

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Rose Szywic Warner
September 12, 1994
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Rose Szywic Warner, conducted by Randy Goldman on September 12, 1994 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

ROSE SZYWIC WARNER

September 12, 1994

Q: I just want you to begin by stating your name as it was during the war, your date of birth and the town you were born in?

A: Yes. My name was Rozia, like Rose Luft, that was my maiden name, and I was born in Zamuch (ph), the first of July 1918, and I don't know what else do you want to know? I had one brother and two sisters. We had a pretty good life because my father was a builder, and we had people working for us. We had a maid in the house, and we lived very comfortable. Before the war, in 1937, 1938, a friend of my brother's came from Warsaw and he saw me, and he said who is that cute little girl. So my brother said that is my sister, and he took us out for a little dinner and he fell in love with me. So, I get married to him and be married and then the war broke out, so he was in the army, in the military, and he was hurt and he was in a hospital. So my father sent a guy who worked for my father, he sent to Warsaw and he brought him as a soldier wounded in the war. They covered his face. It was a Gentile who brought him, because the Germans were already in our town, so they covered his face not to look like a Jew, not to see that he is Jewish. Even the Germans carried him from one train to another. So, that's the time he came to our town and in 1940, I got married, in the war time.

Q: You met and you planned to get married. He was wounded and then you got married afterwards?

A: Yes, we were just like engaged. He sent me a ring from Warsaw, but I wasn't married to him, and we got married in 1940. I wasn't crazy about marrying, but he was hurt and he said he was going to go to the Germans to be killed because if I'm not going to marry him, he doesn't want to live. So, my mother said you're going to die anyway, all of us, so why don't you marry him. So, I did. I was pregnant in 1941, I got pregnant in 1941, I had a baby and her name was Maugacia (ph), in English it's Margaret, and she died when she was 7 1/2 months old because she had diarrhea and we didn't have any doctors, and we couldn't go to doctors.

Q: This was in Zamuch?

A: I would think in Zamuch, yes. And I had two sisters in the same town. In Europe family lived in one town only. We didn't move around. We didn't leave the nest like. It's all the family, uncles and aunts and everybody lived in the same town. So, then my sister married, I was the middle one. I had an older sister married already. She was I don't know how old. She was 24 when she died, but she married when she was 15 years old. By 16, she had a baby. She had a boy, and that boy was during the war, and she looked-- my sister didn't look like a Jewish girl. She looked like a Gentile so the Gentile boys used to say "Saki, why do you need a Jew for. Throw the Jew away, like she doesn't belong to him. But she was married, happily married to that guy, and they had that boy. Then the

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younger sister, the youngest married a doctor, a young doctor. She was about that time 20. She was born in 1921, and he was about seven years older, 27 at that time. He was a pediatrician. They lived together, and then the Germans used to come in to give us all kinds of orders.

Q: I'm sorry. I need you to stop a second. I think you were talking about your younger sister?

A: Yes. She was married to that doctor. My youngest sisters --- there were three sisters and I was the middle one. She married his name was _____, and they were very happy together, and when the Germans started coming into our houses and taking everything away, you know like here the carpets we have on the floor, but the real what do you call it, not Chinese, the carpets that come from the East, we had on the walls at that time. They were hanging on the walls. So, they told them to take down the carpet from the wall, and he saw that they are very rough to us and they were pushing him and hitting him and they decided to take their lives. So, they went into their -- because they lived one apartment, one home near the other and they went into their room and they told the maids to go into our house and stay with my mother until they're going to wake up. They're going to sleep. So, she came in and she was sitting an hour or two and she said they're still sleeping. So, my mother told me to go in and see what they're doing and I saw them like that both of them. He was really dead and she was all right, but she didn't know that he died. They took their lives. He gave her a shot. I don't know what the stuff was and himself and then he told her when she wakes up before him and he's going to be dead already so she give herself another shot, and he put it away in a place in the oven. We didn't have like heating, but big huge ovens so she said it's there because when the doctors came and the whole town was by our house and when the doctors came, his friends, and they asked _____ where is the rest of it, and she told them while she was still in coma like, but she told them and they took it out and they started giving her _____ shots and she came to life and she lived about three months later, but she didn't go to the funeral. And she was asking where's _____ and my mother said that he is in the hospital, but it was really the funeral, and they buried him. I was sitting with my sister because my mother said you watch her, and I was very shocked because I saw that first. After that, three months later my sister went to the Germans and she said she wants to go to her husband, to die. So, they said, you're to pretty to go to death, and she said, I want to go, and they took her away. That's the last we saw her.

Q: She just presented herself to the Germans?

A: Yes, she said she wanted to go with the transport. She wants to go to be killed because she knew that they took you, it's the end of it.

Q: Let me ask you a question. Did your family have a lot of information about what was happening so that your brother-in-law made this decision?

A: Nobody, we knew that Hitler wrote _____ and the Germans used to tell us it's nothing now. You're going to see what's waiting for you. So, we knew that something is going on, but they didn't tell us what they're going to. They used to say to everybody that they're sending us to work, to the Russian front or to camps, but never they're going to kill us. So, my sister after three months she saw a boy who worked for my father and she said you tell my family that I'm going to see _____, to be with _____ because she found out that he is dead. She didn't want to live. She was in a very bad shape, depression, and she finally she went there. So, my mother was heartbroken, but she didn't -- we didn't want to believe that they killed right away, so my mother was sending us, where did they send the transport and if she can send packages, and they said of course. So, my mother was sending packages in the unknown and she had long been dead. Who knows, we don't know how she got killed and so that was less one. Then they were moving us place to place, and they took us out from our homes and they put us in like not Ghettos yet, in the beginning. They just made our community smaller and smaller and they put us in a Ghetto.

Q: Let me just go back a minute. When the war began in Poland, what are your first memories? How soon did the Germans come into your town?

A: Right in the beginning. They marched in and we didn't even know what happened. They marched in about two weeks later, because at that time I forgot to tell you, my mother sent me for vacation. She said go to Warsaw to your aunt's. She wants you to have a vacation. So, I went to Warsaw, and the war, they started about 5:00 in the morning they were calling in Warsaw, the war, the war, 5:00 in the morning, the papers. A war with Germany, a war with Germany, and we didn't really know what it means. I said I'm going home. I want to be with my parents. My aunt, that was my father's sister, said no they're going to come to Warsaw. It's going to take a long time. You're better off to be in Warsaw than to go home, and I said, no I want to go home. So, she put me in a train that I was with the German soldiers in a train in the beginning because Polish soldiers were going one way and German soldiers were going the other way. It was a horror. We didn't even know what's going on because I was never in a war and how did I know how a war is going to look. Finally I came home and my sister was not far, in the middle of the town living, my older sister with her husband and that child, and she had a maid, her name was Stasha and I went to the window and I started screaming Stasha, Stasha, early in the morning about 5:00, 6:00 in the morning. So, she opened the big gate, because it was a big building with gates, and so she opened the gate and she said quiet, everybody is asleep, but my sister heard and she said what are you doing here and I said, "It's a war." In our town they didn't know yet that it's a war, but in no time did soldiers start marching in. And it was a time that they were -- the Germans were grabbing older people. They were shooting from the street young people, and cripples and anybody they can find, you know. Like bearded Jews, you know with beards and with the Jewish you know, those curls by the ears, and so they were telling him to wash the floors, to lick the floor with the tongue or they said, I don't have anything to wash the floor with, so they said wash it with your shirt. So, anyway, it was a terrible thing, but we never knew what was

happening. Then they told us we have to move together, together in a different place, but we for a little while we stayed in the same place, and my sister had a maid and she was part of the gate, standing and the Germans used to come and they asked if there were any Jews, and she couldn't speak German so she said, "No, Jews," so they left. But we were in the window watching what's going on in the streets, and we saw all our neighbors a lot of them came out of the houses and they told them to make a big ditch and everybody was working hard to make the ditch and they laid around, they told them to stay around the ditches, to stand up, and that's what I saw. A very nice, I don't remember her name, a lady with a little girl, she was about five years old. She was holding the baby with her and they told them to stay with the Germans with the backs and they were shooting from the back in the heads or whatever and they were falling into the graves, into the ditch.

Q: Was this right in the town?

A: Right in the beginning. They were falling and she was holding on to that little baby and she was killed and the baby, and after a while in full blocks and lots and lots of people. I don't remember how many it was at that time, but a lot of people fell into that grave, and that little baby came out after about five or ten minutes, from under the mother because they shoot her in the back of the head, so the little baby was she was holding on her so she wasn't hurt, and she came out from under the mother's body and she was begging them on the knees please don't kill me. I want to live, and they killed her just straight on her -- and she died. This we all saw and my nephew said you see what they're doing. At that time he was about five years old. He said, "I don't want to be killed like this." And so, it was over and we cried and we said this is going to be our end. At that time, I worked already for the Germans, _____ the SS, the German engineers, and I used to be Ruzia, but they called me Pauline. They gave me the name Pauline that was easier for them. Sometimes they called me Rozamunda or you know all kinds of names, but I worked for the Germans and my mother used to take my sister's children and we used to work; all of us, and my child and she used to babysit my mother, for the children. My mother at that time was about 45 or something like this. I don't know what year my mother was born, and she was watching the children and we were working. One time I said I want to go home because they're killing people there, and the SS men said no you're not going because you'll only get killed. You stay here. He was a very nice SS man and he wasn't in the military. He was a civilian SS, and my mother gave me the baby and said here you run away with the baby. He said take the baby, and I'm going to bring you milk for the baby, and he helped me and he was standing over me and he was crying and he said, "I have children, too, and I don't know what's going to happen when the war ends with my children." They were afraid for themselves, too. So, this passed by and they started moving us again, to a Ghetto.

Q: I'm just a little confused. When the Germans came in, you were sent to work?

A: Yes. We had to have camp cards, like a passport, that we are working and we are registered to work, because if you're not registered, you didn't get bread. So, you had to

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be registered, and we used to go all out to work.

Q: Was this in the town?

A: That was all in our town.

Q: Were most of the young women going and doing this kind of work?

A: All of them, old and young.

Q: What was the actual work?

A: Anything. One worked and cleaned houses. I worked as a helper there, you know. They asked me if I know how to make manicure and I said, I don't know. He said try, and I made for the SS men's manicure and I was afraid that if I'm going to hurt them, they're going to kill me, but they were nice SS people, really. They weren't the military. They were private. They were like engineers, but they belonged to the party, but they didn't know the cruelty yet.

Q: But your work was really very intimate. It wasn't working in a factory. It was this one to one contact?

A: In the beginning in our town, they used to make us work in getting used that all of us have to work if you want food. They didn't give us much. The Russians were very small. They gave us bread and the bread tastes like raw, because they didn't bake them like they were supposed to be, but we had something. Then, we worked there until about -- they made _____, that was in 1941. My daughter died by the time, and they came and they took my daughter in something away. I didn't even know where she was buried or what they did with her. Nobody knew what happened to the dead people. They used to come every morning and collect the dead from the Ghetto and take them. We didn't know where they took them.

Q: Okay, now you're mentioning a Ghetto. When was the Ghetto formed?

A: The Ghetto was formed from almost the beginning. It wasn't like a real in Warsaw Ghetto because that was the beginnings. They were just putting us together to have us in one place you see, not in the whole town, to be everywhere that they couldn't find us. So, they kept us. It was togetherness like. They kept us in one place and they knew where to look for us.

Q: Were the conditions bad in the Ghetto?

