

Mrs. Oshman, as we were speaking, you were telling us about what your family was doing in the ghetto. How long did this situation go on as you described it before the break?

That's right. I'm going to explain to you exactly what was going on. You see, as I said again, they kept us until they needed us. When they feel that they don't have use for us, so then they get rid of-- they got rid of all these people.

And then as I say again, they just this ghetto they kept us, I would say-- I'm not going to exaggerate-- like about-- I would say like about maybe about six, seven months or so. [? Nights ?] couple months or maybe more even than that. You see, this I don't, recall or maybe more. Let's see, I would say, think they kept us over there over where this was in 1940. This was already 1942, OK?

So they kept us about, I would say-- yeah, about eight or nine months in this place. And of course, there was a reason, as I said before, because they needed us. And eventually, they found out that all this war could be-- it's mostly was done, and there was no use for us anymore. So they felt that they don't need such an amount of people, that they think that they could use less of us.

So what they decided to do-- what they decided to do is to liquidate this ghetto and put the amount of people that they need in a smaller place. Otherwise, to get rid of the extra hands that they didn't needed, OK? And one morning, it was an order that everybody-- I mean, that everybody should come that should-- no, should report to work, OK?

Otherwise, with exception, because there were some people that they were on, some people they were sick. So they were in the hospital. Some people they were sick. They were laying in the beds, that they did not go to work because the Germans actually did not check the inside.

As a matter of fact, they were afraid to get into the ghetto. Because they thought maybe there was dirt and lice who knows what kind of sicknesses? They were afraid. They just communicated with these people that represented the Jewish community, the Jewish ghetto.

The Judenrat?

The Judenrat, right. The Judenrat and also the [NON-ENGLISH Word]. [NON-ENGLISH word] was the word. A couple people that they appointed the people which place to work. Also we had a militia and police. There was police also in that ghetto. There were some Jewish policemen.

Of course, some people, they feel bad about it, but there was no choice. They had to do this work. They had to appoint people and say, you go here and you go there. Because otherwise, it wouldn't work.

So one day, it came an order. We didn't know about it. The population from the ghetto didn't know a thing. Only the Judenrat and the [NON-ENGLISH word]. They knew exactly that it's going to be now another aktion, another killing. But you see, they couldn't do anything about it. They had to follow orders.

And so as usual, the people that used to go to the barracks where the army used to stay, they went to work. The other people, they went to work here and there and there. And that's it. And there was some people that were not appointed to work this very same day, see?

There were just people that they appoint, and they sent out guards. You go here, you go there and there. But there were people they did not get any appointments at all. They weren't appointed to go nowhere. So they were told to stay in the ghetto.

And these people, they really didn't know why. So they said that there was not enough work for everybody. But the Judenrat and the [NON-ENGLISH word] they knew that it's going to be the end of this ghetto, OK?

So these people that were appointed to go to work, they went. Now these people, that they remained in the ghetto, they

stayed in the ghetto. And of course, all these people that they stayed-- the ones that they went to work, they were there, and the ones that they stayed, they were all liquidated.

The Germans-- they walked into the ghetto, and they were going from one house to the other one. And they pulled out the people and they killed them, executed them immediately on the place. They didn't bother even to do anything. They just-- that's where they did it.

And what is the story with me? And my sister. How did I escape, OK? Well, I'll tell you what. I was told. Somebody told me. A friend said to me, do not stay this day in the ghetto. Because if you stay, that's going to be your end. OK?

And he told me something else. What he told me? He told me that at after when it's going to be a screening. I mean, they're going to get rid of this amount of people. And the rest that will stay and remain for this time, they're going to put in the buildings in the courthouse. And these people that are going to stay in the courthouse for time being, they will need them. They will do work, and they'll be alive. OK?

So when he told me that, of course, I told my mother, and I told my sister. And I told other people there, a couple whom I met, because there was practically-- everybody was in their house, this and this. And I came over to the--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Sonya, was there anybody in your family who was sent on any kind of work assignment out of the ghetto, or was every member of your family in the ghetto?

