

[MUSIC PLAYING] Hello. My name is Carole Shaffer-Koros, professor of English and a member of the Kean College Holocaust Oral Testimonies Project. We're affiliated with the Kean College Holocaust Resource Center and the Holocaust Archival Project at the Sterling Library at Yale University. With me today is Professor Bernard Weinstein, director of the Oral Testimonies Project here at Kean.

We're pleased to welcome Mrs. Sally Chase of Edison, a survivor of the Holocaust, who will share with us today her experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. It's a privilege to welcome you to share with us.

I'm pleased to be here and be of help and give my experiences and testimony as a witness to the Holocaust

Mrs. Chase, would you like to tell us a little bit about what your town was like in the early years of your childhood?

Yes. I was born in Radom, Poland. I was the youngest of eight children. The population in Radom was 150,000, out of which 30,000 were Jews.

My childhood began-- I was the youngest of eight. My childhood was a joyous one. Our home was filled with love and fervor and intellectual inspiration. Tradition was an integral part of our lives. I remember the festivities during the holidays and the way we spend them. And I never forgot them. And this really gave me the strength during the hard times to go on living.

I was only eight years old when the war broke out. I was told that I was different than the other children. I could no longer attend school. I could no longer play and be free.

We weren't as sophisticated as the children of today. I really fully did not understand the differences in the religion. Although there was a certain way I lived, I thought everybody else live the same way. But when I was told that I no longer was allowed to attend school because my birthright was a crime. I was born Jewish. We grew up very fast.

And this happened suddenly? Or did you sense a gradual change?

That happened suddenly. As soon as the occupying forces entered Radom, it took 88 days to conquer Poland. And when they came through the city, they were marching with the tanks day and night and artillery, we thought that no one ever could conquer this might. It took a week, day and night for them to go through the city of Radom.

And when they stopped, immediately they enforced their orders for the Jews to move into a ghetto. This ghetto at first was not really that strict. We were able to sneak out to obtain some food.

But I remember very, very vividly that my mother send me out being that I was a little girl to get some bread outside the ghetto. A little boy, maybe my age, was able to tell that I was Jewish. He was pointing, here is a Jewish girl. She just snuck out to get some food.

Now, here in America, I couldn't tell the difference from a Jew or non-Jew. But there, for some reason-- I had brown eyes and very dark hair. They were able to tell because the Polish people had a very distinctive pugged nose and perhaps blond and blue-eyed. And I looked different. So anybody that looked different was Jewish.

I assume at this time you weren't forced to wear a star or to identify--

Not yet. Not yet. But the orders were issued for all the Jews to move into the ghetto. And they formed a Jewish police force. What really the Jewish police force was didn't have any weapons or anything. They just were supposed to control the order and make sure that no one goes out of the ghetto gate.

And they had some power as far as controlling us. But they didn't have any powers with the Germans. And later on, they issued an order that all the Jews were to wear the white armband with the Jewish star, the Star of David. And things were getting tougher as time went on.

And the worst part of it was that periodically, they would come in to the ghetto. They called it actions, in German, Aktionen. And they would come in at dawn, 5:00 in the morning. And we heard the shooting. And everybody automatically got out of bed and waiting to see what was coming next. We never knew who was on the list to be taken.

And, of course, they tried to get rid of all the intellectuals and all the professionals. And they would come in with a list, which was given to them by the German spies. They even planted some spies to tell them who is of any intellect or who has the money. And they would come with a list to actually get these people.

Why do you think they went after these people first? Because they might have some effect or influence over the others, is that--

Because they didn't want anybody really with brains. They were afraid perhaps that they might organize some sort of resistance. But we were really helpless, because they put 30,000 Jews into several streets. We had no ammunitions, no weapons. We had no way of getting out. We had no way of getting anything into the ghetto. And everything was so harsh and bewildering in the beginning that we didn't know what was coming next. And we didn't really believe what was happening. And it was really hard to perceive that things like that are done to another human being.