A: Very. You know, like you have a house and they put you in two rooms, a whole family. My mother with my father and all three of my sisters, the beginning, and my brother. We

were in one room later. So, it was terrible, but you're still -- we were allowed to take our clothes, not much, but a little, but not the furniture. Nothing like this. It's just personal things they let us take and you know, little by little they take away our freedom and everything. We couldn't get out. The Ghetto was from this place to this place. We couldn't go to the other side of the Ghetto by ourselves. We had to have a German or a _____ dressed in a German uniform, but they were _____. They spoke Polish but they were from some place in the border of Germany and Poland, so they spoke both languages. They had to bring us to work. We couldn't go by ourselves. We met one nice _____ and his name was Philip. I don't know the last name. He used to help us. He used to put when they say he used to come and say they are going to make a raid today, you know, like they're going to kill a lot of people. They are going to raid the Ghetto, and so he said let me take you all go into the ditches, you know where the potatoes are high. So, he put us in the ditches and he said I'm going to watch and I'm going to see where they are and I'm going to tell you when to come out. So, the Germans were very smart and very clever, and they used to go around and looking for people like this. They knew that everybody is trying to stay alive. So, he watched them, and he used to show us quietly don't get up. Just stay there, and he was like a _____ means he was the watcher, a watch guard for them, but he helped us. He helped us a lot in the beginning. They had a little more freedom to do that, the _____, and the Germans. They weren't so bad. But, they were bad enough because we weren't used to a life like this. But, you know from the worst they were the better ones. So, they moved us again, and I moved out from my mother to a different place. They gave me a little room in a building, in the same building my aunt lived downstairs with my cousin and her husband and child and another guy, another family lived next door and they made an _____. Do you know what that is? They told us to go to the market place and they were cleaning up the place, so we all went to the marketplace, but the contribution of people, so many they can put into the trains, that they had enough. They did the amount of people, it was over, so they sent some people back. Then when we came back home, it was the middle of the night and we couldn't go because they were shooting everybody on the streets, whoever they saw. So, we went into a building that we didn't even know who lived there, and we heard somebody crying and it was an old lady, maybe 100 years old in the bed crying that she doesn't have food, and that she doesn't know where her family is and we told her to be quiet because they are going to shoot us all. I was with my little baby at that time, yet still, and I was breast feeding her and I didn't have anything in my breast how to feed her. We kept the baby quiet and my cousin was with me with her boy. He was six years old and my cousin's husband. Then the middle of the night, it was too dark, maybe 4 o'clock in the morning, we were going back quietly and we saw blood all over the streets. It was like a war field with people who I knew were on the streets all over, and we saw a German on a horse. He was Gestapo or SS officer, a very high rank officer and he said "What happened?" It was quiet already, just, you know, once in a while we heard a shot someplace. So, he asked us what happened here and we said, "We don't know. They killed us all." And he said, "Tell your people -- I never knew who he was -- "Tell your people that I am ashamed of our race." And he was a high rank German. He told us tell the people so we went home and we said _____ so what can

you say. We went back home so we had to lock the gate and my cousin went to the next door neighbor for the gate -- locking the gate, it was a big like a piece of iron, you know to put an iron on the gate. In the meantime, he went in there and he called us all and he said, "Come in, come in, you're going to see something." Fourteen people were shot through the head. All of them. My two aunts. One aunt was standing. She was looking something in the drawer and she opened the drawer and she was with her head looking into the drawer and she was shot, I suppose in the back of her head and the drawer was full of her blood. One of my aunts was sitting on the floor in the corner, with her tongue out, shot to death. That was my cousin's mother. My mother's brother's wife, and so it was a full house of dead people, fourteen people. All of a sudden I hear somebody calling my name, and one girl was moaning because they shot her in an eye. They said she's too pretty to shoot her so they just shoot her eye out, which she died a while later, but the woman who came out from under the bed, they were all standing or sitting or just so the woman was my neighbor and she came out from under the bed dripping in blood, and she said, I run the first under the bed and they couldn't see me. They just shot the next person who was after me. I said, "Come out" my cousin said, "Come out. You're going to be with us." She said, "No, I'm afraid they're going to kill me." And she went back under the bed. Finally, you know, we persuade her to come out and we said go and wash yourself. Look how you look. She was soaking in blood. So, that was then my mother knew what was someplace else and she sent the maid and she said to Anera (ph), she said go and see what's with my daughter. She came to the window and it was I had a candle on because we were afraid to put the lights on and so she said she came back to my mother and she said I think in Ruzia's apartment there's a little candle so she must be there. So, my father came with a blanket and he came for me and when he saw me he fainted because I looked like -- he couldn't recognize me because we went through hell all night. It was not a night, it was a hell. What we saw, and that's always in my mind. I never told my children anything about those things, and my father took me home to my mother. He took me home and my mother said you're not going anyplace. You're staying with us until they move us further. That was the place for you to stay with us. So, then I said no I'm going to go home tomorrow. Soon after my baby died, because I didn't give her milk. I gave her water. I didn't have anything to give her, and so we --

Q: Was there constantly terror in the streets?

A: Constantly, constantly, night and day you hear shooting and screaming and running. It was not a day or not a minute without fear, without that horror, not fear, horror. It was unbelievable.

Q: You saw this when you went to work?

A: All the time, all the time. Then you know, after that you're still a few months in that Ghetto, and I used to go to work, and I had nice friends, and I had a teacher who and his name was Mr. Khun (ph), and you come to me, and I'm going to feed you and I'm going to give you something to wear, you know things you need. I want to help. So, I used to go

there and they used to prepare for me a package of food of something to bring home, and but you know the Polish people most of them it was a lot of nice people who saved a lot of people who are trying to save, and they saved a lot. But it was many for a pound of sugar, they sold your soul. So, they worked for the Germans, and one time I said to that Philip, he used to come and he used to take me to visit my friends. Like I used to have a friend, my brother's friend, and she used to tell me how about coming to dinner and I said -- she's a _____, you have full Germans, and she said, I'm going to tell her you're my sister and nobody is going to know so that was the truth. But in the meantime, we were making Gentile papers for ourselves to live through the war if we decided to run away before it's too late. So, we were working on the papers. It cost a lot of money too make Gentile papers.

Q: Who was helping you with us?

A: It was a lot of Polish people who did those things, who put the German stamps, like it looked real and everything. They gave me a name, Bernice Slabovuchko, that I should live on this name, and my brother and my father put money down for camp cards like passports like Gentiles and they put money down and they waited. They said it's going to take and they gave them pictures and everything, it's going to take a little while and you're going to get your papers. So, and I had papers from a church and I had those papers but you're going to work every day and all of a sudden one morning they came in and they said it's everything _____, they didn't let us go to work and it's _____, you know they clean out and we all have to go out of town.

Q: When was this?

A: That was by the end of 1941.

Q: You were still living in _____?

A: Yes, but then I came back and it was '41, because they took the whole town together and we marched, children, old and young, whatever was left, we marched to a little town _____. I was never there in my life and we marched 21 kilometers with my sister at that time had a boy and he was eight years already and the little girl was two years old. She had a girl. So, when they told us to march, so we had a woman who washed our clothes for us and so she said send Sanrush (ph) to me and he said "No Mommy, I will not go. I'm going with you." And he said, "I don't want to be shot like all the children on the street, because when you're not going to be here she's going to throw me out and we're going to wind up dead on the street." So, he went and he walked 21 kilometers, an eight year old boy.

Q: Was your family with you?

A: Yes, my mother, my father, my brother, my one sister, because one was already gone. So,

we walked and I helped carry my sister's little girl. And he was walking, my nephew, alone by himself and he was so proud you see I am walking by myself, all by myself. And he walked the whole 21 kilometers. They brought us to a little town. It was a dirty little town with -- it wasn't even a town. It was a village like and there was no place to go and no place to live. We found a room someplace. We went in with a family. I don't know who that was. In the same day, a German, an SS man, but I worked for him, he was -- I worked in an _____ logger, that means a _____ camp and we were going there for there for the day and working and coming home and you know. So, I worked all the time for him. So, he came and he used to call me Pauline, not Rose. So, he came to the town and he was standing on a truck and he said where is Pauline. He called for me, and my brother came into the house and he said I think Walter -- his name Walter Robert, my brother says, I think he's looking for you because he called your name. And I said, "I don't want to go." And I want to go all together. We're going to go all together all of us. So, my mother said, "No, you go," and she put on I don't know whose coat, my brother's coat on me. It was cold already. I don't know what month it was, it was like fall. She put that coat and she said you're going to keep warm. You go back. Maybe by you're going back to work for Robert, you can save us, and we're going to start hiding ourselves in here by the time maybe you can help us. So, I didn't want to go and I cried. I said, "Mother, I don't want to go." He said, "you go." My brother took me there and he said, "You go with Robert," and he was standing on the truck and the other side of the cane, he always had a cane to hit somebody, so he pulled my neck to him and he said, "You come here," and he took me on the truck and he said, "You're going back, because they needed 75 people back to our town to clean up the town. My brother and my father and my mother and my sister and the children stayed in that little town. So, my brother started going for those cards, for the passport. So, the Pollack who made that passport saw that the Germans are you know the bosses and he said -- and my brother paid him 3,000 slotas, that means like \$3,000, and that time it was a lot of money. So, he said, you better get out of here. I don't have papers for you and I'm not going to make them. I have the money and you go out, and if you're not going to get out, I'm going to call the Gestapo. So, my brother ran away. He ran away and he came down, and by that time, my mother and sister and children were hidden in a hole underground. They found them there, I don't know, because I wasn't there anymore, because they took me back to my town. They found them there and where their remains are if they were cremated or they were shot, if they were shot whatever happened to them, I don't know, but my father in the morning he used to like to go to the forest. So, my father went to the forest, and he said I'm going to be back. So, he was walking around in the forest and after a while he came out. He didn't know that _____ that they are killing all the people. They are taking them away and screaming and everything. He came out and a few Germans on horses they were _____, because they spoke to him in Polish and they said to him, you SOB, run back because they are going to kill you with all the Jews around, and my father was a Jew, and my father had no choice. He ran back to the forest, and walking in the forest he was walking and crying and he met somebody was in the forest, a girl. She came to my father and said she's a Gentile and she said please don't kill me please don't kill me, so my father said don't worry, what's your name and she said Tricia. I'm from Warsaw. He

said I'm not going to kill you. I am not to kill you, I'm in the same boat like you are, and I'm going to save you as much as I can. He did. He said I'm a Jew like you are and we're going to hide out together, and when he came out nobody was around anymore. All of them are gone and I by the time I was in _____ in our town in the camp, working and my father was one of the workers, a Pollack, came to the gate and said he wants to see me and I run to gate and I said what happened. He said, your mother was killed. Your sister was killed and the children were killed -- no, he said your father is alive and your brother is alive and I said where are the others why don't you tell me. They are all killed, I didn't want to tell you this. I said I am going there anyway to bring my brother and my father. I went in a wagon hidden with straw and I hid in the straw and they brought me because they had to go and see I don't know what the Germans were looking there for and I said I'm going, and they hid me there. I went and my father and brother and my brother-in-law were there. So, I brought them back. I don't know how, but I brought my brother-in-law and father back and my brother said I am going to wait maybe still he is going to give me the papers and he waited. A few days later my brother came to the gate and he fainted by the gate where I worked but nobody could take anybody in. It was not allowed. So, I don't know how but I took him in quietly and I hid him there. So, her mother, Bessie's mother was someplace around too, and by the gates and she couldn't go in --

Q: This was a friend of yours?

