United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Estelle Klipp
July 24, 1995
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Estelle Klipp, conducted by Randy Goldman on July 24, 1995 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Research Institute's collection of oral testimonies.

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.

ESTELLE KLIPP
July 24, 1995

01:01:20

Q: Will you begin by telling me your name, date of birth, where you were born, and your name at that time?

A: It is Estelle Klipp right now. But I was born Estella Gippsa Weingarten (ph). And I was born in Lodz on Savatzka (ph) number 40 -- and in the year 1922, January 10th.

Q: Try to look at me. You're looking down.

A: Okay.

Q: I'll turn the lights off, its a little irritating. Tell me a little bit about your family life before the war.

A: It was beautiful. It was a vary large family. My parents, sisters, and brothers -- I mean, my mother had about seven siblings. And my father, the same. And for instance, on Purim we're gathering all of us in the house of my grandma. And it was.....

01:02:21

Q: Stop tape. We have to do this again. Tell me a little bit about your family life before the war.

A: Now, as an example, for instance, on Purim we were all gathering at my grandma's

house. It was grandma Weingarten. And it was extremely festive, you know. On Purim, you bring schlackamonies. So there were just beautiful cakes, and what they call torte, and there was fruit. And everybody gathered there, all my cousins, and all my aunts and uncles. And usually, it lasted -- there was one cousin who played the violin. And that was Itzic (ph) Weingarten. And then we -- it was very nice for us children because we had to stay up longer. And then when we came to our house, the manager of the house came out, and we have to ring the bell, and he opened the gate. And for us children, it was a big happening coming so late. And he -- and it was Purim. But it must have been cold because he was coming out with a fur coat. And it was a good life. We were to our grandma's we surely went by druzka, which was a horse -- horse-drawn carriage. And there was always a lot of fun too. We met the cousins. There were my aunts. And in the summer, in the beginning, we used to go to a spa, like Rainitza (ph), or Rapka (ph). And later on, we built a house in Portumbina (ph). And it was one -- there were, like, four apartments. And one was ours, and the other one we use to rent out. In fact, I have a picture in front of it. It was beautiful there too. And we were spending the vacations there. So life was pretty normal and very much based on family. I was going to school. It was called gymnasium imienia Hochsztajnowei. And it was a lovely school. It was so beautiful there. In our auditorium, the floor was like a mirror. And when we came to school, we had to change shoes. And we often had concerts in school. We had the grand piano. And there was often -- Chopin was often being played. When I hear Chopin now, I remember it. And my brother was going also to a school. And in the afternoon, he had to go to a parochial school to learn more Hebrew and so on. And we used to play. I remember we played train, I and him, in the house when our housekeeper put the chairs in the middle so that she could clean them. And there were holidays. There were beautiful occasions. There were summer outings. There were picnics. And all of a

sudden, like a lightening from the sky actually, everything changed. And, of course, we had no idea that anything like that could actually happen. And so there were actually clouds in the sky. There was bunchen where the people from Germany were coming. But somehow, when you live a normal life, you just don't think and don't believe of such a possibility. My father did -- after the Germans entered Lodz, he predicted certain -- I mean, even before, he predicted certain things. And I asked him, "If that's what you believe, why aren't we leaving?". First, there was no place to leave. And then you have really to have guts and you have really -- to be able to leave. But there was no place to leave. Nobody wanted us.

01:06:31

Q: Let me stop you a minute. Was your family fairly religious? You had mentioned Purim.

A: Yes. We actually celebrated all the holidays. And my father was rather religious. He was -- at the same time, he spoke French and he spoke German. He was a wizard in mathematics. And, of course, we had a business. The business was on Ostrowska 10 and polizei station. And it was Golontaria Emenya Weingartenya (ph). And everybody in Lodz knew that place. And today, I sometimes meet people here even in Los Angeles who said, "Of course, we were going there." We had a very good name. Everybody was safe because in Lodz, at that time, you didn't have prices on any articles. But they knew you could send a check to that store and they would be treated fairly.

01:07:36

Q: What kind of store was it?

A: If somebody is familiar with the Silk Shop, which used to be in Los Angeles, it was very similar. There were wools, and lace, and buttons, and gloves, and hats, and -- I mean, all kinds of things. And it was in existence for a very long time, until the Germans took the keys away. And so my father's family was more religious than my mother's family. But we celebrated all the holidays. And our Passover was just fantastic. It was so beautiful and -- it was so beautiful, I remember that we -- I used fall asleep finally, because it lasted so long. But all the -- it was just beautiful.

Q: Did you --

A: You asked me about the school, sorry if I interrupt?

01:08:36

Q: Well, yeah. I was wondering if you had any Christian friends or if you really lived in a Jewish community.

A: It's very interesting. We lived in a Jewish community. The manager of the apartment house was not Jewish. And in our summer house, the keeper of the grounds was not Jewish. And some of the housekeepers at my grandma's house were not Jewish. But, in generally, we were actually -- we thought that everybody was Jewish. Yes.

Q: Large Jewish community?

A: It was a very large Jewish community. Lodz was -- I understand there were 250,000 Jews or more. It was a textile in the street there and it was called the Polish Mattress Stash. And so when some of this -- of the big industrialists in textile were going to our school. It was Vininsky (ph), Korn (ph), and others.

01:09:46

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism or you just weren't around it?

A: Oh, we felt it. Somehow we did feel it. We knew that it exist. We felt it much more before -- after Hitler came into power and after the death of Marshall Pilsudski. That really felt it and I remember one program. We went to the summer house all the father, I and Lolick (ph) and when we came back my mom was petrified, terrified standing at the window because she had a feeling which I will always remember because she knew there is a program and -- but we were able to somehow safely reach our house. And there was some times such a underlying fear of certain things which I as a child could sense and it had much to do with anti-Semitism. That .... did that answer your question?

01:11:01

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, and it, your question actually right now is how it was before the war? See, that

school I was going to was a private school and I started the school from the first grade and then I was maybe fortunate because I gained one year to graduate and they -- I had my papers graduation papers. I thought they were very important. Dave, my husband, saw them and when we went to Auschwitz I thought it would be helpful. I put it in my stocking. But of course, it wasn't helpful. I could get a copy, I think, if I would write to Warsaw, but it's not -- not really important right now. So it was -- it was actually a good life. It was a Jewish life. We also had very high morals and ethics. And I remember that when the Germans came and we had to wear the yellow star I was, nothing to it as I was concerned, but I had a friend, Genya Finkelstein (ph), who was from a little bit more assimilated home and she didn't want to go out I said, "Genya, they're doing it to us. They are the perpetrators. Let them be ashamed. Why should we be ashamed to wear the star?" And it had something to do with the upbringing I received in my house and we knew much about charity. My father used to always to say "It's not enough to give. It's important how you give." I know when there were some relatives not close relatives who needed help. There was always help ready for them and every Friday night my father was bringing from the House Of Prayers a guest which is called the orrach, and he was sitting with us at the table and when we finished the meal he was given a bag of food to take with him and nobody asked him any questions. It was a charitable atmosphere in our family. For instance, my grandmother one time somebody stole silver spoons and her daughter says, "Don't let him in anymore." She says, "Look, if he wouldn't have needed the spoons, he wouldn't have taken them." So considering the high ethics and high morals it was inconceivable for us to think that such atrocities which followed later on are possible that we had to prepare ourselves, but there was no way to prepare ourselves anyhow.

01:14:00

Q: One more question about before the war. Were you involved in any political or Zionist organizations?

A: I knew of their existence. I knew of their existence. However, in -- in retrospect I know that it was -- actually the right thing to do. Because if you have an idea, no matter how impossible it seems at the certain time what should actually follow it? Because the first there is an idea always and there are deeds following it. But because of the background and because of the school I was not involved in it. I remember a certain time somebody wanted to -- to -- me to join, but I didn't.

01:14:55

Q: What do you remember about the day when the Germans came in to Lodz?

A: Yeah, it was a very, very frightening thing. They put up some --

Q: What was the, I'm sorry. What was the date, do you remember?

A: It was in 1939 and it must have been already in September. And some gallows were put on in Lodz and some Jewish men were hung and they were very much interested that as many as possible people would see it. When they entered Lodz they somehow wanted to harass and abuse the Jewish men, so there were, let's say, a knock in our house and they wanted my father. People who were taken to so called work were not taken actually to

actual work. Some people were, for instance, bringing furniture up the set floor and the others were suppose to take it down and so on. It was just shear harassment. Shear torment. Shear like they wanted to demoralize us and what was happening was my father was still going to the store and I was afraid that he'll be picked up and harassed, so I was going with him and he called me his angel. I had long brown hair and somehow I was very often able to talk the German out of letting him go. I remember that one time we -- they brought us into a court yard and they left. And -- but it was a very frightening time because it was a very unsure time because -- and what was so tragic about it the Germans actually could not recognize who is a Jew and who is not, but there were Polish children standing on the street and pointing out to the Germans who is Jewish and considering that they were just having been occupied by the Germans and why did they do it? You know, very often I'm thinking about it. Where does all this, I mean, it's -- it's based on -- on the teaching unfortunately of the church which I hope is being changed. But in Poland it will take a very, very long time until it would be changed. I heard somebody saying that he got this feeling of a stygmatism with the milk of his mother. Because -- and as I understand, that the church, the -- anyhow the Catholic Church since Pope the 23rd, is realizing that the roots, a lot of the roots of this tragedy actually started with the people of the church. Because it can teach hatred and there have been changes in their liturgy and their changes are -- are going on. I'm sure there are many, many Christians of very good heart and I'm glad that there is from the Vatican some directions now to change the liturgy.

01:18:48

Q: Okay. We were talking about how the Polish people would -- would turn you in. What

else was happening on the streets at this time?