Oh yes, my brothers.

Your brothers?

My father also.

The men were?

Sure, the men were. They went, of course. Even my mother was sent to work.

Yeah.

But I got to work in the ghetto as a nurse, and I took my sister next to me.

Yeah, so it was just you and your sister who remained behind?

That's right, when they went to work already.

All right.

And their work wasn't finished. I mean, they really needed them. So my family thank God was at that time-- still, we were lucky. And so I came to the gates. The were about to close already. Everybody left.

And so one of them from the [NON-ENGLISH word] said to me, Sonya, what are you doing here? So I said to him, listen, I'm not going to stay here, and I want immediately you should open the gate and let me go-- me and my sister and another couple ladies that were there. He didn't say a word. He opened the gate.

He opened the gate, because the gate was closed already. He opened the gate, and we took off-- about four people or so. And we went to the end of the town, since I was born there, and I knew approximately where I am. So through the fields we went. And then we got to the courthouse.

And at that time, the courthouse, they didn't have any fence yet. It was nothing organized yet. So when I came to the courthouse, I walked in there. And it was [INAUDIBLE] people that were working there, putting up gates. And it was like a whole mishmash. So between all these things, I could get away with all my survival-- with my sister and the other couple ladies.

OK, by the end of the day-- so all these people that they went to work, they did not come back to that old ghetto. They came back, already they appointed them to stay in the courthouse. You follow? And all these people they were there in the ghetto left, they were all liquidated. So whoever was left over there, they were all killed. So they got rid of another-- I would say maybe another 2,000 people or so.

So the rest of the ghetto was concentrated in the courthouse?

Yes. So not yet, but you see, all these people that they went to work, they came to the courthouse. And this was the last--

The remnant?

That's right. This was the last part, the last station, I would say, for all these people they survived. OK, when I came to the courthouse, and I was waiting very anxiously to see when my family will come. So my father came. My mother came. My two brothers came, but one didn't.

What did they do? Over there where they worked, the two of them-- my two other brothers-- they worked in the barracks where the army was stationed. So over there there already they did some cleaning also. So from these people, they felt that they don't need all of them there. So half, they separated, and the other half, they left.

And so some of them, they liquidated immediately. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you what we heard-- and we know that, and it's sure-- that the people that they slaughtered there-- all from the Polish population after the war-- that these people that they went to work, and the half that they left and the other half-- I mean, to be killed. They told them to dig their own graves, and then they buried over them. Otherwise, they dug their own graves, and they killed them right in there. This was a half of the working people that they came from that ghetto.

So one of my brothers didn't come back. It was the younger, Charlie. And I'm the one that was born in 1927. OK, so one was missing already. Of course, we were all crying. What could I tell you? What could we do? Nothing. Misery, atrocities, hunger, and what hunger. The only thing, the desire that you want to live, and also-- because we were young. See, when you're young, you could survive a lot of things.

And they started again. There's going to be the ghetto in that courthouse. They had also there-- there were big buildings and barracks. We were about at that time a couple thousand people. And they there was where to put the people. They put a fence immediately around it. Then they put the double wiring, you know? And they put up a station there with searchlights.

This was real-- this was not a-- I wouldn't say this wasn't a ghetto anymore. To me, this was a concentration camp already. Because all the people that they lived there, they had to report in the morning, get up early in the morning. We had numbers, and we were counted.

You had the appeal?

Of course. And everything, this was a real concentration camp. And the people that remained in this area, same thing. Since we stayed already here for good-- I mean, this was for good. What could we expect something else until next time.

So of course, we had their way. The same thing where there was a little emergency room for all kinds of people, whether you get hurt or whatever it is. And was there a barber that was needed. And there also they, at that time.

And everybody-- we were sleeping one on, and -- usually on the top of each other with the bunk beds, about 50 families in a very small room, one on the top of other, everybody wearing exactly the same clothes, full of lice. [INAUDIBLE] where they were working around us, they could carry us away. But we survived.

