[MUSIC PLAYING] Good afternoon. My name is Robin Rijz. I'm a member of the Kean College Oral Testimony project of the Holocaust Resource Center. We are affiliated with the Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Sterling Library of Yale University. Sharing the interview with me is Dr. Bernard Weinstein, director of the Kean Oral History Project.

We are privileged to welcome Halina Kleiner, a survivor presently living in Springfield, New Jersey, who has generously volunteered to give testimony about her experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust.

Welcome, Mrs. Kleiner. To begin with, could you tell us a little bit about your background, where you came from?

Sure. I was born in Poland, the town of Czestochowa in 1929. and I was an only child of fairly well-to-do people with a very nice family, extended family. I was going to private Jewish schools and had a very happy childhood.

Did Czestochowa have a large Jewish community?

Yes. Czestochowa is a-- was a quite nice sized town. It's not what you would call a shtetl, it was a--

A city.

--a city. As a matter of fact, you might have heard about it because it's a holy city. Have you heard of the Black Madonna? The pope visited recently.

Yeah.

That's the city. It has a famous church. It is very holy to the Catholic religion. This is the city I come from. And there was quite a large Jewish community.

And my father was a businessman. He had a lumber yard. He was selling lumber, and my mother was a housewife. She also helped him in business. And we lived very happily until 1939.

How many children were in your family?

I was an only child.

You were.

Yes, yes. But I had cousins and aunts and uncles. My mother's family comes from a different town, which you might have heard of. It's in Silesia. It's Bedzin. It's one of the three towns that are close together. Sosnowiec, and Bedzin, and Dabrowa. It was also a very large Jewish community there. This was where my mother's family comes from.

Was your family very, very observant of--

Yes. We were a very religious family. My father was clean shaven, but he observed Shabbat. He did not work. His business was closed on Saturdays. And we, of course, had a kosher home. And we were very observant, but my father did not wear a beard, and it was a modern-- rather like you would find here today-- a modern orthodox family, although both my grandfathers were much more traditional and Hasidic.

Yes.

They were bearded, and the households were more orthodox.

So at what point did you begin to realize that things were changing, that you were in some type of danger?

Well, not until 1939. As a matter of fact, we were-- I and my mother were on vacation on a resort in Poland in August 1939.

You were about 10 years old at the time?

Yes. Yes. And we were-- it was quite far from home, and we managed to come back on the very last train just before the war broke out.

And this was when actually we realized that we are in danger as far as a war. We had no idea of any Jewish problems at the time. Being an only child, I remember my parents were very concerned because Czestochowa is on the border, very close to the border of Germany. And they thought that there will be great fighting in this area because somehow they thought that Poles will be trying to protect themselves from the Germans, and there will be big fighting on the borders.

So what happened was in the very last minute, they arranged for me and my mother to go to Warsaw, or near Warsaw, where we had family, so that I would not be exposed to bombings and war. And that's what happened.

Was Warsaw on the way to Czestochowa.

No. Warsaw was actually kind of middle of Poland.

Yes.

They thought you would be safer there.

Yes, because somehow they were foolishly mistaken that Poles will be able to withstand the German onslaught. As it happened, there was no fighting at all, that the fighting happened to be in Warsaw.

Where was your father when the war broke out?

My father stayed behind to protect the family property and the business and the-- which was, at that time, a very important situation, but mistaken because we didn't realize that families should not be separated. We realized that as the time went on.

But we did go. They hired a taxi, and we put some belongings into that taxi and went to a town which was near Warsaw, called Skierniewice. My mother's family, more distant family, lived there, and that's where we went.

And what did you find when you got there?

Well, the war was already on. And mistakenly, we went from the frying pan to the fire because the Germans just walked into my hometown without any fight. And as you know, any resistance that there was was in Warsaw. And it so happened that we were separated from my father for six weeks until the Germans broke the resistance in Warsaw, and they occupied all of Poland and took about that long for us to be able to get back to our hometown.

