United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Anna Laks Wilson
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Anna Laks Wilson, conducted by Joan Ringelheim on February 21, 2001 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Hallandale, FL and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

ANNA WILSON
February 21, 2001

Q: Good morning, Hania.

A: Good morning.

Q: It's lovely to see you this morning.

A: Thank you. Same here.

Q: Hania, I'd like to begin by asking you what your name was when you were born.

A: Anna Laks.

Q: Anna Laks. And what month and day and year were you born.

A: 16th of October, 1924.

Q: And where?

A: In Wierzbnik.

Q: And tell me a little bit about how you remember your family before the war. I understand you were the second born, actually.

A: No, I was the second born. I had a brother…

Q: You had a brother who had died, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: And he died before you were born?

A: Yes.

Q: So, in some sense, you were treated at a certain point like the first born.

A: That's right.

Q: Were you spoiled?

A: No, I wasn't spoiled. We had a very happy family life. We - I always remember singing and dancing at home. The parents were very good to us. They took a big part in our lives. They cared a lot for us, and we were all, we were very happy then.

Q: Do you remember the character of your father, what your father was like and what your relationship was like? Were you very close with him?

A: My father was an educated man. He was - he didn't mix into our lives, into the kids. My mother took complete charge of us. She was like our friend. She was always interested in every aspect of our lives, and we responded to her that way.

Q: And was your father sort of a distant father?

A: He wasn't a distant father, but he didn't mix into our upbringing.

Q: So, did you have private time with your father or primarily private time with your mother?

A: Rather with my mother.

Q: And, since you were the eldest child, what was your relationship with your two younger sisters? One was two years younger then you and the other is, what, five years younger?

A: Yes, five.

Q: So, were you close with them?

A: Well, I was close with them, but they say, I don't remember this, but they say I was bossy.

Q: You were bossy?

A: That I was bossing them around, but we loved each other. We were always - we never had any fights unless it's true what they say that I was bossing them around.

Q: Do you remember - Chris said that you had - you all had to have collars for school?

A: Yes.

Q: Clean collars?

A: Clean collars.

Q: So, they had to be washed and then sewn on every day, right?

A: Yes, but that was when I was at school in Radom. I had a girlfriend, and since I was good at writing essays and stuff like that, I was writing her essays and she was washing my collars for me, and attaching them to whatever I wore.

Q: Now, Chris remembers you asking her to do that for her before.

A: That's very possible. I don't remember, but it's possible. Her things were always neatly hung up in the closet. I remember, we had a shelf together. My mother divided it, and she says, "You will have one side, and Chris will have the other side." Hers was always neatly put together, and mine was a mish-mash. So, I remember my mother says, "Why can't you keep it like your sister?" I said, "She has a better side." So, Krysia says, "Okay, I'll give you my side." And soon enough, this side was all neatly put together and mine was all messy.

Q: [Laughs.] What did you like to study? Did you like studying?

A: I was a very good student. My mother - my mother calls me a genius, and I believed her. [Laughs.]

Q: Well, your sisters call you a genius too, you know?

A: That's - my mother was very proud of me because I was very well brought up, like I had very nice manners and since I was a little assimilated and I had a lot of Polish girlfriends, usually the Polish parents did not like the Datastrassas (ph), the Jews, but since I was so well brought up and polite at all time, and I was helping them with school, I was always welcome to their homes, and to me, at that time, it was very important.

Q: Why was it so important?

A: It was important because I wanted to be one of them, because I felt so persecuted as a Jew that I felt that - I just wanted - at that time, when I was a kid - don't forget, that that was at the time when I was nine, eight, ten, you know - I wanted to be one of them at that time.

Q: So, explain how to me persecuted as a Jew? What was it like for you as a Jewish child?

A: Actually, I felt it because I noticed that we had - in our town, there was a lot of religious Jews. Most of the Jewish people that lived in Wierzbnik were religious, and I always saw Polacks, throwing stones at them, talking to them in a way that it was ridiculing them, and so - I, personally, since I was just a child at the time, I didn't feel it, and being with the Polish girls, you know, associating with them, I didn't feel it, but I saw it on the outside, and that's why maybe I wanted to be one of them.

Q: Did you yourself feel uncomfortable with the very Orthodox Jews?

A: To a point, because they - they couldn't speak Polish. I mean, they spoke Polish with an accent. They spoke mostly, among themselves, they spoke Yiddish, and being so very religious, they had a certain mannerism that distinguished them for the other people. They were dressed differently. They acted differently. They spoke differently. So, but I identified with them, but sometimes I felt a little bit uncomfortable with them.

Q: Do you remember what the population of Starachowice was?

A: Yes, it was - Wierzbnik-Starachowice were like twin cities, if you can call that that. That total population was 35,000, and ten percent of it were Jewish people like between 3,200 to 3,500. And, most of them lived in Wierzbnik; some Poles lived in Wierzbnik, too. Starachowice was mostly - in Starachowice, there were mostly - not mostly, I would say almost 95 percent Poles. They worked there because we had the munition factory there. They worked there and they lived there. Some of them lived in Wierzbnik, too, but all Jews lived in Wierzbnik.

Q: You left?

A: I left. My mother sent me to school in Radom when I was eleven years old.

Q: Was that an ordinary thing? Why did that happen?

A: No, because I was a good student and we had what they call *Gymnasium*, which was a high school in Starachowice, but it wasn't one of the best. In Radom, there was - there was one of the best girls' school, but it was almost impossible to get in for the Jews. At first, we had *numerus klausus* (ph), which meant one Jewish girl for 45 students in a class would be accepted, and then in the later years it was *numerus nolus* (ph), which means none of the Jewish girls could be accepted. So, I was lucky. You have to pass a competitive exam, and you had to really be very, very good to be accepted. So, my mother tried - she sent me there and I passed the exam, and at the end of the year, she found out that I was accepted. So, for her it was the biggest achievement that she could ever achieve at the time which - and I went to that school there and I lived on my own. Like, I had relatives, but my mother placed me in a - like she rented a room, with like there were kids there my age. So, she rented a room with a family, and that's where I stayed.

Q: Did that scare you to go away?

A: At first it did. As a matter of fact, I cried for a long time before I went there, and when I found myself there, I also felt a little bit strange, but soon I got used to it, and I got to know all the people my age and a year older or a year younger, because they were several schools in Radom. It was a big city with 100,000 people there. They had several different schools. They even had a Jewish high school, called Pzhiachu Wierze (ph), which meant

"friends of knowledge", if I were to translate it exactly. So, there were a lot of Jewish kids that were educated in Starachowice, Wierzbnik. The religious people didn't send the girls to high school because of the fact that they had to go to school on Shabbat. You know, because we had six days of school. So, the parents wouldn't let them do that. So, they had a lot of other schools that were connected with the religious movement. But in Radom, the parents were a little bit - I mean, it was a bigger city, and there was a lot of young people that were going to those different schools, and the schools were much better than in Wierzbnik.

Q: Was it kind of exciting to be in a much larger city?

A: Well, once I got to know the people my age, I felt very good there. As a matter of fact, until today, I have a lot of friends from Radom. And, as a matter of fact, my husband made a party for them all like at the cottage a year before he died. There was fifty of us.

Q: Really. And, what were your favorite subjects?

A: At the time, languages and mathematics.

Q: Mathematics?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did that come from your father since he was an engineer?

A: Yes, that's true. [Laughs.] It was -talking about home, when he counted, he counted in German, because he was educated in German. I count - no matter what language I speak - if I have to count, I count in Polish. My husband, no matter what language he spoke, he would count in Yiddish. And since you are talking about languages….

Q: How do you account for that?

A: I think you - like I was used to speaking - we spoke Polish at home. So, I was used to speaking Polish all the time, and because I suppose that I got used to counting. I think it's very normal.

Q: Did you write home a great deal?

A: Well, I did write home. Every week my mother would send me home-baking and stuff like that, a parcel, and then, whoever would travel to Radom, she would send something for me. So, when this person came I wrote a letter to my parents. We didn't have a telephone at all.

Q: Did you write to your sisters? Or does the one letter count?

A: One letter.

Q: Did they write to you?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No, because we were, you know, for every holy day, I went home. As a matter of fact, the month of September, since Radom was about sixty kilometers away from Wierzbnik, it was a two hour ride on the train because I had to change trains half way. So, at the beginning, I didn't want to go back to Radom because when I was at home it felt so good to be at home. So, the first month, I was traveling every day to Radom and back.

Q: Every day?

A: Every day to get home. But then, then later when the days became shorter, I stayed there. But I had a very, very good life in Radom because, as a say, I had lots of friends there.

Q: Do you remember the Paliszewskis?

A: Yes, I remember them very well.

Q: Were you close to them also?

A: Very close. Those were the Polish friends of my parents, and we were very close. The father was - I mean, we called him a doctor. He didn't have an education, but he, I mean, maybe he wasn't a doctor really, but he was acting as a doctor. And there were four daughters there and they opened, how should I say, a school. Since the age of two or so, we went to that school. It was like a - I don't know whether to call it a kindergarten or whatever. And they taught us - they taught us to such a degree that when I went to public school, the transferred me immediately the first day because I could read and write already, and then I skipped again, because they were very good teachers and they were very good friends of our parents. We went there for Christmas and I enjoyed so much seeing the Christmas tree and she had home baked cookies on the tree. We really liked it, and they were very, very good friends of our parents. As a matter of fact, they kept certain things for us, like valuables and they - and this was the only family that returned our valuables after the war because I also had - we also had friends, they were also teachers, that we left some clothes and stuff like this, and when we came back, they wouldn't give us anything. Not only that they wouldn't give us anything, but they said, "If you are need, go to the Jewish congress." So, the Paliszewskis were very, very exceptional.

Q: So, in your experience with Polish Catholics, that's an unusual experience, the Paliszewskis, the way they were with you?

A: Very unusual, but they weren't - maybe they were, but I thought they came from the Russian side so maybe they were, whatever…

Q: Greek Orthodox?

A: Greek Orthodox, I'm not sure, maybe not, but Christmas was Christmas, so maybe they weren't, but they spoke with a Russian accent. They weren't born in Wierzbnik; they came from the Russian side.

Q: Were there other Polish Catholic friends that you had, that you were that close with or not?

A: I had a girlfriend, the doctor's daughter. Her name was Helena Lambaska. She had, her parents were - in addition that he was a doctor, he was also such a Polish aristocrat, and I remember them. She was a very good friend of mine right through school, right through the public school and then in Radom, as well. And I remember when she came to us, she rode a horse and I was envious, but I was afraid of the horse.

Q: So, you never got on the horse?

A: No.

Q: No, did she ever ask you to try?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember your dog?

A: Dog, yes, I think we had a dog called "Lady", but I was mostly, at this time I was away from home, but I remember it being there.

Q: So, you left to go to Radom in '33 or '34?

A: No, '35.

Q: '35, so you were twelve? No, you were eleven.

A: Eleven.

Q: You were eleven.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, even though you're still a kid, do you begin to hear things about what's happening in Germany, or is that not very conscious yet?

A: Not conscious until - as a matter of fact, I had no idea. I mean, first of all, we knew what was happening in Germany, but we - I, myself, believed that Poland is so strong that we are not going to be afraid of the Germans. What should I say? I really believed that Poland was one of the, how should I say it, the strongest countries in Europe.

Q: So, you had no idea what sort of an army they really had.

A: No idea.

Q: So, you had no fear?

A: No fear.

Q: None. But, you were conscious in some way about what was happening in Germany?

A: I was conscious, but I didn't believe it. Like, my father, who was educated in Germany - not in Germany, in Austria, I think, but he said the German people are so good, that nothing - I mean, not to worry about it. That, you know, like, that's what he believed because he himself was brought up in a different atmosphere at the time.

Q: So, a couple of years later, in '37-'38, before the war begins and there are German Jews whose ancestors came from Poland, who are sent back to Poland and come into the area of Starachowice, right?

A: Right.

Q: So, do you see these people when you come back on vacation? Do you notice that there are these German Jews who have been sent away?

A: But, there weren't too many yet in Wierzbnik or Starachowice, but they might have gone to other cities. I don't remember any German people. Mind you, when I came home, my mother used to send me to different aunts on vacation, and they all - since I was used not to being at home and my mother felt that my sisters had it better because they were at home and I was away., so when I came home she would send me to a relative for the vacation in another part of Poland. So, I really was very little in Wierzbnik.

Q: Tell me - I want to go back a little bit. Tell me about your grandma. You all seem to have had an extremely close relationship.

A: Very close relationship. She lived about - I don't remember. It would be about 20 or 30 kilometers from Wierzbnik. The place was called Ostrowiec. We had three aunts and a grandmother that we were very close with them. The aunts were very nice women. They were running my grandmother's business, and the youngest one was going to university, and she finished pharmacy. We were very close with this grandmother. I was going there very often, and I developed like a friendship with many kids my age there, and I like to go to Ostrowiec, and my grandma liked us to come to visit her all the time. She was a very - she really loved us.

Q: Did she teach you about Jewish prayers?

A: Yes, she was very religious, extremely religious. My grandfather was - I would say, he was wearing the clothes that the religious Jews wore. And I remember that on her stove, she had a wooden kind of a board that would divide the milk dishes, if she cooked milk dishes, and the other dishes on the same stove. She had this board so the vapor shouldn't mix with the other. My mother was Kosher, because otherwise my grandmother would never eat when she would come to the house. But we were more traditional and my mother and father were very much involved in the Zionist movement. So, they were working for Israel all the time.

Q: You may not remember this or even know this. Was your mother in conflict with her mother because she wasn't as religious?

A: Never, no. As a matter of fact, she was very much loved by her mother and grandfather, I was told. The grandfather was so religious, and his sons - I don't know whether Renia told you that his sons turned to be Communist. They had to run away because the grandfather wouldn't accept them. Then he sat Shiva after them because he was so religious and they were Communists. So, how could that be reconciled? But my mother, regardless of what she was, she was very much loved by her family.

Q: So, was it odd for you to learn this much about - did she expect that you would become religious? Was that her hope?

A: My mother?

Q: No, your grandma.

A: No, no.

Q: She just wanted you to know?

A: Yes, right, and as far as my mother is concerned, I remember she brought in a teacher and she opened - because the Zionists had an organization, we had a room there - so, my mother was instrumental in bringing a Hebrew teacher. He lived in our house at first. He

was like, you know, they couldn't pay him much, and she opened the Tarbut school, and we were learning the modern Hebrew.

Q: So, your mother opened the Tarbut school?

A: My mother opened it.

Q: And there were a lot of children who went?

A: I would say there was about twenty percent of families that weren't orthodox, so they would send the kids there.

Q: Because, of course, the orthodox would not go.

A: No, they had their own school called Bysiarkev (ph) for the girls, and for the boys they were studying at the schribus (ph) and the synagogue - the religious ones.

Q: I think we may be close to the end of the tape, but I'm not exactly sure. Four minutes, okay. Did you graduate from high school before the war began?

A: No.

Q: How many years was high school?

A: High school and lycée, we had both. Like before the war, I finished four years of high school, and after the war, I went back to high school, and then I went to university in Poland, what they call Cultural Diplomatic school.

Q: So, as you're going to high school, so between '35 and September of '39, right, do you feel things getting difficult, or are you still believing, "Germany's not going to do anything."

A: No, Germany will not do anything. I still believed it, because at school they let us believe that Poland is very strong.

Q: So, you don't live with any fear.

A: No fear.

Q: So, war must have come as a complete shock to you.

