

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Cecile Klein-Pollack
February 26, 1992
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Cecile Klein-Pollack, conducted on February 26, 1992 in Hollandale, Florida on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

CECILE KLEIN-POLLACK

February 26, 1992

Beep.

I want to start with your describing the deportation from the ghetto, and I want you to include the context, the time, the place, who was with you and what happened.

I was in Hust, the name of the ghetto was Hust. This was uh down in Czechoslovakia which was occupied at that time by the Hungarians because it was annexed by the Hungarians, and my mother was with me in the ghetto, my sister, her little boy, Donny, and her husband. They came, the Hungarian, uh police, just, first of all we were always uh, brutalized because uh they would just come in and uh, uh take out some girls and, and, and make them do all kinds of uh of stupid things, or men, they would tell the men to walk on all four and uh be like horses and they would ride on them in, in order to, to brutalize them, but then came uh the time when, when they just chased everybody out, they told us the day before that we can pack one small suitcase, and we should be ready to leave the ghetto. When we came to the, it was a um, at one time, a factory for uh, bricks, and there they s-started to search us again. The SS was there also, and every woman had to and every girl had to undress naked and we were searched internally for valuables. My mother was a really religious person, and all I could think of was how terrible this is for my mother to go through something such, such a terrible ordeal. When we were finished, my mother took the baby from my sister, she, because she was holding the little boy Donny, and, she had a bottle of milk for the child, and the SS grabbed the bottle of milk and said, let's see you cow what you have there, and my mother pleaded please, the, this is, the child needs the milk, please don't take the milk from, from my um grandson. He started to beat her with a horsewhip, and then I saw that she was being beaten, so I screamed , so at least I got away the attention from my mother, and so my mother ran into the because the trains were, were right there, we were just you know going into those uh cattle trains, so I took away the attention from my mother, and he started to beat me with that whip, and finally, uh, I was able to run away also, and we were finally in the cattle train. We were pushed in like herrings, at least 75 to 80 people which could only hold maybe 30. There was no room even not to lie down, but to sit, most of the people were standing, and then when we, we got very tired, we would be sitting down, and they locked us in, and finally the trains, but before the trains took off, uh, and SS came in and told, and picked out my brother in law that he is going to be the one responsible for, for they gave us 2 pails for uh bodily functions, and we were travelling 24 hours before they opened those cattle trains, and then my brother in law had to take out those pails, and

they told him to bring in water in the same pails, we received the water, and he told my brother in law that if anybody would escape, then he would be killed. There was no way to escape, because there wasn't where to escape. We travelled three days and three nights, each time they stopped, they would take out those pails and bring in one, but the, the journey was one of the greatest horrors. First of all, we had no idea where we are being taken, and most of the people were either praying or they were talking about the past and about the future, and, and where we should meet, and, and my mother wanted to, to cheer us up so she would uh, she, she would tell us that uh she should not, wherever we are going, we are going to meet my si-my other sister was not with us because she was taken before we were separated because we ran away a few years prior, and uh, my sister was therefore taken away with her children to a different ghetto, and uh we, we missed her terribly, my mother always hoped that we shall meet my sister. Then when we arrived to Auschwitz, it, it was like we had just come in to, to a different world. They opened up the those uh cattle trains, people in striped uniforms came on the trains, and they started to shout we should get out, and leave everything behind and all, whatever we have is going to be uh delivered to us. My brother in law still had a watch, so he asked one of the these men, in those striped uniforms, please tell me what's going on here, so he, they were not allowed to say anything because these were uh, they were prisoners, they already uh for years, but then my brother in law gave him the watch, so he told him in Jewish, and my mother was standing next to my brother in law, and I was also standing next to my brother in law, but my sister, as soon as the train opened and the child was crying, so she went down quickly from the train to get some air, so my uh, this man uh told my brother in law, "If you have children, then give away the children either to elderly people or people with because people with children are going to be killed the same day. And, as soon as my mother heard that, she had presence of mind to run down, and I was next to my mother, and, and I could not really believe that that this could possibly be true, but she ran over to my sister, removed the child from her arms, and told her, "Darling, I just found out that women with children will have it very easy, all they will do, they will take care of the children, but young people will be sent on hard labor, and you know, I'm not so young, I'll never be able to survive hard labor, so she was trying to make my sister believe that by giving her the child, she's going to help her. Before my sister had even a chance to resist or to say no I don't want to give the child up, my mother had the child in her arm, and as soon as my mother had the child in her arm, there was uh standing uh an SS, uh his name uh eventually we learned that this was, his name was Mengele, so whoever had children uh young people and old people he separated, so to the to the left and to the right, so this is how I remained with my sister standing with the other women, young women, and then, you want to ask me other questions, or should I continue?

(Says something)

So this is the last, my mother had only a chance to yell out to me, "Take care of your sister, because she knew where she was taking her grandson, and although I was the younger, she knew how my sister will suffer when she'll find out what happened to her little son." And, we really didn't have too much time to reflect on anything because everything was done brutally with shouting and we, we were terrified because all we saw there were SS with large dogs, and screaming to, to stand uh in line, to get into line, and the separation of us uh being conducted with uh , with uh beatings, if, if somebody didn't move quickly or, or didn't stay straight or, or so, it, it was everything done with uh, with brutality and with force, so you just did whatever to avoid being uh beaten. When

We have to reload.

So this is a retake?

Yeah, and where you should begin is with the cattle cars arriving, and the doors being flung open. Okay.

The cattle cars arrived to Auschwitz, at that time we didn't know this was Auschwitz. Some people in striped uniforms came to the on the train, and they started to yell at us, we should get out, and leave everything behind. Everybody was terribly frightened because we didn't know what's going to happen to us. My brother in law asked this man, "Please tell me, what's going on here?" because downstairs outside we heard a lot of barking and shouting and a lot of commotion. He didn't want to say anything, he was, was just quiet, but then when my brother in law still had a watch, and he slipped him the watch, he told him, "If you have children, give the children away, and if you, if you have a wife and she has a child, then she is not going to, she'll be killed unless you give the child to somebody else to older people because they are going to be killed anyway." My mother was standing next to my brother in law, with me, and my sister was already downstairs because she was glad to be able to get out of the cattle train, so that the child should get some air after this terrible journey. As soon as my mother heard that, she had the presence of mind to run over to my sister, quickly to remove the child from her arm and told her, "Darling, I just found out that women with children will have it easy. All they will do is take care of the children, but young people will go on hard labor, and I am not so young and I am not so well, I'll never survive, so I'll take good care of your child, and you take care of your sister." But as soon as she had the child in her arms and before my sister had even a chance to object, because no mother likes to give up her child for whatever reason, she was pushed away between the single people, and my mother was pushed by Mengele we, we whom we found out that was his name only later because he did the selections.

She was pushed to the side, where all the women with children and older people were standing. She had only a chance, and my mother had only a chance to yell out to me, "Please take care of your sister." My name was Cecilie, and this is how she called me, how she called me, how she called out Cecilie, take care of your sister, because she knew the pain my sister would feel when she found out where she took her young son. But we really had no time or a chance to reflect yet on the separation because everything was done with such brutality with such screaming and yelling and right away there were the kapos and block elders who started to beat us into line and the SS with their dogs, who were barking and they were trained to tear anybody to pieces if one did not obey their orders, and so we were finally lined up, and they marched us to a huge bldg which had shower caps and we were told to undress, and I was always, I was young -----, and I dressed in my best clothes, my nice coat, my, my best dress, so I put it nicely together when I when I undressed, and there comes over this kapo, and she flings it to the side, and I say, "This is my clothes." She said, "Yes, but you won't need it anymore," and, and I was terribly scared because I didn't know what that meant. Then when we were undressed, we were ordered, everybody was ordered to stand up on a stool, and they shaved us, they shaved our hair, and the private parts, and they looked, we couldn't even recognize each other once we were stripped, not only of our clothes, but of our hair. Then we were shoved into those um showers, and they first opened the hot water, so we were scalded and we, as we ran out from under the hot water, we were beaten back by the SS and by the Kapos to go under the showers again, and so they opened the ice cold water, which had the same effect, and finally we were out of this shower. Each of us was given one garment, which of course, didn't fit. Some got small, that was too small, some got that was too large. We didn't get receive nothing, even a underwear or brassieres or panties, just that one dress. It was not a striped dress, it was just a dress that probably the ones before us were killed, and they had taken away the clothes, and finally, we were ordered to line up. My sister was calling my name and I was calling her name. Even though we were standing next to each other, we didn't recognize each other. This is how we looked after we were, after they finished with us, and then they marched us, we were five in a row, and as we were marching, you could see flames, and you could smell, there was a smell of smoke as you would barbecue something, and when we asked the, the ones, the those block elder-the Kapos, who, who were escorting us, "What is the smell?" So, she said to, "These are your fathers, your brothers, your, your sisters, your children," and when my sister heard this, I said, you know, "Don't listen to her. She's only trying to scare us." And, nobody, even when I heard it, and even what I heard that this man told my, my brother in law, I really truly didn't believe at that time that this could possibly be true, that anybody could just take and kill completely innocent people that didn't commit any crimes. I thought that must be some mistake. Then, we were led into, it looked like a big stable, and it had 3 layer bunks, and we were ordered to go into that stable. The number of that stable, there were thirty stables like those, and they pushed in

