Good morning. My name is Daniel Gover. I'm a member of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project of the Holocaust Resource Center. We are affiliated with the Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. Sharing the interview with me is Jodie Frank.

We are privileged to welcome Helen Herman, a survivor presently living in Maplewood, New Jersey, who has generously volunteered to give her testimony about her experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. Welcome, Mrs. Herman.

Thank you.

Could you tell us where you're from and what your life was like before the war?

I was born in [PLACE NAME], Czechoslovakia, and I was the second of four children. My brother was the oldest, and I had two more sisters. We lived in a very comfortable home. Most people were about the same. We were very happy.

We lived next door to my father's parents and my father's sister and her family, and we were very close.

What did your father do for a living?

He was a self-employed contractor. We were not rich, but we were comfortable. They worked very hard, but we had the necessities we needed. And that was it.

What was your town like? How large was it?

A very nice town. A beautiful town. It was a resort town. Summertime, we had a lot of people coming for different reasons. There was natural mineral water coming from the grounds. And people with rheumatism came for treatments there, taking baths.

It was a beautiful, lively town before the war.

Was there a sizable Jewish community?

Yes, a very neat one. Everyone was interrelated. It was a beautiful, family-oriented community. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody lived nicely in harmony, including the Gentiles.

And you were a school student?

Yes. I went to school up to eighth grade, we finished. After that, the Hungarian came, and the Jewish kids were not allowed to go to higher education. So they sent me to a trade school. I learned as a seamstress.

Could you tell us when you first sensed that things were beginning to change?

As soon as the Hungarians came back, because in our time-- before the war, my parents were born under Hungarian rules. And then after the First World War, the Czechs came, and we were born under Czech regime. And we had it very good. It was very Democratic, and everybody was treated equal.

And then in '39, I believe, the Hungarians came back, and they were not the same Hungarians that our parents experienced. And right away, the trouble started then. There are certain things that the Jews could not do, but the Gentiles-- all of what they were doing before, and one of them, they right away took over the Jewish business.

We were not allowed to go to schools, higher education. We were not allowed to travel, except with a permit to go on trains. Farther out of town, we had to have special permission. And the older people experienced more problems. I had a grandpa that went every day, twice a day, to shul.

And this was in the middle of the town. And coming home, there were the Hungarian soldiers. And he used to pick on his beard, used to prove that was their biggest pleasure-- pulling the old man's beard. But he refused to stay home, not to go to shul.

What they did in Europe, if you had a toothache, they used to put up a kerchief and that kept-- that's what they thought. And that's what he hid his beard into, one of the black kerchiefs, and tied it up, that he shouldn't be harassed. Then he still was going to shul. And he was over 80 years old. He was going every day to shul.

And then later on, we ourselves noticed things that we would not do this, and not that, and then later, when we had to wear yellow stars.

As a young girl, how did you feel about your life being restricted?

It was the way of life. You couldn't do nothing about it. We were deprived of a lot of things, but there was war, and we were hoping that the war will end and everything will be fine. We knew that it cannot go on forever like this, but nobody participated it was going to happen.

So you weren't thinking long term?

No. No, we took every day as it came. But we were still happy, because we were all together. They took away all our young men, the capable parties, young fathers of children, they took away, and the young man. The only one that's left was the old men and the women, children.

Did you have any contact with the men after they left?

They used to ride. Yes, they used to ride, and sometimes they let them, for a weekend or so, home for a special-- those who were in the country. But some of them were shipped out of the country. They didn't trust the Jewish guys with the arms, but they did give them jobs like digging ditches for the soldiers or minesweeping. Dangerous things. They needed the young guys.

That's what it was until the day came when they took us all away. What we were told was that they were going to resettle us. That the Russians are coming back, and they don't trust the Jews. They said, all the Jews are communists. They don't want to be close to the front. That they were going to take us away, and they'll resettle us. And then the war will be over, we'll come back to our homes.