A: It was especially -- for instance, it was so dangerous that my parents decided to send Lolick, my brother, to a smaller city where his closest friends were living. In the hope that he would be spared, but he came back after awhile because things were just as bad there. There was also much more difficult to get fuel. Much more difficult to get food, so we were living in one room in order to save fuel. We could sometimes -- of course we couldn't get the amount of food which we needed, but we still could get some food. It was dangerous to get out of the house. It was dangerous to be in the house because they were just coming in and pulling you out.

01:19:52

Q: Were there any bombings?

A: The bombings were in the short period before the Germans came in. In fact, we went to a cellar. We -- you know, there were cellars where people were keeping the food to keep it cold and we were hiding there because there were some raids. That was in the period, the short period, before the German army actually entered Lodz.

01:20:24

Q: So how long did -- how long did this last? The Germans were in the -- the Germans came in, they were around all the time harassing people?

A: Yes, they were harassing people and one day when I brought my father to the store some Germans approached him and told him they wanted the keys to the store. We just had to hand it over. Now, we probably were expecting it and were bringing certain materials from the store and hiding it under the hardwood floors and we hid there also some Torahs. Maybe I'll mention it later, but when we were in the ghetto the manager, we assume, or we actually know that the manager of that apartment house informed the German about it and my brother was taken to the Kripo and from the Kripo he had to go to our apartment house and to -- to show them where everything is and they removed everything. And it was -- you know, it was a very -- it was a very dangerous, dangerous time because there were shootings. There were shootings at that time and this -- this constant harassment, you don't know whether a person would go out on the street or even from his house and he would come back alive because the torture was quite perverse.

01:22:10

Q: So, did you stay in most of the time?

A: We must have stayed in, but they were also coming into the house. I remember one time when they came and we hid my father in the bathroom, but it didn't help. We had to show them where he is and they pulled him out. And he wasn't -- he was very spiritual and he was very learned, but he wasn't a strong man, a very strong man physically. But he actually survived at Auschwitz.

01:22:47

Q: Did the Germans promelgate a bunch of decrees? Were there new laws, things you had to do?

A: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Q: Like what?

A: First they liquidated all our stores. We couldn't own any stores. I'm sure there was a catch for us. The amount of food we could get was limited. Of course, I couldn't -- the schools were closed. Our schools were closed. We had -- we had -- actually, the minute they came in we were prisoners. We were prisoners and as an example of it they were putting up gallows and, you know, hanging people. And, our dignity was taken away -- I mean, it my -- the way I feel it, my dignity was never taken away. Not even in Auschwitz. I never felt inferior to them. It could be with the teaching of -- the teaching atmosphere of my house I felt that the ones who do the wrong they should be ashamed of my -- of themselves and when I heard somebody say that he felt inferior during this time it struck me actually because I -- I never felt inferior. Never.

01:24:20

Q: Did all these changes happen right away?

A: Right away. Right away, but the taking out of the -- I mean, the -- asking for the keys of the store because I remember I was still taking my father to the store for a short time and before he had to hand over the keys.

Q: You must have been fairly terrified.

A: We were fairly terrified. It was, they were a very terrified times. Very terrified time.

01:24:55

Q: Did your family have any plans or you were just going to....

A: There was no way. There was absolutely no way. You live a normal life and something which is beyond your many imagination happens you cannot prepare for it. There was no way to prepare there were some very very rich people who were somehow able to -- to reach a different country. However, even the people of Germany who would have left Germany couldn't. There was no place to go. Even -- even a ship was -- a ship was sent aware form the shores of the United States. The white paper was issued and there was no entrance to Palestine. Otherwise, some people could have maybe reached Palestine. No other country would have opened the door, so, I mean, we were just boxed in. Completely boxed in. And, so some people did leave to Russia, for Russia. And a friend of my -- the closest friend of my brother left for Russia and survived, and he asked, he came to our house and asked my father's permission that Lolick should go too. And I do understand my father on -- on -- in a way because he said we all should stay together. Nobody could have predicted what would happen and he said no. And Lolick was an extremely -- first he was absolutely gorgeous. He was so handsome that when he was helping out sometimes in the store people would say "Go to that store just to take a look at that guy because he's so handsome." Then he was extremely talented. As a child he

was curious how the grandfather's clock is working. So he took it apart and when he couldn't put it together he used a string, but the clock was working. I mean, by losing him, of course I lost a brother, but the world lost something too. And when we considered all these people who were burned, gassed, tortured, murdered, the world lost something too because they were scientists and they were future doctors and they were future physicists and they were just people who learned from childhood, charity. And that you are not living only for yourself, but you're living only for others.

01:28:08

Q: At what point did the ghetto come about?

A: Um --

Q: What did you find -- I mean, how did that happen?

A: Yes. There were announcements that we better go to the ghetto or else they'd be shooting us.

Q: When was this do you remember?

A: That was in 19 -- 1940. It was maybe six months after the Germans entered Warsaw. I guess when we went to the ghetto it must have been somehow the beginning of April and they -- so we just had to go because otherwise, we would have been killed. And fortunately there was a neighbor of our's who was very helpful because she said she had

some kind of a wagon and why don't we go with her? So we packed some belongings. Not much of furniture and we went. It was very very traumatic. I was a pretty pampered child. I wasn't a child anymore, I was 17. But I was pretty pampered and I couldn't take it so I kept fainting and there was no, there were only lavoratory -- there was no, you know, accomadations for bathrooms or anything like that. And I remember we stayed there and then Ciotka [aunt] Hannah (ph) came and Uncle Moshe (ph) came and we all were sleeping on the floor and then some how somebody told us about the room of the Fresetska (ph) eight. I think it was the same neighbor and that was one room. We lived in this room and that was my father, my mother, my brother, myself and later on during one deportation there was also Ottos. Ottos --

02:01:00

Q: You know, I'm -- What had you decided to take with you?

A: The time was very limited.

Q: When you went to the ghetto?

A: Yes, and the amount of things we could take on this wagon was also very limited and, of course, we didn't have anybody ecspecially to help us, but anyhow I remember when the -- I remember that we had a bed. And I remember that we had one piece of furniture which must have come from our kitchen. We had also a table and we had chairs and the room wasn't very large and what -- when ever I think about that place on Fresetska eight, who wasn't -- which wasn't very big and was the kitchen and everything was in this one

room, I have to give an enormous credit to my wonderful mother because it was extremely clean. Always, extremely clean. We're cooking there and sometimes I think about it, how was she able to keep this place such meticulously clean. And later on after one deportation Ottos, our cousin, was adopted by us. I think it had to be done so that they have his name in the register so, that's why he was really adopted. And he came to us with a skin disease and my mother bathed him and cured him and my father got infected and she bathed my father, and she cured him. And my mother was absolutely a very remarkable women. She was very beautiful. She found a job for herself, by herself. She was doing some -- some working with a sewing machine. She cooked where ever there was some food to cook. She keeped everything clean and I know that at a certain time she was going to sick people and she was washing them. She was washing their bodies. And thats why the tragedy of -- when ever the tragedy was touching my mother she never complained, but it was very very painful to me and -- if I think about the time we were taken to the Kripo. Kripo was the Kriminal Polizei. They were actually having a building within the ghetto and since we were considered well to do in the ghetto, I mean, before -- they assumed that we had some valuables which they wanted to have. Now first it was only my father who was being taken to the Kripo. We were just petrified of the thoughts that they were going to take him and whether he would come back. Many people didn't come back from the Kripo. The Jewish authorities were notified to take the corpse away from Kripo. My father never disclosed anything and the strength his -- his spiritual and strength to be able to take the -- because they were actually whipping and hurting him and he came back and he didn't disclose anything. One time, they took my mother and I remember exactly. I was standing there when they took her and fortunately they came later on for me because I was very much afraid about her not that that I could do any help. I remember I walked into the Kripo, the cellars, in the cellars, there were

the torture chair -- there were the cells, where we were kept and in the back were the torture chambers. So when you were sitting in the cellar you could hear cries and screams. And -- but when I walked in there and this head of the Kripo, I think his name was Stutar (ph), was standing there and I laughed. I was laughing in his face and he says "Das Lachen wird dir hier vergehen," which means "The laughter will stop here. Your laughter will stop here." And I was also taken to the -- to the chambers and I was also tortured, but not to a degree that, you know, that I had to be hospitalized or something like that. And finally, I don't know how it happened that they were -- released us. It -- the whole time we were in the ghetto, there was always an enormous fear that we would go to the Kripo. And I remember when my father was in Kripo, when I was very concerned that he is not coming back, and he is not coming back. I went to his brother's house. The brother was already deported. But his two sons -- one son was there. And the son was very religious. He was the one who was playing the violin so beautiful. And he was a real genius. And he says he was very religious. He said to me, "Look. It's Friday night, and we didn't light the candles yet. So until we light the candles, he might still come back." I just remember what he was saying. Even in the ghetto, we tried to remember when it's Friday. And on certain holidays, we made some -- mother prepared something from the grass, or from the leaves, or something which was appropriate for that particular holiday. Now, you want to ask me something?

02:06:57

Q: No.