A: Yes, her mother, and I took them in there because that SS guy, I went to him and I said "Please take him in, please." And he said, "I can't, I can't. I'm not allowed. They're going to kill me too." I said, please and he said okay, hide them in the toilet and I'm going to do something about it. And he did. So, I got my father and my brother already there and her mother and another girl from our town. She was sitting hidden in the toilet for two weeks, and whoever came in I said, please don't throw her out. Let her sit there. She was so scared and she was shaking and I took him and then my brother went to work to clean up the clothes by the clothes they worked. By the cemetery they made a big barracks and they put all the clothes from all the town and they had to sort out the good ones and the bad ones and put them in bundles and they were sending them to Germany.

End of Tape #1

Tape # 2

A: So my brother came and he didn't have the papers. They told him that they are going to announce him to the Gestapo. So, he walked out. He came to our town and he was working in the city. He went to work and he met a friend of his. I think he was in the Army with him together, my brother.

Q: In the Polish Army?

A: In the Polish Army. So, because my brother was the oldest brother in the family and so he was born in 1910 so he was not a child and so he was after the Army and he met the guy and he said to my brother why are you miserable what's wrong what happened to you. Are you hurt? Are you hungry? And he said no, I can't get my gentile papers because they took away my money and my father's paper is Kochonoski, and I want -- no and my father doesn't have the papers really, and I want him to be my father and I am his son and we Polish officers are going to run away. And he says, okay, take my camp card. He took off his picture and he gave it to my brother. He said, "I am going to report that in three months that I lost it. By that time you make yourself other papers." So, he gave him the papers that he is Kochonoski, and he made my father his father and they left. They went to Lemberg, to _____ as Gentiles. I took my father the night before when they had to leave. I took him to his friend, and I said Mr. Bishak to my brother's friend, keep my father here one night because they are leaving tomorrow. And he said, "I can't, because my wife is anti-semitic and she's going to give him out. I can't do that. I would love to, and I'm afraid of her." But I was wearing a Moses on my neck and he said, "Child, give me that Moses and I'm going to keep it for you, if you're going to live, I'm going to give it back." I still have it. "I'm going to give it back to you, and I'm going to put a new cross and Maria," and I said fine. So, I gave him that Moses and I had to take my father away from there. I kept him. I took him to another place, to a lady, Nanina (ph) and I said you keep him and she said I will and she kept him overnight. In the morning they left to Lemberg, and they said you don't come until we're going to send for you, no matter what. You shouldn't move from here and I said fine. So, they left. I was already in the camp in _____ it was _____, no Jews. We were just cleaning up the place, we were cleaning up.

Q: How many were there?

A: Oh, it started with about 75 and it wind up over 1,000.

Q: Women and men?

A: Men and women, yes. So, Bessie's mother was there with her brother and a cousin and we got very friendly there. She was a very lovely girl, always smiling and it was a pleasure to be with her in her company and I really fell in love with her like a friend. I said I'm going to help you with this and whatever because I worked in the kitchen there in the

camp. I was peeling potatoes, a potato peeler. Then I got sick of Typhus there and that Robert who took me back he told a soldier that he should bring me every day water there and keep me -- I was in a little coop like, and you have to keep give her water and make a little fire to keep her warm and she is going to be okay. We didn't have any medication nothing and so I got I was crazy. It went into your head. After I came out of the sickness I was nuts. I didn't want to do anything in the kitchen. I didn't want to peel potatoes and he came in, that Robert, with and he said if you're not going to do what I -- not because he was mad at me, but he wanted me to wake up. He said, I'm going to beat the hell out of you but you have to work if you want to live. And I was so scared of him that I started doing it. So, then I got better with nothing. We didn't have even an aspirin, nothing, just water. When you're young, you get through a lot. So, I make the story short and the _____ camp and one night it was late in '41 I had a dream there that my mother I want to run away. No, I had a dream that my mother is by the door and I said, "Mother, what kind of mother are you. I want to run away and you're keeping me here." And she said, "Over my dead body." I'm never going to forget that dream. It was real, I saw her there on the floor and she said you're not going to run away because over my dead body because they're going to shoot you outside and all of sudden we hear screams outside "Arouse, Arouse" that was about 4 o'clock in the morning. Arouse, so the Germans the Gestapo came, we worked for the SS but then the Gestapo came at 4 o'clock in the morning, and the Gestapo were over the SS, so they said all out and they start you know putting us in lines and the outside people start running and they were all shot outside. My mother told not to run, and they took us away. But, before that, there was a guy an engineer with a wife, I told you they even brought me from Germany presents, a raincoat and a rain hat, and a parasol and they said they are going to adopt me and send me to Germany, but it was so sudden that the SS didn't know what the Gestapo was cooking for us and they came to the gate and they were standing in the gate and he saw me going out of the gate and he started crying and he said just like this. He showed that he couldn't do anything, and they took us on big trucks and we didn't know where we were going. They shoot a lot of people in the camp there before we left because they were starting to run and they shoot a lady that I knew by my door and her brain was by the door. Nothing you can do about it. You saw the brain, you saw that person, pieces, but we had to march out. They put us in the trucks and they filled up, I don't know how many people in one truck, the rest they took to the Rotunda, you know, it was a Rotunda and they shot them all. What they felt they're not good to work anymore, so they shot and us they took and they were going, driving us and we didn't know where. Are we going to _____, going to _____ to be killed or --.

Q: Had you heard about these places already?

A: We didn't hear about them, we knew in the camp, we knew it exists. We knew it goes around or they said we went by already _____, that means they are not taking us there. They are taking us someplace else. We thought to jump, the trucks, but we really -- one said let's jump, let's go, and one said no don't, they're going to kill us. So, we were in God's hands.

Q: Did you think you were going to work somewhere else?

A: No, we knew they are going to kill us. We are going to death, because we weren't dressed. I was in my nightgown. We weren't even dressed, with a coat on top. We didn't know really where we were going, but when we passed those death places we knew that they are -- it's death camps, just ovens, not even camps, just straight to the crematory. So, we went by it and we said, no we're going someplace else. So, you know, we lived with hope that maybe we're going to live. They brought us into Maidanek. After a long, long drive they brought us into Maidanek, and they told us to undress and to take a shower. They put us into cold showers and they took away everything. They gave us old junk to put on us, and they took away all our jewelry but you see before we left we were smarter, we put all the jewelry in the toilet. We had packs. We were sitting on it so we put everything there. We said let's not give anything to them. But I forgot that I had long hair and I forgot that I had my earrings with my monogram in my ears and my hair covered it, so it went through, but everything went and we were naked. The men, they took separate and they undressed the men naked and they left them only the strap in the hands and they told them to hold the strap in their hands and they let German Shepherds after them. And you know, when you have something in the hand and the German Shepherds went wild and they were biting out pieces of meat of the people. This was the beginning of Maidanek.

Q: You were watching all of this?

A: We were watching. The women were separate, but the men were running. We were naked, we didn't have straps. Men had pants with straps so they had the straps and the German Shepherds tore them apart. So, we went into the camp. They took us in camp.

Q: When you arrived did you see prisoners already there?

A: Yes.

Q: What did they look like?

A: They looked like prisoners with an L on the back, the striped clothes with _____ on the back. _____ that means concentration camp. That was a concentration camp, Maidanek.

Q: Do you remember what month you went there?

A: I don't remember months, just like I remember barely in the beginning I did remember.

Q: This was the beginning of '42?

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A: No, yes, we went in '42 to Auschwitz.

Q: So, this was before that?

A: Before that, we were about eight months in that camp.

Q: In Maidanek?

A: In Maidanek, about six months maybe. I don't remember exactly but so we went into that Maidanek and they took us in. They dressed us in clothes and they took us in. We marched in. The women separate. The men separate. I don't know how many blocks it was, about five all together I guess and we had about one block that were men and the men had the rest. They had kitchens in the men's place but not by us. By us we only did work and when we came from work they used to put us -- we worked like not melioration, we put grass in the -- the men were bringing us the water. They were the horses and the wagons, and they pulled the wagons with water and they gave us buckets of water and we watered the grass there. That was the job in Maidanek.

Q: How long did you water the grass?

A: All the time. That was my job.

Q: You were beautifying the camp?

A: Yes, beautifying the camp, and that's what you know my husband was there too. He paid his bread -- he worked someplace else, that he wants once to go to the women's camp to see me and I took off my earrings and I put them in a piece of my undershirt and I had them in my shoes because the shoes didn't take away. I just cut off my heels and I was walking like backwards but I had them in my shoes and when he came I took him out and when he was giving me the water I just gave him those earrings and he didn't know what it is and I gave him my bread because men need more bread.

Q: How did you know your husband was there? You hadn't seen him in a while?

A: No, but I was working there and I saw him coming because he told somebody that he's going to be that day through -- like a messenger like you know one word comes to another that he's going to try to see me that day. So, he didn't nobody knew.

Q: That's sort of miraculous that you found each other again there?

A: Yes, but only for a day, only for a minute really. I gave him those earrings and he put them away because and then we worked and we went in the evenings we went to the camp. Saturday and Sunday they used to put us -- the camp was with high electric wires and in between was so much place, very little about maybe how many inches I don't

know ten, twenty inches, I don't know, between the wires. They used to let us in between the wires and sit there and we couldn't move because if you move one way it's electric and you move the other so you were sitting there one by one around the wires. This was our past time or we used to they used to give us a job to bring stones from one corner to another, the same stone. We bring it to one corner of the camp and bring it back, go back and forth like you see ants working, you know. They're going back and forth.

Q: Why were you doing that?

A: For nothing, just because they wanted to occupy us. We shouldn't be free. We shouldn't have free time. I don't know in Polish we say _____, that means, sesame work. It didn't take you any place and we didn't do anything, so we used to work that time like this and then we went out when the food was ready. So, from the men's camp they came in with the food on wagons to bring us the food. The men cooked for the whole camp, so one my neighbor saw me there standing and waiting for the food and he looked at me and he said "Are you hungry?" And I said, I didn't say anything. I was afraid to say something but I just nod my head yes. So, he threw down on the floor a few green peas without the greens peas, just the shell and I picked it up. So, somebody saw it and they took me into the camp and they gave me 25 on my back. They took off my clothes and I was in the whole block, the whole block is like the barrack was watching. They were beating me. I felt maybe three times and the rest I didn't feel anymore. So, they gave me 25 on my bare back. I was -- there was nothing you could do about it. I had open wounds and the girls, her mother tried to _____ wrote they tried to soothe me and said "Don't worry." They dressed me slowly and they took me out to work and my girls about I don't know a few of them ten girls, fifteen girls they were all around me and they were really taking care of me to bring me back, because they thought I was going to die. So, that was in Maidanek. After that it was so bad that whoever wanted to run away they -- a girl wanted to run away, we didn't who she was, and they found her. They brought her back and they put us all in an _____, a counting and they put us all in the middle of the camp, and they put her to be hanged. They hanged her and they let her hang on a windy day, very windy, and she was dinging three days and three nights and we were afraid to look at it. You know, to show us that that's what's going to happen to us if someone even tried to run away. So nobody tried.

Q: No other examples of --

A: Nobody was. We couldn't. At that time we didn't have our numbers because the numbers they gave us in Birkenau, in Auschwitz they gave numbers, but in any other camps we didn't have any numbers. Nobody did. So, we just they told us thousand times a day that if you're going to run away, that's what's waiting for us. So, we were afraid. We were there for about I don't know and we whisper went around that they were going to transfer us someplace else. We don't know where.