So then at that point, you were reunited with them?

Yes. At that point we were reunited after quite an experience for a 10-year-old because we did experience bombings. And we experienced having to flee the town, and flee on a horse and carriage with a large family that lived in this area, and not being able to continue because the Polish army was on the move, and we just couldn't pass. And we had to get off the carriage and walk through the woods. And bombs were falling.

Can you describe for us a little bit of your feeling at the time? I know it's hard to recreate now.

Yes. It was very scary, but I must say that I don't know where I got the strength. I really can't explain it. Being an only child, and being very protected, but somehow I must have had it in me because there was a large contingent of my family that came to that area from the other part of Poland that I mentioned before, and it was mainly the women and the children that-- the husbands moved to supposedly a safer area.

So we found ourselves-- my grandparents were there, who were an older couple. And aunts and their smaller children than me. And I was somehow had the strength to help to take care of the younger ones. And remember before we went out from that town, Skeirniewice, where we experienced bombing, it was a railroad crossing, a very important railroad crossing in the town, so the Germans bombed that particular town.

And the family lived on the first floor, and we just went down to the neighbors, who lived on the ground floor. And they were not Jewish, and it was a very-- now from the perspective of time, I can see what kind of a scene it was. The Gentile family was gathered in one part of the room, and the Jewish family, which quite a few members were in another one. And everybody was praying in their own language. We were saying [NON-ENGLISH], and then they were crossing themselves.

Yes.

And all of a sudden, there was-- a bomb nearby, very close by. And the windows were shattered, and we thought that-- everybody got very scared because we thought that it's gas. Somehow there was dust in the air or something. I don't remember. But everybody got scared that the Germans are using gas. And we tried, I guess, take towels and handkerchiefs to protect ourselves.

Was this a particularly strong fear that people had at the time?

Oh, yes. Sure. From what I remember because--

Did I remember World War One, I suppose.

I guess so. I guess so, because there were-- just shortly before the war broke out-- there were preparations of shelters and gas masks. But of course, when it happened, nobody had any time to use or to worry about it. You just had to do the best under the circumstances, which was crawl under the table or under a bed or whatever at the time. But I remember that distinctly.

And it was very scary, but I somehow was able to comfort the other people around. I--

You had a tremendous responsibility placed on you.

I don't think it was placed on me. I think I just took it upon myself. Maybe that's what made me eventually survive, that I had a strong backbone, which maybe came down with my heritage, from maybe my genes because I wasn't raised to be actually strong, since my background was, I would say, quite affluent. You know, a little girl protected.

How long did you spend in this particular surrounding with the Gentile family?

No, this was just as soon as the bombing was over, which was a few minutes, we went back to the family's apartment upstairs. And at that moment, the older people decided that we have to get out of this town because they were afraid that there will be more bombings.

So this is when they hired this big wagon, and the family piled up on that wagon. But we couldn't really go very far because the road was clogged with the army that was-- I don't remember if it was going to Warsaw or from. I can't even remember.

But I just remember that the wagon had to be moved to the side of the road, and we just walked through the woods to the next little town. And this is where we stayed because actually the Germans came very soon after-- maybe a couple of days after, the Germans came to that part of Poland. Because if you remember, the resistance was just in Warsaw.

Right.

And this was very close to Warsaw, but the Germans just walked in there without any fight. So we were confronted with that situation in that little town. If I remember correctly, it was a very little shtetl called Biala.

And I remember being there. And one morning we knew that the Germans came because they made all the Jews come to the marketplace. And we stood-- all the Jews had to come out and--

Was this an Aktion?

Pardon?

An Aktion?

No, no, no. This was just an announcement that they are there.

Yes.

And I really don't remember what-- they probably told us that we are not free anymore to do whatever. I don't know exactly what transpired. I don't remember, but I just remember that they gathered all the Jews in the marketplace. And what the announcements were at the time, I don't remember. And we were there for about, I would say, six weeks in that little town until they captured Warsaw.

