

Good afternoon. My name is Bernard Weinstein. I am director of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project of the Holocaust Resource Center. We are affiliated with the Video Archives of the Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University Sterling Library. Sharing the interview with me is Ruth Harris, member of the Kean College Oral Testimonies Project.

We are privileged to welcome Lillian Ettinger, a survivor presently living and watching, who has generously volunteered to give testimony regarding her experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. Mrs. Ettinger, you're welcome.

We'd like to begin by asking you to tell us a little bit about your life, and the town where you lived, and your family before the time of the war.

I was very fortunate that I, before the war broke out in 1939, that I had 10 years of very happy, secure, shelter childhood. I'm glad that I can rely on those memories, because those beautiful years gave me strength for later. Przemysl, the town that I was born, was very centrally located, very strategically located, very famous in Polish history. It was a fortress town, which many times with the invasions of different armies, this fortress survived and was never taken.

Przemysl was located on river San, very picturesque town. And because it was so strategically located, it was a very cultural town. Can you imagine the town had 20,000 Jews? They had many lawyers, many doctors. We had a theater, which was in the fortress itself, called Fredreum.

There were many synagogues. There was one very famous synagogue built here during the time of very famous Polish king, King Casimir The Great, who invited the Jews to Poland. Unfortunately, that synagogue was destroyed immediately in 1939, when the Germans came, and on Jewish New Year's, destroyed the temple and the synagogue.

Mrs. Ettinger, can you tell us approximately what percentage of the town was Jewish?

2/3.

2/3.

There were 30,000 inhabitants and 2/3 of this were Jews. The town had a library. The town had a theater. The town had a social club, and they had music soirées.

It was a very, very cultured town. It is so completely different from the pictures when I see from Fiddler on the Roof or little shtetl. My town was like they can in western Europe. It was a little Vienna, maybe because it was under Austrian occupation for so many years. And this was modelled, the culture was very much influenced, by the occupation of the Austrians before the war. And also because it was a link, railway link, between Vienna and Budapest during the First World War. That's why this town was so cultural.

My father of blessed memory was a very special man. He was a lawyer. He was a lawyer for the government. He was a lawyer for the army. The Polish eagle was very proudly displayed in the entrance to our apartment. Besides, my father was official translator for the government of seven languages.

My father was a handsome man, but I don't have any pictures. This is the only picture that I have. This was taken during the German occupation when everybody had to have Kennkarte, this was called the German identity card. And this card, I had with me, sewn with me. And this survived and I developed now into the big picture. And I'm fortunate to have this.

My mother-- my mother was a beauty. She really was like a vision but so completely unprepared for the years that will come. She studied in the university. She studied philosophy. I don't think she graduated. She married my father. And her life who was-- actually she was just planning all the receptions that my parents gave.

And when there was planning a birthday party for me for year to year. And it was such a major undertaking that I cannot really believe it, because I grew up thinking that my birthday's a national holiday. Once, it was a Japanese party, and everything was Japanese. And we were sitting down the mats. And the dishes she rented from Warsaw were Japanese. I think every child was sitting, every girl with Japanese umbrella.

One birthday party that I remember was a forest. All the children had the heads of the mushrooms. And there was a little dwarf, which we were used to draw the lots for battery. I could see now that my mother was very gifted. But she never had the chance to display her talent.

Were you an only child or do you have siblings?

I was the only child 'til 1939. Both my parents played piano beautifully. My mother, especially, was very gifted. Still 'til today, my cherished memories is of my both parents playing four hands on the piano. The tones of their music are, so many years after, still reverberating in my soul-- in my ears and in my soul. It was something really very special.

I had a governess. By the way, I was a tremendous disappointment to my parents, because I wasn't gifted musically. They tried to give me the lesson, and this was a big fiasco. And my parents were disappointed. Because in those years, a young girl were brought up had to have manners, and she had to play piano. She didn't do this. She wasn't brought up properly.

Manners, by the way, was something that was very, very strictly observed. And if I compare to the liberal atmosphere in our homes here in the United States, I just can't believe it. That this is in the same century. I could never sit down before my father sat down. I could never leave the table before my parents left the table. I had to ask permission to leave the table. I could never interrupt when my father was talking.

