

A little bit before about the Judenrat and your feelings toward the Judenrat, and could you describe them a little bit?

Well, as I said, I hear a lot about Judenrats, but my-- whatever I remember about Judenrat, the feeling that we had about Judenrat, they were the people that we didn't envy, because they had to face the Germans for us. It was-- the feeling was, that I remember, I mean, I wasn't a baby. The feeling was, it is easier to give that silver candelabra, or that money, or whatever than to face the German who comes to take it once a month in order for the promise that they wouldn't have Aktion in our city.

And when we heard already that in all the neighboring cities they had Aktion, we saw that it works, that our Judenrat works for us. Because people started jumping off the train. We lived on the way to Belzec.

People were being taken on the train.

Yes, and that's when I got this.

Now, when you see people jumping out of the train, you knew where they were being taken?

Oh, by that time people already knew.

This is, we're still --

People knew that they are going to Belzec and they don't come back. In the beginning, people weren't sure. But deeper into the summer we knew already.

Of '42.

Of '42. I'm speaking of '40. When they were taken away in March, the first Aktion, which they took the people, the cripples, you know because the first thing that the Germans-- you see, I'm not very chronological, by the first thing when the Germans came I'm sure you are familiar with. They had-- they told to register every Jew, and they categorized if you are A category, strong to work, B, half, not so strong, and C, was a cripple.

And there were a lot of people who wanted to-- went to the doctor and [? weren't ?] a cripple. And that I remember, my mother telling my father why doesn't he do it. So my father said, by the Deutschen, I don't want to be a cripple. That's what he said. And that job, that Aktion was easy. All they did, they took the list of the cripples.

Did they take non-Jews also or only Jews?

No, no, only Jews. Non-Jews, I remember when they only came there was a family. I don't know what it was, but they were walking around. Children were laughing at them. They were retarded, apparently. And they were always dirty. That family, because they lived further down beyond the city, so I remember. I saw through the window the truck when they took the whole family, the Germans. Before they even touched a Jew. They must have had a disease or something. I don't remember it.

Yeah.

But that was a special family. Everybody knew about them. Nobody touched them. They weren't Jewish. But they were running around, their children very filthy and running noses, and with all kinds of rashes. You know. And cross-eyed. I mean, everybody knew that it's not a normal family. Then they took away right away, before they touched a Jew.

Were you surprised? Did you know why?

No. Who imagined anything? Then when they took over in March the people who were the cripples and non-cripples who were listed as such, they took them and their families. They didn't come back. I remember they sent some Polacks.

They paid them off they should go and sniff out where the train-- I mean, they knew the train, the direction of the train.

But by the end of the summer, we knew already it is Belzec and it is bad. They're not coming back from that. Nobody was inside. And people jump-- knew already and people started jumping off the train. That's when I got this. Because when I was with my appendicitis in the hospital, it was bad still. Penicillin was discovered but someplace else. I was three months in the hospital.

And I developed a hobby. I went to the-- there was a room where you-- a dressing room, where you changed the dressing, which they did for me also every other day. And I rolled the bandages, and I held the water, and I helped out. In our city was only one Jewish nurse. And why she was a nurse? Because she had a hoiter. How do I say in English?

Uh--

Caught you.

You caught me for a second, yeah. Not a hernia?

No, a hunchback.

A hunchback, OK.

And she was a nurse. She was the only Jewish nurse. So the people jumped off the train. They were shot at by the Germans. They didn't stop to collect them. Or they broke a leg, or they had hurt themselves on the stones. And boys, young Jewish boys used to go there, and collect them, and bring them to Jewish houses.

And I went with her, because I was the only one that could look at the blood. And that meant sometimes going through the whole city, from one end to another and changing the dressings with her. And my mother cooked soup, and I took soup there, because people could give you a bench to lie down or a bed to lie down, but they didn't have what to eat themselves.

And that's what I did, the whole-- I organized my friends. And that's what we did the whole summer. I remember once being told. They said, the Germans are here. You know, because you were expecting it the whole summer that one day-- I mean, we didn't delude ourselves. One day they will come for us.

