We continue with our videotaping Lauryann Friedman. Mrs. Friedman, you were saying you wanted to go back to the time when you left your mother.

Right. As we were shoved, and pushed, and ordered, in German, of course, to march and be passed between these two Lager, which I learned the word later. And the people, as I have described them. We were-- after perhaps a 10-minute walk, we all arrived into a room where we were told quickly to undress and leave your clothes behind and go into another room, where we were given a soap and shower.

But before that, we were shaved. All area that can be shaved. By men, totally. How you call it, just completely shaven. And then we were-- we took this shower. And then we were thrown some kind of clothing that, as I said, what we saw the other people.

Now, we must have looked like that. Because we couldn't see ourselves. But we saw what we passed on the way in. The clothing were not assorted to size or-- somebody tall got something ridiculously short. And somebody who was heavy got something so tight you could hardly squeeze into it. And there was no choice.

And no underwear. Just an outer clothing. It was not a striped uniform. It was just a dirty clothes that must have been dumped into some kind of fluid to sterilize already. And it was full of lice. That was worn before.

Do you think that the objective of this was the kind of humiliation or degradation?

Every step of the way everything they ever did was to take away your self-respect and humanity. You were no longer a woman. And after a while, you were no longer human. See, the-- when a child draws the picture of a woman and a man, a woman will have hair.

Now, first thing they did is to dehumanize us this way, that women no longer looked like women. And perhaps it was good, because it could not have been that we had hair and lice in our hair. It would have been horrible. But I don't think it's for the good of it that they thought about it, but for their own reason of dehumanizing us.

So now, we were wearing something absolutely horrible. And we were ushered into this enormous Lager just to spend the night. Everybody was on the same floor, there were no different, you know, like you might see in movies that were taken then, how there were three layer of people in these--

Bunks.

--bunks. There were no bunks. I suppose the newcomers, they were just shoved in there for overnight. And it was locked up at night. And you couldn't go anywhere. There were no bathroom facility. And people-- there were at least 1,000 people there. A sea of people as I could see. And you were told to march in and sit down as you were.

So if I was against the wall, there were people front of me sitting down, and next to me, And left and right. And there was no way to walk out if you had to go to the bathroom.

And people, from exhaustion and fatigue of the trip, they fell asleep and woke with nightmares or wanted to turn over and hit somebody in the dark. And that person next to you started screaming. Doesn't know what was happening and woke up in fright. There were absolute chaos that first night.

And you could see nothing?

No, you could see absolutely nothing. You heard shots outside and dogs barking and it was dark everywhere. And all you heard is from different parts of that enormous room somebody screaming or hitting somebody and somebody crying. In the middle of the night, somebody got up and wanted to go somewhere and was so disoriented, they stepped on somebody right next to him. And that person thought she's being attacked. So it was really utter chaos. And people crying.

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By then, of course, we had no children around us. There were very old people. We were selected on the way before we got there. And of course, the night didn't last long, because around-- must have been at the crack of dawn, the first as the sun came up a little bit. We were already still in the dark. We were marched outside, and told, and pushed physically to line up five by five.

We had to now learn a new way of doing things. And from then on, we knew. We learned very fast, because the butt of a machine gun is very hard. So you didn't waste any time moving on and stand up in fives in columns and stand straight. And we were told that we will be counted. And so many people have to be on that count. And if it doesn't correspond with their numbers, we will be counted until it will correspond.

This was the Appell?

It was the Appell, yes. [GERMAN] Appell. But this didn't happen until about maybe 8 o'clock. And we learned to tell time by the way, the sun hit us and where our shadow fell. We had nothing on, nothing to tell time. And we got to know a little bit each other. And at least boys. And most people spoke the language we knew. They were all Hungarians.

And before we were marched out, we also were given some kind of black coffee and nothing else. That same night, later on, they distributed pieces of bread that really looked like made of straw and a piece of margarine. And that was our daily allotment for food.

As I say, we learned to tell time by seeing if there was sun, which way our shadow fell. So we had to stand there to be counted and make sure that we are in the proper position, standing straight by the time the Germans came, about 8 o'clock in the morning. That was from 4:00, there were still stars in the sky. And it was very cold. And little by little, it warmed up. And this became our daily routine.