And so they would come in with the list and take out 300 people. Some of them were shot right on the streets and then make the other Jews clean up the bodies. And most of the time they came in and put them on trucks and send them out to the woods, the trucks, and shoot them in outskirts of Radom.

This was going on every few days, sometimes every week. And we never knew when the next Aktion would come. It was horrible. And one of the specific ones that I personally was involved in was they came and knocked at our door. And as I said before, each family lived in one room. We were nine in our room. And each room was occupied by different family. So our room, in order for Mrs. Finkelstein to go to her room, she had to go through our room.

And they were knocking at the door, the three SS men with the black uniforms and the red swastikas and machine guns, knocked at our door. They came. And we didn't know who they were going to get. And they asked for Mr Finkelstein. So naturally, we had to say he lived next door. They knew exactly to come there. So probably they knew.

And this is all going on in our room. Mrs. Finkelstein had two little children, a little boy of three and a baby of nine months old in her arms. And her mother was with her. And they asked where Mr Finkelstein was. And she said she really didn't know. He did not come home. And she didn't know where he was.

So this is all going on, and we are all standing in our nightgowns out of bed and shivering. If somebody had a weak heart, I think they could have just had a heart attack just watching this whole scene. And Mrs. Frankenstein said she doesn't know where her husband is. And if she knew, she would tell them.

And back and forth, they kept saying, if you don't tell us, we're going to take you and the baby and we're going to shoot you. So the mother went over to one of the SS men. She was sleeping over that night with her. And she pleaded with them, take me, I've already lived most of my life. But leave this young woman with the baby.

He pushed away with the machine gun. And he said, no, we're going to take her and subsequently took her out with the baby and shot her right on the steps. I never forget this, because I used to dream about this particular experience.

How old were you at the time you saw this?

This was in 1942, in the beginning of 1942. I was 11 years old.

So you were already in the ghetto for--

I was already in the ghetto. And every day was another thing going on. And we never knew what the next day was going to bring. We lived with terrible fear.

And then suddenly we found out that people that had gone in some capacity occupied and worked for the German army on any different capacity that is connected with German industry, because all the factories were confiscated. So the people that worked there before remained there, would remain in the city because they had a quota to fill. And the others will be resettled into to a different city.

So I went to the Jewish police headquarters. And I found out that there was a track came from the Wehrmacht and they want some people to work. So I actually volunteered. My mother pushed me to go. So I actually volunteered. And that was the Wehrmacht. And they took me.

They looked at me. they thought I was young. And I told them I was older. And they took me. And it was called Alpha L, the labor camp, where we were loading blankets and dishes and bunk beds for the army and trains to go all over Europe. And I really didn't want to go, but my mother really pushed me. She says, you have to go because at least maybe for the time being you'll be saved, because there were rumors of people that are going to work or at least remain, we didn't know for how long, but have a chance to survive, perhaps for the time being. And so I went.

It was three miles out of the city. It was called Alpha L. We were 25 girls in one room, the bunk beds, two levels. And we worked 12 hour shifts. And this was controlled by the Wehrmacht. We got food. It wasn't too good. But we were managing to survive.

August, the bitter day, soon came, August 28, 1942. They came into the ghetto. And they lit up the ghetto streets. They installed big lights all day long. And they said, people should pack up whatever they can take with them and be ready to go to be resettled to another city.

That day, I had a chance to get permission to go into the ghetto to see my parents. And I said I didn't want to go back. I want to stay with them. My parents physically pushed me out to go back. And that was the last time I saw my parents.

The rest of your family was with your parents at that time?

No. They were alone. Everybody worked elsewhere. The only ones that were not working for the Germans were my parents. One of my brothers escaped to eastern Poland when the war broke out near the Russian border, in Stanislaw. He was the youngest of the five brothers.

That night, they came in. And they lit up the streets with those lights. It was like broad daylight. Took everybody out of their quarters, living quarters. Searched the rooms to make sure no one was in hiding. And 28,000 Jews were shipped out to Treblinka to the death camps.

