

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Carola Steinhardt**  
**June 3, 1996**  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Carola Steinhardt, conducted by Joan Ringelheim on June 3, 1996 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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## CAROLA STEINHARDT

### June 3, 1996

01:01:08

Q: Good morning, Carola.

A: Good morning.

Q: It's nice to be with you.

A: Same here, nice to meet you.

Q: Can you give me your name that you were born with and where you were born and when, please?

A: Right. I was born Carola Stern in 1925, March the 8th. No, March the 8th, right. In Nieder-ohmen, Germany. And my father's name was Meier Stern. My mother's name was Hedwig Stern, and we lived in Nieder-ohmen for many, many years before -- my parents were both born there. My grandparents were born there, and I believe my great grandparents were born there.

Q: You had a sister?

A: I do have a sister, yes. She was just about 15 months older than me, and we lived very happily in Nieder-ohmen.

Q: Tell me what you father did for a living.

A: My father was a cattle dealer and so had been my grandfather before him. And my father had sisters and brothers who more or less helped in this field. And then my grandfather was getting older, my father took over. So we had cattles, and we had everything. We had chickens and we had goats and we had a marvelous time, especially when we were young. And we had eggs and we raised potatoes, and we had a whole farm. We were actually farmers.

01:03:01

Q: So including cattle and animals?

A: Including cattle, yes. We had a stall with cattles where my mother reluctantly went in the morning to milk the cows. It was a little shtetl, and we had people who helped. And we were farmers, just like anybody else in Nieder-ohmen. There was never any difference; we were Jewish, but we didn't feel it. We were Germans first. Jews were secondary -- nobody

bothered with this religion. And since my father was a veteran of World War I, he was very well liked. Very well liked. And whenever someone had a problem in Nieder-ohmen, my father was sure to solve it. We called him later on the Kissinger<sup>1</sup> of Nieder-ohmen.

Q: And do you remember any particular thing, problem that came up that he solved?

A: Well, there were problems with marriages. One wanted a divorce from one another, so they would come to my father and ask him could he talk to this one and that one. My father did, and he usually solved everything. He was very well liked. So was my mother.

Q: And tell me about your mother.

A: My mother was about 13 years younger as my father. So we looked upon my father as the head of the house, and my mother was one of us. She was a young girl. She always has been, and as we grew older, she sort of looked for guidance towards us, to my sister and me. And we became sort of like three sisters. She was quite young, she was still our mother. I mean I wouldn't say when it came to disciplining us, she was the head of the house. She knew just what to do, but basically we grew up together with our mother.

Q: If your mother was 13 years younger than your father, do you know approximately how old they were at this time?

A: My mother was 20. She was 19 when she got engaged, and my father must have been 32. And my mother, and then she got married at 20 when my father was 33. And from the same village, it wasn't unusual.

Q: It wasn't?

A: No, it wasn't unusual. And they were very much in love, I was told. My father, everybody thought that, "Why would he marry such a young kid?" But my mother was in love with him, I heard that and I seen that.

Q: So this was a very warm household.

A: Very warm household, right. But we did -- our grandparents lived with us. And my father had a sister who was retarded. She lived with us, too. So it was a big house, but it was a happy house. My mother took care of the retarded sister, who, who,, really was never older than 11, let's say. You know, mentally. And we grew up with her, too.

01:06:01

And we had a dog, and, we were just one happy family. We never had any problems.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Alfred Kissinger

Q: Did you milk the cows, too?

A: I tried. It didn't help me. But what I did, we had a dog. And whenever my mother punished me, I would go out. The dog was never in the house, that didn't happen in Germany. Dogs were kept outside, so, therefore, I went outside. If she punished me, I went outside and ate with the dog.

Q: And ate with dog?

A: I ate with the dog. And my mother would always catch me, and she would say, "Why are you eating the dog's food?" And I would just say, "Well, the dog didn't want it." And I ate it, and, you know, grew up healthy. Didn't bother me a bit.

Q: Was this dog a real pet for you?

A: It was -- he sort of was my friend, you know. He walked after me wherever I went. And, you know, in Germany where we lived, we had an outhouse. We didn't have a toilet inside, so the dog was right next to the outhouse. So every time we went there or stayed there a little while, the dog would scratch on the door. "It's enough already, come on out." So the dog was part of our family, we loved him. And his name was Flock.

Q: Flock?

A: Uh-huh. Strange name.

Q: And what about friends? Were you . . .

A: Well, I had lots of German friends. I had little kids who played with me, and went to school with me and we were -- sometimes one of my friends would go with me to synagogue, and I went with her to church. My mother told me I shouldn't kneel down because that's not in my religion, so I didn't. Nobody bothered, I don't even think they did kneel down. Because I was always told, I remember that from way back. But, but I went to church Sundays and she went to synagogue on Saturdays. We were really close friends, and she's still alive. And she was happy that I did that for her, and I was happy to have her. I never wanted to let her go, why let her go on Saturdays and why would she let me go on Sundays, you know? But it changed, it changed in 1933. It changed a lot. This particular friend didn't change too much, but I had one girl which really was my idol. She was extremely intelligent, and she was a little redhead and she was very cute. And we played together, and at one point she said to me, "You know, Carola, I can't play with you anymore." And I said, "How come?" She said, "Because you're a Jew." I said, "What is that?" She said, "Well, have you heard of Hitler?" I said, "Yes, because every morning they used to say Heil Hitler. And, but why can't you play with me anymore? Why?" She said, "Because my father told me that you're Jewish, and Gentile children, Aryan kids can no longer play with the Jewish kids."

01:09:08

And her father had gone to school with my mother, and they were the best of friends. And that was very, very hard for an eight-year-old, you know. It felt very strange that suddenly -- and then the whole group disappeared. Nobody would play with a Jewish child anymore. So then we sort of -- to the Jewish kids, we were friendly with the Jewish kids, too. So then we were all Jewish kids, and we stuck to one another.

Q: When that young friend said that to you, was that the first time that you felt . . .

A: Felt there was something -- I was different. And I couldn't, and I couldn't understand why I was different. Well, I was asked before by someone why was I different. Did I feel any different? You know, we did speak Hochdeutsch<sup>2</sup>, which is the better German. So did that girl, this Lucy, Lucy, really, she spoke Hochdeutsch. Only the farmers had a dialect, and we never did have a dialect. So I felt was that the difference? No, it wasn't the difference, because the teacher spoke Hochdeutsch and so did the pastor of the village, speak Hochdeutsch. So we were -- I was very upset that suddenly they would make such a difference and make us feel like outcasts, and it got worse and worse. It was just -- that was only the beginning.

Q: Did it affect school right away?

A: Yes. Not right away, because we were pretty good students, especially my sister was an excellent student. So the teachers couldn't right away throw us out of school because we sort of held the school together. But there was a time where it was impossible, it was only Heil Hitler and there were these songs which I really can't translate. But in German it was "Wenn's Judenblut vom Messer spritzt<sup>3</sup>." Jewish blood runs off the knives, then we feel better. Just songs like that, and we felt very, very, very bad. We were little kids and yet when we looked around and we seen the BDM<sup>4</sup>, that's a circle of German girls who had these nice outings, we felt so why can't we be part of it? Why can't we? As a matter of fact, I remember at one point when I walked through the schoolyard -- we lived right next to the schoolyard -- everybody said, "Heil, Hitler" like this. I did, too. What did I know? I was eight years old. So my mother said to me, "You're not supposed to do that." I said, "Why not?" She said, "Haven't you been told that you are Jewish?" I said, "Oh, I forgot." So it was very hard to comprehend.

01:12:00

I couldn't get it together that I was suddenly Jewish and I couldn't do whatever I did before.

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<sup>2</sup> Standard German (German)

<sup>3</sup> When the blood of the Jews sprays from the knife (German).

<sup>4</sup> Bund Deutscher Mädels [League of German Girls] (German); branch of Hitler Youth.

But, they told me quickly that . . .

Q: That must have been very frightening.

A: It was very frightening, and, especially for an eight-year-old child. If you're older, you understand. But it got worse and worse, and by the age of 11, my parents decided that they couldn't leave me in school anymore. Neither myself nor my sister, and they would send me to a Jewish school. In the meantime they had made Jewish schools all over Germany where only Jewish kids went. And so, therefore, I went to Bad Nauheim, which was Bad Nauheim Bezirkschule<sup>5</sup> in the district of the area where some of the children came by bus and some of them stayed in the dorm. And I was sent into the dorm. I was very homesick, and my mother and father had a hard time getting me there, but once I was there I was fine. And my sister went -- went,, she's a year older -- she skipping already, I don't know, in one grade here and there, went straight to a teacher's seminary to Würzburg. That was a teacher's seminary, so she went there and I went to Bad Nauheim.

Q: So what year, do you remember what year it was that you went?

A: In 19 -- I was 11, 1936.

Q: Did you, before you left for school, did you talk with your sister about what was happening and what was happening to her?

A: Yeah, always, always. And my sister, although she's only 15 months older, she always was, like, she gave me strength. I, I made believe like she was 100 years older, and I would say to her, "So, what's going to happen to us?" She says, "Nothing. I don't know why you're worried. It's going to be all right. Don't worry about it. We'll live, we'll survive." So I figured if she said so, I'll probably survive and went on with that thought.

Q: Did your parents tell you this? I mean . . .

A: My father, my father was a very -- he was a German. He would say, "I went through World War I, and the Germans are really not bad people. And you're a young girl, and they're not going to kill you. Don't worry about it, you'll be fine. You'll absolutely fine. Hitler will disappear one of these days, and you're going to be okay. Just hold out, don't let them make you crazy. Be strong." And he had all these quotations from Schiller<sup>6</sup> and Goethe<sup>7</sup> and all kinds of things telling me that never do anything wrong. "Rather suffer, but don't do anything wrong." Which in German is, "Lieber Unrecht Leiden als tun."<sup>8</sup> And he left me with all kinds of legacies, and I really, I, I lived through this on my life. I listened to ... he

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<sup>5</sup> District school (German)

<sup>6</sup> (Johann Christoph) Friedrich von Schiller

<sup>7</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

<sup>8</sup> Better to suffer injustice than to cause it (German).

was a very bright man.

01:15:10

And,, at least of everybody feels their father's superior, but he had a strong mind. And he kept saying that definitely we'll get through that easily, and we don't have to go to America. We can stay in Germany, not to worry. So what was I supposed to do? I said "okay." Little did he know what was in store for him.

Q: He and your family had an opportunity to go the United States?

A: Well, yes. We had a -- we could have gone, but the number was very high. It was 70 or something, 700, I don't remember anymore. And, we had an aunt, you know, my father had this retarded sister. And he wasn't going to let her go, just abandon her. So he said, "Maybe I ought to send the children," my sister and myself. But then he said, "But my kids want to be with me." And we really wanted to be with them, and he said, "It will be okay." But in the meantime, they took the retarded sister into a home to Berlin away from us. And my father was taken to a labor camp, and well, on the 10th of November, you know, he was taken to Buchenwald. And my mother came to, to Bad Nauheim where I was. And my sister came to Bad Nauheim from Würzburg and we reunited there. And from there we just faded out and being in Bad Nauheim with all the children and we were taken out of the school to the, . . .

Q: Could I interrupt for a moment . . .

A: Sure.

Q: . . . and just go back a little bit? When you were at school and you were alone boarding was the first time you were away from home.

A: Right.

Q: Was that both difficult and easier because life was better for you there?

A: Life was better for me school-wise, yes. And I was 11 years old, so I figured eventually I would have to grow up -- be on my own, so I adjusted very well and I stayed there, and I had friends and it was fine. I could have gone home. I usually went home on vacations, but, it was never the same anymore because my sister wasn't there, and I stayed a few days and went back to school. But it was considerably pretty normal yet.

Q: So the Nazis or the Germans didn't come in and do things at the school? There was a . . .

01:18:05

A: Well, the 10th of November.



Q: In 1938?

A: 1938. The Germans came and threw all the kids out, cut into the feather beds, and the whole school was in an uproar. The little kids were crying, looking for their parents. But naturally there were no parents; it was a boarding school. And, well, I was one of the older ones, there were six-year-olds; we held on to them. And they marched us to the mayor's office with the teachers, and the teachers were frightened themselves. We thought we were going to be shot there, but we weren't. We stayed there for a while, and from there we went back home. We went home. In the school, and it was horror. All the feather beds and everything was on the floor and all the -- it was a religious school, so the torah cloths were all torn and the books all -- whatever. But we remained in the school until 1939. We fixed it up again, and we stayed there.

Q: And the kids fixed it up? Everybody . . .

A: The kids and the teachers and whoever helped, we all fixed it up, and we stayed another year until 1939.

Q: So when these Nazis left, did you -- were the kids still very frightened? Did kids have bad dreams?