And bread, we got one slice-- each of us-- with a cup of water. And what kind of water? Dirty water. And the bread-- if this would be at least a nice piece of bread, but they were those pieces from the wheat that they didn't clean it, even. It's like if you could kill yourself--

Hmm

--eating it. And everybody also started to work. And everybody was working. One was working as a carpenter. The other one was working as a tailor. The other one was working-- some of them, they were shoemakers. And also, there was a shoe department. They were sewing and making the warm boots for the army with the lining.

OK, they planned already the invasion to go to the Soviet Union, you know? Because over there, you need warm clothes, and for winter to prepare the army. And this is why they closed this ghetto. Because they needed us again. They needed working hands.

And so all the women-- the ladies and whoever-- so everybody was working and sewing these boots. Because you had to do it by hand, also, because it was so thick. And we did it. We were hungry. We were sick. We were everything, and we did it. And was cold, and humiliated, and we're beaten.

Once also, there was a man that he was a very elderly man that was sick. He came to work his whole life, you know? And he used to make these wool-- these same boots. And he was very good. But one day, he couldn't come to work. He didn't feel good, he was sick.

So the German-- one of the soldiers, they took him out and they hanged him in the middle of that-- [INAUDIBLE] on a cross. That's right, and they hanged the man, because he couldn't work anymore, OK? And that's how it was, the life over there.

What year was this second concentration camp established?

They started in '42--

'42?

--until '43. This was, as I said, the last place where we were living and staying. And this was the last stage already. I mean, there was no-- also, what they said-- they said, as a matter of fact, you know, there was some German soldiers-- that they were standing and watching us around. And of course, not everybody has a terrible -- I mean, is a terrible man and like an animal. But he told us, you're not going to stay too long here. Eventually, they're going to kill you until --

In other words, this was the terminal point.

The terminal point, exactly. It's be last point.

This was the plan, yeah.

And here would be the end.

Yeah. Yeah.

And my father was working there as a mechanic. He was a very capable man, my father. He had golden hands. He could do anything what you tell him. Since he had his business with all the appliances and everything, and also, he knew how to do beautiful things with his hands. He learned. So he worked as a mechanic.

Now my other brother-- the two brothers, they worked next to their father. Because my father kept them and showed them, and they did exactly what my father did. And there weren't too many people like that, because he was really full of skills, my father, and also, my brothers alone for this short time.

And circumstances-- what they're doing to you, you could do the impossible. Sometimes, it happened to me. [INAUDIBLE] started when I did something really impossible. I wouldn't do it again, what was impossible. Anyway, my father stayed there, and my mother also was going, and we were working around the woods.

And my sister, she was a big girl, and didn't know that she's [INAUDIBLE] that I was 10 years old. But she was taller than I was. I was not a big one, a petite kind, but she was a big girl. And she could get away like for 16 years even, and she stayed with us and going every day to work.

OK, in meantime, the situation was terrible. We were tired and sick and disgusted. And I could tell you something-- even you didn't want to survive anymore, it was too much of everything, you know? You gave up. There were times when you really felt-- well, that's enough, you can't take it anymore.

What is there to fight for? Anyway, you can't fight for-- things they don't look so beautiful. Who knows when -- how could I survive? Sometimes, I think things about it. How could I survive? Look, the Germans, they are so strong, they're going to fight, and they're go and fight the Russians. Who knows how long it's going to go on? Who will survive? It's ridiculous.

Why not to die right now in some way like a hero or something to do? I did think about it. I had a brother that was a year younger than I was, a tall fellow. But you see, he was very delicate. His body couldn't take all this abuse. See? Sometimes, you could take hunger, and abuse, and all these things-- cold, no clothes. They send their clothes that we wore, never washed and whatever it is.

