the tap, I used to drink from the tap (?). It was horrible. Well, I was never—I was in Birkenau, I was (unintelligible). And this man came, and he looked for people from Prużany* But he was from my home town, and I went to school with him. (NAME??), I'll never forget, he had heavy glasses, he looked so strange (unintelligible). And he said, "You know what?" When I came down, many Litvakiis** (to Joan), you know Litvakii** it's like (??) And many people—and Shifra, who was with me, was from Prużany* and we went back on a kale train? On a kale…

Max: On a coal train

David: Coal train

Max: Coal train

Rachel: And we travelled to Wannig*?

Max: There was a lot of, right after the war, on the trains

Rachel: Right after the war, and we came to VELEVEE, and there were many his last like Prużany. There was nobody from my hometown. Nobody. I was the only one. I don't think—except for me and Sally, nobody survived. We too.

Max: A few who survived—

Rachel: (Overlapping) The few who were in Russia, but—

Max: (Overlapping) A few who survived the war—

Rachel: (Overlapping) They, by us, they killed on the spot. Not many were in together. From Auschwitz survived me and Sally. Nobody else. That's all. (Polish?)

Alan: How many were there to begin with?

Rachel: In Auschwitz?

Alan: No, in your hometown

Max: No—

Rachel: In my hometown, there were 50,000 Jews.

Max: 50,000 Jews.

Alan: And you think only two survived?

(Rachel nods)

Rachel: After the—

Max: (Overlapping)I think survived more, but—

Rachel: (Overlapping) But they were in Russian, and they were in—

Max: (Overlapping): Those who managed to escape the whole, before, when the war even broke out. To escape into the Soviet Union, to Russia.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Chiam, look, my cousin Chiam. He escaped.

Joan: He escaped? Where did he go?

Max: To Russia

Rachel: As soon as the war broke out, on a broken bicycle, he escaped to Russia. And he begged my father to let one of us go. Me, I was always the weak one. And my mother was overprotective, but my sister. I was always very, very weak. Look how weak I am now, how much I can take. My mother was always afraid that a wind should blow on me. My daddy used to say (Polish?). Overprotective. Overprotective. So Chiam didn't ask for me, he said maybe Daddy would let my sister go. But my father said, whatever happens, we'll be all together. None of us is leaving. How little did he know? And Chiam took a broken bicycle and went to Russia, and joined the Russian Army (to Max) Right? He joined right away in Russia.

Max: Yeah

Rachel: Joined the Russian Army, that's how he survived.

Max: The Russian Army.

Joan: He moved to Germany during the war.

[1:25:57]

Rachel: Oh, he did. This is how. After the war was over, I didn't know that he survived, and he didn't know that I survived. But there were already lists given out. He was the one who came to Berlin and liberated Berlin. And there was a Jewish—while he liberated Berlin, he came into a

house, and there were people in hiding. And he thought they were German, you know, why wouldn't they be German? But these people kept on saying they were Jews, that he's a Jew. She was German but she converted. Chiam checked him out—

Max: (Overlapping) He was a Jew.

Rachel: Chiam checked him out, and he was a Jew. And he gave them back their house, and he lived there with them. But he didn't work—he worked far away from Berlin. But he used to come and whenever he come, he stayed with them. And he found out that I'm alive, through these lists, the Red Cross used to distribute lists. And when he found out that I'm alive, he sent this man, he was a sports reporter, and he used to travel, and he came to ask, I think, he came to ask?

Max: Sure, with the byline

Rachel: He came to Wannig* and he looked me up.

Max: (Overlapping) He looked her up. And he brought some presents, I remember for me.

Rachel: Chiam

Max: Chiam

Rachel: And then I decided that Chiam would come to the Americans, and he couldn't because the Russians wouldn't let him out. And I decided, no matter what, I'm going to see him. It was, still, I couldn't believe he was really alive, and so I had to see him. So I left, I made it past (NAME) lent me his passport.

Joan: So, where were you at the time?

Max: (Overlapping) You did need a passport? You needed a passport?

Rachel: Yes, I needed, I was near Munich. This friend that I got came there and brought us there to Germany, to Munich.

Joan: (Overlapping): Near Munich, in Germany. Ok.

Rachel: And we were living in a little town, it was called Waldheim*. One of the men who was there in charge of this community was from my hometown. His sister was tutoring me. And he gave us their room in a hotel, it was a good hotel. And he gave us a room and that was where I lived. And I went to Berlin. It was—

Max: To East Berlin

Rachel: To East Berlin, it was terribly dangerous. This was all I needed for them to catch me. And how little did I know that I was already pregnant with him?