They told them they were going to be in a different city. Of course, a few days later, we found out that the destination was Treblinka. When they arrived in Treblinka, they told them to get undressed, go into the showers, and leave all their belongings behind them. And these showers, instead of water, actually gas came down.

Many, many people died in the train cattles. They herded them into train cattles. That night we were all up. We heard the cries and the screams three miles away from the train stations where we worked. And we knew. I will never forget the cries from the babies and children and women so far away. That we heard they were herded into cattle trains. And a lot of them never made it even to Treblinka. They died during the ride.

When they arrived there, everything was taken away from them. They were supposedly going into the showers and gas came. And then all the bodies were burned in the ovens. They didn't have enough ovens to burn. So some of them, they made the Jews dig the graves and throw them into the pits. And the children, they threw in alive. And they didn't even want to use the bullets. They figured they will die eventually. An average of 100,000 people were burned barely in Treblinka.

It was no accident that all these camps were built in Poland. Poland was the cradle of antisemitism. The Catholic Church for years had taught and ingrained a hatred for the Jews and all the ills of the world were due to the fact that the Jews

were responsible. And they really hated the Jews with their hearts. They did not help us.

When they issued the declaration in Denmark that the Jews were going to put on the yellow star, the king went on the radio and announced that all the Danes should put on the yellow star, so they had no way of telling who was a Jew or who wasn't. And as a result of it, 99% of the Danish Jews were saved. During the night, they took them out with trips to Norway, who was neutral. It was not at war with Germany.

We had no help. We had no cooperation. The Poles were really happy what was happening to the Jews. They did not help us. They did not hide us. They did not hand out a helping hand.

And so 28,000 Jews-- just to give you a sample of one of the ghettos, because that was going on in every ghetto in Poland-- we went to the death. Now, 2,000 Jews remained in the ghetto. They were going out daily to work and coming back. A year later, I was still with the Alpha L on the outskirts of Radom.

January, a year later, January 1943, they declared again that they were going to-- first, they said that the Jews who want to immigrate to Palestine should register. So my two brothers were working for wrought iron factory. And one of my brothers had a lot of influence. They liked him, and he would have been able to register to go to Palestine. But he decided that was a trick, because in the other cities, the people that registered to go to Palestine were the ones that they were taken to Treblinka. As fate wanted it, this time in Radom, the ones that registered remained. The ones that were not on the list were shipped out.

So in other words, they crafted this deception to confuse--

To confuse the issue, so you didn't know how to act and what to do. So if you weren't on the list, then they were shipped out. At this point, we knew already that the people are not being resettled. When they were taken, they were taken to Treblinka. Thousands upon thousands of Jews were brought into Treblinka from all over Europe, from Hungary, from Romania, from France, from Czechoslovakia, from Belgium, Holland, et cetera. That's where all the executions, all the final solution, was being instituted.

January 13, 1943, in the morning, they came in and took-- they had the quota to fill. Out of the 2000, only 1,000 was to remain. And my two brothers were not on the list. And they went out. My older sister was in that group to be taken out. But she escaped. And they were shooting after her, but they didn't get her.

And that night, we found out where I was in Alpha L on the outskirts that my two brothers were taken. And I was hysterical, because at this point, we didn't already-- we knew for sure where they went. It wasn't resettlement at all. And I couldn't stop crying. The two German officers came in from the Wehrmacht and they were asking some of the girls why I'm so hysterical. And I couldn't stop crying. And so they told them that my two brothers were taken. They were in their 20s.

And I didn't want eat. I didn't want to get undressed. I wanted to sleep in my clothing. And I didn't want to go to work the next day. But, of course, I was forced to go. And that also passed, and I went on living. But every day, there was no hope. It was hope against hope, and what's going to happen next. We were always in fear. Never knew what the next step was.

What happened to your sister, the one who escaped?

The one that escape remained in the ghetto. But the others and went out daily to work. They made them dig turf. Turf was an ersatz, which is substitution for coal. And they're actually digging it and lining up. So that was used to heat the homes. So they used to go out in the morning and come back 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock at night. And she was working there. My other sister, my middle one, was with me in another department, the food supply. And so she was with me on outskirts of Radom too in Alpha L with the Wehrmacht.