A: No, no. Now, the problems in the ghetto were hunger, lack of fuel. But the worse of the

worse was, the constant, deportations. And you could never be sure that, what is not being deported. And -- but there was one deportation, in particular, which was done by the Germans. The other deportations -- when they hit somebody, of course, it was very tragic. So we really did not know for sure what was happening to us, and nobody thought that we were going to places that they would gas us in some wagons. In the beginning, they are telling us, they are taking people to work. And there was a small number of people who were deported from the ghetto for the purpose of working in Germany, or in the territories. In fact, one of my cousin, who was pretty husky, came back one time from a working camp. But they took him -- after a very short time, they took him again. I don't know whether to a working camp. Very likely, yes. But it was torturous work. So we did not know. We actually had no inkling that a deportation means being taken to death, or gassed, or murdered. And this Germans were master of deceit. Before they -- the deportation to Auschwitz, there were loudspeakers. And I don't know who, in particular, it was. But it was people. And they were assuring us that we should take everything we possibly can with us, because we are going to a better working camp. And I remember that my brother was working very hard to pack everything possible. They say, "Take pots and take pans, because you are going to a better place" -- and I was sick already at that time. So I was just watching them. But they were packing. Now, the deportation -- going back to the deportation. There were always deportations. There was a list made, which in view of what happened -- this was, I think, '42, September -- the alternative -- the other alternative was very -- was terrible. They just -- I am -- they just came into the ghetto with trucks and with wagons, they ordered a gehsperren, which means, you know, a curfew -- they ordered a curfew and they said that they would take all elderly people, they would take children, and take -- we are -- if anybody would hide in the apartment, they would be shot. What I did -- I knew -- my mother was actually in

her 40s. But she already had gray hair. And I was very much afraid for her, that they would take her. I don't know how I did it. But I took her to the part of the ghetto which they already were searching and taking people away, and I hid her there. But I had to run back because there had to be a certain amount of people present in the courtyard for them to do the selection. And then I went back and brought her home. Now, that was a terrifying time, because they were shooting anybody who, let's say, approached a wagon, or run to a place that they didn't want to, or whatever. They were all shooting. They were just shooting. They were taking some people who were younger. They did not really select only the older, the elderly, ones. It was one of the most traumatic, terrifying deportation. So there's no excuse for anything. However, maybe because none of my family was deported -- so I'll tell you in a few minutes about my brother. In comparison with the alternative, the alternative would have been -- I'm talking about the list -- the alternative would have been that they would enter the ghetto and just shoot whomever they wanted and drag whomever, which was of course much more frightening to begin with. And we didn't know and no one knew that we are going, just like we didn't know about Auschwitz, which I am very surprised that the Poles or somebody from the outside would not somehow give us, because they knew. They knew where Auschwitz was, and they knew what was going on in Auschwitz. Anyhow, one time, my brother was about to be deported. What happened -- my mother was at her sister's, and I was home, and that Sonderkommando came, and they looked for him that he was supposed to be deported. And he hid. But we had to, we had to, he had to come out of the hiding, and they took him. And I had only one solution. See, he was very sick in the ghetto. He was sick with typhus. And he was -- that was a very terrible experience, because he was very sick and his eyes were not completely closed, only partial. And finally, it was so hard on me to look at it that I was sleeping at a neighbor's and, in the morning, I was going to the

window -- we had the shutters closed -- and looking through the shutters whether he is still there. And my mother, did everything possible -- we got some food for him -- she washed him, she bathed him. And a neighbor told us of a doctor who was a heart specialist, Doctor Yorkiche (ph).

02:13:59

And Doctor Yorkiche found that his myocardium, which is a sac around the heart, is infected. And everybody suspected its typhus also. But if it would be -- if they would have taken him to the hospital -- of contagious diseases -- you would have never come out. Nobody came out of there. And -- but -- so he was finally taken to the hospital, a regular hospital. And fortunately, this was not at the time. Because later on, the German took all the patients from all the hospitals, including the children's hospital, and deported them. But that was earlier. He reported that he was going to work. But I knew Doctor Yorkiche. And Doctor Yorkiche was supposed to be in the commission to select who is going and who is not -- no, I mean, -- so I ran to her, and I said, "Do you remember how sick he was? Do whatever you can do, and she must not have done it because they didn't take him." So we were together -- and maybe I should inject it now. When you philosophically think about life, it's true. They didn't survive. I'm the only one who survived. But everyday -- I mean, the life is not forever anyhow. So that we were together and that we were together until Auschwitz has its great value. And when we talk about going to Auschwitz, I will mention to you that we had a day extra. But I think I should do it later. My father was also sick. But he also recovered. And he had a work, which was much too much for his physical strength. So -- but I was able to find him some other work. I felt always some responsibility for everybody. When my brother was

sick, I prayed that if somebody has to go, let it be me, but not him. And I always tried to get something. I was able to get some soup, I was able to pick up some leaves, I was able to go to the resort of -- I mean, the place where there were vegetables -- and get the potato, or get something. But finally, you know, there was a lot of starvation. And I, actually, was never used to -- wasn't a big eater. But I was the one who had swollen -- who had edema. And later on -- that was already '43. '43 -- I may be jumping around -- but in '43, many people had tuberculosis, many people had pleurisy, the worst diseases, which were the result of starvation, because there was very little food. It was an accumulated process. The body was being starved and being starved and being starved. In the beginning, you saw people in the ghetto who were much slimmer than they used to be. You could see it in their clothes. You could see, when you look at them, they had funny color of skin. But later on, there were people working with a lot of edema. It was from malnutrition. And there were many people dying of tuberculosis. Most of the pathological diseases somehow disappeared, like my father who used to have diabetes. He didn't have it. My mother used to have a kidney stone. She didn't have the kidney stone. It was mostly the effect of malnutrition.

02:18:05

Q: Tell me a little bit about the food situation. How did you get food?

A: There were portioned. And they were -- see, depending what the German appropriated -- for the ghetto population. It was known in the administration of the ghetto. They were also very good at knowing where people lived, where people worked, how many people died, how many people -- most of the time, they even knew how many people are

deported. Only the time when the Germans deported people, probably, they were not able to have the real good statistics. So they were able to fix the rations for -- based on how much food it was. Now, there were sometimes starvation rations. Now, people who had worked were entitled to a soup. The soup was actually some vegetables and it wasn't much. But it was something. And we all were working. So we all had the soup. And the rations of food were sometimes very, very small. But it was, I was able sometimes to get an additional soup, or something additional. We somehow -- I mean, I was actually the smallest eater before the war. I had -- I had signs of starvations already. And so -- I sometimes think about it. How that everybody -- there was very little food. But it wasn't like -- you know, sometimes you stand in line, and you say, "No, we ran out of food." It didn't happen. Everybody -- that's a little minimal, that very little was substandard. I mean, and it was not sufficient, it was a starvation diet. But everybody got it. And here, maybe -- maybe we should give thought to the way the administration of the ghetto has been formed and of their functioning, that they were able to provide everybody with what little it was. But everybody got it. It was never a situation that somebody was completely left out. And also, most of the time in the ghetto, maybe not at the very end, I don't recall any time where there was ever corpses on the street, or where there was -- we had to -- it had to be clean, because the Germans would not -- would have closed us up and finished the ghetto off. And also, there were in the beginning, and now later on too, but people were after -- they were afraid to go the hospital, because they were afraid they would be deported the way -- it was a big tragedy. Human life, as I see it, was very important to everybody in the ghetto. Because I recall that we -- there was a little bit of land at Fresetska eight. And it has been divided so that we can -- not at the very beginning, but later on -- it was divided so that we could grow some tomatoes, or onions, or what have you. And I, we had also a piece of land. Now, I don't recall that anybody

stole anybody's vegetables, and really don't recall it. And I am very impressed -- I am very impressed with it. And as far as the neighbors, where my brother would sleep, they were very helpful. They disappeared. They must have been deported. The neighbor who came with us, who helped us with that wagon -- they were deported. And they had a little child. In '43, you didn't see any children. There were no children in the ghetto. In the very beginning, the administration in the ghetto tried to have schools. One time, there was even a graduation. And to keep up, you know, the intellectual part of life so that we can survive intellectually. Now, about the German Jews who came in, I remember them. They were so different. They were, like, normal people. Go ahead.

02:23:08

Q: Well, before you tell me about them, when did they come in and how did that happen?

A: Must have been -- wait for just a second. They might have come in in 1941. 1942 was that big, big deportation. And they were deported before. So it must have been, like, 1941, or something like that. They came from the lawyers, Germans, Germans who have the iron crosses, I mean, some Mischlings, which means they were married to Jews, some whose ancestry was discovered that they were Jewish, some who were actually Jewish. But when they came in, they were normal people. We were not normal people anymore, not in our -- not in our looks, or not in our way of life. Maybe, some intellectually, actually were. And they also -- some of them brought farce (ph) with them, or different clothes. But it was tragic, because it was a very short time they were so miserable. They were so miserable. But there were also many lawyers. And some of the lawyers were, had positions later on as prosecutors and judges in the courts. There were courts in the

ghetto, and there were judges in the ghetto, and there was a priest in the ghetto. And so -- and then most of them, the majority of them -- there were some rumors that about 20,000 came in. But many of them, afterwards, were deported. And there were many musicians. And at the end of the ghetto, all the instruments, musical instruments, had been requisitioned -- requisitioned. I will just repeat that. And that's it.

02:25:26

Q: When the German transports came into the ghetto, did they mix with the -- with the rest of you, or did they keep to themselves?

A: It probably varied. For instance, it varied. There was one big industrialist Hirsch (ph). And I know that my husband let him come to his office where he was and --

Q: Your present husband?

A: My present.

Q: Not your husband in the ghetto?

A: I don't know. That's my first husband. And I was not married --

Q: No, I know that. But when you say, "my husband" you're talking about fifty years ago?

A: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. My present husband, right. And he

was -- he was -- it was a Mr. Hirsch. And he -- he was -- he kept exempt so that he could get us to -- so there was something. Of course, I'm sure they -- when they looked at us, not properly dressed that there was malnutrition and we probably looked like heck. So of course, I'm sure they felt superior. So unfortunately, after a not very long time, they didn't look very much different than we did. But many talented people were -- were incorporated in the administration of the ghetto. And the, the musicians were -- there were, sometimes, concerts. So they were active there. And the lawyers were -- were -- some of them were active as judges.