[1:28:14]

Joan: So, when did you meet?

Rachel: Meet?

Max: We met in forty—

Rachel: (Overlapping) Nineteen—

Max: The beginning of ’46.

Rachel: You see I met him—

Joan: Wait—

Rachel: He came back from Italy, he came through to this place, because all the landsmen concentrated in this place. This was ??, a camp where Eisenhower came. *(NOTE: THIS IS OHRDURK, BUT THAT’S NOT WHAT IS BEING SAID)* This was the first camp that they came, I think, Eisenhower, right? And all his landsman were at this camp, and he came from Italy, and I came from Nuremberg, and this friend of mine, Shifre** that I know, that you know, came one day and said she must introduce me to a landsman of hers. And this was Max.

Max: And this was me.

(Joan chuckles)

Rachel: And this was him. And the minute I saw him, I knew this is it. Three months later we got—he didn’t want to get married and bad way, children, you should know. (Joan laughs) He begged me, he said, “Look, I have nothing to offer.” And I said, “No way, this is it, we’re getting married.” And we went, we didn’t have, ?? Just, we had God. We didn’t have anybody to be present at our wedding, we didn’t have, we didn’t have any means—

Max: We didn’t have any weddings, so we didn’t need anybody

(Joan and Max laugh)

Rachel: (To David) Daddy took a jacket, and Shifre* gave me a skirt, and we went to Munich. And there was an old ??, you remember him? He came from Israel, you remember him?

David: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah

Rachel: You remember him? Because he made your brist.

David: Well, I don’t remember that, but I remember when he came from Israel. (Joan laughs)

Rachel: He came, he went with us, and we went to meet him, and then a Rabbi gave us ??, and when we came back home, (NAME) brought us fish for good luck. We used to (laughs) we got the fish, and I cleaned this fish, and I didn't know that the inside, that you have to clean them on the inside. And I saw everybody, not many people were there, Chelme's father ate the fish, and he called me out and said, "Oh, the fish should be—" (laughs)

(Joan laughs)

Max: Did you open it?

Rachel: Did you open it? Did you take the thing out? It was—

Max: Some cook!

Rachel: Nothing, I didn't know how to cook.

[1:30:25]

David: How did you get to Chiam in your time in East Berlin?

Rachel: Oh, so I came to—this man took me to Berlin. I came to Berlin with a complete stranger. I just think now, where did I get the guts to go there?

Max: He had brought you a letter from Chiam

Rachel: Wrote me a letter, Chiam, where are you? Chiam was not there. There was no Chiam. One day, two days, and what happened was Chiam was taking ???

David: How did he get to East Berlin?

Rachel: Oh, don't ask Chiam, there was the border--

Joan: Wait

Alan: We've got to ask

(Laughter)

Rachel: (Polish)

Max: How did you get—you didn't—

Rachel: (Polish)

David: You smuggled across the border?

Rachel: (Polish)

Max: But how—

David: You were married already then?

Rachel: I was pregnant with you, my son.

David: No—

Rachel: Yes, (Polish)

Max: Well, anyway, I think that you went to meet him. You had the pass--

Rachel: We made it past and when we came to the border NAME said, "I'd rather you don't use it, but you let me know what I can do." And we went to the border, and Chiam didn't show. And I went to the Germany's wife, she was a little German, she was blonde, and told her, "I don't know why but (unintelligible) something's not good." What happened was Chiam was in Potsdam, and his truck broke—

Max: (Overlapping) But he's in Berlin

Rachel: Yeah, his car broke, his truck. And he had no way—

David: He was no longer in the Russian Army then?

Max: (Overlapping) Oh sure, sure—he was a playboy!

Rachel: Sure, he came, he came in, and I was sitting there waiting and Chiam came in. Ah! (Pause) Like God, he came here from Heaven. (Pause) And he didn't know, he didn't want to leave. I begged him, we drove the ?? down, to come with us.

Max: He was afraid.

Rachel: There was no one left, he said he was very much afraid, God knows what will happen to me. And he didn't. And I went back home, and I left him there. But he was in touch with us all the time, yeah, he sends packages.

Max: Yeah

Rachel: And one day, can you see what life is all about? (To David) When we were in a little town. Daddy was working, he used to deliver food for us—(to Max) who gave us this food?

Max: This was—no, this was, you see all the camps were supplied by the UNRA, you know, the "unra?" This was—

Joan: What does it stand for?