What year was that?

In 1944.

And how old were you?

20. I just turned 20 in March.

And so where did you go after--

Well, what happened, they told us to take whatever we could carry on our backs, and the rest they going to lock up. And they'll keep [INAUDIBLE]. They'll keep the keys for us. They'll lock it up so nobody will go into our homes, and then we'll come back. We'll have it all back.

So of course, we packed every one of them, and they tried a few times-- whether we'll be strong enough to carry such a big bundle, and then we were marched into a school, and we were there a couple of days in our town. And from there they took us into next town, Mukachevo, and that was a ghetto, into a ghetto. And the ghetto wasn't a regular ghetto like [INAUDIBLE]. There were brick factory.

And we had to clean the bricks out of there to make room for ourselves, to lay on the floors, of course. So all day we were-- we formed a chain of people, and one passed on the bricks to the other to clear those things. All day, we worked. At night, we came, we made our quarters together with my grandparents and my aunt and her children, and her husband wasn't there anymore.

He was-- I told you, he was in the army-- so-called army. And we were there for about four weeks. But we were together with the parents. And then they put us into wagons, and the cattle wagons, and shipped us off to Auschwitz-- which we didn't know at that time where, but we wound up in Auschwitz.

Can I backtrack for a minute? When you were in the brick factory, and you were there for four weeks, what was life like there daily?

There wasn't much doing. It was horrible because everybody was afraid of-- and it wasn't even the Nazis that were, at that time, there. It was our native guys that came from German background. They volunteered, and they were the guards. And they abused anybody that they get a hold of. But the old people were afraid to venture out-- during the night was forbidden, everybody had to stay in those places.

But even during the day, if they get a hold of somebody that they wanted to pick on, they found the way. It wasn't pleasant.

Were conditions very crowded in that ghetto?

Very. We just had bodies to put down. That's it. If you sit up, there's no chairs-- all on the floor. Everything was on the floor, but we had our beddings that we took along. We thought that was going to be important wherever you go. So we put our beddings on the floor and that's where we--. Just for body spaces, that's about all.

And the food, I believe-- I think I remember that there was a kitchen, and one of the [? police ?] put a big pail and brought back for the whole bunch to distribute food. And that was about four weeks.

Were you aware of what was happening in the war during this time?

Not really. It was so secretive, everything. We heard rumors that I had lost an aunt-- my mother's sister with four children were taken away in 1942. There was another thing-- we had to have papers to prove that we were born in that place, everyone. And somehow her husband, my aunt's husband, couldn't produce papers, so they took the whole family away, and they transferred him into Poland.

And we never heard from them since, and we knew that something terrible has happened to those people, but nobody believed what-- he said, oh, maybe just rumors, because there was no radios or newspaper. It was an underground newspaper, and if the parents knew about it, they didn't let the kids on it. That's what it was.

And then we came to Auschwitz. And we knew once we crossed the Hungarian border, because we were told that we were going deeper into Hungary and that we'll be resettled, the families. And we'll be working, doing some kind of a work. And once we crossed the borders, then the old people knew that it's no good.

So my father said to us, whatever will happen, if for any reason, we'll be separated, remember, after the war, go home. So I don't know how long we were going, maybe eight days, maybe four days. I have no idea. We lost time.

And when we got to Auschwitz, the train stopped. And after a few hours, they opened the doors, and the people-- the Polish boys, young boys were working there, and they came on the trains. And they told us, young mothers, give the children to the elderly people. And young kids, say that you're older.

But we didn't understand what he was saying, what they were saying. And my mother says to us, me and my little sister, you will be able to take care of each other, and I'll go with my youngest daughter, Frieda. And after the war, remember,

if we separated, remember, go home. And as we came down from-- there was such a chaos, such screaming, first the men went to one side.