Q: In order to bring in all these new people, did it just get more crowded, or had the ghetto been cleared of a lot of --

A: At this time, it had been cleared somewhat, but not completely, because there were people coming from other places, from ghettos which had been closed, like Pabanitzya (ph), Suskavolya (ph), and others. It was a problem. And that what -- in retrospect or maybe even then, this very well organized administration of the ghetto, with all its flaws and so on, was able to -- to somehow incorporate them, maybe first not in apartments. But they were incorporated, and they were -- given food -- they were also buying food with their fares and with the fixed wage they brought. But each time there was an influx, somehow -- somehow, the administration of the ghetto was doing something about incorporation. But later on, there was so many deportations that the ghetto shrunk. I mean, you could see when you walked that the ghetto's shrinking. I don't know whether -- what, maybe, not even one third of the population was there when we were ready to go to Auschwitz.

02:28:39

Q: Was there -- you've mentioned a number of things like concerts, schools, all this. So there was --

A: In the very beginning. It was in the very beginning. Because then, when the older kids and everybody has to work -- and I understand children who were very young had also to work, so that there was -- the schools were only in the very beginning. Later on, we could not have any schools. They went to middling schools and if -- if a person wouldn't work, they could be deported. They had to work. And they took, in this awful deportation in 1942 -- children were taken away. And before we went to Auschwitz. There were no children in the ghetto. I heard of a -- of a which, Dave my present husband witnessed and mother. See, the Germans were masters of deceit. So they were telling stories, like, they were going to take the children and they should be make to look pretty, by whichever means is possible, and that they would be going to better places. And then, this mother had to put the child on a wagon and, right away, she'd become insane.

Tape #2

03:01:01

Q: You were talking about the ghetto and you had mentioned concerts. Was there some attempt at a normal life there?

A: A person who has been in the ghetto has to answer that there was no normal. It was absolutely not a normal life. We were living in a constant fear. And when we talk about concerts, very, very few people actually attended. We knew that they were -- in the very beginning, more people could attend. But it really is only like a token that something like that existed in the ghetto. But I'm sure that many people didn't even know about the exsistence of the concert, because very few people were able to reveal themselves to them.

Q: Was there a synagogue?

A: Absolutely not. In fact, there were -- in the beginning, there were some Rabbis. But later on, they had to -- they cut their beards off, and they were not able to function. In fact, see, they were -- there was a marriage, marriage ceremony. At the very end, the only person who can conduct the ceremony was Rumchovsky (ph) -- the Rabbis had no rights to do anything of this kind. Services -- there was no services. They wouldn't allow that. See, the ghetto was also changing, it wasn't always the same. If we talk about schools, they were only at the very, very beginning. Later on, the German wouldn't allow it, they would allow only work, and they demanded work of children who were very young. I

think anything above 10 -- they had to work. So schools were absolutely out of question. The life was really, absolutely not normal. So, let's say, our family -- we were extremely fortunate. One -- one reason for our good fortune was a cellar. In the other room, there was a cellar. The cellar was very close to the back wall where our bed was standing. And very frequently, when we knew there was a deportation, we went down to the cellar. It was very crowded. My brother -- there were two boards to cover that cellar. He covered it, and he put the bed over it. We would close the shutters. So there were quite a few times that we escaped deportation this way. That's why we were able to stay so long before we went to Auschwitz. In the same way -- it was no normals, because it was terror, it was fear, there were -- I don't -- I didn't have any social life. The life was work, and you came home, and there was also -- we were not able to use electricity very long. So it was darkness. And you know, in such a situation as it was in ghetto, you just want to survive, you are happy that you lived that day, and that your mother lived that day, that your brother is living the day, that your father is living the day. That was -- that was all we wanted. And nobody even had -- had -- we, you know -- you have -- you accept it that you don't live, actually, for today. You accept it that you just -- or you live for today, that you accept that a day passed by without any deportation, without any shooting, without any -- any decrees. And it was in the time of the -- it was a time in the ghetto, at the very end, that they were cutting off parts of the ghetto, so people have to go, have to leave their apartments and go to others. We were fortunate, quote in quote, that we stayed, you know, in this, one apartment, from the beginning, you know, to the end. And when it was very cold -- there were times that it was very cold. But I think that they even cleaned the streets during the winter, maybe not for us, maybe for the Germans, so that they -- nothing should happen to the Germans. And it was lie that we -- they were always some rumors. And it was -- it wasn't really what you call a life. It was a sub --

subliving, subliving. And see, we -- we had something -- that the war is going well for the Allies. And you know, we were hoping. We were hoping. And that this hope kept us alive. But we were not even visiting family. First, many of them have already been deported. And in fact, my grandfather, my mother's father, and his daughter went to Warsaw. It was a time that, for one reason or another -- I don't know how it was arranged -- but it wasn't -- it wouldn't have -- it wouldn't matter. Because when I told you about this Purim celebration, at this very crowded beautiful table, there is, there are only two people, me and my cousin, Renya (ph), who lives also in Los Angeles, who survived. All of everybody there, all my -- Ciotka Dopcha (ph), Ciotka Hannah, Ciotka Sulcha (ph), Ciotka Peza (ph), and their husbands, and their children -- everybody was murdered. On my mother's side, I had family in Tomachav (ph). And I was able, while we were still in Lodz, to somehow go there, because I didn't look very typically like a Jew. And we took some money, brought it to Tomachav in the hope that it would be easier to live there. So she had two small children. It was Paula Rosenblum and they perished, they perished. From my mother's side, I had a picture of the Ciotka Rucha (ph), who perished in Warsaw, Ciotka Paula, who perished in Tomachav. And there was, in fact, a brother of my mother who lived in Amsterdam. And sure enough, he was taken to Auschwitz and murdered, with his wife -- and with his two small children. Now, we were sure that he would be surviving. But he didn't survive even in Holland. They -- so, you know, when you live in a place where there is death all around you when people are being deported, when you don't know what will be tomorrow, when everyday they can come and take you to Kripo and murder you there, when you are starving, when you are cold, when, when, when there is disease, because there was typhus quite a few times in the ghetto, you don't really think that there is something like a social life, you don't think that there is something which would entertain you, or -- we never went to anybody's

house. And the neighbors somehow were disappearing too. They were disappearing. And so --

03:10:16

Q: Do you remember what you talked about when you were at home with your family?

A: I was thinking about it. I was thinking about whether we talked. But we must have talked, because my mother was -- one time, had a dream. I do not believe in, you know -- I'm not superstitious at all. But she had a dream that she went someplace, and that she met her brother, who was in Holland. I mean, he went to Auschwitz and she went to Auschwitz. I mean -- I mean, why she had this dream and how this dream came upon I really don't know. And what did we talk about? Now, when --

Q: Maybe we should stop a minute. Is that music still here?

A: So the life was just -- it was to survive, to see that your family survived. And I feel that considering that we had, you know, this little -- little places where we could grow vegetables -- and I do not recall anybody stealing. And I remember kindness from the neighbor and, actually, kindness from the people I worked with. So I don't think that I -- I -- that it is a picture -- a rosy picture is el (sic). (pause) The way I saw it -- and I do not think that it's something in my imagination -- but anyhow, from my experience -- and I did not have any special standing in the ghetto, or any special influence -- but I, myself, experienced a pretty high moral fiber. And the ... that's what I experienced.

03:12:40

Q: Let me ask you; what kind of work did you do in the ghetto?

A: It was actually desk work. There were -- we had to issue what was legitimaceje obiadove, which means -- there was a little booklet based on it. You got a stamp that you got the soup. It was actually a part of the administration of the ghetto, which I was working in. And it was a job like a bookkeeper's job. And we were issuing -- it was called legitimaceje obiadove, which means -- such a little booklet, where it was stamped whether -- when somebody got his or her soup. And in order to be entitled to the soup, they had to have this booklet. So that was my work in the ghetto. Before, I was working in the produce department doing similar work. And then I was transferred to that department.

03:14:48

Q: Is this where you met your future husband?

A: Actually, he was the head of the office management in that department. He was very strict. He was the first to come -- and he was standing there -- and if somebody dared to come late -- he was just peering at that person, didn't say a word -- I don't think anybody came late anymore -- and was very much respected for -- for his, I would say, noble -- maybe yes, noble behavior and so on -- integrity -- for his integrity.

03:14:29

Q: Now, working in the food department, I would think, in a situation like the ghetto -- this is a pretty good job?

A: It did not entitle me to any additional food, maybe sometimes a soup. But otherwise, I could not get anything. In fact, I had diarrhea, and I needed some rice, and I approached my future husband, and he refused because he had his reasons. I am not blaming him. But it is very telling that I approached him, and he said, "No," he can not give it to me. He had such -- such strong conviction of what he can and what he cannot do -- he wouldn't give it to me. He wouldn't take it for himself either.

Q: So you had no opportunity to --

A: I had sometimes --

Q: -- cheat a little?

A: I had sometimes an additional soup, which I brought and gave to my parents. But otherwise, I sometimes -- it was a time that I could -- when there were more potatoes in the ghetto, I could get a few more potatoes. Then we were actually -- the worst -- we found out that there was something growing -- I don't know exactly what it was -- it looked like spinach or something similar -- and we were gathering it, and we were cooking that. So that was, of course -- every little bit was helpful.

Q: Did people come to you and try to get favors?

A: I was -- I wasn't the one who they knew. So they couldn't come to me for favors, because I am not -- I don't have the means to give anybody favors.

03:16:29

Q: Were you aware of much corruption and bribery going on in the ghetto?

A: I don't know whether I am an optimist, or I have a rosy outlook. I knew that somebody who was working, let's say in the bakery, had more, could get some more bread. But -- and somebody who worked in the police department could have some favors. Somebody who worked in the Sonderkommando and had -- or helped -- was stationed in the Kriminal Polizei, in the Kripo, for sure was able to get some favors, some more nutrition, and so on. If you needed medication, you had to go to the people who were connected to the _____ Polizei, who were either policemen, or something. They were able to bring some, which I -- when my brother was so very sick, you know, I got some medication from them.

03:17:44

Q: How?