The following day, we were assigned to go which barrack. We were going to stay. Later, I learned that this was the [GERMAN] Lager. And I was in number 12 barrack. And that was now where I existed.

That was your universe.

That's right. In this barrack, there were the bunks, three rows of bunks, and just planks. Nothing on it, just planks. And six people were assigned to one space that perhaps two people should have been. We were so squeezed that at night, we formed a fetus position in order to fit in into each other's shape. And if one person had to turn, everybody had to turn. Because there was no place.

And in between these planks which were not wider than that, sometime in the middle of the night, somebody who fell asleep, a leg fell through. And a person underneath felt it. And again, chaos, because you didn't know where you were or who was trying to touch you. It was just a most uncomfortable way. We had one blanket. And of course, one on the left folded and one on the right folded.

And when the early morning came, and the couple, the block eldest who was assigned-- and I can't recall her name. She was a Polish woman, very masculine-looking, very loud. There was some kind of brick construction in the middle of the barrack.

And she marched up and down on that to make everybody understood with her whip in her hand that when I say up, you get up. And when I say, you march, you march. Or else you learn the consequences. And I account the SS. And my life depend on the SS. And your life depend on me.

Did you see your strike anyone?

Oh, constantly. They were very good at it. They had to make an example of it. Whenever somebody had to be struck for whatever reason, it was brutal.

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Were you ever hit?

No. I have learned very fast never to have eye contact with anyone. This was self-preservation. Nobody told me about these things. I just learned on my own judgment.

Did you look down? How did you--

I looked--

--focus your--

--focused nowhere, just front of me. When the SS would pass and count very systematically in the morning, I was not there. I wove a certain no man's land around me like I don't see you and you should not see me. This was my-- from the very early time that I was there, I tried to be invisible and not to make eye contact with anyone of authority, except for the cellmates I had.

After a while, I have heard someone, someone's voice. I'm very sensitive to voices. And I heard a young girl talk. And I liked the voice. And I repeated the words she just said. And I said who said such and such a thing just now? And she was two bunks below me. And I said, I'd like to meet you. And the first chance we had, we met. And we remained friends. We sort of looked out for each other.

What she said was obviously in Hungarian.

In Hungarian, yes. But it's her voice that appealed to me, not what she said. It had no special meaning. But this is how I made friends with one person. She has remained with me all the way through the other camps and liberation and died after. And I was in the same bunk with her. We ate from the same [GERMAN], as they call it, which is a plate. And sometimes from the same spoon.

She had a very fast tuberculosis. She began to cough. And I remember hearing her little cough. But at the time, I didn't know what it was, what it meant. And it got worse and worse. And she died the day after we were liberated.

Was she the same age as you?

Yes.

What was her name?

I don't know her last name. I only know her-- even then, I think only I knew her first name. Her first name was Magda. And then it was again chaos when we were liberated, just as much. That I remember, I was there. She was buried there. And I went on back to Hungary from that point on.

So coming back to Auschwitz. You could see through the different Lagers. Because it was open only barbed wire separated us and that was as far as your eyesight could see. You could see far, far away that those were men.

And one day, I observed somebody being beaten. I was outside. I had to stay where I was. I could not move from there. And it was just a horrible sight. Even far, far away, without really recognizing expressions or faces. Just a group of people beating one man, a group of SS. It must have been at least four or five Lagers further from me.

Each Lager had 32 barracks. And each barracks had about 1,200 people in it. Some of these barracks were latrines and some were washrooms. The washrooms were open and that you could go only a certain time, usually before you were stand to be counted.

If we had to wash our clothes or our faces, we had to go before. And it was 3 o'clock in the morning. And that's how we washed our clothes. We were totally naked, because that's all we had. But we were going to wash. And we washed our

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clothes and put it on wet. And we went outside, and sometimes it got stiff from the cold. And it thawed out on us and dried on us before the Germans would come and count us around 8 o'clock in the morning.

Some people fainted from standing there. Some people had to go to the bathroom. They were unmercifully beaten.