And then the women, the children, the other-- and then Mengele, must have been Mengele, then, stood in front of us when we already lined up. And he started to point, you go here, you go there. And it came to my mother, and he wanted my mother to go where the young one goes. She was a beautiful young woman, but her premature gray-- and she says to him, she pushed up her kerchief and she says, I'm old and I'm gray. You don't want me.

He says, you don't want to? Go there. So she went between the old. And my mother looked out, and she seen all three of us are together, because she thought that my youngest will go between the children, so she'll go with her. Well, she realized, that we three are together, but she couldn't go no more. That was it.

So it was so fast, happening. They took us into the showers. We were told we were going to showers. We followed. Everybody was going, we were going. And we came there and there, they stripped us completely. They told us to leave all our bundles on the wagons that they will bring us later, all our belongings.

My grandma had her clothes. In Europe, they bury you in certain clothes made out of pure linen, and she had it made way before, they were in the '80s. And that's how the old people made their own-- they had it made certain way, from certain cloth, and every year, they used to wear it out. It shouldn't get stale. And they put it back in that package.

And that's what she wanted to carry with her, but she got off the train, and the guy says, you can't take nothing, you leave it there. We'll bring it to you. She says, no, this I want with me where I go. This is my things that I want to be buried. He says, where you go, you don't need that, but she didn't understand what he was saying, and he let her go with the bundle. She went with the bundle.

So when we came to those big place of so-called [? zone ?] shower, we were supposed to strip naked. And all you have to leave with you are the shoes. Keep your shoes with you. I was never exposed to anybody naked, very young girls, we were so ashamed. So we took the two shoes-- there were men going running back and forth. These are the men that worked there already.

And those Nazis were standing there, and so we took the shoes. We didn't know which way to hold one here and one there to hide. That's how we standing in front of all those men. Then they shaved all our heads, they shaved all over, but when we turned around, we couldn't recognize each other. That's how we looked.

And we were shaved and showered, and they gave us a bundle of clothes. So one got-- the short one got the big clothes, and the little one got, you know, but then we started to exchange. And then they put us into a barrack. And we said that tomorrow, they're going to relocate us. That's only the first night.

Anyhow, all night my sister, the young one, Frieda, she cried all night. I don't want to be here with you, I want my mother. I want my mother. I said, go to sleep. Tomorrow, we're going to go look for mother. Well, I don't know how we made the night, but we did it. The next morning, we volunteered to go bring the breads they were giving out.

So we were supposed to go-- I don't know how many girls, we were going for the bread. And you've seen barbed wires. There were people starving in one place, and [INAUDIBLE] place, another camp and other people. And we were going, oh, there must be my mother. There is my mother.

And it's called the Blockalteste, that was taking care of the group. And she was there already for many years. And they were very bitter. And they said, you stupid Hungarians. You want to know where your mother is? Look at that smoke. That's where-- that's when we found out that-- but we still believe that it is happening.

Well, anyhow, after a few days I convinced myself that it is true. And I had given up. I didn't want to live. What is there to live for? My mother is gone, I'm sorry.

It's OK.

We had with us my friend, Edith's, mother. She stayed with us and her sister, Sylvia. And she came over to talk to me, she says to me, what's the matter with you? I said, I don't want to live. My mother is not alive. I don't want to live.

She says-- I'll never forget that-- you have to be the mother of your sisters. You get a hold of yourself. And she says, you're the oldest. You must be their mother. And I realized that she was right.

But I couldn't eat no more. My heart was so weak, I couldn't eat. So somebody suggested that I should sell a piece of bread for a piece of garlic. That if you put a little garlic on the toast, the appetite will come back. So my sister, Margaret, went to sell the piece of bread and got a piece of garlic for it.

And she went to toast it, and there was a place that-- when you were supposed to be in your place, you're not supposed to roam around. The Blockalteste that caught her when she was going to toast my piece of toast, she gave her a hit in the head that hit the brick. She got like-- blacked out, probably, and didn't know what was happening.