thousand girls in one such stable. We were, to each bunk, we were ten, and we received, everybody received a blanket, and you could not, you had to, when you went to sleep, you could only sleep on your side because, and if one turned, all of us had to turn because there was no way that one could turn and the other one, because there was no room otherwise. In the morning, they woke us up, tell me when you want me to stop. In the morning, they woke us up at 5 o'clock, and we had to line up for roll call, and we received some that looked like coffee but it was just some colored black water. This was our breakfast. At lunchtime, we all had, we, we got a um cup, and we all had to keep this cup, it was our most important possession because if you wouldn't have this cup, you could not receive your portion of the soup that was distributed at lunchtime, but it was so terrible that for that we still were not used to eat this kind of food, so we did not eat it and um, and then we realized, the big mistake that we were making because this meant if, if you didn't, we got such poor rations and you could not afford to skip anything because we everybody deteriorated very quickly.

Stop?

Yeah.

Is there anything I have to repeat now after...

Beep.

Why don't you start with being given the cup.

Okay. The cup that received became our most prized possession. For without it, we would starve. Our rations were anyway starvation rations. Therefore, it, it was so important to be able to have every meal and we received lunchtime a cup of soup, which was watery and just swimming a little potato, and in the evening we would receive a piece of bread, and some would receive a piece of margarine and some would receive let's say a piece of head cheese?? I always tried to change the head cheese for margarine because my sister became completely despondent and depressed over the loss of her child and she refused to eat, so I would force open her mouth because I could, the margarine would dissolve, but the head cheese she wouldn't swallow, and my sister only after a few days even it didn't even last long, she started to talk about suicide. Our camp was surrounded by electrically charged wires, and all she wanted was to go to those wires and kill herself. I wanted very much to live, and I tried to tell my sister that she promised that she's going to take care of me, and she's the older one, and she, she and I tried to talk her out of it, and when I saw that she does

not really understand me very well so, I used a different tactic. I promised her, I said, "I'll go with you, but you tell me when you want to go," because this way, I could keep track of her, and I could always persuade her not to do it, I would always tell her, "Don't do it today, look it's still warm, we'll do it when we can't take it anymore when it's going to get cold." Or I would tell her, "Don't do it today because today is, is um let's say uh, today is, is going to be, we are going to get a piece of salami or, or I would, I would always promise her something good will, will come out of, of that day, and, and, and then, so, so she sort of waited for me, that I'm going to go with her, and this is how I was able always to keep her from, from doing this week and hoping that she will get used to the situation, and uh, but as time went on, the lack of, of food that we were getting started to uh take its toll and we were starting to uh deteriorate. Ours was a , it was a not a camp, Birkenau was not a camp that they were sending you to work, it was an extermination camp. They only kept you there long enough until they needed the place for other people to bring in, and as soon as you were deteriorated, they would make selections and take you to the gas chambers. And, realizing this, I started to try, to eat everything that I, that they would give me, and I would force my sister to do the same, but then, I met, I met um, a friend of mine, I recognized her, and she was in a different um block and she was very happy to see me, because we were friends from the ghetto, so she told me that I should come to her block, but hers was a children block, that only children were there, from, it was from 14 and up. Mostly 14, 15, 13 year olds, but my sister was already, I was nine--twenty-two, and I was already 19 then, but I looked very thin and skinny, and I didn't look my age because I had been already starving for years before because uh from, I was in mostly in hiding, we didn't have papers so uh, and I didn't have uh already food uh the proper food for a few years, so, she knew that I am, that I write poetry, and she told me that her block elders like talented children, she will tell her about me, so I told her, "All right." So, she asked that uh, I have, whether I have any poems, and I, I, I knew all my poems uh by heart, I didn't uh, because we had no pencil and paper in there, so I told her "Yes, in fact I uh, I, I had some composed already since I am here even, in German, and so she told the Blockelders about me, so she called me and she wanted me to recite the poem, and I recited a poem, and she said, um "All right," she said I, "If you want you can come and stay in my block." I said, "Well, I have a sister," and so she asked me how old is my sister. When I told she said, "Well, she certainly cannot pass as a child." I said, "Well, then I can--I wouldn't come, I would never come without my sister." So she said, "All right, come with your sister and um, I will pass her off as a uh Studentist, but she wasn't a studentist, because a studentist was a very wonderful to be because the studentist were the ones that were, that were cleaning the blocks and that were also distributing the food. And if you were the one to distribute the food then you always had a little bit more, and you always were trying to get from the bottom of the barrel, the, the potatoes that that were small, you know that wasn't so, wasn't um, just watery, that had more potatoes. So, this is how we got to be in this was Block 8, was the children's block, but this

on the other hand was a very foolish um part on our uh on our side because the children were the first ones to deteriorate very quickly and they were the ones to be selected uh much uh, uh more often and uh much sooner. However, so, so we, we went through one selection, which we passed, and every few weeks, we would be taken for disinfect, to disinfect our dresses because we had only this one dress, and we would get another of those wonderful showers which was always repeated in the same fashion, that we really didn't, couldn't get clean under the terrible conditions that this was conducted. Um, however, the dresses are eventually, since we slept in those dresses and wore them constantly, and uh, became full of lice. So, they would, they would try to disinfect, not that it helped any. So we would, we would stand around naked while those dresses were disinfected, the SS with their dogs would guard us, and we would be nak--standing naked while the SS were guarding us with those dogs. Uh, sometimes an hour, sometimes 2 hours until we would receive our dresses back. One, one day, after having, after such a uh, uh spectacle when, when the SS was, was guarding us, they became very restless, and the blockelders apparently wanted to because she happened to be a very nice woman, wanted uh maybe to save us from some disaster, told the SS that she has among her children a very talented girl, she is a ballet dancer. And she asked them, "Would you like to see this girl dance?" And they said, "Yes." So, this girl, she told this girl to dance. She was one of the most beautiful children that I have ever seen. She was about 14 years old, and she was dancing, and as she was dancing, tears were running down her cheeks, because I'm sure that she was remembering when she was dancing to the applause of an audience, when her parents were watching her, and had so much pleasure seeing their daughter dance with such talent, and then, when this was over, we received our dresses, but they took this child with them, and we never expected to see her again, but a few days later, they brought her back, and we didn't recognize her. She had been tortured, she had been raped, she was in a daze, she didn't even know that she has to get up in the morning to get out to stand roll call, and if you would not get out from the bunk to stand roll call, then you were beaten to death because roll call...

We just ran out. We have to reload.

Changing film, camera roll 4 is up; sync take 4 is up.

Beep.

Can you back up in that story and tell how she,

Until where?

Till where you were all standing around and the SS became uneasy and the blockelders direct certain games.