A: Complete shock to us and when we had to run away from home because they were bombing the factories in Starachowice, and we had to run away to different villages to just not be - but, Poland was taken in a few days. So, soon after the Germans came in - I

wasn’t afraid of them at the beginning - but soon I learned that we have to be afraid of them.

Q: Okay, let’s stop the tape and change it please.

End of Tape #1

Tape #2

Q: Hania, what happened when the war began? You were in Radom at school.

A: No, I was at home. I came home for the vacation in June, and I stayed at home, and the war broke out on September the 1st. As I said, we had to run away. We ran away to whatever close village. We stayed with some farmers, and when Poland was taken by the Germans, which was in a few days, we were sent home.

Q: Was that a very frightening experience the evacuation?

A: It was very frightening because we did - war was something strange to us. We didn't know what war means, but we when we heard the bombs flying and when we heard that people got killed, we got scared. But when we returned home and the Germans came in, they walked with dogs. We were afraid of them, and we were told like when we were walking on the same sidewalk, we had to go off the sidewalk when the Germans were walking through. So, at first we laughed that they are so proud, they are so stupid, but then later we started getting scared.

Q: Do you happen to remember the first night you came back after you had been evacuated and you had a very formal kind of dinner, that your father wanted there to be a tablecloth on the table? Do you remember that?

A: No, I don't.

Q: So, what is your first memory after you come back from the bombardment? What is the clearest memory that you have of how life changes for you?

A: That we were afraid, but my father assured us that the soldiers and the government is bad, but the German people are straightforward, good people, that not to be afraid of the civilians, just the soldiers. But they were like, there were soldiers all over, only soldiers. I was afraid of them, but we just stayed away from them as much as we could. So, we didn't pay very much attention to them. Like, we did, but when we came home, at first, like in 1939, there were things happening, but not - we weren't really afraid. I wasn't, at least.

Q: Do you remember whether your sisters were afraid? Do you remember talking with them?

A: I don't remember this part of my life really that much.

Q: Let me ask you this: you move about three times.

A: Right.

Q: Between the first evacuation, when you come back to your apartment, until the ghetto is closed.

A: Yes, first they moved - we lived on the main street, so, first of all, we were moved away from the main streets, and the ghetto was a little bit bigger, and then they squeezed us. We had to move because the place where we were, they moved us again a little bit closer to the original ghetto. So, we moved three times. I remember all those.

Q: You remember all those moves?

A: Moves, yes.

Q: Now, was that - what did you think when that was happening? Do you know how…?

A: You know, like, when I think of it now, I didn't have any idea that it's going - that it could be so bad. Like, we didn't really - we didn't know what was going on around us, like in Warsaw. We heard it, but we didn't want to believe it, to believe in it. But we were more scared then than at the beginning, because at the beginning we lived a little bit more normal, but now we had to watch every move that we made because we're not allowed to get out of the ghetto. We were wearing those - we wearing the armband with the Jewish star in it, and if they catch you outside of the ghetto, they would kill you. I heard that. I had a case where I was very foolish. I had a boyfriend at the time who lived in Busko Zdroj. It was - but that was around '41 already, and the parents invited me to come there, and Jews weren't allowed to travel. So, they had hotels there. It was a place like where they had cures for arthritis and they owned hotels there. The Germans took away their hotels, but they worked there as workers. So, they send me a work order that I was supposed to work in the hotel. That was just - it was just for the purpose of me being able to go, to travel. So, I remember I went to Kielce, which was a place where the train stopped, and like when I say stopped, the train line stopped and there were buses going to Busko, and I couldn't get on this train. I couldn't get on the bus because they sent the Jews to the very end, and I was wearing this band, and the Jews to the very end. So, I was waiting the whole day there, and all the time, the Jews to the very end, I had to stay in line. So, I decided - I didn't have any fear at the time - I decided to just hitchhike to Busko, because I figured I couldn't do anything else. So, what did I do? I took off my band, put it in my purse, and then I stood on the corner and a car stopped and it was a guy, a German-speaking guy. He asked me if I would like a lift, and I said, "Yeah." He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "To Busko." So, he says, "Get in." So, I get in, and he started speaking to me. He asked me - I didn't know who he was. I had no idea. It was a German. I was scared to death. That's the first time I was scared, but I was already sitting there. So, he started asking me where am I going. I said, "I go there." He said, "For what?" I said, "I've got a job there." "What's your name?" So, of course, I gave a Polish name because I was afraid Laks was a Jewish name. I couldn't say that my name is so and so. So, anyway, what he was, he was like a troihinder (ph) of the Jewish

businesses. What it meant - the Germans took away the Jewish businesses, and he was like - he was checking on all those businesses, and among others, he was checking on this family that I was going to. So, I told him that I'm going to work there, and that was okay. So, he stopped in a place called Miernic (ph) because he had some business to do there. So, he asked me to sit in the car and he would take me because he was going to Busko. So, a Polish guy - in each city they had a Polish supervisor, in each town and city like on his way because he was the main one. He was in charge of it, but the Polacks were supervising those Jewish businesses. The Polack recognized me that I was Jewish. He recognized me. He didn't tell me anything, although I spoke Polish perfectly, and I thought I didn't look Jewish. He recognized that I was Jewish. So, when the guy came back, I noticed that he went and he told him, and this fellow - he was so nice to me all the way - he came and he says, "*Bist du eiben*?" So, I said, "Yah." So, he screamed - do you understand what that means, "*Bist du eiben*." - "Are you Jewish?" So, I said, "Yes." So, he said, "*Wo hast du die Armband*?" That means, "Where is your band?" So, I was stupid - at that time I was crystal clear like as far, I was so idealistic. I never lied, and I was so well brought up. So, I took my purse, and I took it out and showed it to him. He took me by the collar, threw my out, threw my suitcase. The suitcase fell apart, and he took - it's a good thing he didn't kill me because he could have. He was so embarrassed, you know, in front of the Polack, the Polish supervisor that he didn't know what to do. So, he ran to the car so fast, and then the Polish guy comes to me and says, "Do you have anywhere to go in Miernic?" So, I said to him, "As a matter of fact I do. I know a doctor here, and his name is Dr. Reichman." And I remember and he says, "I can take you." So, he carried my suitcase. He carried my suitcase to Dr. Reichman there. He wasn't even embarrassed. He caused all the trouble, because otherwise I wouldn't have had any trouble. I'm telling you only how - not only that I was idealistic, but I was so naïve, and I'll tell you, stupid to a certain point because, I mean, I didn't do anything wrong. I just took a…hitchhiked. So, I don't know what I was referring to when I told you the story when you asked me.

Q: It's every interesting. First of all, the Germans could not recognize who was Jewish and who was not; only the Poles could.

A: The Poles could, and I never - believe me, by accident, I don't know how he knew that I was Jewish, and then I had to call my boyfriend from this doctor's place, that I'm here and he worked for the Germans as a chauffer at the time. He was a medical student, but he was working for the Germans as a chauffer, so the German - his boss of him came to pick me up, and then from that time on, I was just sitting there. I was afraid that, because he knew what I was, I thought he would come and kill me. But, that's how I trusted people.

Q: Did this Polish guy tell you why he told the German guy?

A: I never told him. I never asked him, but I thought that it was - like, it was almost cruel because, I mean, the Germans, they all carried guns with them, and if he could kill me, nobody would ask questions.

Q: Were you surprised that the German guy didn't ask for your identification, because all of you had to carry identification?

A: No, we did, and I did, and I had a letter where I'm going to work. I wasn't going to work, as I told you, and he never asked me. I'll tell you, whenever I'm late from that time on, whenever I met a German, I pretended that I don't understand German. I thought that was the best - that was the best, if I couldn't - if I don't understand. I always said, "No."

Q: Why? Why did you think that was the best way?

A: Because I figured that if speak German well, he will ask me more questions. This way they won't ask any questions.

Q: And you being so honest.

A: I was so straightforward, my father used to that he didn't like it.

Q: So, did you go to work at this place?

A: No, I never.

Q: You never got there.

A: No, I did get there, but this letter and the request for work was only for me to be able to travel, because otherwise I couldn't get out, being Jewish, I couldn't get out of the ghetto. But if I got a permit to work somewhere, I was allowed to - of course, I had to wear my band - but I did wear my band until I couldn't get on the bus, and if I stayed in Kielce, there was no place I could go anywhere, and I wasn't sure whether the next bus will take me.

Q: And, the armband that you wore was white?

A: White with the Jewish star, but at the time, when I went hitchhiking, I didn't wear the band.

Q: What made…? You weren't afraid to take it off?

A: I wasn't afraid because I knew that I looked Polish. I have no accent that would nobody would recognize me. I was told so many times in my lifetime that I don't look Jewish that I believed it. I just told him a false name. Like, he asked me what my name was, so, I told him Lisowska, or whatever was a Polish name, the first name that came to my mind.

Q: Did you speak German with him, this guy?

A: I spoke German with him, like, to a point, but I did speak German because he didn't speak Polish.

Q: He was really embarrassed because he didn't figure it out.

A: If you knew how he screamed at me when he threw me out of this car. He just took me by my collar and just threw me. He was so embarrassed. He wouldn't have done that if the Polack wouldn't look at it. I don't think so. Maybe I'm wrong.

Q: When did you start dating?

A: I was, like, shortly before the war, when I was fifteen.

Q: Yeah, was that sort of a typical time for young girls?

A: Yeah, but when you say dating, it wasn't dating. We went in groups. We never went one by one. Like, we met - we were going to movies together. So, there was a whole group of boys and girls, and of course, I had my favorite, or he had his favorite, but we were going always together, not by ourselves.

Q: And did you like going to the movies?

A: Yeah, I loved it.

Q: Any particular favorites?

A: The old movies, Jeannette MacDonald and all those, the musicals. It was really like - every student was going at least once a week to the movies, at least once a week.

Q: These were American movies that you saw?

A: American movies, yeah, we didn't have any others.

Q: I think it sort of surprises people to think about people going to those movies.

A: Yeah, but we had subtitles.

Q: In Polish?

A: In Polish

Q: So, Jeanette MacDonald singing.

A: Singing with - that was one of my most favorite movies. Her movies were - and Shirley Temple, of course, at the time, because she was so cute.

Q: Did they show you dramatic movies as well and mysteries or was it mainly the musicals that came over?

A: No, there were different movies. As a matter of fact at that time, we were collecting the movie stars photos and we were exchanging them. This was like a treasure. We were buying all those photos and putting them into an album, and then if - because they were quite expensive those photos - so if you had some doubles or if you didn't like some, you could always exchange it with someone else because everybody had an album and photos.

Q: Was this boys and girls?

A: Yeah, both.

Q: Both, and where would you buy - how would they selling them?

A: I don't remember, really I don't remember. We often, when we get together, we often talk about the, the albums that we had.

Q: Because when I was a kid, people used to buy them, and they were in candy or bubble gum or something.

A: I had no idea where we got them, but we had to buy them like…

Q: I understand that, once there was no schooling for Jewish kids, that you became a teacher in your house.

A: Oh, that was during the war.

Q: Right, that's what I mean.

A: That was during - school's finished for us. The war finished, like, we were not allowed to go to any schools. So, there was nothing else to do, and the people thought that I was intelligent, that I was smart, that I was going to Radom to school. It was a myth really. So, the parents started coming and asking whether I could give them lessons. So, I had two sisters. So, I figured I'll open this - it wasn't a school - whoever wanted to come, like, people that were more or less on that level, on Renia's level I had a few, and on Chris's level I had a few, and Chris was teaching. She was also teaching, but she was teaching younger kids, and I was good at school because when I was in Radom, I had a French teacher who just, I don't know, she liked me, loved me. So, when people had problems with the French language - and I learned very fast - so when people had

troubles, she says, she made me a tutor. So, right from the beginning almost. And, if I was their tutor, they passed. No, but most likely, I could do it. So, you know, I had a little bit of experience from Radom. So, when I came home during the war, my pupils were very happy with me. Some of them were until today - as a matter of fact, I went now to the Wierzbnik Society meeting and I met two of my pupils. They kissed me and went, "My lovely teacher." And I was not very much older than them.

Q: That's true. You were fifteen, sixteen years old at this time.

A: Yeah, that's true.

Q: Do you remember how you treated Renia?

A: I'll tell you. I think that I treated them well. I thought that, but I was very strict with my pupils, and especially strict with Renia. Renia says that I was sometimes I'd give her a smack. I don't remember it. Renia must tell you. As a matter of fact, one day, Renia, like, when we arrived here, we got together the three of us, and Renia says that she remembers that I gave, you know, I smacked her a few times. So, I said, and I started crying because I didn't remember. I said, "Why would I do it?" So, she wanted to be nice to me, and on the way home they came back out. She stopped somewhere. She called me. She said, "You know what? I remind myself that I gave it back to you." She wanted me to feel better. She didn't, but I don't remember it. Maybe it's true, but I don't remember.

Q: Was this good for you to be able to teach them, to have that time?

A: I was very, you know, like I was really happy to be a teacher because I noticed that the kids - those kids looked at me with such admiration. So, I really enjoyed it, and I know that Renia's friend - the one in Israel - whenever she talks to me on the phone, she recites all the poems, even the Latin poems, that I made them memorize. I myself remember it. As a matter of fact, when I was in the university in Toronto after the war, after I came to Canada, and on my first - I took - the first course I took was French. So, I remember all the French Canadians, they speak perfect French. I wasn't - my French was only from school, so I couldn't speak so fluently, but I remember grammar and everything much better, and one day the teacher comes when we were taking La Fontaine, that's a French poet, and he says, "Does any of you remember any poems?" And, remember that this is years and years after; that was when I was already Canada and we came here in 1948, and I didn't go to school until 1970. So, that was in 1970. So, I said to him, "I remember *Maître Corbeau*,, but I don't know whether I'd remember it all." So, he said, "Would you like to try it?" So, I said, "Okay." So, I closed my eyes like this and I started and I remembered the whole poem. So, after I finished, the whole class stood up and clapped, and I was so proud that I remembered, because, you know, it's how many years from 1939 to 1970?

Q: Let me go back a few years, because I was recalling that Chris said that, prior to you're going to Radom to high school, you would bring home friends and you would sit around and you would talk about books, and Renia said she also was listening, but she was sort of listening, and Chris said you wouldn't let them be part of the group because they were children. Do you have any recollection of your friends coming into the house and talking about books?

A: I had a lot of friends. I always had a lot of friends, but you know, I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember?

A: No.

Q: Okay. What do you remember about your parents during this period, '39 to '41, when things are beginning to get tougher, but they're not quite as bad as they become? Is your father working? He's lost his job, I gather.

A: Yeah, he lost his job. First of all, he lost his job because he was assessing the forests and stuff like that for the government. In 1933, he lost the job and he lost his pensions.

Q: '33 or '37?

A: No, he lost his - the government job in '33, and then he started working in the same capacity for private enterprise, which wasn't the same, and the reason why they let him go because they didn't want to pay his pension, or because he was Jewish, they didn't want to pay his pension. So, my parents went - they struggled but we lived normally like any other, because the Jewish people - the Jewish population, especially the religious ones, they were tradesmen, small businessmen. They were all poor, like, they weren't rich people. So, although we were quite - we lived quite modestly, we weren't any different than any other people. I remember, my mother learned a trade but it was, you know, I don't really remember exactly what - my father was also selling something. I couldn't tell you really exactly what they did during the war.

Q: So, if you would…

A: Riches wasn't important then.

Q: But, you did have a maid.

A: Yes, we did.