And she got through it. She didn't give up. She went and got me toasted bread, because she knew that this is going to be like medicine. So slowly, they started to piece and piece, until I realized that we must go on and whatever happened will be. And that's what it was. So then a few days later, they had to tell us they were selecting a certain amount of girls for work.

And before we were doing hard work. A few times we were going a d pushing those barrels with stones from one place to the other, I don't even know for what purpose, but they made us do that. And Freida was so weak. And we sat her down under a tree, and me and the other sister was doing the work. We were supposed to produce a certain amount of work.

So we did it for her. And she should sleep, because she was so weak and so young. And praying to God that she wouldn't catch her, because if they caught her, we were all in trouble. Then a few days later, they selected, as I said, to tattoo us. So I was the first one in the line, and Frieda, the youngest one between me and the other sister-- we always tried to hide her if they should notice her fragile body, because this is what we had to stay every week.

We went to showers, and every week, we were stripped naked there in front of that Mengele, and he was making the selections. And those who were a little bit sickly, were going always on the other side, and you never see them again. And that's where we went to every week with my sister. Worrying about it, when will we lose her?

So the time came to tattoo. So I was the first one, Frieda was next, and Margaret was the third one. And they put us into-- we had a job to do to sort the clothes that the people were bringing. And it was next to the crematoriums. We used to sit outside and form a circle and open up a big bundle. And we were sorting the clothes.

Now, the clothes were going one way and the silver and the other and the gold, which we very seldom gave the gold over to them, because we already had some kind of a contact with the men that were doing outside work. And they told us, if you find gold and silver, try to give it to us, and we'll bury it in a certain place. After the war, we'll get it.

The gold and silvers, we used to try, whatever we were able to, we used to in the hands to hide. And then we were going-- it was called the latrine, in the toilets. In a certain time, we met there, those guys, and we used to stick them there, the gold. And we never-- anyhow, we were doing that kind of work.

And the crematoriums was next. So from the beginning, there were no-- nothing hidden. Everything was open, and we've seen those people go, and the screams were heard, and then the smell of those-- to this day, I cannot think barbecue, such horrible smells. That smell stayed with us. But the screams, nights, I hear them.

But what they did, they seen what was done to us. We couldn't eat, but they needed our work, so they wanted us to be strong. So they took blankets, eventually, and they put on the things, that we shouldn't see the people, at least going in there. But the rest, they couldn't hide. We heard the screams and we smelled the smoke.

Anyhow, so we worked there until the transports were coming. For then, we were safe, there, doing these things. So Frieda used to go under that bundle and sleep. And we used to do her work. And one day, the SS came, and he stood by the middle of the bundle, and she started to move. And that frightened-- I went underneath and I pinched her, she shouldn't move, she should stay still.

Thank God, because if he would've caught her-- first thing they did is shave off your hair again, shave off your hair again. And that was the worst thing, because once the hair started to grow a little bit, you would have something. And anyhow, this is what happened. So when the transport stopped, we were given another job to do. It was called [NON-ENGLISH].

They had a big barrack, and we were weaving some kind of ropes. We were told that it was going for the parachutes. And I'll never forget this, we were supposed to produce a certain amount of work a day. And our rabbi's daughter was with us, also, and she figured out when Yom Kippur comes up. So the day before Yom Kippur, we did extra, we shouldn't have to work on Yom Kippur so hard, because Yom Kippur, nobody's supposed to work.

So we were doing that. And somehow somebody gave us away, or-- they couldn't be so smart. I don't know what was-- because after we finished work, we covered all our work up, and we left for the day. And before we left, they came and they inspected the place, and they found that we did extra work that we could. We were punished. We could have produced all that time.

And then so when we came back to the barracks, they let us sleep all evening. We didn't have a chance to eat, whatever, we want a piece of bread that we should be able to fast the next day. Only late at night, they let us back into the barracks, but nobody wanted to eat anymore because it's Yom Kippur. We have to fast the next day.