When I was a little child-- I have a picture here. This was my German nurse. I don't know why they chose a German nurse, but evidently that's how it used to be. Here she is in her uniform. I have a picture. Those picture luckily survived because my uncle, brother of my mother, was a physician in Brooklyn. And my mother sent some picture to him. And I'm lucky to have it.

I have a picture of a birthday party. It wasn't my birthday party. But this was a birthday party at the friends. And because I wasn't gifted musically, so they had to compensate by giving me dancing class. And then we had a very nice school of jazz, ballet lesson. And once a year, we used to have a recital at the local theater.

I had a governess who used to take me to the school. By the way I don't remember, if I mentioned, we had what we called the Hebrew Gymnasia school. It was a school six years of the grammar school, and then you went to the Gymna-- The level was unbelievable.

It was not a religious school like you have in the United States, the Solomon Schechter. We did learn the Jewish la religion tradition. But the boys were sitting together with girls. And no kippot on the head, but we learn Hebrew.

So I started to study Hebrew at the age of six. It was a Zionist-oriented school with all the teachers were PHD in the grammar school. And I have to be very grateful to this school, because my education was interrupted the age of 12. And even for so many years I didn't go to school, when I came to United States, I could make the high school in one year then graduate. I don't want to sound like boasting, but because I had such a good background, I passed the regions in algebra and all other, and I graduated within 10 months of Brooklyn High.

So you were well-prepared?

Because of the school, because of the school. And so as far as my childhood, you couldn't ask for a better childhood. I was very spoiled. Their only child. My sister was born eight months before the war broke out.

My mother had a companion. She was-- she had such an easy life. At least I'm happy, she had that easy life, those, because she died so young. She had a cook. Every morning, the cook would walk into her bedroom, and they would

decide what would be the menu of the day. Then there was a cleaning woman that used to come, and she would only clean.

And then was a woman who would come to make the laundry. We didn't have the machines at that time. And my governess was a nice woman. But at that time, I rebelled. And I was a bad, bad girl as a child. I gave my parents rough times.

I didn't want the governess to escort me to school. And I ran away from the governess. And now, in retrospect, I'm sorry. And all the tricks that I played, they had finally-- in 1937, my parents gave up, because they saw I was a rebel, and I didn't want to have her anymore.

So the first 10 years were beautiful years. Coming back to my father, my father had the biggest impact on my life that a father can have. Even that he was so busy, and he was going very often to Warsaw for the appellate court, but he always had time for me.

He always treated me not as a child but as a understanding person. He always-- he imbued me with the feeling for justice, and for that-- that nothing is black and white. He would come from a case, some traumatic case in the court, and he would take me on his lap. And he would tell me a story-- what happened, how this person was so unhappy.

And I would say, Daddy, but that's terrible. Oh, this poor woman, how she suffered. And he says, one second, my child. Let me tell you the other side of this story. And he would present the same story from different point of view.

And now I say, Daddy, I'm so confused. So who is right? What's wrong? He says, my child, I told you the story. You should know that nothing is black and white. There is always something gray in between. You always have to listen to the other side of the story before you judge somebody.

I had many toys. I had many luxuries. All this is gone. But the time that my father spent with me, his lessons in life, his-- this pride that he tells me that I'm intelligent, that I can understand it, I can do it, and where there is a will, there is a way-- this was like a beacon of light for me in later years because I lost him so young.

Until today, when I have to undertake a special step, I always think, would my father agree to it? Even today, when I have to sign a document, I remember his words, never sign a document, the smallest print, before you read every line and every word, because words are very, very powerful. And every word has a special connotation.

So that's all what I can say about my childhood. Happy, carefree, spoiled little daughter of a famous lawyer. I'm very proud of this father. My parents, both of them, instilled with me desire to travel. They used to tell me about the beautiful places-- Vienna, Venice. The rest of my mother was very romantic. The special place in Venice, Piazza San Marco. And this was always my dream, that one day, I will go there.

Besides, because my mother was so beautiful, she used to tell me stories about her admirers, who used to serenade her under the window. And I was hoping, here, I'm going to grow up, and one day, there'll be boys serenading me under my window. It never happened.

