

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Guta Blass Weintraub
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Guta Blass Weintraub, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on January 4, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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GUTA BLASS WEINTRAUB

January 4, 1990

Q: Okay. We are beginning. Would you tell me your name please?

A: You are starting?

Q: Uh, huh.

A: Okay. Uh...My name is Guta Blass Weintraub. My maiden name is Blass and my married name is Weintraub.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born...born in Poland in a large city, the second largest city called L O D Z, Lodz [_ód_ in Polish].

Q: In what year?

A: It was...uh...January 22, 1924.

Q: Would you tell me about your family and growing up in _ód_?

A: Well, uh...basically my life was, as a child, was sheltered and beautiful and I remember only wonderful things about my childhood. I had very caring and wonderful parents. My father...uh...was a very educated man, and uh...he had a factory of...uh...uniforms...uh...sort of like...sol...for soldiers or like...uh...boy scout uniforms also and like preparatory ...uh...school uniforms...uh...and...uh...we were slightly upper middle class family, basically fairly well-to- do. I had a younger brother and...uh...we had a very good life. We used to go..., my brother went to...uh... Jewish private school where they learned Hebrew and...uh...so on. We went to a private kindergarten. I went to...uh...uh...regular ...uh... public school which was...uh...only Jewish because this is the way the system was in Poland that...uh...the Jews had their own, ...then their own schools and the Polish people had their own school. And the reason for that, evidently, was that the Polish people were not going to school on Sundays and we did not go on Saturdays. So it was like, ...uh ... basically...uh...helping us not to be sacrilegious and so on, so it was good and we felt good about it. Of course, as far as antisemitism is concerned in Poland, I as a child could...uh... notice things quite a lot. I occasionally would notice or hear that...uh... someone...uh...Jewish was beaten up or that...uh...you know, something...uh...little schul which was, you know, a small little synagogue...uh...that was...uh...vandalized or burned or so. Those were little things and...uh...and my parents tried to ...uh...shelter me from it and for me not to, you know, grow up with a complex of these things but I knew of it. I...uh...when I was growing up,...uh...children, Polish children my age...uh...some let me know and would say something bad, "You Damn Jew" or something like that, to me. But...uh...the majority did not because

maybe children did not to such extent understand antisemitism or practice it as the older did, older did. So, that was it and...uh...I don't know what else I can tell you. Life, in my opinion, was beautiful and...to me. Of course, I know that there were...uh...people of lower financial class that maybe did not have it so good in...in Poland, but they were also people upgraded...uh...as far as financial situation and so on is concerned and they most probably had even a better life...uh...but... uh...I don't know. I know it existed, but I don't really...I have not experienced it. We used to go every summer...we used to have a summer home. Uh...We used to spend our summers there. And a funny thing happened. I visited Poland two years ago, and I visited all those places. It was a very emotional journey for me. Of course, I still feel like it isn't enough. I would like to go back and see more of it, because I spent a short time in these places and so on. So maybe I will do it some day again. And then I...uh...the first year, I started going to high school which was a private and only for Jewish girls. It was a girls' high school and, like I said, private, but unfortunately it did not last too long because the Germans entered...uh...my city in September 1939. Of course, we still went to school for a couple of months and...uh...but as...uh... time went on, the Germans started occupying...occupying...uh...pri...buildings that...like school buildings, offices, government offices, and so on, and they settled themselves in our school. They only used the third and...uh...second floor, and we had the first floor for us. But it became dangerous because we had to use the same bathrooms and on some occasions...uh...we have heard that...uh...some girls were abused by the soldiers so for that reason alone, the school was closed. It would have most probably lasted for another month or so, but it was too dangerous and it wasn't worth it. And...uh...so I stopped going to school. Uh...

Q: What was life in _ód_ like right after the German occupation?

A: Well, right after... Now first of all I would like to describe the entering of the Germans and slightly prior to it. I have heard that the war started with Germany and, of course, all the soldiers were going toward the German borders to defend Poland. But it seemed like...its...they just simply turned back, and they were running. Uh...a day or two prior to the entrance of the Germans to _ód_, the Polish Army, without actually having, you know, without fighting, ran back and they were passing through our city. And they were passing through our street and they were heading somehow toward Russia, running away. I will never forget that day because what...what we did, ...uh...we were preparing sandwiches and food and we were giving it to the soldiers as they were going toward Russia [the Polish army was retreating eastward in an attempt to avoid encirclement by the Germans]. The population of the city remained. There were some that...uh...foresaw what was coming for some reason...uh...that also ran to Russia. Many of those survived and they escaped concentration camp and camps. But for a family with children, it was difficult to run away. So basically who ran away is young women and young men that were unattached and many majority of them survived if they could survive the winters in Russia and later on. Of course, the Germans practically were near...uh... Moscow [only briefly in early December 1941] and...uh...of course, the Jews were running away and Jews at that time, somewhat were persecuted by...by the Russians also. So, but it still was evidently much easier to survive than to go on to camps and concentration camps where a majority of... uh... people perished in gas

chambers and so on.

Q: Okay. The Germans have entered _ód_.

A: Yes.

Q: Uh...What happened to you and your family? What did you do?

A: Okay. We stayed there until about the end of...the beginning of December, actually. And at that point my father thought that it was too dangerous to stay in _ód_, that there were talks about making a ghetto in one part of the city where the poorer people...where the poorer Jewish population lived, and they were going to push everybody in there...uh...and since my Mother's home town was a small town called Wierzbni-Starachowice, and my Mother still had relatives living over there, we...we thought that it would be easier for us to get there and, you know, we were hoping that the Germans would not be able to follow us. I mean it was just a dream that, but it...uh...they followed us, but a lot later and in the meantime, we were still able to exist as normal people without being thrown into a camp and so on.

Q: How did you exist? How did you live in this town?

A: During that time? Well, we...we did not take much with us. Whatever we could pack on a wagon! And, of course, the...the journey on the wagon from...uh..._ód_ to Wierzbni was very unusual too because we were...we had to hide and we had to...uh...sort of...uh... pretend that we were not Jewish and the way we were doing it is, my father used to live during World War I in Germany for some reason I don't understand why. He was born in Poland, but he lived for some time in Germany, near Hamburg. He spoke a perfect German. As a matter of fact, a German with a dialect, which is very unusual because if a foreigner speaks...uh...German he will not speak with a dialect, because it is very difficult. So he spoke with a dialect and I learned German in school, and I also was able to speak with Father some German. So we were able to sort of make believe that we are either of German descent or mixed Germans which they sort of, kind of, you know, were lenient with them. And we arrived to one city where a German family Well, actually not all, also mixed-German ... Germans hid us for a day or two until we were able to continue by wagon to...uh...Wierzbni. And since it was winter time it was a very difficult journey because the roads were not cleared of snow, and the wagon was slipping and sliding, and the horse were...was...uh... tripping and it was a very bumpy, bumpy and bad trip, very cold and so on. But finally we arrived to Wierzbni, and...uh...after a little while.... We lived for sometimes with relatives,...uh.. but later on, we were able to rent an apartment for ourself and we lived, so.... We had a sewing machine on the wagon and my father was a designer. I don't know if I mentioned that to you, but he was designing military clothes for the army before the war. He was also designing sportswear. Also...uh...boy scouts uniform and... and...for preparatory school uniforms. So...uh...since he had the knowledge of...of making patterns and...and able to understand how to do things and so on, and I somehow always liked to sew, so we were doing some sewing. Father used to make the patterns and doing things like that; and I, under

his instruction, would sew the garments and we were able to make some money to sustain ourselves. Because all we needed at that time was just to buy potatoes and...and bread. That was our daily...uh...food, whatever we could make with it, because meat was very scarce and if there was any meat, the Polish people would get it. Somebody that had influence. In other words, people that grew up in the city and so on, knew the natives, the Polish people, and in the city, they were able to sort of obtain other staples of food...of food and so on. But since we were strangers, things were a little bit more difficult for us. Uh...later on, I...uh... decided that I will open up a little kindergarten, and take care of small children for still working parents because it was not a ghetto yet in this city and we were just restricted as far as the time is concerned. In other words, we were not able to get out of our houses before a certain time, which I imagine was 7 o'clock in the morning, and we had to be in our homes at 5 o'clock. But, of course, people still continued working and so on. There were a lot of tailors, shoemakers and...uh... merchants in the city and whatever else, just like it was before the war. So they continued to serve the community and so on. And I...uh...the kindergarten that I opened...it was in my own home, which was consisting of one large room and a kitchen. (cough) Excuse me. But usually, we would clear the room and push the furniture back, and then accept the children at 9 o'clock and I would take care of them til 1 o'clock; and that helped the family survive because...uh... the kind of parents of the children would occasionally bring some articles of clothing, or extra food that they were able to get, you know, like meat and things like that, and they were paying me a certain amount of money. And I was doing it with another friend of mine who was the same age. We were about 16 at that time. Unfortunately, this young lady was killed by the Germans later on. So, this is how we tried to sustain ourselves during the time until...until the ghetto was formed and until they took us into a work camp.