And by that time there was already some movement. People were able to move from one place to another, because until that time there was no way that we could even think of going back. And of course, we had no communication with my father. We didn't know if he survived or where he is or what happened to him. We had no communication whatsoever.

But finally, we decided-- my mother and myself decided-- or rather she decided-- although I wanted to go back, I think I was instrumental in her making some kind of arrangements to get a move on in going back because I wanted to be with my father.

And we were able to get on a train that went in that direction, and we traveled not in normal ways of train travel, but we just came to the railroad station and when we found out that this particular train was going in the direction that we wanted to go, we just piled in, whoever was able to. And I think it was a mail wagon that we traveled in. I don't know, whoever-- you know, just piled in.

So you traveled in freight cars--

In freight cars, and--

I'm sure with very little regulation and--

No, but you see, I don't want you to mistake this with the way the Germans transported people. This wasn't the situation. We still moved freely, and it wasn't just Jews. It was anybody that had wanted to move from place to place. And we came back to my hometown, and we did find my father there.

How many family members were with you at the time when you reached home? Was it just you and your mother at the time? Or you had other family members?

No. The other family members were from a different town, and they managed to get home on their own at a different time. But it was just myself and my mother that we got home and we met my father.

During all of this time, this early period, did you sense any special danger to yourselves as Jews, or was it just the kind of danger that perhaps all Poles felt?

No. No it was not. It was definitely-- as soon as the Germans came, and as soon as they made all the Jews come out into the marketplace or wherever it was that they gathered them, it was already a danger to the Jews because the Poles were just occupied. It was a normal-- for them, it was a normal war situation.

Yes.

But for the Jews, it wasn't a normal war situation of an occupied country. It was a danger-- right away a definite danger to the Jews because they were Jews. So that was felt immediately.

As a matter of fact-- yes, Robin, you wanted to say something?

No.

We met my father and were able to go back to the apartment that we lived in. But already at that time, the Germans took part of this apartment because they were stationed somehow in the apartment house. So when we went back, it wasn't already to the whole apartment that we were able to get back but to part of the apartment because the other rooms the Germans occupied.

Were you on different floors or were they--

They occupied part of the house, but I don't know how it happened. They just wanted part of the apartment, and there was no question that they took what they wanted.

What were your feelings while staying there? Your own emotions?

There was constant fear. They took my father's business away right away. It was a vital business. It was lumber, and they needed everything and especially lumber. So they took that from him immediately. So he was immediately devastated.

And of course, there were right away shortages. There was a shortage of food and shortage of clothing.

And Jewish children did not go back to school. They did not allow Jewish children to go back to school. And I was a school-aged child, naturally.

And soon after we had to get out of the apartment that we lived because they made a ghetto in Czestochowa. I would say that it took maybe half a year, maybe 1940, maybe '41. I really don't-- I don't remember exactly when it was that we-- that they made a ghetto.

So you know what that meant. They designated certain streets that the Jews could live, and they had to move out from wherever they were. And you were assigned, according to how many in your family, but very small quarters because they just pushed everybody together into a very small area. And we just got assigned a room.

My father did not work, and I guess we lived on whatever my parents had. Either they had money or they were selling their jewelry or whatever possessions we had. And that's how we were surviving.

By this time, had you lost track of your other relatives, the ones were with at an earlier point?

No, the relatives that were living in Czestochowa were my father's relatives, because my father came from that town and everybody was still around. And also we knew about my mother's relatives, who lived in Bedzin because I think we communicated by mail still. We were able to communicate. So we knew that they are still there.

What was life generally like for you in the ghetto?

Well, at this particular time, in the very beginning, I guess the adults did not realize what is going to happen-- what is happening. Or they didn't believe that it could get worse. And I think they also had hopes that the war is somehow going to end soon.

