

Good afternoon. My name is Bernard Weinstein. I'm the director of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project at the Holocaust Resource Center. Assisting me is Selma Dubnik. We are interviewing Rose Schwartz. Mrs. Schwartz, welcome.

I am Rose Schwartz, and I was born in Jodlowa in Poland. And I was 13 years old when the war broke out in '39, when the Germans come in. And by two months later it starts the horror in our town. They start coming, because they send a letter to the police, to the German police, about my father, that he is a wealthy Jew and he made the wealth of the Poles. So he should be shot and they should take over all the possession of my father.

Who sent this letter? Do you know?

Yes. [? Okama, ?] his name, a Polish Volksdeutsche. His name was [? Okama. ?] And he sent that letter to the Germans, and he pointed out where we live, and they should take care of my father. So from the beginning, my father had to flee the house. And wherever he was, my mother tried to stay with him as much as she could. And my brother, my two grandfathers, and me stood home.

When they come, they come with a car and come by two cars of German police. And they try to-- the house, to circle around. And then when they come in, they raus, raus, everybody should get out of the house. And they tear the house to pieces every time to look for my father and for possessions and whatever.

And my grandparents, if they could, they ran out before they circled around the house. So this way they would not get beat up. And they were interrogating us, me particularly, to tell them where my father is. Where is he hiding? And I always used to say, I don't know. And my brother was four years younger than me, and he was scared, so they didn't bother him.

But that was going on quite often. One day they come into the town, and it was maybe by 20 Gestapo cars. And they took care of the whole town, not only our house. We had a shul, a synagogue, with Torahs in the shul, and they pulled out the Torahs in middle of the street in the center of the town, and that time they caught my father's father, my favorite grandfather.

And they used to beat the Jews so bad-- that's unbelievable. And they used to force them-- they should step on the spread out Torahs in the street. And my grandfather says, no. This is a holy thing for me, and I will not step on it.

So by us was a little lake. And that lake was across from our home. So they dragged him to that lake and they beat him all the way there. And they took by a tree, they stood him up over there, and with that knife they slashed his cheek with the beard, and they threw him out to the lake. And then they pulled him up and they told them to climb up on the tree, and they were taking pictures and laughing.

And after this, I never forget it, my grandfather never was the same. Never. He said very hard times are coming for us and to be very careful, because whoever will survive will be only by miracle. That time from beginning just.

And that's how we're going on. They kept coming again and coming again.

What happened to your grandfather eventually?

He died. He died in normal death. He died on my birthday. And they buried him the Jewish way by us in the town. But after that, my father and my mother, they made that ghetto already. Until that time we didn't wear those pants yet. Then after they said curfew is 5 o'clock, and we all have to wear those pants.

We still had some materials left in that home where we were hiding, because we had a barn by the neighbors. So every time it was an opportunity, it was ion the afternoon, and it was quiet, my parents put a bulk of material on me. And they send me out to people what they call themselves friends of my parents', and they should keep the material for us. So when hard times come, we have from someplace to get stuff so we can buy food for that stuff.

And quite a bit of material we took out from that house, from our home, from the store. And that was it. After that, every time they used to come, they used to get furious. One time they were so mean. They looked around every place, and then they took me out, they looked in the barn, they looked everywhere. Then he says, if you're not going to tell me where your father is hiding, you be killed. I says, I don't know where my father is.

So he took me into the garden-- we had a garden-- and he was so enraged in fury, he took his-- I remember, he had feet like this-- with tall shoes, and he just smacked me in the face--

This was the SS officer?

SS officer. And he shoot up with the gun into the air, and he walked away. I fell in the garden, and he walked away. And then my brother came running. What happened? You're not dead! You're not dead! I says, no, I am not dead, I am OK. And they took the cars and they went away.

That was going on for the longest time. Though finally it quieted down. I guess that gestapo left from this neighborhood. They went someplace else. And we were a little bit in peace.

So there come demands. We need to send force. We need silver. We need money. Every time one of all the people always was selected to take the force and to deliver to the bigger town where they wanted it, or the money, whatever.

So one day we had Polish police by us, and they were, with us, friendly. We had very nice furniture in the house, because we had a modern house with tile ovens.

What did your father do for a living? Excuse me.

My father was-- first of all, we were taking woods-- in the woods, we were cutting down trees.

You lived near a forest?

No, the forests were away from our home, but he went to woods to make-- how you call it.

Was he in the lumber business?

In the lumber business. Wait a minute. He was cutting down the trees, and they cleaned up the trees in the woods. And then people were taking the wagons and bringing that wood, those big trees, to the mill. And then they in the mill they were cutting boards from it.