Q: How was the ghetto formed?

A: Well, the ghetto was still...uh...not terrible, by comparison to...to a work camp or a concentration camp. In other words, we were still sort of free, but we have to abide by the rules of the Germans and..., but we were moving around freely in the area of our confinement; and we were still together, which was the most important thing, my parents and my brother and I. And we...our lives were still sort of normal because we were able to get together with friends, with relatives, and amazing thing that all through our confinements in the ghetto or in a work camp or even in concentration camp is the fact that... uh...we were..., the Jewish population always had a sense of...of wanting to learn...of wanting...of...you know, wanting to have knowledge, so we did not stop. So, in...in the ghetto, we were...like for example, I continued...I was teaching young children in kindergarten. Someone else, who had a little higher education than I, was teaching me. Of course, we all had to pay. And I remember I...I was taking algebra and continued with my German, although I spoke German well, but I...I needed to improve it, in...in writing and so on. And we were...I even took Latin. I took French, and we were able to...to get together and sing Hebrew songs. So it was important because we were still together. We were not torn apart, and therefore...uh...life seemed to be normal. It was very...uh...very special, too, because we...we valued each other much more than...than... It made us think, altho... although I cannot say that we valued each

other more. We just understood it better because family ties were very close among Jewish family...families in Europe and...uh...ties with friends and relatives were also extremely important. And that was what was sustaining us and making our life bearable, that we did not have the comfort, we did not have...uh...the opportunities; we did not have a million things that we had before, but it did not seem to matter.

Q: Okay. Under what circumstances and when were you taken from the ghetto into a work camp?

A: Okay. Uh...I will never forget that morning. Usually they...there were no announcements...announcements from the Germans of their plans. They usually did everything totally unexpected. If anything ever leaked out, it was either a gossip or...or it might have been some truth, or the times did not correspond. So...uh...but we knew of...we heard of other people being...uh...transferred to different cities; and there were many people that were transferred from small little towns near Wierzbni-Starachowice into our town, and they were all...uh...you know, put into the ghetto. And things were getting tighter and tighter, because we had to share our little room and kitchen with another family and another family. And we realized that it will not last...last like that forever, that things were getting worse. And, of course, the food situation was getting worse because of the incoming of so many people from other cities. So...uh...we prepared ourselves, like for example, we made knapsacks for...for each one separately, and had them packed with the essential clothes; and my father, whatever little money we had, distributed the money among all four, amongst all four of us. That way that if we were separated that we should have the money to be able to help ourself. (Cough) Excuse me. (Cough) Anyhow, so basically we were prepared. We were not able to take any extras because we knew we couldn't carry it. Uh...so we left our household goods, our silverware, even a photo album which was so...so dear to us we had to leave. But I managed to stash away some pictures in a bag and kept it hidden... uh... and sure enough...uh...what happened is a few days later at 4 o'clock in the morning, the Germans at the same time knocked in all the doors. The reason for that is that they did not want us to have the opportunity that one should find out, hear from the other and have a chance maybe to...of escaping. So, at the same time, they had hundreds and hundreds of Germans with dogs knocking on people's doors and screaming, "Out! Out! Raus! Raus!" So many people, if they were not prepared as we were at that time, ...uh...ran out with basically nothing. And then they ran us all together and gathered us on a marketplace. Each small city had a marketplace that was, you know, usually the cities in Europe had this point that was called the marketplace. So we were all rounded up there and at some point, they had Germans doing a selection: right, left, right, left. So what was happening (cough), they were selecting younger and stronger people to remain in the city and they were distributing them to those three camps that were located in the city. One camp was a woodwork camp where they were cutting wood; and before the war, I imagine they were making furniture. But during the war, the Germans confiscated it and they transferred it for their war purposes. So this particular camp was manufacturing boxes for ammunition. They were manufacturing...uh...um... stretchers for the soldiers, and...uh... other things that were helping them for their war...uh...purposes. Then there was a camp...uh...nearby in the city, nearby city called

Starachowice where they had a steel factory; and...uh...all the Jews were ordered to work in the steel factory, also manufacturing things for the war. And the camp was nearby the factory, and they were over there. And there was also one other camp. I don't know what specific purpose this particular camp had. And they started selecting. My father and my mother, my brother and I were standing naturally together. When they came to us...when one of the Germans came to us with a dog and with a big...uh...switch that they used, you know, for beating horses when they were driving carriages and he wanted to separate us, my brother and I they left in the line, and my father and my mother they pushed in the other line. That means they were going to go to a concentration camp, you know, instead of going to the work camp. Uh... someone who was...they had Polish, they had Jewish policemen ...uh...in our camp..., in our ghetto actually, to keep order amongst us, and they were evidently...uh... helping the Germans keep order during this ordeal of selecting the people. So, ...uh...one of the policemen...was a very good friend of my father's from school, and he realized what was happening. And he came running and took my father and my mother out, and put us together. My mother at that time must have been maybe 36, 35--something like that. My father was a couple of years older; so they were not old, but this is what they were doing. So temporarily we were staying together. Later on, what happened is the same policeman, ...Jewish policeman, had a son also who was my brother's age and at that time, he found out that...uh...the Germans who were stationed outside of the city, in houses that they confiscated from well-to-do Polish people, needed boys to do their cleaning, shoes and whatever else they needed them to do. And this policeman thought it was a good idea and safe for my brother and for his son to go over there. And he explained it to us and they took my brother and his son away. But we were not frightened because we knew that they were going to be safe, which was true. So my father, myself and my mother were taken to the woodwork factory, and...uh...they had...uh...set aside a big hallway that they separated by a door and one part was for women, one part was for men. So I stayed with mother; and, of course, we were the ones that...that made the beds, you know, the bunk beds and so on. And I was working, too. And ...uh...we were all at that time being given food that was...uh...cooked for us by a group of people that they selected and they were cooking for all of us, for the men and for the women. So it wasn't too bad. I...when I think about it, and...and the reason I say it wasn't too bad because I am still comparing with the times to come. So, we were able to survive because we were receiving bread, we were receiving soup once a day; and in the beginning, I was working in the gardens. They had gardens over there, which there were...there were some Germans on the grounds of the camp that...uh...that we needed to supply with fresh vegetables and...and whatever fruit was growing and other things, so I was working in the garden. Later on, in the winter, of course, there was no work in the gardens and so on, so I was working in the factory...uh... supplying... uh...the wood to the machine and...and so on. And there were other skilled workers that were doing other jobs. And in this, I would like to say something very special to me how I met my future husband, but I have to go back a little bit to the time of the ghetto. Okay. While we were at the ghetto, uh...they...people were coming from different cities and my husband was among the people that were shipped to Wierzbnik from Bodzentyn. This is his home town. It's spelled B-O-D-Z-E-N-T-Y-N. And...uh...he was always...they were well to do at home, and they evidently brought in some money and some means that they could somewhat survive. Uh...and one