My eldest brother remained. His wife and child-- now, during the 1942, I forgot to mention that, my eldest brother, Abraham, his wife and four children were taken away too, in August of 1942. This time, my second oldest to the oldest

brother, Jacob, had a little girl who was a year old and a wife. And they remained in the ghetto, at least for the time being.

In the middle of 1943, Hitler broke the treaty with Russia. The Russian armies were being defeated. And all of a sudden, it took a turn that the Russians started succeeding. So they started thinking of how to liquidate the remaining Jews in the ghettos. So they announced that the ghetto is going to be liquidated and we all were to go outside to the outskirts of the ghetto. They had an ammunition factory in Radom too. And we all gathered there.

And there were 1,000 left. 300 remained in the ammunition factory in the outskirts of Radom in the ammunition factory, and 300 were sent to Ostrowiec, which I was shipped to. And another group was shipped to Pionki, also an ammunition factory. Excuse me. My brother and--

How far was this from Radom?

That was about three miles outskirts of Radom. All the women with little children were taken into a separate room. And my little niece was one year old, a little over one. And just to show you how even a child could feel and become almost grown up, she turned around to her mother and she said-- she wasn't even fully 1 and 1/2 years old, but she spoke fully with sentences-- she turned around. She says mommy, what's going to happen to the baby?

That night, they took all the women and the children to a separate room. And at the end of the day, they took them into the woods and they shot them all. My little niece was saved by a Jewish policeman, because she was a little baby. And he was related to my sister-in-law. So he took her out through the window. But he couldn't save my sister-in-law. So she was shot. And all the women and the children were shot that night.

This little baby, over a year and a half, was now in the ammunition factory with two aunts, two sisters of her mother, who took care of her. And one day, they had communal bathrooms. And she was sitting in one of them. Nobody even realized she was there. And one woman came and she said that she had this diamond ring. And she handed it to one of the guards. But she couldn't save her child, but she saved herself. So this little child, a year and a half old, turned around, and she came out and she says, and I couldn't save my mommy, but I saved myself, and I came out of it. A year had and a half old.

We went to Ostrowiec. We worked there for almost a full year until 1944, June. In 1944, they liquidated all the labor camps and shipped us further and further away going towards the German border into Germany. June of '44, we were herded into cattle train and we were taken to Auschwitz.

Upon arrival, they told us we're going to take showers. Of course, we never believed them. We thought that the same fate was awaiting us, what they did to our parents and to my brothers. The only thing that we were allowed to take with us is the shoes. And everything else we had to leave behind us.

I was holding two pictures in my hands of my parents. What I wouldn't give to have them now. And the SS woman told me, what do you have in your hand? And I said pictures of my parents. She pulled it out of my hand. She tore it to pieces and slapped me in the face.

And then we were going into the showers. We left all our clothing, all our belongings behind. And as I said, the shoes we're allowed to take. This time, actually water came down, not gas. We took the showers.

And afterwards, when we came out, they started shaving the hair off women. We were 300 women in that particular transport. And I turned around, and I said to my two older sisters, if they shave my hair off completely-- because I looked at my friend that we were raised in the same building and she's not present living in Fairmount, and her hair was shaved off. And she was crying. She was hysterical, laughing. And I looked at her, I took one look, and I said to my sister, when this happens to me, I will not-- not the hair means anything-- but just they took away the last ounce of pride or dignity from a woman or girl. And I said I'll go to through the electric barbed wire and I'll finish it all.

As fate wanted it, out of 300, women maybe 20 remained with hair just cut short. I and my two sisters came out with a

hair cut short, not shaved off. I really would have done it, because there was like-- I know I'm very determined. I know myself. I would have done it. But as fate wanted it, I guess I was meant to survive. They did not do that.