And of course, they worried about us children not getting an education and losing time from school. So what happened was the teachers of the-- Jewish teachers who teachers by profession had no-- they couldn't do anything to support themselves. And the parents of us children wanted us to have an education.

So what happened was that they created an underground school. So we were meeting in small groups in the teachers' homes, and so we're getting an education.

And I was going to a school like that, because somehow life was still pretty normal under the circumstances. With that, we had a place to live, although it was much smaller, but we still were able to have a place to live. And we had the money to pay for this education, and the time to do it. So I did continue with my education like that I think for two years.

Yeah.

How long did you stay in the ghetto altogether?

I stayed in the ghetto until they liquidated it. Or just about to the very end, which was until 1942.

In the time prior to the liquidation, did you see a deterioration in the lives of people?

Yes, absolutely. Because first the ghetto was open, which meant that the Jews could not go out of the ghetto but the Poles could move in the ghetto. But soon after they closed the ghetto, which meant that the Jews could not go out and the Poles could not come in. So that made it much, much harder, as far as acquiring food articles because prior to that closing of the ghetto there was a black market. People that had some money could buy on the black market. And there was an underground trade and a little more freedom.

How soon after the establishment of the ghetto was it closed?

You know, I don't know exactly, but maybe six months, maybe a year. Really, I don't remember anymore. I had these figures-- years ago I remember it exactly, but I don't--

So that for the larger proportion of time--

It was closed. And of course, they were already at that point sending people out. There was they were bringing people in from other places, from other parts of Poland, and concentrating them. In Czestochowa, that meant that this ghetto was getting more congested. And we saw people come from different cities. They were just brought in, and they didn't have anything with them anymore, whatever they could carry perhaps in one suitcase.

And we saw the devastation of the other people that were totally uprooted. We were uprooted from our home to a small, terrible place because, of course, you realize that the ghettos were always in the worst of neighborhoods, the poorest of neighborhoods, and the crummiest of apartments. That's where they pushed us in.

But the people that they took from-- that they brought from other towns were already-- they already were missing probably parts of their families because they did not bring them together. Maybe they sent out the husband some place already to work camps. And there was already broken families--

So these were already separated from each other.

Separated people, broken families, with nothing except for what they carried on their backs and maybe in a small suitcase. So it created a terrible stress.

And of course at that point, we were already wearing, naturally, the armbands first. And a matter of fact, I just recall an incident that happened, I think before we were put in the ghetto. The Jews had to wear armbands, which were white armbands with the white Star of David.

And the children, the young children, were not required to wear them first, but I think at 11 or 12 or something like that, you had to put it on. And I was once picked up by a German policeman for not wearing the armband. This was the [NON-ENGLISH]. Do you know, the ones in those round helmets? Do you know which ones?

Yes.

Now imagine-- I think it was on a Saturday, and somehow it was still a semi-normal situation for a 10-year-old because I remember I was dressed up and going to my friends. And all of a sudden, I was picked up by this German policeman, and I was petrified. And he brought me home. He walked with me home, and he brought me to my mother.

And I think when my mother saw me with this policeman, she almost had a heart attack because she didn't know what is going on. And he brought me there and told her that-- how come I'm not wearing an armband. So this was--

Must have been frightening.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Were there transports during the time?

There were transports already. They were taking people. There were-- you see, the Germans started this very, very precisely. First they divested us of our possessions, our material possessions. They took the businesses away from the men, devastated them that way. Then they took us from our apartments that we lived in. They put us in the ghetto. First they put us in an open ghetto. Then they closed the ghetto.

And then they started to take young men. They just caught them on the streets, or they had lists and they came to the houses and picked them up. Or the Jewish community had to-- they had lists and they had to gather the young men or men and bring them to the Germans to go-- they said for labor, for work.

Right.