The blockelders...I say about uneasy too? As we were standing around waiting for our dresses, the SS became very restless, and the blockelders, they wanted to distract them, so she told them that she has a talented ballet dancer, and would they want her to dance. They agreed that they want her to dance, and as she was dancing, tears ran down her cheeks, for she remembered the times when she was dancing on stage to the applause to an audience and to the pleasure of her parents, and now she was dancing in this God forsake place, like a -----, felt there were only dogs and SS watching her. When we received our dresses, they took this beautiful child with them, and we never expected to see her again because when they took somebody away, they usually killed them and we never saw those people again, but they did bring her back 3 days later, and we couldn't even recognize her. She had been raped and she had been tortured. She was like in a daze. She didn't know that she has to get up in the morning to stand roll call, and if somebody would have been missing and if they would find her in the bunk then she would be beaten to death. So, I would pick her up, and take her between me and my sister she should stand, and then, we would watch over her that she should get her portion of food, but a few days later, there was a selection, but we luckily again passed that selection, but they took out from that selection 500 girls. We remained half, and one of those girls was this beautiful ballerina, but she tried to run over to our side, and the SS caught her and with the butt of the rifles, they beat her to death. It takes a long time for somebody to die when you are beaten to death, and all I remember was praying to God that she should die already. Her screams were following me forever. she was screaming to God, she was screaming to her mother. Nobody could help her. And then, when she was dead, they took all the girls to the gas chamber and they formed like a chain that nobody should be able to run out, and like a chain, with the chain, they escorted them to the gas chambers, and I promised myself then that I shall never forget her, and I memorialized her in one of my poems, which I call "Ballerina." You want me to say the poem, if not I go on...Ballerina: Little ballerina, I did not know your name. I only knew one thing, that from far away you came. It was said about you that you were once a star, and you were privileged as to sing before the king. Look at what they are doing to this beautiful ballerina. They force her to dance naked like in some arena. You blocked out the present, and turned back a page, and you made believe you were on stage, and -----

Beep.

From where can I go back?

How about arena, go back to the-----.

You blocked out the present and turned back a page, and you made believe that you were on stage. When the SS taunted you, tears welled in your eyes. You swallowed them bravely and held back your cries. They led you away, and brought you back bruised. I knew what they did and how you had been used. I took your hands in mine, and held them very tight. You opened up your eyes, and said you'll be all right. Three days later, I watched you die. You were only 14 and I could not even cry. I didn't know your name, you beautiful little stranger, yet we were sisters in the same danger. I cursed them with a passion for this awful sin. I don't even know whether you had eh, any kin. Little ballerina, I'm naming you Lori, and in my, and in your name I'm writing this true story. Beautiful young glory, you surely are in heaven for this sin against you, they will never be forgiven. She was not the only one that I have seen beaten to death. I have watched so many beaten to death for this little as being, they, because, one of the girls took out a blanket to cover self while we were standing roll call, and it was very cold early in the morning. This was enough of a reason to be beaten to death. After this incident with the ballerina, the block, the blockeldest every time there was a selection, she would hide me and my sister in one of the blocks that had a storage with blankets. there were hundreds and hundreds of blankets, which were eventually shipped to Germany, so every time there would be a selection, she would send us into that storage place, and when the selection would be over, she would take us out. In a way, I really owe my life and my sister's life to this blodkeldest, her name was Vella. But my sister never gave up the idea of wanting to kill herself. So, one day, being very desperate and trying always to find a way that she should live, and they were going, everybody would try to hide from, from going to, to this uh disinfectant, to have the dresses disinfecting and have that shower, but I went, and I told a girl that from a because, each time they took a different block, and when I found out that a certain block was going to be disinfected, I told her, I'll go in her place, she should go into my block just because you have to be counted, and she couldn't be standing in that block alone, that she should go into my block and I will go instead of her, for, if she gives me a piece of bread. I needed that bread to show my sister that to make a plausible story, so I went to be disinfect--to, to go to that disinfecting place, and on the, when I came home, I had hidden that piece of bread because you can't take along with that bread. I hid the bread under my blanket, and then, when I came back, I told my sister that a group of me-uh soldiers there, a group of men, and I had been engaged, and that I had seen my, my fiancé had passed by and he yelled out to me that he had just seen a, a women and children, and, and there is a, a block with women and children and my mother is, he had, he knows from somebody that my mother and her child is alive, and in order that she should believe me, she knew that I didn't have bread, that he threw me a piece of bread, so I be-before as I -----, I took out the bread and I showed it to Lupe, I, he even threw me a piece of bread, so this gave my sister a

little hope. Also, in all the way that in the beginning that I could uh persuade her that they are still alive was that

We have to reload.

Beep.

Okay, you were going to tell me another way that you used to try to keep your sister from killing herself. Yes, in the in the beginning when we arrived there was uh check, camp course?? but we, it was separated with, with uh also wires, with electric charged wires, but it was on the other side from us, and we would see their uh children, women and children, they were from Czechoslovakia, from Theresienstadt, and we envied them so much because they were there uh, the mothers with the children and uh, and this gave us somehow, also hope that uh, there are children and, and it, it was such a beautiful thing to see, little kids, and I would always show my sister, "You see, they were lying because look here are children and here are uh mothers, these were all young, young uh women with children, but then, one day, we got up, and the it was empty. They took all the children and all the mothers, the whole families, and they killed them, and uh then I had absolutely no, uh no way of uh convincing her, my sister, and this is really why I tried to find this other way with this going to the, to, to uh, uh to those showers in order to make her believe another, another story about a child, and um, later on, I um, I read about um, there was uh, his name was uh, Wilbur, and he wrote a book because his wife was there with the child, and uh, and how she was skilled and um, it, it, it was uh one of the best uh documentaries written in, in Czech. So uh, this, this was another struggle that I really had not only to save myself that I should live, but I, I had to constantly to struggle that my sister should also live. And uh, one day they came and they asked for volunteers, and even though the blockeldest always cautioned that nobody should ever volunteer because you don't know for what you're volunteering, I was already so desperate that uh I decided uh to volunteer. They were looking for um, for girls that were still uh looked half decent and so I pinched my cheeks they should be read and I bit my lips that they should have color and I did the same thing to my sister, and, and I told her, "Let's go and uh line up." I had no idea for, for, for what we were lining up, and they were selecting and they were looking like we would be horses, they, they even looked into our mouth, they, and ,and were, were feeling out, you know, like touching us, and, and it was very odd because -----, but do we need to, because they said that we will be going to work, so but then, my sister was not selected, and my sister wasn't and all of the sudden I see my sister was just walking back to the, to her uh, to the block, and this is when I knew that it is either we will both die, or, or we will, I, I don't want to live without my sister anyway, so I decided I will just make a run back to my sister. I expected if it would have

been me, I would have gone to a different line, and lined up again, but my sister was not uh, she had no fight, she didn't know how to how to try to, to fight her way into anything. So, I just ran out, and I decided if they shoot me, they shoot me, and it was like, like a miracle till this day, I can never believe that I, I ran away, and that they, nobody shot me, and when I ran into that uh block, this was one of the most exhilarating moments of my life because I, I embraced my sister, and yet, I expected that she is going to be just as happy, but my sister was in such a depressed mood, that she did not, she didn't, she couldn't react to anything. And then the blockeldest came over to me, and she said to me, "You know, you have, you don't know from what you ran away. Didn't I caution that you should never volunteer for anything? These girls, they were selected to be sent to be, to the, to be prostitutes for the, for the, I don't know what it was, for the Germans or whether it was for Polish workers, who-whomever, but, later on, I read a book about this. The Dollhouse or House of Dolls, and there it was described exactly what happened to these girls. They would keep them three months, and after that, they will, each one was killed always, and before they would kill them, they would kill them, they would beat them terribly, and they, they died terrible deaths, so I really was just lucky that I had uh, the, for, I mean that I had the idea of ,of running away, so and but then later on there was um, the blockeldest told us uh, eventually that the selections were more often always, and um, and then, there was not anymore going to be any selections, they were just emptying the Auschwitz because the uh front, they were losing on the Russian front, and they were , get, the Russians were getting closer, so they would take uh some camps they would take on death marches, some they would take to the gas chamber, some, and, and, some ways they, they, of course, didn't want that there should be any witnesses, so they were trying to kill them uh, in any way they designed. S-so, when I asked my blockeldest what's going to happen to us, uh, she said uh, "I cannot hide you anymore because uh, they are emptying the block," she said, well, she said, "Some are going to work and some are going to the gas chamber so I'm going to be honest with you." She said, I said, so where was I going, she said, "I don't know." I said, "Are you coming with us?" she said, "No." Then I knew that ours is probably going to the gas chambers because if it would be going to work, then, they would be last ones, so they, so I, I, I had no choice, I was just thinking to myself, well, my, my sister was going to get her wish, but I was very, very upset and very angry because I thought that nobody will ever know how we died, just like we didn't know what was going to happen to us, that nobody will ever find out now, and um, and they really took us, and we were standing already in front of the gas chambers, and it was so quiet, you would have thought that we, nobody was, was crying because uh, everybody was, was really prepared. We knew that if they win they're going to kill us and if they lose, they're going to kill us, but until you live you still have hope, and I was one of the optimists that always hoped, and I was holding my ha, my sister's hand very tight, and, and I was so angry that I thought to myself, "I'm not even," because I come from a very religious family, "I'm not even going to, to pray if this is how we are