So that time when they said he should kill him because he used the people from the town. So we said to the people, you can be a witness, I paid everybody. And one time, one of the people was cutting down woods in the forest, his brother-in-law, and said to him, I want you to know that my brother-in-law is stealing your wood, and he is building a house from your wood and not paying for it.

So by us every time-- Saturday night was for the ones where they had the trees they wheeled to the mill. And he come in-- they get Saturday night paid. Sunday, the ones would cut the boards and the trees in the woods. So everybody got paid, and everybody get a drink of whiskey, and everybody got a piece of cheese and a piece of challah for a thank you.

That man, my father said, you wait, you'll be the last one to be paid. And he got a little bit nervous. He says, I have to talk to you. And he said to him, look, I know you're stealing my wood. He says, and you're making a very bad name for me. I can't do anything, he says.

I really would appreciate if you asked me that you need wood. I will give it to you, and nobody will come and tell me that you are stealing from me. That guy, that time, said, thank you. And he says, master, I really do appreciate that, because I cannot afford to buy it, and we need a roof over our heads.

And this is the man what we were hiding for 2 and 1/2 years by him in the cellar. Not in the cellar-- it's the wood was a shack with wood, and beneath the shack we had dug out a hole. And in that hole we were laying.

So my father was a six footer-- he was a tall man. So he was laying from one corner to the other one, then my mother next to him, I am next to him. And wintertime is so bitter cold, and it was not enough room in that hole, so the head was laying next to the ground. And every morning we get up, we had to pull, because that was frozen to the ground, the front head.

And of course, we were starving-- starving from hunger. And we had those black flies. They were eating us alive. Not lice, flies. I don't know how you call it. They jump like little fleas, and they were black. It was unbelievable.

I particularly--

But this man was sheltering you--

He was hiding is.

--because?

For-- I want to tell the story. When we come, that man was asking people, when they-- we were all what was left over-- we were wandering around. Because I catch one before the other one. When we-- at one day in the fall come one of the policemen. And we had to leave our house, our original, because the police-- [NON-ENGLISH] I don't know how to explain to him-- what took care of the lens or whatever, he wanted our house, and we had to leave our house.

And we went to live in my grandfather's house. And in my grandfather's house, the man come over, and he said to my mother, I want your furniture. I want your couch. Your couch I particularly like. So my mother says, I give you the couch with a condition when the Germans will come to clean up our town, because we hear from all around the neighborhoods that they are taking all the people and they putting into from little camps to big camps, so I would appreciate if you tell me when, and then maybe we can escape.

He says, I give you my word, and I promise you I will do that. So that time, he come over one afternoon, and he said to my mother, tomorrow, 5 o'clock, the Germans will be here, the Gestapo with the three cars, and they will take care of all this town. They will take care of it.

5:00 in the morning?

5:00 in the morning. Yes. So my mother, right away, sent us kids from one house to the other, tell everybody that tomorrow is [NON-ENGLISH]. It means tomorrow is the leaving the house. And we took-- I remember-- this I never forget it-- two breads we took with us, and one change of clothes, and a warm coat. And that was summertime.

And we left the house. It was already dark, and we left the house. And that was the first night we slept in the woods. And if I can describe it, how it felt, I don't have no words. Because we had one little quilt to put it down on the floor, and it was cold at night, and it was wet. And we were not used to it-- we were very sheltered.

And it was just horrible. And then we were laying in hiding, and then we hear people coming over, like passing. And they said that they took all the Jews on wagons-- mostly the older ones what cannot walk. And they took them-- where they took them, nobody knows.

All of a sudden, we hear that between Jodlowa and [? Przeczyca ?], they dug a grave, a mass grave, and they put in whitewash, what you paint.

Oh my.

And the Gestapo-- the Polish police hauled the people from the wagons, and they told them to undress. Because that was woods. And they should undress. And one by one they shoot, and they fall into the grave, and they barely cover the grave.

And that was cooking, that-- how you call it? That whitewash.

Lye.

That whitewash was cooking with that blood and was smelling for miles and miles and miles. And nobody did anything. Finally--

They all knew.

They did-- nobody knew where it's going to be. We are thinking they are taking them to a bigger town to a bigger, how you call it, camp. But they didn't take them to a camp, they shot them-- they killed them. Till that time, there was no killing by us in the town at all. They were looking for my father, but there was no official killing. Beating, breaking bones, destroying, tearing down things like the shuls, all the books and everything, tear it out, and the windows knocked out, and all those horrible things.