And somehow, I think this is what happened to the Polish Jews. They very, very slowly and methodically put the screws in. And somehow by doing this, they made us think that maybe the very next thing that is happening is the worst, that we couldn't project that there is even worse to come.

Yeah. So the idea was always to keep you a little bit off guard.

A little off guard, and people just tend not to believe in the worst. And you know, you just don't want to think that it could be worse. So you did the best under the circumstances, and somehow you build up your strength to deal with the situation at hand. And also you prepared yourself slowly for the next thing, because I know that after a while we heard of the terrible things that were happening in other places.

And slowly we heard that there were extermination camps, that they are taking people and gassing them.

How did news--

So you were hearing this. Where were you hearing this from? How were you getting this news?

Well, from people that probably came back or ran away. And it filtered through from one to the other, and people heard about it. Of course, I know that it was very hard to believe, and we always thought that it might not be true. I think for self-preservation--

You didn't want to believe it was true.

Exactly. You couldn't go on on a daily basis thinking that this is going to be the end.

In retrospect, do you think you were better off for holding on to that belief that it couldn't get worse?

Yes. I think this is self-preservation because if you would know what awaits you, I think you would just have to take drastic steps, and some people did. Some people that commit suicide with their families. They couldn't deal with it, or they were very realistic. And you've heard of families just taking poison or doing all kinds of things like that.

When was the ghetto liquidated?

The ghetto was liquidated in 1942, and that was also done in steps. And this is a part which I think will interest you, because it happened just before Yom Kippur. You know, Germans usually chose big holidays for doing these terrible things and confronting Jews or making them unaware of things to come in times of holidays. Well, this was just before Yom Kippur.

And one day we woke up and-- they woke us up very early in the morning, and we heard that we have to all report to the railroad station.

Now at that point, we knew that this is not good news, that things are very bad. We knew already about the Auschwitz at that point, or Treblinka, the other places. And we knew that going to a railroad station is the worst.

An ominous, very ominous sign.

Very ominous news. And prior to that, the people tried to protect themselves foolishly, but that was the syndrome-- by thinking that if they will have papers, that they are working at some kind of a labor that is important to the Germans, that they will be protected.

So although my husband-- my father was not working at anything, but he was able to get some kind of a paper saying that he worked. And he also had papers for me that I worked. As a matter of fact, I did work at the time in some kind of a agricultural something or other. I remember once gathering tomatoes in a field.

But my mother had no papers, no working papers. So on that morning when we were confronted with this--

Having to go to the train station.

Yes. I can't find the word that I'm looking for. My parents decided that since the two of us have the working papers, we will go, hoping that the ones that have the papers will be sent back home, and only the ones without papers will be taken to wherever. And since my mother didn't have any papers, it was decided that she's going to stay in the house and hide.

Now there was no hiding place. We did not have any hiding place. So she was going to go to the attic and then just stay there.

Did you have feelings about being separated from her? Because you spoke before about--

Yes. But you know, this was-- it was such a sudden thing that it--

Didn't have time to think.

No. There was no time to think at the moment. It was just an impulse decision. And I cannot-- I don't think I can convey to you, unless you remember watching any of the movies, Holocaust, of an action of that sort. The fear and the whole dynamics of the situation is just incredible.

Anyway, we just took whatever was-- because they said you can take whatever you can carry. And so we just took whatever. And we went. We went out of our house, and there were already hordes of people, and the Germans with their guns pointed, and the Polish police. They also had Ukrainian police that were helping them in this action. And it was just-- it was terrible. And people with children and old and young, and people were just herded into the-- towards the railroad station.

And just as we were walking, my father pulled me off the street, and we ran into a yard. And we hid in a-- as a matter of fact, it happened to be a lumber yard. Not his lumber yard, but a lumber yard that was on the way to the station. And we hid in the boards that were stacked up.

It was just an impulse decision that he just pulled me because I guess he realized that all this paper, working papers, is--

A facade.

Wasn't going to help.

