

Yeah, I'm sorry. You're saying the next day then, after, you found out that they're mined.

Yes.

The barracks were mined.

Yes. We can nothing do. We just look and see what's happened. Life is to end. And one night, we were watching.

The window from the barracks were closed every time for the evening, the shades outside, they wooden shades. I don't know what they call, the shades from outside, to close. So every night, we have to go outside and close them. And we saw a tank that was Russian-- that was a German tank exploring in all direction.

This was May 9--

No.

--the day of liberation?

May 7, maybe.

Two days--

Two days before.

--before liberation.

We saw a lot of people the whole week already, May. We saw people going, evacuation, the people. We saw prisoners of war. We saw all kind of-- Jewish people was passing by with the [INAUDIBLE].

They dressed up the Nazi uniforms, like to say, like the pajamas looking. And we saw the whole week. But our windows were closed. But still, we can see through a little--

Crack.

[COUGHS] Excuse me. So anyhow, we saw that something is for our good, or not. We're going to see what the day bring. And we not going to work anymore, because the streets it was a small street. And tanks, Russian-- I mean, German tanks and people was evacuation, and cows and animals. They were going to the street.

So one day, we saw that guards getting dressed up, going away dressed up like regular people, not like guards. We said, uh-oh, maybe it's good news. But let's be not so happy. So they left and they don't say another word to nobody. We saw them in two, and three, and they left.

And the barracks were empty, only the lagerfuhrer, the German lagerfuhrer. And the Jewish judenaltester, she cannot say nothing. She just passed by. And she said, girls, be calm.

Be calm. Don't get excited. Just be calm. She don't say not much, because she was not able to say. And next day, we were taken-- they took us to clean the machines in the factory.

Which date?

That was the date when we were liberated, in the morning, May 9.

May 9. Let me just ask you, just quickly, do you remember an incident where there were some American bombers that

flew over and dropped some leaflets?

No, no leaflets.

No leaflets.

They dropped no leaflets. They just flashed. That was early in the morning or in the evening.

But there were no leaflets that you can recall.

No, no leaflets, nothing. We don't saw no leaflets. Maybe someplace else, but I don't saw no leaflets. We just were sitting quiet. And the German were hiding. And what's happened?

On May 9, you were going to work--

On May 9, they took us to work cleaning up the machines, which we were cleaning already about two or three days. We were cleaning already the machines, because there was nothing to do. We were very happy that we're getting away from the barracks, because we know what's happened and what can happen.

They were mined.

Yes. So they took us the same day. On May 9, they took us to the factory. And we were a little bit more happy there, because over there was more safety, probably.

And it was lunchtime or the afternoon. It was the middle of the day, something like middle of the day. And girls came running and screaming. A tank break the door on outside from the factory. It was a big door.

A tank.

A tank broke through. And on the tank is a red flag.

How many people were in the factory?

All girls.

2,000?

They're all girl. No. We were about 700--

Left.

--or something. I don't exactly remember how much we were, because lager was dead, because we got typhus.

Yes.

So we just stood up. And we said, don't kid yourself. You just better-- you don't see good, or something like that. We were just in shock. We don't know what to say.

But we were thinking that we are tricked, that the German came in with a tank, with a red flag, and maybe they trick us that we were liberated. And then they will shoot us. So we were staying. And we were doing the machine cleaning.

A Russian soldier came in. A lot of them came in, one tank after the other one, start to screaming, and singing, and carrying on. And we were so scared, because we still don't-- but we remember that the German guards left and private dressed up. It was just like a dream. We just don't-- I cannot explain the feeling. Just it's impossible.

But at the time, some girls speak Russian. I speak a few words, not much. But I just heard the-- by my parents, how they were spoken, because my father was speaking Russian, too. And they were saying, [RUSSIAN], or whatever.

They were saying that we are Russian. We can help us. They start to give chocolate to girls and cigarettes to the girls.

Nobody smoked.

What is [RUSSIAN]?

[RUSSIAN]? That's girls. Girls, we're Russian. We're liberators. We want you to liberate. And we were just very, very excited.

And we don't know what-- I, personally, was standing by the machine and bang my head by the machine. And I don't want to see nobody, because I was so scared terrible. I was so scared. I just not can explain. That was one scary moment in my life.

I make peace with myself that maybe it's true. Maybe it's the war over. Who knows? Maybe, because we saw we have no guards around.

But still it cannot happen, a miracle. I was not thinking that a miracle can happen so fast. Impossible. One girlfriend came to me, and she said to me--

Was your sister with you? Yes.

Yes. She was in a different corner, because we don't want to get together and stay together. We were staying-- each got their machine to clean and to work. And we stayed by it.

The woman guards was not there anymore They already disappeared in the morning. They probably know something. And we don't know nothing.

And after a while, we went out, outside. And we saw so much Russian came in. And they really speak Russian. They give the girls chocolate. And they start to see that we are in a big mess. We're all sick. We need help.

And we walked. Hardly, we can walk. We walk to the barracks. And we cry. And we laugh. And they open the music. And they were dancing, the Russian boys-- men, I mean, the soldier.