Q: I want to talk a little more about Maidanek before you move on. One thing I read was that

in the beginning, maybe you were there a little later, they didn't even have water. It was hard for people --?

A: It was nothing. No where was water. They let us in. They gave us ten minutes, not only in Maidanek, in Auschwitz too, they give us five minutes each to go into to wash, and it was cold water.

Q: Every day?

A: No, sometimes when you went in. We didn't have toilets we went out not even an outhouse, under there someplace where ever we found a place. We didn't have anything. We didn't have a paper so you know what I used to do to take pieces of my underwear and I used that until my underwear was to here but because we had to give them back one to get a new one. So, this was to left to give it back to get a new one. So, you see we didn't have any paper. We didn't have any water. We had very little food. We had just barely to live through the day, a little soup which was terrible from cabbage, rotten cabbage and collarabi. It was the worst thing you ever ate in your life, but when you're hungry you try to swallow it.

Q: What did you eat it in?

A: We ate it.

Q: Did you have your own dish?

A: Yes, they gave us dishes and we used to put the dish in here, under and it looked like this and this was our dish to wash ourselves. I washed my face in it. Sometimes, I don't know how to say, I went number one in that thing and we ate soup in it and the soup it wasn't too much. It was just like a cup of soup.

Q: Were you able to rinse it?

A: With the coffee they gave us in the morning, not coffee. They were leaves, like burned leaves, they made brown water, so with this we washed the faces and we washed the dish and that's all.

Q: How crowded was your block? Were you sharing a bed?

A: Oh, yes. It was like ten in a bed, eight in a bed, one foot. You know, we were sleeping like sixes, six and nine just like this and --.

Q: Did you have a straw mattress?

A: It was supposed to be a straw mattress but it was almost nothing in it. And it was

bedbugs, a lot of bedbugs, a lot of lice, very much a lot of lice and a lot of fleas. Everything you can think about was there and it was on us. They ate us alive. so instead of drinking that coffee I washed my body with it.

Q: Did you ever get sick and go to the hospital?

A: No, if you went to the hospital, you never come out. This is it. Even if you were sick -- we had girls who had typhus and you were dragging them to work, not to go there because and then I'm going to come back to that Tricia. She died, who my father found and brought into the _____ camp and then she'd wind up with me and all of the camps too. So, all of a sudden we heard a rumor that they are going to whoever wants to go for a transport can go for a transport.

Q: I still want to ask a question. One thing I think may be unusual, in Maidanek there were a number of children weren't there?

A: Yes, they were all killed or they, when they brought them to Auschwitz they separated them and they went straight to the oven to the gas chambers.

Q: What were they doing in Maidanek, were they working?

A: The kids, nothing. They were playing around. Kids, you know, but they weren't doing anything. It wasn't kids, little tiny like tiny kids, it was like nine years old. They told one little nine year old in Maidanek to hang his father and he did. So, this is what -- they brainwashed you. They made you they didn't call us person like you know in German is mensch, they called the dog mensch and us they hound, hound is a dog. So, they didn't call us by name. They called us by hound and their dogs were mensch, people, and we were the dogs.

Q: The people's behavior did they adapt?

A: No, people's behavior was like animals. When they saw food, they grabbed food from somebody else. They would kill you for a little soup. It was unbelievable how people in our how you say it in those circumstances how they behaved. Some, when you had a little bit of education, intelligence you knew better you behaved a little different, but some were very, very poor and common people brought in. They didn't know better. They were fighting for their life. They would kill for a little just soup.

Q: How did you respond to that?

A: I was never aggressive. I am not a big eater, and thanks to that I was never hungry, really, really hungry to go for somebody's food or to whatever I got sometimes I was trading my little soup for a little piece of bread with a little margarine and the margarine was like a little tiny square and very thin, but it gave me a little energy. So, this I was never

aggressive, never. I had later on in Birkenau friends who were aggressive and they were going to the garbage and they brought food and they wake me up and they said you have a soup from peels from the potatoes or whatever it was in the garbage but that was later on. In the beginning, I was quiet and satisfied with whatever I had.

Q: Were you surprised by the other people?

A: Very, they used to put the heads in those big pots of what they brought the food and liquid the tanks there and I said what kind of animals are they because they made us animals. They made from people unbelievably animals. I think not everybody had a mind to control themselves and they broke you down and you couldn't control.

Q: One more question about Maidanek, the guards, the kopos, your block elders, who were they, what were they like?

A: They were all mean. You were afraid to talk. You were afraid to say anything. You weren't afraid of them like of the dogs because they didn't do anything to you, they just let the dogs go.

Q: Were they Germans or were they Poles?

A: Germans, Germans and many, many Poles too. They made themselves that they were _____, you know. That means that they have mixed blood, half of this and half of that. The worst people of all were the Lithuanians. They were in black uniforms and the Lithuanians were worse than any Pole or any German. They were the most daring people alive.

Q: This was in Maidanek?

A: That was before Maidanek in everywhere they were -- we were afraid of the black uniforms, because we knew that they are Lithuanians. They were they wanted to be better for the Fuhrer than the Germans. They were terrible people. They hated the Jews a lot. They hated our guts. We were afraid more of them than anybody else.

Q: You were starting to say that there were either selections or you heard there were going to be transports.

A: Yes.

Q: At the same time, were there a lot of new transports coming in?

A: I didn't know about it, must be, but maybe when we left they brought new people. They had to replace, not very roomy places, but at least to squeeze us in. I used to like to sleep by the end of that piece of wood, the bed like because nobody breathed on me. I'd rather

breathe on the wall so I rather had the box from the wall come out on me than the breathing from other people, so they didn't need much place, but I didn't see any transports. Then when we heard that it's going to be transports so my husband sent me word from the men's camp that he is going to register for a transport, I should do it too.

Q: It was your choice?

A: Yes, you could register or you could be killed. They gave you the choice to leave the place and go to a worse one, but we didn't know if it was worse. We thought it was better.

Q: I'm sorry to do this, but I want to back track just once more. Were there any gassings or burnings done at Maidanek?

A: No. They used to be they're gassing I think at the beginning where they just took you to work and they gas you there because we knew and we saw those gassing chambers but not people. They didn't gas them anymore. So, then we had the right to go for a transport. They knew that we not going to a resort place. They knew they were sending us to worse places and this is the way the Germans did their work and that to be to make you very little in not thinking. You know but they gave you like a little authority. You can register, but they did what they wanted to do. So, we registered and they took us away and we didn't know where, and so did my husband. They took him to Mauthausen and they took me to Auschwitz.

Q: Do you remember approximately when this is?

A: Oh, I don't know, 1942, someplace.

Q: Winter?

A: It was like fall, it was fall. I know it was cold but so they took us out. They marched us out of Maidanek and they took us to -- we marched to the train and that wasn't people train they were animal trains or coal trains or whatever and they put me in a coal train. I was black when I came out of there. I looked like a black person. In Polish negroes they didn't say they said black people are coming. The black people are coming because we came out we were black from the coal and this is later. I just go back, they put us in those and they gave us a little bread and they didn't give us water, they gave us a little margarine and a little cheese. We were in the train about four days without water. We begged them for water. They didn't want to give us. Many of us died. They were jumping over the dead people to the window to scream out for water, please water. Nothing was more important than water. They didn't give us any. So, we used to make number one and we used to drink it. What could you do. Maybe people don't -- I don't know how many you interview don't tell those things, but this is the truth. So, we had some water, it was salty, but water. So, we came into they took us four days for a ride. I don't know if I was lucky or not because after the war I even say, why am I alive and the rest perished. I don't

know if I'm lucky. I should go with all of them, but maybe it was my luck. I don't know. Thank God I have three children and I would have them if I wouldn't be here. So, they took us there and they brought us in the middle of the night. It was very dark, very dark when they brought us in. They stopped the train and they took us out and that was already in Berchanau.

Q: How many went with you?

A: A lot.

Q: A thousand?

A: More than that, more than that. Maybe two or three thousand people. Germans were in a line lined up, the Gestapo with dogs by the train and like they saw me they said go this way. They saw an old person this way. This way, this way, children left and right. Left and right, we didn't know. Who knew what means left and we went where they told us to go.

Q: This was a different system than at Maidanek?

A: It was different. In Maidanek they took everybody who came from everyplace. This was the segregation because in Auschwitz or in Birkenau they want you to still be healthy and able to work, and they had there later when I went to work, I saw them, but they had there all working people who had still a lot of energy in them. Energy at least and the old and the children they put separate. It was screaming and pulling. The parents pulled the children to them and they pulled them out of them, the Germans. And they were hitting the people and they were hitting the children and they were taking out the children and beating and killing those children if you're not going to get into here that's what's going to happen to your child. It was the middle of the night. It was awful. It was screaming. I can still hear the hollerings, the screamings, the cryings. It was an old couple he was in a uniform with his wife. He was holding her hand and they pulled them apart. That he is a man. He has to go to the men and she should go with the women. Because they didn't gas you with men and women together. Women separate and men separate who has to go, and children whatever. So, they pulled them apart and got the screaming. They took our children from our camp didn't come with toys because they didn't have the toys, but from the freedom they came with toys and they took away the toys. They keep them, the kids and you saw the kids walking to the ovens in and the parents and all of a sudden you hear screaming.

Q: There were people coming from other places?

A: From other places too, of course. But they separate everything and they let us in to the -- took us into the camp and it was still very dark when they took us into the working camps. They took us in and in the front was an orchestra playing, orchestra real people

playing music to the march and they said left and right, left and right and left, left, left. They were singing to us, and we had to march to their singing. We marched in and we came in there and they looked at that part of the train of us and they saw negroes, they said black people. Because we only had the eyes showing the faces because you touched from the coal the faces all the time. We didn't know how we looked. We came in and they put us under showers, cold showers. They took us in and they said now you go into showers. The other one went into the gas chambers they told them the showers too, but we went to give us clothes. They took all our clothes away. They shaved our heads. They shaved us all over and they gave us clothes.

Q: What were you thinking?

A: We didn't recognize each other. When we came out and we said that's you, that's you, that's Tricia and that's Rose? We didn't recognize each other. That wasn't the worst part. They gave us pieces of material to cover the head because it was cold and it was very, very cold at that time. They let us in to the shower, cold water and all of a sudden they put hot water, like hot and cold, hot and cold. It was screaming terrible because here they bend us and here they give us cold water, cold, freeze us. They gave us barracks to go into. They gave me the 21st block. Then he came into the blocks and I came with her mother. We were in one block. We keep each other together. We hold.

Q: I need you to explain something. When somebody looks at this tape many years from now, they're not going to know who her mother is. They didn't know who her is.