A: Yes. The kids had bad dreams. So did the teachers. They weren't that much older, you know. And we all had bad dreams. We were afraid. What would they do with us? And, -- but life went on, and we stayed till 1939 and then the school was eliminated.

Q: Now, your mother and your sister came there . . .

A: And my sister stayed in the school for another year. Since she had some education in Würzburg she taught first and second grade.

Q: In your school?

A: In my school.

Q: So this must have been very good for you?

A: That was good because I had my sister. My mother went back home, and I think she eliminated everything. She -- my grandparents and her and my father moved to Frankfurt because there was no way we could stay in Nieder-ohmen because we were recognized all over. In Frankfurt, nobody knew us as Jews. We were just people like anybody else until we had to wear the star. So we lived together with our grandparents and it was okay. And, my sister worked, she had to do some, also, some slave labor work in Frankfurt. I don't recall what she did, but I went to school yet because I was still young -- younger. I went to

Philanthropin and I took a course in medicine.

01:21:00

I took a course in sewing, and I sort of was preparing myself for America. Learned how to speak English. And,, all kinds of courses, and that lasted until 1941. From 1931, till 1939 till 1941.

Q: Now, you father had been take to Buchenwald after Kristallnacht<sup>9</sup>?

A: Yes, but he came out about four weeks later because he was the so-called Frontkämpfer<sup>10</sup> because had for -- at the front, so that if you could provide papers, they let him out. So he came to Frankfurt, and in Frankfurt he was taken away to a labor camp. It was someplace around Mecklenburg, I believe; I don't recall. And he had to do really hard work.

Q: Do you remember his return from Buchenwald and what he talked about?

A: I remember. He was so thin, and he was -- a few teeth were missing. I don't know whether they had beat him up or something, and he never wanted to talk about it. He was afraid that we would be frightened by it. And since he was such a German, he thought that couldn't happen to him. He definitely didn't want to talk about it. And I remember in 1939 when German soldiers came back to Germany from Poland, and they used to say, "They're taking the Polish Jews and they shoot them right outside." And my father would say, "that guy never told the truth, it's not so. I'm sure it's not." He denied it. He really denied it, he thought that couldn't happen. Germans were not bad people. It was, you know, they were educated mostly from birth. Beethoven<sup>11</sup>, Schiller and all the whole thing, so he couldn't believe that.

Q: Were you more skeptical?

A: No. I listened to my father. I thought my father couldn't be wrong. Only I could be wrong. I was too young anyway to think -- my sister kept saying, "Daddy is right. Not to worry." So we weren't worried.

Q: So you're living with your grandparents . . .

A: And my parents.

Q: . . . and your parents and your sister.

A: My mother and my sister. My father was then taken away.

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<sup>9</sup> Crystal Night (German); Night of Broken Glass.

<sup>10</sup> Front line soldier (German)

<sup>11</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven

Q: Taken away?

A: Right. In Frankfurt. And it was bearable. We had a room and we didn't have much to eat, but we had food stamps, and we got food here and there. My grandfather used to go and buy things, but we were always rationed. My grandmother was always afraid that I would eat too much. Because I was always tall and heavier than the rest of the family, and she couldn't stand that. Whenever I ate, she said, "It's enough."

01:24:00

That was a little hard for me, but she didn't mean any harm. I just took it very badly. But, in 1941 they took 150 or 60 young girls from Frankfurt to Berlin to a labor camp, and I was among them. My parents remained. My mother and my grandparents and my sister remained in Frankfurt, but I was taken to Berlin.

Q: Now, by then you were wearing a Jewish star?

A: By then we were wearing -- yes. By then we were wearing a Jewish star, right.

Q: And these are just young Jewish girls that they're taking?

A: Young Jewish girls.

Q: And . . .

A: Not older -- we were maybe 'til 18. I was 15 then.

Q: And how did you find out you had to go?

A: Well, we got a notice . . .

Q: In the mail?

A: . . . we had to be -- in the mail. And we had to be there at a certain time, and a doctor would examine us, a Jewish doctor. And we were told we were going to a labor camp, which we did, and we were all taken to Berlin. Now, we were -- like I was 15 years old. I didn't think that was so terrible. I went with lots of friends. Of course, I had to say goodbye again to my parents from then I would never see them anymore, and my grandparents and I went to Berlin. And when, when, we came to Berlin, we were put up in an old movie house, and, it was in a very good neighborhood. But it was an old movie house and they made it in little rooms, so we were about -- two, four, six, eight people -- eight girls together. It was livable. If they would have left us alone, we could have survived there during the war. It was livable. So, of course, food was scarce, but at that time they had occupied Italy. They brought

watermelons, and we had enough potatoes, so we made potatoes and we fried them with nothing. Made potato pancakes and watermelons and we got a little bread, and we got by. And we worked for the Siemens-Schuckert-Werke in Berlin. It was pretty hard labor, especially for a 15-year-old, but . . .

Q: What were you doing?

A: We were making airplane doors. Well, I wouldn't say doors. A little, it was more or less windows. We had to cut off pieces,, we put it on a -- in German, it's a trebank.<sup>12</sup> I've seen these things here, and I kept looking at them. I said, "This is what I worked on." You had to put it into the machine, and then you had to put the knife really close to it.

01:27:01

And then it would cut off a piece, make it to a certain size. And very often if you didn't do that right and the thing kept falling out, you know, and would hit you. But I was always very careful to do it right, and I did okay. They paid us very little, but we had enough money to support ourselves.

Q: So they did pay you?

A: They would pay us a little bit, yes. But we weren't just Jewish girls, there were German people living in Berlin, older people who worked there. And I was in Abteilung<sup>13</sup> 505. That was really for big, fat people. And since I was strong and tall, they put me in there while the others went to different places, but luckily I survived in that place. It was, it was bad, but the voice of my father came up, "You've got to survive. You have to be strong." And I tried very hard really. It wasn't always pleasant, but Berlin was not the worst. The worst is yet to come.

Q: Let's stop and we can change the tape.

01:28:15

End of Tape #1

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<sup>12</sup> Lathe (German)

<sup>13</sup> Division (German)

**Tape #2**

02:01:06

Q: Okay, Carola, I wanted to ask you a few questions about Frankfurt. Did your mother work during this time?

A: No, she didn't. She took care of her parents, our grandparents, and, she took care of us.

Q: Where was the money coming from for food . . .

A: I don't know. I have no idea. Maybe they had a little bit, I have no idea. There was no one working, and I don't know where the money came -- maybe from my grandparents. I asked that question many a times.

Q: Do you know if your parents sold the farm, or was it confiscated?

A: Yeah, they just took it. It wasn't sold. It was confiscated, absolutely. So we didn't get any money from the farm then until later on. So there was -- I don't know. What I lived from, I have no idea.

Q: Do you remember when your dad went to the forced labor of the . . .

A: I remember that, right. I remember that.

Q: What was that day like?

A: Well, we were afraid that we weren't going to see him anymore. And he said that he would come back, not to worry. He's not going to leave us, he will come back. But I didn't see him anymore. My mother and my sister did, but I didn't see him anymore.

Q: And how come they were able to see him?

A: They took Jewish people out to labor camps. They wouldn't let anybody in there, and I suppose he wrote to them here and there. But I was taken away, so I had no connections with my father anymore. I would write to my mother once in a while, and she would write back. But that was only a short while, I was taken in 1941 to Berlin, in February.

02:03:01

And my parents were taken then altogether to Łódź in September of 1941.

Q: Did you know they were taken in September?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you know that?

A: They sent a letter saying we are relocating to Litzmannstadt. I still didn't know what that meant. They were moved out of Frankfurt to Łódź together with my sister, that's all I knew. Nothing else.

Q: Now, the war started in 1939.

A: Right.

Q: Was there a particular effect on you other than being Jewish?

A: No, there was no particular effect, not on us personally. We went about our way like I was in school yet and, but no, not me. I mean, I was absolutely away from everybody. You know, I was all on my own. Then in Berlin, of course, I was together with other girls, and we formed close ties; we really did. We had no other choice. All we had was each other, and we didn't know what was going to happen. Their parents were also taken, so, we didn't know. We had to really stick to one another and bond.

Q: Can you describe those relationships, what kinds of things you did together?

A: Well, we were -- the more religious girls would eat together, you know, and I was one of them. And a little bit, I think, I was an outcast because the others always thought I was a little bit too religious. I really wasn't, I was just observant. That was how I was brought up from home. But other kids really didn't care about religion, the other girls. They did whatever they had to do, so I made sure not to eat meat and things like that, you know. If there was meat available, I stayed away from it, I didn't -- I was very kosher.

Q: Now, this is interesting, because when you talked about your childhood and when your friends wouldn't talk to you anymore, you said, "But I didn't think I was Jewish."

A: Right. I didn't think I was, but kosher I was.

Q: I see, so it was different. You had a certain set of traditions that you followed that were habitual?

A: Absolutely. Right. It was very much accepted in Nieder-ohmen, very much so. Because on Passover, we would hand out matzos to our Gentile neighbors and friends, and they in return would give us eggs. And I very often went to my friend's house and they had these beautiful salamis hanging in their cellar. It looked so good to me, I asked my mother many a times, "Why can't I just have a sliver?" And she said, "It's not kosher. It comes from a pig." So that was it, it was a no-no and I lived by the rules.

02:06:01

Q: Now, when you're in this factory, was that harmful in any way? I mean, are you getting weaker because you're not eating some of the things that you weren't?

A: Well, we were young, 15 years old. No, I wasn't really that weak, but I missed my parents. I missed everything. But, you know, there was one thing we were young, and I think that really helped. Because when you're young, you always feel that something better is going to come, and it will eventually be good again. And we really didn't think of the worst, none of us did. We thought, "Eventually this will all end and we are going to go home again, and we'll be free." But it didn't come to that, never did.

Q: Were you praying with these young girls, as well eating together?

A: I did. I prayed for myself. They didn't do much praying. But I had one girl -- two other girls who were equally religious, and we did a lot of praying. But the other girls really didn't. They sort of looked down on us a little bit like the frumies -- frumies<sup>14</sup> you know. That was done, but it didn't bother us a bit. It was okay.

Q: Now, did sometimes difficult things happen so you had to really help each other, not simply support each other spiritually?

A: Spiritually. In Berlin?

Q: Yes. Did someone get sick and they needed to . . .

A: Well, it wasn't that much that people got sick, but, you know, they were young girls and they wanted to have dates. They wanted to go out on a date, and maybe they did. And they wore the Juden-star, the star, and they were caught. And when they were caught, they went right to the gas chambers. They went right to Auschwitz where we never heard from them again. So that was a big issue, and so many girls disappeared. They just felt we'll take the star off and nobody will even know that I'm Jewish. After all, our skin was white. So nobody would know, but they were always caught, and many of the girls were taken before that time to camps and never survived.

Q: Now, who would they meet and where . . .

A: It's hard to say -- it's hard to say who they met. They were recognized by somebody. Maybe their nose was too long. Maybe they were stopped by a Gestapo, who would say "Du bist eine Jüdin?"<sup>15</sup> and then what? To say "No." "Where do you live?" You had to have papers,

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<sup>14</sup> Pious Jews (Yiddish)

<sup>15</sup> You are a Jewess? (German)

that was it.

Q: No, I meant boys. Where were they meeting boys?

A: Oh, where did they find boys? Well, in the factory, you could find not just Jewish boys. There were the men who helped us with the machinery. Every young men, young German men, who sort of became interested in the Jewish girls, and if you were stupid enough, you would go with them. But, otherwise, you just didn't do that.

02:09:02

Q: So you never thought about doing that?

A: Never. First of all, that wouldn't have been my thing. I was much too religious. Second of all, that was something you just didn't do as a decent human being; you just wouldn't do that. So . . .

Q: Did you have some kind of a social life when you went to that, but when you were boarding in school?

A: In Bad Nauheim?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Oh, yes. We had a wonderful life there. We had -- it was very good there. Really, it was easy. I met my husband there. He went to the same boarding school.

Q: So were you boyfriend and girlfriend in that school?

A: We were -- I had an eye on him. I don't know whether he had an eye on me. Like girls usually do, yes.

Q: So you had a crush?

A: I had a little bit of a crush on him. I had a little crush on the teacher, and like all girls do, that was okay. But, you know, I went away, and we had different, very different roads, you know.

Q: Now, there seemed to have been some freedom of movement being to work in that . . .

A: In Berlin?

Q: . . . in Berlin.



A: Yes.

Q: And you saw your father's sister?

A: Right. I, we could go out on certain days. We had a curfew, of course, you know. But we could go out on Sundays if we weren't working in the factory. And I remember taking another girl along. I had heard that there was an institute for retarded people, and that she was brought there. So every Sunday I went with my friends to that place, and -- to meet her, to see her. And she was so happy when I came, and she didn't really know where she was. She had her friends there, and it was ring around the rosy and whatever, and she was happy to see me. And I was happy that she was happy, and I went back into the labor camp, until one day I went to see her -- wanted to see her and it was closed. Closed indefinitely, no more. Somehow they had taken them all some place and suppose gassed them.