going to die. I, I, I am very angry at God," and, and then, it was taking very long. Usually, you know, it doesn't take that long, and we were standing and standing and the door still would not, they were not opening, so all of the sudden, one SS came, comes over and tells the other one uh in German that they have um, an order to take uh a group of girls the next day, like, like the next day, to work. And, uh, and the gas chambers were not empty. They, they miscalculated because they, all the corpses were still inside, and it takes a very long time until they take out the corpses and put, and they were very systematic. After they would take out the corpses, they would just clean them and wash the walls because they would usually be bloody and you know from scratching, I don't know, so they didn't want us, the SS didn't want to waste too much time standing around, so they said, "You know what, let's uh take these girls, let's take this transport for work, and the transporter had to go tomorrow and take them." So this is was just uh fluke of fate that uh we were tak-we, we were uh taken to the railroad station, but before that they gave each one a coat, and they loaded us into uh, uh cattle trains again, and um, and we were travelling uh to for a long time until we reached uh Nuremberg, and shall I continue? Until we, but I was a-I got very sick. I had um, a high fever, and uh, I had all kinds of sores.

Let's stop now because we're near the end, and this is a good place to stop, I think, so let's reload.

I thought you want to ask questions or you want to just....

Beep.

Why don't you start where you get put into the trucks where you're taken for work, and then go into how you got sick.

I was very, I got very sick. I was already sick, but I was uh, I didn't give in, and uh, I was running a high fever, I had uh my mouth was inside uh full of sores and, and pus and, and uh, I couldn't uh stand so I, I sat down, and this is the first time when this somehow shocked my system into realizing that I am, I am sick, and she, she sort of like just woke up from her de-depression and uh, she goes over to an SS, which that was, the biggest no-no because you were not allowed to approach an SS, you're not allowed to divulge that you're sick because, if you are sick, then you automatically are candidate for being killed because especially if you are going for work, they want you to be able to work, but luckily that we were out of Auschwitz and we were already on the way, in, in the trains, and that the trains were moving, so she said, "Please, can I have a pie--he was eating an apple, the SS, "Can I have a piece of apple for my sister?" He gave her such a slip that she, that she was uh being thrown all the way back to the, to the other side of the of the cattle train,

and, and in a, in a, in a weak voice I, I, I begged her, I said, "Don't you ever do that again. Please, you know that you're not allowed to uh," I was lucky that that he didn't do more to her. So, this is when she sat down and, and I was uh mostly uh dozing off, I was sleeping because um, I was not uh, I was, I just was very sick, and uh, she even took, took off her coat to because I was shivering and, and, and covered me with her coat, and, and it was like um, like my sister had completely changed in that, in those uh few hours, that she was able to take care of me, and uh, I had all kinds of uh nightmares, but uh, uh, uh, I'm going to skip them because uh it would uh take uh too long away from the rest of uh, uh story, and we finally arrived uh to Nuremberg, and this was to us like um, like a paradise, the change from Auschwitz because, we had already uh, running water where we could drink when we wanted, and we could wash and uh, uh we had uh only, we were only two in each bunk, and not uh ten, and they assigned us to uh, to a munitions factory which was right next to our uh, uh to the concentration camp, was a concentration camp, of course, wasn't something uh, but, in comparison, that we could just drink water or go to the bathroom, and in Auschwitz we couldn't even, we weren't allowed to even, to go to the bathroom only when they, when they let us twice a day, this was, everything was uh, allotted to us. So, but uh, and, and we, but we still had to stand uh roll call and uh be selected um for, for work, but they did not select uh to the gas chambers there, so my sister was uh working in the same factory where I was, and um, one day, as we were standing roll call, they selected a group of girls to take them to the, to the bakery to bring back bread, and they looked always for girls, for some reason, I looked apparently a bit better than, than some of the girls because I was selected also, to go into town, to bring in the bread from the, to take bread to from the bakery, and it was loaded on the wagons, and we were, we were, it was on uh these wagons that uh, wheels, and we were bringing in these wagons with the SS of course uh guarding us. I uh, I was extremely happy to uh be selected, but uh my sister was not selected, and I was so maybe because she, she pushed out my sister, she said, uh my sister ----- you're ugly and, and she pushed her out, and, and my sister was one of the most beautiful girls in town and, and even at this time I was always so protective of my sister and I was uh, I loved her so much that that I couldn't even forgive the SS man just for that word that she said, that my sister was uh *heslich*?? even in the camp, so, I had uh, hoped that I'll get a chance uh to steal a bread, and this is like a life saver to, to have uh additional uh bread because we were constantly, we were starving, and all we could think was uh about uh food, so I, and I was always the one, the daring one, so I finally uh got hold of a bread, and being that I had a coat, I put the bread uh inside my coat, but the girl next to me uh was scared and she said uh because there was always collective punishment, if somebody did anything, then everybody was punished, it was just your punishment alone. She said, "You better put back the bread. If not, I'll, I'll tell on you." I told her "Look, listen, I'll give you half, (clears throat) and, and let's, let's uh try and, and uh and I am taking the bigger chance, uh, you didn't, you don't have to know that uh,

and you will still get half, I'll share it with you." So, I, I convinced her, but when we came into the camp, it seemed that we didn't know that the war was uh so clo--nearer and nearer to the end, so they were a little bit more lenient, I mean, these SS did not uh, watch so closely because when we came in with the bread, some other girls ran over and, and stole a few more breads, but an SS from the ones that were in the camp had seen it, and she called the Kapo, and she told her, she didn't even tell her "Bring the girls," she just said, "We want you to bring back the bread. Go collect the bread." But the uh, the, the kapo was doing, wants to do such a thorough job that not only did she try to bring back the bread, but she was finding also the girls, the, she found a girl who had a half a bread, and the other girl told her that I had the other half a bread. All I was sorry was that I didn't get a chance to eat it up my bread. So, the girls that she found that had the bread, she brought the bread and the girls. We were brutally beaten, and I never expected that I'll get out alive from there. They beat me with a wooden spoon that you cook for a whole army, which is very thick and very, very long, and only when it was broken, she threw it away in disgust and she let me go, but for weeks I could only sleep on, on my stomach, and, and I, I was in agony, and I this is how I had to go also to, to work, and I, I couldn't sit, I was, was always uh seated on the on the edge and uh, the bombs were falling uh constantly because uh they were trying to hit uh the barracks and uh, but what they hit, they never in the factories, they never hit the camp, but they hit the, the factories and they, and they hit the uh, the kitchen. At first went the kitchens, when they hit the kitchen we didn't have what to eat, they still, for the SS they brought in from the to--from town, but we were without food 3 days in a row, and we stayed only in the bunker, and we would come out, it was already winter, and we would just eat some snow, and uh, after 3 days, we were lined up to get uh a potato, and this was uh all the food that we got, but then they couldn't stay any longer because the factory was out of commission and uh, they, so they loaded us again, on uh trucks, on uh cattle trains, and they took us to Halatian,-----, it was a, a at one time Czechoslovakia, but now it was uh, uh under uh, it was occupied by uh, uh the Nazis, and there again, we were in uh concentration camp, and they took us again to work, and but it didn't take long and they bombed again the factory, so they didn't have where to take us, they would they would take us to work. By taking, just moving stones from one place to another, huge stones, which were very heavy and dig um, uh, ditches and um uh, you know, big uh road blocks, and all kinds of, of uh even Sundays they would uh, they would come and, and take us out and say uh, uh "We think that you, you are going to be spoiled here, that uh, and, and chase us on."