A: I knew somebody who knows somebody. And so, one time, I got some medication. And that was in the very beginning. In the very beginning, we had -- it was easier to get medication. At the end, it was nearly impossible. And maybe, I felt that it is a matter of

fact that people who were associated with these places would have a little bit more nutrition. But nobody lived in a beautiful apartment. I don't think anybody -- maybe very few -- had a bathroom. They were mostly latrines.

03:18:37

Q: There weren't -- you went outside?

A: Yes, we went outside. Most of the people were living in one room. See, it was a part of town which was a part of town where very poor people used to live. So you know, there were not -- I, you know -- so corruption. By the nature -- let's say there was a Sonderkommando, who was very much in touch with the Germans -- I mean, not in touch because they were informers or something -- they were because they were supposed to be performing certain duties. It was obvious that they had probably a little bit more food. But all -- as I understood it, all was about food. They couldn't have much better living conditions, because they were not available -- maybe some people did have running water and some people did not have running water. Many people did not have running water.

03:19:48

Q: Now, you worked in the food administration. Was this....

A: A part of the food administration. But it --

Q: You worked on these coupon books for --

A: Yes.

Q: -- for people --

A: Yes.

Q: -- but your department also worked on distribution to food sitters?

A: No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: No?

A: We had -- we never saw food. We never saw food. It was just a bookkeeping department. I never -- no food went through -- we were a part of the so-called Aprovisation Department. But we were the part, an administrating part, only of this -- of this coupons, coupon books, and we never saw food. It never came to my office.

Q: Did everybody get coupons? Did everybody get the same amount?

A: Everybody who was working was getting a soup.

Q: And people who were not working how did they get that?

A: There was -- see, what was happening -- there was a certain amount of food which we're getting besides the soup. And the food, which they were getting besides the soup, they were getting. And if they were working, they were also getting the soup.

03:21:10

Q: How did they get this, were there soup kitchens? I mean, how did the poor people -- people who were not working, how did they get food?

A: In the Distribution Centers. They were -- everybody was entitled to a certain amount of food.

Q: They didn't -- they had coupons?

A: It was called -- wait a minute. They were called -- they were cards. They were cards for food. In fact, as I recall one instance after this deportation from -- when the Germans were -- came to the ghetto and took the people out -- some people who were not expecting to -- expected to be taken -- because they just were not so exact to what they were saying they were going to do -- some people took some of the bread, or whatever, cards with them, and it was a hardship for the others.

03:22:12

Q: Let me ask you a different question; do you think that women were treated differently in the ghetto?

A: No, no. It happened what -- it happens even now. The women were living longer. I think that, physiologically, the women are equipped with -- because we are the child-bearing species -- that we have certain -- this -- what is chemistry, or there is the glands, or something -- that we can survive easier than the men, because there were more women afterwards in the ghettos than there were men. But treatment -- I don't think that we were treated differently. In fact, you know, in Europe, women were treated better, in a way. I mean, it depends from what point of view you are looking of course, because the man was the man of the house and the woman, you know, hair drop -- it was different. So there were many women who were in professions. There were women doctors. There were women chemists. I had a relative who was a chemist, a relative who was -- had a kindergarten. And there were many doctors. And actually, I wanted to study biochemistry. That was my chosen profession which, of course, never happened.

Q: More than -- did you think that there were women who were able to use their appeal, to get favors in the ghetto?

A: Not that I was aware of -- not that I was aware of. If somebody, of course, worked close to the administration, there is a likelihood. For instance, I know, when people got married, they could have asked Rumchovsky to give them -- to give them something. But I don't think so. I do not think so. I might have not come across it. But I don't think so.

03:24:32

Q: So how long were you in the ghetto?

A: Until the very, very end, until nearly the last day, because I -- I don't have a tattoo. Because when we came, the last transports -- they were so crowded that they didn't tattoo us. So it must have been very late in August already when we came. And we had extra -- an extra day for ourselves. What happened was that we were on the way which we didn't know is Auschwitz. And we --

03:25:12

Q: Well, how did -- but how did you even get rounded up; how did all of this happen?

A: Okay. They were coming -- in the beginning, they thought we would go full of tyranny [terror]. But people didn't go full of tyranny [terror]. So the Germans started rounding people up. They also came to our apartment. But we had the cellar, and we closed the shutters, and we went down there, we heard them. They were banging with their rifles in many places. But it was that we could pull the bed there -- and it was not usually -- I don't know whether they expected it -- but they banged it on the floor -- they did -- but they didn't bang where we were. So we did it -- we did it whenever, which was probably very, very often -- you know, it was -- we were in the cellar. And in fact, what happened -- I have the picture of my cousin -- and his whole family was deported, and he came to us. And unfortunately, I, my father, my brother, and Aros (ph) -- Aros must have been, maybe, seven years, or something like it -- and we don't have room for Fishek (ph) -- so -- but there was a shed. So we said, "Fishek, we'll hide you there," and we hid Fishek there. We got up in the morning, we looked in the shed, he was gone. So the

German took him out from there. They were looking everywhere. They were looking everywhere. They were just -- just going through everywhere and herding people to go, herding people to go.

03:27:02

Q: And this is in August, 1944?

A: That was in August, 1944. And I -- this was -- like, I wish maybe -- I was thinking about hiding there. But we didn't have any food, and we didn't know what will happen. If we would have known where we were going, we would have probably stayed in that ca...., cellar, maybe suffocated. But we would stay there. Now, with the transport --

03:27:27

Q: What happened, how did you get there?

A: Yes. So this extra day -- I have to tell you about it. So we were on the way to this gathering place -- and August was just a beautiful month -- and we saw very close where we were supposed to be gathered. We saw, like, a little house or something. Anyhow, there was a guard, a German guard, in front of it. But it wasn't a Gestapo. So we said, "Can we stay there for a day?". He said, "Okay. But no more." So we took -- we took residence for a day in that room. And I was so spoiled that, even in the ghetto, I had to have my spoon. And we were there, and -- you know, in retrospect, you sometimes think only, "Did we survive? We didn't survive, right? We didn't survive. So what good was

everything?". But no. Maybe it's philosophical. And since life is not forever, this one day was also important, because this was the last day that we were a family and that we were together. Aros was with us too. And that's why I think sometimes about this day. And I don't want to say, "What good was it that they didn't survive?". But they had to stay. And then we went. It was the most strange thing. I met my cousin and her mother on the ground where we were waiting to be taken away to Auschwitz. And we stayed together, I and my cousin, until we were liberated, which was very lucky for both of us. She claims that my spirit helped her to survive, because I was just -- when we were working in Sasel, one time, we passed by windows which were lit, and there was some kind of a holiday, and she mentions to me, "Look, we will never live like that." I said, "What do you mean, Renya? Why not? Of course, we'll live like that." And she always repeats it. And I think that it was the defiance, the defiance. I just wanted to defy the Germans, because I went to Auschwitz with pleurisy, which is water of the lungs. I had a bladder infection. I was very sick before we went to Auschwitz. And when I was lying down naked on the ground in Auschwitz --

Q: Oh, you probably --

A: That's okay.

Q: -- made your point for now?

A: Yes, I made my point. I made my point. And that's not so much --

Q: I just want to backtrack a minute because --

A: Yes.

04:01:10

Q: -- I want you to tell me a little bit about how things were organized in the ghetto.

A: Okay. Since I wasn't -- I was in a very, very small -- my job was administrative. But I had nothing to do with food, I had nothing to do with distribution of food, or anything of this kind. So I wasn't so close to the administration. But as a person who lived in the ghetto from the very beginning to the very end, my assessment is that so it was hunger, so there was deportation, so there were tragedies -- but there was -- somehow, we knew what is happening. There were hospitals. Nobody came back from a hospital with contagious diseases. That's another story. But there were hospitals. There were hospitals also where children could go. There were hospitals where people -- if some -- if there was a birth that they could go. There was certain civil safety. I mean, we were not afraid that somebody would come into our house and rob us. There were very -- of course, some of the criminals were included in the early deportations. That's true. There were prisons. There was a court. There were judges. There was a prosecutor. They had names of everybody. They knew where everybody was living. There was a Department of Statistics. There was a Department of Distribution of Food. And within this department was the Department of Produce. It was a department where they distributed flowers. There was a Department of Bakeries. Now, there was milk and coffee. I mean, they knew exactly about how many people we had. I think that could have changed after one of the deportations. But they knew. They knew about who has an apartment, or

whether there is an empty apartment. They knew who had died. So it was in this tragic conditions there was something that -- we, for instance, knew that there would be a deportation. We, for instance -- besides, there were many rumors which, sometimes, were not true. Very often, Rumchovsky had speeches and prepared us for certain things, certain changes, or what have you. They were an instrument -- in the beginning, Rabbis were performing ceremonies, if somebody, you know, got married. There were circumcisions performed. Later on, when they -- when the Germans didn't allow it, Rumchovsky was the one who married people. So for a very short time, there was even something, like -- on the marichian (ph) was something like a reserve for people who worked very hard. And one time, my brother had the privilege, and I took him there. And that was in the beginning. The ghetto became more and more less run by the Jewish administration, and the Germans had more of a part. But this was at the time when Jews had more to say about administration.

04:05:05

Q: Was this -- do you think that this was positive that Rumchovsky and the Jewish Consul had so much control over your lives?

A: Considering the alternative, because if they would not be an order, if there wouldn't be order, if there would be dead people lying all over, if there would be a lot of crime, I believe the German wouldn't go for it, they would just close the ghetto.

Q: So you thought he was a pretty good man?

A: I -- besides that I saw him, I never met the man. But I'm, what I'm thinking -- in this abnormal condition, with enormous pressure of the German from the outside, with the population probably being very often not very happy with whats going on, to have this kind of an administration -- so that since we're taken care of, no matter -- no matter what, I think that people who survive the ghetto, if not for this kind of an administration, would not survive it until August the 25, 1944, because the ghetto would have been closed. And if this workshops, would not be administered, administrated the way they are, they were they were, the ghetto would have been closed also much sooner.