And then they handed as a dress, no underwear-- that was probably staunched from somebody else that already was gassed and cremated-- and no underwear, no stockings. And the shoes, when we held the shoes, they looked into the shoes to make sure that no one was hiding anything in them. They emerged it in the water. So in case if you were hiding in the inner sole pictures, it would get ruined. And they gave us back the shoes.

Then they tattooed us. And they used ballpoint pens. Under the skin was very painful. I have a scar here. I don't have my number. I'll explain how this happened. They tattooed us with the ballpoints under the skin. It was very, very painful, little dots.

With a needle?

With a ballpoint. With a very pointy pen under the skin. And the arm was swollen like for days and red. And we were divested of all humanity. We no longer had names. Now, we were numbers.

The daily intake was one slice of bread in Auschwitz and one bowl of soup made of potato peels. We were 1,000 girls in one barrack. The barracks were built with three levels of bunks. There were about 15 girls on each level. Luckily, I was on the top level, because the sanitary conditions were horrible. We only were allowed to go out once in a blue moon to go and wash in the communal big sinks made out of wood with cold water and no soap. But we used to sneak out anyway to get washed, even though it meant sometimes to be taken in and taken and gassed.

And the lice were crawling all over. And people were hungry. And mothers were stealing a piece of bread from their daughters and sister from sister. And I just feel very proud that I never really stooped to that level.

We didn't work in Auschwitz. We were counted every day. 5:00 in the morning, they made us get up to be counted. And in the evening at 5:00, we would stand for hours. If somebody didn't appear, if there was one person missing because they were sick and they didn't want to appear for the counting, they were hiding on the bunk beds, they would let us stand there until that person appeared and the count was right.

This was going on every single day. And every few days, Dr. Mengele would come in to the camp and do the selections. He selected people that looked emaciated, that looked sickly, because not everybody could withstand this kind of diet. And some people really completely fell apart. And I don't know what strength I had or my two sisters that we were able to really withstand all this.

And every few days, they would declare Blocksperrre, which meant the locking of the barracks. You were not allowed to even go to the bathroom. We had no bathrooms inside. We knew every time they declared Blocksperrre that there was gassing going on. They gassed about 150,000 daily. And the roofs were made out-- we had like skylights with glass roofs. When they were burning the people in the crematorium, the whole sky was as red as broad daylight. We knew exactly when they were burning. Aside from the fact that they were not allowed to go out, we saw the skies were red and we saw the flames. The next so you could smell the stench of the burning bodies.

This was going on daily. Not only that Dr. Mengele do that. But my sister-- at this point, a day later, the transport from Radom came in because we were in Ostrowiec. And my little niece arrived with the two aunts. And two sisters are fighting who is going to go with the little girl. At this point, she's 2 and 1/2 years old. And she was very bright and very beautiful. As a matter of fact, the Germans sometimes came from different camps to just talk to her and look at her when she was in Radom, I was told. And the two sisters were fighting who's going to go with her. They wouldn't leave little Rachel alone.

Some mothers knowing that it wouldn't help them, they would abandon the child And save themselves. But not these two. These two were fighting who's going to go with her. And the oldest one who had a little boy with her husband knew that probably they were taking him away. So she won. And she went with my niece. So with the two victims now because of that one child.

And the other sister survived. And she was in the infirmary in Auschwitz, because she got scarlet fever. So she was taken to the infirmary. Nobody would like to go into the infirmary unless it was absolutely necessary, forced upon them-- she had such high fever, she had no choice-- because the chances of being selected in the infirmary were much greater than the regular barracks.

So Dr. Mengele came in to the infirmary. And he was selecting everybody to be taken to the crematory. And while she was there, there was a little girl from my hometown. She was a doctor's little girl. She was our neighbor from across the street. Why was she still there? She was five years old. They always left a handful of children for the Kinderheim. So if the international inspection from Geneva would come from Red Cross, they would show-- there was a handful of children-- how well they were treated with the beautiful clothing and the toys. And then when the next transport would come, they would take these children and burn them and replace them with a new transport. So there was always a handful of children.