We have to reload.

Beep.

Are there incidents of resistance or sabotage that you can recall, maybe from the times that you were working or even from the times in Auschwitz or an, or anywhere along the way?

Well, in Auschwitz, I did not work, but there were, I was not part of it, but there was an organized active uh group that not only was uh sabotaging but uh they were connected with the underground. They, they collected information and that was mostly possible by people who worked and they called it Canada, where and the ones that were uh when you came, your name was registered, they kept records, they hid those records, and they had uh, and there was also some that tried to, to escape, which unfortunately were not, were most of the time caught and my husband, who was a survivor, was uh, uh was in Buna, and he was present at many hangings that were and those were hangings not just you know uh for the least for other things, not just uh for sabotage but uh, but some that were, that were caught and that they, they hang them, and the, the ones in uh, in, in Canada, that that worked in Canada, they were connected with uh, with and they did uh all the recording and passed on the information. I personally, myself, cannot say that I was would possibly have been involved because I was never in this kind of capacity that I could have had a chance.

What about spiritual resistance of people you saw around you or -----?

Do you mean in a religious way?

In a religious way.

Yes, in a in a religious way, they were uh they would be uh praying and, and they, they even I that it was uh that food was one of the most important sustenance of your, of your life, and you couldn't give up not even the least little bit, when it came, I fasted, and in uh Auschwitz, which that was practically suicide, but I couldn't not make myself eat on Yom Kippur, so I had fasted the whole day, and being I didn't have a prayer book, I prayed in my mind to God, and I, I, and, what happened was that I could be doubly mad at God because that uh, it's a -----, it's called, you know, in what the food comes, and they, the blockeldest put away for those girls, there wasn't only one, because quite a few of us fasted, that we should have it when we when the fast was finished, and when we found that it was stolen and we had nothing what to eat that day, and, and instead, I was very angry, and I wrote a very angry poem (ha ha) that day, and uh, in German, so but um, I did, I, I fasted.

When you think back, can you think of some of your sensory impressions, what things meant a lot

to you, what kinds of sounds you remember that or maybe things visually that were important or smells.

Well, unfortunately, uh, uh the, the smell was the was most was, was the burning of those bodies and uh, and then it was the people that which had dysentery and it was an awful way to uh, it certainly was, I had to smell, and uh, we had um, we, we watched an, a lot of those people die, and, and they would be, and this happened many were beaten to death just for that alone because, because they could not keep their uh their bowels and, and they had no way of uh of going to, to, to a bathroom, and uh and then they that's the music that was playing which was a mockery, uh, in a, in a place where they were killing daily, they had this band of music consisting of uh prisoners that were forced to play music as they marched to work and from work, and bringing back uh bodies uh killed while working because uh, uh, uh they, they were beaten to death. My uh, my uh husband told me, no, I will, I'll have to describe to you just one scene and that is my brother in law in, in Israel. This will show the brutality and the, and the absolute that you have to have even imagination to, to think up this kind of uh of, of, of punishment. They uh, my brother in law was terribly hungry and, and he saw the dog uh--he was working and there was this dog, uh had a lot of food, and he ate, and then, he walked away and there was left a little piece, uh some food, food in the, in that dog dish. My brother in law was also a very courageous person, he always uh got into trouble because of that, but, he always tried to, to, they called it organize, organize some food. So, he stole himself, and he took this piece of uh food what the dog had had left over. The SS came out with this, this, this, this dog, with this dog, and now my brother in law knew that now he's going to be uh because they were trained to tear people apart, and this, and some would do it as a sport, and this happened, I cannot, I didn't witness it, there are people that witnessed it, that witnessed my, my present husband had, had, had witnessed something similar, and uh, anyway, my brother in law was ordered by this SS, he brings out the dog, and he tells him to kneel in front of the dog, and ask the dog's forgiveness, call the dog, "Herr," you know, like Mr. and tells him "You dirty swine, you," all kinds of, of and, and while he, he is, is telling him that, so he's telling him that he is going to let the dog tear him to pieces, and, and, and is whipping him, and, and, and then, the, the SS behind are laughing because they like to see this, this Jew calling a dog, you know, Herr, Mr., and uh and tells him to beg for his life, and my brother in law figured first that uh you know, uh, if he's not going to do it, he just wanted to play a little bit for time because he was really terribly scared, he only wished that he could die a differ-a different death, but, uh luckily for some reason, he just beat him and beat him until he was senseless, and then some uh friends of his uh had were, were allowed to take him away from there, and he was torn to pieces. I mean, this, this is the life that people had to endure while they were in camp, and uh, and, and I uh, had watched 2 girls being beaten to death for a for a few, few raw potatoes, and that was in Halation. They took us to, uh, there was a field,

and uh, it was on a Sunday, and then we, and they needed uh potatoes for the, for the kitchen, uh for the SS uhkitchen, so they selected a, a lot of girls, and my sister too, quite a lot of people to take out , put it, to dig out uh the potatoes from the field, and as we were digging out, being I had a coat, what my coat had a hood, so I took uh 2 potatoes, and I put it in the tip of my hood, and I put on the, the hood uh on my head because it was uh still cold, and there were other girls and, and, and two sisters were standing, uh, they were also, and they took potatoes, and they put them in their pockets, each one, maybe 2 potatoes. My sister was terribly frightened so I told her "You know what, we are not going to stand together," because I was afraid she's, she will keep looking at me, looking at me, that this would give me away. I told her that she should stand behind me because I was afraid if she stand in front of me, she should turn her head. I thought of everything to bring in those, uh, how to bring in those 2 potatoes, sweet potatoes. So, I wasn't standing with my sister. I stood with somebody else, and my sister was standing behind me, and uh, and these were also two sisters, and they were standing together, and each had a couple of potatoes.

(Sandy and Cecilie talking in background).

We were a group of girls. Among them was my sister, myself and many others, were digging out potatoes, were digging through the -----, potatoes, for the SS kitchen, and uh, way back, I decided to help myself to a couple of potatoes. I had a coat with a hood, so I uh put the 2 potatoes in my hood. Being I was afraid that my sister was, was very frightened that uh I shouldn't be caught. I told her that she should stand with somebody else, that she should stand behind me because I was afraid if she would stand in front of me, she will turn back and that could give me away, and, and in front of me was standing 2 other sisters, side by side, and as we were coming back to our block, they started to search us, and I never expected that they will start searching for a couple of potatoes, but they found nobody else really had it was only those 2 girls and me. So they found the potatoes by those 2 sisters, and they took out, first of all they had to throw the potatoes to the floor, and then they were beating them, and beating them and beating them, and then they were already unconscious. They took 4 girls. Each one had to take them, one by the head, one by the foot, and didn't bring them back to our block, but they had to bring them in to the, to the SS uh, uh quarters, and we never saw those 2 sisters again. That means that they killed them. Now, while I saw what was, how they were being beaten, I saw myself already, that this was going to happen to me, and, and my, my feet was just, I, I was just shaking inside, but I was very lucky. They searched my pockets and they never thought of, of going, of searching my hood. So, I brought in those potatoes, and those potatoes left such an impression on me, that this I will have to because it really has a psychological impact. First of all, when I was eating these potatoes, I told my sister they taste like -----, my sister said they, they taste like apple. We couldn't understand why in, in our lives why

we were outside and, and free, how come we never ate raw potatoes. I made up my mind that as long as I live, I'm going to eat raw potatoes because there is nothing more tasty than raw potatoes. I also shared it with the girls that was on, on my block, on my uh bed because we couldn't be that selfish. But then when, when we were liberated, my first trip when everybody was running and they, and they opened up the ----- and they opened their uh, they had uh the salamis, and, and, and the storage places. My first trip was to run to the field--I was digging feverishly, I had load, dug up loads of potatoes. My sister first didn't know where I am because she was smart enough to go and, and came brandishing bread with salami, and she couldn't find me. Then it occurred to her to come to the field, and I wouldn't budge from those potatoes until I didn't bring them in to the block. And I was the only one that didn't bring a bread or a salami because was all gone by the time I had lugged in all those potatoes. Because this is what, these potatoes, because, meant to me at that time.