Until that time, could Jews come and go from the town? They--

No they were--

Or was it was already a closed--

It was closed in the town. And that's where we had to be. And we were wearing already the bands too. But that time they said, it will come a day when this camp, we take this camp to a bigger camp. And we will this camp clean up. But the cleaning up was a horrible way. Because nobody expected that that would-- a human being can kill a human being.

And that, I never forget it, every time I had to pass near that grave, I got petrified. I was so scared I was holding on to my father. And I says look, they maybe come out from the grave to drag me in too. I was-- I didn't even know-- it was a horror. I can't describe it, the fear that's unreal.

And finally, after it settled down a little bit and we are in the woods, then they started picking-- because a lot of people from our town ran away, the young ones in particular.

Excuse me, how many of you were there in the woods?

A lot. A half of a town by 150 or 200.

So it wasn't just you and your family.

No a lot of-- whoever was capable of running away ran away. And then little by little, they the Polish police start catching the people like dogs. They were running around and catching people. And the Poles, he is a Jew, he is a Jew-- you give me his clothes and you can kill him. That's it.

And we were once in the woods laying inside in the woods a little bit, and here was shrubbery, thick, you can't see it. But we seen the police. And the police walked down with the dog. That dog didn't smell us, OK? It was by a miracle only. And two hours before they killed, in the same woods, two Jews.

And they passed by that place, and they walked away. And the dog didn't smell us, and didn't bark, and they walked away. And that was it. And we were right there.

And we were in the woods for quite a long time. Once in a while the Jews at night in the woods get together and discuss

their future. He is one. This guy took him. He is one survivor what is hiding in the cemetery by the Irish-- not the Jewish cemetery, because the Jewish cemetery was checked every day almost-- but on the Polish cemetery, it was that-- how you call it, where you bring the body before you put it to the grave. It's like a room.

On that roof two children survived. They still alive, thank God. One lives in Germany and one who lives in Israel. They hid in the cemetery on that roof--

On the roof.

--from that place. And that was how people survived. This was sleeping with in the barns. In the barns, when the Polish people didn't even know where we are. And that's how this town survived.

One day, we are staying home, and the man said, this and this day we can get together-- at around Christmas time we get together-- and we will talk it over who is left. Because every time you hear, they caught this one, they took him away by train. They took this one, they shot over there. It was horrible. So every day you are prepared and looking death in the face. That was it.

So one day we went to meet two other people. And as we walk we were very close to the woods. And I didn't know it was quicksand. And I fall in with my two legs in the quicksand. And I couldn't holler, father! I said, psst, psst, to my father, and he gave me his cane. Because he always had a cane in his hand because of dogs. And he pulled me out with the cane from the quicksand. Otherwise that would be it. That was number one.

Number two, for bread, to go-- we had to survive. Because after we found out that that man what stole from my father the lumber, he is asking everybody where we are. And one man says, go over to him. He is so desperate to find out where you are. Maybe he will hide you.

You can't stay in the woods. Because it's winter. It's below zero. Forget it.

So we went over there to that man. And he said to him, like that, he says-- Jedrzej was his name, Jedrzej Paremsky. And he said to him, Jedrzej, why did you ask all the Jews where we are? He says, because you were my breadwinner. You let me build a house, and you didn't press charges for me.

He says, and I feel obligated to save you and your family's life. He's says, come and stay with me. So my father said-- and I was with my father. Usually I was the shammass to my father. And my father says to him, tell me, what do you want to do? Do you want me to come with my whole family, not just with my daughter. And then, I says, you will take my clothes-- it's old already and filthy-- and then you will kill me just for my clothes.

He says, I swear to you, my wife did it. I know what you're talking about-- [NON-ENGLISH]. Five people, just for the clothes what they wore-- she let the police kill five Jews for just what they were wearing. And I said, look, to my father, he wants to hide us. We don't have no place-- nobody wants us.

And my father says, wait, let me find out a little bit more. But if your wife don't like Jews, he says, and she will go to the police, and we'll be finished. He called out his wife, and he said to her in Polish like that, do you remember our wedding day? She says, Yes. He says do you remember what I did to your friend? She says, yes.

And he says, if you have any ideas of going to the police and telling about my people that I'm going to hide them in our house, I will stab a knife in your heart too.

Why did he stabbed this friend? What was--

This friend was making offenses you say to his wife on the wedding day. So he was a little bit drunk, and he had a knife, and he just went. And that was it. He says, I will do the same thing to you if you do that to my friends. I am warning you.