And there was girls Russian, too. And she said, don't worry, we're liberators. And they brought the bread. And they brought a lot of food. And they saw that we're sick. We cannot eat. We're already not use to what to eat.

And that was-- a whole night, it was going on. And we were laying on there on the beds like dead. We were very weak. And then came Russian doctors. And some girls were taken to throughout the night to hospitals. And they start to taking care of us with food.

And we were afraid I was not poisoned in the kitchen. There was a lot of food, because the Germans were eating in the kitchen, in our kitchen over there. And they-- not in the camp, but we got a kitchen.

In the factory there was a kitchen where German was eating and Jewish were eating. We eat in a different place. And of course, we got different food, like there. They got good food.

And they checked. And they brought all the food from the Russian camps. And they brought, and they gave us food and medication. And some girls went to-- taken by ambulances.

Were there any other organizations there?

Later came the Red Cross. And they take care. And one incident, I never forget. That was two or three weeks before-- two or three weeks before liberation. I like to explain.

Please.

We saw American boys taking off their uniforms. We know this is American boys, because not far away was a camp, American camp for the soldiers where they were caught. And the American Red Cross were coming to them. And there was at camp for French soldiers.

POW camps.

Yeah, that's right, not far away. And they were passing by in daytime, Sunday or Saturday afternoon, going to the movies with guards. They were going to the movies.

So one time-- that was a couple of weeks before liberation-- we saw a group of soldiers, American soldiers. We looked out, because the windows were closed. And through a crack we can see. We were looking out.

And we saw German guards, German SS men, the black uniforms with the red swastikas. They were going to the woods, because across the street-- there was a street, and then was the woods. And they were going to the woods there.

And we were looking. And we said, oh, god, only knows what they want to do to the poor boys. I don't know how many it was, 20 or 25-- something, a group. I cannot count. They went to the woods.

And the German got machine guns, carry. And after, we heard very cracking, cracks. We heard [VOCALIZING], like a wild cracking.

And then they came out. And they clapped their hands, smiling, and be very happy, and with the boots. They got high boots, and they were cracking with the feet, like that. And they were so happy.

We were very upset. We heard what's happened. And they left. After the liberation, the girls-- when we were in the rooms, we were looking. Well, we know.

Right.

We told the Russian soldiers that over there, over the street is over there the woods. You see? You go over there, because over there, some dead soldiers are there laying.

Of course, some girls went. I was not able to go, because I was very weak. Some of them were weak, too. But the soldiers put them on a Jeep and bring them near the place, not too far. And they were pointing over there, and they find.

The girls came back. They were very upset, and they were crying. They find, covered with leaves and branches, a whole pile American soldier were shot by the German. It's just too much. It was too much pain to see-- young men.

And I like to tell the American people that's what we saw. And that was not one incident. There was many going on like that in the woods. That's what they done. How we can forget?

How long were you in Bernsdorf after the liberation?

I was about four to six weeks almost. And then we moved away, because it was very hard to be there. It was very hard to be. We got no medication. So we moved to Waldenburg.

To?

Waldenburg.

Right.

We got transportation from the mayor in this town. And we went to Waldenburg to be there. It was a Jewish committee a Jewish organization with a Jewish kitchen. And they were feeding the people.

That was from the Red Cross, or whatever. Who supply, I don't remember. And they were given suppers, and lunches, and breakfasts. And I stay in a little town like--

Who did you go with?

I was with a couple girls.

With your sister?

Yes. A couple girls together, we were. Yes. And we were staying in a hotel. It was over there. It was a German hotel, but the German left. And we stayed in this hotel.

We got two rooms there. And we were going every day by trolleybus to this kitchen for free. We went for free. And that was the Russian occupation over there. And we went over there.

We met a lot of Jewish people. And I met people. I asked them, which camp there do I find? One was from my husband's camp. I was not married at the time, but it was my boyfriend from home.

And he said he's going to Poland, and maybe he will meet him. But he knows that he's alive and well. I said, that's very good. Tell him that I may leave soon to my hometown, to Poland, because that's where we were saying to go back and to see if anybody in the family is alive.

And that was-- maybe three or four days later, he met my husband. And he said, your girlfriend is waiting, and she's over there in Waldenburg. She's coming to eat. But she stay in a small town. Whatever the name was, I don't remember, because it was with the trolleybus about 3 kilometers to go.

And one evening-- and there was a curfew, a 7 o'clock curfew. And he came. And I saw him going. And I recognized him. And he came to me. And when he came, he stay over night.

The next day, he said, we're going back to Bergen-Belsen with my friend. So we went to Poland. And from Poland, we met his group, friends. And we went to Bergen-Belsen in 1946-- 1945.

I arrived to Bergen-Belsen, and I stay to Bergen-Belsen. It was dismissed, the camp. So we went to Hanover and stay. From Hanover, I went to Frankfurt.

I'm sorry. You said Bergen-Belsen was what?

Dismissed, the camp. People was going in different direction already '48, '49.

How long were you in Bergen-Belsen?

I was till 1929, I think so-- 1949, something like that. And then I stay in Hanover for a while.