Q: And a seamstress and a laundress, I believe, before the war.

A: Yeah, they were coming once a month. It wasn't that they were there all the time. We didn't have a maid continuously. We did - there were two sisters where we lived that they were doing this kind of work. So, like, to wash the laundry, I don't know if they were coming once a month or every two weeks. I couldn't tell you. I don't really remember, because during the war, during ghetto we didn't have any help any more and Renia and Krysia would remember more of what we had right before the war because they were at home.

Q: So, one wouldn't have to be wealthy to bring in some people?

A: No.

Q: So, if you would describe…

A: But, my parents were both educated. So, that was the difference between them and - I mean, there were a few others that were like my parents, but most of the people were religious, educated only - that's all they knew: how to pray and how to… You know, that was the type - that's the type of people that lived in our town.

Q: When is the ghetto formed, in your view? I can't quite understand because it doesn't become a closed ghetto.

A: No, at first - I would think that was '41, maybe '40 - when they moved us from our first location to the second location, and they were closing on, but it wasn't closed. We were not supposed to get out of the camp unless we had a work permit or whatever. That's how close to the, how should I say, October the 27th, people were going to work, too, because we had an *Arbeitsamt,* a German *Arbeitsamt* that said - enlisting people for work. And a lot of people from the villages were coming to Starachowice already in the ghetto to look for work, but they had to come somehow, maybe they were brought by the Germans, I couldn't tell you, but I know that we had an *Arbeitsamt,* which is a labor bureau, whatever you call it, where people were coming and asking for work because they knew from the other places that only the ones that will work will live. Because we heard what was going in Warsaw and all over. So, people - as a matter of fact I was working in the *Arbeitsamt,* and my father and I we both worked in the *Arbeitsamt*.

Q: I think we have to change the tape.

A: Okay.

End of Tape #2

Tape #3

Q: …And I think that story about that holiday, that's a wonderful st-, I mean, it's a very - I understand.

A: But, you know, I cried my eyes out, and, again, the people that I knew in Radom, the Jewish people that were sending their kids to high school there because it was expensive, well-to-do people. So, at that time, it wasn't nice to be - you had to be rich. You wouldn't admit that you weren't. So, let's say my mother was sending me home baking on Friday. Every Friday she would send me a parcel with someone who was going that way. And my girlfriends loved my mother's baking. And this was for the whole week for me to eat! Because I didn't, you know, it wasn't that she was, she says, "Oh, today is Friday! Let's go to Hania. She has her mother's cake!" And those kids, they didn't miss anything. You know, they were rich kids. They ate all my cakes. My mother would buy me fruits like oranges that were extremely expensive, but for me, maybe one orange, maybe a few grapes. You know, she would do the best she could. And they ate everything and I didn't have what to eat for the whole week.

Q: Hania, I want to take us back to your life in Radom, because I think it's important for us to get a sense of what it meant for you to be that independent, and how different it was for you to be home than for your other sisters to be home. So, let's talk a little about what your life was like during that time and some incidences that happened to you.

A: Well, I lived in - my mother used to rent a room for me in a friend's place or whatever and I lived there for the 10 months; for the vacation I went home. And she did the best she could. She washed my laundry every week. I sent her my laundry to be washed at home because I didn't have the facilities. And every week she would send me the home baking and the best she could, she could afford to buy at the time: some fruits that were imported that were so expensive that only the sick ones would get them sometimes. And I was very good at school, so I had no problem there. I always had straight A's. My parents were very proud of me; they were always bragging. And I also tutored French, and I was paid for those lessons, so this was my spending money. We could go to a movie or for ice cream, like, we were going in groups, but it was expensive, so I could afford to pay for it because I was making some money there. And for holidays, I usually used to come home, but for the Yom Kippur and the Rosh Hashana, I not always could because it was the beginning of school and I didn't want to miss - don't forget, I was the only Jewish girl in our class, so I couldn't afford to miss a week of school at the very beginning. So, I remember, one year I was living with the professor, the professor's family, and for the holidays, I also had an aunt living, an aunt and uncle in Radom. My uncle was the brother of my father, but I didn't live with them. I lived with this family. And the lady of the house asked me what am I going to do for the holidays. So, I couldn't say "nothing" because I didn't want to be invited by them, because it is a family holiday and they had their family. So, she says, "What are you going to do?" So, I said to her, "My aunt invited me for dinner." So she said, "Oh, that's good." So when they sat at the table, I went out

on the street, and you know, that was - all the smells were so, I mean, so inviting everywhere. And I wasn't invited to my aunt's for the holidays. I was walking the streets until I got tired, and I sat down on a stone somewhere near the road and started crying. I cried myself to death. I was so hungry and I was thinking of the house and I was envious of my sisters being there, you know, with the whole family and eating well and all. So, I really felt very bad and I couldn't go home until they finished the dinner because I went to my aunt's officially, so when I came home, and they were already - I heard the dishes being washed and put away - and I went to bed. I was so hungry. I was so hungry, so I cried all night. That's how I remember one of the incidents of being independent.

Q: And why, were you not close with your aunt?

A: No, my aunt was very envious that I was - from the beginning, when I was accepted, when my mother brought me to Radom and when I passed the exam and the results were being, like, 'til the end of the summer, the results were unknown. So, my aunt says to my mother, "What do you expect? You come from a small town there, and you come from Wierzbnik, that they'll accept you with open arms? First of all, she has to pass as the best exam because she's Jewish. Secondly, what do you expect? They have in Radom a lot of people that they know, and they're prominent people, that they'll accept you?" And she says, "The hair will grow on my wrist if she would be accepted." So, anyway, towards the end, my mother registered - at the same time, she registered me at the Jewish *gymnasium*. And when she came to look at the results, she went by herself because she was sure that I won't be accepted. So, she went there and, sure enough, I was accep- my name was there, so she fainted. And then my aunt and the whole family wanted to be sure that this is true, they all went to see whether it's true. But that wasn't the only - I talked to her many times. We had many conversations because she was in America. And she knows that she did me wrong. But she had two sons and she says that she didn't want me to live in her house because the sons were my age, and that was her explanation.

Q: So, you sometimes made decisions…?

A: No. I mean, I had to make decisions the way I could. I was just a kid. I couldn't call my parents; we didn't have a telephone. I remember it one time, I was sick, and I was living in another place where, like, I had a girlfriend in the family, so they accepted me, and I shared her room. And I got sick, so my landlady called my mother to come and pick me up because, I mean, she wasn't ready to look after a sick child. So, my mother came and picked me up and took me home for a week or two until I recovered and I came back.

Q: And I understand that the packages she would send you…

A: Yeah, the packages - every Friday she would - because she baked for - every Friday she baked a babka, and other very - I mean, her baking was very good - and every Friday, she would send me a parcel containing, like, her baking and some imported fruit, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, which was very special and very expensive. And I had a lot of

friends in Radom that visit me many times, and we went out with them to the movies. And they knew that on Friday night, I would get a parcel with all the goodies, so they say, “Let’s go to Hania because she got a parcel!” But those kids were at home and they didn’t miss anything, and I didn’t have anything for the week. I mean, except for the dinner that I was given. Like, when my mother paid for the room, she paid also for one meal for me to eat, a hot meal, and the rest I was supposed to buy by myself.

Q: So, where would you then eat breakfast and lunch?

A: In my room, but you know, like, it wasn’t like - I would have a bagel and cheese or something. And I remember I had a tremendous appetite, and one day my father came to visit me. And on the way from the train, he stopped to buy bagels - not bagels, I think rolls, kaiser rolls - and cheese, because I really liked the yellow cheese. So, he bought six rolls for me to have for the week or whatever. And I remember, he never forgot to mention it that I had all six rolls at one time. [Laughs.]

Q: So, you really had a big appetite!

A: Tremendous, because I grew very fast. When I came to Radom, I was the smallest one in my class, but when I was thirteen years old, I grew twelve centimeters. I was the tallest one in my class. And from there on, when we carried the insignia of the school, the tallest used to get it, I used to be the one.

Q: Tell me, what was it like for you to be the only Jewish kid in that school? Was that difficult?

A: It wasn’t difficult because - I had a few kids that were really ridiculing me, they called me all kinds of names - but they were just a few. But in general, I tried to be like them. I helped them out, I stayed after school, did their assignments, helped them with everything, like, for free because I wanted so badly to mix with them. And certain people, ones, I learned to disregard what they were saying. They called me all sorts of names. I’m not saying ‘they’ because there were a couple of such girls. I remember them very well. So if they called me such names, I just pretended not to hear. But I had also one case where the parents treated me very badly. I was sitting at one desk with a girl called Janina Kremska (ph). Her father was a judge; I don’t know what her mother - her mother was apparently not well. I couldn’t tell you - I have never before been in her house. Before we left she offered that she would take me to the station. We had some time yet. So, I took my suitcase and - when we got our school certificate at the end of the year, our marks - so, she says, “You come, we’ll have lunch at our house, and I’ll take you to the station, I’ll help you.” So I went to her house. She wasn’t a very good student. Anyway, the mother asked her to show her her report card. So, the mother looked and didn’t say anything. So, before she set the lunch, she asked me if I’d show her mine. So, I always had straight A’s, I mean, that was to me - I took it out without even thinking that I could

have told her that I don't want to because I knew Janina Kremska (ph) wasn't such a good student. She got so mad, she threw me out of the house!

Q: She got mad at you?

A: At me. She got mad at me, but she told me later the father apologized. He came down later and he apologizes. He said to me that she's not - she's not - that she's sick. But I didn't notice that she should be sick. She just threw me out, she told me to go. So, you say, "How did they treat you?" Well, that was my best friend!

Q: And the teachers at the school?

A: Well, that's also, some - all the teachers were - the French teacher was Catholic, but she was converted. She was really Jewish. She loved me - I had no problems with her. And the teachers in general liked me because I was a good student. Like, even in Latin, I was getting harder work, like when we had an exam at school, she would put me at the end of the class with a longer exam because she didn't want me to sit there while the others were still struggling. So, the teachers liked me because I was a good student. As a matter of fact, there was a mathematics teacher, her name was Kostetska (ph). Nobody ever had a - like, we had numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, so 5 was the best, you know, it's like 'very good' here. I was the only one that, throughout the school, I used to get 5. My friend still today says, "If you got a 5 from Kostetska (ph), you're lucky." So, the teachers all liked me, but the secretary - the secretary, whenever I went there, she made very bad remarks to me. One day, she says, "What's your name?" I said, "Anna Laks." She says, "Your name isn't Anna. Your name is Hannah." I says, "No, my name is Anna." And she says, "No, your name is Hannah." And she emphasized the 'H' because she couldn't stand it that my name was Polish while I was Jewish. And she was mean to me, but I mean, I didn't come in contact with her too much, only when I had to bring my parents' check for the tuition. But I did feel a little bit of anti-Semitism, but I disregarded it completely because most of the girls were really nice to me. There was 45 of us and we met after school, and then there were dances. I didn't have any problem because - there was a similar men's *gymnasium* under the same name as ours - so, once a year we had a dance, so they put all the boys in a row and the girls in a row, and whoever you met you had to dance. So, I never had any problems, but I heard from a friend - as a matter of fact we just talked the other day about it - from a male friend that, he was standing across from one Polish girl and she was so cute, and then she says, "I don't dance with Jews." He says he felt so bad because it never happened before because he was a good-looking boy. So, there were - but as I said, the few incidents that were happening to me I tried to disregard because otherwise I couldn't live with them. I was the only one!

Q: Do you know if other Jews applied to the school - other Jewish girls applied to that school as well and couldn't get in?

A: Oh, yes, because I have here - there is how many are we here? There are about five of us left from that school, and we still meet here.

Q: Jewish girls, you mean?

A: Yes, because one year they accepted four girls instead of one girl, and after that it was *numerus nolus* already. Why four girls? Because one of the girls that lives here in Miami, her father had a brick factory, so he built a gymnasium for the school for free, so they accepted the four girls. When I say gymnasium, like exercise, a big exercise gymnasium for the school. He donated the bricks and the labor.

Q: Tell me something, going back now to the ghetto, when the Germans attach Russian in June of 1941, do you remember that as being a significant change?

A: I don't.

Q: You don't? Okay. So, the ghetto experience up to the end of the ghetto, October, when do you start working in the brick factory with Chris?

A: Okay, first I worked in *Arbeitsamt*, and they closed this - maybe I should also not tell you that a German, before we got sent to the camp, that a German under the name Pohl - P-O-H-L - who was the *Lagerführer* of Majowka, he was coming to recruit some people, like, pick some other new people, you know, to work. He noticed me working in the office there, and so he was always telling us things, that the ghetto is going to be liquidated. But he didn't tell us when; he only told us that it's going to be liquidated. Anyway, towards the end, the last time he came to the office, he told us that the ghetto is going to be liquidated the day later than in reality it was. So, we had an idea. So, *Arbeitsamt* - about two weeks before they liquidated the ghetto, they closed the *Arbeitsamt*. The *Arbeitsamt* wasn't needed anymore because the people that had the war cards already were located. And Krysia and I…

Q: Excuse me, but the *Arbeitsamt* did what?

A: They were assigning people - like, they were employing people. They were assigning people to different factories

Q: In the area.

A: In the area. We had, we had the _____ worker, where they were making bullets, they were making guns. This was a war kind of factory, a big factory. Rogalin (ph) was a place where they were making bricks. So, towards the end, when we knew that we have to work somewhere else, that we have to get our cards, Krysia and I started working - they closed the *Arbeitsamt*, let's say, I think it was about two weeks before the liquidation. It could have been three weeks or maybe shorter, I couldn't tell you. But we

started working in this factory, on the night shift, Chris and I. Like, when they liquidated the ghetto, we had to find another job. When they liquidated the *Arbeitsamt*, I started working for this brick factory and Krysia worked with me at night.

Q: And you were doing what?

A: We were making bricks. Like, there were machines, but we stayed in water, I mean, the water was dripping, and we were making those bricks. We were putting the stuff in those machinery and when the bricks were coming out, we were working…

Q: Now, your mother was not working?

A: No, but I provided her, like, a card, too. I mean, she wasn't working just for her to have a card. Everybody had to have a working card.

Q: And your father was also working in the *Arbeitsamt*?

A: No, he worked in the *Arbeitsamt*. And I don't remember what - I don't think that he - or maybe he went to work? I couldn't tell you later. I couldn't tell you because it was very short-lived. That was a very hard time for all of us because we heard already that there was that village and this village, and they were bringing the people to Starachowice because, in these villages, they only had a few - not too many Jews, because the liquidation was for the whole district there.

Q: So, you're hearing rumors about the killing of Jews.

A: Right.

Q: And does it make any connection with you about what…?

A: It did, it did. But we felt that if we worked, we will survive, because that was the - everybody believed that if you worked, you save your life. Because I don't think they paid for the labor. I don't remember whether we got paid for the _____ work when we were making bricks, but once you worked, you saved your life.

Q: So, that was the strategy. And Renia, what was she doing at that time?

A: Renia, I don't know what she was doing before, because she was, during the liquidation, she was at the marketplace with Mother and Father, and Krysia and I were at work because we worked night shift.

Q: I wanted to ask you about a story that Chris told, and I wanted to know if you remembered it and how you remembered it. She talked about all of you being outside - I

still don't know whether Renia was outside - you were outside somewhere where there were bushes. And some guy came out and used the code word "Amhat" was used.

A: Amhut.