And finally, my father says, look, we are coming. So he dug out at that time that hole, and that's where we were 2 and 1/2 years old. So every week we had to go and bring bread, wheat, and butter, because we had to feed him. And the stuff, the clothes, the material what I used to take it away to the people, I used to go once in a while and ask, can I have a piece of material, because I need to buy bread. Or can I have a piece of material, because I have to give the one what keeps us for a gift for a pair of pants or a shirt or whatever. And that's how it was.

One day, I come over to that man what he has mainly off our clothes-- stuff, the material, the clothes, furniture-- whatever we could stick it into his house, we did. And I come over to his house, and usually the signal was 1, 2, 3. You're knocked very gently in the window and you walk away. And then they know that you are there-- who is in the window.

And the girl comes out, and she says, my father is not home. I says, where is he? And she says, he went to see his sister and the police stopped him. She stopped him, and the time he was on the police, three other policeman come to the house to look around if we don't hide Jews. We didn't have anybody. And all of a sudden, as I talked to her, I hear from-- she was on top of the hill-- from the bottom, the dogs start barking, each time louder and louder and louder.

And I said to her, Saskia, I am leaving now. Do you have any bread? Because I think the police is coming up. And she says, my father is not here and I can't give you anything. And I went back and I told my father the story, and we went back home with nothing to that man, to the house.

The next day, my father is a little bit, you know, skeptic. So he says, I want you to go to the town, and snoop around, and find out what was going on yesterday. Maybe Roza-- my name in Polish was Roza-- tells a story. She says, I was there. I heard all the dogs barking.

He went over there and found out sure enough, they come, they round up the house, and they were looking for us. And they hold him at the police that day. He says, they must have sensed that's I am friends with you. That's why they do those things.

And they let him go, and I come in a week later to that house for bread. And we had four houses that mainly delivered bread to us. I mean, every time I knocked in the window, I got bread. And one time I come over to our other guy what also tried to be nice, and it was around Christmas time, and I come, and I stay there. And his house was in like a wall, because by us it's very cold and windy. And then a wall was hiding from one side of the house.

And I come over there, and I lay down on under snow, and I see bicycles outside. I says, what is this? I listen-- I listen careful. Sure enough, I heard them saying, one policeman to another one, maybe I should go outside and I shoot in the air. Maybe some Jews fly down from the air and that will be excuse me killed one.

When I heard that, I ran so fast that you can't imagine. And I come home, and I didn't bring nothing. And my father says, my God, we don't have bread, and they don't have bread. And if we don't bring it, they're not going to keep us.

So I says, father, it's the only time. This time, I didn't bring. Next time I will bring it.

So every so often when we went-- we got two bread, we got a piece of butter-- that was for the house-- and some wheat to grind it to make bread. And if I needed a piece of material, I took that too. And that was going on for a year and a half.

Excuse me, but were you the only one who went out?

No. My father and me or my brother and me.

Wasn't it dangerous?

My mother didn't go.

Wasn't it dangerous for your father?

Very dangerous. Very dangerous because, everybody knew-- that's why to come into a house, to come close to a house, I went or my brother went. My father stood always in the back. Because if they would catch my father, then the whole families is destroyed.

You were unrecognized. You, they didn't know.

Yes, they didn't know better. Because I left from the house, I was little. Then I was skinny, and tall, and raggedy. And nobody could even imagine who I am. One day--

Because you looked so different.

That's right. Filthy. You know, undernourished. No shoes. The shoes got small for my feet. So I used to take the foot, put it on top of the shoe, and with rag tie around that shoe just to have the sole to, you know. Because at wintertime it's bitter, bitter cold. In summertime, we were walking bare feet. That was it.

And you had to provide bread and butter for the people who were hiding you.

Hiding us, yes. Because they were poor, see? He took us in and he called my father my breadgiver-- my main breadwinner, whatever. And that was the agreement. We will provide clothing, we will provide food, as much as we can. And if we can't provide food, we provide money he should go out and buy it. And that was it.

I'll never forget, it was Yom Kippur night. They must have known when it was Yom Kippur. So she made some kind of a soup by 12 o'clock, and in that soup was an ear from a pig, and it was swimming around. And a big pot of water, and that ear was swimming around.

And she says, why don't you eat? Why don't you start eating? And my father says, not yet. The two kids are sleeping-- we wait till they wake up. Even if it's cold, we will eat later. And we wouldn't eat-- when it come Yom Kippur, that was a holy day, no matter how anybody was hungry, we didn't touch food. That was out of question.