A: That's what I want to say. I and we hold hands with Hannah _____ at that time I didn't know her name but she was _____ and I held hands with Tricia that my father found, and other girls and we said we're going to stay together. We hold each other together. Don't let us part, but we couldn't help. It so happened that we went to the same barrack, so we were all together and we became I and _____ and many others, _____ she was now and we were holding hands. Before we went there to the blocks. They took us into tattoo us. So, we went in for tattoos. We were already clean so they tattoo us. So, they took just a pen and ink and they stretched our skin and they put the pen in one place and they scratch like a four, they scratch that piece and they put another dot and they scratch it farther and the scratch was the whole time was scratching. Then they put a -- this is a half of a little Jewish star so some had tattoos, some had the tattoos here, some had here a little higher, some had that here, the pants. So, this is what and that was my number. They stretch our skin. They put the pen just pen and ink, they made a hole and they scratched it under the skin until they have to make the four the other corner and they pulled it this way. That's the way you see they scratched inside and you'll see in each beginning and in each corner a dot because from there on they went farther. That was the number. Some had bigger numbers. This was the pen. They knew that this transport came at that and that time, like in '42, they came in. So, they know when we came in. Others had different places too. Then they gave us numbers the same numbers to put on the clothes. So we had the numbers here, we had the number here we

had the number some on the back, some you know the men had it in the back but we had them only here and here because if you're going to run away this is an easy target. You can find the person right away. So, that's what they did and they gave us blocks so if you went into the blocks we were all numbered and we all dressed in striped clothes and we went and they gave us underwear. I don't know what kind and who had it before and they gave us wooden shoes. Huge ones, on my foot I was a five and they gave me a man's big shoe so we were just walking in them and put some junk in it, like whatever we found to fill it out. Those were wooden shoes, wooden bottoms and material like junky material tops. That was our shoes and that's why the dress. When we saw each other how we looked and how we dressed we laughed and we cried and we didn't know what -- we really didn't know how to behave. We laughed like I was you know bald so I didn't see me but I saw her, the other person. So, we were all bald.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

- Q: One thing that I am sort of curious about is how the physical conditions at Auschwitz compared to what you experienced at Maidanek?
- A: Different, much, much different. Hannah _____ she was a very clean lady. She loved cleanliness and so am I and we were afraid that we were going to get like everybody else. They had malaria. They had typhus. They had _____ and that everything together and besides everything from the dirt we had sores from the body. If somebody didn't wash, they just died from that. They went to the gas chambers with those sores, but Hannah, _____, _____ used to wake me up in the middle of the night and she said you know what, I found a place that's called they wash clothes and water is dripping a little in the middle of the night we went out with her because we weren't allowed, but we sneaked out. I'm always forgetting I always say barrack and we always sneaked out and we cleansed ourselves. Thanks to her she gave me the courage she said come on, come on let's go because you like to be clean and so do I. So, we washed ourselves with that little drop of water, we shared it. So, that was very important. It was a terrible, they gave us five minutes to go to the bathroom, and we were sitting around and you know, number one, it wasn't a bathroom, it was a room with holes and you could sit there for five minutes and they opened the water in the morning for five minutes you have to get to the water and wash your face and drink a little water and go to work. They start counting us going out to work we had to be all together. They count us. They separate us who is going where to what work to what shop and we had to march out by the music, no matter what. The music was waiting for us.
- Q: Who was playing the music?
- A: People from-- they were in concentration camp and they asked them if they know how to play and they gave them instruments and they told them to play. They cry and play because what else can you do.
- Q: What were the actual physical conditions like? How did they differ from Maidanek? Was it more comfortable, less comfortable?
- A: Less, less, it was worse. First of all they made selections every few weeks. They looked at you naked. You had to go through naked with your clothes on your arm and they looked you through like cattle and looked at your teeth, exactly like cows like cattle, they're buying cows to work. So, they looked us through from the front and from the back and they went around us like you know looking all over you. This was selections, called selections, and they selected if you were still good to work they send you straight ahead and if not they took you out on the side. So, you knew that this was the end. So one time in a selection like this, I had a friend from my town and her name was _____. I forgot her name and last night I was thinking and I said you know, I think I know the name, it's _____, and she was heavy, and I was a skinny girl and she was very,

very heavy and she lost a lot of weight and she said but I'm still heavier than you. You are bones. You see sometimes on television those thin boned people. We call them _____, a _____ is a piece of gold, nothing else, just bones or a musselman. A musselman is completely to nothing. He couldn't walk any more. That was a musselman, and that _____ she said to me I was going before her and she was behind me and she said, you know let's change places because when they look at you they are going to take you to the gas chamber and I have here on my arm a wound and she said put the clothes because we should keep the clothes in our right hand, not the left and she said change it and you cover this because even with a little thing like this they took you to the gas chambers. So, and she said I'm going to walk before you and you after. They're going to look at me not you they're not going to see you. She was right. A fat person when you lose weight your skin hangs, and she went through and they took her aside and they took down her number and I went through. She went to the gas chamber, but she was working with us for two weeks. They took down her number and every day they're going to call me now, they're going to call me today, and I said why did you do that for me? You could live and I could go, and she no, I wanted to go. You're going to stay here and she gave me her piece of bread and she said you take care of yourself. So, anyway, after two weeks they called her name and she went to the gas chamber and I went through like they didn't see me, like she said. And I always have her on my conscious that maybe she was saving me that maybe she went instead of me. I don't know. I have that on my conscious many, many years. So, I come out of there and she was calming me down, don't worry. I want to go, I want you to live and I wanted to go I have nothing to live for. Maybe you'll find your father and your brother. Maybe you're still going to have anybody to live for. So, she kissed me goodbye and she gave me the bread and she went. They used make a _____, they used to take all our clothes and put it, in the winter time, and like a big huge I don't know, it was like a swimming pool with water, and they put something in it to kill the lice and all the insects. So, they gave you back those clothes and you had to go to work, so you put them on wet until you walk out to work it as frozen on you, but this was our life. You asked me how different it was. It was completely different. Then when we came into the camp, you smelled the flesh. You smelled burning. You walked out, you saw on the other side camps like each had a name. We had Loger A, Loger B, Loger C. In one there were all gypsies. In the other one were children or Gentiles, not only Jews and then the third one was anybody who was a little crippled had you know a hunch back or something. That's a cripple. So every time he came back from work another one was gone. No more children, no more playing, no more singing and they didn't like homosexuals and they killed them all too.

Q: So, they would liquidate a block at a time?

A: Yes, all of a sudden you would see it's missing. It's not there any more. Then we saw the fire going. I lived closed to a crematorium. The smell was unbelievable. The screams were terrible. You heard them screaming going in, not because they were afraid. They didn't tell them they were going to death. They just told them that they were going to go for a shower and they were going to come out. But still, when they went in, one pushed

the other the mother wants to go with the child, it was terrible screams.

Q: How did you learn what that was, the smoke?

A: We knew who was burning. You know when fresh transports came from freedom -- not really freedom, they were better off wherever they were like at Bergen-Belsen or in other camps than Auschwitz, so they had a little flesh on them, so when the flesh was burning you saw only smoke. You didn't see a fire, you know. The flames you didn't see, only smoke. When we were burning, like those musselmens, like what they didn't like, you saw flames. So, we knew that those are the freedom people and those are our people. We knew who was who, burning.

Q: How did you first learn what was going on in there at all, though?

A: The minute they brought you in and they send you to work and you saw before people were coming in to work it was just a crematorium. Or they brought them in not a crematorium made to burn but they were killing them there because we were finding spoons on the floor, bones, heads, we saw heads with hair to work. We saw because I don't think they buried them very deep and they were buried -- you know we could see. We were walking on bones and hair, on heads.

Q: Do you think these were things that didn't get burned properly?

A: No, they didn't have the oven finished yet, so they just killed them and they just covered them with I think a very, they were not covered much and we found like spoons and forks and things like this. We were lucky we found those. We had something to eat with because we ate with the fingers. It was not civilization. It was, I think in the old ages, they had a better civilization that we had. Germans looked us over naked like pieces of meat. We didn't have our period time because they put something in your food that we weren't women.

Q: How do you know that?

A: Because I worked later in the kitchen and we were putting in -- it was very bitter what we put in.

Q: What was it?

A: I don't remember the name of it. It was like a powder and you put that powder into the soup and we ate that so a woman wasn't a woman and a man wasn't a man either, I suppose. I don't know.

Q: They didn't tell you what it was?

A: No.

Q: You just saw the results?

A: Of course. We didn't have periods. We were young because how you know how we never being there we didn't think about if we're going to live. We didn't know we were going to live through it. If we would live through it if we're going to be able to have children, to bear children. Never never in life because we didn't even have -- I was married already. I had a child already. There, is I said I have a child and I had a husband and they used to say I was nuts because I looked like a little girl. We were bones, no breasts, nothing. They took away our dignity. They took away everything you have in life, and we didn't care. We just didn't want to suffer, but we didn't care, but we did suffer because they saw we used to go to work every morning. At first you used to work in the outside commander. So, we used to go out in the fields. In the fields we found a row of potatoes. It was a jewel. In the outside commander we were in the fields. When we found a row of potatoes we ate it like it is. No water, no nothing, with the dirt and everything, so and it was so good that I used to say if I'm going to live ever. If I'm going to live, after a dinner if I'm going to have enough dinner that's going to be my desert. It was so delicious.

Q: What kind of work were you doing in the outside commando?

A: In the outside commando I don't know what this is called in America. We called it _____. If you took that in your hand, your body burned. That's a reed, like a burning reed and from this they made soups in the kitchen, so we used to pick those. A whole day with our hands. We felt that our hands were so swollen after a day, and we brought that into the kitchen to cook the soups from it. Sometimes we went into the swamps, because it was swampy. Auschwitz was swampy and we went into the water to the knees or higher and we were pulling those reeds from there and we are putting those reeds they gave us to fill after the day after we picked them, they gave us pieces of like socks and we put them for a mattress. That's supposed to be our mattress, but those reeds are very sharp on the ends and they cut our hands. That didn't matter. We were bleeding. We were swollen, but that was our job and we wanted to live, or you couldn't kill yourself. You didn't have any sources to kill yourself. How, people were running to the electric wires or shot when you were running. So, and I think we were chicken. We didn't have the guts to that.

Q: There was a lot of that?

A: Yes. Lots of it because you didn't have the guts. You wanted to die but you didn't know how and so this is --

Q: You must have also wanted to live?

A: Must be. I remember why I wanted to live, because I knew that my father and brother are

free and maybe some day we are going to meet. And I knew that I have a lot of uncles in America. I never knew my uncles even my father didn't remember them and they were living in Cleveland Ohio and they were in American and I thought maybe the American Army will come and they are going to bombard the place and some are going to get killed so it doesn't matter but at least somebody is going to get saved, you know be saved. That's what we did in the beginning. Then they were selecting people all the time in the morning where to go and they selected me to _____. Did you hear about _____ and they selected me and Hannah and _____ the same to work and that was heaven. We were you know inside closed in. We were segregating clothes, which ones were good, which were bad or finding gold and diamonds and had to put them in boxes because they were watching you like hawks.

Q: These were items from the new transports?

A: From all the transports. Everybody who came in. We found, first of all we had to check all the seams in the dresses if there are not diamonds there. They were watching you what you're doing. We had to throw the diamonds in there. We had everything put bundles made big, big bundles and put them together and put them up you know in bunches and right away people came in and took them to a train and they were transported, the good ones, to Germany. And the bad one we had to cut and tear into pieces. So, that's what we did in _____.

Q: How did you get chosen for that?

A: Just because they were going through the lines and they were choosing faces. I think they liked me. I don't know.

Q: Let me ask you a question. Was it a strange feeling going through the clothes of all these people like yourself?