And they made us work double the date, that Yom Kippur day, because they already proved themselves, that we are able to. Well, that was that. And then when this finished-- and what their philosophy was, when they see two people very close together, they wanted to break you. And one day they came, and they're going to select 300 girls for transport, to go off to work for some kind of a-- which we didn't know at that time.

And I was hoping that they will not separate us. All those time, we were together. We tried so hard. And somehow that day they came, and they selected me and then they selected my girlfriend, Edit, and they split us. They Split her from her mother and another girlfriend from her mother and me from my sisters. And there was nothing we could have done. That was it.

So we were separated, and we were put in a different lager, but we talked every night by the barbed wires. And we said to each other, remember, when the war is over, you go home. And a few days later, we went into transport, and I left my sisters there, not knowing what happened to them after.

And we traveled, I don't know how many days, on the transport, but maybe three or four days. And then we came-- it was in camp, it was on a hill, and the valley was a town, civilians lived there. And it was already 200 girls in that camp, and we came 300 more. So altogether, 500 girls in that camp. Which, compared to Auschwitz, was a resort.

And those girls that were there from the beginning didn't like us at all, because we brought along with us the Auschwitz Gestapos. The girls, the ladies, the SS, and they were very rough. The other girls had very nice-- they complained that we came. They said, you should have been burned there. Why did you come here?

Because they had it good. They had it good. That's when their problems started too. Started to be treated differently.

Do you have the name of that camp?

That camp was [PLACE NAME]. And in Czech, it was called [PLACE NAME]. Now, our job was to work for Krupp's factory. We were doing some kind of-- transistors. We were putting transistors for submarines, we weren't told what, but we had an idea. And, as I said, this girlfriend of mine, that she was separated, Edith, she was separated from her mother and another girlfriend, the rabbi's daughter. The four of us clung together.

We kept together all the way. We shared bread together. When we got bread, Edith says to me, you keep the bread. And we said, now you have a piece and I've got a piece. Now, when we started to work in that factory, there were also French civilians that were prisoners of the Germans, and they worked in that factory.

They were not allowed to associate with us, but they just used to pass us little notes. All over were signs that the Jewish hilflinge you're not allowed to associate, not allowed to entertain, not allowed to talk. Only the German foreman-- Wehrmacht, they were like the foreman or the engineers, told us what to do. They were allowed to.

And when they wanted to say something what, like personal, they said, don't look at me. Just look in you work, and I'll ask you a question. You answer. So one day, the French-- they had contact with the underground-- had passed us a little note. Don't put in this. Each girl had to leave out a certain part of that-- probably some sabotage. But they didn't catch on until weeks later, and everything went out, and then they came back.

And the director from the factory, he was an SS. And he, one Sunday, he came, and we were rushed out in [INAUDIBLE] Appell. And we knew something terrible happened. And he says to us that he knows that it was sabotaged on, and he wants to know who gave us the idea. Nobody would speak up, because-- so he says, this time, he lets us get away with it, but if it'll happen again, every tenth girl will be shot, if it'll happen again.

Yes, that was their threat, always. You are responsible for the next one. If one of you makes something, you are responsible for it. So we got away, then, with this. And they were always threatening us that you're not going to get out alive from there. There was no way. Then I remember one day, the food was terrible. There was a shortage of salt.

And even the Germans were already getting rationed, because the Russian occupied the salt mines, and they were short on salt. So we, of course, got just plain dish wash water. That's it. I couldn't eat it, but that foreman always left a little bit of salt in the cubby, there, and my friend, Edith, got a hold of it and she always-- it didn't bother her. I couldn't eat it.

So when we came to food, she always used a little sprinkle on that. I used to tell her, Edith, give me only one time the whole thing. Let me enjoy it. She just, no. No, a little bit. Every time, a little bit. That's how closely we worked. And that's how it was. I mean, as I said, we were not as abused as the others, but the fear was there.