But then my mother looked at it. She says, look what she gave us today. She gave us a pig's ear. One big pot of water and that ear not even cleaned up. And it was swimming around in that water. And my father says, nobody has to know. We bury it, and we don't have to eat it.

So that was double Yom Kippur-- we didn't eat till the next day. But that's how it went. Look, food was the most important thing. I never forget it. My brother pretended he's sleeping, because there was nothing, we didn't have anything to eat. I used to have a sweater, an old sweater. So we used to unravel the sweater, and I teach him how to knit or to make a hem, open it and close it.

The days were long days. You couldn't talk, because somebody could hear you. So you have to be still and quiet.

What was it like physically, I mean, for you to be living in that condition?

Hell. A real hell.

Can you describe this?

It was horrible. You couldn't sneeze, because nobody can hear you that you are alive. You couldn't talk. You have to be 100% silent.

And if you wanted something, you have to whisper really quiet. Because they had two children in the house, you see. And the children didn't know that we are there. So they used to play outside, and the children used to say, I'm going to kill the Jew-- kill, kill, Jews. They'd play with each other. And he says, oh, I'm going to kill three Jews.

So the kids didn't know anything about it that we were there. So we had to be twice careful. Because it was a room where you keep [NON-ENGLISH]. That means where they have all that pig was hanging there, and they had the wheat over there, and the potatoes. So there, it was-- this is where the wheat was, and on the bottom was a little piece of board that covered where we come in through that hole where we were staying in.

And if the kids would find out about it, they will run out and tell, and that would be finished. One day, I went out for bread, and my mother was home with my brother. And my father and me, we went. And I come, and they were thinking that was me.

Meantime, her mother lived below a little bit. And she come, and she just knocked like we knock. She didn't know we were there. And my mother opened the door-- my mother opened the door and she seen my brother and my mother. And my father says, I thank you, we cannot stay here anymore. We have to leave.

Because if we will stay, she will go to the police, or will she tell the next neighbor, and we are finished. So I have a place in another town where we used to stay. When I used to deal in the woods, I used to come into her house, give a couple dollars for a glass of milk. So she said, any time I want to come, she will take us in.

And we packed up the same night and we left to the other lady. All night long we walked in snow up to here. That was unbelievable. We come maybe a mile away from the house, and in front of me, like a wall, stood and says, don't go. It's death.

And I turn around, and I said to my father, I do not want to go to that place. And he says, why? I says, because I think in this place we be killed. And he says, come on.

Don't give me a hard time, he says. If it's good for us to go, it's good for you. Wherever I say we go, you go too. And then I was exhausted. I was carrying the rucksack with bread, my brother. And my mother, she couldn't walk very well. And her hip, the joint was hurting her very badly.

So we were maybe a mile or a mile away from over there, and I made the scene. And my father says, I don't want to hear anything. Let's go. You go wherever we are.

I says, OK. We went over there. And as we come in, she took our shoes, and she told us to go upstairs on the--  
Attic.

--attic. And to go over there to sleep, and she go to buy food. And when she come back from the town, she will make food for us, and we will have it. That was Christmas Eve-- no, New Year's Eve, the day before New Year's Eve. And they all slept all day long, my father, and my mother, and my brother.

I couldn't fall asleep for one second-- not even a second. I was going from one corner to the other corner to look. I had that feeling that must be she went for the police. I don't know why, but I had that feeling.

Finally, it started getting dark, and she came home. And she told my parents and my brother to come down, that they should make themselves food. And I said, OK, now, it start getting dark, and it's almost New Year's Eve-- I am safe, I can go to sleep.

And maybe I fall asleep for 10 minutes, and somebody comes over and shakes me, and says, get up, in Polish. And I said, in Polish to him, to my brother, why would you want to wake me? I didn't sleep all night long. And now, I wanted to sleep, and you are waking me.

All of a sudden a switch light straight in my eyes. He says, get up. I says, why? I opened my eyes. Sure enough the police is there, and my parents are already downstairs. And they took me downstairs.



I come downstairs. And when my father sees me, he start passing out. And I ran for water to give him some water. So he smacked me in the face twice, and he chained me right up to my father. He says, you are dangerous. And they took a sled and put us on the sled. And my father tried to bribe the police, but it didn't work.

And they took us to a jail. They're supposed to shoot us that New Year's day. But the man said, like that, he says, they are on the second floor. They are not going no place. We have time to kill them tomorrow, the day after New Year's.

And as one of the people what my father used to deal, he come to that place to the police, because it was a post office and police, and he tried to talk to them, maybe they should let us go. They wouldn't hear of it. They already announced it. That's it.