Did you and your sister rescue each other? Can you talk about that kind of rescue as a common thing, and also was there the opposite of that?

I could have never survived, and my sister could have never survived with without each other. My whole focus in life became my sister, and I could only fight for to live as long as my sister lived. And, and this was vice versa because my sister in Nuremberg, when this happened to me in the train, my sister became more, she became better. I mean, she somehow recuperated enough to, to help me and to, to, to and not think so much anymore of suicide, and um, and she was a great help already in that way, that I could, I could already, let's say if, if I had to fight for, for the food or, or, or to, to get something additional, that I didn't have to worry, that my sister is the meantime going, going to kill herself and there is nobody, everybody had to have somebody in order to survive, for instance, my husband, my late husband who was alone, he adopt, they were like brothers, he adopted like one friend that they took care of each other. When, when uh one of the brothers wanted also because one of the brothers got uh died, and he was so despondent he wanted to run to the electric wires, my, my uh husband saved him, wouldn't let him go, and then when my husband was on the train, uh, it was those open trains where they took them on uh, after, on uh death marches, but this was but this was like a death march because you, it was in the winter, and, and you were travelling without food without water, and uh, it was snowing and freezing and my husband was for a while his, his mind and he was trying to jump off the train, so his friend and his brother, the one that eventually died, was, sit on him, they sit on him that he shouldn't jump. So you always had to have somebody that would help you survive. If you, if you were alone, you were never interested any further than the next person, you couldn't because, you became so completely absorbed only in your day to day survival that you could not get any further, nobody

knew your name, nobody, nobody -- we were called the 2 good sisters because we could not, we wouldn't, because it came to a point where even sisters would take away each other's food, and with also to us that we would fight only that the next one should take a bite more, or she should have more. She would, she would cry why I didn't eat up my my bread because I was, I was afraid after we didn't eat like for 3 days and we had that experience, so I was trying to save up a piece of bread in case we're not going to have the next day. And then if there was, there was a there a, a search. So, they were not allowed to find, if they would find the bread, they would take it away and they would still beat me up. So, I would beg my sister to help me eat, help me, they're going to, to beat me up if they find bread, so she would cry why she has to that she is eating my bread, and I will have that much less and, and, and I'm may uh you know die sooner or I won't survive or I get sick. Yes, we could only and it was everybody had to have somebody and if you, if you didn't then you didn't survive no matter how strong you were. Unless you had some kind of a choice uh, uh position like uh blockeldest or uh or uh students or a kapo, then you could survive. Otherwise it was not possible.

Define kapo for me. I've never heard of a kapo.

A kapo was, who was in charge of all the blocks, not only of one block. A stu, um, blockeldest was, who was in charge of the block itself. She was responsible to the Kapo or to the SS. The kapo was responsible to the SS. We were called heflinger, heflinger is slaves. But we had, we were less than slaves. So we could never approach or talk to an SS. There was no such thing. You would be killed if you would, that's why I was so upset when my sister spoke directly to this SS. So, so but this was a, a kapo with a, with a whole uh camp responsible. The blockeldest was over each block and uh, the students was over the uh, it should be used, make your bed it should be clean, you know, you have to make your bed, and uh, she would sweep out, and she would distribute the food, and these were the functions and uh...

How could one become one of those?

It was appointed by the SS. But the, the kapo would appoint, would appoint the, uh let's say could appoint the blockeldest, or the SS could appoint the blockeldest, but a studentin was appointed by the, by the blockeldest and they had the same uh power and the same, I mean, they could kill you, they could beat you up, they could, they, they didn't have to account to to anybody and to anything, and some became very vicious and it wasn't and I don't even uh I know that some uh of the prisoners then killed these kapos when they had a chance, and some even blockeldests. But, I myself uh cannot uh, not that I condone it but I cannot blame them that much because whatever

they were, whatever they were they were made, uh, uh they became because of the treatments that they, they had received already from the SS, and that they were there already years. They weren't human. We were only a year and I wasn't quite human.

We have to reload.

Beep.

Let's just talk a little more about kapos. Could, could kapos be, have a good effect? Could they do, could they be good kapos or bad kapos? Some of your experiences with blockelders were helpful...

For instance, my blockelder helped me, but I'm sure that many probably hated her because when my sister who lives in Israel had seen her once and recognized her Hadassa, she was uh dressed as a nurse, she was working there, and my sister wanted to run over to her, and tell her, to thank her because she really saved us. But, when she s-called Vella, she said "Vella!" she said, "I'm not Vella, I'm not Vella!" She was so scared that and she ran away, so my sister thought she'll do her a favor then, if she doesn't want to be uh recognized, that she should not go through it. So, apparently she must have felt that there was also in her life, that she did, but her I definitely know that she could not help it because as I said, if you, you had to be, when you have thousand people and you are, and you have to keep order, you have to see that they should stand straight and in a line, and nobody should ever take out a blanket, and nobody should ever be missing and nobody should, should ever go without your permission to, to bathroom, how can you control unless with, with fear, and unless with, with, with beating and yelling, and this is what they did. They, they, they, it isn't as I said, I could never be one because I, I would be I, I would be killed much before because I could never be uh brutal, my, my uh husband was a very gentle and very uh wonderful and kind person, he could, he couldn't uh do this job so he didn't accept. He would rather die than, than ,than um be uh brutal to, to other people or, or harm other people. And, yet my present husband who was um, he, he was the longest prisoner, he was in uh Buchenwald for uh 5 and a half years. He told me that uh, they were uh very brutal but uh then there were a kapo that they would be very mean and hit and do everything when the SS was around, but when the SS left, he would, he and they worked very hard, they had to, they had to uh, they -----in mines, I don't whether it's coal mines or salt mines that they had to bring I don't know some very heavy stuff up, and they had to run they said, and on both sides would be SS, and while they were running they, they would, they would hit them and, and a lot of them just died, they never got back to uh, to their uh camp again, so but, it the ss were not around this kapo would say, "Okay, relax don't, don't have to work now so hard," but as soon as he would uh, uh see the SS he would scream "you filthy dogs,

get on with your work, you, you, you better do it faster!" and, and screaming and carry on and make a lot of noise. So you, you had two kinds of, of kapos. But they, but most of them were not very, very good. I mean, they couldn't be good. I know somebody that is in fact from my late husband's town. He's a brilliant man. He has a, he has a doctor in philosophy, and he was a very religious man, and, and he had to, and he was a kapo, and he had to hide for, for many months. People wanted to, to kill him because he was so, so brutal.

In all your experiences, did you do anything for relief. Did you ever, could you ever laugh, was there ever, did you..

While I was there?

Yeah.

While I was there. Nobody, not only me. There was no laughter. There was there was, you couldn't even, but you couldn't afford to cry either because if, if you let yourself really believe and think that this is what happened, you pushed away. I just was no going, I, I used to dream a lot about my mother, but I would force myself, I was very attached to my mother, but I would force myself not to think about it. I would, I would think about anything always what I'm going to do after I am uh, after I get out. I never wanted to think that I'm going to die there. I, I would uh constantly uh, I would, like I would say a poem, this is how I would repeat the 2 -----in Palestine, at that time it was Palestine, now it's thank God Israel. My brother's address, and my sister's address, this was all I was thinking, that I should know, I shouldn't forget their addresses, because when I am, when I survive, I want to send them a cable that they should know and, and, and I should, and I will go to join them with my uh sister, and I never let myself think what happened to my sister, what happened to my brother, what happened to, I just was thinking besides, you are always so hungry and starving, you could think of 2 things. Either what you're going to do, or what you would like to eat, or what or, or, or I remember what my mother used to cook, and, and, and how I'd love to have it, or I would talk to my sister about it. Do you remember this? Do you remember this what we're going to do, and this is all that that I allowed myself, um, uh, to do. If, if not I couldn't have uh, nobody could uh, under those circumstances um survive, and uh, and, and we almost didn't, didn't survive because uh it was everything prepared uh in Halation that they, they were going to, to burn down our uh, our camp.

Can you talk a little bit about age of the people who survived. Were you pretty much doomed if you were a child, and doomed if you were...