And they said the Germans are here. And I didn't have where to run. There was a door, like a double door. And I went there between the door. And then I heard it is quiet. Nobody's running. I came out.

That was in your own home?

In my hometown. Not in my home. I got caught someplace else going with her to change dressings.

So in other words, many boys, and yourself, and this nurse would go.

Yeah.

And you knew exactly where people would jump off the train.

As a matter of fact, my best friend today, she lives in Israel. As a matter of fact, she will be next week in my house. Because her husband is a doctor, and he's on a convention here. She and her mother jumped off the train. She's from Kolomyia. And then her mother got Zolkiew false papers. She still sent for her son to Kolomyia. And because she looked like a gentile, had children, and she hid her children in a bunker and survived in Zolkiew.

And that's why the first sight of her I have. She had her-- you can see it even today. She wasn't-- I mean, she was shot at, but she wasn't hurt bad. But she fell probably on her knee, and it was open to the bone. And her mother had a blue eye

and all had these teeth missing because she fell on her face.

The Germans obviously didn't realize that there were boys waiting at these places.

No. No, they did. You know, the Germans, they go straight. He had to escort this train. He shot. He knew if he doesn't die today, he will die. And how many people were saved in our city and died when the Aktion came in our city? Then, toward the end of the summer, we were already-- we knew it's any day. Every neighboring city had already a ghetto. We knew.

So we had several bunkers prepared to hide during an Aktion, our family. One of them was in our factory. In a tool shed. You know, you couldn't just dig a hole. You had to have an approach that wouldn't be seen. And the main thing, nobody could look after you and masquerade after. You had to go in.

And so one of them was in a tool shed in our factory. But one, we had my father's friend. They lived across the street from us. They had a one family home. And they had the parquet floor, the modern parquet floor, which was herringbone. And in the bedroom, underneath the bed, we took out that parquet floor like the design went, and dug into the opposite room.

Not the room here where we went, but you had to go through like a tunnel to another room. And over there we had prepared a bunker to hide. So we used to go after 5 o'clock everybody to sleep there, three families. To sleep, because I mean, there wouldn't be time.

Was this beneath the first floor? In other words--

That was beneath even the crawl space. That was in-- when we went there, after 10 minutes the candle didn't light anymore. There was no air.

Right.

The house was built like on the crawl space. You know what's the crawl space.

Right, right.

So the whole house was on a crawl space. One of the rooms underneath the kitchen was a cellar. The rest was just crawl space. That's where. From there we dig underneath. Really underneath inside, in there. And we went every night to sleep there, because the Aktion, this much we knew, usually start at 4 o'clock in the morning. Very early in the morning they used to surround the city. Or a ghetto if there was a ghetto.

And sure enough-- they all don't live anymore. My father's friend and partner, he used to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning to walk around. He saved our life. He ran in and said, they are here. And we all went into that bunker, closed, that it was a piece, and it had two like handles. We closed it, and we went there. After a few minutes, like I said. At that time, we were, I think, 11 people there.

So it's your father, your mother, your sister yourself is four.

Four. Now, two friends of my father's, each had one child.

OK.

That's the people we were there. So it is six.

10.

10. 10. That's what we were. After a few minutes, the candle didn't light, and we were sitting. We lost track of time. We

lost track of time completely. We didn't know if it is over, not over. But we did know that it always takes just one day. And then they leave. And when they leave, you can see a German in the street, he doesn't bother you. Because that's not his business.

Unless it's judenfrei. So then they opened, crawled out, open slightly and saw it is quiet in the street. But it was over, but there were a lot of dead people, people who were running. It was-- I remember my mother didn't let me go out to see. I stayed in the house, because they were taken away.

It was the first frost, and she was telling me, it's not a sight for you. And then after this Aktion, which was the biggest one, I mean, that was the big Aktion, they called it, they posted the notices to go to the ghetto.

OK.

We didn't go to the ghetto.

OK, so then the ghetto was established.