The same New Year's day, in the town where I was born, the priest said, anybody who wants to light a candle and say a prayer for the family [? Pariser ?] is welcome, because tomorrow they will be killed. And from our town, the [NON-ENGLISH]-- it's like, how you called the [NON-ENGLISH]-- like, he is the master of the town.

Mayor?

Mayor.

The mayor from the town told us the story. He says, if you see everybody-- in New Year's, everybody is in the church-- everybody went, kneeled down, lit a candle, and said a prayer for you. And we were in jail that New Year's day.

I wanted to go for wood. And the policeman says, no, you're not going. Your mother will go for wood, because she cannot walk very well. So being it was freezing cold, she will go for the wood, and she will bring it in, and you can make a fire.

And my mother kept saying, [? Avraham ?]. All the Americans have [NON-ENGLISH], those big [? thieves ?] in America, they break out from the 10th floor from the biggest jail, what we used to read. They climb walls, he says. All those things. Why can't you do something? Only we wait to be killed. Why?

And she kept nagging and nagging. And [? Avraham ?], you have to do something. [? Avraham ?], you have to do something. Well, he says, what am I going to do? I don't have even my knife.

We didn't. But we had a little suitcase, attache case. And that suitcase had on top, what hold the top-- like a file you know. We ripped that out. And one leg of the bed we were supposed to sleep on-- it was one wooden, flat bed-- he ripped that out. And little by little with that thing-- we had a whole day-- rub it. He got tired, I took it. I got tired, my mother took it.

And finally we rubbed off-- and we didn't get food the whole day. We were just staying that day. Just looked into the window, and all those garbage, the cement what we took out from what we rubbed off, we put it behind the oven so they couldn't see it when they looked in through the window. But we knew that they have a special [NON-ENGLISH], police, watching the jail. They were going forth and back.

Well, it was New Year's, you know? And they were-- by us in Poland, you drink an awful lot New Year's. New Year's, if you don't get drunk, you are sick. So [? and ?] [? it ?] [? cold ?] [? was. ?] So finally we broke out one corner, like this, of a block. You know those heavy, big stones beneath the bars--

Cinder blocks.

Cinder blocks.

Cinder one corner. Big we were not. We were just skin and bones. So we had that sheet, that blanket. We ripped it in half-- because we were on the second floor, they made sure we don't escape-- and we tied it to those bars.

And first we let down my father. He was the first one. Then I threw out my mother. He grabbed her. And he told her, you go this direction. Then I put up that bed where we are supposed to sleep on. And my brother was tiny-- and I said to him, you just go out feet out and let yourself down. We catch you. Don't worry. And we all escaped.

And we escaped that day. And the police what was watching us, it was a cage they were standing watching m anybody what come in to the police station or get out. They fall asleep in there. I guess God said, you have to fall asleep, they should have a chance to run away. And we ran away.

And 24 hours we were in the woods below zero. It's like two big hills come together in the woods, and a stream goes on the bottom. And by that stream, in a corner, we huddled all together. Because if we would lay separate each, we will all be frozen to death.

Frozen to death.

But we huddled.

So bodily warmth kept you--

Together. And we stayed there New Year's day, and New Year's night, and the next day. And then we start out back to the same man what hid us before. And that's where we-- and my mother couldn't walk, so we took that half of a sheet and we carried her halfway of the way. Because she couldn't walk because her hips were so hurting bad. She couldn't make it.

She's a complainer as it is, so we carried her. But we got her, thank God. And that was it.

When we come to that man, he says, I heard every church was ringing bells and everybody was praying that a good family is going to be killed tomorrow. That was period. That was one story.

After that, I come over from the town of that man. He was giving us bread, by the way. And I come over, and I knock 1, 2, 3, and she come over, and by the window she stood, and she screamed out, Jesus Christ! She says, I don't believe it! She's come from the dead!

It's unbelievable. I says, I am OK. My father's OK. Oh she said, no, no, no, no, no! You must be dead. That's it. They're supposed to kill you.

I said, but they didn't kill us, and I need bread. She called over her father-- her husband-- and she says, I don't believe it. She comes from the dead.

And he says, give her bread. She asked you for bread, give her bread. Why are you making a big thing? And I never, as long as I-- that face, scared out of her wits.

She thought you were a ghost.

I am a ghost.

Right. Yep.

Would you believe that? That was unreal. Just before we left from that place when he told us to leave, they said they will go searching house by house. Because this time it's no more for Jews. But they for-- the ones they come from the balloons? You know when they let themselves down--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Parachutes. Parachutes.