There were bombings. We heard the air raids. They were running to the shelters, and they told us to come. When they are ready to go, we should go too, but we all refused. We said, if we have to die, let us die here. And we lived in a forest up on a hill, and they told us when the air raids get bad, that we should run into the forest. But if one of us are missed, then they'll shoot every 10th girl.

So we knew that even though we'll all be accounted for, they'll find an excuse. They'll do that. But we said, we're not going to go no place. We'll stay in our barracks, and whatever will happen-- we used to pray the bombs should fall here, but we were saved. So then they came, and then we see-- because down on the bottom, there was a station, and we'd seen civilians going. A main highway was there.

Civilians were running. You already see chaos there. You see the trains were full of people that were running. And one Sunday, we got up. Every Sunday we had to get up in a certain role call. I called [INAUDIBLE] Appell, and nobody's calling for [INAUDIBLE]. And we say, something's going on.

Saturday, we worked in the factory, and the French, like I said, those people passed us a note. It says, don't undress tonight when you go to sleep. Sleep in your clothes. Something's happening tonight. But then we got up in the morning, we've see the SS was still here, and nothing was happening. But they didn't call for [INAUDIBLE] Appell.

So we say, something is happening. And finally, around 9 o'clock or so, they called us. And we went, and there was that director from the factory with all the SS. And he told us, this way. We were frightened of him. He was a terrible, strong man, and he came through at least as one of the very strong Nazis.

But that day, he said to us, like this. Girls, I want to tell you something. Maybe a lot of you will not understand what I'm

saying now, but you'll realize it after we're gone. You are free. Yes, I try.

Many of you will not understand, he says, the word. But once we are gone, you'll realize that it is happening. Now, I advise you to stay here, because I don't know who's coming-- either the Americans or the Russians-- but we must leave. We must leave, because we have orders to leave you.

And I would advise you to stay here until somebody takes charge, because there is a lot of SS loose, and you could get hurt. This is what he told us. And they left. And they left, and we stayed alone. And, as I said, there were a few of very bad SS ladies with us, and one of them, she had a nervous twitch, was always throwing her head back.

And she was down on that station, and I am sorry to this day we didn't do something with her. But we were foolish. We could've thrown stones on them. But we did-- we went like this. Like that.

[LAUGHTER]

Only, we were at the windows down, because she could have seen that she was waving. We'll be back, she says to us. We'll be back.

But you got your revenge that way, I guess.

But that's the only-- but we could have done much more if we-- but we were not up to that, and we didn't think of that. Well, anyhow, that director of the factory told the alteste, the one that was in charge of the camp, Jewish lady, that she will be fair. She should divide whatever food there is, divide among the people and wait until-- as I said-- the Red Cross comes in, or the Russian, or the American-- whatever.

So one night, the first night, we stayed there, and it was horrible, because there were so many loose-- it's called the Black Hats, they were worse than the Nazis. They tried to break into the camp, and they were looking for girls.

Who were they?

They were volunteers from the-- Ukrainian volunteers. They were called the Black Hats. They were worse than the Nazis, and they wanted to break into our camp. And so we had civilian people working there-- men, Czechs-- as plumbers, electricians, I think, three or four. And they always said to us-- they called us sisters, because we were Czechs-- he says, when the time will come, we'll come for you. You'll come with us.

And they came the next day, and they said, those who are able and want to come with us-- because nobody came. No Russian and no American, we were left alone there, unattended, unprotected. He says, if you are willing to come, we'll walk-- there was no transportation-- we'll walk, and we'll get you to our homes.

And we decided after two nights, terrified nights, we are going to follow those guys. So 21 girls, we got together, and we walked all day to their homes. They lived-- I don't know how many miles we walked. And they took us into their homes. And on the roads we'd seen SS with trucks and tanks, and they knew that we were Jewish, [NON-ENGLISH], it was called, because we had big crosses, red crosses, on our backs.