One day, some somebody overslept from exhaustion and hunger, and the people who were next to her didn't notice. They ran out. They didn't know that this person didn't go with them. And the count didn't correspond to the numbers that they supposed to counted. And every 10th person was shot. Every other row, one at the end was shot.

And other times, people were-- and the person who overslept was beaten. That was the last day she ever didn't wake up. From then on, she was just beaten to death. Kicked, beaten all the way. And dragged.

And this was a very-- an occurrence that happened more and more often as the people got weaker and weaker and selections began to happen daily. I have found two very good friends who were from Ujpest, from the school where I went to, sisters. And their name I remember, of course, because we were in school together. Eva and Edith Schwartz.

Edith was in class with me, a beautiful girl with magnificent braids down to her knee, big, thick, black braids. She played the violin. She was a very talented girl. And her sister played the accordion, the younger one.

And at one point, we were lined up to be for selection, which occurred most every day as time went on. And rumors had it that if they recognize you, that you were sisters, surely one of them will be sent to the wrong side. We never knew which one was the right or wrong side. Just to make the other one suffer more being separated.

So they didn't want to stand next to each other. And I stood between them. And as we came to the end of this, the barrack where the selection was being taken place, one was sent this way and I was sent the other way. And the one who stood behind me was also said the right way. Same as her sister. Unbeknown, I think, to the doctor who selected us, that they were sisters.

And at the time, neither they nor I knew which one was the right place to be. Only later-- I never met them again. So this is how it happened every day.

And as the war progressed, these selections became frantic. And the shouts at night, people being taken and carried, taken by trucks screaming in the middle of the night.

And of course, Auschwitz was permeated with a scent that is indescribable. First of all, there was this chemical that they use to disinfect clothing with. It had a horrible smell. They dumped these clothes that every time we were selected, we were given a shower.

And our clothes that we wore, we had to leave where it was and move on. And we were given others. But none of them were any different. It just was disinfected and something else.

I remember I got something to wear that was so long on me that I tore off the bottom of it and made a belt. And in between my legs, another part of it to be like an underwear.

And of course, something was in our food that we didn't menstruate, which was to the good. And the food, too, had a special smell. I don't know what was in it, but it smelled something awful. And it came in big buckets. And everybody had to take turn to drink from it. Of course, you know, people are people and human. And each tried to take as much as possible.

Was this soup?

It was absolutely horrible. Sometimes we found pieces of wood in it. It looked more like what we used to give to the pigs, the leftover food. And it was something they put in it to make it thick. It was thick. And it had a horrible smell to it. It really was not palatable, nor for-- for looks, it looked gray.

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And everybody had a spoon. And that was really the only thing you owned in life, a spoon.

So everybody was trying to see if in the bottom, there is something in that to eat. Sometimes we found pieces of wood, other times we found shreds of meat. And someone said to me that that meat probably is horse meat. After that, I just took enough to satiate my hunger to the very least. Because the thought of it just turned me off, even though I was very hungry all the time.

And I don't know what I must have looked like. But somehow, I passed every selection, which was remarkable. Because when I am, in a way, the most in normal life, I'm not more than 100 to 105 pounds. So I must have weighed half of that.

And I remember one day, new people came into the camp. And we met them at the latrine. That's where you met people. You were not allowed to linger on for long. These were very beautiful people with skin I had never seen before. Even their hair was shaved, but it was-- you could see it was blond, blue-eyed.

These were Polish Jews. And they were just let out from the Lodz ghetto. And they were skin and bone. And there, I have never seen anything like that. Their ears, earlobes were transparent. But they were still beautiful. And to me, this was a revelation, to see a lot of blond women with blue eyes, with magnificent skin.

Now, it didn't last long. We also came with decent skin. But then, it didn't last long. Because then we were eaten by lice. And everybody scratched. And this was also told from one to the next, don't ever scratch. Because as soon as they see a blemish on you, you'll be eliminated.

The C Lager, as I mentioned-- later, I found out, I was never tattooed. And when I heard that there were people who were tattooed-- and I saw people being marched out to work in striped uniforms, I said, how come they have a uniform, we don't?

