

The children are doing in there, I think my uncle went with her and 15 minutes later they brought their clothing. I found out about it because there is one survivor, he was a brother-in-law to my uncle. They saw that their days are numbered, so he ran away to a forest and he survived. He died last year on Easter. And he told us this story.

So they were killed. Now, this man knows that any day he has to run away. What he did was unforgivable then, but he did it and he succeeded. He just couldn't go away to the forest and leave these two children.

So what he did is, on a Sunday morning, where every-- I mean this is 99% Catholic in Poland, everybody's in the church. He told the boy, children were not children to ghetto, they were grown ups. He told them, your mother is in Merriman's house. He knew the house, I mean he grew up on this street. And he took his little sister.

And a day before his mother was doing laundry and that kid used to hang the laundry. He took his mother's nightgowns, his sisters underwear and things and little dresses, tied around them was the rope that he found on the attic. And Sunday morning, I would try to give you the picture. Beck is knocking at the floor, you open the floor, Oh we are dead. The children, [PERSONAL NAME] children are here? I mean, he knew the family. People started to tear their hair. What will we do? You know what he answered, what have you got to lose? Play with them, they wouldn't cry. He said, I have walked the roads. But the children were full of lice, he took him to the attic.

There was a tremendous concern that the children would cry make noise.

They'll cry and make noise. And who saw them? Then there is the man who saw them walking. But my guess is, first of all, Sunday morning everybody's in church. And if anybody recognized them, they thought let them go to somebody. I mean we had a known family, and they were two children, there was a boy holding a-- then they came to the door. And he says in Polish Mr. Beck, my mother is here. So he says, your mother is not here. He didn't know that he saved his life. He says like this to them because that's what he told us that Pollock, Mr. Beck, he says to him, look she's a little blond girl. Take care. I will already take care of myself. He is two days short too.

When he saw this he just took him in, he saw that they have full of lice. He took them to the attic. I went upstairs. We shaved their head, gave them a bath, and they came down. And they stayed with us. Now that little girl, she used to cry all night long silently, red face. Never a sound, never a sound. And they survived with us. They are alive, their mother is not alive, and that was April 6th.

Now around April 20th, on the Palm Sunday, Mrs. Beck knocks at the floor. A fire, we're dead. I mean, that's all we heard. We opened the thing and it's fire all around.

My mother had two small children already, I mean two small children that people can trample and people can choke. We decided we cannot, because she said save yourself from fire. And then my father with Mr. Merriman went upstairs and they saw, you know a fire, people around. So we decided to go to the bunker where we were in November, the under the ground bunker and stayed there till it quiets down. And then we will walk out and see, we go to a forest or something.

My mother was afraid that when they started over there it was just a narrow passage. They started trampling, she has two small children, she took the children and went first. And she didn't know that my sister ran after my father.

Now my sister, I told you wanted to live. Now listen to this story. My father gets up in the morning, says Kaddish, it's 40 years that his mother died from a fire. My sister has the same name. When she said to him upstairs, daddy I'm going, I want to live. He felt that when she's there she would die, he let her go. When my father finally came down and my mother asked where is Manya and he said she will save herself, my mother started crying [? Hanish Kaddish. ?]

And then in the afternoon, Beck came, they caught her. A boy who went to school with me pointed her out. They asked her where she was and she said she was in Lemberg, and she came a night before and she hid out. That's why I mentioned the bunker in our factory. They went there and they found that bunker, it was empty. 14 years old. She didn't tell them where she was.

What the fire did for us, it destroyed the whole neighborhood. We were all alone in the street. Now there is a cemetery at the very edge of the city. There were about 20 houses, they were burned down. This house started burning and then they poured the water, that house is standing, about five houses burned down, our factories standing. Then about 20 houses are burned down, and there is a little old church, it was a monastery, that's standing. Then again about 20 houses into the deep of the city.

He came at night and he says like this, you know what, there was next door who lived a Russian who stayed. He worked with my father under the Russian occupation in the factory. He was a traitor to the Russians, he stayed with the Germans. And he saw my sister running out of the house. And he brought the Gestapo, and he says, she ran out from here.

So Mr. Beck, very shrewdly said, this Moskel. He worked with her father, he wants to save his skin. But they said there was a lot of rubble and Germans liked clean, that they're going to come tomorrow. So at night he comes down, he knocked and he came down to us, because it was hard for him to do it. So he came he says, you've got to go. They're going to come and look.

And it was a terrible event, but that's why the fire was so big. And we started, what will we do? He slammed like this, he says, listen, I have like 30 something special, the church is standing, the factory who is going to be mine now is standing, and this house is standing. There is something to it, lock the clapper, you name this, and whatever will be, will be. The Germans came like she told them, they found that bunker there in the factory.