And after the Aktion was September-- November 22nd. It took two days.

OK, do you know how many people were killed during the Aktion?

Over 2,000, I remember. Maybe I wrote it in my diary at that time. I don't know. But over 2,000, I remember. And then they set the ghetto. The ghetto was in the center of the city. You know, surrounded by a ring around the synagogue. Because that's where the most Jews lived.

Right.

And I never saw-- I mean, I saw the ghetto once. One night I was there, but that's it. We never went to the ghetto. My father, in the meantime, there was a Polack. His wife was a servant in my-- this patron, that's my father's friend's house. And she came. She says, I want to save you.

So he said, yes, but I have two friends. We live or die together. And one of the friends has the house that we need. This was the house. Because don't forget. In order to save Jews, you had to be isolated. You had to live in a one family home. Then you had a chance. I mean, it was a small city. And this was a one family home.

And it had already that approach there. And that's how it started.

So this person actually--

This person, he was a Volksdeutsche. And as a Volksdeutsche, he could get any Jewish house that he wanted.

Right.

And he asked for this one.

And he approached your father.

Not my father, my father's friend.

Your father's friend, excuse me.

His wife was there a family servant all her life.

In your house.

And my friend's sister, she was a widow. She was-- you know what is a Milchmama?

A milkmaid?

When you-- my grandmother when she gave birth to my mother and she didn't have enough milk, so he took a peasant woman who had a child, that woman, the wife of this Polack, she was my mother's milk sister. She was my mother's age, and she knew the family, too. And they wanted to save us. They just wanted. That family and us, and he took this house.

And you think it was just the feeling--

It was also money. But mainly I wouldn't say-- he could-- look, he could have taken our money the first two days and then to the Gestapo, here they are. That's all. I mean, I will tell you also how many helped the Germans, but money factor wasn't the main-- because all right, so let's say it was the money factor. But he could of after a few weeks just go, denounce us, and be clean with all the money.

He was a known anti-Semite. Like he said like this. "I always wanted Poland without Jews but not this way."

Interesting.

Wasn't a Jew lover. He said-- he said, I always wanted Poland without Jews.

So actually there was a specific date when the ghetto was to be created.

There was, yes. I don't remember exactly, but it was just a few days. Right after this Aktion, the announcements came out, and it just took a few days. They gave you so something. And we were already afraid to live in our house, which was the front. We went to my aunt, where my sister. And the Volksdeutsche, they used-- they went and everybody had everything put in, and luggage, and valises, and trunks. And the Volksdeutches, I mean, there were no cars.

Horse and buggy, and they went from house to house, which they knew there are rich people. They came they came to our house. A guy who went with me to school. I did all his math work because he was stupid in math. And he knew where to come, and came and took. He did me a favor. I asked him to give me-- and I still have-- like you have a little memory book and a few pictures. So I asked him if I can take out this. And he gave that. He did me a favor. But we never went to ghetto. We went there.

Were there a lot of other families who were able to go into bunkers?

No, there were. And then when we were in bunker, you heard here and there, they were caught left and right. Because there was a bounty. And if there was just a suspicion, they went to the police. They did the rest. So you heard here and there, they were caught. I don't know. It's a [INAUDIBLE]. We wound up being 18 people there. We went.

You know, it was November. It was the Battle of Stalingrad.

Right.

We also went for six weeks. If we knew it is two years, we wouldn't even try. He wouldn't try, the Polack. It was only him, his wife, and his daughter. But we thought in six weeks the war is over. So for six weeks-- in six weeks he's a hero. And at that time, we couldn't be already in this bunker. We just were-- you imagine the crawl space and there are little poles made out of stones that hold the floor.

So we took a big pole in the middle to hold up the floor, and removed a few of-- not all of them. So we had an area like half of this, smaller. Just to straighten out. The rest we put straw. It was you imagine a square area an L. Where we had straw we all slept. And this was just to go down. We were sitting all day long on that straw.

So now there were-- you're saying there were 18 people.

At that time went in, 10.

You went in 10.