Rachel: (Overlapping) UNRUH

Max: This was United National Refugee Relief, for refugees. This was a big outfit, this organization. And they had, they used to deliver the packages for the camps.

Rachel: And Daddy was working—

Max: (Overlapping) I was worked in the, in the, what do you call it, the supply magazine, the supply—

David: Depot?

Max: Depot, right. It wasn't a depot; it was just a room (chuckles).

Joan: And he was just three months old?

Max: Yeah, and—who was three months old?

Rachel: Chiam *(NOTE: IS DAVID'S FIRST NAME CHIAM?)* Chaim.

Max: Chiam? I don't know

Rachel: Chiam was three months. (Unintelligible)

Max: Oh yeah, you're right, we was about three months. Now, what was I talking about?

Rachel: (Overlapping) A man came over—

Max: Chiam was born in '48, in November, right?

Rachel: November, yeah.

Max: And he came, in, and Chiam came, too and—no, it was already March, it was four months.

Rachel: March, ok. He was four months. He was four months. Tell us how Chiam came.

Max: Honey, he came, he came.

(Joan laughs)

Max: He came by—he flew in, right?

Rachel: (Overlapping) He flew in, he took—

Max: (Overlapping) He came in in civilian clothes, and---

David: How did he get over the border? It wasn't so easy for a Russian soldier to—

Max: No, no, no—he left his unit coming over and he put on civilian clothes—

Rachel: (Overlapping) We shouldn't even talk about it—

Max: Oh, now we shouldn't talk about it?

David: You're going to have him talk about it.

(Joan laughs)

Rachel: (To Joan) You see the mentality? This is that last of it, that's what's left of them.

Max: (Overlapping) And he went to West Berlin and he took a plane. He got on a plane. But he was engaged, still, with ??

Rachel: (Overlapping) But how did he come to our home town, who did he approach, Motek*, when he came to us, who did he approach first?

Max: He approached me.

Rachel: He didn't know who he was—

Max: (Overlapping) I was standing in front of the hotel, you know,

Rachel: (Overlapping) Hotel

Max: It was already after work, and I was standing people go home—

Rachel: (Overlapping) Because I was ??

(Unintelligible)

Rachel: (To Joan) Listen to this!

Max: So, I saw a man was walking right towards me with a small—

Rachel: Briefcase

Max: With a small briefcase under—

Rachel: ??

Max: He looked so funny—he looked like a stranger, just him from somewhere out of town. And we walked over to me, and he said very quietly (GERMAN) So when he asked me this question, I said "Du bist Chiam?!"

(Joan laughs)

Rachel: Can you imagine what kind of luck?

David: Let me stop it here, we should probably change tapes.

FILM BREAK.

Max: Any store we walked in, and Peshe used to say—

Rachel: This was our trademark

Max: She used to say, "Dies ist mein Cousin, Rachel, und das ist Motle, his fancy name is Max."

(Laughter)

Joan: Oh, isn't that cute

Rachel: But everybody knew us. We didn't have a bedroom set. So, she said, we're going to buy a bedroom set—

Max: At Daniel Jones (?)

Joan: Oh, at Daniel Jones!

Rachel: She said, listen what she told me. She said, "Listen my child, you have no money, it's true. And you're going to buy a piece of junk that will fall apart. It will be like the famous story," she said, "A poor man went and bought cheap fish. The fish was no good, and he got sick from it. And the money he didn't pay for the fish, he paid for the doctor." (Laughter) "Buy a cheap bedroom set, in no time" she said, "it will fall apart." And she made us buy the set most very good for the money.

David: It's what you paid out in those days

Max: Paid it out.

Rachel: Listen to this, while I was there buying the bedroom set—

Max: (Overlapping) No, no this was years later—

Rachel: Later? Daniel Jones brother had this picture standing there.

David: (Overlapping) Mom, that was twenty years later, twenty years later.

Max: (Overlapping) Many years later.

Rachel: Ok. And the bedroom set is still, we still have.

Joan: Oh, that's wonderful.

Rachel: Yep. She made us buy the bedroom—it was a fortune there (unintelligible)

Max: She said, her philosophy was that only rich people can afford to buy cheap furniture, so they can change it in twenty years.

Rachel: (Overlapping) Oh, was she right! My, she was so right!

(Laughter)

Max: "Good people," she said, "have to buy good furniture, so it could last for, well, we've had it now for thirty-five years, and it's still like new.

FILM BREAK.
Alan, Max, David, sit at table. Camera scans house.

Conversation is overlapping and difficult to hear.
Focus on old photos on wall.