So this little girl is in the infirmary with my sister-in-law. Mengele came in. She was very beautiful and very bright. And he played with her. He handed her candy. He talked with her. And then he sent it to the crematorium.

When he passed my sister-in-law. He looked at her, and he couldn't decide. And then he left her. If he would have chosen her then, she wouldn't have been alive today.

We were in Auschwitz for six months waiting. We didn't know what for, what the next day would bring. And when the selections were being conducted, one group was to the right and one to the left. We never knew which one was life and which one was death. We were just following orders to go to the right or to the left.

And as I started saying, the men used to pass by our camps. They were working. Somehow they were able to get a little more food sometimes. I don't know how. But because they were working, they were going from one place to another. They were able to get some honey or to get a little extra piece of bread.

There was one man, who was a friend of the family. We knew what time all this when he was going to pass. We used to stand there. And he would just throw it to us. So I had an extra little piece of bread. And whatever I got, I shared it with my two sisters, every bite. And I have to say, I'm proud of myself to say-- and I didn't remember this incident. A friend of my sister-in-law's passed by. And she knew I had a little drive honey that this man had given me. And we treasured it like God knows. So she had a cold, and she asked me, would I give a spoon of honey and she gave me her portion of bread?

And after the war, she told me that I refused the portion of bread. And I gave her the honey anyway. And I was really proud of myself that I did that. I didn't even remember it.

We stayed there like this. We lived with fear every day, something else. And then we were told we were going to be shipped out. We really didn't believe it.

But I, my two sisters decided we're going to go to the main kitchen. And we're going to say that we were sent by the lady in charge of our barrack for a barrel of soup. We couldn't lift the whole big barrel. So we picked up a little barrel of soup. And I said before we're going to die, we shouldn't be starving. And we're going to bring this barrel and we're going to eat and fill ourselves up.

Well, we never got to the barracks with it. The women attacked us. We didn't have plates. But they had pots. They attacked us. And our whole soup was spilled out. And no one had anything. That's how hungry people were. People were going into the garbage, picking out the grind from the coffee, the ersatz coffee that they called-- ersatz coffee is a substitute. They used to the grinds from the coffee, the peels, or whatever they could find. I never did that.

And actually, that winter-- it was the end of December-- we were told to go into the showers again. Of course, we never believed we were coming out. This time it was really showers. They handed us a coat and another dress and some stockings. And we were actually shipped to Germany to Georgenthal, which was a plane parts factory.

And I became a welder. And they taught me how to weld a little screw to a little round wheel, a small one. And it was done with copper. And we worked shifts, 12 hour shifts, alternating from 8:00 to 8:00 at night and from 8:00 at night to the next morning, alternating each week.

And the food was a little better. We weren't guarded with electrical wires. We were guarded by the SS. No one ever escaped because there was not a place to run or to escape to. If anybody escaped, they were apprehended instantly. And then--

Were your sisters still with you.

We were always together luckily. There were two sisters. They were always separated. I really considered myself one of the more fortunate ones. We were always together. At one point, they wanted to separate us. And somehow my sister, the middle sister, snuck out and got back to the line where we were.

And they evacuated us. This point, the Russians are progressing into-- you almost hear the shooting from the front. And we hear that Russia is really progressing, going westward. And they told us to get ready, that we're going to walk. We walked for three days and three nights in a bitter cold, torn shoes with holes. The snow was high. The winters are much more severe there than what we have here. And we walked day and night without food.

Two girls escaped into the woods. They were apprehended instantly by the SS and shot. I knew them very well. They were part of our group.

And whoever couldn't make it was left behind and shot because they couldn't walk any longer. And we finally arrived to the other place. The first one was Gebhardsdorf. Correction, I think I said Georgenthal. The first one was Gebhardsdorf. Now, we walk to Georgenthal, which was also the same type of factory.

How many miles or kilometers did you walk?

We don't know. It was three days and three nights without food, very cold, and no stops. And so we finally arrived here. And again, we worked shifts. And the food was a little better than concentration camp.