day he came to our home--which was, you know, the place where we already lived separate--but it was on steps from the street going into our apartment. And he heard evidently of my father and he came to us and he asked my father if he could make a one-piece suit for him with a zipper and then he requested...uh...many pockets. And, you know, I will mention once again that that was before they chased us out to the marketplace, before going into the woodwork factory. So...and he explained to my father that he wanted pockets inside that they wouldn't show on the outside, that he wanted some pockets on the outside because he wanted to.... He didn't explain that he wanted to hide things, but we knew; and...uh...we did that and he paid us well, and he was a very, very handsome young man. He was older than I. At that time he must have been maybe 21 and...uh...maybe 22 or so. I...I don't exactly know. And he was very handsome and he came in and he sat on the couch and he explained to my father all this and he was sitting with a sack of apples and he was eating those apples one after the other and I looked at him in amazement. First of all, we didn't see apples. We were not able to obtain apples, and he evidently got them. He was very...uh...he was always able to...to manage things. He was very...how to say?... uh... innovative? Yes? And he always...always had ideas how to accomplish things or how to obtain things, and how to do things. So...uh...evidently he didn't understand that when we looked at him eating the apples that...uh...it was a novelty to us, but later on when he finished describing what he wanted and my father took measurements and so on, he...when he left, he left the remaining bag of apples for us. Well, that was the very, very first time that I saw him. Uh...it was...I didn't think much of him because, you know, when somebody is 15 or 16, you know, somebody that much old...he was 9 years than I am, you didn't think of it in...in any other way, just as a nice good-looking person, and so on. Okay. When we...uh... went...I am returning to that...they called it "Aussiedlung" [NB: "Resettlement"]...means to move you out from one place to another, means like to displaced person and so on. When they moved us to the camp...uh...after the camp...uh...after I stopped working and during the time in camp, it became obvious that we needed some medical help for people because there was always somebody that would cut their fingers. I remember to this day, one person, one man, had cut off two fingers but they were still hanging and he didn't know what to do. And they asked...they asked if there was anyone who has any knowledge of first aid. And...uh...I did have very minimum knowledge of it, and I didn't know it was going to be like gluing two fingers together...I mean the fingers together. I expected maybe a cut, a bruise that I could just use the basics and when this person came to me, I almost fainted. But what I could understand myself...I mean I put the fingers together and...and put the...whatever medication we had and taped it together. Well, would you believe that the fingers grew together. I am not sure to this day if the bones grew together. He had the fingers, but he was not able to move them from the first joint. He moved them in the second joint where he it was not severed, you know, injured, but he couldn't move... but he had fingers. Well, at that point when they realized that I knew something of it, they had supplied me with first aid articles; and I was doing it not all day, because they could not afford for me to...to get away from the work, so like for a couple of hours a day people that had some problems that I some idea to...to help...uh...that I was doing that. In the meantime, why I am getting into it because there is a story going to be connected with it. Uh...next to our camp, was a camp called Zeork. It's spelled Z-E-O-R-K. Uh...it was a electrical plant. Well, this plant evidently...um...occupied a very small number of Jewish

people. Uh...they didn't need such great...uh...work force that they needed in our camp. Among the people in Zeork was my husband, and a elderly doctor. Why I say elderly, he must have been in his 40s, but he was elderly to me. Uh...Well, he was a friend of my husband's and...and he evidently said he was his assistant. My husband had fantastic ideas of trying to survive. So as a assistant, they did not part him with the doctor and it was asset to have the doctor in this camp over there. Well...uh...a few weeks later, for some reason, they liquidated this camp and they evidently knew about it. Uh...But within the time that they were in the camp and we heard of them, we tried for the doctor and his assistant to come to our camp because we needed him more than what he was doing over there. So twice a week the doctor and his assistant, Leon Weintraub was his name,...uh...would come to our camp and they were assisting people that needed more professional help than I could give them. And, of course, I was present since I was in charge of the first aid, you know,...uh...box and so on, so I was assisting the doctor and the original assistant of the doctor was not assisting. He was just running all over the camp and trying to meet up with the people that he knew because there were some people that were from his home town. And also, his father and his brother were in my camp. So naturally he was always bringing things and this and that. And then at the first meeting, of course, he had to come, so he met me, again. And since he knew me, he was telling us...he was telling me, "Oh, you did my suit; you see, I am wearing it." And this and that. Of course he never told me what he had hidden in the pockets and...and so on. And he would see me on occasions until the time that they were going to evacuate his camp. Well, the night before the evacuation, evidently the...the...guard... the German that was...uh...administering, or you know being over...overseeing our camp, knew about the liquidation of the other camp and he wanted the doctor to come and be with us. He made them come the day before. So he came to our camp and he was with his father and his brother and...uh...I would like to mention that his father survived. His brother survived, too. Of course, by now his father is not living anymore because he would be maybe about a hundred years old. Uh...But they survived the war, and we were together in the camp. Uh...well, and I got to know him. On occasions here and there, and we...we kind of became very fond of each other; and he was also very instrumental in helping my family, 'cause since he had evidently money, he was able to obtain some goods from out of camp, and always got something extra like a bread or maybe other things and would give it to my mother and father and they...they had to promise him that he would not tell me, they would not tell me, because he did not want our relationship be affected. In other words, that I should not like him or whatever it is, should not influence my feelings toward him by the fact that he was helping us. And I didn't know any of it at all. Uh...After a few months... uh...we heard of...uh...the liquidation...no, not the liquidation yet! But the mistreatment of the people in the camp where...uh ... they were working in the...uh...steel factory, and also at that...before then...uh...they for some...there was a typhus that broke out in the camp itself and the Germans felt like...uh... I don't know if it was their concern that they were going to lose enough...too many workers by the typhus...breakout of typhus or so, so they decided to do a selection. And...uh...see the ones who looked sick or old or whatever it is, they were shooting. Uh...By that time, my brother was already transferred to the camp because evidently they had no use, the Germans who employed these two young boys had no use for them, so they put them in the camp. Uh...well...

Q: Excuse me. Which camp?

A: In the camp...in the same city, but this is the camp where they were going to work for the...uh...steel factory. And that's where the typhus broke out, and this is where they did the selec...selection, and killed off many Jewish people. My brother survived somewhat, because...and he had typhus at that time...but evidently he was young and he was able to control himself and he was dressed well in a coat that was twice the size and...uh...it was rather well-to-do looking coat, with a hat and so on. And maybe it was his luck that they did not shoot him. Well, they shot a whole pile of...a whole number. Why I say pile? Because they piled them up on [and they threw them] in a corner, and I don't know what they did with them, whether they buried them or burned them or whatever it was. So we heard...heard already of the mistreatment and the atrocities that were going on in the camp, and we tried to bring..., and people in our...uh...factory tried to bring--because many of them had relatives and friends--and tried to bring them to our camp. Well, through our...uh... German on the camp, we were able to get many people from there, and among them my brother. Well, it seemed like it was...things were.... Since we were together, we didn't understand the pain of other people separated or other people...uh...having lost their lives in...in concentration camp and so on. Uh...It's human nature that you only worry about your circle. So we were content. Uh...It was difficult, but with a little help from Leon, who became my husband later, with a little help of a...a kind person in the camp that originated from Wierzbnik and was able to obtain some food and so on, we were able to not go around hungry. Uh...There was...uh...also a incident and I still have those shoes actually. My husband noticed that I had very bad shoes on...uh...and the most important thing--since we were being transferred to unknown places--the most important thing was to have a warm coat, good clothes and shoes that did not leak water. So he...uh ... ordered. We had a little shoemaker that was able to do wonders, and the shoemaker made shoes for me. Little shoes like the kind you use for horse back riding out of all leather and everything, and I had those shoes. Uh...Then came the time where we heard that we were going to be evacuated again somewhere. We had no idea where. Uh...And of course we all sensed...there was so much talk by that time already... People were coming into our camps, running away from different places and so on, and they always had some news, believable or unbelievable news cause we tried not to believe the horrors. We only wanted to believe the good things like...uh...for example there were some incidents, while in this camp still, that all of a sudden some Germans would come and say...uh ... "Is there anyone who has relatives in Israel? We have openings for...uh...these people to be able to transported to Israel that their relatives are paying for it." So it sounded logical. And...uh...we remembered that two people from the camp that evidently had no connection with anybody in the camp like relatives, evidently they were alone, that they mentioned that had they had a sister or whatever and those people were taken out with all their belongings and everything and they were shot. So...uh...we were always reluctant in volunteering to...to do something when...whenever it sounded too good. Because we didn't trust them. Uh...Then...uh...also there was a horrible incident during my time in this camp and there was a group of people that was really very sick and delirious with fever of the typhus. And my mother was among them. I...uh... had no knowledge of the fact, and I had no