How many people were in Bergen-Belsen during those years?

Oh, about-- over 20,000, over 20,000. It was a big camp, Bergen-Belsen. I marry over there in Bergen-Belsen.

Can you describe what life was like?

In Bergen-Belsen? Well, we got a room. I marry. In 1946, I marry. I stay with-- when I arrive, I stay with the 20 girls in one room.

Was your sister still with you?

Yeah, sure. She was with me. Of course. And my sister's husband arrived too, because he was with my husband in the camp. We didn't know at the time too much.

My husband was in Bunzlau camp. And then they took a walk. And they wind out in Bergen-Belsen. And then, in Belsen, he was liberated April 15, 1945.

Now, you were in Bergen-Belsen from '46 to '49.

'45.

'45, I'm sorry, through '49. You got married in Bergen-Belsen.

1946, yeah, January.

Who married-- who--

Married me, a rabbi, and a chaplain from England.

What kind of organization was there in the camp? Who was-- during those years?

Downstairs was a kitchen. And we got food in the kitchen, cooked breakfast, lunch, and supper.

What did you do for those years?

Well, we were sick. We didn't do nothing much. We were very sick. I was still sick, undernourished.

Your husband?

My husband, the same way. We weren't doing nothing. We were just sitting around, relax. And we were waiting to get someplace, to the United States or to Canada, to go away.

What organizations were helping you at the time? Was Joint? Did you have any Judenrat?

The Joint, yes, the HIAS-- the Joint, the HIAS.

UNRRA

Yeah. They help us. They give us food every week. They give us regular food so we can cook by himself. And we got a kitchen downstairs, very good food. And that was a big help. That was a very big help.

I mean, how did you feel? Here, you had gone through the war. And now you're in Bergen-Belsen. And where do you go from there?

Well, I know I don't have nobody from the family, only my sister and my brother-in-law.

Did you think about going to Palestine?

Well, I was thinking, but never came the day, because I got a baby. And I wasn't feeling not too good. I got the baby in Bergen-Belsen.

In 1948 came the boy. And I was not feeling too well. I was not good feeling. And then, from Hanover, I moved to Frankfurt am Main, because--

Frankfurt am Main.

Yeah. My husband's cousins lived there.

You went to Hanover in '48.

For a while, yeah. Not '48. '49.

'49?

Yeah. I want to be in the city, because it was so painful to be in this camp, Bergen-Belsen. So many deaths were there, so many graves, so many big graves-- 5,000, and 15,000, and unmarked graves completely, very painful. I was so-- I want to just go out and stay in the city a little bit to see how life is back.

You had applied for a visa to the United States already.

Yes, we apply. I was not the only one. So we moved from Hanover to Frankfurt. And we stay in Frankfurt. And my husband worked in a place and make a living. And later, we came to the United States. It was time. And we came to Bayonne.

When did you come to the United States?

Yeah. I came February 16, 1951.

-- You came straight to Bayonne?

Yes. Yes.

How come Bayonne?

Because my sister went to New York. She went earlier. She fly in with the baby. Her baby was young. He was nine months old. So she went before me.

And I want to be near my sister. And since they don't got so-- to New York, they don't got very much, because there was so much people were coming. So they got a place in Bayonne. So I went out in Bayonne. I'm very happy. I like it very much.

So you came to Bayonne.

Yes. I came with a little boy two and a half years old.

And you have other children?

Yes. In 1953, I got twins, Lily and Conner-- Conner and Lily. Conner is the older.

Not by much.

35 minutes.

Are there any thoughts that you'd like to share, any--

Well, I hope never come again this, what we went through, never. We should be always alert. What I went through-- well, it's impossible to explain. I lost my health. I lost my family.

My children never saw grandparents. They asked me when they were small, very young. I don't want to tell them nothing. But they start to be bigger, like 10 years old-- eight, 10 years old.

Why have friends have grandmas? They're going to grandma and grandpa. And why we don't get birthday presents from grandma and grandpa?

So when they were already 8, 10 years, I said, they die. What do you mean they die? And later on, with the time, I start to tell them, and they really understand what's happened. That was, too, very painful.

And most were not-- it's different. My husband was always sick. He got the stomach-- with the stomach, an ulcer from camp. And I was not the healthy one either, because I have problems with my back. It was broken over the potato.

And I was beat up in the head and beat up in my teeth. I lost my teeth very young. I was beat up many times in the mouth. They were just hitting the places where the damage should be--

Most noticeable?

--noticeable and--

Painful?

--and painful, and not healable, like teeth. Beat up the teeth, so you have to have teeth. Or the back is broken, so you're going to suffer. Or in the head, they were hitting so damage, or a mental to do, or a-- a lot of tricks for human not doing just animals.

It's been a lot, a lot of things to talk about this. And how can we forget? I go to Auschwitz once in a while, I can. It's a long trip, but I go. It's not forgetful.

It's over the ashes, walking on the ashes only. And it's very painful. But it should be told. The people should be-- the people should know everything. That's not a story. It's really a true story.

OK. I want to thank you very much for coming--

You're welcome.

--and talking to me.

Thank you.