11, because that widow, [INAUDIBLE] sister. She's dead of cancer already. Then around Christmastime, we didn't know but one of the people that were with us, that was his house, Mr. Melman. He had two brothers. And he had them stashed someplace else. That was Mrs. Beck is that the Pollak, the Volksdeutsche. She had a sister who was an old maid. She lived alone in like-- not in the city, like out in the field.

So he had there-- he talked to her, and she took them, his two younger brothers, fiancee one and a brother of one. But then the neighbors got suspicious. And when she came home-- she wasn't home. When she came home, the neighbors told her that the police was here, looking at the house. So she chased them at night. She was afraid.

So they went to the ghetto at night. But the following day, they came into the ghetto, and they rounded up young men for the concentration camp in Lemberg. Janower Lager, you probably heard. So they took away one of the brothers and the young boy. So the other brother and the fiancee, which was not his fiancee, came at night to our bunker. Then there were two single people, [INAUDIBLE] the brothers of the widow, the brothers of my father's friend.

They were in a camp in [PLACE NAME] So when they dissolved this camp, they knew where we are, and they came. And then there was a couple, he was-- he was the only one. My uncle, my mother's brother was still in the ghetto. And he knew that we would need money. He knew. I mean, my father made a lot of money, if he wanted to charge money. But my mother gave away all the food.

So he knew how long this engagement [INAUDIBLE] would last or anything. So he got a guy who they didn't have children. I mean, there was a big thing by the Germans that you didn't have children. So it was easier on you. You could hide. Children was bad.

So he told him-- he was the only one that didn't live in the ghetto, because the only drug store was out of the ghetto, and he had to be there day and night. So he told-- he knew that he has a lot of money. He told him where we are. If an Aktion comes, he should come. He came when the Aktion was. My uncle was killed.

And he had the money and didn't share it. I mean, you know, people don't change. We were starving. And he was paying these Polacks. They gave him three times a day a tray of food downstairs. And I tell you, no matter what circumstances, people don't change. Because Mr. [PERSONAL NAME] was the one who opened the door-- when they knocked, you opened.

They gave him a tray. His child, Klaronia, she must have been then five, six years old. Looked at the food, and he handed the tray to these people. And they ate there, and they never said there were four children in the bunker, here is a piece of bread. We were all starving.

Even if he had the money, he couldn't buy a lot of bread or things. Because in a small city right way, "Oh, he has Jews." A lot of people perished that way because they bought too many things. So he bought swine. And he used to buy sacks of the small potatoes. And we used to cook. We had electric plate downstairs, and used to cook these potatoes. Used to peel them with a small pocketknife, because it shouldn't-- and water, we had rationed, because he had to bring the water from the well. And we had a gentleman's agreement that we had to wash every day. We shouldn't get lice and typhoid.

So how were you able to do this?

Oh, there was no soap. But there was washing powder. So we took 2 cups of water in a basin and rag with a little powder, and we washed.

So you were in this bunker for a total of how long?

22 months.

22 months. Originally you thought it would be till after the war, six weeks.

That's it.

Battle of Stalingrad.

It dragged us in.

OK. Now, can you describe a day? I mean, you've sort of described it already.

That's what I haven't. Well, we were just sitting.

I mean, at what point-- did you come out of the bunker at any time during the course of the day?

You kidding?

Never?

Nobody got out. You-- there were upstairs, there was the bedroom, and the thing was under the bed. It was that opening.

Right.

And there was a scatter rug over it.

Right.

Half of it was under the bed. Half was there. Now, we had two piles--

So how old were you at this time? You were--

I went in 1940-- or 1942. 15 years old.

15.

I was 15 when I got in. I was 17 when I got out. And we had two piles, and we used to make that. And at night, or early in the morning, we used to knock at the door. There was one thing that house had, which was also for us why we had to take this house. It didn't have running water, but it had, they used to call it an English toilet. That toilet like you see here with you pull down the water.

Right.