A: Very. We knew, you know we found in Jewish clothes big crosses, bibles, catholic bibles because they were already, I think they changed their religion and they thought they were going to be saved. But Hitler found the generation of Jews and some came there and an old lady came in and said I am not Jewish why am I here. She said my grandparents were Jewish. I said, that's why you're here because the Germans were the most stupid Jews in the world. They didn't believe. They said we're going to win. That's our Germany. Hitler's going to vanish. You see, they didn't believe. They believe our Germany _____ and they really believed in them that they are not going to kill them because they are Germans. So, we used to when walking to work in Birkenau we're going every morning to Auschwitz, four kilometers to Auschwitz to _____, and they told us to sing, what we were singing, but I can't sing so I'm going to just talk and it's like _____, you know what that means. The shoes and the stockings are torn and the dresses are _____, that means they are in pieces and _____, that means through the underwear when you whistles the wind. So

they said it German _____. That was our song going out to work and it has to be left, left, left, left. This has to be everyday. And sometimes when they were mean, they told us to take off the shoes in the middle of the winter and walk out barefoot to work. That was meanness and we had to pile up the shoes by the gate. But the music was playing and we were walking. If we had sick friends we were holding them up and we were walking out with them.

Q: Did any of the other prisoners resent you for being in this _____ or not?

A: No. Then I worked in another place. We were building buildings. We were making railroads. We were holding those heavy -- and girls didn't have the strength to hold them and one would let go and the other fell on the feet. It was unbearable and we had to do it. If not, if you let it go, you got killed.

Q: You saw people getting killed?

A: Of course, beat up, killed and they'd drag him into the camp, dragging by the feet. It was just awful but I worked building a building and when we had the 15 minutes to get our soup there was a German old man there, a very old man. At that time when I was young he was in his sixties, maybe it was an old man, but he was like a manager by the buildings and he couldn't talk to anybody, but I think he liked me and everyday he brought me a sandwich in the morning with an egg in it. And he put it on a window and he just showed me with his eyes where to take it and I took that and we shared it with the girls, with Hannah and _____ and with another girl from my town and you know I shared with them a bite. Each one got a bite from me and that man brought that sandwich every day in the morning until I never saw him again. But that's what we were doing and that was our work and our job and coming in they used to you know give us a little water and a little piece of bread and a little piece of salami some time some day and a little margarine. I used to have sores on my body and I was afraid that I was going to get worse so I used to sell the margarine for a little -- we had a market between each other -- and I bought some ointment to put on my body. And we used to make pee -- excuse me I had to say it and wash our body. The salt, they didn't like the salt, the bugs, and we put it on the body. I did it every night. I put it on the body and many of us do the same thing. That, to be insane, you didn't think about it. We had such a small brain at that time. We were only thinking how we were going to make it through the day. One time we went to work in the hills and I found a wild duck in the field and I took that wild duck. I didn't care. I put it -- I was wearing a man's jacket like and I put it under -- and it was alive and I was holding with the other hand I was holding the beak of the duck and I brought the duck into the camp, to Auschwitz and I sold it for a bread, a _____, like she was the maid of the barrack. She bought it from me because they had more bread and more food and she was Czechoslovakian and she bought it from me and I think they cooked the soup from it or I don't know what they did from it because they had the facilities to do it. I had a jar of jam and a bread for us.

Q: Did you keep this in your bunk?

A: No, I shared it with the girls.

Q: You ate it right away?

A: Of course. We shared it and we had a terrific dinner. We shared that because she brought it in so I didn't have to sneak it in, so it was in already so I said let's have it and we sat in the back and we all ate it and we had a ball. That was one episode I could bring something in. I couldn't believe and everybody said "How did you do it?" I said you see, hunger is more than life. I kept his beak closed so that he shouldn't make noise and I had full of his feces in me, but I didn't care because I had bread. That's what happened one time to me and I couldn't believe. Then I had another girlfriend who lives now in _____ she lives now in Israel and she was in care of the feces. You know what we did the whole night, you couldn't get out. It was closed, you couldn't get out. So, she was better off than anybody else so on the holidays like today you come and wish each other a happy new year and so the girls Hannah and other girls said go to Sarah, maybe she's going to give you something to eat because I couldn't. The people who could organize. I couldn't. I wasn't the pushy type or I couldn't do it so they said look you don't eat so go to Sarah and she will give you something. You will see. She is from your town, you took her into the _____ camp and she will help you for sure. I went to her and I said Sarah I came to wish you a happy new year and she was sitting by a _____, big plates from iron, red ones, they were red and the Greeks called them _____, and she ate in that _____, full of it and she had cream of wheat and sugar and I don't know what. She didn't even offer me a little bit. So, I was sitting there talking to her and I left and I came and I cried and they said did you get something and I said she didn't give me anything. So, they hated her, but to her I come later in the last episode because she knew that she doesn't deserve anything. Anyway, she was very mean. She was very selfish. She was from the one that she was going to live, be the only one alive. So, she didn't share with anybody anything.

Q: You brought up something interesting, that this was Rosh Hashana. Were you aware of Jewish holidays in the camp?

A: The Hungarian people they knew exactly when it was a holiday. And we were with the Hungarians and they used to pray quietly. They used to say come to my bed we're going to pray. I didn't know how to pray. I didn't read and write Hebrew or Jewish so they were praying but to pray to God you can pray in any language in any place. If he is in a synagogue or not church he is in every place we are, he's even here if he's there. So, we prayed to God and it doesn't matter where we are. That was our praying. We prayed quietly and we cried and we kissed each other and we wished each other a happy new year. We didn't have a calendar. We did not know which day it is. We knew when passover is, we knew everything.

Q: In some way you acknowledged all these holidays?

A: You see, I was never religious, but there I prayed with everybody else. I thought maybe that is going to help me. You reach out to anybody especially to God. I believe in God, but I am not a fanatic. I believe in something higher than we are, better than we are of our savior, but I am not like today, I am not going to a synagogue because I don't know how to pray, but I pray at home. I put on a tape of _____ and I have it at home by myself. I cry a little and I pray to God because he's there. If not for him, maybe I wouldn't be here. My father after the war used to say where was he when we needed him the most, and I said he couldn't take care of all of us. So, that was Auschwitz.

Q: Were the guards horrible? Were the block elders Jewish?

A: Not the _____, was Jewish, but the elders they were Germans. They were Germans and let me tell you that's very important one episode in Auschwitz. One day we were coming back from work and _____ was standing in the middle of the like a place, a big one, and they made pole to hang somebody and everybody came in and he said halt so everybody had to stand around. We didn't know what this was for, but we knew something is going to happen, something bad will happen. So, we were standing all around and they brought in a girl. She was Czechoslovakian and her name was Molly and she was working in the underground but she was working in Birkenau. She was a _____, do you know what a _____ is? She was like a message girl and they were sending her in from the front from the camp inside a messenger girl so she knew everything but in the meantime, she was working in the underground with another Polish guy and the men's camp and he was not Jewish, he was a Pollack and his name was _____, and they were working together. They had German uniforms. She had the right to go here and there, so she put on a German uniform and he a German uniform and they went out of Germans and they were reporting to the underground what's going on inside. So, that went on for a few years. Somebody, always somebody will tell on you. So, they denounced them and they caught her and they let her go out in a German uniform and they caught her outside. They wanted to see where she was going but she felt something wrong and she didn't go the places where she was supposed to go and they caught her in the men's because we weren't together with men. They were like -- we were on the east side, they were on the west side. We just met them when they came to fix something in our camp or something so we weren't allowed to talk to anybody. So, she, they caught her and they brought her in and they were supposed to hang her for everybody to see what's going to happen to those people who are working against the Germans. So, he was standing there and he was so happy to see that she's going to be hanged soon and her hands were tied in the back and somebody, we don't know who, we were all standing around. The whole B, I was in Lager B and the whole B Lager was standing in that appel, and we were supposed to witness what is going to happen. In the meantime somebody gave her a razor to cut her and she had her hands tied and she cut her wrist with a razor, both of them and when she started, the blood started running and she was starting to faint so they looked what happened and she was fainting, so they

stopped the hanging and they took her they brought a cart like and they put her there and she was instead she was cremated. She said long live Poland, long live the freedom, long live the world without Hitler. She wasn't afraid any more. And they took her away. That's what we witnessed.

Q: Were there other acts of resistance that you noticed?

A: There was one but they decided that did you hear about _____ commander. The men in the _____ commander decided to run away and tell everybody to run after them and they cut them and they shot them, they were shooting at them and they were pulling them in. They let us watch them like by the feet. _____ was running and they brought them back to the camp. But they were running. A lot of people were running and a lot of people there were dead. About that time about 200 people died, maybe. I don't know the exact number, but a lot of people and we saw that. Because they said today you're going to run, word of mouth, mouth to mouth, we knew what's going to happen. If I was chicken I wouldn't run, but somebody didn't. They said that's our chance where to run. They were all over. So, they tried. They burned them all. They beat them up first and then they burned them.

Q: Did you ever have any reason to be in the hospital there?

A: No. That was to let me tell about Tricia. I'm going to the hospital. That Tricia who my father saved she was very lazy and she said I'm going to go to the _____, that's the hospital. The Germans called it _____.

Q: In Auschwitz or Maidanek?

A: Auschwitz.

Q: It was called a _____.

A: Yes. I'm going to go there and I'm going to live better than you and I'm going to have more food, and I'm going to tell them that I'm sick. So, she went there. She was there a long time. I used to go to her and I used to say get out of here. They're going to take the whole _____. They're going to burn you. They are going to kill you here and she said no, no I have it good I am like a nurse and like this and some people came into the camp pregnant. They wanted you to be pregnant. They used to take out the children. They killed the mother and they made the children they were guinea pigs. So, she was helping there and one day Tricia was killed. They took her out. I was never there. I said I will never go there because when you say you're sick, you're certain 99 percent you wind up in the gas chambers.

Q: I was wondering if anyone you knew had any first hand information about some of the experiments?

- A: I wasn't there and I can't give you any information. I know they were taking out the open stomach the mother or they let her have the baby and she suffered and then they killed her and they brought her to the gas chambers and on the kids they were the guinea pigs.
- Q: Were you aware of any sexual abuse while you were there?
- A: Not I. They say, now I learn a lot from other people, but that wasn't in our camp. Not, I didn't experience things like this. I knew that the Germans talking to us was a _____. How could they do something like this. I know it was because other people lived that through. They were in whore houses. I didn't know about it. I knew it was a _____.
- Q: Because of the unusual circumstances, do you think any of the women in your block had sexual relationships with each other. Was that anything you saw?
- A: I didn't see. I saw lesbians. I hear lesbians doing it and we didn't know what lesbian is. I said, what are they doing there? So, they said, don't you know? They make love, and I said, what love? I don't know a woman with a woman and they said they are lesbians. So, because there were a lot of Germans too. But they were Czechoslovakian and they lived on top of me and I hear them.
- Q: In the same bunk?
- A: Yes, in the same bunk. So, but I didn't have any experience. I didn't see. I knew that they did some. I don't know how, but I knew what I knew I had two girls, two Marishas, from Warsaw and I know that they were prostitutes and they were doing things with the Germans there, too, but I didn't see it.
- Q: How long were you in Auschwitz?
- A: About two years.
- Q: What happened next?
- A: Next we went with the transport to _____.
- Q: How did this selection come about?
- A: They asked you, you want to go someplace else, so you have to sign in. So, I said yes. I want a change. It's terrible. It can't be worse. So, we went they took us and so they said so you're going to go on a transport. We waited about two weeks or so and we went for a transport and they took us to _____.

Q: Were your friends with you?

A: Yes, all of us, like Hannah and the others, a lot of them. Some went to the gas chambers. One said I'm going I can't take it anymore. So, whoever was alive went with me because we kept together all Hannah and others you know. Hannah was with me close to the end of her life, so that's why she is the closest to me and I talk about her because she was like my sister.

Q: How big was the transport, Rose?