Q: That must have been a horrible day.

A: It was terrible, right. But I realized -- I still didn't realize that they had gassed them. I thought maybe they put them someplace else. I mean, you really didn't -- maybe we were so naive we really didn't think of gas chambers because we thought relocating, relocation, that was the thing. Gas chambers were far from our minds. We didn't think that could happen. That was only later. So when she wasn't there anymore, I was devastated, but there was nothing I could do. That was it.

Q: So now you're really alone in a way that you've never been before. Now, your parents are Łódź and your sister is in Łódź?

02:12:03

A: Right. And my aunt, well she wasn't much of a help, but she was there, you know. While I was in Berlin, I knew she was there, and I could see her. She was someone from home, but that was it. There was no, no relationship with anybody. We sort of had each other, the girls.

Q: How did you deal with it? I mean, did you cry? Did you get really depressed?

A: Well, we all did, you know. When we cried, we cried together. And like, you know, like in German they'll say, "geteilter schmerz ist halber schmerz,"<sup>16</sup> "If you share your pain with someone, it's half the pain." And we shared everything, everything, even the clothes we shared. We were really one happy bunch together. We made the best of it, but it wasn't until we were in Berlin until 1943 in February, they took big transports, more than a thousand Jews from Berlin, including us. And they told us in the labor camp that they didn't need us any longer. We are going to be resettled to Poland, and they're going to have Russians -- White Russian, who were replacing us. But what could we do? We were going together on

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<sup>16</sup> Shared pain is half the pain (German)

the transport, and we were together again, all of us, 160, 50, 40, whatever we were by then. Some of the girls, I must say, had gone back home to their parents and were taken with their parents to a camp. How this was arranged, I don't know. But, I couldn't, my parents just disappeared overnight, so I couldn't have gone with them.

Q: What rumors are you now hearing? I mean, you're in the factory for two years in Berlin where some information must be coming in to somebody. Are there rumors that you're hearing about ghettos, about killings?

A: Yeah, we heard about ghettos. Never about killings. We heard about resettlements in ghettos. Killings, we didn't hear about. We, we kept thinking about the girls who disappeared from nowhere. That they did something wrong, they shouldn't have done it. But, we never thought that they were actually killed. We thought maybe they had taken them into a camp someplace else, but that they were killed? Never entered my mind, anyway. So it was not until 1943 in February we were taken to -- we didn't know where we were taken.

02:15:04

We were taken to Auschwitz. We were going on the cattle -- on the train. And in the train, it was horrible conditions. We were in there for quite a few days, and, people died right then and there. And we had one pail in the middle there -- well, it was horrible. So ...

Q: Is that your worst time?

A: one of -- not knowing where we were going, not knowing what they were going to do with us, that was really hard. But there were always a few people, older people than us, who said, "It's going to be all right. You're going to be resettled and not to worry." We never really screamed, cried, or did anything. We just took it as it came, I guess because we were young. And we said, "It's going to be all right." One sort of did that to the other, you know, we tried to really calm each other down until we got the train rolled in Auschwitz in February. And then we what happened, we got out in the middle of night and there was Mengele<sup>17</sup>. Of course, we didn't know who Mengele was, and there were quite a lot of other Gestapo and SS men and everybody around us with dogs. And they kept screaming in German, of course, "Aussteigen, Aussteigen!"<sup>18</sup> And they formed a line, and "You go right and the other one goes left." And whatever the older people left, the children to the left, and the younger people to the right. And we still didn't know what was going on.

Q: How big a transport was this, do you know?

A: A thousand.

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<sup>17</sup> Dr. Josef Mengele

<sup>18</sup> Get out! (German)

Q: A thousand?

A: Right. From Berlin.

Q: And how did you know it was Mengele?

A: I didn't know it then. Later on I recognized him. I really didn't know then. And he started screaming, "You get here. You go here." Well, by then I was 17, so I went into the camps and all the rest of the people -- I mean, the older people, and the people -- the children went to the gas chambers. But we didn't know that. So when we got to the camps, we were first -- they undressed us. We were sent to the sauna, and in the sauna -- they cut our hair before that. They cut our hair, and then we were tattooed. And we met in the sauna, we were all sitting together, not knowing each other because we had no hair and it was really -- for a young girl to suddenly have no hair whatsoever -- was a devastating experience. But it wasn't the worst. So we just looked at each other and most of the time, we didn't even recognize each other because we looked so different.

02:18:04

So after the so-called delousing, we were given clothing. Our clothes we never seen any more. So they gave us some old things. I was a tall girl and I had a blouse which went to here. No hair, and unbelievably you looked like a degenerate. You looked like an idiot coming out of there. And what happened to those beautiful girls, I've been asked many a times, but you were a young girl. You must have been a pretty girl. If that's done to you, you're not pretty anymore. You look disgusting, and, of course, that wasn't the worst yet. The worst was yet to come.

Q: How did they cut your hair, with what? Did they cut it with a scissors or with a razor?

A: Clippers.

Q: With clippers?

A: Clippers and all the way down, so . . .

Q: Did they cut your bodily hair as well?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: Women cut your -- was it the same person who cut the hair on your head, or did you go in a line?

A: We went in a line, some of them did their head and some of them did the other, you know, bodily hairs for us. It was a line, it was very well organized like everything in Germany was

very well organized. But the people who did that were other inmates, you know, that were assigned to that particular thing. And most of them didn't speak German at all, so the only language I spoke was German. So all, some of them spoke Polish; some of them spoke whatever . . . Czechoslovakian

Q: Did you -- you, obviously, then didn't speak with these women, or did you try to speak with them and say, "What's going on here?"

A: Well, you know, you know my friend, Zippy<sup>19</sup>, she was around that area. She was in the Politische Abteilung<sup>20</sup> and I remember her coming by and saying -- she spoke German, and she said, "Don't say a word. Just do what they tell you and you'll be okay." And I figured she really meant well with me, and I did what she said. I didn't say one word, and I told my friends, "Just let's keep still and do what they tell us to do." And they really didn't do us any harm except for someone who made a big to-do about it. I don't want my hair cut. Why should you? Some of the women were married to Gentiles, and they said, "My husband is an Aryan. Why should you cut my hair?" And that would get those girls who had been there for several years already extremely angry. They kept saying, "But you are a Jew. So, therefore, we have to cut your hair and shut up." So there was always some sort of an argument with cutting of the hair.

Q: Did Zippy go to a number of young girls and say, "Just be quiet"?

A: Yes, she would just go around and say, "Be quiet. Don't say anything.

02:21:00

Let them cut your hair. It's not the world's worst. It will grow back." And she was right, you know. This is not the world's worst, this wasn't.

Q: What was the tattooing like?

A: The tattooing was done --, well, like any tattooing here. People are tattooed all the time. The tattooing was they took your skin and they took a pin, a pen, pen and they sort of stuck it in piece by piece and they put the number. It's a real German number I have on my arm. And then this half a Winkel,<sup>21</sup> here underneath, which I never knew what it actually meant. I thought maybe this was part of a -- half of a Magen David. That's what I explained to myself; I don't think that it was now. Whatever it was, I have it.

Q: Did that hurt?

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<sup>19</sup> Zippy Tichauer

<sup>20</sup> Political division (German)

<sup>21</sup> Corner (German)

A: Not really. Didn't hurt, no.

Q: Now, were you then given a number to put on your uniform?

A: Yes. Over here and we had like a cross in the back so we shouldn't be able to escape, so . . .

Q: And who put -- who did that?

A: It was old people, other inmates who were assigned to do these things. It wasn't the SS women themselves. They just stood there and supervised. They didn't do that themselves. They stood and laughed and had a good time in seeing these poor Jews looking like animals.

Q: Were there any men around?

A: Yeah, once in a while there was a . . .

Q: I mean, when you were being registered, in that registering process?

A: There was always a few SS men standing there with the SS women, and -- but it didn't bother us. We really you know, we didn't look like women anymore anyway. We were not ashamed of anything, that's what we looked like and that's what we had to deal with.

Q: Were you registered the first day you came in?

A: I believe I was registered the first day I came in, because, you know, the Germans are accurate with their registrations and their book work. So I believe I was registered, maybe I wasn't. I don't know.

Q: Did somebody fill out a card of information? Just your number?

A: I believe so. Maybe they did. If they did, I don't remember. It could have been because why would they have the officers where Zippy worked, they called it the Politische<sup>22</sup> Office. So maybe they did, I do not recall it at all. It's possible.

Q: So you get these strange-looking clothes, you're shaved, and you have a tattoo?

A: Right.

Q: Now, what happens?

A: Now, we were assigned to a block. I think it was Block 13 I was in. We were all the girls, not all of the girls who came at the same transport. So we were more or less together, and we

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<sup>22</sup> Political (German)

were put on -- so we had what we call a Koje.<sup>23</sup>

02:24:06

You know what a Koje is? A Koje is like a board. There was one on the bottom; there was one on the top, and I think there was a third one. We had no straw, we had no blankets, we had nothing and it was February. They took away our clothes, but I do remember they left me with my shoes. And I was a kid, I didn't know -- I had shoes, very simple shoes on. I was in Auschwitz three days and the soles had separated from the top. So I found a rag someplace and tied them together. It was quite a few weeks I walked barefoot in February. It was very cold. There was snow on the ground. I put all kinds of -- whatever I could find on my feet just to stay warm. And so they did put us into the barracks. And then every morning we had zählappell<sup>24</sup> which is the roll call, and there was usually SS men or SS women that came. We stood there sometimes for hours in the freezing cold, so some of the girls already died right then and there because it was impossible. Couldn't take that. Food, we hardly got. And really, I mean, they were falling down left and right. So standing there -- then, one of the SS men would come and make a selection, and most of the time that was Mengele. And he would go to say -- he didn't like the face, he didn't like what you looked like, and he says, "Come on out. Come on out. Come on out." So I remember that so well. You know, I was brought up very religious, and the prayer you say when you die is "Shema Israel"<sup>25</sup>, so every time he came around, I would just stand there and say my prayer. And luckily I was never taken. And I used to tell my friends, "Do what I'm doing." I was such a religious person. Well, it worked for me, it didn't work for everybody.

02:27:01

So it went on for weeks and weeks. We marched out in the morning. We went to build barracks out in Auschwitz, and then the SS men came with their dogs. And if they didn't like you -- but who you -- liked you? You looked like an animal. They would just say, "Go, run after her. Go ahead and take the dog." The dog would bite you. I have a few bites on my legs. And, you know, by then you were already every day you looked skinnier and skinnier. There was nothing left of you anymore, and then suddenly I noticed I was getting typhoid. I started to -- couldn't control my bowel movements anymore, and I felt this is it. I'll probably lay down like the rest of them. By then most of the girls had already -- the first four weeks were the worst, and I probably won't be able to make this. But then I remember my father said not to give in. "You've got to be strong." And at night I used to hallucinate and, you know, there was no Schindler<sup>26</sup>, no Schindler's list or anything. If anyone would help you, it was the girl who laid next to you. She would say, "Here, look, I give you a piece of rag to clean yourself off, and I'll take your bread." Well, I much rather gave her the bread, clean

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<sup>23</sup> Bunk (German)

<sup>24</sup> Roll call count (German)

<sup>25</sup> Hear, O Israel (Hebrew); declaration of God's unity and watchword of Jewish faith.

<sup>26</sup> Oskar Schindler

**USHMM Archives RG-50.030\*0368**

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myself off, and be okay the next day. But it was horrible, I screamed for my mother, my father. There was nobody. I was a young girl, I just felt somebody should listen to me. I really would say the first four weeks, if you held out the first four or six weeks, you were okay. I think I did, I held out those weeks.

Q: Okay, let's take a break.

02:29:00

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

03:01:06

Q: Carola, you said that you were building barracks. So you were living in Auschwitz barrack now at the time?

A: Birkenau.

Q: And where were you building these barracks?

A: We walked out -- I don't know. We walked out, we walked in at night. Quite a distance, it must have been in Oswiecim, in someplace there. And, we, you know, we carried the stones. If we had sort of a jacket, we had to turn it around and we put the stones in there and carried them. The buttons in the back, and that's the kind of work we did.

Q: Were you put to that work very quickly within the first week of your coming?

A: Yeah, right away. Right away. The first four weeks, I was doing that kind of work and that was the time when I started having typhoid. I was so sick, so sick. And I went -- in Auschwitz, there was this so-called Lagerstraße,<sup>27</sup> the street. And there was the Lagerstraße where our barrack was, and I -- it was close to the kitchen. And I walked to the kitchen, and I found some coal on the floor. And I always heard that coal will stuff you up if you eat coal.