And a very interesting thing happened to us personally. We heard the shooting from the fronts. And we knew it was a question of hours, perhaps a day. My two sisters and two other girls decided we're going to sneak out of the camp, because as I said, we were just guarded with the SS. But we weren't really near barbed wire. So you could really walk out if you wanted to. It was very easy. But where were we to go?

So we decided to sneak out at 5 o'clock in the morning, that morning. And we walked in to a wooden shack, which was attached to a private home. The people always stored their coal and wood to be heated, because we didn't have gas heat and electric heat like we have here, to heat their ovens. And it was open. And we snuck in very quietly. We didn't utter a word.

We were sitting there. I don't know how, 8 o'clock in the morning, three SS opened up the door. She must have realized that we were hiding there. I don't know how. And she called them up. And they came to get us. They came in, opened the door, and they told us to come out.

Now, in the history of the whole Holocaust, this was unheard of. Somebody escaped or somebody-- they would instantly kill the person. They took us-- they asked where we came from, which camp. They took us back, and they said, don't you ever do that again. I wouldn't be here to tell the story if they would have done what they did with all the others.

That night, the SS disappeared. They change guards with the Wehrmacht, which was the regular army units. And we didn't go to sleep all night. We heard the shooting from the fronts and everything.

And 5 o'clock in the morning, we looked out and they were all gone. They left us free. We couldn't believe it. They

waited for orders what to do with us. All the communication lines were broken. There was such consternation. They didn't know what to do with us. And they just went for their own lives, I guess. And they left us free.

We ran out of the streets. We couldn't believe that we were actually free. And all we dreamt about is to get a loaf of bread, that slice, just bite into it for once, not to be hungry. And we reverberated.

Where were you exactly at that point.

At this point we were in Georgenthal. And then we were shipped to [PLACE NAME] Dachau.

Who were the liberators?

Over there were the Russians in Georgenthal. And then we were shipped with trains. Then after the war-- actually, at some point, we went back to Poland, I and my two sisters, hoping to find somebody in Radom. We knew that for sure there was no one there, but we went anyway.

And all the new survivors came to a certain center. We all met together. And they knew more or less who was who. And we knew each other. And we couldn't find anybody. And we heard that a lot of people who returned, the Poles would kill them. And so we got on a train two days later and just went back.

They were being killed even though the war was over?

After the war, sure. They didn't want the Jews back. They didn't want the Jews back at all. And a cousin of my friend went back, and he had some gold and money buried in the ground. And when he arrived in that town, they beheaded him. It's terrible. The Poles were our friends of ours. They really weren't.

Now they say that they really had no choice. And the war was against them too. Of course, it was. They only took the Poles for political reasons. If they were in the underground or resistance. But they didn't take the Poles because they were born of a certain faith. And I think the pope dispersed his Christian love and unity by being silent. And the least he could have done, 90% of the Christian world of Germany, where answering to the pope. The least he could have done is threatened them with excommunication. But he didn't even do that.

So when you got on the train to leave Radom, then where did you go?

We went back to Czechoslovakia. We went back to [PLACE NAME] There was a engineer in Ostrowiec, who was a private person. He wasn't in the army. But they did bring some forced labor in from different countries. And he wasn't Jewish. He was an engineer by profession. He said, if you ever live through, why don't you come? Maybe I can help you. So we arrived in [PLACE NAME] And we found him, because my sister remembered his name, my oldest sister.

And as it was in the train station, they had the Red Cross was set up. And every train station, all the trains for free. We didn't have any money or anything. But we could travel from city to city freely. And there was a young doctor there and he said, how about settling here and I'll give you a job as assistant nurse? So all three of us started working in the hospital. And somebody came and told us that, my brother is in Dachau. He survived. So we packed up after three months and went to meet my brother who survived.

My brother subsequently found out that his sister-in-law, one of the three sisters, his first wife's sister, was alive. So she was a single woman. And he picked her up and brought her back and he married her. So actually, he married his first wife's sister. That's the one I told you about, my nephew.

When was it that you decided to come to the United States?