Q: Amhut. You knew that he was Jewish. And he said that he escaped from Treblinka. And Chris tells the story that she really didn't believe him; she didn't know what he was really talking about. She brought him inside the house, or the apartment, or wherever you were staying, to your parents, and your parents kicked you all out and talked with him. Do you have any recollection?

A: I don't remember, no.

Q: So, what recollection do you have of what you're hearing about what the Nazis are doing?

A: We were scared but we believed, we somehow believed that if we have work, we'll survived. So, that was our main - like, we tried to work, to have the proper papers to prove that we work.

Q: Do you remember the illness, the typhus, that your mother had?

A: I remember my mother being very sick. I remember this, that she almost died. But she was sick at home. That wasn't in the camp.

Q: Yes, this is before.

A: It was before. I remember it very well, and I remember the Paliszewskis were coming to the house to help with that. Renia will tell you.

Q: So, in spite of the rumors that you're hearing about the extermination of Jews, you still think that they're exterminating Jews who either can't work or won't work? Or you…?

A: We still, we couldn't believe that things like that could happen. Although we heard about it, we tried to work in order to save our lives, but we still did not believe that they are exterminating them. We still believed that they are deporting them somewhere for other work. But we wanted to stay where we are because we knew already what it was.

Q: Did you ever get depressed during this period, before the liquidation of the ghetto?

A: You know, I don't - I was so engrossed in saving our lives. I was always trying to save my life. And I knew that I will eventually die, whether I will be killed that way or the other way, but life was so precious that we concentrated more on how to live than how… I don't remember being depressed.

Q: But frightened.

A: Frightened.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember the mood of people around you, other than your family, the way people were?

A: Other than my family, I don't remember. But while we're talking about it, I will tell you, the grown-ups were more scared. Because, see, when you are young, you're daring, and you are not so afraid because you think to yourself, "I will run away." That's why we're thinking of uprising inside the camp already in Starachowice, because we didn't want to be killed just like we heard that other people are getting killed.

Q: All right, we'll stop the camera here.

End of Tape #3

Tape #4

Q: Hania, let's talk about the night of the evacuation, or the night before. You and Chris are in the brick factory doing the night shift, but they don't let you go in the morning. So, tell me about that day and what you remember.

A: We are expecting the liquidation of the ghetto a day later. My mother prepared everyone of us had a knapsack, I mean, whatever, so that when we are going to work anywhere, it was a little bit of clothes, you know, and it was - but a change - some shoes maybe or so. So, everybody had it ready for the next day. But, unfortunately we went to work in our work clothes for the night, not knowing that the liquidation would be that night. So, we didn't take anything with us, only the way we were. And at night we noticed on the roof of the factory, like through the window - through the roof - above the roof of the factory, we saw people walking toward the station, walking, and Germans with dogs and we were wondering what happened. So, we knew that the liquidation is going on, and we tried to - I mean, it wasn't far from the station, but we couldn't - we only saw lots of people walking slowly with kids, but we didn't see any of our relatives or friends. We tried to. They told us that we will go straight to camp. At that time, we had three ready camps to move in. Strzelnica, which was the biggest camp, Majowka, which was the smallest camp. So, just to give you an idea, let's say in Strzelnica, they could keep a thousand people. Majowka was about five hundred. I mean, it's not exact, but just to give you an idea that Majowka was a smaller camp, and they had a third camp called Tartak (ph). This camp - it was a sawmill and they only had room for about a hundred workers. So, some people, as you know, from the marketplace, they all went to Strzelnica, the ones that were chosen to work. The ones that were chosen to die, at that time nobody knew where they were going, went to the train station. We were sent direct to Majowka, and in Majowka this Pohl, guy was the *Lagerführer*. He was in charge of that *Lager*. So, when we arrived there, he right away - I mean, since he knew that I had experience, he put me in his office. I don't remember what Krysia was to do. Then, we found out that - we didn't know who survived. We didn't know whether Renia was alive, whether my father was alive - I didn't know that, whether my mother is alive. We had no idea. We were sent to Majowka, and Renia and Father were sent to Strzelnica. Of course, my father went to the office right away because they knew him also from the *Arbeitsamt*. And I don't remember whether that day or some other day we found out that my mother didn't make it, that she was sent out together with the other people. We believed that they were sent somewhere else. We never believed that they were going to Treblinka although we heard about Treblinka many times, but in our mind, we couldn't believe that atrocities like that could happen. So, life was hard. Like, the people that went to Strzelnica, started going to work right away. I don't remember what Krysia did. Maybe she was working with… I don't know. I don't remember where she worked. A few days later, and Vaschek (ph) was in charge of the other *Lager*, came to inspect what - because he was actually in charge of the two *Lagers*; Pohl was in the smaller camp. He came to the office. He looked at my work, and he says, "You know what?" I think that because he liked the way I wrote those lists, you know, those - we started - what did we do at the office? We kept

records of all the people that lived there. Everyone had a card. On the card, it was his name, the barrack number, because, I mean, the date of birth, and the barrack number, and where he worked. Then, from those cards, we were making up lists - daily work lists - because they were different departments in the factory and those workers, like, in the morning, you would call the names and they would go to those, and the next day maybe they were changed. So, I was making all those lists. So, I remember Vaschek (ph) liked the way I make the lists and he says, "From now on," he sent my father. So, Krysia was with my father, and since Renia was in Strzelnica, I was sent to Strzelnica to do the work there, to work in the office. Now, I'll just mention it, because if somebody died, was killed, whatever, most of the people were very strong, the ones that committed themselves to work, so they didn't die the normal way. Most of them were either killed here or there. We used to write down in the Polish "deceased", and we kept the cards separate. Otherwise, we knew exactly how many people we have in each camp. Tartak (ph) was a separate unit. They had their own office and their own people. They - it wasn't connected. But those two camps were connected.

Q: So, you were making the lists for both camps.

A: I was keeping all the records. The records to - Vaschek (ph) - maybe I'll talk about him when I talk about the other Germans - he kept under lock and key; that was in his office. And in the morning was allowed to go in there, take whatever I needed to do the - to prepare whatever, and I had to put it back in his office and he was the only one that had access. I didn't have any access to any of those records. I was doing what I was supposed to, I put it in the place, and it went under lock and key. Now, the structure - are you interested in the structure?

Q: Yes, it's very important. It's very important, yes, please.

A: So, I'll start with Strzelnica. The same was in Majowka. We had a Judenrat - first the Jewish people - we had a Judenrat, we had the police, and we had people that were in charge of the - where they lived in the barracks. The Judenrat were the elders - do you need the names?

Q: That would be great.

A: Mr. Minzberg (ph), Mr. Billingriecht (ph), Mr. Einisemann (ph), Mr. Wolfowicz (ph). The police - there were 12 policemen, 12 Jewish policemen, and one in charge, and the one in charge was my husband's father. Then there were Ukrainians - guards. They were…

Q: Go back to how the Judenrat was chosen and how the police were chosen.

A: I couldn't tell you because when I came to Strzelnica, that was already a done fact. What the police were doing. The policemen had no rights of any sort, just gather together the

people in the morning. They were supposed to keep an order inside the *Lager*, but people at that time were very orderly, they were doing what they were supposed to do. So, there was no problem of this sort, but their main job was to bring all those people - they came to the office, got the list, this one, this one. So, they would round up those people that were going to this department, this department. The policemen would take them to the gate, and from the gate, the Ukrainians would take over. And, they were supposed to keep an order, and of course, when the Germans used to come and whatever they had to do, they were using them to do what - what should I say? They had no arms, no - not only no arms, no sticks, no anything. Like, there was about 12 of them.

Q: Did they wear any special hats or anything? Did they have any way of identifying themselves?

A: I don't remember. They must have had, but I don't remember. I really don't remember, to tell you the truth. Then, there was Judenrat. They were in charge, you know, of - they were responsible for the kitchen and for the supplies and, you know, in general - the Germans would dump the food and dump it, and they were in charge of all those, I mean, they were running a camp where was a thousand or over people. So, they had to be fed, they had to be clothed, they were bringing the clothes at one time and just dump it. And at the office, let's say, I and maybe another two or three girls to help were giving out the clean stuff for the people, like because, you know, and they were responsible for the inside of the camp. And there was a lot of - there was a lot of bribery going on. They had to pay the Germans off for this and for whatever. They did the smallest favor, they were collecting whatever they could collect. And a lot of the Germans were only asking for bribes. Now, what was - so, the guards - I'll go back now to the guards - the guards were watching the gate. There was a tower, one tower near the gate where they watching, and as I said, they were taking people to work and from work, and they were transporting whatever had to be transported. Now, the guards were Ukrainians. Then there were Germans, heads of the guards. So, there was three of them. There was Schrodt - he was famous and notorious and I'll tell you stories about him - Schleizier and Wolf. There were three shifts. So, a German was responsible for the guards. Then, we had - we had the *Lagerführer*, which was responsible for the camp. He lived outside of camp, but he was there all day. That was in Strzelnica. I'll talk about Strzelnica because I was there the longest. His name was Vaschek (ph). He was a *sudetendeutche* (ph), which means he came from Czechoslovakia. He spoke Czechoslovakian, Czech, so we could understand. He could understand Polish, and he had the green uniform, and he was - he had a very foul language. He talked so badly, but he had - he was the only one that had a heart, the only one, because he never - he would always screamed at the people, screamed at and swore at them, even at me, like he called me all kinds of name, but I didn't pay attention because I knew that he had a heart. He never touched a Jew, although he had this rubber stick. He would pick it up and he would scream, "Get the hell out of here." And he was screaming, but he never - to such a degree that once he told the Ukrainians, "No one touches my Jews. Only I have the right to touch my Jews." So, he wasn't so bad, and as a matter of fact, he was there for a long time. I don't know why he was later let go. He

went to Ostrowiec, which was a camp not far from us, and they tell me that he was horrible there. So, I don't know. He was the only German that I could say a good word about because the others were all murderers and, I mean, I'll tell you stories unbelievable stories. Then we had - then we had in camp, above Vaschek (ph), Vaschek (ph) was in camp all the time. Then there was a guy by the name of Meyer (ph) who was overseeing all the camps, but he would only come for an hour. He would talk with Vaschek (ph). You know, they would walk and talk. He wasn't yet - I mean, he wasn't good, but he wasn't yet as bad as the top man was called Altov (ph). He was the most horrible killer that one, I mean, he was - he was killing Jews and when he arrived into the camp, he wanted everybody to freeze in the place where - if you walked you had to stand up. He jumped over fences. He killed from all kinds of situations, like he would sit down, he would jump, he would kill people that appeared on his way, and we will just make a note then at the office that is deceased. He was the worst of them, and apparently I heard that he was from a family because there was as I said called Altov (ph), apparently in Germany a very famous circus. So, he must have been an acrobat, because the way he behaved, I mean, only an acrobat could kill people from all positions like him. Everybody was so scared of him that I didn't even look in his - I don't even - I don't remember his face because when he came to the office and asked for Vaschek (ph), I would pretend that - I was afraid to look up. So, that was the worst. Then, in the factories we had - we had people. Okay.

Q: Can I ask you a question about somebody like Altov (ph)? How did you - how did you make sense then or how do you make sense now of this kind of brutality?

A: I think that he was not accepted by the Germans because I think - he didn't have a uniform, he didn't have an SS, most likely because we found out later, whether it's true or not, we met his mother in Auschwitz and she was a gypsy. Whether this was the same Mrs. Altov (ph), but if must have been because I talked personally with her. When I heard that she was an Altov (ph), I went and I talked to her. And the way she described him, it must have been her son, and she says she was a gypsy and they were in the circus business. So, I can't tell you, but he wasn't an SS man. Everybody was afraid of him. The Judenrat was afraid of him. They were hardly talking to him, and I'm telling you, I mean I would freeze. I put my eyes down, I so was afraid, and I kept my shoulders up because I was afraid that he would shoot me in a minute.

Q: But, the Germans didn't stop him. They didn't care that he was doing this.

A: They didn't care. He was the worst and he was - his title was *Stumführer* (ph). Then we had - and Meyer (ph) died, I think, yes, he died. So, he was replaced by a guy called Colditz (ph). He was very fat man. He was also screaming. He was almost as bad as Altov (ph).

Q: On the Judenrat.

A: No, no, he was almost as bad as Altov (ph) by his behavior like when he was coming they'd he also demanded to freeze, people to freeze, and then they were the people, the *Sicherheit Polizei*, which was the, like - I don't know how to say *encavudei* (ph) in Russian, how do *Sicherheit Polizei* (ph), they were…

Q: Intelligence police?

A: Intelligence police. Okay?

Q: Maybe security police.

A: That's right, *Sicherheit* (ph). And, I'll tell you stories about him, what he did to people, because I'll give specific stories about him, horrible man, horrible. Then there was Kashmider (ph), and who was in charge of, like - the Germans were - the Germans soldiers, the German officials who were wearing uniforms were in charge of the place where the Jews worked. So, they would come and look around and change workers and stuff like that. Those were the people that accepted all sorts of bribes, you know, to take somebody to work or to change his job, you know, what it was. So, they used to come to the, for conferences, to the Judenrat, but it wasn't a conference. They had to be prepared with bribes. There was another one. I think I gave you all the names already.

Q: Can I ask you something? I think most people assume that Judenrat was a function inside a ghetto, as opposed to a labor camp. Was this camp somehow in between being a labor camp and a ghetto?

A: No, that was the labor camp, and those people were - maybe the Judenrat was the same people who were in the ghetto. The same as they took me and my father because we were in *Arbeitsamt*, maybe that's why we got into the office. Otherwise, I mean, I don't know how we could get into the office if they didn't see us writing there and keeping records.

Q: Was you in somewhat of a privileged position because of the job?

A: No.

Q: You were not?

A: No.

Q: So, whatever…

A: I slept in the same barrack, and I wasn't in any privileged position at - they never spoke to me, nobody except for my boss, that Vaschek (ph). He was the only one that talked to me; otherwise, nobody else talked to me ever.

Q: Did you actually have conversations with Vaschek (ph)?

A: No, because he had such a foul mouth, I was afraid to, I mean, I wasn't afraid of him, but I just couldn't take the way he - I mean, he didn't mistreat me, but he called me all sorts of names, but it wasn't only to me. He did that to everybody. But that was only words. That's why I say he had heart, because sometimes there were a few cases when I was saved because of him, because he sent me to the factory to work, to type letters, and type lists where they had - when they had some kind of action. I only think like that because on two occasions, I was sent to the factory during selection, and the first time I thought I was lucky, but the second time, I thought maybe Vaschek (ph) did that. Although he talked to me so badly, but I didn't care. It was a good job.

Q: So, how regularly were there selections? Was it regular or was it just…?

A: No, only sometimes, and the selections were only when people were sick. So, I'll tell you those stories separately because it was very important how they were treating it.

Q: So, you're now in this - are you with Renia or with your father?

A: No, my father and Krysia were in - on Majowka, and Renia and I were there for awhile, and then later - I don't - this I don't remember exactly how it happened, because they brought all the people from Majowka to Strzelnica and then from Strzelnica to Majowka. You know, it was, I don't remember exactly what time and when, but Strzelnica was the bigger camp, the bigger camp, but then later we were all moved to Majowka. At first, because for a time I was with my father and Krysia, and for a time I was away from them. I don't really remember when it was, what year it was, because I'm sure that Krysia must have been - they must have taken them from Strzelnica to Majowka maybe first and then to - they made one camp at a certain time, maybe for repairs or for other things, I couldn't tell you.

Q: But, when you went to Majowka, is Majowka larger than 500 people or was it was still only 500 people?