03:03:01

And I had a little bit of medical knowledge, not too much. Coal will stuff you up. No matter what, what could have happened? I found a piece of coal in the kitchen and I ate the coal, and I found a piece of lemon peel near the kitchen and I took the piece of lemon peel in my pocket. I ate the piece of coal. And water we didn't have, but we had the snow on the ground. And I ate the snow, and I swallowed that and I got better. And every time when I felt faint, and I had that piece of lemon peel in my pocket for all the years I've been in Auschwitz, and every time I felt faint, I took that lemon peel. And, you know, there's always a little something coming out yet -- no matter how long you have a lemon peel in your pocket -- and I could smell it, and I felt like -- relieved. So the lemon peel and the coal got me out of my dilemma. And then one day, they were taking all the so-called fryzjerkas<sup>28</sup> which I didn't know at the time what that meant, to Auschwitz. And they needed new ones in Birkenau. I didn't know what that meant, and they had selected already about six; they needed a seventh. And this girl, Sheyna was her name, stood next to me, and she said to me, "Pick up your arm." And I said, "Now I'm not -- what is a fryzjerka anyway?" She says, "A fryzjerka is a beautician." And I said, "But I'm not a beautician. I, I don't know how to do hair. I can't do

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<sup>27</sup> Camp street (German)

<sup>28</sup> Hair dresser (Polish)



that for the SS women." She said, "Oh, keep quiet. Just give them your number." So she took my hand, and she said, "37468, she's the seventh fryzjerka. " So the girl in charge took my number down and that made me the fryzjerka, which is a beautician, but I didn't have to do the SS women. All I did was cutting the hair of the people who came in the same way they had done to us. Now, that was a very devastating experience, since lots of transports came in and lots of friends of mine came and I had to cut their hair. And I kept telling them, like Zippy had done previously to me, "Do what they tell you and don't make noise." And I did tell them, and their hair was cut and I did that for quiet some time. That somehow made my life a little better since it was indoors. Then after a while, they replaced us again with other girls.

Q: About how long were you doing this?

A: I don't recall how long, but I did that for a few months, for a few months.

Q: Did you still live in the barrack you had been?

A: The same barrack I was living in, yes.

Q: Did they train you? I mean . . .

A: No, they didn't train me, no. Well, everybody knows how to use a clipper, and you just cut the hair. I really didn't do too much hair cutting. I did more of the body -- the bodily hair, you know, under the arm, on the bottom part. And it worked for a while, it was okay.

03:06:01

Then they replaced us again.

Q: Wait, wait, wait, wait. This couldn't have been very easy for you.

A: It wasn't easy, but it got me out of the Außenarbeit,<sup>29</sup> going, marching out of the camps every day and building barracks.

Q: Were there rules that you weren't allowed to talk to the women who came in? Do you know?

A: We were mainly supervised by Kapos, women who had been there before us. Well, they could have been miserable and started hitting each and every one. But whoever came and started to rebel, we would tell them, "Don't say anything. Just have your hair cut. It's not the worst." And people -- only some people would say, "But my husband is Aryan. Why should you cut my hair?" And then the whole thing started to explode a little bit. I watched this for quite some time, and it was horrible.

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<sup>29</sup> Outside work (German)

Q: Did you see Zippy again there in that area?

A: Zippy always worked near the sauna. She would work in the political -- she would come by, and she would ask questions and she would come around. And she would talk to the newcomers, because Zippy speaks more than one language. My language was German, nothing else. And that was a bit hard, you know. Speaking -- you know, speaking German only was for the other inmates like I spoke the language of our enemies, you know, of the Nazis. So many a times, they thought "Are you Jewish?" I said, "Yes, I am." "How come you speak German?" So, you know, for survival you do anything. It didn't take me long, and I learned how to speak the Slovak language. I spoke it so well -- unfortunately, I don't speak it anymore -- that I went after the war to Czechoslovakia and they thought I was born there. So I learned a different language, and it got me a little further, I suppose.

Q: Now, how about the other women who were cutting the hair? You knew them . . .

A: Well, I got to know them, yeah. I got to know them. Well, this little girl, Shayna, who took me in and said, "Take her number," I worked with her. And she spoke Yiddish only, you know, and she had a little sister. They were beauticians. They were manicurists and beauticians, but I was nothing. I had no idea. And I remember that was my first experience I had with Yiddish. Now, Yiddish sounds pretty much like German, you know. A little bit. For a Yiddish-speaking person, the German is like a distorted Yiddish, but for a German-speaking person, Yiddish is a distorted German. So I, that's when I learned how to speak Yiddish, too.

03:09:01

So I learned two languages in Auschwitz.

Q: Now, why did you decide to learn Slovakian?

A: Most of the girls, like Zippy, they spoke so many languages, and they spoke Slovak, and you know, it's a Slawisch<sup>30</sup> language. Once you know how to speak the Slovak language, you can understand Polish, too, so I understood a little Russian, a little Polish. I understood quite a bit, so it was okay. Except for Hungarian, that language I could never catch on. That was too much for me.

Q: Now, you knew a young woman named Rose Farkas, who was also cutting hair.

A: Yeah, Rose Farkas worked with me. She was in the same Kommando<sup>31</sup>, so called. And I remember her, but she had been in Auschwitz for quite some time. I was a newcomer to

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<sup>30</sup> Slavic (German)

<sup>31</sup> Commando (German)

them, and now, I'm an old lady, but then I was the youngest of them all. And it seemed that all the girls, you know, they were very sweet to me. I was the little kid, the new little kid on the block. So they took very good care of me. We didn't have Schindler, we didn't have anyone. We helped each other.

Q: So how did they take care of you?

A: Well, that's a long story. I'll make it as short as I can.

Q: No, don't make it short. That's okay.

A: Well, when I worked in the sauna, you know, I couldn't hold my stool because I had diarrhea continuously. And the Kapo of the sauna was a German woman. She was a lady of ill repute, so she was not very nice or very neat. And she had nasty things to say, and when she seen that I was just a -- I couldn't walk anymore, and wherever I went -- I hate to say it -- but something dropped. The girls would just take a pail of water and wash it away, and she would say, "So what's wrong with that one here? She belongs to Block 25." Block 25 was the death camp -- death block. And the girls said, "No, no, no, no, no. She is okay. Not to worry. She is working hard. Nothing." And they protected me, you know, they protected me from all sides. Why, I don't know, but I really, like I said, I was a young kid and they were all a little older. Zippy is maybe about seven years older than I am. So they felt they had to rachmones<sup>32</sup> with me. And, of course, you know I didn't speak exactly the way they . . .

Q: So this went on for a long time?

A: It went on for a long time. You don't -- it helped. The coal, the lemon peel, that was my medication, and it helped me. It helped me to survive for quite some time.

Q: Did you think about going to the hospital?

A: No. That was a no-no. If you went to the hospital, you stayed there because you would never go out again, no matter what. So I had to, because my father had said, "You have to survive, and you will survive."

03:12:04

And I had that in me that, "It's going to be all right. Just don't give in to them, you're going to make it."

Q: So, now, they took all of you who were so-called "beauticians" -- what a strange name -- and put you into another Kommando?

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<sup>32</sup> Mercy, compassion (Yiddish)

- A: I don't know whether they took all of us. I believe when the Greek transports came, like this Rollie and Stella, they were beauticians. They took them into that Kommando, but I was out of the Kommando. But I went, instead of cutting hair, I went to the Bekleidungskammer,<sup>33</sup> which was close by. There we cleaned the clothes. It was like a cleaning outfit. We, people were getting undressed, we had to sort their stuff and then put it through machines and -- called the Entlausung.<sup>34</sup> So I worked there for a while then. That also better than going outside and building barracks.
- Q: Was it warm in there during the winter?
- A: Well, you were near sort of an oven. It wasn't that cold. It wasn't always warm, but when you slept at night, you were cold in the corner. It was kind of cold, freezing. But by then, of course, once I got into the sauna, I got a pair of shoes. Not shoes, but those things you wear in Holland. What do you call them?
- Q: The clogs?
- A: Clogs, right.
- Q: Wooden shoes.
- A: Yeah, that was good. They lasted, so you could go through winter weather with them.
- Q: Did you feet get sores on them from those shoes?
- A: Uh-uh.
- Q: No?
- A: Luckily nothing. Luckily nothing. And I walked without shoes in Auschwitz for quite some time.
- Q: Now, how did you manage that and not get . . .
- A: I don't know. Somehow I think somebody up there was watching over me. Because when I look back -- at that time, nothing phased me, I was a young kid, but when I look back and I think back of all the things I experienced, I said to myself "somebody up there was watching over me" because how do you walk in Poland without shoes, in March? There were other people that did the same thing, and their toes were frozen off. Quite a few.
- Q: And you never had frostbite?

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<sup>33</sup> Dressing room (German)

<sup>34</sup> Delousing station (German)

A: Never. I had bites from the dogs, but not frostbites.

Q: Carola, when did you find out after you had come to Auschwitz that there were gas chambers and they were killing people?

A: Very easily, because we worked in the sauna. The gas chambers were very close by. So we seen the chimney smoke, that's all we seen. We didn't see transports going in there.

03:15:02

Maybe they did that at night, but we seen the chimney smoke and it was peaceful. We didn't hear anything, we didn't hear anybody cry. We didn't hear anybody scream. We did hear music play when the transports marched in and out to work. Außenarbeit, so to speak, but you did not hear any screaming in the gas chambers because people who went into the camps -- into the gas chambers didn't know where they were going. So while I was working in the sauna and doing the entlausen<sup>35</sup>, disinfection, they asked me to go to the crematorium and get some blue gas. Whether they needed that for the clothes or they needed it to wash the people off to take lice away and entlausen -- I don't recall. All I recall is that I went, of course, not alone. There was an SS woman walking with me to the gas chambers. I was supposed to get two bottles of Zyklon B<sup>36</sup>, or whatever they called it. A liquid gas. And, I went, and this lady went with me with her gun, of course. And I asked the Sonderkommando<sup>37</sup>, the man, to get me what I was supposed to get. So he opened the wrong door. He must have opened the wrong door. I just stood there, and I seen these people piled into the gas chambers. Not saying a word, they were all dead. They were all piled in there. They couldn't even fall down because they pushed them all in there, and I just looked and I said, "This is impossible." Of course, I had known all along that was happening, but to see is to believe it. And then I came back to the sauna. I never told anybody. I was so horrified, I didn't want other girls to feel bad and get nightmares. I had them. You see grownups with children and everything, yet standing up. They were not taken out yet, and they were not gassed. They were not burned yet, so quickly he closed the door. He was very embarrassed that he opened the wrong door, and this SS woman escorted me back into the camp. And, like I said, I never told anybody until a few years ago I was interviewed by someone and then it took me a long time to even talk about it. That was the experience I had with the gas chambers.

03:18:03

Q: Did you ever tell Zippy this?

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<sup>35</sup> Delousing (German)

<sup>36</sup> Cyclone B (German)

<sup>37</sup> Special commando (German); term used for Jewish prisoners selected to work in the gas chambers and crematoria.

A: I don't think so.

Q: So you didn't even go to someone who you knew was a functionary to talk about it?

A: I didn't talk to anybody about it because I don't think I told ever anybody except Nina who interviewed me after the Washington Together<sup>38</sup> -- Togetherness, but otherwise, I didn't tell anybody. But it's now not as bad to talk about it anymore. It was very hard for me to even open up to see this horror.

Q: Was the SS woman standing with you when he did this?

A: Yes.

Q: And . . .

A: It was nothing to her, she had probably seen it a million times.

Q: And she didn't care that you had seen it?

A: No. Nothing. It was okay. As a matter of fact, you know, the SS women -- all the transports came from Poland, from Czechoslovakia, from Greece, from Italy. Everybody brought beautiful clothes and I had been working in the sauna. I had to put this stuff into the machines. They used to say, "Well, this is nothing. Just wait till the American people come. When we get the clothing of the American Jews, then we really have clothes." So, obviously, they were very sure of themselves that the American Jews will eventually end up in the gas chambers, too. So that was my experience with the gas chambers in Auschwitz. , what I wanted to say, by that time, you know, in Auschwitz most of our girls who had come with me from Berlin had already died except for one. She was a young girl, she was 19; I was 17. By then maybe she was 20 and I was 18. I passed -- I walked in the Lagerstraße and I seen her laying there, and I said to her, "What's the matter?" She says, "Well, I'm going to die. I can't hold out." But she says, "You're a young girl. You're going to --" She says, "You're going to make it, ... and I want you to tell the world what they did to us." And I held her in my arms and she died. And I said the "Shema"<sup>39</sup>, that was the right thing for me to do and I walked away.

03:21:05

It was an everyday happening in Auschwitz, you just seen your friends on the street and dying. She was a very nice girl, and I really felt that she was going to make it, but there was no way. People could not endure all the stress and all the strain and no food and wintertime.