But you filled it up from a cistern. In the attic was a cistern that you filled up from the drinking water you had to bring from the well in the backyard. And he used to go with-- he used to knock at this. Mr. [PERSONAL NAME] used to go out. Somebody gave him the piles, and he went from the bedroom just through-- here was the bathroom. There was a corridor. At the end of the corridor was the toilet.

He just went out here from the bedroom to the toilet, spilled it, came back downstairs. And that was going on like for a year and a 1/2 till once he almost got caught. And that's a different story because the Germans took over two rooms. So then we dug out and we did it downstairs.

The Germans took over two rooms in the house?

Yeah. So let me try to put it to you chronologically. First we were 10. Then one came, and another came. And only in the diary I can tell you the dates. This is not important. Another came, and he was there.

And in March of '43, they had an action in the ghetto. And I don't remember how much, how many they killed. I probably wrote it in the diary, because Beck used to come from the ghetto. He was free to go anywhere with all the news. And then that was March, I think the 15th. I don't remember the date exactly.

Gladys Harper will know now because that's when they killed her father. They killed the Judenrat there, too, at this Aktion. And then they left just 60 people to clean the ghetto. April the 6th they made judenfrei. A few days later, Mrs. Beck or Mr. Beck, I don't remember, knocked at that floor. We opened this. "You know, they killed all the Jews?"

But my mother's youngest sister and younger brother were still in the ghetto.

Your mother's--

Younger sister. She was a widow. Her husband got killed in the war. My mother's brother was married, and he was also between the-- his wife was with us in the bunker for a while. He had a child of one year, and he gave it to a Polack. And then she heard he has-- then-- I'm jumping over my own.

At one point before the March Aktion, and I have to tell this, because that's the only time I saw the ghetto. At one point, my aunt was there, my uncle's wife. Mrs. Beck comes from the ghetto, and she says that my mother's youngest sister, [? Uczka, ?] her name, Rachel, has typhus. My mother takes her in, gives her to Mr. Beck. He had a soft heart, and takes her to the ghetto at night.

She lived-- this side of the street was the ghetto. This was the Polish side. So all you had to do when nobody looks, run through the road. My mother went to the ghetto. No sooner he took her there, he started telling, I wouldn't let her in. She will bring typhus. I won't let her in.

So now his daughter was 19 years old. I said-- I asked, if I can talk to her. I say, will you go with me to the ghetto to fetch my mother? She says I will. It was a night, full moon, everything white. It was winter. And I was scared. And she says to me, just walk, talk loud like two young girls do. And we had to go a mile for sure. And from one end to another.

And she stood across and I ran through. I came in. That was the only time. I saw maybe six, seven families together. Three people sick with typhus and my aunt. My mother didn't let me into the room where she was, because she-- and my mother, I mean, she was yelling. You-- Manya was my younger sister. "If Manya would be sick, you would leave her, too?"

All she-- later I understood, all she wanted me is to get me out of there. And we were raised this way. Mama yells, you do what she says. And I went back to the bunker. My aunt got-- survived the typhus. And he himself went to fetch my mother. As I said, he was a softy.

Mr. Beck?

Mr. Beck. You see, he could go as he pleased because he was the Volksdeutsche. No but he went and brought my mother back. No sooner was my mother back, he came and says that my uncle has typhus, and his wife was in the bunker. And the child was by a Pole. She took off a diamond ring. She gave him, and he should take her to the ghetto.

We begged her. We says he will get well. Now, his sister is in the ghetto, and she survived already typhus. She can't get it. And she went there. Soon they live together. She's alive. She went to the ghetto.

In the meantime was the Aktion March, and they killed her. He and my aunt stayed between the 60, my mother's brother and my mother's sister to clean the ghetto. Now, she had two children. Her little girl was only four years old. Her boy



was eight years old. She had a lot of Polish friends. They said, get rid of the children, we will save you.

OK, what do you mean, get rid of the children? She tried to go. There was a woman who took her. So she cried day and night. She brought her back. So the children were hid in an attic. At night, she said I have to go and see to the children. So he's her brother. He wouldn't let her go by herself. 15 minutes later they were--