Well, I always wanted to come to the United States. I didn't have any relatives here. But I found out from the UNRRA, from the HIAS, that children under 18 should fill out an application. And we would have to go to an internment camp in Prien am Chiemsee, which was near Berchtesgaden, and stay there and wait for the quarter and the papers to come

through. And that's when I left my brother. And I stayed there for three months until my papers were cleared.

And we came on the Ernie Pyle, which was an army transport ship, in January of 1947, January 13. And that was some trip. We left January 1. And it was supposed to be a 6-day journey. And it was terrible. There was a terrible storm. And the ship was rocking. And all the dishes broke. And the water was coming in. And we never thought we were going to make it.

But we did arrive. And, of course, I couldn't speak a word of English. And my sister had married six months prior to my arrival. And her husband had an uncle here. So they came here in June of '46. So when I arrived, I lived with her. And I registered in evening high school, Girls High in Brooklyn. And I got a job in a factory doing floor girl, picking up sleeves that were done, piecework, and they all joined together. So I was tearing them apart. And I was making \$22 a week. And I was going to school at night.

And I registered in high school, not knowing the English language. It was really tough. So I started-- I knew Polish quite well, because all the years I didn't go to school, my father tutored me at home. And, of course, when the Germans came in, they confiscated all the furs and all the radios. We had no way of getting any information or any news. But, luckily, I had a father who was brilliant. He spoke seven languages. And so whatever education I had, I really at that point, thanks to him.

And I started phonetically writing and sitting in English and American history class. And I'm writing phonetically what I'm hearing. And it was very frustrating. I bought a Polish-English dictionary. And I couldn't find any words to correspond to what I wrote. So I decided to do it the reverse way. I started staying up nights and thinking of little sentences, like every day sentences in Polish. And then looked it up from Polish to English. And every day, I wrote 50 words. And I really taught myself English.

And believe it or not, I made four years of high school in a year and a half. I don't know how. I really don't.

And then I wanted to get out of factory. I didn't want to work in a factory. So I got a job with an insurance company, Chubb and Son. And I became a file clerk. So then I decided to go to Brooklyn College as a non-matric student and just take courses in accounting. And I was doing very well. I was getting all A's. So I got a letter from my professors how well I was doing. So I asked them for a promotion. And I got promotion.

And little by little, I said, well, I have already so many credits, maybe I'll take another course and another course. And, ps, I wound up going for 9 and 1/2 years to Brooklyn College and got my degree, majoring in accounting, minor in education. And from then on I went on to different jobs, better positions. And here I am.

When you think about all that's happened to you, what do you think enabled you to survive? Do you think it was fate? Do you think it was luck? Do you think it was some quality in you that made you not give up or what?

As I said in the beginning, I had a really beautiful childhood. We were not interested in material things, because we really weren't rich, but we were very rich spiritually and intellectually. I remember we had this big radio that's the size of a television. It was Telefunken. Before the war it was \$500. And we got it because we all loved classical music. Ever since I was a little girl, I remember singing symphonies and concertos. And my brother could whistle out a violin concerto from A to Z. And reading and it was the tradition, the love, and the closeness of the family.

The mere memory of this gave me the strength to go on. It was so beautiful. And every time something happened-- I mean there were times where I felt was there a God? Why didn't God paralyze this German who took a little child and smashed it against the wall?

But then there were other things happening that made me feel, well, why me? I was chosen from so many millions. Why? There must be a power that is doing this, sending me in the right places. Not even not the shaving of the hair or always being kind of protected somehow. I don't know how, whether it's fate or religion or God, call it what you want. But I've always felt that there was somebody watching over me.

And I feel very fortunate. I know some of my friends don't like to talk about the Holocaust. They sometimes they are ashamed to admit the things that they had to live through. They wouldn't tell their children. It was degrading. It's beneath them.

I feel I really I have risen above it all. And I feel like I'm the chosen one. I feel fortunate.

Can we pause at this moment take a break? And we'll continue a little bit beyond this after a break.

We'll be back after a brief intermission.