It turned out that this was a [GERMAN], exterminating Lager. That is, they didn't want to account for us in numbers or names. They didn't give us a number. And it was at the end of the war, which we didn't know. To us, this was the beginning of the end. That's why we never were given uniforms.

How long were you there?

I was there from June-- and I don't know the exact date. You see, from the time we were taken from this designated, star-marked building in Ujpest through the brick factory, which was the concentrated place next to always a railroad, I lost track of days. And I don't know the date. I could research it. But I never went back to research it. So anyway, then June--

Do you remember the days getting colder? Or do you remember the days getting shorter? Or any--

Well, later on, I knew the date. But I don't know the date from the time I arrived in Auschwitz. I was there through the summer. All the way till the day the selection, as I say, accelerated. And one day, there was another selection. And we were taken and locked up in one barrack. And for two days, we didn't get anything to eat. And we didn't know why we were locked up there, what was the purpose of it, what they made us wait for.

And then the following day, it was a horrible, rainy day in October, October the 16th. An [GERMAN], a German soldier woman came and marched us and we wound up standing in line to the crematorium. There was no place. No place to get in, no place to go anywhere.

And another one came running. And I still have this picture in my mind, because she was shouting in German. And I didn't know too much German, but I learned a little bit. That that is not a transport for the crematorium. That is not a group for the crematorium. That is a transport. Transport, she was shouting.

And while we were waiting there, are a lot of people were praying, crying. And I was-- I felt very numb. By then, I was

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told what was happening, that I will never see my parents. The people who were there for a long time, they were eager to tell you and put you into reality, really. I don't know if they did that because they felt they had to warn you, or because it happened to them already.

So some of them were even resentful, saying that you were still in your bed when we were here already. And you were untouched. You were the last one to be taken.

How did you know it was October 16th?

This I know because we kept dates. We had our way, just like prisoners have ways, to mark the dates. And those who were religious even kept the dates of holidays, by being told from one to the other. And then somebody fell out and never been seen again, the other one knew it. And this was October 16th.

And so we were told to turn around and we were given a shower, and still, new, horrible clothes, and marched into a wagon. And we left Auschwitz. And everybody, all through the time I was there, always said, the most important thing is to leave Auschwitz. And I didn't understand why. I didn't know there were other camps.

And I didn't know that Auschwitz was an exterminating camp with all the crematoriums. I knew it was there, but I thought if anywhere else they would take us, perhaps it would be the same thing.

So no, I was taken out of Auschwitz. And we arrived into a small camp, with a very beautiful woman [GERMAN] who wore a beautiful suit. Her name, I remember, was Lola. No on the last name. She was in charge of us.

Rumors had it that she was the mistress of Mengele. I don't know if it was true, was it invented. But someone said that Mengele, who was so almighty, wanted her out. And that was a sign that the war is coming to an end. And this is why there were all the selection, they were eliminating and getting rid of everybody they could possibly destroy.

And some-- we were lucky that the Siemens corporation from Nuremberg has asked for 500 workers. And I was selected among them. And as much as they were slave labor keepers, if it wasn't for Siemens, I would not have survived. Now, Siemens treated us better. First of all, it was a small camp. We were 500 of us. We were given an individual dish to eat from, which was incredible. We felt almost human again.

How far was Siemens from Auschwitz? And how long did it take you to get there?

I don't know. I really would have to look it up. But it didn't matter. It just didn't matter how long we spent in transport, or where we were going, what they were doing. It was already-- I was totally numb. I didn't look to survive. I didn't do anything in order to survive. If I survived, it's sheer coincidence.

Do you remember thinking that you were going to survive?

No. No, it seemed very hopeless to me, the whole thing. It seemed-- and I had no control over anything. And I didn't. I had to get up when they told me, and go to bed when they told me, and eat when they told me, and eat what they gave me. And to follow exactly orders and directions as I was told. And that's the only thing I could do.

Did people talk about escaping?

No, never. From Auschwitz, I don't know if there was escaping. Perhaps among some men, I have heard later. But this was on programs that I have heard about. Not while I was there. The security was such that it was impossible. And first of all, we didn't even know what was nearby, where were we located?

Once in Nuremberg, we didn't know we were in Nuremberg. We were marched from our barrack to another barrack, where some kind of machines were set up that we were working on. This was part of whatever they were manufacturing.