A: Five hundred people, but maybe they - maybe they enlarged it meanwhile, because, you know, later on they were taking us, towards the end - towards the end, we were taken to another camp altogether. They were building a special camp for us, just to get rid of us, because it was near a train line.

Q: Can you give us some idea of what these camps looked like?

A: Yes. When you walked in, there was a gate and there was a tower. The Ukrainian was on the tower with a gun. The Ukrainian that was at the gate also had a gun - did he have a gun or one of those sticks? And, the office in Strzelnica was almost close to the gate, like, you walked and that was - such a barrack was an office, and then, I remember, there was

a kitchen there further away, where they were cooking the soup, and you would have to line up for the soup right away. And there was a laundry where Renia later worked. She worked in a laundry, and then there were the barracks. The barracks were separate from the men and separate for the women, and I don't remember how many of the barracks were there, but we slept two on one cot, and…

Q: And, where these buildings brick?

A: No.

Q: Wood?

A: Wood.

Q: And, were they made specially?

A: I suppose they had - there was no camps before, so they must have made them specially when we were in ghettos, because there were no camps there before.

Q: And how terrible were the conditions? I mean, was there any water running? Where was the latrines, if there were latrines?

A: There were latrines and there were showers, but you k now what? I don't remember. I really, like, I was thinking the other night, "Where did we eat?" Because I remember that we lined up for food. We lined up for food - for soup. That was the main meal. The people that worked in the factories got their meal, but the people that were on shifts, and the people that worked in camp ate - we had to line up for the soup and line-up for the bread. But, if you ask me where did we eat? Did we eat - it wasn't a dining room - but in a big room or whether we eat in our barracks? You know, I couldn't remember. I was trying to think, "How did we eat?" I don't remember.

Q: Did you eat outside?

A: I don't - I don't remember, like, I don't think that we would sit outside and eat. So, we must have eaten somewhere, but where? Maybe there was a room behind the kitchen, but I couldn't tell you. I forgot.

Q: Did you carry bowls or did they hand them out to you?

A: No, we had such metal dishes that they were - because they served the soup and you left your dish there later. But it wasn't - in concentration camp we had metal kind of *manashki* (ph), we called it, and with the handles so we could put it on a string and carry it all the time.

Q: I think we probably have to stop the tape now, am I right? Two minutes, all right then let's stop.

A: Then we'll have lunch?

Q: We have lunch? I don't know.

End of Tape #4

Tape #5

Q: Hania, I know that you can't remember where you ate, but can you describe the process of getting food and the container in which you got food and if you had a utensil, and describe the food if you can.

A: Okay, there was - there was a kitchen and some of the people worked in the kitchen, and one of them was Salka Perinsweic (ph). She was in charge of the kitchen, if that's important. Every noon - or the main meal - I don't know if it was at twelve or at two o'clock, or whatever - the main meal we would get soup and we had to all line up for the soup. The workers that went to the factories were getting their main mail in the factories. So, there weren't that many people, only the workers inside, the people that weren't well, and the people that didn't go to work that day or whatever. So, but she would - there were some metal plates painted white. We would line up, get the food, and I'm sorry I don't remember where we ate, whether we took it to the barrack, whether we ate outside. I don't remember any rooms that would be available for us to sit down at the table. I don't remember. Maybe there were. I couldn't really tell you. Then we would get bread in the morning, I think. Each time, we had to line-up, but food, like, the morning breakfast wasn't so important because many times the workers that went to the factories were buying somehow or exchanging things with the Polacks and were bringing home some bread and some other stuff.

Q: What was the soup made of?

A: The soup, potato soup, I remember. I don't really remember exactly, but whatever they had, they put in this pot, and that was the soup for the - that was our dinner for the day.

Q: And, do you remember how about how many people were being fed like this? I mean, were there a lot of people working in the kitchen.

A: A few people.

Q: A few.

A: A few people. I would say that at least half of them, because don't forget that we had shift work, that some people were going to work at night, in the evening, I don't know whether we had three shifts, I think. So, they were getting food at the factory or on the premises, but this Salka Perinsweic (ph) was, she was one of the inmates as I call it. She was in charge of the kitchen. That was her job.

Q: And it was a big job.

A: Yeah, a big job.

Q: Do you remember being very hungry?

A: Not in labor camp. You know that I really don't remember being so very hungry. That means that we must have had - we didn't have any fancy food. We didn't have - we had bread and soup, but maybe we were allowed to eat as much as we could. I couldn't, I don't remember. I remember being very, very hungry in the concentration camp, but maybe because in concentration camp it was - it was, I mean, we were almost dying from hunger that - that the camp in Starachowice was already like a restaurant.

Q: So, I guess as you progress for deprivation, you remember the least bad as being not so bad somehow.

A: That's true. I just don't remember those things.

Q: Did you have an evening meal?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember. Tell me something about what your day would be like. How early would you get up in order to go to the office?

A: I would go very early because the first shift, if the shift was going, I had to give them the work list. I had to prepare it for them. So, if they went to work at seven o'clock, I had to be there, and I worked until the last shift would go to work and Vaschek (ph) - before Vaschek (ph) would go home and put all the records under the lock and key.

Q: Did you make up the work lists or did Vaschek (ph) tell you who would be on it?

A: No, I was told either by the policemen or like, I was, if there was any changes. If the list was the same, I didn't have to change it. I just - because I got reports that would say, "This was transferred to here." So, I knew that the next day, I'd have to put this name on another list. And I had to adjust the cards, as well. I had to write on it, let's say if she worked, if he worked in Department A, as an example, I'm just saying. So, if he was changed to C, I had to put it on his card too.

Q: So, everybody in the camp had a kind of identity card.

A: Yes, in the inside office. They didn't carry any cards.

Q: And how big were these cards?

A: Pardon me?

Q: How big?

A: They were small cards because all we had was the name, as I told you, the birth date, the barrack number where they lived or slept, and the department where they work, and a place whether he's still alive or dead.

Q: Now, did you type these lists?

A: First, we didn't have like a typewriter in camp at first. So, if he wanted typed lists or something, he would send me to the factory, Vaschek (ph) would. But, if - but I had a very good handwriting, very legible, I remember, and that's why he took me to his place, because he could read so easily my writing, and I was doing it all by hand. Later on, I remember, I don't know when, he brought a typewriter, an old typewriter, to the office.

Q: Did you…?

A: I didn't know how to type, but I pretended. I said, "With two fingers, I type so fast." I learned so fast. I never learned how to type. So, when he asked me if I could type, I had to say yes. I mean, otherwise he'll take somebody else to the office. That was a good job. So, I typed with my fingers and I learned to type so fast that I was faster than the others - to such a degree that, in my office later, when I worked for ourselves, I took typing classes and I could never learn because I was much faster with two fingers, the way I learned in camp.

Q: And did you print when you were not using the typewriter or did you handwrite?

A: No, I didn't print, I wrote, but my letters were like printing. They were like calligraphically. Like, I had a very good handwriting. You wouldn't believe when you see how I sign my name now, with my eyes.

Q: And how many people worked in the same office with you?

A: Three people. There was one girl that cleaned the office. She's still alive. She lives in Toronto. And there was one seamstress. She actually - he hired her as a helper to the - when I say he, I mean Vaschek (ph) because he was in charge of this office - he hired her to help the other girl to bring wood and stuff. We had a fireplace. There was no heating there. So, there was such a fireplace and the girls had to bring wood, chop wood, they had to do all this. So, he hired her, but since she was a seamstress, Mrs. Vaschek (ph) used to come very often to the office just to visit because this third girl was sewing dresses for her. So, she would bring materials and she would sit there, she would try on, and she would - so, actually officially she was a helper to the cleaner, but in reality, she was a seamstress that sewed dresses. I don't remember because there was - I don't remember a sewing machine there. So, unless he provided a sewing machine, I don't remember, but she made many dresses for her.

Q: What was Vaschek's (ph) wife like?

A: She was a very quiet woman, German, tall like him or maybe a little bit shorter because he was extremely tall, and she was slim and she was a very pretty woman, and she was very nice to us. I mean, she didn't talk with the other people, but if she would come to the office, she would say hello to me. She would say hello to the seamstress. She would say hello to the other girl that cleaned the place. She was very nice. She used to come quite often because she - I don't know where she got all those materials. So, that girl sewed for her.

Q: So, was your work day like nine, ten hours?

A: Yes, as long as people were going out and coming in, until the last shift went to work, I had to be at the office, to give them the list and then I went home.

Q: So, your day…

A: And sometimes Vaschek (ph) wouldn't be there so long. I mean, he would be working maybe eight hours or seven or six, but I had to be in the office. But when he left, he locked all his - I had no access to the papers anymore, but the list were prepared in advance, so the lists that I was giving out before they went to work.

Q: So, all day long you were doing lists and changing the things.

A: I kept all kinds of records, like, when I say all kinds of records- they brought in, let's say if there was a delivery of clothes and we were giving the clothes out. So, I would say - I wouldn't, let's say, tell them what's going - we got a shipment of clothes and it came on such and such a date, and we gave them out on such and such a date. And, if the other supplies would come or whatever, like, somebody had to keep records of those things.

Q: So, you really were the record keeper of the whole camp?

A: Right.

Q: Of these two camps?

A: Right, in one camp, but later on when they put us together, my father worked with me. Krysia told me that in Majowka she was helping father in the office, but I couldn't tell you because when my father was transferred to Majowka and I was transferred to Strzelnica, for a long time, I didn't have any contact with them, until we came together. But I remember when I had typhoid, I think Krysia was there with me. I think so, but I don't remember.

Q: Was it typhoid or typhus?

A: Typhus, but isn't it called typhoid in English?

Q: No, I think they're two different diseases.

A: I see, because we had what they called - it wasn't connected with the stomach. It was…

Q: Spotted.

A: Spotted. It's called typhus, right? Okay.

Q: I'll have to look it up. I'm not…

A: We called it *tiphus*.

Q: Yes.

A: So, I think I told someone typhus and he said, "No, typhoid." So, I say typhoid.

Q: Now, tell me something, were people coming into your office to talk with you or to find out information?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: I wasn't such a big wheel. The Judenrat was deciding, you know, they were - I was just - I was just writing and typing and stuff like that. But I'll tell you that people liked me a lot, because I remember once when I was distributing clothes and, you know, I was so straightforward, I was transparent. So, I started giving clothes and people were grabbing and they started taking like instead of one shirt or whatever T-shirt, they would grab from my hands and run. So, you know, I started crying. I said, "What do you want from my life? I have so many I have to give and get to everybody." I started crying. So, some people who stood in line were chasing those other people to take it away, to help me because they were sorry for me because, you know, I would like to give them three or four of them, but, I mean, I only had a limited amount. So, I must say that people always helped me.

Q: It's very interesting that you would cry at that moment.

A: Yeah, I was crying because you know why?

Q: Why?

A: I was crying because I felt that, because of those few pigs that want to grab all this, the people at the end won't get nothing, will get nothing. So, I felt sorry for them. I started crying and I remember they ran them and chase the down the guys.

Q: Did you see a lot of that kind of behavior, people…

A: Yeah, people were grabby, people were, you know, but, you know, this was life like - it was hard. It wasn't as hard, in comparison to concentration camps, it was a picnic, but it was still hard because we were still treated like animals.

Q: Why do you think that you and your sisters remained…? You didn't do that. You kept wanting to be fair.

A: You know, we were fair and because of that we really - we really always had protectors. I'll tell you later stories about Auschwitz, how we remained alive because we kept ourselves together and how people were helping us, people that were in charge of something. They would pick us because they felt sorry for us - more sorry for us because we didn't fight, like we didn't - we didn't fight for food or grab it or anything like that. We wanted to be fair. We were brought up that way.

Q: All right, let's get back to some of the - let me ask you, did you know the people on the Judenrat?

A: All of them, because they were from Wierzbnik. One was the father of our very good friend, Krysia knows - Krysia and my friend, Mr. Minzberg (ph). He was a very well-known man in Wierzbnik. They were once very rich, but at the time when we met them, they had some kind of possessions, lots of land, landowners, bankers, who knows? Like, his predecessor. At that time when we knew them, they were just like any others. There were no rich people in Wierzbnik, but they were very well-known and very respected. He was very well known and very respected person, and although he belonged to the Zionist organization, he was also very religious. But he was - we didn't have a synagogue. We used the school the Tarbut school we used for prayers, and he was - he was the one that prayed like he was religious. Another one was Minzburg (ph). Einisemann (ph) was just a shoemaker, but he was a very simple man, but he was a good man. So, they have chosen him because he was also - he tried to be fair. Then there was Mr. Wolfowicz (ph). They had the store, like in Wierzbnik; they had the store materials, sewing materials. He wasn't that pleasant, but he was good at giving orders and stuff like that. He wasn't as pleasant, as matter of fact, he was a little mean, but he was good if people refused to do things, you know, that they sent. Then, there was…Minzberg (ph), Wolfowicz (ph)…Wirenswiec (ph), Wirenswiec was - they had a - they had a liquor store, I mean, not a liquor store, a liquor restaurant or whatever you call it, a bar. And, you know, in Starachowice because the Polacks, the minute - the minute they finished work, they got their pay they were going to drink vodka. So, he was quite well off, and he was okay. So, those were the four.

Q: So, it's a small group.

A: A small group.

Q: And, what did you think of these folks and what they did?

A: They - we had to have them, because otherwise the German would run it. So, they were running the - they were under Vaschek (ph). What I mean under Vaschek (ph), Vaschek (ph) supervised their work, that let's say if we needed supplies or something, they had to tell Vaschek (ph) and he would do those things or whatever, but they were trying the best they could for the people in the camp. So, as I said, supplies and what else would they do? Order and complaints, you know, I mean, when they didn't want to sleep with one another, because there were two people to a cot. So, you know, they would solve all the problems, inside problems.

Q: Was there something like a court?

A: There was, but they had nothing to say. They weren't - I mean their orders were what? People didn't listen to them. But they didn't go and squeal to Vaschek (ph), they had to settle it, but they didn't have very much - they didn't have very much power. The same as Adash's, my husband's father. He was in charge of the police. He didn't have that much power. I mean, I saw how they - how the Germans were almost murdering him, giving him orders. So, he screened and he did what he could, but, I mean, his power was limited.

Q: So, what would happen if someone really was committing a crime? I don't mean a German definition.

A: No, no, no, no - we would keep it quiet. Nobody would - nobody would squeal to the Germans, unless the Germans would find it out somewhere else. Like, we were always protect - when I say we, there was Judenrat and the police - they were always protecting the people. On the outside they had to - on the outside they had to pretend that they are - that they are solving all the problems.

Q: So, you really didn't have anyone in those positions who you thought were betraying the Jews and trying to protect themselves.

A: No, it was - how could they protect themselves? They were in the same shoes. I mean, the policemen were - when we planned the uprising, all those strong people and the people would only keep a secret, because you couldn't tell everybody - but the policemen were essential because they were all strong young men. So, when we were planning the - this - not the…

Q: The breakout?

A: …the breakup…out, the policemen were influential. They were organizing it. They were organizing the break.

Q: When did you meet Adrian?

A: I knew Adrian all my life, because he comes from the same town, but I had - when I went to Radom, I didn't see him - I saw him in camp, but at that time, I had another boyfriend. So, actually I didn't identify with him. Firstly, because they were the orthodox people.

Q: Adrian was?