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<sup>38</sup> American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors (Washington, DC)

<sup>39</sup> See "Shema Israel."

That was a very, very bad experience for me. That was something that I will never forget. I had known this girl from childhood on. And even today sometimes I see a woman, an older woman, who -- she was very short -- and I look at her and I say, "She probably would have looked like--" Bertel was her name -- "she probably would have looked like that today." She would have been an old lady by now, but at that time she was 19 years old, beautiful and everything. Couldn't make it, no chance. And so by then all, most of the girls from Berlin had passed away, had been killed, or had been shot, or didn't want to live anymore. And we were just with the girls who were there, and we again made close ties with each and every one because everybody had one reason; that was to survive. Stick to one another and survive. And there was one thing I must say. Somebody in Auschwitz, and I think they must be from Czechoslovakia, maybe from Poland by the name of Carola Stern, and that person must have died. And she got some sardines from the Red Cross from Switzerland, and she was no longer there, so they gave it to me. This was the most fortunate thing I had, so I had about four cans of sardines, and I could buy myself, you know, a piece of bread or something like that. They also gave us a piece of salami, like once a week. And being that I was so Orthodox, I wasn't going to eat it, I exchanged it for bread. Later on I found out that I didn't have to do that, I could have eaten it. But that was my religion which wouldn't allow me to eat any unkosher food, even in Auschwitz.

Q: Where could you exchange? You would just exchange with another prisoner when you had them?

03:24:02

A: Uh-huh, with another person. And sometimes if you exchange it for a pair of underpants you know. Anything, and sometimes, you know, whatever.

Q: When you were working in the sauna -- not the sauna, when you were working with cleaning the clothes . . .

A: Right.

Q: . . . did you ever take clothes for yourself or for other people?

A: I don't really -- I never took clothes. Because the clothes was dirty, you know. You had to go through a machine first. They came out on the other end. Maybe the people who were on the other end could. What I did I assorted the clothes dirty, you know. Maybe I did take a thing or two; it's possible. I don't recall ever taking anything because by then they had given me a black uniform, a black -- I had something to wear and the clogs. So I was happy with what I had, I didn't really -- I got a jacket, yeah. We did organize -- they called it "organization." We stole a few things, let's put it that way, if we could.

Q: Did you wear a babushka on your head?

A: Yes. All the time because they wanted us to. They didn't want the hair to grow. But then the hair grew back slowly, you know. But after a week -- a month or so, they would always cut it off again until later when I worked in the Bekleidungskammer they didn't cut their hair that much anymore. Sort of skipped it once or twice, so my hair grew back and I looked a little bit more normal than I did before.

Q: How did you wash?

A: Well, you had to keep yourself clean; otherwise, you had lice and whatever. So we went to the toilets, whatever water kept running there, we did wash ourselves off. But the toilet conditions were terrible, you know, it was an awful thing. But if we got to some water or even during the snowy season we would take a little bit snow, and we would let it stand in our Schüssell<sup>40</sup> or whatever we had. And we had some water, we kept washing ourselves. Well, we did not have our periods, you know. So we were not women. Obviously, they had put something in the food which women did not menstruate anymore. So we were easy to keep ourselves clean. They did that, I forgot what they call it. Some sort of a solution they put in the soups to make the women sort of leaner and no desires or anything like that.

Q: Did you have your period when you were working in the factory in Berlin?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: You did?

A: Yes.

Q: And was that difficult in the factory?

A: No, that wasn't difficult. We could still go out and get things and to protect ourselves. That was okay. In Auschwitz, that would have been an impossible thing.

03:27:01

It really would have been. It was very hard to keep yourself clean. If you kept yourself clean, you were on top of things. It was very hard, though.

Q: Were you picking lice off each other?

A: Well, I didn't pick lice off myself. I, I, don't think -- I probably did have. But I remember later on that I had sort of knots. Is that what you call it?

Q: Knots?

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<sup>40</sup> Bowl (German)



A: The eggs of the lice in hair. No actual louse crawled around my head, but then you sort of combed yourself with your fingernails, whatever, to get that stuff out. And you kept washing yourself and washing yourself and somewhat it went away again. Never did go away completely. We all had lice. We definitely all had lice. There was no way that we could escape that.

Q: Okay. Let's take a break.

A: Okay. We will have lunch.

03:28:04

End of Tape #3

**Tape #4**

04:01:18

Q: Carola, what was the next job that you had after the cleaning of the clothes?

A: Well, it was sort of a side job, I would call it. They took lots of the people and somebody had to write it down. Because the Germans were very thorough with all their bookkeeping, and since I spoke German, I was elected to write down whether one had blood type A, blood type B, blood type whatever. And everybody was so thin and so hungry to give blood was a horrible thing, but they did. They had no other choice because that blood was sent to the front, to the soldiers, Wehrmacht<sup>41</sup>. So I did, too. They took it from me, too. So I did that for a while, that was -- that is besides when no one came for a day or so, that was my job then. So, of course, people cried, they didn't want to do it, but there was no other choice. They had to, we were forced to. And all these survivors who looked so undernourished and ready to die had to give blood.

Q: And where was this done?

A: It was done in the sauna in a little room, and they marched the people in. Not the newcomers, but the people who had been there for a while. So they gave blood.

Q: So people must have been extremely weak after that.

A: They were terribly weak. Not only that, a lot of Hungarians had the good blood type, blood type B, I believe is the good blood type.

04:03:11

And they took it again and again because that was the type they wanted for their soldiers. I believe it's B, the best blood type. And they had to give it. Of course, they were weak. They were weak to begin with. They got weaker after that.

Q: You had typhoid, not typhus; is that right?

A: I had -- in German, it's typhus. In English, it's typhoid. Right.

Q: Did you get sick any other time?

A: Well, I was never -- I never really recuperated to the fullest. I, in later on as we were -- 1945, as we marched out of Auschwitz, I developed an eye infection, and my eyes were very red. And I don't know how, but somehow things always fell in place. There was this doctor who

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<sup>41</sup> Armed forces (German)

worked at the Revier.<sup>42</sup> He seen me walking on the street, and he said to me, "Carola, your eyes are red. You need some drops." And I said, "Oh, I didn't see a mirror. I didn't even know my eyes were red." And he gave me drops and the drops helped me, and my eyes got better until later on, 32 years later, there was a flare-up of the eyes which I developed really in the camps. The doctors had examined the whole thing. It had been laying there dormant for 32 years, and then it came up as iritis. And later on, it developed into glaucoma.

Q: Do you remember your day off?

A: I don't remember my day off. We weren't always working, because sometimes we were just laying around. When there was nothing to do and we were dreaming of better times and then when the war would end and we would survive. We would be together with our parents and people again. And, and, we were always cooking -- for some reason "some day we will have food again." When you're hungry, that's the only thing you think of. The only thing is food. And, we were constantly talking about food. "We will cook this" and "we will cook this." The most intelligent, the most -- I mean, each and every one of us was talking about food.

Q: What particular food did you talk about? Did you have a particular fantasy?

A: Whatever one liked best.

Q: And what did you like best?

A: I liked puddings. I loved puddings, and I liked cakes and things like that. So I dreamt of rice pudding. I adored rice pudding and all this kind of stuff I didn't have in years.

04:06:03

Then food didn't mean -- a particular food didn't mean too much,. We just wanted to have, let's say, a loaf of bread. Just a loaf of bread and call it our own. And we felt that some day somewhere we'll have a loaf of bread. May be.

Q: Did you ever notice a difference in the food, the amount of food you got or the kind of food you got? Was sometimes it better than other times?

A: Well, it was never good. But in -- after we went out of Auschwitz, we went to the last camp. They eliminated the salt. Obviously, they were short on salt and they sent this all to the front, to the soldiers. So after we had no salt, we were so skinny, it's amazing. We were so thin, it took all the water and everything out of us. That was horrible. That was in the last camp. That wasn't in Auschwitz.

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<sup>42</sup> Police station (German); according to interviewee, this term was used to refer to the camp infirmary.

Q: Were you ever able to take a shower after you first came into Auschwitz?

A: Yes, I have been able to take a shower when no one was looking. We went sometimes we stole ourselves a shower. We went into the sauna, and somebody turned on the water, one, two, three; we were in and out.

Q: Was that dangerous?

A: Yeah, we made sure that no one was looking. None of the SS women was -- well, I don't know how dangerous it would have been, but they probably wouldn't have liked that. They wanted us to be dirty. Dirty Jews.

Q: Do you remember noise in the barrack or smells in the barrack?

A: There were quite a bit of smells because people always died, and then they laid there for a little while until someone removed them. But when somebody died, the next took the shoes. The next one took the kerchief. The next one took the -- it was like an everyday occurrence. It was done every single day. That's where we got an extra jacket or something. If somebody died, you took it from them, and you cried with everyone who died who was killed or didn't get up anymore in the morning. But life had to go on. Life and death. There was more death than life, but that's how it was in Auschwitz. It was like a very quiet street when I watched the movie "Shoah." I seen that silence, that silence. That's how it was. It was very silent, you didn't hear anything. It wasn't noisy at all, and the gas chambers were burning day and night.

Q: So even in the barracks, it was quiet?

A: It was quiet. Because, you know, you get to a point when you're so hungry, you have nothing to say to each other anymore. When you're so desperate for food and so starved for love and for your family, there's very little to say.

04:09:06

Absolutely nothing. At the end, we hardly talked to each other. There was no spirit. What does a young person do? They talk about boyfriends. And we had nothing to talk about. There was nothing. They had take the dignity and everything away from us. There was absolutely nothing left.

Q: In the beginning did you have conversations at night? Did you learn about each other's lives when you met new people?

A: We always did. Yeah, we always did. They always told us what they did at home, and what their father and mother did and what a good life they had at home and we talked about it.

Q: Did anybody ever sing?

- A: We had a sort of a Lager<sup>43</sup> song. Yes, we did -- we didn't -- we heard the music, you know, when people marched in and out. And yes, there was a song in Auschwitz, too. But we really didn't sing much, no. We didn't . . .
- Q: Do you remember that song?
- A: Yeah, I do. Very vaguely, but I do. Let me think. . . . It doesn't come to me at the moment, but I'll remember it maybe later on. Yeah.
- Q: What do you remember about the women's orchestra playing? They played when you went out to work and when you came back.
- A: Viennese waltzes and things like that. Good music, Beethoven and very good music, because the Nazi officers, the SS, liked good music so they played it for them. And there musicians, girls, yes. They had training, and sounded very good, very nice.
- Q: Was it helpful in some way?
- A: No.
- Q: No?
- A: It was horrible. It was -- the gas chamber was here and the music was playing. I mean, it was ironic, you know. It was terrible.
- Q: Did you know that Zippy was in the orchestra?
- A: No, I didn't know that. I think she played an instrument, yeah.
- Q: Did you have relationships with non-Jewish prisoners, as well as Jewish prisoners? Or were you in the barrack with only Jews?
- A: Well, in the barrack in Auschwitz, I was with only Jews, but, I had, you know, Kapos, I got together with Gentiles, yes. They were prisoners, too. They were -- the one with the blue Winkel over the -- I can't think of the name now. Bibelforscher<sup>44</sup> -- they were Jehovah's Witnesses, right. And there were the black Winkel that was the prostitutes. The red Winkel was the politische -- the Communists and whatever. So each and every one had a -- they weren't all Jewish.

04:12:012

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<sup>43</sup> Camp (German)

<sup>44</sup> Biblical scholar (German); term used to refer to Jehovah's Witnesses.

There were Polish Gentiles, and they were from all over. All kinds of people that we dealt with, and you spoke to them, too, of course.

Q: Do you remember any particular prisoners who. Were . . .

A: A Gentile prisoner? Not really. No. Later on I remember Gypsies in the last camp. Yes, I do. Because there were, -- that could read your hand, and -- do you want me to tell that story?

Q: Why don't we -- well, no, go ahead, tell the story.

A: Well, that was in the last camp. We were just sitting there, and it was a Sunday, I suppose. We didn't do anything, we were just sitting together. The last camp I didn't work -- I worked in the kitchen. I was little waiter, and the Gypsies were sitting there. And they kept saying to us, "Let me read your hand." They were Hungarians. "Let me read your hand." And, you know, reading your hand, telling the fortune, is not done in the Jewish tradition. We don't do that, but I figured, "What have I got to lose?" And so I gave them my hand. I said, "Go ahead and read it." So she read my hand and she said -- other girls translated for me -- she said, "You're going to come of here, I want you to know, you're going to come out of here. You're going to meet a young man, someone you knew already from early childhood and you'll marry him. And you're going to have a son and a daughter." And I said, "You word in God's ear." I couldn't pay her, but that's all I could tell her. So she said, "Okay, it's going to happen." It did happen. I don't know, it did happen. It really did. That was a very strange thing, but I never forget it. I always remembered the Gypsy who gave me, told me her fortune -- my fortune.