Since then, like people say, he couldn't have. Because everybody was talking, he has Jews, you know. He couldn't have Jews, he had the Germans looking. We had twice more, he had his doubts, and the annunciations. And each time we were stronger because they didn't find us, and we were just underneath the floor.

So the children live, and my sister who wanted to live doesn't live. Figure it out. He's dead, he died, he had an ulcer, had an operation. She died, she was paralyzed. Mrs. Beck, she's the only one that had a wheelchair in Poland there. Because one couple, I mean you have to realize, 18 Jews, we are spread all over. There is one couple in Canada, they were the first ones. I was still in Israel. they send her a wheelchair. And we are always in touch with the daughter.

And my only reason to go to Poland was we brought head over, the daughter. And she was one month in Canada, one month with us. And one day we are asking her if the people know in the city where she lives, she'd say to Jews, what about? Says, how my boys know about Jews? He says, the only Jews that you can find is out at war, so there are no Jews in my city. They ask me if I'm going to eat matzah for two months. You never met my husband, he's a softie, aggression level. He said, Clara, let's go and show these two guys that Jews never forget.

Plus, we're her only family. It just so happened she had one aunt who was single, and she died, she didn't leave sooner. Had her father, had one brother. The brother had the one son, he died in the war. We are her only family.

Let me go back just for one second to the day that you walked out of the bunker.

We didn't walk out so fast. When it was in 1944 already, the Germans they going back, they knew everything that is going on. At 12:00 at night or 1 o'clock in the morning, he had the radio, there was a station who broadcasted from London in German, to the German people. He didn't know German, so he used to call Mr. Patrontasch or my father. My father had trouble getting in and out because he was extremely tall, so it was very hard for him. So Mr. Patrontasch] that was his function.

He used to go, and we had maps from the newspaper. And we heard the truth, how mostly the Eastern front was concerned us. Of course, again, when Italy capitulated, we thought they'd still basically dissolved it, became a year. So we knew what is going on in the world. So when they had it already bad, they started to requisition in nicer houses, rooms. And this was a nice house, so they requisitioned two rooms.

Now we have to stay there and to behave, 18 people, the Germans shouldn't hear us. They were working, the two

Germans they were working in the railroads. So one of them was always sleeping. They used to come from night duty, 5 o'clock in the morning. As soon as he fell asleep, Mr. Beck knocked, we should empty out the pails. And one day he emptied out the pails and he came down very fast and he thought something is wrong. He was afraid to tell us he was seen.

What he did when he emptied the pails he came into the bedroom, which was where they slept and smoked a cigarette. That was his luxury in the fresh air. And the railroad man, the German, went to the toilet in the corridor and the door was ajar and he saw it. About 8:00 in the morning or 9:00 in the morning, this is described in the diary. I mean this was life or death for us.

Mrs. Beck knocks and says, we are lost. And doesn't say nothing else. But we had, I mean we recognized steps, who is walking. I mean like a blind man. I mean that was all we did. So we heard them talking, you could hear them like I speak to you, that they are looking. And they are saying, and [Foreign word]

I mean he had a beard and they shaved like once in a week. And he described it. Mrs. Beck was very smart. The window was open because to air out the smell. And there was a armoire next to the window. She had entered the room, opened the window very wide, open the armoire, why didn't you go in? They stole all my clothes.

The Germans didn't believe her. They went-- why didn't he do it right away, 5 o'clock in the morning? Because he was waiting for his friend. Think they're afraid, the Germans. He didn't want to do nothing until his friend come. They took the guns, they took a flashlight and they were looking, in the cellar, everywhere. And then our hearts sank. He's lying down underneath the bed because he says, he disappeared here. But what he did with his body, he was on the opening and looked with the flashlight under the bed.

Next day they moved out. See at that time, there were a lot of partisans coming to the city, they were afraid that maybe he's involved in the partisans. And being they were just railroad men. I mean, if it would be assessment, then it's different. They just looked for another house, and they left.

Then we had three Germans taking over that room, soldiers. Soldiers, but they worked in telegraphs and things. So there was always somebody sleeping. When he turned off the electric light, we heard. Afterwards, when he saw Patrontasch was upstairs, we just dug in deeper into where the corridor, underneath the corridor. Made that a big hole. I don't know, they put posts and this so they can cover it. And that's where we were ready till the end, because we were afraid anymore.