He didn't feel so very good lately. I saw that he is caving in. A young boy, he was 16. No, maybe 15 at that time. No, 1942, he was about 16 or something like that. No, why do I say 16? More than that. He was 1923, and this was '32.

About 20.

Yeah. So when I saw that he caved-- and my mother also-- that he was not going to be able to do it. He lost lots of weight. He looked so pale. And I'll tell you something, that God was so good to him. One morning, the whole family-- we're getting up, and we went to go to work.

And my mother was saying to him, Shlomo, why don't you wake up? It's late. Because they're going to come, and it's going to be your end. Nobody wants it. You'll get a bullet in your head. He didn't end so. He was dead. He died from hunger. And then the doctor said that he couldn't take it, and my brother died from hunger.

They buried him in the ghetto. As a matter of fact, there was near the gate-- there were a couple graves. They were about 10 graves of people that they died-- or were killed and died. And one of the graves is my brother laying there. He died in the sleep, a lucky one. We were crying and everything. But then I said to my mother, Mom, maybe he's a lucky one. The went like a saint, because he was. He didn't do anything wrong to anybody.

Then my father died. This was in January 1943. And then good enough, the Germans, they realized that they don't need anymore. I mean, there are too many people in this ghetto. There are too many, and they don't need us anymore. And again, one morning-- this was in end of May, 1943. They told everybody to get out. The gates they opened up.

And here a whole army of black dressed people from the militia, from the population. They came in with the rifles like that. And there were maybe about five German soldiers, and the rest, all the population. Everybody out. Well, we had to get out. If you wouldn't get out, they're going to pull you out.

They'll kill you immediately. And I'll tell you what happened. At that time, when they told everybody to get out, I felt

very sick this morning. I felt very ill and sick, and I didn't have enough strength. So I said to my mother, I said, Mom, I'm not going. So my mother started to cry. She says to me, what? You're not going to go? They're going to walk in and they're going to kill you instantly.

I say, you know what, Mom? Let them do it. Let them do it. So she started crying, and my sister also. They insisted. So with all my might, I got up. [INAUDIBLE]. I was sick. I had a cold. I [INAUDIBLE] was very weak. And I got out.

OK, then all of a sudden, Reiter-- he was the chief commander from the German army that was stationed in Novogradok all the time since they took over the city. He showed up. In the middle of that place, of the [INAUDIBLE] of the back [INAUDIBLE]. And he said like that.

He said like that. I'm going to divide you, he said. One people, they'll go here, and the other people over there. OK? Exactly what they do always. So we knew already, it's nothing new. But what could you do? Stand up against it? Can't. Maybe it will be better, or maybe not, who knows?

Anyway, so he divided us in two. All the women-- most of us-- most of the ladies. There were some ladies. Why? Because they needed the ladies for this shoe work. For the boots, they needed sewing by hand. But I understand that they didn't need it anymore. So all these people-- most of the ladies-- so they divide it in half. So they said, this on the right side, and this one on the left.

And be surprised that myself, my mother, and my sister, we're all left to the right to die. And I was left to die. Now my father with one of my brothers that was left-- the two others, we lost them-- so they were put on this side. You could do nothing.

So that's what they said. All these people on the left, mostly men, they told them to get into the house there. When they entered in the building where they worked. It was a workshop there. I mean, that's always where they did all their work. And now the rest should stay outside. And I will remain there.

When they walked in, I just followed my father and my brother. And the same thing, my mother and my sister. We knew. They were crying, and everybody was crying, but what could you do, you know? And they left. And until the last ones walked into this building-- and there was like a little gate that separated the building where people walked from the quarters-- from the barrack, you know, the stables where we slept.

And so there was like a little gate, and it was locked. And the people, they were left to live, so they were in the building, and we were all-- no one left in this place, surrounded by these militia and with the Germans. And we were to die, of course. I mean, we understood it and we knew it.