Q: Did you know about any underground work in Auschwitz or hear about resistance?

A: Well, yes, I did at one point. That was at the first four weeks we were in Auschwitz. There were two girls that were half Jewish, and they didn't want to go on. They wanted us to bury them under, under the barracks, and we did. We shoveled stuff over them, and they went underneath that. And when it was time to go home, Taube<sup>45</sup> -- Taube was the Aufzähler.<sup>46</sup> He counted us, and there were two missing. And, my God, he put the dogs on us and everything. He had the dogs shovel them out. The dogs captured them and they shoveled them out. They wanted to escape, go back to Germany. That was about the only thing where I was a witness of -- I helped them shovel in there.

04:15:02

I -- we kept saying, "Don't do that, don't do that." They said, "Yes, yes, yes, yes." So we did.

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<sup>45</sup> Adolf Taube

<sup>46</sup> Counter (German)

Q: And then what happened to those two girls?

A: I don't recall what happened to them. They certainly weren't treated very well, that's for sure. What happened to them, I don't remember. It was in the beginning in 1943. So, maybe they got to Auschwitz the first four weeks, so I really don't remember. What happened to the girls. That was a no-no.

Q: Did they try to find those of you who helped, or do you know?

A: No. Well, we had all kinds of things there. They didn't give us any food for a day. We shouldn't have done that. All kinds, we were, we had punishment there. All kinds of things, but nothing major happened. Nothing major. What happened to the girls, I don't know. I really don't know.

Q: So you were never beaten or were you?

A: I have had the dogs put on me, yeah. Beaten? Beaten, I was like everybody else. You know, you passed through there, and they took the whip and they just beat everybody who passed through. But not me personally beaten. If they felt like beating the people at the zählappells, they would beat. They would just take a whip and beat. But nothing that was sort, of like a morning prayer.

Q: Do you ever remember very short appells as very long ones?

A: No, I only remember the long appells. There was never a short appell. It could have rained, and it could have snowed. It could have done anything. They let us stand there until they were good and ready to come out and count us. Because, I mean, the Kapo, or what they called the Stubenälteste<sup>47</sup>, the one of the barrack, they would put us together and we would stand there. We had to wait for the SS person to come and count us again. And they took their good old time. Could be two hours in the rain, whatever. Well, all they wanted us to do is die right then and there, so why hurry up? That was the master plan.

Q: You know, in the men's camp, the men wore caps. And whenever they saw as SS, they were supposed to take off their cap. Were there any particular rules? Did you have to stand a certain distance from the SS?

A: Not really, but when you spoke to them you had to address them in a certain manner. Like, in the military, you know, because I had the experience later on talking to the Obersturmführer<sup>48</sup> and otherwise, I never spoke to any of the SS, I really didn't. SS women, yes, they were there, and we didn't talk much to them really, no.

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<sup>47</sup> Room elder (German)

<sup>48</sup> Lieutenant colonel (German)

04:18:02

Q: Do you remember who you say, which SS women, other than . . .

A: Teresa. Teresa. Well, there were other women, but I don't remember their names in particular because I really had no dealings. No dealings with them.

Q: Did you have any occasion to go into Zippy's office in the barrack four.

A: Yeah. I have been -- I've been in the politische, yeah.

Q: And what was that like?

A: It was -- if I remember correctly, there were desks that were sort of make-believe desks, and there were girls writing and doing whatever. And Zippy forever walked around with her little charts and pencil and did whatever -- whatever she did, I don't really know, but I seen her always hanging out there.

Q: So you saw her a good deal?

A: I saw her, yeah. Saw her quite often. She was an all around person in Auschwitz. She was very well liked, it seemed to me.

Q: Well, tell me about that a little bit, because often people talk about the Slovakian girls in very negative terms.

A: Yeah, I know. Well, my opinion is that when I came to Auschwitz in 1943, the Slovakian girls had been there already for a year and a half, I believe. They had lost everything. Their sisters or brothers or whatever they had, they were already dead. They were the pioneers of Auschwitz, and they were treated like dirt. Like dirt. So everybody was out to live, you know. We all wanted to live, and we tried very hard to make the best of it. So when the other so-called Zugange<sup>49</sup> inmates came into Auschwitz, they may have been harsh at times. Yeah, I've seen that quite often. Like I said before, when someone says, "Well, I don't get my hair cut because my husband is Aryan," and so on, they would say, "You're just as much of a Jew as I am. Who do you think you are?" They would get nasty with words, but never -- I mean, I have never experienced anything like hitting or kicking or something like that. I've heard some people say that, but it was -- where I worked it wasn't like that. As a matter of fact, the girls who worked with me in the sauna some of them are still alive and have been really very good to me. They have called me. They live in Israel. And, as a matter of fact, one was here in America. She's now a widow, and she came here and she asked me whether I was happy with my marriage and I said, "Yes, I am." I said, "Why would you ask me?" She says, "Because I have enough. We could both live in Israel together because I would take you with

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<sup>49</sup> New comers (German)



me." I thought that was very, very nice. I said, "No, thank you."

Q: So your relationship with the Slovakian girls was . . .

A: I cannot say anything, -- I can only say that they survived their way.

04:21:07

Everybody survived their -- I can't say anything nasty about them really. They were out to live and if something came across they didn't like, they would shout and they would maybe kick and maybe hit. I personally haven't seen it, but I have heard from plenty of people who said they were nasty. They weren't nice. But look, I was not their kind; I was a German Jew, and maybe I was young, I don't know. Maybe they felt I was a child, they were awfully nice to me. That's all I can say. And Zippy was exceptionally nice. Very, very nice.

Q: Did a lot of people know her in the camp?

A: I think everybody knew her. Yeah. I asked some of my friends, "Did you know Zippy?" "Oh, the dark-haired girl? Sure, I knew her." Of course, she was always around. She was running around. Everybody knew Zippy, mostly everybody.

Q: Tell me, you were talking about how close the girls were in your barrack. Did you have a particular small -- you couldn't be close friends with 500 people in your barrack, right?

A: No.

Q: Did you each have small groups with you when you were close?

A: Right, right. Mostly with the girls who worked together, we were close with one another. And we helped each other with food, you know, and some of the girls smoked, which I didn't do. But somehow, somehow they got cigarettes into the camps. How they got them, I don't know. And it was a very close relationship with one another. Everybody was trying to help one another without having a Schindler hanging on us, you know. We did for each other whatever we could do to survive.

Q: Were there ever fights that developed between groups, or did people stick within their own group pretty much?

A: You mean . . .

Q: Arguments with . . .

A: Slovaks with them and Polish with them? I didn't see it, no. I seen two sisters fighting with one another, and that was my first experience with the Yiddish language. And I couldn't

believe it, like, they were very good with each other. They were really very sweet people. They were beauticians, and one said to the other, "You, you zolst vaksen vi a tsibele mit kop in der erd."<sup>50</sup> Which I translated that in German. I was horrified, that's when I learned to speak Yiddish. That means, "You should grow an onion with your head in the earth." Oh, my God. That was a curse if you ever heard one. So I spoke to her and I said, "Why would you say that?" "Because she did such stupid things." I don't know what she did, but there were two sisters, so it couldn't have been all that bad. But things like that came up, you know, where two sisters would fight with one another.

04:24:04

We were only human, you know, no matter what the situation.

Q: Do you remember men prisoners coming into the camp and working?

A: Yeah, there were men coming in, right, but not too many. There were people coming in. , we didn't have that much of a connection with the men. Some girls had more than others, but, I met a very nice person who later on helped me with lots of things. And, -- but there was not what you call a love affair going on in Auschwitz, but men were in there.

Q: Did he help you in Auschwitz?

A: He helped insofar if I tell the story now, you know. When the transports from Łódź came into Auschwitz, I thought -- that was in June -- no, that was in August 1944, I thought that my parents would be still alive. And I said to myself, "Nothing can happen to me anymore. If I see the Obersturmführer" -- and I forgot his name -- "I would go to him and I'll ask him if he can bring my parents into the camp, provided they are still living." So as I walked on the street in Auschwitz, I see this Obersturmführer walking, and I went over to him. And then -- we were talking about how do you address an officer -- I went over to him, clicked my heels, and said, "Herr Obersturmführer, sieben und dreising vier acht und sechzig, meldet sich."<sup>51</sup> Which means "37468 makes herself known." He says, "What do you want?" with a very stern voice. And he said, "And how come you speak German?" I said, "I'm from Frankfurt," which I really wasn't, but Nieder-ohmen, nobody would have ever known. I said, "Well, I was born in Germany, and I wanted to ask you something. Do you go to the ramp to get the people from the Łódzer ghetto?" He said, "Yah, yah." "Yes," he says, "why would that interest you?" I said, "Because my parents have been in the Łódzer ghetto since 1941, and since the transports are coming now into Auschwitz, I would like to ask you if it's okay with you, sir, to bring my parents into the camp. I'm here two years, and if that's possible, please do that." So he looked at me like I was nuts, like chutzpa of a young girl. And he said, "Your parents, where are they?"

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<sup>50</sup> ...should grow like an onion with your head in the ground (Yiddish).

<sup>51</sup> Mr. Lieutenant Colonel, 37468 reporting (German).

04:27:01

I said, "Well, in Litzmannstadt." He said, "Well, no, you can't go. But if you know of a man who can -- if you know of a man, he can go." So I knew this man by the name of Bumeck Stern, same name as mine. And I knew him, and I said, "Yes, I do, and if the officer allows me to, I will get him." And he took this young man to the ramp and this Bumak called out the names of my parents and my sister, and they weren't there anymore. There was no, no response. So he came back into the camp. Occasionally, he would come into the camp. He wasn't in my camp, you know, and he said, "There was no response. I don't think your sister, nor your parents are alive." So I had to deal with that, I figured "that's it." And then transports still came in . . .

Q: We have to change the tape. I'm sorry. So we'll start right there.

A: Okay.

04:28:07

End of Tape #4

**Tape #5**

05:01:04

A: You know, he was the Obersturmführer who was killed together with Grese.<sup>52</sup> When I see him together on the movies once, I recognized him. I don't recall. Zippy would know his name. Kramer,<sup>53</sup> I believe.

Q: Kramer?

A: Kramer, I thought. I don't remember.

Q: All right. So Mr. Stern doesn't find . . .

A: My parents.

Q: . . . your parents or your sister?

A: Doesn't find anybody. But I -- are we on?

Q: Yes.

A: I, I, didn't give up. I thought maybe the next transport. We didn't go to every transport, maybe the next transport. So I, I didn't give up. And in July -- in August 1944, another big transport came from Łódź, Litzmannstadt and I walked through the sauna thinking that if my mother -- my father wouldn't have been there anyway -- and my sister would be there, I would just see them. My mother at that time was still a young woman. Maybe she was 41, 42 years old, and she was tiny. She looked tiny. And I walked through the aisles where people the came in and their head -- their hair was already shaven, I think so. They already had -- no, they didn't have a number on their arm yet. They were about to be bathed or whatever, showered. And as I walked through the rows, through the aisle there, I hear a tiny voice say, "Carola." And I turned around. It was my sister. And the reason she recognized me, it's a very interesting story. When I as a child, I had a way of bending my arm completely back, and I walked like this.

05:03:05

She knows, I really don't know. She seen a woman walking, a girl walking with the arm like that, and she said to her -- a girl was standing next to her, "This is my sister." She says, "What are you talking about? This couldn't be your sister." "I noticed the arm," she said. And, and when I turned around after she called, "Carola," it was my sister. And we hugged

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<sup>52</sup> Irma Grese

<sup>53</sup> Josef Kramer

and I wanted to know what happened to my parents, and she said they were all dead. And that's where Grese was, Grese, "the Beast of Bergen-Belsen." She witnessed this thing, she seen me speaking to my sister and hugging my sister. And she stood there and cried. Something nobody had ever seen before, and then she said to me, "Carola," she heard my sister call "Carola"; otherwise, she wouldn't have known. She said, "You don't have to worry. Your sister is going to stay with you now." And we hugged again, at least we are together. And whatever happens, we are together. And she said, "Okay, there is nothing to worry about. Your sister is going to be with you." So I was trying to hold on to my sister, but she had to go through all kinds of different routines. Having, being tattooed. She was tattooed on the inside because I felt that she didn't have to have -- in case she would survive, she has a tiny little tattoo. And I thought we would be together, but it was just a false promise. They sent her to a different camp, and I didn't know where she went. And once in a while, one of my friends who went around -- my friend, Claire,, one of the Frankfurt girls, she would go to the camp where she was in. And she would come back, and she says, "Your sister is still alive. Your sister is still alive." She was in a different camp, and, I would hear from her once in a while. "Not to worry, I'm still living." And I had hoped that maybe, you know, maybe the Russians would come and we would, we would be free again, and we would get together. But there was little hope, very little hope that we would be together. So it went on,, the march that was in 1944 in, in August. 1945 in January, the big march from Auschwitz started, and I didn't know where my sister was. I didn't know what was happening. She was already so tiny and so skinny, I was afraid that she, she would be killed. She would have been killed already then. So we marched out of Auschwitz day and night, and late night and day.