And then the front came closer and closer, and you heard. And then one day it came already, big, I don't know, it must have been a big shot to took one room, because the Germans used motorcycles for messengers, used to come every half an hour from the front and the report on the situation. So by that time this was already our area, we knew where they are. My father knew of all these names.

And on a Friday they picked up and he says to Mr. Beck, now if you want to save yourself you better do it because the Russians will be dead in a couple of hours. In the meantime, I didn't tell you, he sent away his daughter because everybody started seeing all the Volksdeutsches were running away. And he couldn't leave us, he would starve, he didn't have water.

So he sent off his daughter and said that he sent her off and said he will run the very last minute. So this gentleman tells him, you'll runaway. He says, yes, I am, I'm running. They left. And then they started cannons and shooting, you know, took three days. So when the soldiers left there, they built a bunker in the backyard.

We, look how scared we were. Half of the city ran away already, the Germans ran there. We wanted to be in the cellar who was Baton, Samanton Baton. So we were afraid. 18 people to go into the house, through the house, through the kitchen, through the cellar. We dug a tunnel, we took out stones from the walls, and through a tunnel. We went to the cellar, that's how scared we were. Maybe somebody would come in last minute. And we were in the cellar, and what we didn't know, they had one gun, not far. And a wall fell in, we thought the whole house fell in. There was a big gaping hole then we came out.

So we told him, Mr. Beck, and the little one, the little girl says to me, she was shivering. And she says to me, and now we are going to die. Like that one says after all this, you are speaking and now she was already five. She was four-- so we told him, you go to see what on the aircraft. And we observed that it was always half an hour long, then it was tra, ta, ta and then the big cannons.

So we told him in this lull, you just run out and at least save yourself. And as whatever it will be will be. So he ran to that in the backyard. It quiet, quiet, quiet, but we were afraid Sunday in the evening. We were afraid, then he came running. And I don't know if he started crying and screaming, and we had a Torah too. We had a Torah too. And my father, my friend, took up in the Torah. Oh, you know, they say you could write books. When the Russians came, people took out Torahs from the shelves and kept them in the homes and they had minyans. Because you not always could go to the shul you had to work, and by the Germans for sure.

So Mr. Merriman had the Torah in his house, we used to go there for minyan to daven. So when we went to the bunker, he didn't tell us. The reservoir wasn't an attic for the water, it was a big whatever iron. But it was surrounded, he put big planks, wooden planks. He hid the Torah behind the planks. When the fire was, and they started pouring water and whatever it was wood, they chopped off and that fell out.

Now Mrs. Beck knew what it is. She rolled it fast and she put it away between her, I mean whatever she was going to take out, she had it. And it stopped burning right there then, and I'm not telling you stories, that's what she told us. It came up to that the reservoir, the Torah fell out, but it stopped. She schlepped my father upstairs to show him that it's still the wood, that's when she believed. That Torah is today in Israel.

In Yad Vashem?

No. Because Mr. Merriman, after the war, he had relatives in Australia. So he says, let me take it. That's the only thing, you are going to the Holy Land you don't need the Torah, I need it. Well he came to Australia, and he had [? pernosia ?] what you say. But he wrote to us letters to Israel. He says, what did I survive for? And he came to Israel to live in Israel. So then he lived in Ramat Gan so he went to there to show and it was set up, Brings him to give that Torah.

And in the meantime, and I happened to be there in Israel because my father was dying. My father died, so he gave it in his name. In the shul now. I call him brother. He was till his retirement a big shot in the Israeli Air Force. She lives in Israel. She was in a while in America, she didn't like. He never wanted to come. On her fourth birthday, April the 6th, they killed her mother. That's what she has to cope all life.

Of course in my diary you have all these. We had several times, we had like what you call close call. But let me tell you one thing, we owe and the pharmacist, because they had on the piece of string poison. And when they catch us, they wouldn't have to suffer. I wouldn't say much, but at least four times there are instances when we heard dogs and we are finished. I didn't see them once reaching for the poison, because they would be dead if they did.

You want to live, you want to live so much. My mother tore her heart out that her sister and her daughter is dead. But quiet, you want to survive, you want to live, and that's all that matters.

But you know all the years I didn't even think about going to my hometown. It hurt each time you had to. I mean, I had to still stay there a year. I couldn't go.

First of all, I weighed 40 kilo. Had my father who was at least 6 foot 5 weighed 50 kilo. I mean you had to first-- and then the Russians made it for us easy, because they wanted you crying out there, so they gave us cattle cars. And believe me, for a Jew that time to go into a cattle car, even if you knew where you are going, was not easy.