understanding of the fear of being infected with the...with the illness; because of my mother, because I wanted to be with her and I wanted to help her. Therefore, I didn't even think of it. And I was the only one that was assisting all these sick people. Unfortunately, the doctor himself got ill and he was among them and...uh...there was also a brother-in-law of my future sister-in-law that was there. And...I mean, I knew all these people and without thinking I offered that I was going to take care of them. I took care of them. My mother came out of it. Many other people survived. What I was basically doing is...uh...helping them...uh... to sponge when they were hot and...and perspired and feverish and I was also trying to feed them, which was helpful. And, of course, all of them most probably would have survived, but after releasing my mother and some others there was small group left; and this German was terribly impatient and he didn't want to wait any longer and he said, "These people are going to be taken away to a hospital outside the camp." Well, there was no hospital that I knew of, but we believed him. He said it was a temporary shelter or a hospital that we were going to that they are going to be taken care of. Well, we were ordered to make stretchers. We had to carry the stretchers. I myself with other party carried the stretchers of one person. And...uh...but we did not go to a hospital. They took us straight to the grave yard...Jewish grave yard, where there was a big ditch dug and...uh...they told us. You know, the people could not walk. They couldn't stand up. And they told us to place the people, you know, like at the edge of the ditch...ditch where they could simply shoot them and kick them in, and this is what they did. And we witnessed that. Later on I will tell you of the fact that I went to Germany to be a witness and I...I apprehended the German who was instrumental in shooting all these people. But any...this what happened in the camp. What else significant happened?

Q: Let us hold it at this point. We need to change tapes. Okay. Perfect timing.

A: Okay.

End of tape #1

TAPE #2

A: Okay. The camera is back on. What happened next? The people had been shot.

Q: Yah. We came... Unfortunately, it was a tragedy for everybody because they were relatives of people who were still in camp with us. And...uh...we...we were deceived, because we did not...uh...believe that they were going to do something like that. We trusted that they were going to...to take them to...uh...uh...place where they would treat them. Uh...And when we knew that we could trust them, whatever they were ever saying...uh...it was never so. Uh...but...uh later when I...I must return...return to the point where I came to the other camp to help...uh...the sick people over there with typhus. Since we were doing it in our camp, I went to help the people with typhus over there. I couldn't do very much, but it was that I did. And at that time, I made sure that I took my brother out and so on. During that time when we had to stay...spend a night over there because it was a long ways to walk. We were...had not, no transportation. We had to do it by foot. So we returned the next day. And during my stay there I came across this German...uh...he was actually a Ukrainian, from Ukraine, but...uh...the Germans employed them and...uh...they were even worse than Germans or as bad as Germans. And...uh...suddenly this guy for some reason took some liking to me. I had no evidence of it. I didn't know, and didn't think nothing of it. I didn't even know. Well, one day he comes...uh...to our camp for some reason. It must have been...uh...a reason, either he transported somebody into our camp or...or vice versa, but he came and came running through the barrack. Uh...And I mention it to you how it was done. It was a long...uh...hall that was separated by a wall and door where one side was for men, one for women; and he came running through the...uh...area and started shouting my name and screaming, "Where is the beast?" In German he spoke, he said, "Wo ist die Bestia?" Well, he had...uh... immoral intentions and we all knew it. And he said, "If she does not come, I will shoot everybody." Well, of course, he must have been drunk...uh...because it was...his behavior was...uh... totally out of place even for a German or...or so. Uh... But I knew that I must do something because he would not hesitate to shoot somebody. So I came up to him, and I started speaking to him. I says...he understood my Polish and, of course, we couldn't correspond in German cause his German was worse than mine. But we spoke Polish and I started kind of minimizing...uh...what he was...uh... showing, what... what...what impression he made on us and what he was planning to do. And...uh...and I talked to him very kindly, and this and that, and I told him how glad I am to see him again since I saw him and I, you know, fenagled the whole story. Uh...and he was trying to kiss me. But he didn't even do that because I kind of...and it went by. It went by. And he left. And everybody at that time was hidden, because they were sure he was going to shoot. So that...uh...is gone..so. And, of course, later on like a week or two weeks later, ...uh... came the...uh...evacuation from this camp. The reason I mentioned, I want to say it because that way you can connect it later on with a situation later on with him.

Q: What is his name?

A: Schrot. His name is Schrot. S H...No. S-C-H-R-O-T. And there's going to be quite a incident

with him later on, that therefore I mentioned him. Uh...they evacuated us, but in a different manner. They came...we had...uh...like about 300 people in...in our camp and they brought trucks covered with a canopy, and they put us on the trucks. Our...we did not know where they were going to take us. When they took us to a camp called Majowka. It's spelled M-A-J-O-W-K-A. Uh... When we got there we could see from there...uh...the fires going from the factory...steel factory which impressed us terribly because since we did not know exactly or maybe I was the only one that didn't know, but this is my impression that still stays with me to this day, that this was a concentration camp and that they had ovens where they were burning people. That was my feeling. I did not share it with anybody. Everybody saw it. Maybe some other people were also thinking the same way, but I don't know. Uh... when we got there, there were barracks on the camp and the people that were already there...uh...from the other camp--we were the last one to come in--were in the barracks so everything was closed up. Uh...But at the entrance, there were two very long...uh... graves dug and when we got there, it was the same Schrot that was in charge of this transportation from...uh...the "Sägewerker"... or in Polish, it's called "Tartak," T-A-R-T-A- K. That means wood factory. **[NB: Actually, the correct translation of both terms is "sawmill"]** Uh...He was the same one, and he was in charge of transporting us to this camp. When he told us to get out of the wagons and he says in German, "Women on one side, men on the other side. Make a line in fours." Then and he stood at the end of the grave and said to us, "You have one minute...." He said it in German, he said, "You have one minute to say your prayers. You'll be shot." Well, naturally we all believed it. I mean it was... uh...if I had to describe my feeling it would have to take hundred pages to really, one-by-one, to describe what I felt. But my utmost feeling and reaction was my concern first of all for my parents, for my brother, for my friends, for everybody there. So what do you do in a case like that? And he also saw that I was there. And I also knew that this was this animal that was capable of doing anything. Uh...I was in the third row and my mother was standing near me and I realize how terribly disturbed my mother was. How her facial expression has changed. How her color has changing. She was looked like a ghost. And all could see is her heart going strong under her thin dress and it was so painful to me that I...I didn't know what, but I knew that I had to do something. So I jumped out and jumped straight...he...he didn't expect it. And I jumped straight to him and I knew that if I approach him from the front I have no chance of doing anything. So I jumped on his back. I...uh...put my fingers around his throat and I started choking him. I jumped with my legs and I put them around his mid-body. It's just like piggy back playing with a child and that's how I hung to him and kept on pushing my fingers into his neck. My finger nails were even longer than now. Uh...and, of course, since I...my grip was so strong and he couldn't walk because I had my legs around his, we both fell. And I still didn't let go because I knew if I let go it was going to be the end of me and especially the end of everybody else there. So I did not for a long time. And...uh...finally, they...they couldn't shoot because they were afraid that if they shoot, they may shoot him, so they didn't shoot. But finally the stupid idiots...uh...came running and...uh...pulled us apart. I am talking about the Ukraine, Germans. They pulled us apart. When they pulled us apart, I knew everything is lost. And...uh...I was mainly concerned for the rest of the people. And as I was lying on the floor, my...uh...my only satisfaction at that point would be that he would not get a chance to torture me and realize that I am alive, that... that I feel that maybe I would say something to