Then because my both grandmother died very young, there were all kinds of jewelry who were left to me because I was the only child. So once a year, my mother would call me, try the jewelry, and means, these ones, when you'll be 16, I'll give you this, when you'll be 18-- Luckily, we had those jewels. Those jewels saved our life during the war. We were left, through all the years of the war, selling my both grandmother's heritage.

Now in 1939, my life changed, because my sister was born. I was very proud, and the first few months were the wonderful. That September 1, 1939, everything changed.

Prior to that you had no warning of what was going to happen?

Prior to that, I remember my father walking and talking to other lawyers. And they were discussing already because

Czechoslovakia was occupied. And I used to go for the work to see my father, and I was a curious child who was listening to their conversation. There was Czechoslovakia occupied, the Sudetenland.

And they were talking, but they-- they were very naive, politically naive. They said, United States, France, and England will never allow it, never allow the Juden. Those people who were so smart in life, politically, they were very, very naive.

So we did know that there is a Hitler, but everybody would discuss he's a crazy guy. Germany is a cultural country. It can never happen in the country of Goethe and Heine and Schiller. This is impossible. And the other-- England and France will never allow it. And it will be stopped at the gate of Poland.

Do you think that the very fact that they were so cultured and educated maybe set up a protective shield around them that didn't let them see the truth, or?

And I wouldn't say because they were cultured, but I think because they grew up under German culture, Austrian culture in Vienna, they felt they are part of it. And my parents-- I wouldn't call it assimilated because it would be doing them a disservice-- but they lived in that milieu of-- you know, after Mendelson, if you are part of the party, part of the culture, and they believed in it.

They believed in it, that it cannot happen. Germany was a very, very cultured country. It's just like-- God forbid, I shudder to think about it-- could you, for a minute, think it could happen in the United States?

When people are professors in university and taking part in the government, my mother had a cousin who was a delegate to Polish Sejm, which was like the Congress here, he escaped from Poland on time, and he was in Polish government. He was a very famous name, man, Herman Lieberman. I mean, they were participating in the full life of the society. Unfortunately, they were so naive.

What happened on September 1, 1939 and were on--

On September 1, 1939, naturally, the rumors-- it was announced on the radio that the war erupted. My father and a group of Jews from Przemysl had a premonition that they should run away. And they were trying to escape, and a group of them said could they-- at that time, they were also told that something can happen only to men. But never, never in their wildest dream did they think something can happen to women and children, because they still had the idea that the German are cultural people.

So a group of men at that time escaped, and they were going east. And my father reached already the border town to Romania, the town called Zalishchyky where my aunt lived. And unfortunately, at that time, he found out that there was this pact between Russia and Germany, and Poland would be divided, and Przemysl would be-- half or Przemysl where we lived, would be part of Russia.

And he knew he left his wife and two children-- and one child only eight months old-- so instead of crossing the border to Romania, he came back. Then, I think, I don't remember exactly the date, but it was Jewish Rosh ha-Shanah when the Germans entered the town. We lived on Jagiellonska Street, which was across to the synagogue on one side and the temple.

They immediately burned the temple and the synagogue. And we were sitting-- we were also lived very close to a bridge on the river San. And I remember they were trying-- they bombed the bridge. And my mother was in the shelter with my sister, and with her nurse when I thought that the house would collapse, because I went upstairs to bring diapers for my sister. And I thought I would never see them again, because one floor of the house collapsed from the bomb.

And I have to mention that there were some decent German, too. Because our house was a very cultural house, so the head of the town requested two rooms in our house. And they placed a German doctor who was with the army in our house. And I remember he was a very friendly man. And the Germans were maybe two weeks in Przemysl before that. And he told my mother-- she told me later-- you better-- as bad as the Russians are, they say, you better stay with the

Russians because it's very bad for the Jews in Germany. So he warned her.

But on the other hand, I remember him looking at the books in the library-- my father had a very extensive library in French and in German-- and making a remark, I can't believe it was the culture of Jewish home it is. I enjoy reading all those books. So on one hand, he warned. And on the other hand, he threw those remarks.