Yes.

In a real basic way, as though I don't know, I'm new to this.

Children had more chance to survive. I would say uh, unless they were, you know they had a shribery, that means uh, there would be let's say, a blockeldest or, or uh or uh, uh a messenger, they would keep a little uh a young girl as a messenger and everybody would love her because she's so cute and uh, and so, so she would be like protected by the so a girl like that would, would have a, a chance to survive. Or uh otherwise between from, from very young, like from uh, uh one year up to uh 14 15, they had really no chance to survive. Unless, not, unless they were in different camps, but not where I was.

What about adults?

Adults had slim chances but uh, still as you see, some survived, and, and it would be only the ones that, not, the ones that had spirit, that that really wanted to live, that didn't want to give in. Otherwise, the, and it had nothing to do with age. And it had to do also with luck. For, for instance there was um, my um, my late husband always remembered one young man that he was he had a lot of will power to live and he was very religious and he deeply believed in God, and he even believed that whatever is happening now, you know, he didn't blame nothing on because that God has a purpose. He believes that there is a purpose in everything, and he was with my husband on this death march, train march, whatever, but when the train would pull in they would um, they would uh chase them out, and they would sit in the snow to rest, and then they didn't have any more uh no, they were, they expected to get some uh buses or something or, but then they decided uh that they these trains are going to continue, so they, they started, they told them, they should run and whoever can run into the train is going to live. And this religious man, my husband made it, and, and who didn't make it was shot on the spot, so that they had less people. And he was already by the train, my husband already gave him the hand you know to, to, to pull him in, but because he didn't make it on the train, he was killed, they, they shot him. And he always, my husband always would light a candle for this man because you never know who has family left or who didn't because uh, families were wiped out to the last. So uh, so my husband when he, my husband wasn't religious after, after this. And uh, he always told me about it and he always remembered this, this young man that was so much spirit and so much hope and so much belief, and he died it was really very, very short like before uh the liberation.

We're about to run out. Let's reload.

Beep.

When you gave your interview to the museum you said by the time of liberation you couldn't be trusted because you weren't human anymore. What do you mean by that?

For instance we were so used to uh take things in order to, I mean, to eat, what had to do with food, and being that we had absolutely nothing, and so I will demonstrate to you. And when we were liberated and uh the, the English people, the English set up a kitchen for us, and we were given very good food, and I mean the reg--the food got to us agreeable, but, to us because we couldn't be fed right away, everything and, and heavy food because of the way uh um when you start and you cannot stop eating at one time a lot, so after we would be finished with uh, with the food, and we had one, one bowl we would take the bowl with us, and we would want to walk out, and they would beg us " Please, you're coming back, you, it's only today, and you're coming back for uh lunch, you're coming back, you going to we need the, we need you should leave the utensils the dishes because if not we won't have not to give you. They could not persuade us because our security was such that we thought, if we walk out of there and, and we don't have and what to uh you know, what to take food, then we wouldn't be able to eat, and I also thought, if we have this uh bowl, we can go and beg for food. So, so they had to stand by the door every time we are finished with a meal, and they, they understood us, and they would nicely, they would take it away from us, but you know, so and another thing we couldn't, it was it was when I was because we had absolutely no sense of right and wrong. For us, everything was, was right as long as we can take it.

It was not, this is yours. And, and being that I came from a family that that there was no such a thing as ever to take anything uh, without asking, that was a very, this is what shocked me that I could have changed that much because when I was in a recuperating place, and I was there in Prague, uh, be-because at the train station, the red cross was handing out sandwiches and packa--I was on my way to Budapest because this was our meeting place, and somebody recognized me, a friend of my husband's, of my late husband's recognized me that I am the fiancé of, of this Joe Klein, and, and he recognized me so he came over and he said, "You know, Joe is alive, and he is here in a, in a recuperating place. Come, I'll take you to him." So I ran right into the train, and I told my sister and we got out and we came to this uh Harita, Harita was the name of this recuperating place, and as this man who was in charge is writing in, I had my maiden name Goldenside, he's writing Goldenside he tells me "you know," he said, "I had a friend, I, I went to law school with um with a Goldenside." I, I asked, there was really very few Goldensides, I said, "Who?" and he tells me my brother's name, I said, "This is was, this is my brother." He said, "Oh,"

you this is your brother, "Where is he?" and I told him "he is in..." at that time it was Palestine. He said, "Oh," he said, you know, "Everybody can stay here only 2 wks but you can stay as long as you want." He didn't know what to do with us, he brought us the best food, and uh made us, made us toast and brought a cake, and he was so nice to us, and he was absolutely marvelous. And the, 4 wks later, my sister said, "Look, uh I want to maybe I can find my husband" because she was looking for her, her husband. The child we knew already that it couldn't have survived. So, she said, "We want, let's go to Budapest." So I said, "Okay," then, and I see these wonderful blankets on the on the bed, I said, "You know what, when you go outside, you will stand in front of the building and my husband also, and I'll throw down the 2 blankets, and we'll take it with us on the train." I didn't go to say goodbye to this man because I was afraid if he wants to come with us to the station, he's going to see me walk-walking out with uh with 2 blankets, so I didn't say goodbye, I didn't say thank you, I, I stole those 2--to us this wasn't stealing, we called it organizing. We took those 2 blankets with us to the, and we got on, on a train, these blankets lasted exactly until we didn't???fall asleep. By the time we woke up, those blankets were gone because there were there were other survivors that meantime took them took them away from us. So this, this is a kind. It took, it took a while just to become normal to realize to know that that what's yours is yours what's mine is mine, that there is a, that there is, is, is now a normal world, that you have to have manners again, but we, we didn't have, we didn't have this, we completely changed. I didn't -----, I am telling me you couldn't trust me, you couldn't trust, but you couldn't trust for no survivor for quite a while, until we became, we were not human, we were completely dehumanized.

And, what

You can change a person into whatever you want.

Tell me about being a survivor.

You see, I want that when everybody would come to the museum, and will look at those pictures of our murdered families, I want you to know also how the survivor felt all these years. First, I want you to think back just for one minute how you feel when you lose one loved one. You mourn him and you suffer, if you lose one loved one. But you have at least the satisfaction of telling yourself, you did everything you could for your loved ones. You were there to console him. You were there to give him aid, to bring a doctor, to hold his hand. You were there to hug him and to give him comfort. Now think how we feel when we lost so many at, at one time, when we lost so many in the families, sisters brothers children mothers, how can we feel the rest of our lives no matter what we do. No matter what we have in our lives, the void can never be filled. Our pain can never be

healed because when I made all my happy occasion, and I invited so many people, the ones I wanted most never arrived. And when we even go to parties, I always felt alone, no matter how many people were there because I could really not relate completely to anybody except to other survivors, no matter even if I reached out to you I couldn't get that close because you reminded me too much of what I could have been, and what I will never be, and when I go on vacation, I take along my whole family, I even feel guilty for enjoying because I always tell myself "how can I do this? How can I still do that? How can I enjoy when they suffered such a terrible death?" We even envied you your graves because you at least have where to go and bow your head, but what do we have? If my children ever asked me when they were small where were my grandfather, my grandparents, my gra-my mother, my uncles, my aunts, I always told them, they're in ----- Czechoslovakia. I couldn't tell them where they were buried. I can't, I couldn't even talk to them, what happened to them, because I wanted my children to grow up the way your children are growing up.

We have to reload.

Beep.

How would you like those you lost to be remembered?

Not only the ones I lost I want to be, they should be remembered. I want the 6 million to be remembered...as brave courageous people who died only for one reason, because they were born of a different race. They were heroes in every way because while they lived, they did some wonderful things. They made this world a wonderful place to live in. Their loss is a loss for all humanity, and if anybody comes to the museum and will see the mementos that we left behind, whether it's a little shoe, whether it's a letter, whether it's our torah, prayer book, remember these are our precious, precious valuables, remember that from these books these children studied, from these prayer books, our families chanted their prayers, and remember them when we are gone, and remember the agony of the survivors that had to live with these memories, and could never touch them, could never have them back, and we hope that future generations will never know of our pain, and that everybody will stand up to any form of persecution. I taught my children love and not hate, but I could never forget. I could never forgive.