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It could have been parts of radios, but small parts. And we were told what to do. And you did that under supervision and to your best of your ability. And that was it. But what-- was it toys, was it toward the bomb that I was working for, or radios, or whatever? No idea to this day.

Now, this young woman was very energetic, whose task was to be guarding us. She was Jewish, Polish, absolutely the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. To me, she was like the wing victory. Bodily beautiful and well-dressed. And she was in charge of us. And she was very verbal and vocal to the local Germans who were of high rank SS whenever they didn't come to count us.

Now, this was in the winter from August-- from October till March. We marched out, we had no clothes on. And when they didn't come and made us wait outside in the freezing weather. And when they came, she actually shouted at them. That what do you think? Why don't you come? These people are freezing here.

And we, as the people, we couldn't believe that anybody can talk to the SS like that. So you see, the rumors that were circulated were confirmed by her act toward these people. Obviously, they must have known that she was somebody or that she had friends in high places, that she should allow herself to shout at the Germans in front of us.

And they were very kind to her. Hands off. And she had her own person who-- a young woman who shared her bunk with her, and made a bag for her, or take good care of her clothes and her food. She had very special privileges.

Afterwards, did you come across any accounts of her? Was there anything ever written about her?

No. But I have to add a postscript after I am told everything. I will tell everything. I have met somebody, by sheer coincidence, about a year ago on a Lower East Side in one of the shops. There was no one else in the shop but me.

And when the lady came to me, asking me if I can help you, I detected an accent. But I wasn't sure what accent it was. So I dared to ask her, and said, are you from Europe? She said yes. She was very-- she was giving me answers like yes or no.

Guarded.

Guarded. And I said, I can't place your accent. She said it's Czechoslovakian. But by then I heard a Hungarian sound in it. She happened to come from that part of Hungary that was given to Czechoslovakia after World War I.

So immediately, I was curious. I said, were you in a concentration camp? She said yes. So in order to allow her to answer me again-- and I didn't want to be too inquisitive because she was giving me such a guarded answers-- I said, I was, too. That's why I'm asking. To put her at ease. I said, where were you? This allowed me the next question.

She said, I was in Auschwitz. I said, so was I. Where in Auschwitz? She said the C Lager. Again, not more than what she had to answer. She was polite, but just to the point. I said, which-- said, were you there? How long were you there? She says, till the fall of 1944. I said, I asked her, how did you get out? She said, I was sent to another camp. I said, may I ask you where? She said, to Nuremberg.

And I knew that she was among the 500. I said, I was there, too. And still, there was no customers to interrupt us. This was a shop where I went upstairs where she was selling coats and jackets. There was nobody. I said-- and by then I saw a little taboret there. I said, may I sit down? I thought I felt faint. I never met anyone from this group.

And she said, of course. I said, I want to ask you something. Were you guarded by a woman named Lola? She says yes. I said, tell me, was she beautiful?

You know, when you are alone with thoughts for years and years of a certain event and memories, you have the feeling that maybe I invented this. Maybe it's my imagination. Maybe it wasn't so. There is nobody that you could discuss it with, verify it with. And this is long ago.

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And I said, tell me what she looked like. And she described her. I said, was there a young girl shot when she went out in the middle of the night to steal a potato from where they kept the potato covered with straw and dirt, soil?

That's how they kept the potato from being frozen in the winter. And that was our ration. And there was a young girl who went out at night to steal a potato. She was shot by the guard.

She says yes. I said, well, for the first time, I have somebody that I can talk to. That it was really so. And this is not a figment of my imagination. And then we talked, and I said, do you remember when we were sent to Czechoslovakia?

She says, we were not all sent to Czechoslovakia. Well, I didn't know that until I met this woman, that half of the 500, or 499 at this point, were sent somewhere else. I still don't know where. But we were only 250. When you are in a crowd, you have no idea if you are 250 or 500. I know originally we were 500.

And she told me, she said, only 250 of us. Now, she stayed. She survived with her sister-in-law. She didn't have to talk to anybody. And if she had to, there was somebody who was with her, who experienced and lived her experiences. And I was isolated--

But you had no one.