A: I have no idea. It was a few blocks. They filled up a few blocks and they kept us naked for about three or four weeks. I don't even know how long they kept us there because people used to come to our windows from there and they used to see in one girl came, who she was my brother's friend and she looked at me and she thought I am my other sister, _____, and she said are you _____, and I said who are you and she said it's Sophie Biaz. She was Polish. She wasn't Jewish, she was catholic and she was a guinea pig there because she was taken from our town. We didn't know where she vanished to the Gestapo and she was working with her husband in the underground. So, she came to the window and she saw me and she started crying like a baby. She brought me a piece of bread into the window and she said do you know what happened to me? She was very tall and very she had very gorgeous legs, she said you know what I don't have my cartlidges by my bones and I can only walk five or ten minutes most and my feet, I don't have any feeling in my legs so she was a guinea pig there. She helped me there a little and they kept us there and they fed us there naked and we were on the beds doing nothing and just you know kidding around and not knowing even what's going to bring tomorrow. We didn't know. Are we going to stay here, nobody knows.

Q: You didn't have any clothes?

A: No, nothing. They took our clothes because they didn't want to watch us all the time to walk around to get mingled with others. We were locked in and no clothes so that's okay. We had a blanket you know like one blanket of eight and that's okay. We had a little something to cover ourselves and we were walking around naked. So, it didn't bother us because we were all women and we didn't have anything to hide. We didn't have anything period.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

- Q: When you're traveling from one camp to another, are there peasants, are there people that you pass that see you?
- A: We didn't have windows. They knew -- the Pollacks or wherever we went through knew that there were people in them. Because some through a little hole put a hand out, screamed out, but nobody saw. We didn't see anybody. We had to see somebody through a little hole. But nobody come close to us.
- Q: So you're in _____ were you working?
- A: No, we didn't work there. We were just waiting for a transport to a place where to go. So, the front was coming closer and closer and they had transport people closer to Germany. So, that's why we wind up 120 miles from Germany, from Berlin. That _____ was we didn't know about _____ who knew so all of a sudden they come in. They opened our blocks and they said you're going to a transport. Now, they gave us the clothes, the bundles and they told us to dress and we're going. We marched out from there. Again, we went in to train. Everything was a train. Not people train, but car trains. So, they put us there. They gave us a little bread and there we go. They gave us a piece of bread.
- Q: How long was the train ride do you remember?
- A: To _____ I don't know. From Maidanek to Auschwitz it was four days. A long time, a long, long time. Here it wasn't short, maybe two days. I'm not sure. But when we came there and they opened the gates for us and we were the first ones, nobody was there. It was quiet. We said, "My God we came to heaven. Now we are in heaven." So, that was about a thousand of us, maybe a little more, the first transport.
- Q: When do you think this was, maybe the end of '44? Was it getting that late?
- A: Yes that was the end of '44 because I was there until about April 25 or something the middle of April and then they took us out. The Germans were still around because we were an exchange for soldiers. So, when we came in there we were so happy. We are in a new place and we know each other and a girl knew that I made manicure for the Germans so she asked the _____, a German woman, a very, very SS woman, a terrible person, and she asked the girls who knows how to make her manicure and she said I know how to make her and she knows how to make manicure and she said okay, I need only her. So, she took me after a few days we were there. And she said you're going to work in the kitchen and you're going to be at my disposition any time I need you. And I said, fine. So what else can you do. She had a boyfriend there, a Gestapo man, and she wanted to look nice, good to him and be you know combed nice and she said to the other girl, okay, you can comb my hair but I'm going to take her. And she didn't like it and she

said do you know how to comb my hair and I was scared to death. If I'm going to do wrong, she's going to kill me. And I said, how, just wet waves, like waves, and I said I'm going to try, maybe I don't know but I can try. And she said try it. She gave me a comb and I made it nice with a fingers, I made the waves. I don't know how. Fear teaches you everything. From fear you know everything. There's not a thing that you don't know. So, I start making her hair and she said I'm going to show my boyfriend my hair. She's going to show if he likes it and he said it's wunderbar, it's wunderbar so that's all, so I became her private beautician and manicurist, but she said to me you are going to work in the kitchen, that means we didn't peel potatoes, we were only that was a machine that it was like scraping the potatoes with the dirt and everything. In the beginning I didn't work in the kitchen so my girlfriend Hannah, no another girlfriend used to make pancakes, no potato pancakes threw them in a little oven there and with the sand and the dirt and everything just like baking them and we were supposed to swallow them because you couldn't chew them. It was in the teeth, it was an awful feeling so we were swallowing them to fill the stomach. So, she cooked a little soup and she brought me up to eat a little soup, but when I was in the kitchen so Hannah wasn't there yet. They took from -- no Hannah was there. We all were there. Going out to Sweden she wasn't there. So, then other girls start coming into _____ from Auschwitz, from _____ wherever they took them, because Auschwitz was in Poland and the Russians came very close to there so they had to evacuate very fast. So the evacuation came very fast and they brought them in bunches to _____. So, Hannah came with the next transport with me and other girls and that Sarah Goldberg what I tell you she was there too, and I worked already in the kitchen. After a while she prepared me she didn't want me to be by the potatoes. She wanted me to be a cook to have nice hands to hold her hands and I said I couldn't believe it I was in a kitchen and I saw food. And so when the transport a few weeks later a new transport came and I came out of the kitchen with a white, I was wearing a white uniform in the kitchen because that kitchen cooked for the Germans too. So they picked me in the day time they took me in the dining room where the Germans ate to be a waitress. It was very nice. So, I had to wear a white uniform. So, I came out when a new transport came in and I looked who was there and I saw who is from our girls who is from the _____ camp and _____ said Ruzia it's me and so I said _____ it's good to see you and we hugged and I said who is with you and she said Sarah is with me and others. They are all with me and another Rushka is with me an I said okay. That Sarah thought I was a nurse so she didn't even come close to me, but when she hears that I'm in the kitchen and they said what are you doing here, what are you doing here, I said I am in the kitchen. I am working as a cook. So she wants to be my friend but I had ten girls. We are together. We came all together and I said to Hannah, _____ Bessie's mother, I said you are going to be the supervisor of the food. You're going to feed all ten girls that left after that terrible, terrible what happened to us and you know terrible deal that happened to us and we are alive and I will help you. So, she said fine. I said put them together, tell me how many are there and I somehow I was going to steal the food from the kitchen and I am going to feed you. In the meantime I was transferred to block one, because there whoever worked for the Germans had to be clean and that was the first block was for the clean people.

And there I found a woman and a little boy. He was nine years old. She was a doctor and the husband was a doctor, but the husband was killed already. And that boy's name was _____, and he was with the parents with the mother because they were doctors.

Q: Where were they from?

A: They were from Lemberg, but they were in that camp when they put me in that barrack, in that you know, barrack, they were there.

Q: They were Polish?

A: They were Jews from Poland from _____ and that boy, I felt that I found my nephew and I adopted that boy and I said I'm going to help him with anything I can. That boy was so skinny so I said all right I will bring you sugar whatever I can and for him it was a special deal. The others used to come with buckets under the windows in the middle of the night and I used to give the food out until they found out. But before they found out I used to give it through the back. But for him I used to bring the food in my panties. You know, the panties have something to hold you here, I don't know what it was, it wasn't a band like to tie so I put there from the Germans I stole like cream of wheat cooked, warm and a little sugar and a little margarine and I used to a piece of salami and I used to bring for _____. His mother had a sweater and she taught him how to needle -- how to crochet and he crochet for me from his mother's sweater a pair of gloves not to be cold because it was winter time and when I came in he was sick that time. Something was wrong with him and he said I have something for you from the back, and he gave me mittens, you know. I lost them, I don't have them and that name never, never went out of my mind. I remember exactly his name after 50 years ago. So, I don't know what happened, but I helped them and the girls. I used to tell them to come to the back window because you see we had _____ was built for only a thousand _____ what is _____ it's like you cut them and put them in the war time in jail, prisoners. It was made for 1,000 French prisoners and they brought in 5,000 so the kitchen was going 24 hours a day. We cooked the whole night and the first dinner was 9:00 in the morning for food and then it was 12:00 and then it was about 3:00, 4:00 in the afternoon and then you slept a little. You know when I cooked in the morning or in the night, I slept in the daytime a little. So, it was three shifts to cook the food and so when I worked nights, I used to say you come over and I'll give you through the window I'm going to give you a bucket of food and you saw Hannah, _____, she sent every time another girl under the window.

Q: You had a fair amount of freedom of movement there?

A: Movement you had but you had to go, you worked there but I didn't but the other girls they made they worked out underground and they had factories hidden in the woods like and they were making ammunition and the girls went out to work ammunition. But you

see it was 24 hours who was in the daytime they could sleep, inside you could walk around but when you had to go out to work you worked by the ammunition. I was never there.

Q: Were the general conditions better than Auschwitz?

A: Much better, but it was very small. It was very crowded. It was people were beaten to death. You know, it wasn't honey. It wasn't a resort, it was a camp, but that was the best one from all of them, so because it was really in Germany, so the German ladies, the SS women who worked in the kitchens and they worked with us. They were our superiors and some were very bitchy, very bad.

Q: Weren't you afraid of being caught?

A: Oh yes, but it didn't matter. You see, it really didn't, I was afraid and I was not afraid because to save a life it was worth it. To save ten lives it was more worth it. So, I used to in the day time when I didn't cook I had to be occupied so they had permissions from the _____ who I made the hair every day I put up her hair and sometimes every second day a manicure. I was scared to death but I did it. Then I got so much that I know now how to make them. I was so good to make those waves with my fingers with a little water, that's all, and she dried them in the sun. I had permission to go that she get permission to the other German SS women who watched us, the watch dogs that I can go sometimes to them if they need me. So, she had a list of ten or something that she's going to send me there today or tomorrow. And I had one to tell me wash the floors and to make the hair and to wash her toilet and that's okay. That was fine enough. One I had she was a very mean _____, very mean, but somehow she liked me and when I came she said don't do anything. I don't need you for nothing. Just come down and lie down near me and tell me your story or tell me how you came here and we talked and she told me her story how she became a German and she was young and she had a baby and she told me her story. Then I had another one she used to tell me let's go shopping. And she took me shopping with her. She took me in her jeep and I should carry her bags.

Q: You went into a town shopping?

A: A little town, but the little town, but the butcher knew that I was Jewish. He said you there, out. So he wouldn't let me in, and she said okay you stay outside. I come out and then we go back, and she used to sit and talk to me and she used to give me something to eat. She always prepared something good for me. Then in the kitchen worked one, because you see those German women, those SS women they weren't really trained by the SS. They were short of people, of women, so they took them out from the factories. They were factory women. They gave them a little. They taught them a little what has to be done, a course how to get through it and they put them in a uniform and they put them into those camps like, little camps. So, _____ in the kitchen was an angel and we called her angel. When I wanted to take something out for that boy I said

_____, and she said _____ she didn't want to see it. She didn't want to know about it. So, I took out things. One time I took out a salami, big like my hand, I don't know how. It was bigger than my hand, and I put in a big salami like this in my arm until here and I smuggled that salami out and they were the happiest people in the world. I smuggled out a whole salami and if they would catch me there they told me don't do that. If they're going to catch you they're going to kill you in the place, but I did it. But you see the winter time was very bad because when they came through the back window for the food they saw foot prints in the snow that every night somebody is there. The snow falls in the day time, at night you have more foot prints. Then they found something out that something's going out and they were watching. Who is going to the back, but you know somebody nice told the girls that somebody knows that somebody is going to pick up the food at night. It was -- they found foot steps by the door, so we had to change all the whole plan. We changed it and I said okay from now on don't go there just come to the front and whenever I'm going to see that nobody is looking I'm going to give you fast and you just run, and that's the way they were picking up the food, through the front. We didn't care, they would shoot us all because they would find out who is eating this food, but we didn't care. In the meantime, they really had a ball. They ate. This was going on for quite a while.