04:06:50

Q: What workshops are you talking about?

A: The workshops for the Germans, the workshops -- like, there was a leather workshop, and there was -- there were all kinds of workshops which -- for which, you know, they were paid, and they could use the money to buy the food, and so on and so on, and -- I mean, the administration -- the administration, not individuals -- everything, the administration. Now, you know, when you think today what's going on in certain countries, that, under this awful circumstances, they had an administration who had everything in check, they had powers -- of course, they had -- if they wouldn't have the powers, there would be wars there. Because if somebody wouldn't get enough food or something, no matter whose fault, people would rebel. But there were no rebellions. Anyhow --

04:07:46

Q: Did you get paid for your work?

A: Not -- no. Whether I got -- okay. But --

Q: All right. Why don't we pick up again where you were at the train --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to get deported to -- you didn't know where --

A: No.

Q: -- or anything --

A: No.

Q: -- and you met your cousin --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and you got on the train.

A: Right.

04:08:10

Q: Why don't you tell me about that journey?

A: Yes. I told you about my mother. And I had enormous -- all -- I mean, respect and all.

Q: Wait. You told me about your mother?

A: Yes. I told you that she was beautiful and --

Q: Oh, you have.

A: -- that she kept everything so clean --

Q: Right. Okay.

A: -- and she would -- took care of me when I was sick. I took care of my brother. And she never complained. And we went into this cattle wagon with all these packages, which they deceitfully told us to pack, and she was sitting on the floor. I can sit on the floor. It doesn't matter. But my mother sitting on this floor and being so unhappy -- it just broke my heart. And a I said, she never complained. And it was so embarrassing. It was -- I mean -- and there was a little window in that cattle wagon, and people were trying to look whether we are going. And, as I said before, the day was absolutely gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. And here, she was, poor -- my poor mother was sitting on the floor and -- I'm not sure -- it must have been the air there -- and I don't know what happened to the excrements -- I think there was some kind of an opening or something. Anyhow, then

they slid the door open from the wagon, and we came out.

Q: How long had you been riding?

A: I do not recall exactly. I was just from Lodz to Auschwitz. From far away, it looked like a place for the insane, because there was some wire around it and there were people running back and forth, back and forth, with shaven heads. And here, we had to come out, leave everything in the wagon. And then they told us to go to the left, to go to the right. And there was one Oberscharffuhrer at the head, closer to the camp. And he said to my mother to go to the left, and I went to the right. And not knowing, really, the depth of that tragedy, I still felt that it means that I'll go to work and she won't. So I run up to the Oberscharffuhrer, and I said, " Meine Mutter kann arbeiten viel besser wie ich," which was true, that she can work much better than I can. So he said, " Du willst, sie schon sehen im abend, " that I would see her in the evening. There were very deceitful, very -- I mean, that this deceit was the smallest deceit -- I mean, because the one which they did to get us out of the ghetto was a much greater deceit. Now, I was with my cousin and her mother, Tess (ph). She had lighter hair. My mother was already, partially gray. And we went in, and there was a second selection. We were supposed to completely disrobe, which we did of course -- we didn't have any other choice -- and that we will go to the showers and -- there was something round -- and I was close to my cousin and her mother -- and all of a sudden, they took her mother out. It was a second selection. Of course, when she was undressed, they realized she is not in her 20s or 30s. In fact, only one mother went with us, a Mrs. Kohn (ph). And what she went through in the camps -- she was lashed and whipped so many times. But that's another story. Then we, from there, there was -- they shaved our hair -- and I had long brown hair -- and my

cousin, Renya, said, "You know, I couldn't recognize you" -- so I was calling, " Tusa, tusa " -- and so I came out and she saw me -- and they shaved our heads -- and we were naked -- and we were supposed to lie down someplace on the ground to sleep overnight, which we did. Everything seemed completely insane. And miraculously, I awoke, I didn't have my bladder infection. Then we were given some shoes, and I was given some shoes which had my foot, and we were given some clothes. And then I remember Auschwitz, I remember we were standing, one time, in line and I had some container with some -- what was supposed to be soup -- and it was all, like, in a maze, what was happening, what has happened, I mean. And what I see someplace, a sign, " Arbeit Macht Frei." That was the sign in Auschwitz. And fortunately, we were there only a few days. And everything seems like a very, very bad dream. And they were telling us that going out of Auschwitz to a working camp is a rather fortunate occurrence.

Q: Who was telling you that?

A: It must have been some other person -- people who were already -- have been there in Auschwitz longer. Some of them were incarcerated people.

04:15:19

Q: Now, you were over in Birkenau?

A: Yes, that was Birkenau.

Q: So you talked to some of the people who were --

A: Who were there before.

Q: What else did you observe while you were there in those few days?

A: The first impression was that it was some gathering of insane people. They just didn't look normal. They absolutely didn't look normal. Their movement didn't -- wasn't normal. That was my first impression when I went out of the wagon, and I looked to my left, to my left and -- because we went out of the wagon, and then we were standing facing this Oberscharffuhrer here. So then I was on the left side -- I mean, I was on the -- my mother was on the left, and I was on the right. So -- and then, as I said, it was like a -- like a bad, bad dream, the whole thing -- it was so unbelievable, the movement of the people, everything there. When I think about Auschwitz, I just remember, like, fragments because it was such an enormous shock. It was an enormous shock for, for me. And they took my mother away, and my father, and my -- and Aros and Lolick were also taken away. I didn't know where they will be going. And I didn't realize what actually happened to my mother for a long time. Because, from there, we went to another camp. My leg started swelling up. And we went to a camp in Hamburg. There, we were supposed to be laying railroad tracks. And there were German woman, women who were our -- I don't know -- they were called Kapo. And in the morning, very early in the morning, we have to stand in line. And there was a German SS, and he was pointing out who's going and who's staying. In the beginning, I went. And in this camp, there was a doctor. In most camps, there was a doctor. They wanted to have us, on one hand, probably, fit, and on the other hand if not, eliminated. So this -- this doctor -- I ask her whether I still have water on the lung. And she said, "Yes, you have." And I had a cut

on my leg. So she put a very large bandage on my leg. And it so happened that, after I had the bandage, in the morning, she, for a short time, pointed out for me to stay. Now, you were asking whether I realized what happened. So what actually -- when I started going to work, it was very hard. It was very hard, to me, to climb on the wagon because my legs were so swollen. But since it was very early, there were stars in the heaven, and I prayed. So I prayed for my parents, and for Lolick, and for myself. But -- so at this time, I had no inkling what, actually, is happening to them, absolutely no inkling. And then we were in Hamburg for quite a while.

04:18:48

Q: What was the name of this camp?

A: I remember only that it was Hamburg. I do not know any name of this particular one.

Q: This was not Sasel?

A: No, this wasn't Sasel. From this camp --

Q: How long were you there for?

A: It wasn't a very long time. But it was more than a month. From there, we were transported to Sasel. And I, as much as it was, the conditions were not good -- this camp was situated in a very woody area. And I am very sensitive to good air. And also, when we came there, there were always accommodations that the doctor -- there was a doctor.

So when people came from work, they could come there. It was called the ambulance. Actually, it's like an infirmary. And I approached this doctor and I asked her whether I could work for her. And she says -- so she had chosen me to work for her. That also allowed me to recuperate somewhat. I had to work, I had to wash the floors, which no big deal. It was a big deal for me then because, you know. But anyhow -- and when people were coming, I was greeting them, I was taking reports, and I got -- they were saying that I am very polite and friendly to everybody and -- now, this doctor wanted me to sleep with her -- she was afraid to sleep by herself -- which I did.

04:20:40

Q: Was she a Jewish woman?

A: Yes. She was from Czechoslovakia. She committed suicide after the war. And so that was going on for a while. But then, for one reason or another, I guess she wanted me to sleep with her and somebody else wanted me to sleep in the barracks. But anyhow, somebody else got my position. So I was going to work. When we were coming from work, we had to stay at attention. And if there were any complaints about anybody during the work of any kind, the person was whipped, and we had all to stand and watch it. And in the middle of this courtyard was something -- I don't remember -- some wooden contraption or something where the people were whipped. Now, one time, I was also punished. And it was -- they claimed -- which I do not know whether it's true or not -- but that I brought some meat. We were working someplace. Over there, we were digging foundations. And at one time, we were carrying heavy stones, one giving it to another in a line. And one time, we were called to a slaughter house. And they -- he

claimed that I took some meat into the camp. And I had a big speech. I spoke German. And I was just sentenced to clean the latrines, which -- I don't know whether -- I think I remember it right. I never felt -- I felt always defiant. I never felt -- even when I had to clean the latrines, I didn't feel inferior. This mother, Mrs.Kohn, has been unfortunatly, she has been lashed and whipped so many times. So over there, one time, I was milking a cow. We were working someplace and we saw cows there. So I was milking a cow. But unfortunately, another girl was doing something similar -- I don't know whether it was a cow or it was a bull -- and hit her. And it was tragic. There was not enough food and the coats -- the coat was a big problem. And one time, we walked -- worked -- walked to work, and we had wooden shoes. And the ice was building up on the shoes and building up on the shoes, and we stopped and wanted to get the ice off our wooden shoes. They wouldn't let us. And it seemed like it will never end. And I remember that, later on, we used to say, "If this walk ended, anything difficult will end." And --

Q: I am going to have to stop you because you are alluding to a lot of things --

A: Which you would --

Q: -- that I want to ask you questions about.

A: Good. Good. I am coming back.

04:24:00

Q: First of all, this camp Sasel--

A: Yes.

Q: -- was it women and men?

A: All the camps which I was in Hamburg, in Sasel, only women.

Q: Was it large? Were there a lot of women?