him, or plead and...uh...and this thinking followed actually a outcry from a young girl who became my sister-in-law later. And she cried, she says, "Please somebody help her. Maybe...maybe she just fainted." Well, when I heard that, I...it worried me, 'cause I was trying to play dead. Uh...when he heard that, well, if she fainted she's not gonna be alive much longer. And at that point...uh...he took a gun and...uh...the position of my body was evidently so that my head was to the side and evidently when he shot me it was from a angle coming here and going out this way. So it basically grazed my skin and part of my bone since my head was that way. But...nevertheless, I was bleeding a lot and he thought, well, when you get a shot right in the forehead like that, how can you live? So...and I did not move. Uh...in the meantime, all this took a long time and it was in afternoon, September, and it was getting darker and it evidently spoiled his...uh...timing because...uh... uh...they turned on the search light already, and on top of everything else they were bombing. The Russian planes were started flying over the area and there was bombing. They did not hit us, but they were evidently bombing the area that I mention to you later about the tracks being bombed and so on. Well, they quickly turned off the search light and (cough) they...uh...uh...chased everybody in to the barracks, together with the other ones. Now I was dead on the floor, so I had to remain there. (Cough) I am sorry. Well, I immediately realized that I wasn't hurt badly, that I was not near anything similar to being...uh...dead or anything like like that and since I realized that there were barracks and I didn't even know exactly because I had to keep my eyes closed not to give myself away, so I...uh...didn't know what they did with the people. I thought, "Well, all is lost. They must have taken them to the ovens." This was my impression, that they were taking them straight to the ovens. Uh...but I saw later on when...when it was completely dark and the search lights came back on, a German...they sent out a German, the same one. I mean the Ukraine...uh...to make sure I was dead. And I was still in the same position. Uh...And he came to me and he wanted to play smarty. He wanted to see if I have pulse. To this day a doctor has difficulties finding pulse, so he didn't find it. But then he...he did another trick. He picked my arm up and then all of a sudden I felt a release, so I dropped it like it was a piece of wood. He shouldn't realize that I was alive. Then he started searching me here for money and valuables. Well, I could not help it. I could not move because that would be the end of me again. Well, whatever he found he did, but he did not take my photographs. (Laughter) I had the photographs. Uh...And then he left, satisfied that I was dead. He wouldn't waste another bullet, because...uh...why waste another bullet where he could use it for somebody else. So...uh...between the search lights I realized that the barracks were there. I says, "Well, the only thing that I can do is just get under the barracks." Little by little, I got myself under the barracks and they were even lower than my body could part...take it, so I had to possibly squeeze myself in. I felt, every time I breathed, I felt that I'm raising the floor of the barrack, but I heard foot steps. I heard voices. I could make out the sounds in Polish and in Yiddish and I said, "Well, who could it be?" Well, I still wasn't very sure. I thought it was just anybody. When morning came, I was still not far from the stairs and as I saw people coming out and I saw they were wearing...uh..., you know, old shoes and...uh... wooden shoes and they spoke. They were very agitated because of the fact they...uh...witnessed shooting, my parents and relatives, my friends and so on. So naturally, they were all quite agitated. And suddenly, it dawned on me that they were the people. I says, "Well, God, then I have something to look forward to." And I came out. As I

came out...uh...everybody got all excited. My parents were right near the door. My father became white. My...I mean, they were crying after me, and my brother, and then.... We did not even have time to embrace each other... uh...that they grabbed me and they hid me under a straw ...uh..., you know, uh...sack. In the meantime, news travels so fast just like lightening and he found out that I am alive and I don't know if you have an idea of...uh...the...uh... arrangements of a barrack. It was a narrow barrack, long. On both sides there were...uh...uh... bunk beds with straw things and there was like a little, you know, path going from one end to the other. All of a sudden he comes in with a gun again, and screaming again the same line that he screamed before. "Wo ist die Bestia? [Ich werden sie schiessen () sie rauskommen (ph)]" And he says if I am..., "If she doesn't come out, I will start with her relatives and I'll shoot you all." And I heard it, so I said to myself, well, I will not allow it. I am ready to die. And I really was. My life at that time did not mean anything, and I wasn't even scared. So, but he didn't shoot me. He grabbed me by hand and he pulled me out of the lager behind the wire ...uh...the wired gate, and he took me into a...uh...storage room where they had...uh...coal and wood work, wood for the ovens, not for us, but for the Germans that were overseeing the...uh...camp. And he left me over there and locked me. Well, the reason he didn't shoot me, because evidently the...uh...man who is in charge of all the operation in Wierzbnik-Starachowice.... His name was Baumgarten. It is B- A-U-M-G-A-R-T-E-N, Baumgarten. It would be "Baumgarten" in English. Uh...well, since they reported to...to him what had happened that night before... uh...then he was afraid to.... He was going to shoot us and say, "Well, I did it and that's all. What you gonna do?" But now that the Baumgarten found out about it and that was not his plan because his plan was to ship everybody to Auschwitz. Then, of course, he would be shot, would be punished. So, an hour later Schrot came into...I mean Baumgarten came into the...uh...storage room and he looks at me and I am bleeding in the front of my face. And I...I was also bleeding in the back because before they shot me, they hit me with the back of the rifle, so there was a hole and it was bleeding. Well, this Baumgarten looks at me and he says to me...he says, "Tell me what happened?" Well, what I told him was not what had happened. I said, "I was standing in a row," which was true, "and when he said he was going to shot us all, I was going to go over and plead with him he should not shoot us." Well, that part is not true because I wasn't going to plead with him. And I said, "He shot me and...and I fell and I don't remember anything." And I remembered every moment and I do remember every feeling and every moment of that situation. And then he looks in the front and he looks in the back and he says to me...uh..."Well, what do you have in the back?" I says, "Well, I don't remember. I don't know. I fell and I must have fallen unconscious and I don't know what happened afterward." Well, I knew but I didn't want to tell. And...uh...in the meantime, since my husband was among the people and since, like I mentioned, he evidently had money saved and in this particular case, he had a small diamond ring, so he give it to this Baumgarten. Well, Baumgarten took me out of the storage area, took me to the so-called "Revier." "Revier" is hospital. That is in German. And he took me there. He stood right there and waited until they bandaged, cleaned me up and everything and they let me go with the other people. Uh...When I went back to the... to the barracks, there was a man, and to me he was older man cause he must have been in his 30s, and he talked to me and he wanted to know details and wanted to know my feelings and wanted to know why I did it and everything. And I told

him. And I wasn't afraid because I knew he was not going to say anything. And as it happened ... the reason I am mentioning this...is because this man wrote a chapter in a book. He was a writer. And we found the book later on. Uh...That's why I am mentioning it.

Q: Do you know the name of the man and the book?