And they offered us bread, believe it or not. They offered us bread on the road. We were afraid to take it. They might have poisoned it or something, but they did offer us bread. They were probably glad to be rid of the troubles, too. So we walked all day until we get to those-- and in the town, every family took in one girl or two.

They were poor themselves, but they did very well with us. They treated us beautifully. I happened to be in a home with a tailor, and he had a girl my age, and she shared everything with me. And they had, also, a man taken away from their house-- a boy, a 22-year-old man-- and they didn't know where he was. And they were hoping that somebody is as good to their son as they are good to-- and we stayed in those houses, those 21 girls, about three weeks.

Because there was no way of going nowhere, and not knowing anything about anybody who survived and who didn't.

But we knew this much-- we have to go home. We have to reach home. And after three weeks, some bridges were already repaired and rebuilt and the transportation resumed. So we said, we're going to set out to try to get home.

And, as I said, we were going, and some of the guys say, we'll go as far as we can with you-- young guys from the town-- with the girls, he says, we'll try to protect you, because you heard rumors, what was going on with Russians, what they were doing to the girls-- raping and robbing and terrorizing them. So one night, they were coming with us, and there was no way, they said, they could do it another night like that.

And they said, girls, come back until everything is settled. And if not, they're going back. They have no choice. They will not be able to help us. You are on your own. And we decided, yes, we want to be on our own. We must go home.

But what we had decided is we will travel by day and rest at night at the stations. And that's how we were going. Now, when we reached Bratislava, Edith-- we were together all the way-- and somehow we got separated. She tells a different story, and I remember a different story. She says, I insisted that I go home, because my father said so. I remember that I got up on a wagon, and she went on the next, and they were disconnected.

And mine ran away, and she stood behind. And I found myself all alone without my friends and without-- but I had no choice, and I was going home. But I got on top of the roof of the train because it wasn't-- first of all, they were crowded. Trains were very overcrowded with people, soldiers, and it was safer for a girl up there. I figured, I'll be all by myself. I'll sit up.

And I was sitting on the train, and we were standing on that station for many hours, the sun baking and everything. And next to me was a Romanian doctor, a soldier, also Jewish. And he talked to me, and he asked me where I come from and all that. And as the trains finally started to go, I hear somebody calling from down below the station, my name.

And I looked out and I see three girls from the next town from where I was born. I knew them, we were together in Auschwitz. And she says, where are you going? I say, I'm going home. She says, your sisters are here in town. And I started to cry. And this doctor says to me, that soldier, he says, why are you crying, my-- he called me my kin.

I say, my sisters are here, and I can't-- the train is going. He says, don't worry, the train will stop. And then what happened, I told you what the Russian had done-- they were gone a few hours, and something transporting machinery were going. They pushed us aside, and they let the transport go by, and they pushed us aside.

And as soon as the train stopped, I went off the train and I was running. I don't even know how many miles back to that station. And I asked the girls, do they know where my sisters-- He says, no, but I know they are here in town. So what had happened, after the war, they set up stations that registered. I don't know who ran it-- either the Red Cross or the Jewish-- I don't know.

But everybody was supposed to stop at certain stations, and you registered. You got food and shelter for passing by from times-- or two days or three to rest up. In every place, they had your names recorded. You had to put your name in it. So I was going, maybe, through four or five places until I found the place that my sisters-- they all wanted lodging me, I said, no I don't need lodging. I want to find my sisters.

And finally, I came to the place that somebody noticed that my girlfriend's brother was crossing the street, and he sees me coming. I ran in to get my sister. He says, here, your sister is coming, because when Edith came, and she met up with them, they didn't believe her that-- she says, your sister is alive. She says, how come that you're here? Where is my sister?

She says, she's on her way home. And then her brother ran in to tell my sisters that I'm coming, so they came and-- everybody cried when we got together. Couldn't believe you're alive, and I'm alive. But from then on we stuck together, and it was rough going, and we were aiming to go home.