For years, when I heard a whistle of a train, you felt it crumble. And we went there to Poland and I never thought of going back. And last year the Helpens went, to all these citizens, she went. As a matter of fact, I will show you later. I have a picture of the synagogue because it's a fortress they couldn't destroy. They use it now for storage. But she says that the churches are in the worst shape because there were Polish churches, all historical, we used to have tourists

before the war to see the churches because there are no Polaks left, only the Ukrainian churches intact.

But since she was there, I really want to go. I want to go with my husband. I want to show him where I was. I really want to.

You met your husband at DP camp?

I mean boy meets girl, you are young, you meet. When I was now in the Washington, Kennedy Center. And they had a concert. And when Elie Wiesel was speaking, and I had a very good seat right up front, I was watching the young people from the orchestra, the philharmonic and from the choir. And he was saying that that's what I told her once my sons, you think in terms in 1944 I was free and everything was dandy. When you were sitting in Germany, where I couldn't take the sound of German. I wanted for my mother, we were two days in Liegnitz, and she brought the teacher for me to prepare for matriculation.

I took French because I didn't want to speak German. And then they brought us to Germany, we had to stay there. And in the beginning, they had like a peace around us. So then we went to protest with our being concentration camp again. You had to have it pass to go out and we had protest. And I mean, they didn't know how to handle. You took journeys from here and here. You understand it when you look back on it. But after a while, he was young and I was young, and we met and married. But we were five, six, families surrounding.

And you all lived here, all of your family?

I lived with my parents and my brother was an Exodus Because when we started preparing, we were from Russia, they took us to the part of Germany that was given to Poland.

Right.

Because they took away the piece where I was. So we were there another year. And then we started, like you read exodus, the Bricha they came, that you can go. Now we have to go and they tell us, there's a knapsack and here we have two small. And my mama had all, she has two young children. So somebody came from the Bricha and said that they have orphanages, there were a lot of orphans going legally by train to Germany.

And my father gave to that kibbutz a lot of money and they went, and my aunt and her older daughter, and my mother wouldn't let them go but there were two teenagers from the man who came back from Russia, one of her daughters she sent like this. And a whole group of children and men. By the time they brought with us through the border, and first you came to Austria. We got stuck in Austria, they closed up the camps in Germany and we couldn't go.

In the meantime that was just around the time and they organized Exodus. And he was on the Exodus. Don't ask, we went to Germany, we worked illegally at night because, I mean, we had to find the children we came there. She was there, he wasn't there. My mother, she thought of her, and my father kidnapped him. Because Exodus is only in the movie that went to Israel, never went Israel. My father went to that camp, so they told him, you're not the father. So my father went to this, he saw boys playing. He says, where is [INAUDIBLE]? So they told him where he is, he grabbed him. And as short as he was and kidnapped him.

Amazing.

Yeah, everybody could write a story. You know that when we came to Israel at 17 he volunteered to them, and went into the Air Force. The only reason he wasn't a pilot was because my father had to sign. And my father said, I'm not signing. You know what Polish do a pilot, he was afraid.

So the kids, his friends, used to always when they had a day off to come to my house. So now when I come to Israel, they gather there. So you should hear them, at least six of the big shots from that group, from the Air Force, they're Exodus people.

Right.

That's what the Israeli army is made of. But now I really, maybe because I'm getting older and I want to go. I just I know I want to go with my husband. Like offer it to me to go by myself, I wouldn't. When they had the first gathering of the Holocaust in Israel, I have a sister-in-law who survived Auschwitz. Not only Auschwitz, she was on the death March and everything. And my husband was very busy that time in the business, springtime is not really his time when he can go.

And I said, you know after all you are not a survivor, you survived in Russia. I will go with Rose, she will be my perfect partner. Was I sorry. I mean the feeling, I would be a poet maybe, I could tell you what I felt there. That we are here in Yad Vashem and everything. And whoever planned it was a genius. You saw the logo. That's exactly what this was, it wasn't all the time crying. It was crying and joy we survived from the [? whole band. ?]

But I wanted to share it with my husband, he wasn't there. I was so sorry. I was so sorry, you have no idea. And now maybe I want to go with him, because we are already married 35 years and that's a big part of my life. I have these friends in Canada that were with us in the bunker because they got married, the single Patrontasch and Lola, they got married. And my friends ask me, to go for weekends to Canada. What you're doing there? It's nothing, we are sitting with breakfast three hours and yakking. And nothing, I just gotta to say-- he had a bypass. I flew to Canada. They asked me, if it's relative. You're kidding me? I mean what we went through together, that cements you so much.

Sure. When you did come to the United States in--

My husband, as I said, you see [PLACE NAME] where he's from, they have a--