So the German after the pact-- I don't remember exactly the date. There must be some place in the history books that German crossed the river because part of Przemysl remain German, and we were on the Russian side. This was a preparation for the bad times afterward.

And strangely, how you cannot escape your destiny. Or maybe, today, from the perspective of time, I think you should not try to escape your destiny, because the Russians immediately told us to leave our beautiful apartment. And they gave us a room in another house, which we were sharing. It was a very big apartment. Everybody had one room, and we were sharing communal kitchen.

And because my mother was not prepared for life-- she didn't know how to cook, the cook was still coming to help my mother in cooking. And one day the cook came running, and she said, I have a Russian boyfriend. And he told me there is a list of rich people and intelligentsia, what they called, who are going to be taken to Siberia. And he read the file about you, because you have a brother in the United States.

You are on the bad list, on the blacklist. But I want to save you. My sister lives in the outskirts of town. Tonight, they will be coming with trucks to take a group of people who supposedly are the intelligentsia, who are rich, and who have family in the United States, and you should hide in my house. And that's what we did.

I wish we never would have done this, because so many people-- and actually there were some people who died in Siberia. But maybe 10% died and 90% survived, which is just the opposite when you stayed.

So your treatment by the Russians was due to the fact that you were of a certain class--

Right.

-- rather than the fact that you were Jews?

Yes. And it was very unfortunate, because after, this when they took the Jews away, they didn't take another group. And my father was-- because it was a border town, they didn't allow my father to stay in the town, because he was, like, I don't know-- undesired, from undesired group, intelligentsia. So we were separated from my father. He had to go to another town which was like 50 miles more east. But he was allowed once a week to come home to visit us.

So the separation with my father, it was very, very hard for me. And we didn't have from what-- to live, nobody was earning any money. So the picture that stayed in my mind is my mother coming with a very big bag, and putting things in it, and going to the market, and bartering for food supplies for us. This was all the time during the Russian occupation.

And this was the first year. It was a very hard year, was a very cold winter in Poland. My mother was so delicate and I was standing-- I was only 11 years old-- 10 and 11-- I spent my nights standing in lines for supplies for sugar and flour so there would be food for my sister. And overnight, I became the grown-up. I became the brave person in our household who will care for the mother.

And this was the [INAUDIBLE] in my father. Every time he would come home, instead of saying to my mother, take care of the children, he was telling me, you are strong. You can do it. Your mother. Is like a delicate flower. You have to take care of her with I'm not here.

In 1941, again, we were trying to avoid the destiny. My cousin was living in Zalishchyky She was married to a doctor there. And doctors somehow always prospered even during the Russian occupation. And I wanted to see, visit my

beloved aunt, my father's sister. I have her picture here. Here she is with her husband, lawyer-doctor Norman Schiff and my beautiful cousin Mela.

And because I had good grades in school, you had the special privilege in Russian school system. If you were a straight-A student, they gave you certain privilege. So I remember going. It was in June. And that date I will never forget because this was June 21, and my father promised me that I would have vacation again. I'll go and visit my aunt, and the cousin. And they didn't want to let us out.

And my father, using his lawyer skills, said, look, she is a [RUSSIAN ], means excellent in Russia. Please let her go to the cousin. And the train was waiting, and my father was arguing with them, and finally, they let me go. And again, I wish he didn't interfere with the fate, 'cause before I reach my cousin, suddenly, the trains were stopped, and an announcement that the Germans attacked Poland. It was June 22, 1941. The pact--

Attacked Russia.

Attacked Russia. But they had, you know, this was Poland. But I mean, they crossed the border and Przemysl was the first, because they were just right on the border. So anyhow, I was stranded for many months, because I stayed with my cousin in Zalishchyky Her husband was taken by the Russian army. And we were alone. And first, the Hungarian enter Zalishchyky. They were part of the German Army.

Under the Hungarian, it was not too bad. Under the German, they took my cousin to work, and she had a little daughter who was five years old. So suddenly, I had to take care of her, and I learned how to cook and everything. And I was so proud of myself, that I am a brave little girl. And I started to have nightmares that I want to go back to Przemysl to my family.