A: No. Sasel was not very huge. I couldn't tell you the numbers. But it wasn't huge. I mean, it was -- in comparison with Auschwitz, it was really small.

Q: How many people were in your barracks?

A: That is a very difficult question for me to answer. We were sleeping in the beds, like, one, I on the top, and Renya on the bottom, or vice versa, I believe. And how many people in the barracks? Wait a minute.

Q: 20, 50?

A: Wait a minute. 25.

04:25:04

Q: When this woman doctor wanted you to stay with her, she just wanted companionship, or

she wanted --

A: Just companionship, just plain companionship. She was scared too. She was, you know. She was working as a doctor. But she was, you know. She was a prisoner. No, no. She wanted just -- because she was, scared. She probably lost her family and she was scared.

Q: You don't remember, maybe, people sleeping together --

A: No!

Q: -- having sex --

A: No!

Q: -- or relationships?

A: No, no, no, no! I tell you it's impossible. There was no drive for that. There was -- I mean, we were so devoid of energy, of desires. I mean, it was all -- what was important was not to be so awfully cold -- the cold was very hurtful -- maybe not to be so very hungry, not to be whipped or hurt -- but nothing of this kind. She was just a nice human being and she was just scared. And at night, I'll tell you, my cousin was also scared, you know. I mean, people were scared.

04:26:18

Q: Where were most of the prisoners there from? Were most of them from Poland?

A: Yes, yes, I think so. I think so. There was one girl who, who was whom, -- maybe who was there from Germany -- but probably, she was in the ghetto. And that's how she got to the camp.

Q: And the guards, or the Kapos; where were they from?

A: There were Germans.

Q: They were all German?

A: Yes.

04:26:50

Q: Did -- well, getting back to strictly women-oriented issues, did you have your period throughout?

A: Fortunately, not. They said that they gave us something in Auschwitz, or something. But we didn't have it. We thought that we'd never regain it. But we did regain it because we have children. But, no, we didn't have it. And we were told that they were giving us something so that we shouldn't have the period.

Q: That must have been somewhat alarming?

A: Not really, because who would like to be bothered with that.

04:27:33

Q: Did you have enough food there?

A: No, no, no.

Q: Was it any -- was it better or worse than the ghetto?

A: The ghetto fluctuated, you know? Sometimes, it was more. Sometimes, it was less. And at the end, there was only starvation. We didn't have enough food. For instance, when I saw the cow, I milked her, you know. And when we went to the slaughterhouse, maybe I, you know -- I took some meat. We were getting some bread. We were getting some soup. That's what I -- what I recall. And I recall that the hunger was bad. But the cold was miserable.

04:28:26

Q: One more question, and then we'll have to change tapes. You said you were laying foundations?

A: Yes.

Q: What were they for?

A: We didn't see the finished products. But there were some German civilians also who were overseers. So there must have been something contracted by the SS, for some companies, I assume. Because there were some civilian overseers at that place.

Q: Do you think they worked for the factory or housing, or you just don't know?

A: I really don't know. But I don't think about the size of it. It's likely that it was not for factories.

Q: Were you aware -- well, when you were outside of the camp working --

A: Yes.

Q: -- did you have any contact with the German people?

A: We never have contact. But in Hamburg, one time, they were -- they were looking at us. But we looked like criminals, because we had this shaven hair, shaven heads, and we had these outfits, you know, special outfits, and we looked like prisoners.

Tape #3

05:00:47

Q: At this time -- I guess it was the Fall of 1944 -- were you aware of Allied bombings in the area, or anything like that?

A: Well, we were in Hamburg. Yes, yes. And we were not that happy about it. We didn't care what would happen to us. And they were running to the shelters. And we really -- we really -- in Hamburg, any time we heard the raid, we were just very happy, because it was a sign, you know, that something is being done about the Germans, of course, and that the countries would be saved, from this tyrant. So we were happy about it.

Q: It gave you hope?

A: Maybe, maybe, yes.

Q: You just said something -- that there was a real turning point, in your mental outlook from Auschwitz --

A: Definitely, definitely. When you have your family, you first, you feel more like a human being. See, Auschwitz was very dehumanizing. You were not a person. You just were not a person. And you felt it, that you are not a person. And since Auschwitz, they did something to us. So as I said, on one hand, I didn't feel inferior -- but I had it also say that -- you see, there was a lot of where I was -- I knew that I could do something in the

ghetto. So when my brother was sick, I tried to bring him ice because ice was -- had to be put on his heart. And I remember the person I was getting the ice from. He, afterwards, saw me. He was afraid to ask me what happened to my brother, because I was so crushed. I could help a little bit. I could do something. I was still -- I was still a person who had certain, certain -- I wouldn't say powers -- but I could help my father, I could help my brother, I could encourage them, I could do something for them, I could be with them. Now, when they took everybody away and -- I mean, we were not really -- in a way, we were not really human beings. In a way, you know, you didn't -- certain feelings were taken away, you know? And besides that, the type of, of, -- I couldn't call it life -- that wasn't life -- that wasn't life -- and we, but we probably -- I in particular, probably believed that we will survive. I also believed that my brother will survive. I also believed that Aros will survive. And, but Bergen-Belsen --

05:04:29

Q: All right. You have to tell me how you got to Bergen-Belsen.

A: All right. Now --

Q: How long were you in Sasel?

A: Very close to the end of the war, because I wasn't in Bergen-Belsen too long.

Q: How did you -- how did you leave Sasel; what happened?

A: They took us on trains. They were not cattle trains. And we were still standing in the station, and I decided that I am going to jump out of the window, which I did. And I asked my cousin, "Come with me," because I knew there is some camp of some prisoners, Italians, and I think that maybe I can walk over there, or do something. This German girls overseers came up to me, picked me up, put me back on the train, and I was expecting, the whole time, that I'll be punished or something. Nothing happened. Now, we came to another hell, because Bergen-Belsen was like a dug up cemetery. There were piles, piles, over piles, of skeletons, one skeleton over the other skeleton, piles, a hill. We were put into something that looked like a warehouse, lying on the floor. One time a day -- or I don't know whether every day -- they opened the doors, they whirled up something which was some watery soup. Now, people were very sick there. There was a lot of diphtheria. And I remember the latrines. And somehow, I probably had the urge to survive. So I don't know where I got -- I got some metal containers, one for me and one for Renya. And when I heard the squeak of the opening door, I ran to the door, and I put this container into this kettle. So I got some soup -- and I think I got for both of us -- because they were not staying there very long, so not everybody got anything, you know? So it was important to run there and to get the little bit of watery soup in the beginning. Otherwise, you didn't get anything. And there, you realized subconciously and conciously, that I will never see my mother, never see my dad. And just -- just lying -- we were just lying on this floor there day and night. Probably, when we had to go to the latrine, we went out. We must have gone out, because we were able to see this -- this piles, piles, and piles, of skeletons, just skeletons, unburied. And they were throwing more and more piling up more. And, that was Bergen-Belsen.

05:08:22

And I remember when we were liberated, we were liberated by the British. There was no joy in my heart. I understand they told us -- somebody told us not to run out too early, one girl did, and she got shot. There was no joy what I was doing, I got some place, some paper and a pen, and I was writing. I write -- and I never thought that I should keep this writing. I'm sure I wrote in Polish. And I wrote and wrote. And, then -- that was liberation. Fortunately -- unfortunately, they meant very well. Some people were taken to, like, a hospital or something. They meant well. But they wanted to share with us the food, and they gave some chocolate and other things to people, who were starving for a long, long time. And their stomachs couldn't take it. So they got diarrhea, and some of them didn't make it. And then we must have been taken out of there. And we were still in Bergen-Belsen. But, of course, in completely different quarters, and with food and so on, supplied by the British.

Q: Do you remember when this was?

A: Right now, I couldn't even think. It was 1945. And I think it was April, 1945. I just couldn't think of dates.

Q: So you were -- maybe only there a few weeks, or --

A: I think I was there only a few weeks. I think I was there only a few weeks. That's what I think.

Q: When the British came in, were you inside this barn?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Then how did you know you were liberated?

A: Probably, the screams, and they probably walked in, and we probably saw the uniforms. But I know as much as later on, at that point, there was no happiness. Because after Bergen-Belsen, I -- I knew, that my parents didn't survive. And there was absolutely you know, maybe, seeing all these corpses, and I mean, you couldn't be happy about anything. I wasn't happy. However, once we were transferred to some human quarters, and I wanted to look for my brother. He was in Buchenwald. But he didn't survive. And I do not know why. And I was sure that Aros would survive, because he was such a tough young, young boy. I don't know what happened to him. I have no idea. There's no way to find out anything right. I talked to people who knew my brother in Buchenwald. And that's why I didn't stay long in Bergen-Belsen -- I mean, not -- this camp in prison -- but liberated Bergen-Belsen. But I went to Hamburg. I got some clothes there. I don't know how I did it. And then I went to Hanover, because it was where I was asking everybody -- I was inquiring whether anybody saw Lolick, and whether they know, and maybe he registered someplace or something. But, he did not survive. He did not survive. And so everybody, everybody from this enormous family was tortured, starved, gassed. And there is a story.

05:12:40

Q: When you went -- you went to try to find some family, find your brother?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do?

A: It so happens that I met my present husband, Dave Klipp. And he was already -- at that time, he was thinking positively. There were people who didn't have a -- who did not belong anyplace. So he and some others contacted -- not the Nazis, of course, at that time -- but the German authorities to form this KZ Ausschuss, so that we get some housing, get some nutrition. Because there were cards at that time. There were nutritional cards. So I -- at that time, I actually stay stayed in Hanover, and I just didn't feel like going to Poland, which I very much regret. And so from there, we started living what I would say is a much more normal life. I was together with Renya and there were some other people who survived. And so there was already a social exchange. We already cared that, how we get dressed, and how we look, and we got -- we got through this KZ Ausschuss.