--all these years. And this is part of the reason she was not eager to talk about it. If she ever wanted to talk, her sister-in-law was there. I have her name and address. She was very sweet. And I said, can I come back another time to talk to you? She said sure. So I hope I can find her again if I gather courage again to talk to her.

But she's the only affirmation of this period, of my incarceration, would you say. Or I was a [GERMAN]. And you know the word in German? I was shocked not too long ago when I was in Europe. And I heard somebody who was a prisoner on the radio, a German radio in a car. And they mentioned the word [GERMAN]. And I said, that's me. I remember being referred to as a [GERMAN]. That's a prisoner.

See, we think about concentration camp, being in a concentration camp. But actually, there is a word for it. We were prisoners in a concentration camp. It's very seldom said it as a whole.

Anyway, they bombed our little haven at Siemens, where we were eaten nightly by bedbugs. We were sleeping on straw beds. The bed inside-- the inside these canvas mattresses, they were straw. And in the straw, there were thousands of bedbugs. So if that didn't wake us, then the air raid woke us.

And we were bombed daily. And daily, we heard air raids. And we were very happy. We knew that that meant that they were fighting for us. Somebody was fighting for us. Siemens was bombed out. The waterworks were bombed. We had no water and no food.

So they marched us every day to the city of Nuremberg, which was an unbelievable site. Bombed totally. Rubbles everywhere. And our job was now to find unexploded bombs under the rubble as the buildings collapsed. So brick by brick, we had to carry the bricks from one side to the other in order to clear it and put it in order, all under supervision.

And we saw local people carrying bundles and riding on bicycle, standing on line near a water hydrant, waiting for water themselves. And in March, I'm not quite sure of the date, we were again marched into a wagon and sent somewhere else.

And that's when we were sent to Czechoslovakia. Where we were, we didn't know. But this was, again, two barracks. One in a distance that we never knew who were there. There were women. We were working in an underground something in a forest.

And we saw men being marched to another area and always guarded. Waving. Some people waved when the German soldier didn't see us. Simply for waving, for solidarity, nothing else. But we never had any conversation. Somebody, I don't know who, how much it was true or not, said that they were Italian and French prisoner of war. But I really am

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not-- I don't know more than that.

And we worked carrying something that I still don't know what it is. It was like wooden cases with very heavy handles. And we were carrying it from one place to another. Now, it could have been explosive in it. I don't know. This was our job in Czechoslovakia.

This was from March until we were liberated. First by the Partisans, who-- the liberation was really quite an incredible story. Because the Germans, before they would leave-- we were locked up in a barrack. We couldn't come and go out. Nobody came in. But we heard a lot of noises on top.

And later, after liberation, we were told to move out because they have stored gasoline and covered them with trees. And they plan to put us all at fire. And as I say, we were locked up.

There were some windows way up high that somebody had to stand on somebody else's shoulder to look out. And it was quiet. There were no Germans around us. There were no noise, nothing. And we were like in a vacuum. And we slept that way. That was it. We didn't know what was to come.

First thing, as soon as they came, somebody again start to climb up there to look around on either side of these high windows way up. And somebody said, there are soldiers. But we didn't know what. Whoever looked out didn't know what uniform they were wearing. These were the Partisans, the forerunners of the American Army. They first got there.

These were Czech-- Yugoslav?

Yugoslav Partisans. Of course, I couldn't-- I didn't speak to any of them. Again, I still maintain the same thing-- never to talk to anyone unless you have to or you're questioned. If I could have crawled into underground not to be seen, I probably would have done that, too. This was my self-preservation, my instinct of self-preservation.

I also, during that time, invented something. I thought I invented it. I didn't know there was a word for it. I repeated to myself when I was very, very hungry or very, very cold that you're not cold, you're not cold, until that's all I could hear. And it actually-- it was self-hypnosis.

I didn't know there was such a word. But this is what I used, out of my own invention, and out of the necessity of standing straight when your feet were frozen. That you're not cold, you're not cold, until I didn't feel the cold or the hunger.