At the beginning, we were not aware. We knew it would be very bad under the Germans. But it didn't cross our mind that they are going to kill us. We felt we would be working hard. They would confiscate all our property or our this, but the wars, we'd never anticipated.

And I just want to show, and I, for history reason, that people shouldn't put judgment on an entire nations. They were nice, decent Germans, too. It was already October 1941. if you remember, I left my hometown in June, so it was June, July a good few months, precious months that I could have spent with my father.

When I found out that there is a German, I don't remember what exactly his position was, but that he's going to Krakow. And he had a driver, a Polish driver. And I knew in order to go to Krakow, they had to go through Przemysl. I didn't tell my cousin.

I was at that time, in 19-- this was 1941. I was 12 years old, 12 and 1/2. I went to his home. And through the translator-- the Polish translator, because I didn't know German at that time-- I kneeled down in front of him and I said, if you have a wife and children, you are separate now. Maybe you'll understand my pain. My parents live in Przemysl. I am alone here. And if you can take me, I will bless you forever.

And the Polish driver translated it to him. And the German guy said, OK, my child, you can come with us. We are leaving in the morning. But naturally, you should not have your Jewish emblem. We used to wear those-- you remember? In Zalishchyky at that time, they were wearing yellow. In Przemysl, they were wearing a white one with the Star of David.

So anyhow, at 5 o'clock in the morning, I said goodbye to my cousin. And she brought me to the house of this. It was a good car. I don't remember what kind of a car, a private car. The German guy was sitting next to his driver, and I was sitting in the back. I was very, very tired because whole night, I was afraid that I would oversleep. And I was so excited that I am going again and to be with my family that I fell asleep.

And I woke up, and I touched my head, and I feel blood is dripping from my forehead. and I realized that I fainted, and I'm coming back. I'm regaining my consciousness. And suddenly, I see there is a big truck of Hungarian soldiers. And I

see the German is killed and his driver is killed. And I am there, I survived. I was just only cut here, because I was sitting in the backseat.

And then there's a German police, and Polish police and the Hungarian-- and everybody is asking me who you are. And somehow, I felt-- And they said, we are going to take you to the hospital. And somehow, I felt I can't go to the hospital. I have no papers, and they will discover who I am. So I said, no, I don't need it. I have relatives here. And when they turned their back, I jumped out.

And it was-- they did take me to the hospital where they were supposed to bring me in inside, and that's when I ran away. But I wasn't completely coherent, because this blood was dripping from my face. And luckily, I had good memory. And I remember that my mother's beloved cousin lived in Lemberg, and I visited her before the war. And I knew the address.

They had taxis at that time. This was October 1941. And Jews and Poles lived together. This was in the time before the ghetto. And I hired the taxi. And I said, when you bring me there, my aunt will pay for you. And he took me. The street was [NON-ENGLISH]. And I ran upstairs, I told the taxi driver to wait downstairs. And when I rang the bell to my cousin, I fainted. And they got so scared, because they opened the door and I fell down.

Later, they told me the taxi driver came running, because he was waiting, waiting for the money. And they paid him. And they took me to the doctors and lucky, it was just a cut, and a bruise, and concussion. And they notified my parents in Przemysl. And my father sent one of his previous clients, a Christian, a good Pole, who came and he took me with me-- with the train to Przemysl. And I was reunited with my family.

But what a difference. What a difference in June 1941 when I left and the condition at that time in Poland. My mother, my delicate mother, who was so helpless before, suddenly became a hero. She learned how to cook and to bake. And she-- I don't know if I mentioned before, I have to go back.

In 1939, when the Germans were approaching us, a Polish soldier, his name was [Personal name] -- I don't remember his second name-- ran away, rang our bell because we have the Polish emblem at the door, and asked, can you help me? I have to discard my Polish uniform, because otherwise, they would arrest me. And I want to mingle with the population. My mother gave him civilian clothes, so they burned his uniform. And he became a friend of the family.

And he was very friendly to us. And he used to come to us, and he would barter for us. My mother would give him clothing and all kinds of things, and he would go and sell it for us. And he would go to villages, to the peasants, and he would sell it for money. And he was like go-between.