A facade, and it's not going to do any good. And he just, I guess, impulsively wanted to save himself and me. And that's what happened.

Well, we did stay a whole day in that lumber yard. And it wasn't a hiding place because it was just open. We just went in there.

Just crouched somewhere.

Just crouched under the--

The lumber.

Lumber, right. And so we heard a whole day terrible things because they were hurting the people a whole day. They had dogs. They were shooting. There were screams all around us. And we were just sitting there and biding our time, not knowing actually what will happen.

And we were lucky that the dogs didn't find us and that the Germans didn't find us. And we were there until the night, until it got dark and it got quiet.

And then my father decided that we should try to get back to our house and to get reunited, at least to see if my mother was still there. It wasn't very far from the house that we lived, that we were hiding. But it was a matter of crossing the street.

And first of all, there was always a curfew. Jews were not allowed, even in the ghetto, Jews were not allowed to walk the streets at night. You know, after 9:00 o'clock-- it 9:00 or 8:00 or whatever. I don't remember exactly-- it was curfew even before. So there was no way of just being able to get up and walk.

And of course there was German police and Polish police all over the streets that we had to cross. But we just decided to go. And we managed to slither around the sides.

By this time was the tone entirely deserved?

Well, this section, this particular section, because they did the Judenrein in sections. They did not do this to the whole town at once. It took two weeks.

Neighborhood by neighborhood.

Neighborhood by neighborhood, yes. So we lived somehow-- there was a yard off the street, and we lived in the other-- like past the yard.

So we got to this first yard, and we had a bottle that was-- there was an empty bottle that my father wanted to fill with water, because at that point, you know, we had no food. We didn't need a whole day. And I think that maybe we took that bottle out with us from home with some tea or whatever, but we drank it during the day. So he tried to fill this bottle up with water.

And there was a spigot outside the yard. I mean, in the yard, not inside a house. And as we were standing there and my father was filling the water-- the bottle with water, a Polish policeman got a-- found us. And you know, what are you doing here?

And my father tried to bribe him to just leave us alone, because at that point he wanted to take us to the Germans. He found these two Jews here running away. And he took off his watch that he still had on and some money that he had. And as we went out of the house, he gave me some money that I kept in my shoe. So he told me to take the money out of my shoe, and he gave it to the policeman.

Somehow the policeman, the Polish policeman, either didn't want to risk taking it or he wanted to make sure that nobody's observing him. He said, you just wait here. And he went into the street, I don't know for what.

But at that moment, I instinctively ran without telling my father, or without consulting him. I ran into the other part of the yard where our house was, and there was a garden behind. And I just ran into that garden, and I hid under some bushes.

If you ask me what made me do it or why I did it or why I ran away without my father, I don't know. It was just an instinct that prodded me.

It was the same reason that made your father take you out of line.

Perhaps.

Desperation.

I-- yes, but I never could analyze for myself why I did this, being at that time, what? A 12-year-old.

Yes.

And I hid under the bushes and heard-- and stayed there for a little while. This was middle of the night. I heard Germans or policemen, more policemen coming in and searching. And they searched in the garden that I was there, and somehow they just-- I was crouched. I was small. I was crouching under some shrubs. And they didn't find me.

Now, where my father was at that time, I don't know. What happened to him at the time that I was hiding in the shrubs? He didn't join me, and I didn't know where he is. After it got quiet, and the policemen didn't find me-- somehow they just walked back to the street-- I wanted to go into the house and see if I can find my mother.

And I walked in, into the foyer like, and I saw in the dark that all the things were just pulled out of closets and of drawers, you know. And there was such disarray of things, and I got very frightened. What I was frightened of is seeing my mother dead, because I knew that when they find people hiding, they usually shoot them on sight.

And somehow, that was in my head that I just can't see my mother laying dead there. So I just walked out right away, and I didn't continue.