But I'll tell you what, it's a funny thing, isn't it? It's psychologically understanding, but this happens sometimes. I don't know. It sometimes [INAUDIBLE] can happen or whatever. I stayed, and I remained with my mother and sister, OK? And each time in the morning, when we used to come for counting-- so we used to do like that-- that I was the first, that we used to put our sister between me and my mother, that they shouldn't see that she's too small, that she is too young, they shouldn't-- just that she should be counted.

And this time, I was standing next to them, and they came, and they surrounded all these people. We were-- at that time, there were left about 500 in the building who will be-- they were to live. And these people that they left outside to die, of course. There were maybe about 700 or 800 people. And between them, I was there and my mother and sister.

But you know, that strength, and that impact some kind, when I [?] seen [?] you, everybody was running while they walked around and they approached you. And they were actually-- people, they were running here and there, and chasing, whatever, which was silly. So everybody tried to run in the direction where the building was, and where was the gate.

And around there was wiring. And believe it or not, the wiring was round, not just plain flat, but was round like that in circles, that if you would like to go over from this side to the other one, you had to be-- I don't know-- a Superman in

order to jump over. And everybody started to run. And I was running also. I was next to my mother, and I started to run also.

It's like everybody was pushing everybody in same direction. I was running also. I was the only one to jump over the fence. Would you believe it or not? You had to be a Superman. Cause if I-- then later on, when I was looking and everybody was watching the way I did, just nobody could believe it. And I didn't believe it even that I did it, OK?

So I remained. Since I jumped over the wiring, I remained on that side where the buildings were where the men there were inside to work. And I was the only one standing on that sidewalk, and didn't know what to do. There was no way back. I couldn't go back, because I couldn't make the wiring over there.

Now at the gate, I couldn't go, because there was a policeman. He would kill me. And over there, -- somehow, he didn't touch me. And I was standing in the corner and waiting, for what, I don't know. I don't know. And here I saw I was waiting like that-- I'm not exaggerating-- maybe an hour or maybe an hour and a half.

And here I saw how they put all these people together, how they took them about 200 miles from this courthouse. It was over the road. The graves, they were there, and they told them to get into the graves, and they shot them to death. And over there was my mother and my sister, and all the rest of the people that they didn't need anymore.

So all that was left just the 500 people from the 18,000 from this Novogradok. And they were all here in that building. And I was the only one standing on the corner, not knowing what to do, OK? And here.

So I know that there is an entrance to this building from the other side. That's the door where all the working people are going in. So I tried to get into this building. So the two policemen, they were standing-- they didn't let me get in. They said, oh no, you're not going to get in.

And they were who? Friends that I went to school together. Not Germans. Two friends that I went to school together with them. And the two of them, they pointed down the guns, but they're not going to let me in, OK? I said to them, OK, you're not going to let me in, so I'm going back. They didn't care.

And I'm walking back. While I was walking back, and I see from the other side coming, Reiter, this German that is in charge of everything of the whole affair, walking with another friend, a Polish guy, his advisor. That he also helped him with all liquidation of the Jewish population. He was my friend. We were brought up together.

And this is the friend that I before told you that he used to live across the way from me, and we used to play together, climb trees together. He used to eat at my house and everything, and I ate there and everything. He used to tell me that he likes Jewish girls, but not the Jewish boys. And he works with this Reiter facing me.

And when he saw me, he said to me-- you're not going to believe me what I'll tell you. He saved my life. He said to me, what are you doing here? And so I said-- and the German was there. I mean, Reiter was-- he was-- who knows what-- he had the highest I mean, highest rank that he had. I mean, from the German officers.

So he says to me, what are you doing here, Sonya? I said, what am I doing? I wanted to get in, and they did not let me in. So he said, tell them that I told you to get inside, and I knew his name. And then they walked outside, the two of them, to take care of the other people there, take care of how is working there with the killings.

So I'm walking back, and asking these two Polish boys they should let me inside. So one did let me. The other one didn't. And he hit me over the head. He didn't shoot me, but he hit me over the head. One of my friends. So when he did it, so I fell down, and I was bleeding.