Parachuters. They found parachuters, and they must be someplace.

Allied soldiers.

Yes. They have to search Russians, house by house, and find where they are. The man comes in and he says to me, what am I going to do? They say they're going to search. Meantime, God was so good, and he started [? pouring. ?]

So he says, you have to leave. So we left. We left from over there, and we went into the fields. And we stood in the fields 24 hours. If you ever see a very old wrinkled lady, that was me.

My whole body was three times wrinkled and my face-- because I was laying in the water all this time. And finally we hear from far away this hollering. This water starts overflowing, and they put the sandbags. And I don't think we can save it. It will overflow, and that's it.

And my father turns around to me-- because I went with my father, and my brother went with my mother-- who will survive? At least somebody will survive. My brother couldn't take it with my mother. So by 12 o'clock, [? seeing ?] [? her ?] [? outside, ?] she looked around. And my brother ran over. He says, can we go back into the hiding, because I am very hungry and very cold. I can't stand it.

And she opened the door, hauled the kids inside, and they went into hiding. Because the house was right-- this is the woods, and that's where the house was. And we were standing there for longer. And my father turns around to me, and says to, me like that, how do you want to be killed? How do you want to die?

I says, why do you ask me that? He says, you have a choice-- being the water starts pouring out-- do you want to die by water or you want to die by a bullet? And I turned around, and I say, I want to die by a bullet.

They were so busy putting the sandbags by the water that they didn't have time to see when we got up from the fields to run into the woods. And that's how we survived.

How old were you when he asked you that question?

That was I think by 16. Yeah. One time, after that, I went to-- just before we got freed-- this is a very, very nice story to tell you-- we didn't have no bread. We knew already any day we had to leave from this place. And I went over to a friend of my father's. They were in the army together, and they were personal friends. And he considered himself like a brother to my father.

And I went over for bread, and she says she's going to that room where the bread is to bring out the bread. It's supposed to take two minutes to bring out the bread and give it to me. It took five minutes. And I went out following her, and I don't see it by that door-- because I know already where the door is where the bread is. I went to the barn, and I don't see her in the barn.

She was going around waiting. And I said, uh-uh. And then I go outside, and I listen, and I hear the dogs are barking. You see that's good, because the dogs didn't like the police. So the best signal was just listen and you will hear what is cooking. And that's when I heard that the dogs are barking.

And I didn't wait. I didn't go back to the house anymore. And because it was also-- usually, we picked houses that are right near the woods. So I flew into the woods, and I come running back to the house where we were hiding.

I come in to the place, and my father says, where is the bread? I says, you know, I was waiting for the bread. She's supposed to bring it out-- she didn't. I went to the barn to look for her, I didn't see her. So what am I supposed to do?

So I didn't wait anymore, and the dogs were barking like crazy. So that means the police is coming up for me. And my father says, you are imagining things. I says, no, I'm not imagining things.

He sent the men the next day. Sure enough, four police come five minutes after I left to get me, because I will tell them where my parents are. And my father says, I apologize. I couldn't believe that this man will do that. And that man says, not me-- my wife did it.

Not me. I didn't know anything about it. But that's a lie. See, they wanted-- they had a lot of our stuff, materials, quilts, pictures, and they wanted to steal it. So if they get rid of us, automatically they have the stuff. So that was it. That was it.

And life was going on unmercifully. Then we didn't have no more clothes to wear because everything was teared to pieces.

Tattered.

Just in shreds. Cold, hungry, unreal. This is unbelievable what we went through. And the marches when we went for bread, every time we have to pass through that place where that hole was with our people from our hometown. And every time we pass by, my father said a prayer.

And I used to hold on to my father really tight, because I was scared. And he says to me, don't be scared. They will not do anything to you. The lives one will do to you, but not they. And it was unreal. Unbelievable.

The stories, the horrors what they come up with, is you can't-- in your wildest dream, you cannot imagine.

Did you hear stories while you were in the woods of what was going on?

Yes.

Did you know about the deportations and everything.

Everything. Like that man what lives now in there in Queens, he was caught. They kept him in jail with three other ones. And they send them away-- he's supposed to go to a concentration camp. On the way he jumped out from the train, and he come back. That's how he survived.

The other two jumped out too. So the other two had the family yet. They had a father and two sisters hiding. So he knew where they are. So he went over there to their family.

And then that Polish intelligentsia found out where they are. And they went by themselves and beat them up so that they killed-- they killed-- their father. And they were barely alive, because they didn't want Jews. This town has to be Jews free. And that's what they were doing.

They did not like us.

The Poles themselves.