05:14:14

We got an apartment with some German person. I mean, it was her apartment. And her husband didn't come yet from the war. So we were -- we were designated this quarters for us to live in.

Q: And she was there also?

A: She was there also.

Q: Wasn't that strange, living with a German after the war?

A: She knew that she just has to let us live there, you know. She realized, you know. It wasn't really -- it was -- you see, there were not enough housing to give us -- later on, we did get a house for ourself. But at this time, it was the best solution. Because, at least, we lived in a normal apartment with a kitchen, and with a bathroom, and so on. At that time, she realizes they are the, that that's the only way it will be for a while. When, her husband came from the, back. He was rebeling. He was rebeling a lot. And then, of course, we got another place to live.

05:16:14

Q: So this organization there gave you food coupons and --

A: Yes. Because the Germans were also getting coupons. At that time, it was rationed. And we got an apartment, and we got -- we got food -- and we got some clothing, and we started what you would call the beginning of a normal life. Some people, you know -- that -- that's what was happening.

Q: Was it difficult to resurrect yourself in a way?

A: I have to admit that it -- I remember some extreme elation. Not in Bergen-Belsen. Not when I was -- but when I started -- when I left Bergen-Belsen to go to Hamburg -- I don't

know whether it started there or much later -- but I was so elated that I am alive. I just -- my cousin, Renya, was just, like, envious. I mean, she was happy about that. But she was envious that -- I mean, I felt that I am alive. And it was -- it was a elation for me to -- it -- I went through this grieving period for a while. And I was -- we were always grieving, we were always talking about it, and so on. But this -- this absolute transformation for being not even a human being -- and all of a sudden, being free -- when I realized it, I was -- there was a period -- it didn't last forever -- but it was a period of great elation.

05:17:46

Q: How long did you stay there with your cousin?

A: Where?

Q: In Hamburg.

A: No, it was in Hanover.

Q: Hanover. Sorry.

A: We actually stayed there for a long time. We also were in Frankfurt for a while. And yes, the reason we stayed so long in Germany was we wanted to leave Germany as soon as possible. There were too many memories and you never knew to whom you're talking. Because if they told you that they always were buying into your stores -- or something

like that -- then you know: "Watch out." Then we didn't want to -- but anyhow, Dave had a sister in the United States, in New York. So actually, they were doing something to send us status. However, I had no pleurisy in the ghetto and also in the camps. And so I didn't have the pleurisy when I was liberated just miraculously. On an x-rays, there were shadows. And the United States, very rightfully, didn't want to let people in with tuberculosis. They would have let somebody in with pleurisy, because it's not contagious. So I had a very hard time, to, until they declared me. It took a long time because -- we came here in 1950, liberated in 1945 -- until I got a clearing that I can go. And that's why it took so long for us to come here to the United States.

05:19:33

Q: So you and David got together pretty soon in Hanover?

A: Yes. Well, we got married in 1946, March 16th. And you know, the lady in whose house we lived, who we met afterwards -- she just couldn't believe it, that we got married. You see, there is a big age difference between David and me. But it really -- he's -- I mean, he's a young man. So he now believes that he's -- am I on tape still?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh!

05:20:08

Q: You know, one thing that's confusing to me -- I've never heard this before about both you and your husband -- is -- I didn't realize, that you were sort of operating with German authorities, as opposed to with British -- the British military Government or the American military Government.

A: All right. Now, we got the British Government -- and that was a UNRR, UNRR -- they were also helping. Now, I don't know whether KZ Ausschussz was later. Formed later. I would have to check with Dave exactly where it was -- where it was formed. Because in the very beginning -- I have a picture with La Guardia. And yes, in the very beginning. This happened later. That's what -- what we are telling you about the KZ Ausschuss. It didn't happen immediately after the end of the war. It didn't happen immediately. Because at this time, we were being sent supplies from the United States to the UNRR, and La Guardia came, and, since I was involved in with the distribution center of the food -- but this was food given directly to people -- and La Guardia came -- and there's a picture of him with me -- he was so shocked when we were telling him what was actually happening. So in the very beginning, there were not so -- the people started coming, you know -- more and more people started coming. And then when -- that's how, that's how I remember it -- because in the beginning, we weren't old. That was -- the beginning, we were on Auerstrasse (ph), and food was coming, yes, to the UNRR.

Q: And you got involved in food distribution?

A: Yes. I was working together with others and we were -- yes.

05:22:30

Q: When you were in these camps and you were with your cousin, do you remember what you talked about?

A: We wanted to keep our sanity. So when we were digging this foundations in Sasel, we were doing some algebraic in the sand. We were doing square roots, when we had a little bit of time. And um.... See, we were going to the same school. She's a little -- she was a little -- in a little bit older class than I. So this, we remembered. That we had a little bit free time, and we were were doing the algebretical roots. So you know to keep the sanity.

05:23:12

Q: Did you think about religion at all; did you pray?

A: I never stopped praying -- I think that I never stopped praying. I do not pray -- I mean, I change the way I pray. Very frequently, and I pray with my own words. But I don't think -- I might not have prayed in Bergen-Belsen. I might not have prayed. But I prayed in Hamburg, because I remember it. And, I don't know whether it is, has something to do with my upbringing, or whether it has something to do with my spirituality. And I think that we have certain powers. Maybe powers is too strong a word. But we were -- in the worst of times even, we have some abilities. Not in Auschwitz maybe. Not in Bergen-Belsen. But we have some abilities. We have -- and I think they are, maybe -- you could say they are God-given. And so I keep praying. I keep praying. I keep -- actually, my way of praying is, if this is important, a way of

thanking God for what I want to have.

05:24:49

Q: Let me ask you one more question. And if there's anything you want to add. Have you thought about what sort of long-term impact these experiences have had on you, and, and have influenced the way you are today?

A: It is absolutely miraculous. I went, in the very beginning, after in Germany, through some times which I was very -- I may be depressed, nervous, and so on. It's likely that, having been blessed with two sons and two daughter-in-laws and four grandchildren, and having worked also on my physical and emotional health through things like yoga and others, I am, actually right now, in a very good, very good place emotionally. Because I could talk about it and I could -- when my husband was testifying at UCLA [University California-Los Angeles], there's no way I was able to testify. It still -- when I think about it, even about testifying, especially about the ghetto, I was having butterflies in my stomach. However -- and I cannot watch any -- anything on television about the Holocaust. And when I watched the first time when there was a Holocaust story, I was sick for quite a long time because I have a visual memory. And when I hear something, it doesn't affect me so much. But when I saw it, I cannot see it. I cannot see. And I try -- since I don't do any good to anybody and I have my responsibilities -- so I try not to look.

05:27:00

Q: Can you think of how -- could you talk about it after the war?

A: No.

Q: It took you a while?

A: Yes, we couldn't talk about it. In the beginning, we just could not talk about it. And I couldn't talk about it for quite a long time. And, my son was always -- when I started talking quite recently, he was, was, like -- in a way, he was pleased that I talk about it. He'd be very surprised that I was able to testify, with pretty much of a composure, because I -- Dave was talking -- my husband -- I couldn't -- I was always, want to protect everybody from everything. Now, I have a little number which I was wearing in the camps. And my granddaughter wants it, she said, "Don't give it to anybody," she wants it -- so probably -- I will show it to you -- probably when she will ever eventually give to the Holocaust Museum.

Q: Can you think of any other way that these experiences have affected the way you've lived for the last 50 years?

A: What really affected me is my upbringing. I was brought up to respect elderly people -- and I don't forget that I am one of them right now -- I was taught to be honest. I was taught that you're supposed to be charitable. We never were taught to hate. And I think it's not so much the experience. But the way I was brought up, there are certain things I just would not do. I wouldn't do it. Because this period of time -- of course, it is a big -- it's not a void -- a hurt -- my main concern is actually whether when my -- especially, my mother -- my father, of course, too -- when they went into this gas chambers, whether --

hopefully, they didn't suffer too much -- that is my very, very important concern. And I do not want to investigate too much. Because I don't off -- on the one hand, in the beginning, I was hoping it was instantaneous. But I understand it was not instantaneous.

06:00:47

Q: What are we looking at, Estelle?

A: This is a photograph taken in a spa which we spent the summer in. And there is my dear mother, Hannah Ryba Weingarten (ph), my dear father, Yakaf Weingarten (ph). And there is my dear, handsome brother, Herschlipe Weingarten (ph), we called him Lolick. And that's me next to my mother. I was about five years old. And let me remember them the way -- the way -- the way they were here, and not think that they were gassed in Auschwitz.

Q: What are we looking at?

A: Oh. This picture was taken in Portumbina, where we had a summer home. And I am picking up the balls and my brother, who is at the right, is playing with -- and his name is Lolick Weingarten -- he is playing with Fishek,

06:02:13

my cousin. I mentioned his name because, before going to Auschwitz, after his family was deported, he came to us and we tried to hide him. And there was no room in our cellar

for him. And there were already five people. And we hid him in a shack. But unfortunately, the SS found him and took him to Auschwitz a few days before we went to Auschwitz.

Q: What year do you think this picture was taken?

A: I must have been here, maybe, 10.

Q: So the early 1930s?

A: Yes, it would be in the early 1930s. (pause) On this photograph, on the left, standing, is Felka (ph), my cousin, Felka Weingarten. And on the right is Ritcha (ph), Ritcha Weingarten. And I am in front of Felka, and my brother, Lolick Weingarten, is in front of Ritcha. Unfortunately, Felka perished in the Holocaust and Ritcha, her husband, and her baby, perished in the Holocaust also. Rest their memory. (pause) This is my aunt, Paula Rosenblum, a sister of my mother's. She perished in the Holocaust together with her husband and three small children. (pause) This is my aunt Rucha Bondrypa (ph), who played her piano beautifully, and she perished in Warsaw during the Holocaust.