A: He was Moshe Prager. You heard most probably of him, but unfortunately he died before I got to him. I was in...in Israel, and I tried to get in touch with him and I did not get in touch with him. Uh...Anyhow...uh...that afternoon, they put us all on...on the wagons. Men separately. Women separately. There is one scene that I must say because it stays with me forever. It is the moment where my father, my mother, my brother and I were standing together and nobody said anything. I was the only one that said something. I said, "Daddy, I think this is the end. I don't think we will see each other again." I don't know why I said it. It was like a premonition. And...uh...when I said that, my father did not answer, but what he...the way he looked at me, I could translate it in many ways. I could translate it that he would say, "Don't worry. I know the Germans." Uh...'cause he knew them as being decent, intelligent, educated and kind people. So he couldn't understand what had happened to them in the meantime. So he was actually telling me in one way not to worry, but in the other way, I could sense that he believed me, that he finally believed me because all this time through the war, he was telling me not to worry, that they would not harm us because of the...of the experiences that he had with him while he was living in Germany. Well, they put us separate and, unfortunately, I never saw my father and brother anymore. I was with my mother. Uh...Well, actually it is not exactly true, because the next day because of the bombing by the Russians, the tracks were...uh...out of order and they could not take us and they...they didn't want to keep us for some reason in there. So they let us go out and that was...that one more time that I was able to see my parents and my brother, but after they fixed the tracks, they put us on the wagons the next day. And it was a horrifying, indescribable, terrible journey to Auschwitz. The wagons were closed, only with small little, you know, like cracks opened for air which for 2 or 3 hundred people in one wagon was not enough. There was only the food that we were able to take with us, what we had, and we didn't have very much. We couldn't take most of our belongings cause there was no room. There was...uh...one bucket that was being used...uh...as a commode for everybody. There was one bucket of water to drink. I never saw it. I never...I never saw one or the other because it was impossible to push yourself through because we were standing like, you know, one person next to the other and evidently, in a case like that, it was already...people were already so terribly conditioned where nothing mattered, only themselves. So you couldn't even come close to any of the objects. And we traveled like that half way. No. All the way...all the way to Auschwitz, and...uh...we...uh...got off the train the usual way as everybody is explaining. And when I was visiting Auschwitz about two years ago, the tracks are the same. The building...uh...that we had to...uh...cross was the same... uh...the...there were...the big gas chamber is not there anymore. But they had...uh...small...small gas chambers which were for individual bodies and they basically looked.... Of course, I am sure you saw the pictures...like ovens.

Q: Let's...let's not deal with what is now. Let's take it back then. Okay?

A: Okay.

Q: What did you see at that point?

A: What did I see when I got there? I had no idea it was...uh...going to be gas chambers because we didn't see it. On the way to...uh...

Q: When you arrived! Physically when you arrived, what did you do? Let's do it that way.

A: When we arrived, they took us off the train. They separated us again. Women separately. Men separately. And they told us to go into a building where they say...said it was going to be a shower. We were allowed to take soap with us...uh...maybe a comb and a tooth brush and maybe those are the things. I cannot recall. I cannot be sure of that. And...so we took...and we were allowed to take our shoes, I think. Uh...And...uh...many people, since we were allowed to take soap and many people already had their soap, they pushed gold pieces, American gold pieces, into this soap and...uh...they saved them. Uh...One lady whom I know and I meet quite often. She lives in Toronto, Canada. I just saw her recently. She can never forget the fact that I have saved two...uh...gold pieces in...in the soap. I risked my life but I...I had no understanding of it. I did it for her because she asked me. And I used the soap for washing and as I washed naturally the place where you stuck the thing kind of got glued back and then when we got to the barracks...uh...I give it to her. Uh...They...uh...what they did, when we walked out the other way...uh...it was a selection. In other words, not all people survived. They were selecting...uh...one left, one right. There was...the guy that was doing the selection was Eichmann. Yes. He had a...uh...he had helpers. Of course, the Ukrainians and there were two girls. I don't remember the other one, but one girl she was German. When I got out from there, he was standing right there. We were naked. Can you imagine how a person feels, especially a woman, in front...no matter how...how bad the situation is, whatever...I mean we practically lost our minds at...at moments like that. But still the fact that we were naked in front of a man whoever it may have been, it was devastating and especially for a teenager that is modest. And when I saw that I...I was confused. I didn't know what to do. He was standing there with a...with a dog. He had this horse whip which was thick and, you know, all leather to the end, very thin at the end, and he was going left, right, left, right, left, right. Well, I...I don't know...I cannot say that I was brave. I don't know. Maybe I was just not experienced. And I simply went to him because when I saw that he took my mother on the other side, I started begging him. I says, "Please" I says, "This is the only person left in my life. I haven't got anybody anymore." I says, "Please. Put me together with my mother. We will work harder together. We will be more loyal and whatever." Well, he put me together with my mother. That means going to...to the concen...to the...to the ovens. Well, the girl somehow took pity on me. I don't...with this girl I had several other incidences too because I must say that as bad as they were and I wouldn't want to say anything special for the Germans as a whole, but I...I must say that on occasions, you found a person with feelings and compassion and they did special things. Maybe it was not a great effort to them, but was a lifesaving to us. Well, this girl was about my age and...and I went to

her and at that point I looked already like a balloon because he used the pa...the....uh...whip on me. And not on my body, but the upper body, on my face. My eyes were swollen. I had little slits here that I could only see, but I was so desperate that I talked and I...in German I said to her, I says, "You are the same age as I am and I am sure and I hope that your parents are at least safe somewhere or you would want to know that they are safe. And if anything like that happened to you, wouldn't you want to save your mother?" And that's all I said to her. And she took my mother and I and she smuggled us to the other side. We survived. Okay. They took us to...uh ...to barracks and the next morning--or was it the same day actually, because time had no...no value whatsoever--and this is where they...they put our...uh...marks. It was A here. That meant transport A, and then the number is 14028. That was my number. I went first for them to do it because I wanted to see how it felt. I was worrying that mother would not be able to stand it or so. So it...it worried me. I went first and mother was...mother's number was the following number A-14029. And we were given numbers and we stayed in the barracks. So we were in Auschwitz already. The first day before they put us into our regular barrack, they put us... they put us into a barrack which was called Death Barrack. Uh...they are standing. The barracks are preserved, and they are standing. They put us over there temporarily, but usually when you put people there that means they were going to...to die. But they had transport coming one after the other, one after the other, and they had no time to kill everybody like that because the procedure, no matter how fast they have developed it to be, ...uh...did not work as fast as they would want it to work. So, we were in that barrack. I saw it...uh ...recently. It had a court yard, also surrounded with bricks. At the end of the court yard on the brick wall, there was a big plate, steel plate attached to the wall. Against this, I was told that--when I was there a year and a half ago, about two years ago--I was told that this what they were doing. I had no idea that they were doing it while I was in the camp, but that steel block was there because they were shooting people, putting them against the steel block and shooting them. That way the brick wall would not fall apart and I realized that the whole yard was drenched with blood. And we looked at it and feelings come back. Expression was motionless, but the feelings were there. And I looked. Then I went to...they have a place where they have so-called archives...uh...and stuff that were of some importance, like letters or writings or pictures or something. Well, the pictures that I mentioned earlier in my journey to Wierzbnik and from Wierzbnik after I was shot that I saved them, I still had them because I was able to save them.

Q: How?

A: Okay. Well that was not after the...the shower. That was still before the shower. I had them. So as we were going into the showers I was afraid that those pictures were going to be taken from me. And for some reason I had an idea if we are going in we will have to come out, so maybe I will find the pictures. But that was not the case. We went in and then we did shower. We went out the other side. That's where Eichmann was making a selection and the ones to go to the ovens were on one side. The ones, and myself and my mother on the other side after the girl saved us, were on the other side. They put us in the barracks and I realized that I could not find the pictures anymore. They were picking them up. They knew that we

were going to do that...that people were going to throw money away, their jewelry away and, you know, important possessions (cough). So after...after they took us the other way out, they had a group of Germans or maybe...uh ... Jewish people that were supposed to... They were walking with...uh...uh... wagons and picking up all the things and that's why I mentioned the archive room. I had hopes that I would be able to find pictures. If not necessarily the pictures that I had with me, but the pictures...uh...maybe pictures of relatives, maybe pictures of friends and so on, and I spent quite a long time in the building. They were very cooperative. Now I am speaking of the time three years ago when I went to Au...

Q: All right. All right. You're jumping time.

A: Well, I am...I am sorry.

Q: Let me if I could. All right. You've jump time and we are at the moment running out of time. So what I need to know very simply is when you returned two years later, did you find the photos?

A: No.

Q: Okay. That's all I need to know at this point.

A: No. I still am hoping to find them, because I didn't have enough time.

Q: All right. I need to know. I really can't go into this. Okay. I need to focus solely on Auschwitz. You have come out of the shower room. I need to know about..

A: What happened there.

Q: You have come back to a barrack. I need to know what happened in Auschwitz.