A: Adrian was, like his father, he wasn't, but his father was orthodox people. Secondly, since they were religious, they didn't mix with the Zionists because they didn't believe in Zionism. So, the groups were divided, you know. So, my mother - I always laugh when I say this, what would she call me? Genius. I had to have a doctor for a husband, otherwise she wouldn't accept him. So…

Q: So, that's why you were dating this medical student?

A: Yeah, she was so happy because he was, you know, that was a real find. She could tell all her friends her daughter is going with a medical student. But then, I met him after the war, because I remember he helped us a lot, because we came to Lodz. We couldn't go anywhere. All the Jews went to Lodz after the war. They had a Judenrat there. So, we heard that his family lives there because he was in the partisan groups, and for him, the war ended in January. For us, we didn't come until June. So, he already had his own apartment, and so when we came, he said he would do anything for us. He found us. First of all, he asked us what we wanted to do. So, I wanted to go back to school. So, he found - he regist-… because he was the big shot. He was at that time a Polish officer. So, he arranged for me this school, like, found this school that was for gifted people that was in a half a year you could do a year. So, he found this school and he registered me there. He found me a job, and he found us an apartment, and that's how we started going, and he was sending me flowers every day to the office, to the house. That's how it started.

Q: So, you weren't very close in the camp. You just knew him.

A: I talked to him because we had a lot to do together, not only with him, with all the policemen, because they were coming to the office every minute for whatever list they needed or whatever order they needed, they had to come to the office.

Q: So, he was one of the policemen whose father was the head of the police.

A: Right.

Q: I see. So, you're 18 in 1942 through this period. This is one of the worst years. Probably more Jews are killed in 1942 than any other year.

A: Right.

Q: Do you - are you hearing rumors from outside and…?

A: I'll tell you what I heard also. My boyfriend got killed in such a manner. He was working as a chauffeur for the Germans. I mentioned that to you before. And the Germans were so good to him because his boss was also a medical student. So, they had a lot in common and they really liked him, and they picked him up at the time from Wierzbnik - my boyfriend with his boss. They gave me all - they treated me as if I was - as if I wasn't Jewish. And I remember, one of them, his boss went home, so he asked - my boyfriend asked him at the time to buy me a raincoat. He bought me the most beautiful raincoat - of course, my boyfriend paid for it. And then Busko was liquidated before Starachowice, and they send them all to Treblinka, the whole family. He was the only one who survived Treblinka and broke out of Treblinka. How? Because when he came, they were looking for truck drivers. So, since he was a chauffeur for the Germans, he had very good credentials. So, they picked, they took him. So, I heard the story from somebody else, because I never saw him again. I'll tell you later, but they said he was a truck driver. Whatever he was doing, he was going outside with the Germans. Apparently - he was driving - apparently, at one time - he was a strong and tall man - apparently, he killed a German that he was driving and he ran away. And, when he ran away, he went back to Busko because they were quite wealthy people. They had all those hotels at the time. So, he figured that when he goes to his friend, his boss that he will help him - he will help him. Meanwhile - and I'll tell you how I found out about that, too - so, he went to Busko and he registered with his boss. He told him how he ran away. He most likely didn't tell him that he killed a German, and - and the guy said to him that he should show him where the family wealth is. They had money, like gold and rings and jewelry, and hidden somewhere on the property. So, he went with him and he showed it to him and he gave it to him, and the German killed him right on the spot. I found it out from a girl - like we had…

Q: Wait a second, I think we have to stop at this point. We don't? All right, then, continue

A: So, I'll just tell you how I found it out. We had an address. He gave me an address. He had the Paliszewskis' and he gave me an address from a girl that - to write her if I ever want to get in touch with him, because it was before the - it was 1940 or '41. So, of course, after the war, I wrote the girl and she wrote me and told me the whole story. His boss killed him for the money.

Q: Okay, we'll take a break and change.

A: Okay.

Q: Boy, that's quite a story.

End of Tape #5

Tape #6

Q: Tell me what your relationship was like with the sisters now. Are things changing? You're now 18 years old, and Renia is 13, and Chris is 16. Do you have roles with each other?

A: No, never. We were always - we tried to be always together, because we knew if something happens to one of us - like, we tried to keep together to defend one another. So, in camp, actually, we slept together in one barrack. We went most - in our free time we spent together, protecting each other. Renia was always scared. She was always sickly, I mean, a little bit sick, and she was always cold. She had to have - she was wearing all kinds of covers not to shiver. So, Renia was really - we had to take care of her.

Q: Did you ever have conflicts with each other?

A: Not really. I mean, not really conflicts. As I said - as my sister tells me now, I'd give her a punch here and there because her closet was better organized than mine or, you know, but it wasn't important really. We always kept together.

Q: And, how do you remember your father during this period? Do you now, after the…

A: My father - I will tell you, my father was, when he lost his wife, he was very much to himself. He was working in the office and - I don't remember going to him and complaining to him like I would to my mother or looking for protection of any sort because he was - he wasn't the way he was at home. He was a broken-down man. But, of course, we cared for him and we talked to him, but not the same way as to our mother.

Q: So, that would have been true even if your mother had been there.

A: Actually, maybe not to such a degree because he didn't take an active part, you know, in our when we were growing up. Like, I couldn't go to tell him and tell him a story that I found a boyfriend or something, that I had a good time. I'll tell it to my mother. But if I had a report card, I would run to show it to him so he could be proud of it.

Q: Do you think he knew that your mother was dead?

A: Most definitely.

Q: At that point?

A: Definitely. Definitely.

Q: And you? When did you think you…?

A: I thought to myself at one time at the camp. I don't know whether it was to make us mad or whatever, one Ukrainian came in to the office once and told me that he saw my mother in a camp somewhere, that she's alive. So, we wanted to believe that that's true. But on the other hand, if my mother was alive, she would have - and she knew that such and such Ukrainian, I mean, how would he know that she was my mother, but if she knew, she would have written on a newspaper or something - she would send some kind of a sign, but how could she? They took them all, and then later after the war we found out that everyone from Wierzbnik went to Treblinka and they were - they were right away killed there. So, it was impossible that my mother survived the war. Why did he come to the office just and told me that? I couldn't tell you.

Q: Did you believe him then?

A: At the time, I didn't know whether to believe him. I told my sisters about it and we wanted - when you want to believe, you believe. But, then we knew it's impossible. Maybe he made a mistake. How did he know that she was my mother? How did he know that, I mean, he didn't know us. It was a strange Ukrainian. It wasn't one of the guards. How did he come there to tell us? I don't know.

Q: And did you see your father deteriorating during this period?

A: Yes. He was - he wasn't as energetic as he used to be, because he was very energetic and he was very resourceful and he wasn't. He was kept to himself, going to the office. He was working there, and that's all.

Q: So, that must have been very upsetting to you.

A: Yes, very upsetting, yeah. But he still lived long enough to go to Auschwitz, where he perished.

Q: I guess deterioration sometimes takes a long time.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you get very sick with typhus?

A: Very sick.

Q: Were you the first of the three?

A: I was one of the first ones. I don't remember. Renia says that one of them recovered before I, but I - I don't remember whether Renia or Krysia told me that I was really very sick, that I had a very high temperature and I was talking nonsense. I was delirious. But

once, when you were sick, like when you had typhus - first of all, when you had this high fever, this very high fever, you burned like anything, and even if you were delirious and you were contagious, you weren't as sick as during the crisis - when the crisis came, when your temperature went right down, you couldn't move, and this was - if you survived the crisis, you lived. Otherwise - and then you, after a while, you were yourself, but a lot of people didn't survive the crisis, and that was the time that I want to tell you about Sulamite (ph). Because that was when typhus was so rampant, everybody was sick. The Germans decided they'd have to kill off the people that are sick. So, what they did, the decided, the army came in. It was as they - it wasn't - it wasn't because they needed soldiers to put all the sick ones on the truck to take them out. So, what they did, they told the policemen that everybody had to come out of the barracks, whether he was sick or healthy, and the Germans were watching them and asked them to run. Whoever could run - the sick ones with the fever could run - but the ones that were just going through the crisis, they couldn't. So, those were put on the truck, and they called me from the office to write down the names of the people that were going on the trucks. Also, at that time, every policeman was - every policeman was responsible for a group, for a few barracks or one barrack, I forget how it was, but the policemen were responsible that everyone that was in the barrack came out. So, at that time, I remember, my sister-in-law, like my husband's sister's husband was also a policeman, he hid somebody there and covered because they person couldn't walk. So, later after what happened when they found the sick one there covered, you know, and very sick, they killed the policeman. Cogord (ph) was killed right on the spot. Then, as I was writing the names - I had two very good friends from Lodz, two very intelligent, beautiful, two tall girls - I forgot whether they were twins, but they were always together. One's name was Sulamite (ph), and the other Mira (ph). One went through quickly, like she ran through, and this Sulamite (ph) couldn't run, she just - because the reason for it was she was in crisis, and she runned, he sent her to, for me to write her name down. So, I thought that they will take her to the truck. So, I asked - I didn't know those people because they came especially for that function. They were Becker's people. You know, Becker was outside the *Lagers*. *Sicherheit Polizei* or whatever you call it - *Sicherheit Deist*, I think they were called. So, those people were assigned this function. So, I said to the guy that was standing near me, "Please leave her. She's my best friend." So, he says, "Oh, she is, eh?" He took out the gun and killed her right in my presence. So, I remember that - I didn't remember - I don't remember what happened to me because I fainted, but the policemen later told me they got me quickly off my job, put me in the police barracks, covered me there, and the policeman was writing down the names after later. So, that was very traumatic to me because I saw it with my own eye. I mean, it wasn't her fault. She was sick, and all I did, I felt - I felt guilty because I told him she was my friend, but I thought that if I would tell him that she was friend, that he would spare her life, but he just killed her.

Q: So, in some sense, you think you're responsible for that?

A: I felt that - I thought that maybe if I would have leaved her or something, but I said, "She's my best friend, please leave her. Let her go." So, he killed her.

Q: Was that the first time you saw anything quite like that?

A: No, things happened before when Altov (ph) was killing. I remember, one day he made one Jew dance, like, I don't know, he - he - and he killed him there, and then I watched from the office window when he killed him, they called the Ukrainian to take him away, so the Ukrainian caught him by the legs, and the camp was full of sand or something. So, he was dragging - not dragging, running with him, wherever they told him to take him, and you know all this sand was - how should I say - covering the face of this Jewish man. So, I saw a few people that were killed and by Atlov (ph), I mean, you know, nobody looked, but when he came and he always killed a few people.

Q: What sort of affect does this have on you? Do you stop feeling things? I mean, as you start seeing so much brutality, what…?

A: Well, it was traumatic. It was traumatic, very traumatic, and it made us cry, but we couldn't help it. I mean, we got so used to it that at night, when we were in the barrack, we sang. Like, we would always, there were songs - special camp songs. They were different from the songs that we sang in the past. Today's your turn and tomorrow's going to be our turn. So, we never knew whose turn it was going to be. So, we really didn't care. We wanted to live - life, the will for life was very strong, but not to a point to, you know, to such - because we knew that today's their turn, and tomorrow's going to be ours.

Q: Tell me something. I don't know whether you know this, when you fainted, when your friend Sulamite (ph) was killed, and the police grabbed you and put you in the…

A: The Jewish police.

Q: Right, the Jewish police, I understand.

A: They took me - the barrack was very close to where we were arriving, the police barrack. It wasn't a barrack - it wasn't my barrack. It was the police - you know, they had their - if you want to call it office there, and their beds there.

Q: And, we - the security police didn't stop them. It didn't matter that they took you away, I guess.

A: That's what they told me, because I fainted, but they told me that they grabbed me and they said, "Ah, she's no good," or whatever they said, they took me to the barrack and one of the policemen took over.

Q: How long were you in the police barrack? Do you know?

A: After the finished with it all, the truck went away. I know - to tell you the truth, I know how they were killed because they were making all these graves outside the barrack. I don't know how many people. I don't remember because right after that, it was very bad when I had to put down 'deceased' for those people.

Q: Does it take you a while to get over the death of Sulamite (ph)?

A: Oh, yeah, until today I can't forget it.

Q: What was her last name?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Sulamite (ph).

A: Sulamite (ph).

Q: From Lodz?

A: From Lodz? They were Mira and Sulamite (ph). Mira is still alive, but I don't remember the name. They were from Lodz, and they were also teacher. They, you know, every girl that was in Wierzbnik, like going back here, every girl that knew how to read was a teacher.

Q: When people were shot, some people died of disease, right?

A: Very few people. Typhus, typhus was the biggest killer.

Q: Not starvation?

A: Not starvation. No, not in Starachowice, no.

Q: And, every name was given to you.

A: Right.

Q: Even if Altov (ph) came in and shot somebody.

A: So, we took the card out and I would write down "dead", "deceased".

Q: And, who would tell you the name of the person? Because Altov (ph) wouldn't know who he's killing.

A: No, but the police…

Q: Would know?

A: They would - you know, they were inside. I mean, they would report to me, so that we could take them off the list. And Vaschek (ph), I mean, you know, he was there every day.

Q: So, this was clearly the worst part of your job.

A: The worst.

Q: To write down…

A: To write down 'deceased', but if I didn't know the people - I mean, I got so used to it because it happened quite often, I would say. So, if I didn't know the face of that person, it was just a name, it was different than when I had to write that Sulamite (ph) was dead.

Q: Help me to understand something, because there are people who, when you're afraid, are you constantly afraid or does the terror go up and down? Because you have to watch all the time, that's clear.

A: All the time.

Q: Right? So, is there a funny feeling in the pit of your…?

A: I'm going to tell you something that I'm embarrassed to admit, but it's true. I believed, although I was - I'm really a non-believer. In camp, I believed that God is taking care of me, that nothing could happen to me. I'm embarrassed to admit because I wasn't religious and I didn't earn this special privilege. But somehow - I even told my sisters during selections in Auschwitz, "If I'm sent there go after me, because God is watching over me." Because you know like I went through so much and nothing - I cannot say that nothing happened to me because all those incidents that I'm tell you about were very traumatic, but somehow I believed - I somehow believed in God, that he's watching over me.

Q: Where do you think that came from?

A: I'll tell you, I just don't know, because things happened to me many times - like, things happening, like people were helping me. So, I thought that God sent them.

Q: So, you might be a believer in angels or something.

A: No, no, I didn't believe in anything. But during the camp, I really and truly - and I said I didn't earn this because I wasn't religious before, and I wasn't religious after, so I didn't earn God's special attention - but that's why I believe that he's taking care of me.

Q: Were you…

A: Because I figured, how come that I wasn't in the marketplace when the things happened? How come the German that took me hitchhiking didn't kill me on the spot? I mean, he didn't even have to make any excuses. How come he didn't kill me then? And I had a lot of happenings that I'll tell you later. How come that nothing…? I mean, I was right there and somebody - somebody helped me. So, that's why I believe that God is watching over me.

Q: This is going to leap - just for a second - leap forward and then we'll go back. Were you with the Paliszewski when Chris was told about what your mother said.

A: No, what happened - no, with Paliszewski I was there, but I will tell you that this goes already after the liberation. Since you asked for Paliszewski, you know the Polacks killed those Einisemann kids and Wolfowicz's kids, and we were in Stratachowice at the time. We came to visit the Paliszewskis. And that day when they killed the whole families including the Einisemanns, the Wolfowiczs, together with the kids that survived the war, being small kids like seven or nine or eight, you know. They knocked at the door at Paliszewski and they said - Polish partisans or who knows, Polish anti-Semites - they knocked at the door and they said to Paliszewski, "I know that Laksuvnas (ph) are here, and we want them." She wouldn't let them have it - Krysia remembers that she said, "I won't let you have them." But I remember that she said, "What do you mean? I wouldn't keep Jewish people here." I remember that way, that she said that, that when they went away, like, they came to kill us. I mean, specifically they asked for us. The next morning, the husband of one of the Paliszewskis took us in a horse and wagon thing, covered us with straw and took us to another - to Skarzysko, which was a little bit further away, so that we can go to Lodz, that nobody will know that he's helping us. You asked for the Paliszewski story.