05:06:03

And we were in cattle cars and we went to Ravensbrück. And in Ravensbrück we stayed four weeks, and I had no -- no sight of my sister. I didn't know where she was. We marched out of Ravensbrück, and from Ravensbrück we went supposedly to Malchow. We did go to Malchow, there was another march from Ravensbrück to Malchow day and night, day and night. And I was already so weak, and we all were. One helped me on one side, the other on the other side, and we slept walking. And that's how we went on, and whoever didn't do it lay down and they shot them. They didn't give them any chance; they shot the girls just right then and there. So at one point I had to go to the bathroom. I didn't know what to do. And I went out of my line and there was no bathroom, but there was barn. So I went into the barn. I said to the girls, "I have to go to the bathroom, it's impossible." I went to the barn, I walked into barn. My sister walked out of the barn. And so I said, "Now, you're not going to be out of my sight anymore. You're going to be with me." And we did cling to each and she walked with me. And everybody thought she was my little sister because she's small. And we stayed together from that day on 'til we were in Malchow, we stayed together. We were never separated anymore. So that was one good thing that I had to the bathroom. That was a very unusual incident. So from the march on, we marched into Malchow. That was the camp where we hardly got any salt in anything. But I had a chance to work in their kitchen, and in the kitchen what I did there is I did heat the kettles the to make the fire underneath, you

know. So what we really -- what the girls cooked there was water, potato peels, and a little bit of farina. Not farina, oatmeal. And that made sort of a soup, but it was better than nothing. So at least I had a little soup I could give my sister and my friends, Claire, who was with me and Martha. Two of the girls from Frankfurt survived with me. We were together, and I had a chance to give them a little extra soup. I added a little hot water and it was good. But we got thinner and thinner every day because they took away the salt. But that's where we laid around, and that's where we talked to the Gypsies and we talked about food and talked about better times which we felt we will never see. And across from us was a camp with English prisoners, and they looked just as bad as we did.

05:09:06

It was just across from the camp we were in. They were also laying around, like, you know, like, like dead animals. You know, when you go to a zoo and sometimes and those animals look like tranquilized, that's what we all looked like. We were just either waiting to die or being liberated. Something had to happen to us, we couldn't go on anymore. And then that was in February, and we talked about that maybe we're getting liberated. Maybe the Russians were coming closer, but we had no newspaper. Nobody knew anything. All of a sudden at the beginning of May, the Nazis, the SS came running in and they kept screaming, "Get out of here you dirty Jews. Get out of here. Let's go. Walk." Now, we figured "where are we walking now?" We could hardly move anymore. They walked us into the woods. We were so sure that in the woods they were going to shoot us. Because it was coming closer, the war was getting -- coming to an end, we felt. And why in the woods? So they marched us into the woods, and all of a sudden in the woods -- it was, I think it was May the 3rd, or was it -- maybe it was a different -- maybe May the 8th. I think it was May the 3rd. They all disappeared, there were no Nazi uniforms. They were either they had their private uniform, their clothes in a package. The SS men disappeared; there were none. And all of a sudden we see a tank with three young American soldiers screaming from the top of their lungs, "You guys are free. Hitler is dead. You're free, you're free." And they had -- I remember they had chocolate. There was a quite a few of us. They had chocolate and cigarettes, and they threw it out of the tank, and they threw it down for us. It wasn't enough for all of us, and we -- my sister looked at me and said, "Did you hear that? We're free." I said, "Yes, but where are we going to be?" We were free, we were happy, but no place to go. But, we had more than other people because we had each other. So while we were sitting around in the woods, we all got together and, "We got to do something. Where are we going? We're not going to go back to Germany." So one of the girls, Slovak girls, said, "I lost two sisters in Auschwitz. I'm not going home alone.

05:12:00

You two girls are going with me." So we traveled from Malchow to Czechoslovakia, my sister and I. And we came there, and to our surprise her parents were still there. Her little brother was there, and they greeted us with open arms. For the first time we seen parents again and people who were good to us. Gave us clothes, gave us food, and it was like such a

relief. It was unbelievable. We stayed there four weeks, and they fed us. And, of course, we had only one wish, to come to the United States. So no matter they did, my sister and I looked at each other and I, I remember my father, my mother had told me that I should remember an address in New York City. It was "648 184th Street in New York City;" that was my aunt's address. And I said to my sister, "You know, I know Tante Anna's address." And she said, "No, you don't." I said, "Yes, I do." I said, "If I get only to that address, then we'll be fine." Well, there no one -- you know, you couldn't do anything. I mean, we went in the nighttime, early in the morning we went over the border from Czechoslovakia to Austria. And the border was like a train -- what do you call the train, what the train goes on?

Q: Train track?

A: A train track. And on one side the Russians stood, and they wanted to shoot when they seen two little girls, two young girls coming there. So I said to them -- I knew a little bit Russian, I said I was a Gypsy and I looked like one. My hair had grown by then, and it was long and a comb I didn't have. And I said I was Gypsy -- and it was pitch black because I was a blonde before. "My father lives in Austria, and we want to go to Austria." Would they let us through? They said no, they had to shoot us. And we said, "No, no, no. We can't be shot. We have to get through here and just close your eyes. Turn around. Let us go." So they said, "Okay, close your eyes." And we closed our eyes. "Go right through, but when you get over the border there will be the Americans. They're going to be shooting at you." Well, there was no American shooting at us. The Americans were fast asleep, it was five o'clock in the morning. And we got into Austria. Once we were in Austria, we went to the train station. We figured that was the right thing to do. And there we seen other survivors. Why would we know that they're survivors? They looked like us. They had not much clothes, and they said to us, "You, you must be" -- at that time they were called "KZ<sup>54</sup>ler," "concentration camp," you know.

05:15:02

And we said, "Yes, we are." And they said, "We'll take you to a DP camp." So they took us to a DP camp, and we lived in Austria until we were ready to come to America, in Gmunden, in Kammer-Schörfling. And through the help of the American soldiers which we met in Austria, they were stationed in Austria, we wrote to my aunt. And my aunt got the letter, and she was overwhelmed that we were alive, but, of course, everyone else had died. My grandparents and whatever. And she sent us food and she sent us clothing, and we were saved. We came to America in 1946 in July. It was a year and three months after the liberation, which was good. That's where -- and after I was here for a little while, my aunt thought it would be wise to put it in the newspaper. Tell everybody that we are alive, but there was like the German Jewish newspaper called the *Aufbau*<sup>55</sup>. She, she put it in there, and my husband read it and he came to visit me. And that's when we later on got married. So the

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<sup>54</sup> Konzentrationslager [concentration camp] (German)

<sup>55</sup> Reconstruction (German); popular periodical of the German-Jewish community in America.

Gypsy was right, I married the guy I knew from way back when, and I had a son and a daughter. And now I have five grandchildren, and I have a lovely daughter-in-law and a lovely son-in-law. And I have my own family, thank God. That's something I never would have dreamt of, something I thought it would never, so I marched into Auschwitz and I was one of the lucky ones who marched out. Not many did. ... Now, my friend, Martha, survived, and she lives here partly. And the other one lives in Queens, and Zippy lives in Manhattan. And I have the two other friends in Israel, and that's about it.

Q: So you maintained Lagerschwesters<sup>56</sup>?

A: Yes, we do. We call each other once every so often. Now, distances are pretty far, but we do speak to one another. We call each other and we try to keep up the friendship.

Q: Are those some of your closest friendships, the ones with the people you were in Auschwitz -- with whom you were in Auschwitz?

A: Yeah. They are my closest friends. You know, like you said "Lagerschwesters" -- besides my sister, Martha is like a sister to me, Claire is like a sister to me.

05:18:06

We, we don't see each other all that often, but we call each other and we get together to weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, whatever is to celebrate. We, we kept that friendship.

Q: Do you talk about Auschwitz very much with each other?

A: Not really, no. We really don't. Once in a while, if someone asks us, we bring up the subject but, we try not to. But I remember one incident I had and this was also friend who worked in the sauna with me, a Czechoslovakian girl. We had a bakery in Washington Heights, and she came in one day. And she didn't know me, but I recognized her. And she asked me for a loaf of bread, and I looked at her, and I said, "Bözsi" So she said to me, "Could I have a loaf of bread, please?" And I said, "Bözsi, you can have all the bread in the world. I have all the bread you want." And she looked at me, and she said, "Am I supposed to know you?" And I said, "Yes, you know me quite well. I'm Carola." And she says, "Really? I can have all that bread?" That's something we only wanted, one loaf of bread and call it our own.

Q: Could we take a break? You decided to leave Czechoslovakia in spite of this warm and loving family because you really wanted to get to the United States?

A: Yes.

Q: When you came to the DP camp, what was it like there? I mean, did they give you help with

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<sup>56</sup> Camp sisters (German)



things, other than with the letter?

A: No, they gave us help. As a matter of fact, we got a uniform because we didn't have decent clothes really. We got a uniform like the American soldiers and on it here, it had the sign DP, displaced persons. So we, we -- the Germans thought we were Americans, I guess, except we didn't speak the language. We were well taken care of there. They gave us food and everything. And, of course, we made connections. We met one soldier who came from Chicago who was originally from Germany, and he had been in the army. A very -- one very interesting story, I forgot to tell you that. And we were sitting in the -- what is it? They called the clubs PX, PX clubs, right? We were sitting there in the nightclub in Austria with this particular young man. I had met him in the synagogue on a Friday night, and he said that I was the first German Jew he had met. All were Polish Jews, and where did I come from. So I told him and we talked to each other, and he said he will get in touch with my relatives and tell them that I'm living, my sister and me.

05:21:05

Which was very nice, and he offered to take us, my sister and me, to the club and there you could have something to eat and something to drink. And you could dance a little bit, and something we didn't have in years. And all of a sudden I'm sitting in the club, and I see this soldier sitting there. And I look at this young soldier I was with and I said, "You know, I know this guy." So he looked -- he says, "Where would you know this guy from?" I said, "That soldier went to school with me in Germany in Bad Nauheim." He says, "Are you kidding me?" "Okay," he says, "I'll ask him." So he's sitting there and he calls, you know, he says to him, "Hey, listen, listen." And I said to him, "But his name isn't 'Listen.' His name is Max Bettman." So he said -- I didn't know the language that well. So he said, "Is your name Max Bettman?" And he said, "Yes." And he said, "Do you know this lady?" And he looked at me and said, "No." I looked at him and I says, "I'm Carola," and he says, "Oh, no." He couldn't believe it, that he went to school with me, and his father was the principal of the school. And he also helped to bring us to the United States, his father, yeah. And only about three years ago we had a reunion where I invited all the kids who survived from Bad Nauheim, and he was there, Max Bettman. He didn't remember that I said, "This is Max Bettman," he didn't, you know. He had forgotten. But I, the funniest part was that when I said, "Don't call him Listen. His name is Max Bettman."

Q: What did you do during the days? Was there vocational training? Did they teach you English--?

A: After the war? After -- in Austria?

Q: In the DP camp, yeah.

A: Yeah, I did work -- since my first love always has been nursing, and I had a little training in Germany in Berlin, while I was in camp I had been sick quite often. And while I was in the

Berlin and I had an ear infection, they always kept me a little longer in the hospital because they knew that my first love was nursing. So I stayed there and took the temperatures of people and they gave me uniform, whatever. And, when I was liberated, I worked in an Army, American Army hospital for a little while. Not for too long, but for a few days. I just wanted to -- it was hard because I didn't speak the language, and they kept calling me "Fräulein," and I didn't want to be called "Fräulein." That's all the Americans knew, they, you know, heard by one thing or the other.

05:24:02

But, I could take temperatures then, too, and pulse, then take the blood pressure and that was okay.

Q: And what was your sister doing?

A: My sister also worked a little bit. Yeah, she, she met an American soldier, and I think what she did -- he was a dentist. She worked a little bit in a dental office or something. If I'm not mistaken, I think that's what she did. But for a little while because we only stayed there a year and went to America. So we weren't too long in Austria, but we recuperated. And Austria is a beautiful country, really nice, and we regained our strength and it was good. It was nice.

Q: How long did it take you to regain you to regain your physical strength, do you think?