A: Yah. Well, we were in the barracks. And...uh...life was suddenly entirely different. We were sleeping with 9 or 10 people in one...uh...what do you call it?...bunk. We had one thin blanket. Uh...We were sleeping on the straw and...uh ...we were given food once a day...uh...small little piece of bread...uh...and...uh...some kind of brew that they called coffee had no similarity in smell and taste or anything to coffee, but at least it was something to drink. And...uh ... uh...Life became very bad.

Q: Did you work?

A: Uh...There was...uh...in the beginning, there was no work. Uh...And even though there was any work it had no meaning. It just had the meaning of the work was to destroy us, to make us tired, to make us exhausted because in the beginning like, for example, every morning we had to be waken up at 4 o'clock. They used...they called it "Appell"...uh...roll call. Uh...We had to get out, rain or shine, frost or whatever it is. We had to stand for hours, hours until

they decided to bring the breakfast which consisted of this horrible brew--tasted like witches brew--that we drank in the morning, but by the time it got to us it wasn't even hot, but it was warm and it still was something. And...uh...Then they would organize what they called...uh...uh...like... uh...groups they had a special name for it in German but it escape me. Groups of people that were doing different things under supervision of a German with a gun or several Germans with a gun and so on. So I was assigned to a group that was supposed to be carrying stones from one place to another. Then the next day from that place back to this place and just keep us moving, ...uh...making us exhausted and tired. People were dying on the job because of malnutrition and loss of strength and so on. And dehydration; and basically every day, we were losing a lot of people. So that was easy for them without shooting, shooting...uh... uh... firing a bullet and using a gun. And...uh...later on I was put into a so-called factory where all the clothing particles and so on which were not...uh...going to be reusable for the Germans, because the Germans were fixing and cleaning and washing the garments that they were confiscating from us to send it to Germany because they had a shortage of goods and ...and everything. So anything that was usable they were sending to Germany back, but the things that were not usable were given...put in one room, maybe the size of this one or larger, and we were tearing the pieces and putting them together and braiding them into a large braids out of different materials and those braids later on, they were endless. Those braids later they were folding into a disk. In other word, the braid would be...this way they were rolling the braids and making them into discs. I don't know what those discs were...uh...for. Some said that they were being put between ammunition to...to keep them from rubbing together that that was insulation or whatever it is between whatever.

Q: How did you...You were in Auschwitz how long?

A: Well, we were in Auschwitz two years.

Q: Okay.

A: 1942, 1944.

Q: When...When did you...when did they prepare you to leave Auschwitz?

A: Well, they were...uh...they were preparing us to leave Auschwitz at the time where it was bad already, that they saw the war was being lost. We heard of the attempt to assassinate Hitler. We heard of many other things and that's when they, instead of running themselves, they had to take us because they did not want to leave any evidence, especially evidence that can talk...uh...and remember, behind them. So naturally they took us all. Uh...So what happened in Auschwitz that day...uh...uh...they poisoned most of the bread and suddenly bread became plentiful in the area. They put poison. Uh...the sick ones could not...uh...leave the camp, so they were shot; or the ones that looked like dead were left. Some that were able to...to eat, died of poisoning from the bread. Uh...We walked out and we were chased out and we were not...we didn't have enough time to get the bread so we didn't have it, which was good. Uh...We thought it was bad, but it saved our life. Everybody had a little

something, and we...uh...started wal...walking out of Auschwitz cause they... everything went so fast. They did not have transportation for us. Transportation...uh...which I learned was a private concern that...uh...the Germans who were working in...uh... destroying us had to pay for the transportation.

Q: What happened? Don't you worry about what you learned later. I would like to know...

A: But I must say why...

Q: Okay.

A: I lost my trend now. Okay. So they did not have because they were not able to pay. Usually they took from us whatever they ...we had left everything behind us...to pay for...uh...to the company that was in charge of transportation. So...And it was bombed, and transportation was impossible. So we were walking a road. It was...uh... January already, first part of January. And we were walking and the snow was high and, of course, by us walking...crowds like I would say 30 or 40 people in one row, the snow was pushed to the side and...and so on. On the sides of the streets we saw bodies of men who were evidently taking the same road before us. They were chased out before us and many of them, a lot of them did not survive. And we saw a leg or a hand or a nose sticking out from the...from the snow and we realized that this is what happens. So it made our journey that much worse because we wanted to see when we saw somebody if it was not anybody, my father, my brother or somebody else, whatever. So...uh...And it was a long, long journey to such extent that I remember we couldn't even walk. You know when you walk a long time something happens to you at the hips. It...it just doesn't work. So we were walking like sideways, the moving our legs. You know, like sliding our legs sideways. Uh...then we came somewhere. We were passing...uh...some villages and some small German cities. They were deserted. We could see...uh...smoke coming out of chimneys. We could see lights in the houses and everything, but not a soul would come out. So we were walking. Some people were making attempts to escape like jumping into a ditch or...or something similar. Some succeeded. Some did not. Since I mentioned that things were bad for the German army, and it seemed like they were losing the war and it was like toward the end, so at that time some Germans...civilians might have been a little kinder and maybe they helped some because of the fright of what may happen to them for what they did. Uh...Finally, we came to a station where they had a platform...platforms where they put us on platforms, and part of the time we rode on open platform and it was snowing. It was my birthday, 22nd of January. And we looked like snowmen covering up with snow. And we were just sitting curled up over there and going to a unknown and worse...

Q: Where did you end up?

A: We ended up... At the end of the line the trains could not take us any further and they took us to a farm house where they had many animals and evidently somebody took pity and they didn't leave us outside, and they chased us in with the animals, with the cows, with the

horses, with the pigs, with the this, and you know, we were scared to death, but it was either that or try to freeze to death outside. And we stayed there...there overnight. Evidently something was not clear outside that we could not continue or maybe the Germans that were taking care of us needed the rest and then and therefore we stopped. The next day we starting going again, walking again until we arrived in Ravensbrück.

Q: Okay. Here we need to stop. Uh...Bonnie put on the short tape please. Let's cut this tape. That's the end of this tape. We have a very short....

End of Tape #2

TAPE #3

Q: We are in Ravensbrück?

A: Yes, they brought us into Ravensbruck and...uh...they did not have barracks for us immediately so they put us along a road within the camp. It was...the barracks were on one side, a big fence was on the other side, and here around that area it looked like in the olden days they had cellars. They had, you know, like a [hip (ph)] up here and a door to go into a cellar. And we did...we had no idea what the cellars was... were...uh...but since they did not have the barracks for us, they put us in this open area. It was January already, 23rd or 24th and so...uh...snow was high and the snow was already hard, and it was like ice mountain and...uh...we had to wait there. And...uh...my mother was worn out and very tired and she just simply just lied down on the floor and fell asleep. And, of course, I understood it was bad for her. I kept on waking her up and trying to get her up but it was impossible. And, of course, she evidently caught pneumonia or something like and that was the beginning of her illness during the time in...in Ravensbrück. Well, about...uh...night time they found a place for us, and they pushed a great number of people into the barrack. We were glad to be in there, although we couldn't move and we couldn't sit anywhere or...or so on because it was not prepared for it. So at least we were not freezing. So we stayed there until next morning and, of course, I remember a incident where people were just losing their mind. Exactly losing...just going berserk and fighting and screaming and killing each other. Uh...I mean I don't know how they could, but I mean their strength was unbelievable when you get in a state like this. Uh...well in the morning they separated us. Of course, I have no idea how many dead...uh... remained behind us and so on and they put us into barracks. We were in a barracks and Mother was not doing well at all anymore and she could not...one day...I mean she was forced to leave her...uh...bunk for the roll count. Uh... the reason I am stuttering about it is because I am used to saying it in German and therefore, I mean, to translate it is English is kind of awkward. Awkward. I mean I have to find the right name for it.

Q: The "Appell" is fine.