The Poles themselves. When I was a little girl, and I was going to public school, we had, how you call it, a principal. And the principal used to come into our store, and, of course, my mother sometimes give him something cheaper from the store or whatever. And yet, when it starts, that business with the Germans, he said, you are not permitted to come to school and you are not permitted to walk on the sidewalk.

What you experienced, did you experience that even before the Germans came?

Yes. Yes. Just before the Germans came it was an awful lot of hostility from the Poles to the Jews-- an awful lot. And they called us, the Jews in that town, leeches. Do you know what a leech is? I think that black thing what drinks blood.

It sucks out the blood. Yes.

They called the Jews leeches. They drink their blood.

How many Jewish families were living in your town?

150.

Families.

Out of about how many people altogether?

That was the town. We were a small town.

Oh, the town was just--

150 families.

Of just Jews.

Of Jews.

And how many totally? Not Jews, but altogether, Jews and Gentiles?

3,000 families.

Oh, I see. So you were very small fraction of the town.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Mostly merchants?

The Jews were merchants, Yes.

What was the name of your town, and where was it located.

Jodlowa.

And where was it located?

That was located on the foot of the Carpathia. That was on the--

Carpathian Mountains.

Yeah. Adrian Mountains, you--

Carpathian.

Carpathian Mountains. In wintertime it's very, very cold.

This was in Galicia.

Galicia, yes. Yes. The big town near us was Turnov. And we were called the wealthy Jews, the wealthy merchant from the town. And they used to say that my father is not only wealthy but he has a good heart. He helps whoever he can, Jew or non-Jew.

That's why I never forget it. When we were freed, and our bedroom set was by the priest from the church. And the man who saved us, he had his oldest son. So being it was no Jews, and he, I guess, had an eye on me, because we still had a lot of land, and woods, and all that stuff. So he said, I want my oldest son should get married with you daughter, and we will be related to each other. She will go and how you call it--

Convert.

Convert. And I, he says-- the father-- will make the wedding. And we build them a house where you house got burned down. We had that enamel-- not enamel, how you call that.

Porcelain?

The tiles for the ovens, we have that. And we also have the roof. Because we had a roof not from like here they make the roofs, but we had roof from steel-- a steel roof. And that was very expensive in Poland. So we have the roof. So only we have to build the walls and make it the way they like it. And they will be happy, and you're going to live here too, and we'd be one family.

Well, I remember my grandfather. Before he died he still learned [NON-ENGLISH] with me-- you know, Hebrew.

This was your father's father.

My father's father. And he always said, remember who you are. And you should always go to your own. Don't mix, because it's not healthy. At that time I couldn't understand what he tries to tell me, but that's what it was.

So when I heard that, I pulled my father. And I said to him-- he says, easy, easy. And he right away stays by me. He says, come on, we'll give you lessons for conversion.

I says, I have time. And I told my father, if we're not going to leave, I'm going to leave by myself. Because I do not-- he says, and I don't want you to either. He says, don't be so anxious. But you have to be a diplomat in the right time in the right way to leave.

And then my mother went over to that priest, and she said to him, I know you have my bedroom set and you have the pictures from-- we had like a carpet over the beds. That was very stylish in Europe. And I know you have that. But he says, give us a chance-- we are very weak, and we are very hungry, and we are very dirty. Give us a chance, when we clean up a little bit and we get a little bit stronger, then we will talk about conversion, about marrying. Right now, we are dead people.

Did you feel you were treated differently from the other Jews in your town?

When I was little?

Yeah, when you were young.

Yes, yes, yes. Yes, because my father was wealthy. Not only I was treated from the Jews different--

I mean by the Poles, by the non-Jews.

By the Polish people? Well, no. No, no. When I come into the classroom the last year it was very big anti-Semitism. And I was sitting next to the map. And when I wanted to show something on the map, next to me was a boy-- Christian boy-- and he says, what do you want to show, where Palestine, where Palestine? And I had the stick in my hand. Being I was wealthy-- maybe it was wrong, I was spoiled-- I turned around, and I took that whip, and I hit him.

I was punished later by the teacher. And he says he's going to beat me up outside. I says, he didn't have no business

saying what he said. And it was a whole commotion in the class. But I felt I am superior, because that was it.

Yeah.

It was very hard. It was hard. I remember refugees was coming from-- because they used to from Lodz, from all over, coming people what they were running and coming. And the house was always open. Everybody can come in and have food and everything else.

We're going to have to pause for a couple of minutes because we have to change the tape.

OK.

OK. We'll continue.

OK. Fine.