And as I say, I didn't talk to these soldiers, who I-- they were not well-clothed or clean. This is why we had trouble identifying who were they. But they were not Germans. Already, this was a plus. A very great plus. They had no dogs. They had rifles, but no dogs.

And they came through the door, and shouted, and start to push it in. And we, on the other side, from inside, were pushing it out. And actually, we broke out with their help the door. And somebody who understood the language translated that we were liberated. These were people on our side. And the war is over.

And we didn't see any Germans. The night before, there were a couple of shots. The Germans ran away, literally, bodily, physically ran away into the nearest forest to disappear and probably change into some other clothing.

We were not guarded by Germans. Suddenly, we had to-- we had another thing to face-- freedom. And it was not easy. Suddenly, you were even more vulnerable. Before, we were guarded. We told what time to get up, where to go, what to do. Suddenly, there was nothing. It's like nothingness. Being totally exposed to the world, no longer being guarded, not even by the enemy.

So we had nothing to do but go back to the same place where we were used to doing and being. The following day, the American soldiers arrived. Tanks. And a lot of people spoke Yiddish. And one of the first tanks had one GI standing there, and shouting, I am Moishe from Brooklyn. And somebody who spoke Yiddish understood. So he was Moishe, we

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were all right.

And that was your liberation?

That was my liberation. The 5th of May, 1945.

Where did you go?

Now, I lost my very best friend. She's the one who died.

Of tuberculosis.

The day after. And there was another young girl, a very beautiful young girl. I lost touch with her totally. She was there with her mother in Auschwitz. And that's why I didn't know her better. Because she was with her mother. They formed a duo together to survive. And I remember her mother very well. Her name was Raisa. And so she looked after her mother. And that's why I didn't know her better.

But she was in our transport. And then I saw her later, but without her mother. See, the last time we were selected in Auschwitz, her mother was rejected. And she came out. But I had my friend and my loyalty to her. And until after the liberation, until then, I didn't become any closer to her. But then, now that she was alone also.

And with this girl, she spoke Russian, and Polish, and Yiddish. Well, those were good languages to speak after the liberation. And we went to the railroad station together. And we heard Hungarian speaking. And of course she spoke Hungarian, too. And we asked the soldiers, where were they going? And they said, they're going to Hungary. Well, that's all we needed. So we got on the train.

But this was an incredible sight. After the war was over, Europe was like a beehive. Or perhaps an anthill. Everybody was going to another direction. Soldiers who were in Czechoslovakia were going to every other place, wherever they came from. And to get on a train was horrendous. It was all soldiers. And on top of the trains and on the steps of the trains. So we squeezed through.

I was a very shy child and very, very protected. At home up until that point. And I was not very streetwise. She was much more so. And it was a good thing for me to be with her. So she pulled me on a train with her.

And we struck up conversations with Hungarian soldiers. And one of the Hungarian soldiers said to us, if you see any Russian soldiers, don't talk to them. Because she spoke in Russian. And we didn't-- I didn't understand what it was all about. I never saw a Russian soldier before.

But of course, we encountered. Soon after, some Russian soldiers came on the train. And I was sitting next to these Hungarian soldiers. And other Hungarians. So some of them on the floor.

And these Russian soldiers asked the Hungarian soldiers in Russian, [RUSSIAN]? And that's where I learned the word, Hebrew? And he answered, no. And then he asked, [RUSSIAN]? Which I never heard before either. So after he said, he said yes.

So after they left, I asked the soldier what was he saying. He says first, he wanted to know if you were Jewish. Then he wanted to know if you were my wife. And he said yes. He obviously knew the consequences if he would have said no.

So you see, as much as there were antisemitism in Hungary and among the Hungarians, there were still some feelings left after the war. And this is how, with this train, we got back to Hungary. I don't remember what towns we went through.

But before the border, the train stopped. Everybody got off to stretch their legs, to get a drink of water while they put on water on the train. And there was a few minutes before they would cross the border. Soldiers gathered and started

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singing together. And others were just talking. And this was the point from where I have a very terrifying story. But I don't think we'll have time on this side of the tape.

I hope that you can come back--

I will.

--and tell the story, and finish.

Because this was really my first encounter face-to-face with a Russian soldier. I think we're going to stop right at this point. To be continued.

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