Q: I assume in the kitchen, the food you served the Germans was very different than the food you got?

A: Of course we couldn't have it. We just helped, but you know sometimes you just got like a little doggie bag, but they knew how many steaks they have. They knew exactly what they have. To us they used to bring the killed horses from the front and the horse meat was smelly and terrible and we cooked the soups from it. We put meat, but we had meat. Can you imagine what we had, we had meat and if somebody found a little piece, like a little square of meat they said I have meat in my soup but we the only thing that we could do, you know the bones they cooked over and over and over because the bone has the marrow inside so we had to cut the bones and cook the soup so we took out the marrow and we put them in a casserole underneath. We took the potatoes what has to go to the soup, we stole potatoes and we put that in a casserole and we put that in the oven where it was burning and we made ourselves a delicious dish. We put that dish in the toilet and every time somebody else went in to have a little and that was very fat and that filled you up right away because it really was fat, the marrow was so fat but that was delicious. I wouldn't eat it now, but at that time it was delicious. This and then sometimes when they took me to waitress and most of the days I used to finish when my cooking. You should have seen what was cooking, just lousy food. Everything was just the leaves of the cabbage was the leaves what the Germans didn't eat. They were rotten. Everything was rotten that came into our soup, but it was okay. It was soup. You know what, we used to put the margarine, they were like in bricks. I think each brick was two pounds or one pound and they used to count in each huge like for the military they had to go in ten bricks of margarine so we used to pick them in. That's a terrible thing to say, we used to put that in and they made the mark, you know, it's fat around, and we used to take out the

margarine to feed the girls. Everybody had somebody, so we used to take it out. We used to eat good there in the kitchen, but some we left, but a few we took out, but the mark was they come, they count, that was ten.

Q: How long were you in _____?

A: In _____ I was there about nine months.

Q: You were there that long?

A: Yes, and then from _____ one day the German came into the kitchen because I helped the Germans _____ that was just poor Germans they didn't have enough food that time either and they weren't bad. They were good to us. They used to bring us the news of the day, where the Germans are and where the Russians are and I think the war is ending is because they weren't real soldiers either. They took them out from factories. They used to give us the news for the day, where they are and they said, you know what, I think they are making an exchange of prisoners of war for you and I think you are going to leave soon here and the woman the _____ in the kitchen she said are you going to let them kill me. I said no not you. You are our angel but she knew I wasn't waiting until then and she was really nice not to kill and she said I know the Germans I know we are all going to get killed. One day when they were talking about it soon somebody I think American are coming to save you to give you freedom. The Red Cross because _____ made a deal to the Germans that they are going to get one of us for a 100 of German soldiers and prisoners. So, they made a deal and they took blocks of us but when the Americans come in to us and we were really afraid. We were afraid of everybody. They said, don't worry. We are American. We came to free you.

Q: Is this the soldiers or the Red Cross?

A: They were in uniforms. They were in the Red Cross. The trucks were Red Cross trucks, but they were in uniforms and they said you have they couldn't talk to everybody but when they took us out they made the arrangements in the office and everything and they said ten barracks are going out of here. So, they put us in and the rest on the other side. _____, was on the other side crying and she said I just missed by one block and she left there and I went out with another Rose and another few girls and we went out and the Americans said now you can scream you can throw stones on them, you are outside the wall and you are in our trucks and they gave us _____, packages with chocolate. Can you imagine with chocolate, with all kinds of goodies and they said now we are going to take you to the freedom. We take you to Denmark. So, we were happy. Can you imagine we cried we left our friends and then the Russian came in there and they were raping the girls and I don't know what. My Hannah wasn't raped but they were doing all things like you wouldn't believe that they came to free you and they are such ugly people, those Russians.

Q: So, this was the end of April '45 that you went to Denmark?

A: Yes, and that was in the middle because I think I was two weeks or more in Sweden, the 8th of May was the end of war, but I was already out of there. That was something in April.

Q: You went to Denmark or Sweden?

A: Denmark first. But going to Denmark that's not so easy. In the Red Cross on the top of the trucks they had written big Red Cross. When the airplanes fly around you they know it's a Red Cross truck but they knew who is there and they went so close to our trucks and they with machine guns they were just shooting all around us and on us and they killed one truck 40 people completely. There were 40 in a truck and then Americans before they saw they were on top of us they stopped the trucks and said run into the ditches. You run wherever you can and we started running. So, we went in, it was someplace a house like a farmer's house, a farmer lived there and we run into the house and they threw us out and they say now that the Germans didn't know what's happening. And they said you _____ and they didn't let us in. So, we had to hide in the ditches, and the American soldiers were so good to us. They put their hands under our feet to put us up. They knew what horrible life we had. They and we didn't understand English, but they were showing us you know that you're free, you're free, but he said you're still not free, and they said to go to the ditches and to run and to hide. They, it's going to get a little darker. They are going to take us through the woods into Denmark and we were walking a whole night because they couldn't see anything so they couldn't shoot us. And we were walking, a lot of us, into Denmark. When we came to Denmark, the people in Denmark were so nice.

Q: Did you have to cross water?

A: Not to Denmark, to Sweden. It's a lot of Germans living in Denmark too. They are not all Danish. They are a lot of Germans. So, the first thing when they took us in they start preparing us and they used to say please don't talk about the Germans. We have a lot of spies in here and you are not still free, remember. They warned us and they gave us food and they said don't eat too much because it's not good for you. You should eat slowly and not too much because you're going to get sick. So, we were in Denmark about three weeks. Then the Denmark people, it was a rainy day when we were leaving to Sweden and they were standing with bouquet of flowers and they were hugging us and they were wishing us the best and we didn't understand them but the German they spoke to us and they hugged us and they kissed us and they wished us luck and the best and not to eat too much and nothing to be careful. And they gave us bouquets of flowers.

Q: Where were you living in Denmark, in a camp?

A: We were living not in a camp, it was like you know maybe barracks like before but they

put us all up in a circle in some houses just like shacks and they kept us there and they gave us very good food. They put us all together by tables and they fed us and they watched us not to eat too much. They said no, no don't eat too much.

Q: Was this with the help of the Swedish and Danish Red Cross too?

A: Yes, this was with the Red Cross, the Danish and Swedish. The whole of Red Cross because the Americans were watching us there, too. They were with us.

Q: So then you went to Sweden?

A: No, they took us in trains and they brought us to we had to go through the water by boat. They brought us to the boats and we now in the boat we were free. We could talk because in Denmark still they were warning us please we want you not to talk about it and we want you to live through it. We don't want you to be killed in here. Then, in the boat about 24 hours we had to go across the water and so we came to _____ to Sweden, and there they were beautiful white clean not mattresses, but like with straw, those things, with beautiful white sheets that we didn't see for so many years. Then, it was written something in _____, it was too much to eat I supposes it's for _____ and _____, and I said we came again to Germans they are talking about _____ and that's forbidden. But we read it in German and it's _____. So they gave us really the red carpet and they took us to a beautiful, beautiful department store and they dressed us from A-Z, from the bottom to the top, everything new, even a girdle, bras, everything and a coat, a beautiful brown coat I had and boots.

Q: Were you living in a camp?

A: No, they took us to a _____. They took us in different places. Some went to different cities. They took me and another girls to _____, and they put us in the quarantine. For about three months we had to be there because people used to get sick and a lot of them died, a lot. So, we used to be in a quarantine and every Sunday people from the city learned about it and they came to we were in with big fences but people went through the fences and they talk and they ask us questions and they speak very well English and German, so one couple came to the _____ and they saw me and they said we were surrounded around three ways with water. It was a lake, and you could swim but naked. The boys find out that these girls are swimming naked so they came to see us naked there and so a couple came, a young couple, she was in the forties maybe forty and she looked and she said would you like to be free and go out from the quarantine, and I said of course I would. So, she said I can make you a passport and you can get out. I am going to be your foster mother and we can adopt you so she did. They did. First of all I have still a picture in that bathing suit. She brought me a bathing suit the next Sunday they came. She brought me a bathing suit and she told me you don't have to show anybody what you have. You're going to be in a bathing suit. And they made a

room for me and they took me to their place. He was an engineer and she was working in an office and they adopted me until I found -- I wrote letters to Europe and I found that my father and brother are alive.

Q: What about your husband?

A: My husband, too. He came later, but I found them alive through I wrote letters I remember my friend's addresses and I wrote to one guy who went with me to school and he said to me that day that I got your letter was the happiest day of my life. You were alive. He said he saw my father and brother alive in my town at a soccer game and they lived some place near the ocean, and I wrote a lot of letters. So, my mother's girlfriend sent me a letter and he said you read that letter and drink water because you have somebody alive waiting for you. So, that's the way I left Sweden after a year and a half and I came to _____ and I was living with them and then my private life came.

Q: Can we just talk a couple more minutes. How do you think you got through all of this?

A: How do I think with my brain or with my health -- I came out pretty good. My health wasn't good, but it wasn't bad either. I am not a cranky person. I have an outlook of life whatever happens, happens, and I am not a hyperchondriac. I am never sick. I am sitting here today and my back is killing me because I came with a bad -- I was in bed for a week before I came here to Washington and I brought with me a corset but today I am not wearing it and I have pills and soon I'm going to take a pill to go home because I'm not going to be able to move, but otherwise I came out -- I'm very sharp. They didn't take away my brain. They didn't take away my will to live. It was a pleasure and the happiest time when I met my father and my father didn't want to be a Jew after the war. He was in a church and I said no you are a Jew and he said no I can't. I said yes you will, and you're going to change your name to your old name, and he did. Then we went to Israel and from Israel I said you have to change your name to your Jewish name. You're a Luft and you're going to be Luft, not Kochonoski, and he said where was he when we needed him. I said he was there, he's now here with us. So, and that's the way I brought my brother. I was in Israel a year and a half and I had a child in Israel.

Q: You were reunited with your husband?

A: Yes, with my husband, I was reunited in _____. He found us. Then in Poland I had a child, two children, one in _____ and one in _____, Germany. I had one son in Israel and he's now 41. He is in the wine business. I have three good sons and three grandchildren and I live for them now. I worked hard my life. I divorced my husband in 1966 and I sent my son and I married the second one and that was Warner and I was _____ and my children are _____, and I helped my son go to chiropractic school and he is a chiropractor. I worked twelve hours a day, but I made it and I after this Warner I want to be alone and I decided that this is my life, my children, my grandchildren and that's about it. I am glad to be alive and I hope it never

happens again, never again, like we say. I have a lot of poems written in Polish I told you and in German and I'm going to send that to Bessie and you can translate those things and make it to something because they are real life stories. That's not just fantasy.

Q: Poetry that you wrote?

A: I and other girls together when we were together in Sweden.

Q: You wrote them in Sweden?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else you want to say?

A: I want to say that I am very proud of my children, and I love them dearly, and thank God I am alive for them and I had them. My brother is in Montreal still. My father is buried in Montreal. He died in 1966 and he had a stroke and he died, and he is buried in Montreal. I am happy to be alive, and I am grateful for everything in life that I'm here and I thank you very much for taping this for my children's memory.

End of Tape #4

Conclusion of Interview