I knew my father was alive, because in the first train that we set out to home, we found a Jewish boy-- what a coincidence that was-- and he started to ask us questions, and he says he was with people from our town. And I said the

name, and he says, yes, he knows very well, my father. And he says, he's alive, because he left them three weeks before the war.

And he was a strong man. He was fine. And my girlfriend asked him, do you know these people? He says, yes, I was with your father, also, and your brother, but your father didn't make it. And my girlfriend, Edith, she started to cry. And I said to her, Edith, don't believe it. It's impossible. The first Jewish man that you find from the other side of the world, he should know our parents-- it's impossible.

He just maybe was too nice to-- but it was so. It was so. But we knew my father is alive, and we were going home, because that's what father said. Go home. I had no mother. And I didn't think my brother was going to make it, because he was not as strong man too, but he did. Thanks to my brother-in-law, he was his best friend, and he saved him. And they made it.

And we already heard he's there, but we were going home. We're going to meet up there. And we got home-- I mean at home, that MunkÃ¡cs [INAUDIBLE], because I'd only been home for one night, just to see what's going on. It was horrible. It was a ghost town.

The main houses on the main roads were all Jewish, and some of them were already occupied, and most of them were still empty. And all you see is all the ghosts of those people. And we slept there. Only my brother and I were there, only one night. My sisters didn't even go there. And so we set up in MunkÃ¡cs, and we're going to wait for our father.

And we had a man, my father's friend, they were together. And one day, he said to us, he would advise us youngsters to get-- what are our plans? I said, we are waiting for our father to get home, and we'll start out to make a new life for ourselves. He says, he would advise us to go to Budapest or a big city, and get yourself jobs, and wait for your parents there. I say, I know that my mother 100% is not coming home.

And he hinted, your father-- 80%. Then I started at him. I say, why aren't you telling me what happened to my father? Because this is the reason we're staying here, because we already had found that an uncle, my mother's brother, is alive, and he wanted us to get to Czechoslovakia. So we had our mind made up, we go in there. The only reason-- we're waiting for father.

But he had no heart of telling us what happened to the father. He kept on sending us to this guy, and nobody wanted to. But you get the hint after a certain time, and then he didn't come, and they were together. But then we met up with somebody in Budapest, told us that he had died three weeks. This guy was right, he did survive it, and one night he had terrible diarrhea.

And he went to the hospital, and that night they liquidated the hospital. In the morning, he was no more. That was the end of him. So we had to start all over again. And so we were traveling from town to town until we settled in the Gabersee and got all of us together. My brother was very weak. I mean, he had vitamin deficiency and such big, big sores. My sister gave him baths and treated him like a little baby until he got to himself.

And then we came to finally settled-- as I said, we were traveling from one place to the other. And finally settled there, waiting. Next, we got contact with our uncles in America, and they wanted us out. My father had two brothers here and a sister, and they wanted us out. And they got to send us paper, and we're going to come to America.

And then Frieda, they offered Frieda a home in a children's home. They had a little privilege, better than ours. A little bit better food, better lodges and school. They sent them. They taught them English. And we decided that it would be best for her to have it a little bit easier. We cannot give her much there.

And she also left. She had preference through the quarters, the children first, so she came out here in 1947, and she left us behind. She was very unhappy, because that's all she had. We had plans. When we get all together, we come here, and we all three going to work. And we put her to school. It didn't work out that way.

She got here, and she got herself a job, and she roomed with our cousin. She was also a survivor. She came from

Sweden. And she used to send us little things that she got from here, and always this saying that one day, we'll come together. We'll be together. Don't give up, and don't give up.

And we had a hard time, I told you. That took us two years, for a little misunderstanding, to clear our things. And we finally, in 1949, came to this country.

We're going to pause now, and discuss it. So thank you very much, and we'll take our break now.

Thank you.

Thank you.