A: Maybe two, three months. You know, because we were young. You know, we were 19, 20, whatever. We were pretty young, so it doesn't take too long. We got food. It took us a while to adjust. I remember I was quite sick. Something went wrong with my intestines, I had very often terrible cramps. Because you had to really get used to food again; we had no food whatsoever. And if you ate anything fatty, the gallbladder acted up, so it was quite hectic for me to get used to. But the minute I sat my foot on an American boat to come to America, I never had another attack of pain. It may be psychological. The minute I entered -- on the boat, everybody was sick. Everybody was throwing up, that was a natural thing. But I never had another gallbladder attack. And I was examined in Austria. For the gallbladder had bent, or was out of shape, or something like that. So somehow I felt I was safe, on safe ground, in coming to America.

Q: Did you find it difficult to be in Austria at all?

A: I didn't find it difficult. The only difficulty I had, I remember going to the movies with the American soldiers, and I heard a woman say, "Die Juden machen sich wieder."<sup>57</sup> "The Jews make themselves known again." You know, that was my experience in Austria, so that was right after the war. There was people who were very antisemitic. I'm sure today it wouldn't

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<sup>57</sup> The Jews are making themselves again (German).

be like that anymore, but at that time they noticed -- well, it wasn't written all over us that we were Jews, but, they recognized it. Somehow they recognized this. It was so instilled in them to get rid of the Jews that they had no other way but act up on it. Not to look at the Jews and destroy them any which way. We were like, like vermin, no-good people.

Q: Did you date when you were in the DP camp? Did you meet . . .

A: Did I date in the DP camp? , yes, I did. I think I did. Yeah. I had met my friend again, Bumak. He came to the -- he was in -- I don't remember where he was. He came and I visited. He visited a few times, and well, there were young American soldiers and there was a little dating going on. Most of the girls found their husband right then and there, you know. Got married with them. I didn't, I wanted to go to America.

Q: Let's take a break and change the tape.

05:27:49

End of Tape #5

**Tape #6**

06:01:04

A: Okay. Where were we?

Q: We were -- you obeyed the prediction of the Gypsy and you got married. What year did you get married?

A: 1950.

Q: So when did you meet your husband? Soon after, within a few . . .

A: '46. Right. He came to visit. And well, he had been a friend of mine in at school in Bad Nauheim, but we didn't want to get married. I mean we were just good friends, and thing were very lonely for me when I came to America, you know. He had been in the Army and he spoke the language, and I sort of spoke it okay. And he was very good, and he -- I had told him my whole story. He always wanted to know more and more. He was very warm because in the beginning it was very hard for me. First of all, I didn't know the language too well. Second of all, when you rode in the subway and it was in the summertime and you were exposed, a number of people would walk away from you and say, "What in the world is that? She has a number on her arm." There weren't too many of us at that time in 1946, and I felt very isolated, very lonely. And if you wanted to tell actually what happened to you, people used to say, "Don't tell me that. I won't sleep tonight. I don't want to hear your story." I mean I didn't tell people on subways, but my own relatives -- they were awfully nice to me, they were really good. But they didn't want to hear our stories because they were getting on in years, and they didn't really want to be bothered. My aunt, I told the story, and then, "It's enough. I won't sleep tonight." So, therefore, no one did anything. Of course, we were not American citizens. We couldn't afford a psychiatrist or anything like that.

06:03:01

We were just -- we were just people who had to get into the mainstream of life, you know, and we tried very hard. We didn't -- German wasn't spoken in America because the war had ended. If you spoke German, they looked at you like you were a Nazi. So we had to speak the language which was good, I suppose. And we got together with our own people, people who were in camps. And very often I heard from people who had come here previously, I heard them say, "Well, these people who were in camps, they behave awfully strange." And I'm a sensitive person, I didn't like to hear that. We did behave awfully strange, but nobody took in consideration what we had actually gone through. So it got to a point where we sort of separated ourselves from everyone, and we said -- we got together on social occasions, only the survivors, the ones who survived. But we went to work and we started a new life, and we got into the mainstream. And I went, -- I knew how to sew which I had learned in Frankfurt. I went into the factory and I made piecework, worked in a blouse factory. And it

was in 1946, 7, I made \$80 a week, which was a fortune. And everyone around me hated me because at that time we were piece -- they were pieceworkers, and if you worked too fast you ruined the prices for the other people. I didn't know that. I did it as fast as I could because I wanted to make money in the worst way. So that was pretty tough, but I made it. I mean I had an average of \$60, which was pretty nice in 1946 and seven when really people didn't make too much money. And then I paid the money to my uncle and aunt who let me stay there. You know, and my aunt cooked for me, and I lived there. And it was very cozy and very nice, and then my husband would come and take me out for dinner. My husband, he wasn't -- he was just a boyfriend -- would take me to the movies and things like that. And from then on, life got a lot easier for me.

Q: Did you go to school at all? Were you able to?

A: After the war?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I didn't really. The only schooling I had was going to a parent's class when I pregnant with my son to learn how to be a mother. That was also not easy. You see, when you're young and you don't have a mother and don't have a father, and people sort of -- you had to do it all on your own. But we did it, we really worked hard.

06:06:01

We helped one another. "You do it this way, I do it that way. You bathe the baby." I took the mother's class -- yeah, that was the only schooling I had because I had to make a living; I had to work.

Q: Were you -- of the two sisters, did you get pregnant first? Or did your sister get pregnant?

A: My sister got pregnant and she lost the first baby. I was really the one who had the first. My son was the firstborn.

Q: And she helped you, as well?

A: My sister lived in Baltimore, so she couldn't really help too much. They separated us, which we didn't really like. But my sister went to college again in business college in Baltimore. Some other relatives of ours lived in Baltimore, and so she stayed there and she met her husband there. So it was all for the better. She had hers in Baltimore, and she still lives in Baltimore again. She ended up in Baltimore.

Q: Tell me something, Carola. You lived under the Nazis from the age of eight to the age of 20.

A: Right.

Q: I don't know if it's the most formative years, but it certainly is an enormously significant part of your life. How do you understand your adjustment? Your coming back to life after all of this happening to you?

A: You know, there is such a thing, I guess it's called a "survivor." You just do it, you know. You don't think about, you just do it. We had, we had such a strong will to survive in the camps. When we -- once we were liberated, it was a piece of cake, you know, and you don't think about it too much. You just go ahead and do it. Don't talk about it and do it. But when I think back now -- I'm an old lady, and I think back at the time, the hard times we had, I sometimes don't understand how I survived it and how I did it. And how I -- later on we had the bakery and I worked there, and it was all completely strange to me, bakery and whatever, but I did it. And whatever I did, thank God, I was pretty good at it, so they tell me. So, at least I know some through college, and my daughter or whatever, it was hard work to do all that. And we wanted -- they denied us a free education in Germany. Maybe I could have gone to nursing school, but I didn't have the means and have the money, and so I didn't. But I wanted my children to have the education that everyone deserved, so we worked, both my husband and I, we worked very hard to get our son through law school and the whole thing, you know. So you just, I would say, get up and do it. Don't think back what has happened, don't have pity.

06:09:01

Don't look, look in the past, look in future.

Q: Is that what you learned from all this?

A: That's what I learned from it. And the other day my, my son was -- since we talked about it, my son was to make to speech how it was living with a mother who's a survivor. And, you know, come to think of it, he said the same thing. He said, "She didn't look back and she didn't live in the past. She lived in the present, and she lives in the future." And, we never discussed the Holocaust in our house. We didn't cry -- if I cried, I cried on my own. I never showed my kids that I was a poor Holocaust survivor. They never knew about that, I used to pick him up when he was a baby and I used to hold him. And I used to say, "They're never going to take you away from me," you know. And I really thought I had created something here. You know I wanted to really hold onto him, and that he didn't know. I only knew that he was so dear to me. Once I had this little boy in my arms, I thought the world belonged to me. And then another little girl, it was just wonderful. But I went on with life and didn't look back and I think I accomplished, after all this horror, I accomplished what I wanted to accomplish. Not quite, but I'm not finished yet. And like I listen and read the stories and I hear these kids saying -- of course, they're right -- they keep saying, "We have to tell the story because soon the survivors will be dead." So the kids who go through the March of the Living say that, "We have to tell the story; therefore, we're going through the March of the Living -- the Holocaust survivors will be dead." I don't want to hear it. I want to live for a

while yet and tell my story. And I think maybe I will. With God's help, I will. Well, the "Shema" I've been saying in Auschwitz, at the roll call, appell, I still say. If things get really tough and you know they have been. I've complained already in the meantime and I've had all kinds of diseases, I'll say my "Shema," I go on. So, basically, I wouldn't call myself a very orthodox person, but I would call myself an observer. And I think everybody should, in their own religion, should be observant. It will make for a better world.

Q: So you do believe in God?

A: I do. Because I, I feel somehow, somebody looked out over me, looked out for me because not too many people came out of this horror.

06:12:08

Q: When you think about the human race, as opposed to God, given what you went through and what you saw people doing to other human beings, are you -- you don't look like a pessimistic person, but are you pessimistic or are you optimistic?

A: Well, what they did to other people, yeah -- that in the beginning did destroy my whole outlook on life. That I have to admit. That was, "Where was God, you know, and why did they do it? The Germans educated people, and, you know, why would they do a thing like that?" It is very much so threw me off everything in the very beginning. But then I noticed that without God and without a belief, it's not for me. I can't go on like that, so I went right back to where I started out from. I really did. I tried to instill it into my kids, but they are not as observant as I am. But, to each his own. I don't preach to them, I let them do whatever they want to because it has to come from you inside, so . . .

Q: Is there anything you would like to say that we haven't talked about, or tell your grandkids?

A: Well, one thing I hope and pray that there is never a repetition of this horrible crime the Germans have done. I hope that they have a better life. It doesn't just go for my grandchildren, it goes for all human beings, humankind. And these wars, unfortunately, in the Middle East and all that, I hope will come to peace, eventually. That the whole world will be at ease, there will be fights. No guns, no nothing. Guns should be completely destroyed. There shouldn't be any of this, and people should live in harmony and peace. And I hope my grandchildren -- I won't see it anymore, but maybe my grandchildren will.

Q: Thank you.

A: You're welcome.

06:14:22

(Starts to show photographs)

This is my mother at the age of 19 taken in Nieder-ohmen, Germany where she was born and she was raised and where she lived.

This is my mother's engagement picture. I believe she was 20 years old. It was taken in Nieder-ohmen. I don't remember the year, but it must have been -- someplace, I don't recall. Maybe '20, '22, 1922.

This is my mother, age 40, shortly before she went to the ghetto of Łódź and that's where she died. And that's the last time I've seen her.

This is my father shortly after he came out of Buchenwald in 1938. I believe he was then about 40 years old.

This is my sister and myself. I think I was about five years old, and my sister about six. In Nieder-ohmen, Germany. I'm the one on the left-hand side.

Q: Standing?

A: Standing, right. Okay. From left to right, it's me standing on the left side corner. Next to me my grandmother in front. My great grandmother in the very front holding my little cousin, Sonja. Next to that my grandfather. On the right-hand side is my sister. In back of it starting on the left-hand side is my mother and my aunt. That was taken in Germany, maybe in 1935.

Q: And where is that?

A: In Nieder-ohmen.

Q: On your farm?

A: No, my grandparents' house. In front of my grandparents' house.

Q: And that's the aunt who brought you to the United States?

A: That's the aunt who brought me to the United States, right. Okay. This is Tante Erna,<sup>58</sup> who came to the United States in 1938. And she's the one whose address I remembered all during the camps, ... and she's the one who brought us to the United States. Okay. This is my sister, Hilda,<sup>59</sup> and her husband, Werner. The two of us survived together, and she lives now in Baltimore and has three daughters and 12 grandchildren. We were separated for many years, and she was in Łódź together with my parents and grandparents. She buried everybody and she was – she left, came to Auschwitz and we met in Auschwitz. And we were liberated in

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<sup>58</sup> Aunt Erna (German)

<sup>59</sup> Hilda Cohen



1945 in Malchow -- Mecklenburg. Okay. On the left-hand side is my friend, Claire. Next to her is Martha. Next to her is Ann, and then it's me. The four of us survived all the camps, and we now live together in America.

Q: You mean, you were in Auschwitz together?

A: We were in Auschwitz together. We were in Berlin together. We were in Auschwitz together. We were in Malchow together and we were liberated in Malchow. And then sort of we went our own ways, and we met again in New York City.

Q: When was this picture taken?

A: three years ago at somebody's wedding, I believe. We were all dressed up, so naturally it must have been a wedding. I think Claire's daughter's wedding. Okay. On the left-hand side is Faryl, my youngest granddaughter. Next to her is Heather, and sitting down Opi<sup>60</sup> and then myself. And next to me is my granddaughter, Jennifer. Starting from the left-hand side, again my oldest granddaughter, Shawna; my son-in-law, Mitchell; my daughter, Linda; my daughter-in-law, Barbara; my son, Michael, and my grandson, Jason. And that picture was taken in Baltimore, Maryland.

06:21:56

End of Tape #6  
Conclusion of Interview

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<sup>60</sup> "Gramps" (German)