So since I was bleeding, some people, they saw it from inside. So they came out with water, and they pulled me inside. And this was my miracle, that I survived. Oh yeah, by the way, until I got in there-- so then, this friend of mine that went with this Reiter came over to me, and he said to me-- I was still standing there. He said to me, why don't you go inside? I say, they don't let me in.

What do you mean, they don't let you in? I say, look, maybe you could do something for my mother and sister. He said to me, oh, forget it, he said. I can do nothing for your mother and sister. But with you, since you're right here, he said, I could do something. He said, go ahead and get inside. This was before I was hit.

So they pulled me inside, and I stayed there, and I was already with the other people. OK, so now are 500 people working.

Where was your father?

Pardon me?

Your father?

My father was inside with my brother, and I was the third one to survive-- the three of us from the family. Couple weeks later, we worked like that. They gave me some work, because I wasn't appointed, but they did give me some work there with sewing and this and that. Whatever, they told me to clean things. So I mean, I did something.

And then two weeks later-- not even two weeks-- a week later, my father came to me and says to me that came an order that they have to take him away. I mean, the guy that is in charge of this department said that there came an order they need a mechanic, and very skillful, that knows how to do a lot of good things, like jewelry and watching and mechanics and this and that.

So they appointed my-- I mean, they're sure that my father is very capable. They need it for a place that they called it Koldichevo. Koldichevo. What is Koldichevo? Koldichevo-- this was a real concentration camp The worst kind. it was even worse than a prison. And it's not true. They really didn't need him there.

But the supervisor of my father's, he was my father's, I would say you could call enemy-- but he didn't like my father. He wasn't Jewish. But he didn't like my father. It's from years-- it's some kind of business or whatever, that my father was very well loved. And then with some things that he got-- My father was doing things that wasn't given to him.

Well, this is a story that has developed for years. So now he failed since my father, and they really needed my father very much. They couldn't do anything like to get -- He couldn't do anything to get rid of him. So at least, he felt maybe it came-- there was an order that came that they wanted somebody very skilled mechanic.

But there were another couple of people like my father working, but they picked my father. And my father told me that I knew that he's going to do it. And of course, it came a truck, and they took away my father. It was a week after when my mother was killed. So our father wasn't anymore with us. So I remained alone, and my brother.

And of course, they took my father to Koldichevo, which I couldn't-- we didn't have any contact. But then later on, I found out that my father was killed over there, that one day, he had to show up in the morning. And he was very ill, and he couldn't do it.

So they took him out in the middle of the street and they killed him. As a matter of fact, they didn't kill him. They beat him to death. He didn't get a bullet. Took a long time by time he died from beating. This was about my father.

So I remained with my brother. Now the whole situation has changed in the whole camp. We knew that we're not going to be there forever. Our time is very limited. And we have-- since we were left, like about-- it was already a couple people, they died, and a couple people, they-- we were about-- I would say maybe remained about 350 or something like that.

So we -- one night, we used to have somebody, a messenger who used to go from one place the other and contact everybody. So we had decided maybe we should all together-- we have that gate, we should one day-- morning or at night-- open that gate and run out. Whoever will be able to escape, fine. If not, we'll get a bullet in the back, you know



what I mean? Not to die just like a [INAUDIBLE] or whatever it is, like everybody is.

Yeah, we had decided to do that. And then somebody came with an idea. It was a young man, and he knew a little about carpentry. He came with an idea. Why shouldn't we-- since they still need us for maybe another couple months-- why shouldn't we decide and do something else?

Since from our place where we slept until the fence is about 300 meters. So why don't we maybe try, if it's possible, to build maybe a tunnel-- to dig one? And maybe we should-- it will take us maybe a couple months-- to start to dig this tunnel, and then we're going to escape. We'll get out, maybe.

Whoever will get out, fine. Because if we're going to jump out from that gate, more likely there was a doubt whether one will survive or maybe not even one. Because it's impossible. We don't have any arms. We don't have nothing, just running. So you're now with a machine gun that is right there, so it will kill us instantly everybody, nobody will be left. OK.