Q: I was going to ask you another part of the story because what I heard from Chris was that your mother, the day before the liquidation of the ghetto, came to Paliszewski…

A: No, my mother couldn't have come to Paliszewski. No, she couldn't have because she went to - before maybe she went.

Q: No, before.

A: Oh, yeah, before. Because she's was taken to Treblinka.

Q: But the day before or two days before or something, she came to give her some things. And Chris said, this is what she heard, that your mother told her that if only my three daughters will survive, I will give my life.

A: Yeah, she said that. She said that to me. She said in Jewish, because she never spoke in Jewish to us. She always Polish, but she in Jewish to me that if you survive, I would like to be the *orben* (ph), the sacrifice. That's what - she said it in Polish, but she used this Hebrew word.

Q: She said this to you?

A: To me. She says, "I hope that three of - I want to be your *orben* (ph)," or whatever, like, she said it in Jewish.

Q: What did that make you feel?

A: That means that I want to be victim, so that you can live. She said that to me, and she could've said it to Paliszewski because she could have - Paliszewskis' was our point of meeting after the war. They were very good friend of ours. So, we always used to tell them everything.

Q: That's quite something for your mother to have said to you.

A: Yeah, she said it to me. I remember it all the time, and I never believed - that was a couple of days before, before the - I remember it.

Q: So, who should we talk about? Tobah (ph)? Adrian's escape? Which do you want to start with?

A: Because everything happened the same time. So, maybe I'll start with Tobah (ph) because maybe it will be shorter. I don't know that much about her, but about my husband's escape and the way that he bought the gun and stuff like that, it might be a little longer. So, Tobah (ph) - one day Becker, who was the *Sicherheit Deist*, came in a car with another German soldiers and they came and asked for Tobah (ph), and they took her out of the camp. We didn't know why. Then, she came back. We didn't know why. Then, a few days later, he came for Tobah (ph) again. Took her himself already. He took her out again. He was very polite. I remember because I was near the office, like they brought her to the office, and you know, I could look through the window and see. He opened the door for her, like if she was - like a girl, and he took her out and he brought her back the same day. The third time, he took her out - I don't know if it was a few days or a week or two later - he took her out and he never brought her back. Now, that day, he was ordered - her father was ordered to, to dig a grave, and of course, it was like, they called him to work. He didn't know it was going to be for him. So, he started digging but he was an older man. It took him a little time. So, Schrodt came out of his office, and he

took the gun and killed him on the spot. The grave wasn't dug exactly - like, the grave was half-finished and he called other workers to cover him. And she never came back. Then we found out, because they were from Opatow - it was about, I would say, about 40 kilometers away from Wierzbnik. Apparently, they had money - money or some goods or some jewelry. I don't know. She must have showed it to them, and after they got whatever they wanted, you know, the money, they just killed her. I didn't know what happened to her because they didn't bring her to camp, but I was talking to the professor about her because he had - he had her - heard the story and his records. He told me that he asked, whether he asked himself or whether one of those people that he - that he was talking to told him that she was - the grave was found later in the woods very close to where she lived - where they lived, where they found the treasures. So, this was Tobjah Weisblum (ph) that's how she perished, and her father, for money. Not only because they were Jews, but because they had money.

Q: Why did they kill the father, do you think, at the moment?

A: Because I suppose they decided they didn't want to have any witnesses because nobody knew why Tobjah Weisblum (ph) was taken out, nobody knew, and she never told anybody.

Q: But the father knew?

A: The father probably didn't knew.

Q: Didn't know?

A: Didn't know what for they are taking her out. Because he was - when he was digging the grave, it was an older man as I say, he never suspected that that was for him, but Schrodt killed him even before he finished. Like, he just killed him in front, like during the daytime, when everybody looked on.

Q: Did you see that killing?

A: No, I wasn't near the grave then. No, but of course, I was the one that wrote down 'deceased'.

Q: Okay, I think we'll change the tape now.

End of Tape #6

Tape #7

Q: Hania, before we go onto the next story, I'm just wondering if you have a sense if there was different treatment of men and women. Was there anything about the women's part of the camp that was different then the men? Were women afraid of being mistreated as women, not just being brutalized, but sexually?

A: Actually, it would be - to them, it would be a sacrilege to talk to - not to talk to associate with any Jewish girl, because the Jews were not people. They were animals. So, you are talking about the people in the camp, the people that lived in camp or the Germans.

Q: There are two sets of possible relationships. One is between the prisoners, right?

A: Right.

Q: And, then there is between the guards. Now, there were Ukrainian guards, and I'm wondering, they didn't have *Ros Hashanda* (ph).

A: No, they didn't have *Ros Hashanda* (ph).

Q: So, they wouldn't be necessarily…

A: Well, they were - maybe they treated the women a little bit better, but I don't think. When I say "better", we have nothing to do with them, but maybe they wouldn't push us or hit us or whatever, but I don't think the Ukrainians would dare, or whether they would dare or whether the Jewish girls would go with Ukrainians. I don't think so.

Q: Were women able to be in contact with men in the camp?

A: To a certain point. As a matter of fact, certain names maybe I should mention, it must have been Mr. Billenswiec had a - because his wife was there, too - and everybody knew that he had a lover there, a woman from Lodz, but that was - everybody knew about it, and - because see the camp, the camp had separate barracks for women and separate for men. So, if they met together it must have been during the day sometime, so the barrack was open for everybody to see. It wasn't that they had separate rooms or anything, because we had - it was like a cot underneath and another one above. It was good for two people, but like people were saying, "Oh, this one or that one," but that was about the inmates. But you know people, I think that people behaved a little better in camps. What I meant - I mean, there was nowhere to go, you had to do it - if you wanted to do it, everybody could watch. I don't know how many people got into a barrack. I was asked the same question by the historian. So I said, at night, the women were separated because, you know, there was no movement from one barrack to another, but during the day, maybe.

Q: Tell me, did you menstruate in the camp.

A: Yes.

Q: You did?

A: Not in Auschwitz, though.

Q: But in Majowka.

A: In Majowka and Strzelnica, yes.

Q: How did you take care of yourself?

A: You know, you're asking me questions, and I don't know. I don't remember. I don't remember. I really don't. We must have had some way to do it, but I don't remember.

Q: So, you were not starved enough so that you couldn't get your period. Did women get pregnant in this camp?

A: No.

Q: No one got pregnant?

A: No one. I don't know of anybody. They would be afraid to get pregnant, I suppose. Even if they had a relationship with their husband, there were husbands and wives there, but they were separated. And I, so I - to tell you the truth, I don't remember having any problems with protecting - not protecting ourselves, but keeping ourselves clean. I don't remember.

Q: It is possible that some women came into the camp pregnant, however, even…?

A: No, there were some children in the camp that were already the children, not too many. Einisemann (ph) had his kids. Wolfowicz (ph) had his kids. Vera Veislava (ph) had a son, a young son, and he survived. She was from Lodz. There were several kids, but I would say not more than ten.

Q: Shall we talk about the escape and the plans for the escape? This is from 1943.

A: Yes. So, what happened - the conditions were worse and worse and, you know, when things were happening, a group of people decided that we have to make an uprising and to liberate the camp. It was an idea that we didn't know how to achieve it, but we knew one thing: that we have to get arms, some kinds of guns and stuff like that. And this was very secretive. All the policemen knew about it, because they were young and strong

people, and some people, but you know, some people that belonged to the group or was told about it, but not everybody knew about the preparations or the intentions because we were afraid that we could be denounced and killed. So, anyway, we decided - everything was secret - and we decided that Adrian was the best one to acquire - he volunteered because he was very good at schmoozing and talking people into it. So, we decided he's going to buy guns. We would collect whatever we can from the Ukrainians because when they were going home, they had to give their guns away and they went to get the guns when they came back to work. They didn't keep the guns with them. So, when they - that they were supposed to steal - the first gun was purchased, and my husband had it. He was the one to purchase this gun.

Q: Where did he…?

A: Where did he keep it? I don't know.

Q: No, where did it get it from?

A: From a Ukrainian, a guard, bought it. They paid for it through the nose with the collected, whatever we could collect. And he talked to one Ukrainian, and this Ukrainian agreed that he would be selling guns for such and such a price. I don't remember what it was, whether it was in gold or whether it was in money or whether it was in other things. When I say other things, some people were, in Wierzbnik, like if we left a lot of things - valuables - not only gold and silver, but other valuables like blankets and furniture and all this. So, you know, we could tell the Ukrainian go to such and such, and we have the, let's say, two watches or something. Take the two watches and bring me a gun. I don't remember exactly how he got the first gun because that's as far as he got, the first gun. On the second try, they caught the Ukrainian, when he was stealing. Instead of taking one gun with him or whatever, they caught him stealing - they found two guns in his possession when he - whatever. So, of course, they investigated and they interrogated him and he said, "He doesn't know the name, but there is one of the policemen." So, they lined up the policemen, all twelve of them, and the Ukrainian came in and of course he sold it to Adrian, so he went there and he showed, "This is the policeman that bought from me the gun." Right away, Becker came in and he started interrogating my husband, and my husband said, Adrian, he says, "I never bought from him a gun. I don't know him. I didn't - I never saw him." But, of course, they didn't believe him. He was interrogated and we had such a bunker, a small bunker that was made out of concrete. They put him there for a while, and then Judenrat went to Becker, and Becker came in and he said that he is lying, that Adrian is lying, because the Ukrainian didn't have any problems finding him, and he's going to be condemned to death. So, the Judenrat decided that - Becker you can buy him. This is the guy who took out _____, so, he says, "Okay, if you give me…" No, the Jew said, the Judenrat said to him, "How do you know? Maybe he's lying. Why not put him somewhere like lock him up until we find out, until the investigation is through. If this is true what happened, then he should be killed, but how you can take an innocent man? I mean the Ukrainian, maybe he had another reason why

he showed that this is the guy that bought from him the gun." So, they agreed. They put him in this bunker, and he had to dig his own grave, and Becker, not Becker, the other, the Baumgarten read, he read, you know, he read to him the order, that because he bought the gun from the Ukrainian and because he is key of an uprising, he's condemned to death. He said it in the name of Adolf Hitler, and whatever it is, and so he read this to him, and this was the first time that a grave was dug up and they had no body, because they kept him there and then when he got his money, they wanted a kilo of gold. A kilo of gold, but we didn't have gold, so everybody, if they hid some ring or whatever, even teeth they were putting in their head, and what happened, they went to Becker and this Baumgarten to say, "Now, you can start the investigation." So, in order for him not to be able to escape, they took him out of the bunker, took two Ukrainians, they covered his head - like, they put him on a bench, took off his clothes, put a sack, you know, like a sack hat you put potatoes in or sugar or whatever with holes in it? They put it over the head. They took two rubber sticks or whatever and they had such whips - whatever you call it - and they told him that he would get now a hundred whips and he has to count. So, you know, one, two, three… Adrian said after the twentieth whip, his body was numb. He says he couldn't even feel anything. He didn't care. So, anyway, after they did that, they put him back into the police barrack there, because they figured that after his body was black and blue and red and bloody. But he was a very strong boy, and don't forget that in 1943 he was nineteen. So, I mean, he was a young, strong boy. They put him in the barrack and they said, "This is only so that he can't escape or can't do anything." So, they took him from the bunker because he couldn't breathe there, and they put him in the barrack, and the next day they called in *appel*. Everybody had to go to the - everybody had to an *appel* so that they could tell them that what happens if - everybody will be shot who will take part, that if things like this, if people want to escape, if anybody escapes they will kill ten people for each one that escapes, and in addition, they are not going to - because somebody - they didn't say it anymore that Adrian bought the gun - somebody bought the gun for a certain purpose. They didn't know about the gun that already existed. They were talking about the gun that they caught the Ukrainian with, you know? There must be a reason why they wanted the gun, and while they were doing it, the guys that were thinking of escaping, of the uprising, they decided that when they visited Adrian later, when he was so sick, that they had to escape at the first opportunity. So, when everybody was standing at the *appel* and they were saying that, the policemen were moving because they were always helping to round up people. So, they went to Adrian's room. They took him out. They had some shears, and they decided, because the Ukrainians were also watching us inside - not outside, the only Ukrainian that was okay was kept, was on the gate. But they decided to cut - there was ten of them, ten young people. I don't know how many policemen, but I think about two or three policemen. The rest were young boys that were always in contact to do the uprising. So, while they were talking and we were watched by the Ukrainians and the policemen moving around, they cut the barbed wire and my husband, like Adrian was at the time, you can imagine, after he got those lashes the night before or the day before. They jumped over the fence and started running. They had to run quickly over the road because on the other side of the road there were forests and the Germans usually, like, all they wanted is to get to the

forest as fast as they could. But meanwhile Schrodt, the guy that was watching, he started shooting. So, immediately they took all the Ukrainians and Schrodt was in charge. He had a motorcycle and he started running after them. But until they found they were a little bit further. So, anyway they managed to go to the forest and the Ukrainians and Schrodt came back and Schrodt said to Vaschek (ph), like they said, "I am telling you, the young Wilczek (ph) _____," which in German means the younger Wilczek (ph) I killed personally. So, we all thought that he's dead, like his mother and his sister assumed that he's completely dead. Meanwhile, the ten of them managed to go to the forest, and what are they going to do? I mean, they run away the way they were. Nothing - they had nothing on them. They had no guns, no knives, I mean, I don't know why Adrian didn't take his gun. I never asked him that question, but when they reached the forest, they were very happy. And we had three kinds of partisans in the forest. One - I'll name them by the Polish name, and then I'll try to translate. One was *Armia Rudowa* (ph), which means the People's Army. This was run by the Russians. It was a Communist party under Russian supervision, and they were taking everybody, like not everybody. They were accepting people that when they needed them. The second group was called *Armia Kryowa* (ph), which means the home army. Those were Polacks, those were Polish people. They wouldn't accept Jews, but they would accept Polish people. They didn't kill the Jews. They hated them, but they didn't kill them. But then there was an *Innoset* (ph) which was a partisan group that were like Nazi, National Polish Organization that they were killing the Jews like if they met them - the real anti-Semites. So, anyway, they were sitting there. I remember four names - three names - four names. I remember four names of the escapees. I don't remember the rest. So, it was Adrian. It was a guy Salik Anulevicz (ph), he was the real first cousin of Daniel Levicz (ph) from Warsaw ghetto. And, the third one was Freumik Singer (ph), he was from Opatow - he was related to Tobjah Weisblum (ph), and the fourth one was James Levy (ph), he was also a policeman, and there were six others, but I really don't remember their names now. So, as they were waiting in the forest, the Russian group came by. So, they told them that they are from camp escapees and so on. So the guys said, "I can't take ten. We can't take ten. We don't have room for ten. We don't have arms for ten." Because the supplies came directly from Russia by plane. So, they couldn't take so many. So, he says, "We can only take two of you." So, he picked up this Freumik (ph) from Opatow and they picked Adrian. And, he says, "And you stay here, maybe the next group will take you because we don't have room." There was apparently 25 of them in this group, this Russian group. So, there were 27 of them. Then - so, I will now speak about them, and I'll come back later to those. I'll say what happened to them later. So, anyway they started to - they needed miner. What I mean miners - the ones who will put mines under bridges so that the German arms couldn't put them in trains like - what they had to do, they had to put mines under the bridges, but the mines were not like today's sophisticated. They had their mine. They had the string. They had to first go by boat, don't forget the Germans were watching. They were over every bridge, there were German soldiers walking back and forth because that's what they were afraid of, that the bridges would be mined. So, they had to swim or go by such a boat that couldn't hear anything under the bridge, put the mine there, go far enough with the string, wait until the train comes - goes by, and pull it. It was a very dangerous job, and very

specialized because when the Germans were up there, if they heard anybody in the river, they were shooting them right away. So, that was a very - the two Jewish boys that were accepted, Freumik (ph) and Adrian, they were doing those jobs, and now, they had different encounters with the Germans looking for them, but the Germans were always afraid to go straight to the forest. They had people that were in the village, Polish villages that were telling them about the movement of the Germans and where they were going, and whether they were coming, what happened here and there. So, they had contact with the world. They had enough to eat there. I mean, not that they were given special - like Adrian says, they would bring them a glop of pork, you know, the fat, and they would just eat half a pound to a pound of it, no bread or anything because it depends on what they had and brought in, and he says, "You wouldn't believe what I could eat - this pure fat." And, they could really eat the pound of fat without anything. So, they weren't really hungry. They slept in the woods, and they were doing the mine work. That was their work.