And my mother was so proud how she's providing her family with food, because food was very-- we used to get certain-- the Germans gave a certain amount of calories -- a piece of bread, that tin milk, and some beets, marmalade, and-- Actually, thinking back, it was wonderful. But we thought we were suffering immensely at that time.

So my friends of my mother brought her their clothing, and my mother became a go-between. And [Personal name] was supplying all our friends. [Personal name] the good Polish [Personal name] I'll never forgive you. Because one day, when he really for-- in the beginning, he was bringing everything what he was supposed to bring.

And one day, when he collected a very big bundle of all kinds of things, suddenly, he did not appear. All the friends of my parents were saying, so what happened with the food that you were supposed? What happened with the money? We said, I don't know. Maybe he travelled farther. He will come. But two, three weeks elapsed, and he didn't come.

And my father took a tremendous risk at the time, and he said to me, it's a curfew in the evening. But we will take off our armbands. And you have to understand, at that time, when you disobey the German orders and you didn't obey the curfew, you would be shot on the spot. But we had to do something. We owe money to so many people. We knew where he lived, and we went to him to ask him.

As long as I live, even after the whole horror that I went through later, I feel this was the first step, the traumatic step.

The way he acted. That is then he said, you Jews be happy that I am not calling Gestapo and the police. You broke the law. You have the nerve to come here. You are lucky that I am a good Pole, and I'm not calling the police. You just disappear. And I don't want to hear anything that I owe you money. If you say one word, you'll end up you know where. And at that moment, he opened the door and two vicious dogs came out.

And we were so scared. And we said, all right. Forget it. And we left. And I looked at my father. My father, the brilliant lawyer, the father that could do anything. My father who was so honest, so good, who defended so many innocent people, stood there, defeated by injustice. The irony of this. And the tears were rolling down his cheeks. And for his little daughter, this was a shock she will never forget. And she will never forget this [Personal name] what they have done.

We were very fortunate. We returned to our apartment. Nobody spotted us. And we survived, and we were not killed.

Did you ever see [Peronal name] again?

No. I never, I never met him again. I don't know what happened to him. Then we started to give all our belongings to some friends of my parents through our previous servants who were very, very nice, who because my mother was always good to them, and they used to come and visit us. And the rumors spread everybody has to go to the ghetto. The ghetto is closing on July 15.

Being a child,-- and I was already-- this was '42, I was 13. Amazingly enough, I was happy that we are going to ghetto, because in ghetto they were no curfew. In ghetto, I would be able in the evening to go and be with my friends. I felt this was the best decision that they could take. We would be all together.

I didn't like the house where we are living. There were no Jews and I couldn't go to play with my friends. And I was very, very excited. And my father had connection, one of his previous clients whom he defended before, the Pole who used to work in the United States-- because many Poles used to come before the war worked hard in United States, come back to Poland, and buy houses.

So when they declared the territory of the ghetto, those Poles had to leave their houses, and go someplace else. And his house happened to be in the territory which was assigned for the ghetto. Little did we know that this was only a temporary measure, because the big ghetto, the Germans had their plans for us. But in the beginning, they gave us a larger territory.

So I remember his apartment was in some place [NON-ENGLISH]. My parents sold the diamonds, paid a lot of money to the Pole, thousands of dollars. And even I remember, my father got short with some money. And he, last minute, he borrow 500 zloty from a Polish lawyer, his friend from before the war. And said, I have to sell something, and I'll repay you in a few weeks, and gave him a promissory note.

Anyhow, we moved to that little apartment [NON-ENGLISH], which I was very, very happy, because all my friends were all around us. And we lived there not even two weeks when suddenly there was an announcement that the ghetto is going to be cut. And the parts, which were called [NON-ENGLISH] will not belong to the ghetto. And again, we have to move again.

They hired like a little truck, which was not really truck. It was with horses. And I remember my father, to the last minute, the lawyer, first-- he had with him all kinds of files of his clients. And he felt this is so important that he said to me, first, we pack that all the legal papers that belong to his clients. And this was loaded in the car. The furniture, already the Germans took away, and some we sold. So mostly, he was attached to his books and to the files.