A: So...uh... Uh...anyhow so Mother came one...one day she was evidently at the end of her strength and...uh...we went to the roll call and my girlfriend and I were holding her because she couldn't stand up and...uh...we felt that she...uh...became completely limp. You know, that her legs were not holding her anymore, that they were like detached and we were holding her up and then comes this situation again with this woman that saved me once from Eichmann. And she saw this and she came over and, of course, I still did not have confidence in her because I had no idea that she was going to be kind to me through several ordeals, but she was and she says...she asks what the problem was. And I told her, I said, "I believe Mother is sick and I would like to take her to the barrack." She says, "Go ahead and take her." Well, I was young, still strong girl. Believe it! I picked my Mother up in my arms like a baby and I walked with her into the barrack and I sat in the chair and I was just holding her, you know, like a baby. And she evidently had a stroke because I know that she could see me with one eye and I could tell that the way she...her eye was moving that she understood and I

was holding her and kissing her like a baby and sitting there...sitting. There was nothing else I could do. Until the roll call was over and everybody...uh...came into the barrack. By then, the girl came...the German woman came to me again and she says, "Well, if she is sick, you have to take her to the hospital and the hospital I mentioned before was called "Revier." Uh...So I couldn't carry her by myself. My girlfriend and I were holding her and kind a dragging her to the barrack and we put her on the bed and...uh...left her there. I...that was still morning...uh...in the afternoon when they were bringing soup, I did not want to eat the soup, but I wanted to take it for Mother and, of course, they would not give me a extra dish for Mother because they said she was going to be taken care of in the Revier. Uh...but I didn't believe it. When I came to the Revier with the little pot as big as this cup or smaller and I was approaching the...uh...bunk area where Mother was lying down, a girl stopped me and she said to me, "Your mother is dead." At that time, I don't really remember what happened. I know that the food spilled and I fell to the ground; I evidently fainted. I don't know how long I was there, but I was still there when I came to; and when I came to...I will tell you something, you most probably won't believe it, because I don't believe it myself. I don't believe it, 'cause I was so calm. I was just like a...like a puppet doing things and the first things were I took all her belongings, her shoes, her little scarf, her garter belt, her comb and whatever else she had there, and...uh...still I knew that this was not enough of her that I wanted to take with me. And I asked for scissors and I cut a great part of her hair and--and I did it, amazingly, only from the left side because I said, "It is from the heart side"--and I cut her hair, and I still have it. And those were the things that...that I did like...like automat...like a puppet...like... there was nothing life in me at all that...that prompted me to do it. I...I don't know I maybe...maybe one corner of my brain was directing me to do that. Other than that, I just cannot understand anything else. And then I...uh...went with these things to my barrack and usually when you have anything that belongs to you, you carry it with you everywhere you go because if you leave it for a minute, it goes, disappears. So whatever bundle you had with you, you had to even take to the bathroom, everywhere. You had to sleep with your head on it and your hand attached to it. Well, I took the bundle and ...uh...the same evening I...uh...began reacting a little bit more normal and I felt like I was thawing out from a deep freeze and I...uh...somewhat was able to go to the barrack which was near by us and I wanted to see my mother. So I went. Of course, I would never do it again if I had to do it over again. I went and the bed was empty already. They had completely undressed her and they had...uh... dropped her in the wash room. There was one washroom where they were dropping all the dead, you know, just like a pile of wood. So I went in the washroom and I saw my mother. I touched her. I cried. And I left. (sobbing) The next day I still was not satisfied because I knew that...uh...every morning they were taking all the dead and taking them either to the crematoria or they were dumping them in ditches and burning them. And they...every...it was like a custom. Every morning there was a guy that came with a wooden little wagon and he was pulling it and he was stopping to all the barracks and all the Reviers and pulling out all the dead. So I knew that this was going to happen and I knew it was happening around such-a-such hour, so my girl friend and I... I...I begged her...I..."Please my dear. Come with me. I must see Mother once again." So, we went and sure enough he went by with about 10 or 12 corpses, and the reason I could recognize my mother because majority of people that entered Auschwitz and later on...uh...Ravensbrück, had no hair. Their

hair were chopped off because they were using the hair for doing...uh...making mattresses or doing other things. I mean they found use for every...everything. So I could tell my Mother because she has such pretty brown hair and they were hanging (crying) so I saw her. But my pain was so terrible that I pushed a...I still have a mark on one of my hands. I think it was this hand. It still has a mark where I pushed the whole hand in my mouth to avoid screaming because if I screamed, maybe they would shoot me or something, you know, cause there were Germans all over. So...uh...I could...couldn't pull out my fist for awhile. My...my friend had to help me. And that was the last I saw of my mother. And, of course,...uh...we stayed there for a little while and we were taken to work...uh... I would not be able to explain what I was doing because it was terrifying, horrible. It was like a tremendous ditch about three times the size of this room, dug. In...in the ditch they had human...human waste. Not bodies...not bodies, but human waste. And...uh...the waste was fermenting. I...they evidently, they used it for...uh...for fertilizer or something like that. That was my understanding at...at that time although at first it looked like the worst...uh... fantasy, the worst and the most horrible fantastic story and we had to.... We had those big sticks with shovels or with something on bottom that we had to keep on...on moving this stuff to...in order it should be for preparation for something, whatever they were using it for. Uh...the smell was horrible. Uh...people sometimes fell up to their necks and nobody bothered taking them out. So it was...uh...unforgettable. It was a horrible, horrible...if you had to imagine a horror story, you couldn't. You couldn't! So...and I...and...and the space between the... areas between the ditches were so narrow that you could easily trip and fall, and we had to try not to. So I was working for a short time there.

Q: Because of time...because of time and our time problems, can you just tell me...

A: I'll make it short because it comes to an end. Yes. Uh...Okay. When we got to the barracks one day, we were... uh ...notified that Swedish Red Cross was going to...uh ...uh ...rescue us. Well, they didn't say rescue, but they were ...because they...to them it was not rescue from what. So they imagined that the Red Cross was going to take us and help us. Now we didn't believe it. I mean basically nobody believed it. But I didn't care. I was at the point where I really, really wanted to die. I did not care to live anymore. I couldn't live with the memories and I certainly could not see the future, so I put myself on the list. My girl friend was on the list. She was very optimistic. Always I was rather the pessimist. I mean pessimistic type. And we went and we survived. We were taken to...as we went out there were wagons...not wagons, but Red Cross ambulances waiting for us and it only took enough people...I mean as many seats as they had so we could be comfortable. They had food on the...uh ...buses. They had first aid and medication, everything. There were young Swedes, and they were trained to speak some German and Polish and they...was a whole train of...of buses...of those...uh... uh...Red Cross buses, and we were going to travel to Denmark. On the way, unfortunately, there were either Americans bombing the areas of the ghetto...of the Auschwitz, ...of the Ravensbrück concentration camp, or maybe it was Russians. I don't know. And they thought they were doing good, but they didn't know. So I think either one or two of the Red Cross buses were bombed and many people got killed and injured. Well, I was again in the...at the end because I wasn't rushing to get on the bus because I didn't believe it. So that was the end

and, ...uh...they got us by land to...uh...Denmark. In Denmark, they put us on trains because...uh...they were afraid for people to come in contact with...with us because of illnesses that we might have carried, but food and...was delivered to us. We had...we were sitting in...in nice trains and...uh...with all comfort and everything. And food was delivered to us hot. I remember Danish goulash and...uh...they delivered...uh...clothing and blankets and everything and then we were taken to a port in Denmark and from Denmark we went by ship to Sweden.

Q: Guta. Thank you very much.

A: You're welcome. You're welcome.

Q: Stop the tape and we will see what we can do about the shoes. We have one minute.

OBJECTS

- (1) Two garter belts worn by Guta's mother in concentration camp.
- (2) Bunch of her mother's hair, cut by Guta after her mother died.
- (3) Toothbrush, comb and spoon, shared by Guta and her mother in concentration camp.
- (4) One boot/shoe worn by Guta's mother in concentration camp.
- (5) Scarf belonging to Guta's mother, and worn by her in concentration camp.

End of tape #3

Conclusion of Interview