So we have decided that we're going to start building a tunnel. It's very hard work. How would we do it? It's really impossible. And it is impossible. It was impossible. But this was a master work, all for the same thing.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

How many of you were doing it? How many of you were involved in building it?

We were involved-- I would say like about 50 people. 50 people from the place where we started to build this tunnel. It was a place where we slept. Under the bunk-- we had the bunk beds, you know, with everything. So we opened up one place, and we started to dig, OK?

And we were working like that-- since there were bunk beds, so we were standing like, one, two, three, four, and handing in little bags with the dirt. There were men that started to dig the dirt into the bag, one bag into the hand of the other one, until it used to go in the attic. Because see, this was barracks.

The army used to be stationed years ago in this place in this courthouse-- not in the courthouse. It was an old courthouse from years. But this place used to stay the army there. So we were there. So we started to build, and there was a little opening like. It was before an opening to the attic. And it came you know why should we put all this dirt into the bags and put all the dirt in the attic, into the walls, spreading around all around. And it took us a couple months. The idea started in May, and we had finished it in September.

First of all, we did it at night. Because you couldn't do during the daytime. And at night, the soldiers, they used to come and check on us. And they never spotted a little bit of dirt. It was done so precisely, it's just unbelievable. It is unbelievable. Because it is unbelievable.

By the time we got half the way, then the men-- we got some pieces of wood that we put underneath on the ground, and then a little on the top it shouldn't fall on us. It was a size that a human being could crawl through on your knees. It was murder, and very hard work. And wed were 50 people that were working very hard. And finally, it was done.

During this work, we needed an electrician. Because we had also electrical wiring that went through. And why did we have it? Because we had electricians working in the courthouse for the Germans. So they could steal pieces of wiring, bulbs, and many other things. And also, there were carpenters.

So they had all the tools. It was everything stolen in the pockets nobody should see it. And we did it. We did it.

It came until the last moment. Why? Because you open it-- where you get out? You couldn't open it, because the German soldiers, they were walking on the other side of the fence. See, this tunnel went from our bunk bed until the fence. And then where you get out-- so on the other side, who do you think we had? We had the German soldiers watching us.

Yes.

What you see-- and also, we had the searching lights on four corners. With what? There weren't many soldiers. Sometimes, there was walking one or two back and forth. And sometimes, there were a lot of them. So we took a chance anyway. We picked a night. It was fall time in Poland, September. It's raining. And the nights are very dark.

And that's what we decided to do. And this is September the night we decided to get out. And of course, we did like that that the elderly people-- there was some elderly-- the elderly, they worry about in the '40s, you could imagine. So the elderly, they'll go first, then as many women that are left. The women, and the young people at the end.

And also, if you didn't want to get lost or whatever-- say if one gets out, hold your hand. I mean, point out your hand to help the other guy to get out. So if I should get out-- so I'm pointing right away and giving my hand to the other person that has to come out. And we did. We did it. We made it. But what happened?

When we did it-- first of all, we couldn't have any lights, OK? We couldn't have any lights. So the electricians-- what they did-- they disconnected all the lights in all the buildings. OK? And at that moment-- because there were the lights before-- but the moment when we had to get out-- so the last person that had to be out from the tunnel, he was the guy that had to disconnect all the lights.

And he did it. He disconnected all the lights, and we all got out. But what happened? Well, we disconnected the lights, so they started screaming. They didn't have their lights, the Germans around. You know searching lights, nothing. And they started to jump, and run on the motorcycles, and shooting and this and that. And of course, the lots of us, we survived. How?

When I got out, it was so really dark that I really didn't see and didn't know where I am. The road was very dark. And it was everything round around me. Which way should I go? I really didn't know, regardless that I was born there, and I knew this territory very well. Because I used to ride on bicycles, very often through the roads over there with my friends. So I knew the territory, but when I got out, I couldn't figure where I am.