Later on I found out that my mother was there in the attic. They did not find her, or they didn't search for her at the time. And she was there, but because of this fear that I had, I couldn't go into the house to look, and I did not meet with her.

I went back to the yard, to the garden, and I laid there in the shrubs. And I was thinking to myself, what am I going to do now? I couldn't sit there. I couldn't be there until the morning because then for sure somebody would find me.

Now, the house and this garden was situated on the border of the ghetto, right-- the garden was the end of the ghetto. The garden had a gate-- not a gate a-- yes, a gate. On the other side of the gate was a railroad track, an embankment and a railroad track. And on the other side was the Polish side.

Now what I did was wait until the morning, very early morning, because the Poles are also had curfew, and they did not walk-- they were not allowed to walk at night. So I waited until very early morning, until I saw that there is already some movement.

I climbed the gate, which was quite tall, but somehow I managed. I had already one shoe, because when I ran from my father I took off one shoe to give him the money. So I had only one shoe. So that means I had no shoes because I couldn't walk in one shoe. So I was already barefooted.

And the embankment, the railroad track embankment, was-- there was-- the Germans were watching because this was the edge of the ghetto. So they knew that maybe somebody will try to escape. So there was a guard walking up and down the embankment. And I observed him, and when I saw that he went past where the garden was, away from me, I crawled up the railroad track and over the railroad track, and I was on the Polish side.

Incredible.

Well, where to go from there? I didn't really have any place to go except I remembered that our former neighbor, there was a grocery store that my mother used to buy groceries. And it was run by a Polish lady who was very nice, and she used to help us during the time of the ghetto. My mother used to sometimes go there and she gave my mother some more bread or some sugar or some flour that she could spare. My mother was buying it from her.

And I thought that-- oh, you probably heard before that the Germans made the Jews give their fur coats. First the jewelry, but also fur coats. We had to give up fur coats. Well, my mother had a fur coat, and my father had a fur coat, a lined coat with fur. That was quite valuable at the time. And instead of giving it up to the Germans, my mother gave it to this Polish lady that owned this grocery store, and I knew about it.

So I knew that she's a nice woman. She didn't take it from her. She kept it for us. So I thought to myself, well, this is the only place that I can go. And this is where I went. It wasn't far to walk.

Can I still have time to tell you this?

Yes.

Yes. Yes.

As I was walking-- as I told you, I was barefooted. I was a 12-year-old. I was already disheveled because I spent the night running and sleeping in bushes.

And being terrified, I'm sure.

And being terrified. And I knew that I have to look normal, that I cannot look scared because you know that the Poles were-- It would arouse suspicion.

--not exactly very friendly, and they were seeking out the Jews and reporting them. So I was scared. And as I was walking, I think I was either whistling to myself or skipping I think, trying to be very nonchalant.

And behind me walked a Pole, and he probably was walking to work, and he knew exactly who I was, regardless of my nonchalant behavior. And he whispered in back of me. He said, you little Jewess-- because the Poles used to-- there was the normal way of saying, [POLISH], which is in Polish, "you little Jewish girl," you better run because they are going to catch you. So he knew exactly who I am, but he was nice enough to warn me and not to drag me by my hair to report to me.

And I did arrive at this Polish lady, and I knocked on her door. And when she opened it, she almost had a heart failure because she didn't expect me, and she was very, very scared.

Well, she took me in. And she fed me, and I stayed there for the day. But at night she came, and she said that she's very afraid to keep me. First of all, the Poles were very afraid because they were threatened. The Germans threatened them that they will kill them together with the Jews if they find anybody hiding Jews.

And also the area was my former neighborhood, so people knew me. And she said if anybody will see you, they will know who you are, and I just can't keep you. She said, you have to go. And also there were rumors, of course, scary rumors that the Germans are going to search the area for the Jews.

Do you want me to stop?

At this point, I think we will stop you. We reached a very pivotal point, and we'll continue with our discussion after a short break.

OK. Very good. It will give us a breather.