Why don't you tell me what kind of a person your mother was-----so that you can read it if you want to.

First of all, this, I am very grateful that you're giving me a chance to tell about my mother. My

mother, my mother was one of the kindest people. She was loved not only by the children but by the whole town. We were not rich, for our living standards, we would consider, we would be considered poor. For European standards, middle class. We had a house, and we had 3 tenants, which we needed really to sustain ourselves with that rent, but my mother rented them to hopelessly poor people and she never collected rent. She used to cook twice as much what we needed in order to bring down to those children of the tenants, and we as children wanted always to have the nice things that our friends had, and my mother couldn't afford them. We would always ask her, "Why doesn't Rosenthal who is very rich, does all those good deeds, and you should rent it to people who can't pay rent. My mother always said that her ----- for me, I do not want ---- from her. They need our help, and I'm going to give it to them. This is the type of person my mother was. My mother would have died not only for my sister -----, I think she would have died for any child, if she could help save a life. This was my mother. My brother that was killed he was born in a hospital, with other patients was the whole hospital was burned down, not by chance, but willfully. He was a dentist, and he treated people who could not pay--free, and he would save up the money that he had and would take the poor children and take them to camp. -----it wasn't a camp as sophisticated as here. It would be would just put up a tent and that was the camp. And he would play the guitar for them, and he would teach them. The horror. I would tell them about our promised land, which he never reached, and this was his greatest desire, because he gave his life for us. He had a certificate to go to Palestine, but he forfeit his certificate in order to help us. He didn't know that he cannot help us and so he died and was killed. I really break down but it's okay.

Beep

And he do it because we are the last of the survivors and on this we put this record straight. There will be denials that this never happened, so you better know that not only did it happen, but there aren't any words which, which we can describe the real agonies, and the real tortures, and the wasted lives, and the ruined lives of the families... that came back. I hope my children will never feel this pain. I tried to protect them. I tried not to talk about it, but now that they are adults, they have to assume the responsibility and pass on this -----legacy for generation to generation, and it isn't only our children, it should be everyone's children, for you must remember them forever. They must not die in vain. And this must never be repeated again, and if you will let those cowards that write those books because they don't want to assume the responsibility of what they did to us, then we have lost. They're marching again in Austria with swastikas. How does it make a survivor feel when we see this? We may not be here anymore much longer, but it is you that must prevent and you can only prevent if you're not going to be afraid to read the books that we leave behind, to

watch our movies that we leave behind. If you are not going to be afraid of a little sadness, then we have accomplished something. But if I hear sometimes when somebody comes over to me and I would speak in a school, and would tell me proudly, "I cannot read this book. I cannot go to a movie to see that has anything with the holocaust, it's too sad, don't expect me to give you a pat on your shoulder. If we could live it, you can watch it.

We have to reload.

Change film, camera roll 12 is up; sync take 14 is up.

beep.

Dear Mother, this letter I'm writing to you will be placed in a museum. I was under the impression that only fine art finds its way to museums. However, this is a special kind of museum. You and six million like you created this museum. Mother, I always remember your wise words, when you said, "When you cry, you cry alone, and if you smile, the world smiles with you." Another of your wise sayings, "Time is the best healer." Mother, I smiled and smiled until my jaw hurt. I smiled when you were absent on my wedding day. I smiled when I gave birth to my children and you never held them in your arms. I smiled when I was for years hospitalized and you could not comfort me. Later when I missed all my happy occasions, and you missed all my happy occasions, our childrens' bar mitzvah, graduations, weddings, I kept smiling. Mother dear, the world did not smile with me. I felt alone-----because inside me, nothing ever smiled. But you were right about the tears. The world did not cry with me. I did cry alone. My tears were reserved for you, for my sister Fahy, for her husband Abraham, their 3 children, how she -----, for my brother Chaim, his wife Shoshana, for your -----grandson, Danny, whom you removed from my sister's arm so that she may live. And for the 6 million. As for time, mother dear, time did not -----the magic of hearing, and each phase of my life, my pain was emphasized as was the realization of motherhood, for if I mourned you, as a mother, I mourned you later as a mother and a grandmother. And if I mourn my sister as a sister, I mourned her later as a mother, for I knew what it meant for you to take your children to die with you, and I knew my mother dear what it meant for you to take your grandson to die with you. For only may you our grandmother yourself, you know what it means. You were right. There was no balm, there's no balm for my wounds, and you were right, my mother, I will always cry alone. Please mother, implore God that our children's laughter should come from their hearts, and let our suffering and yours absolve all the generations to come, and may they know the inner peace which was never mine.

Let's stop just for a minute.

Sure.

Beep.

But I felt that way twice is it when I went to Budapest or is it when when I went because I wanted to be with my family from Budapest.

Stop
16 is up.

Beep.

I was in Budapest for the last 2 years living without papers, and uh the SS, the, the Nazis came into Budapest and uh I wanted by all means to be with my family because there was nowhere that I could hide anymore, and I was determined under ,under any circumstances to reach my mother, my sister and uh, whatever would happen to them, I wanted to be with them, and we knew already that there will be a ghetto and that uh, I cannot uh, uh save myself anyway, and I didn't want to save myself to begin with, I wanted to be with my family. So there was uh, uh, one family that uh, uh, she was a, a gentile, and uh she loved me very much and she sort of even wanted to adopt me, but uh, I told, and she told me she would get me uh papers so that I, I shouldn't, I should be able to uh, uh hide out, but I refused and I told her instead that she could do me another favor, and she should buy me a 1st class ticket because (clears throat) anybody, nobody, no Jew could travel on train on trains at all, not third class, not second class and certainly not 1st class, and uh anybody that came to the railroad station, there was such ----- they would just, they were resting up on the Jews even, even gentiles would because first my uh, this uh, Mrs. Schwartz was her name because she was a very kind lady and she was married to a, a Jewish man but he had converted uh, but still her name was uh her husband's name, so, -----that doesn't matter, I mixed up the name. So, I, she went to the station and she told me that I would come, I would definitely (clears throat) be arrested and, and that uh, I shouldn't go, and she tried to persuade me but uh, I was uh determined and, and so when she saw that I, I would not give in, so she bought me and my uh, and also for my fiancé a first class ticket, and I decided that I'm going to, we had to wear a star already, so I put on rain or shine coat, I sewed on the star on my other coat, and I put over it a rain or shine coat with uh without the star, and I bought, and I asked her to buy me a antisemitic paper, and uh, I was uh and I laid out this plan that as long as we can reach first class that nobody will

think that that any Jew has a nerve to sit first class and especially without having to wear a star, eh, so that uh, and I hope this way I will reach uh un undetected my family's town. So I uh put on rain or shine coat and she came with us, and I just nonchalantly there was a lot of girls at the at the railroad station, and I was getting into the my fiancé, we both carried antisemitic uh newspapers with those big headlines and, and we, we walked with them very confidently, and we walked straight with the tickets we had already, we walked in straight to the first class. We were not sitting together because in case one is caught then maybe the other one uh will uh reach the destination, but uh, my fiancé also had uh taught me, had told me, coached me at home, how I should jump off from the running train, before it pulls in altogether to the station, because once it stops at the station, they were always asking for uh identification cards, and being that I, I didn't have any then I, I would be apprehended . Um, it just so happens that uh my husband had uh, my fiancé had identification card because he was there legally, and uh, in Budapest, but uh, anyway, I had this everything, we had everything worked out ahead of time, and then when the conductor came I was, I was uh just praying silently that uh, he shouldn't think, she shouldn't u, uh, he shouldn't recognize that I, that I am Jewish, but uh all he was looking was at this paper, and gave a very satisfied uh you know a wink and uh, and then I knew that that I have made it, and he also did not uh bother my husband, just asked for the tickets and he saw us reading these papers, and this is how we reached, we reached ----- before it uh, before it started slowing down, slowing down, we both jumped, first I jumped, then, then he jumped, and uh, I fell but it was grassy there so it was, we made it and we came uh back and my family of course was uh ecstatic but uh unfortunately not for too long.

We need to, to just be quiet for 30 second to record the sound....

30 seconds room tone for interview with Cecile Klein Pollack.

Thank you.