And so we started to walk. It was dark. But then we heard motorcycles across the roads, running back and forth, and Germans screaming. They were furious, because they couldn't replace the lights. And by that time, we had time-- I say at least-- to get out from this territory.

And again, miracles. And miracles, they happen. Some people-- it was very dark, and they couldn't see their way. They were circling around that whole area. And in the morning, when the light was there already, and the Germans, they could spot them, they were right there in the mouth of the enemy. And of course, they were executed immediately. it They were all killed, all of these people.

And how many were there? There were 300 people, so we survived 150 people. And again, a miracle happened. Am I smarter than everybody else or whatever? It was my destiny to be alive today and tell that story. And I survived. Why? I went in a direction that they couldn't spot me, OK?

So immediately, when I got out-- so I was very disciplined. And I just-- my husband was after-- he wasn't my husband at that time-- well, he was next after me. And he was after me, so I gave him my hand, and he was out immediately. And then we were holding hands walking all the way. And there were another three, four people with us, that we walked together. And we walked together in the darkness. I know one thing that--

Where was your brother?

My brother also got out.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I don't know, we got lost. And so I think my brother was in front of me. But you see, he was so excited, he had to hold my hands. But they started to shoot, the Germans, because the lights they weren't there. So he got very upset, and he started to run, and I didn't know even where he disappeared to. So I lost him immediately, my brother.

And the only thing what happened that my husband came out, and I remembered that I had to hold his hand. He had to hold somebody else's hand. And that's what happened. So these couple of people who were going together. Now the other party-- again, they didn't do it. So some people, they remained, they went somewhere else.

So what did we do? I do remember one thing. I did I remember one thing, that we went across the road. This I remember at night. It was very dark, and we went across the road. And we did not succeed to go very far. We were walking and walking and walking.

And again, somehow, we came. We were walking, and then maybe about a couple of miles, we did. And then we came to a place. It was already daytime. And what shall we do? How could we be here? No.

So what was our policy? We decided that daytime, we're going to hide, and night time, we'll walk. And we should see while we're going that we should hide in bushes, bushes or forests, or something, or in the fields. We should cover us up that we shouldn't be seen by the Germans. Because they were looking for us.

The following day, the roads, they were full. The whole army was practically involved, looking for the couple people that were half-dead. But they were still looking for us, because we escaped. So half of the people, they remained around. They were circling. They couldn't find their way. And they died.

Now we were walking like that. We survived. How? Just somehow it was our destiny again, because there was no other reason. So we walked at night, and daytime, again, we rested. Until we came-- we were five people together, OK?

Then we came to a little forest, not a thick one. There were small bushes, and it was already daylight. So we couldn't go forward again. So we were hiding in these bushes. And then that-- he did exactly the same thing. We were hiding and covering up ourselves with the leaves. But one of his boots was not covered.

And this was not far away from a farm. And there were children playing, little children. And they were playing ball. And it happened to be that this ball-- they were throwing the ball, and it landed next to this fence, but a shoe, whatever he wore. So this kid ran to pick up the ball. When he came to pick up the ball, he spotted a human foot.

So he became so very hysterical, and he started to cry, and started to run back, crying and screaming. Ma and Dad, there is a human body laying there. There is a human foot that is laying. And he was screaming like that. Definitely, they would come and get us, or whatever. Maybe they would, who knows? We have to think about it, whatever it is.

Anyway, you're not going to believe it. All of a sudden, it started to rain, and so heavily that they never came back. And this was another miracle.

Mrs. Oshman, this is a magnificent story. We're going to have to stop here at this point, because we've run out of the two hours.

Oh yeah?

We would like you very much to come back another time in order to finish this tape. So we're going to leave it at this point. It's a very important milestone.

We have still lots of things to tell.

We have plenty to talk about yet, and we can't talk about them in two minutes.

Well, you'll add the next available time.

The next available time.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]