And we had a friend who had two rooms, and she said that she will let us move in to her. She will give us a little servant room from before where we could move for temporary, because the building where she lived belonged to the ghetto. This woman was Mrs. Gottlieb. Her son later became a movie register in London, England.

And this is-- when I saw my father and mother going to the truck, I had to stay and watch my little sister. And this is the



last time I saw my father, because they grabbed him in front of the house. Some Polish-- I don't know if Polish, I think Ukrainian lawyers, were very jealous of him before the war, because my father, despite of anti-Semitic judges, used to win case after case.

They denounced him to Gestapo under some false pretext that he is making artificial Kennkarte, and Kennkarte in German means identity papers, that he's making Aryan papers for the Jews. This was a complete fabricated lie. And my father was arrested and put in the prison.

Today, looking back, I'm glad that it happened, because my father was shot a few days after in the Jewish cemetery. And at least, he didn't witness the atrocities and what our people had to go through afterwards.

But, because my father had a certain function before, my mother, and my sister, and I, we were saved thanks to him, because we had signatures. At the end of July 1942, the first axia, aktion it was what we called [NON-ENGLISH] in German. Germans announced that too many people are in the ghetto, because, at this time, there were 30,000 Jews in the ghetto.

Because they brought all the Jews from little villages and little towns surrounding Przemysl, that we are overcrowded and with very innocent-- they said that for hygienic reason, they have to take the people to another place, and everybody should pack their belongings, and take some food for 24 hours, and take some towels. They were so deceptive and everybody believed.

But we didn't go, because people who had certain signature that their husbands are working and doing certain, could say-- and I remember I was very naive. My mother said we have to go to Umschlagplatz. This was the assembly place. And I said, Mommy, why do we have to go there? They don't know that Daddy's not with us. We have his signature. Let's stay here. And my mother listened.

So my father protected us during that worst, the first thing when they took-- he protected us because on account of his signature. And I felt that at that moment, they cannot distinguish who is alive, who is not alive. By the way, I said before, the last time I saw my father alive, that I could hug him-- when he left on the truck, I saw him once again.

It was a very high building in the ghetto, the only building that had a balcony overlooking the courtyard of the prison. And two days before they shot him, somebody came to tell me that my father is in that prison. And he has a letter for me. I opened-- this was a Jewish policeman, because they used to plant Jewish policemen to pull the Polish policemen.

I read that letter. Even I don't have this letter now, this letter is inscribed in my soul with blood forever. In that letter was read, my child, I don't think they will ever let me go. They put some false accusation that I'm fabricating those identity card. This is a lie. Now, my child, you are only 13. But I believe in you. You are strong.

I leave your mother who is so delicate and so helpless in your hand. You take care of her and your little sister. And my suggestion is, whenever you have a chance escape. Escape to the city where your mother comes from Boryslav. Your grandfather, who was a physician there, saved many lives. Maybe the grateful patients will help you and your mother. And goodbye, my child, and be strong.

So I took over. And when they told me that once a day, they let the prisoners march in the courtyard, I climbed the steps to that balcony. And I looked at my father. The date is also inscribed in my memory forever. It was July 26, 1942. Next day, we heard the rumors. They took them out, the group of them, and they shot them at the Jewish cemetery.

After the first transport left, we still didn't believe that something happened to the people, because the deceptive Germans made them write postcards-- which they predated. And the postcards were arriving every day. We are working. We are very satisfied. The conditions are much better than in the ghetto.

They tried not to create a panic. So when the second and third transport left, people just willingly were packing their belongings and going to that place. We survivors were accused later on why we didn't defend ourselves. We were naive. We believed. We believed their words. We believed that we will be saved if we will work.

One day, a friend of mine said, Lillian, run to Judenrat In the post office, there arrived two letters from your father. The torture of it. I was running to Judenrat, and there are two letters. The Germans' efficiency still worked. I looked at the address. I couldn't understand. The letter he sent from Przemysl to Lemberg, and from Lemberg back.

What happened there-- I was born in Lemberg because even that we lived in Przemysl, Lemberg was a larger city. And my mother went to Sanator in Lemberg when I was born April 11, 1929. My father wrote her a beautiful love letter, thanking her, thanking her for giving a gift. He's so happy his little daughter was born.

While my parents were moving, and my father put his best suit, when they were packing-- evidently for mementos-- he put those love letters in his pocket. And they shot him at the cemetery. Later, the Polish population wrapped their clothing and somebody who took his suit. So the two letters the letters were mailed because, under German regime, the mail, the trains were working splendidly.

It went back to Sanatorium Salus in Lemberg, sanatorium Salus said, Mrs. Laundau is not here anymore. It's not '29, it's '42. The letter came back to Jagiellonska Street, where we didn't live anymore. And that letter found us in the ghetto.

The pain, the pain of those letters, reading the letter, the one step hoping maybe my father escaped, survive. The madness, the running, the hoping he's alive. The letters came from him, to the agony of weeding those letters. This will be forever, forever ingrained in my soul.

After being given the task by my father, I felt I have to do something and fulfill his wishes. I got a very good job. I got a job outside the ghetto. We were digging on the streets of Przemysl. We were reading on the streets, and we were digging. And this was a fantastic job.

It was called-- we worked for [INAUDIBLE], and many of my school friends from the Hebrew Gymnasium went with me there. And we worked together. And why I said it was a fantastic job? Because every morning, we could leave the ghetto. And we had the contact with the Polish population.

There were some righteous Gentile cooks of my mother who used to find me wherever I work and smuggle some food for me. Our ghetto was like ghetto in Warsaw. There was a big wall. There was a Polish policeman, Ukrainian policeman, and the German policeman.

And one day, through this woman, who was very, very nice and a good friend of my mother, and she used to come and yell at those Germans and the Polish policeman. He says, I want to send some food for my pani. My pani was for my lady.

She warned me. She smuggled a letter that she heard-- because her husband used to be a Polish policeman before the war. So through other policemen, she felt that there would be an action for children, and we should do something about my sister. She smuggled that letter to me in the morning while I was walking on the street of Przemysl.

And she said the aktion will take place tonight. When we were going to work, we used to leave 6 o'clock in the morning, go to work. Then at 12 or 1 o'clock, I don't remember, they used to march us back to ghetto for half an hour to have lunch, and then we return. So I couldn't wait. How will I communicate? My mother was still in ghetto with my sister. And when we came back for our lunch hour, my sister, I remember was three years old, was playing in the mud in this courtyard.

I found my mother, and I told her, quickly, quickly I have to take her out. They warned me there would be aktion for children, and there is no time to think. So we quickly washed her hand. There was no time even to wash her. And my friends were with me. And my mother packed a little belongings of my sister-- a little sweater, her little dress, whatever she need.

And I gave it to my friends. And each one-- because we couldn't take anything out, each of us put something. We didn't wear the brassiere, behind their bras, behind their sweater. And I was carrying my sister on my hand. And when we

were reaching the gate, sadly, my sister discovered-- she was only three years old-- that my friend has her sweater in her hand. And she yelled out, give me back my sweater. Why are you hiding my sweater? And she drew the attention of the Ukrainian and the Polish police.

They stopped our group. They took me out. And they say, where are you going with this child? The Ukrainian policeman was horrible. I can't even blame the German policeman, because he didn't know. It wasn't Gestapo. It was the German wehrmact, the police. And he, like, didn't participate. But the Ukrainian policeman was very cruel. He says, where are you going? And I fabricated the lie, half lie. I said, look, my parents are dead.

And for a Jewish girl to say, my parents are dead, my father was dead, you never say about the person who is alive or dead. But I had to lie, said both my parents are dead. And I don't have with whom to leave my sister, so I have to take her with me to work. The Ukrainian policeman would disdain and say, you're lying through your teeth. You want to smuggle her out.

And I said no, no. Please, sir, believe me. I just don't have-- she was crying. And I had to take her with me. So he said, OK. I watch for you tonight. And if you come back, with a sardonic smile at his face, if you don't come back with her tonight, we'll shoot you right here. And you will be example for all others.

We have to stop at this point and continue in a few minutes.

Yeah, OK.

Have a little water.

Can I have a little water?