Q: Now, when the Russian…

A: I will tell you about the others.

Q: But, I wanted to ask you, there was no question about whether these guys were Jewish, or they said they were not Jewish?

A: No, they didn't say. And, they knew that they were Jewish, and to such a point they said that they are happy that Adrian had the name Wilczek (ph) which means "little wolf" because everybody in the partisan group had a nickname and the nickname was an animal. Do you know what I mean? Like, he was called a cat, a dog, whatever. So, he had - his name "little wolf" was suitable, but they knew that they were Jewish.

Q: Tell me something, Adrian's physical condition then… Did anybody take care of him?

A: And, you know what? That's what I'm going to say. At first, they let him rest because they told them what happened. So, those were the Russians, mostly Russians there. Anyway, one day, he got so sick, he got delirious, so they said they had to move for whatever reason, and they told him that they can't take him because he couldn't walk. So, he asked them to kill him. He said, "Maybe if you kill me because I..." But they couldn't kill him. So, they gave him, like, they gave him a gun. They covered him up. They gave him all the food they had, and they left him there. They kissed him and they said, "We are very sorry," because they left him there to die because he was so sick. So some people were going by the woods and they found him and they took him - some Polacks, most of them were collaborating with the partisans. They were the people that were saying where the Germans are. So, they took him home and they, and it took him ten days and he was better. So, he decided to go back to his group. When he went to his - before he went out, he contacted one of those people that they were in contact with, and he said, "I'm sorry to tell you that somebody denounced the group, the Russian group. The

Germans came in while they were asleep in there, and…and one of the - where they kept horses or cows or whatever - one of those buildings, they put it afire and everybody got killed. So, he felt so bad, but, I mean, he couldn't believe it. So, he went…he went back to the woods, after he felt better, and he decided he'll wait for another group. I'll tell you more about the others that were left, the eight that were left, but I have to finish this story first. So…

Q: Maybe we should stop so you can continue.

A: Okay.

Q: I don't want you to get caught in the middle.

End of Tape #7

Tape #8

Q: Hania, before we go back to Adrian in the woods, let's talk just a little bit about him getting a gun and where you think he may left it, if you have any idea, and did he have any experience with guns?

A: He - he was a Jewish boy. He never had - he wasn't violent. He never saw a gun in his life. I don't think if he was given a gun whether he knew what to do with it unless someone will tell him or show him. I don't know whether the gun was - the gun that he bought and he - from the Ukrainian guard - whether the gun was at all operational, and whether - I couldn't tell you, maybe it was, maybe it was one of the best, but even if he had it, he wouldn't know how to use it unless someone would show it to him. So…

Q: So, tell me, of these boys who were planning the break-out…

A: Right.

Q: And, you were involved, too.

A: I was involved.

Q: Right, were there other women involved as well?

A: I was involved. Some women were involved because we're talking about uprising. So, the women were also involved. Like, we didn't think it would be so fast. We thought that it would take us time first of all to arms and to be prepared and to-to-to-to prepare a strata-strategy. It wasn't - this was just the beginning. We had no idea what's - what's going to be after, and we had to be very, very careful and secretive because I think like that, if the Germans would have found out, it would've been death to all of us.

Q: So, how many of you would there have been, fifteen, twenty people?

A: That's the most - all the policemen were involved in it, because they - they were the strongest and they were the ones that were supposed to know how to do that, and a few other people.

Q: And, when would you meet and discuss this?

A: One would tell - we didn't meet. They would - one of the policemen would come to me and tell me what they decided. One would tell the other one who'd tell - we didn't meet. There wasn't no meeting. I mean, how could you make a meeting?

Q: No, I thought that might be the case, but one doesn't know how those things happen.

A: We knew that the policemen were the - the initiators of that. So, I knew it, and maybe - I don't know if Chris knew it because she was too young to know about it. Maybe she did. I couldn't tell you, and there was a few people, so I would say if they would tell me to tell so and so, but not in certain - we didn't have meetings. We couldn't.

Q: So was there one person who was the leader who then made the decision?

A: I think that my - that Adrian was the best at it because - because he knew how to talk to people - how to talk to those Ukrainians to get what he wanted. He was the type of a person that - that he knew how to - to get things.

Q: And who had experience with arms in this?

A: Nobody, nobody, even the policemen, they didn't carry anything in their hands. I mean, I'm talking the Jewish policemen. I mean, they were only assigned a certain job and they were - there was a good job, you know, by comparison, you know, and they didn't have to go to the factory and - and work at the iron stove where it was so hot that they couldn't breathe. So, they - they were glad that they had this job, but they were - they were all thinking of uprising and getting rid of because we were too long - too long we listened to that - we went like sheep to do that.

Q: So, when you all were thinking about this separately - because clearly you're not supposed to have conversations because it's too dangerous, right?

A: No, it's too dangerous, and I'll tell you, I couldn't take a part in the running away, anyway, because they told us that if someone runs away, first the family and then ten other people and there were cases where they killed ten people for one. If one escaped, they would round up ten people and kill them - shot them.

Q: So, you were not going to take any chance.

A: I wouldn't because I had my father and my two sisters. You couldn't take Renia with you, but, you know, if I took part in it and knew what was going on, and in case - listen, we didn't - we didn't expect that everybody - everybody would carry a gun. First we had to get the guns. I mean, the idea started - came to us, and we tried, but we weren't successful because we just started.

Q: But, was the idea that all fifteen or twenty, as many as…

A: As many as possible. That's why ten of them - ten of them were from this group. The ten people were from this group that ran away that night - that day.

Q: And the idea was for that group, whatever the fifteen or whoever many of that group could run away.

A: Run away, and then - and then come and do something with, you know, like to maybe to get other guns somewhere else. Go to see the partisans and come back and - and - and free all of us, but it was a stupid idea, but nobody - like you - you didn't believe, but you had to believe that something would be done that we are not going to be killed like, you know, like just go voluntarily to just be killed because the way we saw it, we didn't know about - about what happened in Treblinka. We didn't know that there was an Auschwitz, but it was enough that any German can - could come and kill anybody and, I mean, how did we know? Maybe one day all of them would just, keep shooting until they shoot us all. So, those ten that ran away, they were from this group, and they had the best opportunity because the guards weren't there - only one guard. The Germans and everybody, they round us all up to teach us a lesson.

Q: So, now Adrian having gotten better, and his…

A: He came - he came to - he come - he's in the woods, but of course, already half his time - like he was there for a long time with them, because I didn't tell you, that all he did was the mines and stuff like that. I didn't tell you everything that happened because it wasn't important, but now - now it's already close to - already '44.

Q: So, he's with them almost a year or six months?

A: Yes, he's been with them for a long time, but that's when he got sick and they left him. Like, he was working every day that he had another assignment. Most of them, he was a specialist in mining. He was - I mean, working so long every day at it, he was a specialist in it. Because they had to observe the - the bridge going up. Like, when he had this string, he had to go far enough so that nothing would happen to him. He had to - he - he activated the mine, the bridge went up in flames or whatever it was, whatever, and he had to run away back to the forest. So, each - each of such escapade was very, very dangerous, but in his group, nobody - nobody died from that.

Q: So, they taught him how to do all this?

A: They taught him, and of course, he used his gun very efficiently later. I mean, after - because they carried guns all the time.

Q: So, now he's waiting for another group.

A: He's been waiting for another group, then the worst group comes in, and that was already '44. Don't forget that the war in Poland - in Poland, in the woods there or in this district already finished around January of 1945. So, that was shortly before - before the end of the war. Because we were - for us, May was the end of the war, but for him, where he

was in Poland, the Russians were very close. So, January was already the end of the war. So, anyway, when he came back to the woods, the worst of the groups, *Anazed* (ph), got him. So, the - the name of - the name of the captain or whatever, whatever he was, I know one of the leaders of this group was - his name was Orlig (ph), which means - how do you call it now? The bird that has such a big beak, such a very aristocratic bird.

Q: Tern?

A: No, aristocratic. I forgot now. Anyway, it was a bird, like he said - Adrian told him the truth because there was no use to tell him that - that he's Polish or whatever. So, the guy looked at him and he figured like this - it's almost the end of the war, what they did now, the Germans would go away because they were sometimes even they were more against Russians than the Germans. They were against Germans, too, but if they have to choose, they would kill the Russians. So, he figured like in his mind was that if he keeps a Jew, he'll have a token no matter what happens. He had a son who befriended Adrian very much - was a friend. So, he told him, "Please don't tell the guys in the group that you are Jewish." And, he went and he taught him to pray the Catholic prayer, and he made - he was the one that started the prayer and then - but, Adrian was quite honest. So, he told his son, but the son never told on him. Adrian didn't realize that he wanted to - that he wanted to - the guy, the captain of the group wanted to save his life by holding a Jew, but he didn't tell anybody else, but he figured when the Russians come, you prove to them that he's a saint because he has a Jew there. So, anyway, soon after the war finished - and he was working with them in the woods there - and soon the war finished, the Russians started appearing. And right away, this guy wanted to say that - that he saved a Jew, but Adrian didn't pay attention to it, but the Russian - the worst part was that the Russian, when he saw him, he said, "Tell me your story." So, Adrian tells him the story, and he says he was in the People's Army. They were all Russians, mostly Russians and there were two of them - he didn't say Jewish because he says that they escaped the camp, and they were accepted there, and he says, "This is the last group." He didn't say anything about being Jewish or anything because he didn't know who the Russian is. So, the Russian says to him in Russian, he says, "You know, this is a very interesting story. There was 27 of you - 27 of you -25 Russians and two Polacks," and he says, "That's interesting that one Polack got out and all the Russians, you know, all the Russians perished." So, Adrian said, he says to his guy, "Kill him, like, shoot him - shoot him." So, he says, "What do you want? I'm Jewish." So, the guy says in Jewish to him, "Why didn't you tell me that before?" So, anyway, he was saved, but now this guy from the *Anazed* that killed so many Jews on his ways, tried to - since Adrian was already there, like the Russian and him were already such friends, and so, he tried to say that he was also good to the Jews because he saved him, but he wasn't. So, Adrian says, "I am the first Jew that he saved." Because he told him, when he accepted him, "You are the first Jew that I met in my life that I'll save you - that I'm going to save your life." So, he repeated it. I mean, he just said it. I don't know what happened to them. I don't think that anything happened to them. Adrian was right away made, like, he was a lieutenant right away. They put all the stars on him, and then when he came home, he worked for the -

like, he was - he worked in the army as a lieutenant. Now, I'll go back to Salik Anulevicz (ph) and the others. When this - when they took the two of them - the two of them - the two guys Freumik (ph) and Adrian, they were very much concerned what happened to the other guys, but they never found out. Only after the war, they found out what happened. Salik started his story. When they took them and went away, there was eight of them left. So, *Armia Kryowa*, which was the home army, which wasn't killing the Jews, but they were - they were doing everything possible to make their life miserable, went by and they see eight people, and the people - they all told them what happened. They told them, "We run away from this Jewish camp in…" And not all of them spoke because the - Hassidic Jews that spoke Yiddish at home, they had a very big accent. You could right away notice that they were not - I mean, you couldn't tell them you are Polish. They all knew that they were Jewish. So, they said, they, so, there was eight of them - they - they were anti-Semitic, but they said, "We are not going to kill you, but what we are going to do…" They told them to undress. They left them eight people naked, the way they are. They took their clothes away. He says, "Now, wait for the Russians to come, for the other army - for the People's Army. They'll take you." But, and they laughed and laughed that they left them alive but completely naked and took away their clothes. So, they were there and they started thinking, "What are we going to do now?" I mean, they can't move. They have nothing. They have no clothes. So, they sat and Salik Anulevicz (ph) was the only one that spoke without an accent. So, they said, "You know what?" There's a forest - there was a farmhouse and the guy was looking after the forests, you know. So, he says, "There is this house. If you can go there and bring us clothes or food or something." So, he says, "Why me? Why not you?" He says, "You can speak Polish." So - so, he went. He decided - I mean, he had no alternative. He went there, and on the way, a woman came out of the house, and he told her the story. It was a young woman. It was the daughter of the - this forestman. So, she took him home. She gave him something to wear and food and the father came in and the father says, "I can't take eight people. I cannot." "Okay, we can take food and clothes and whatever we can." But he says, "They will kill me, the Germans, if they know that I hide so many Jews." Anyway, apparently the girl fell in love with this Salik Anulevicz (ph) and she decided to save him, and she took him in and she was hiding him there, and he survived the war in her place. Now, I'll go back to the seven and I'll tell you what happened to Salik Anulevicz (ph). So, he and the daughter - this daughter and her name was Hela (ph), because he always talked about her, Salik Analewicz, after the war. So, the girl's name was Hela (ph). He and Hela (ph) were going - went to give them food and give them clothes, but they under no circumstances can they keep them there because there was eight of them. So, they were helping them with - nobody knows what happened to them. Nobody - they didn't survive the war. How did they perish in the woods because when one day they were there, they weren't there. Like, you know, they were taking daily food to them and water, but they weren't there. Nobody knows whether they perished and they must have perished because nobody came back. Now, I'll go back to this Salik Anulevicz (ph). He lived there with this woman and she promised - he promised that he would marry her. He promised he will marry her after the war, but after the war he changed his mind, but he - he wanted to pay them back for what they did for him. So, he was a very rich guy - I forgot which city he lived, but he

was not far from the Czechoslovakian border there. They had some real estate and stuff like that. He went to the lawyer and assigned all the real estate to her, and he says whenever, as long as he lives, if he can help her in any way, he will help her. I don't know whether he could do it, whether she cashed in on his promises, whether she could get - although he went to a lawyer and signed over all this properties to her, we don't know because he never - no, he saw her once. Her father was - her father was accused of being, not a Nazi, but that he collaborated with the Germans, and they took him out, put him to jail, and she new where Salik was in Poland at the time yet. So, she says, "I want you to be a witness to telling him that we - that we saved you." So, he went there and they let the father go. Whether he was a German collaborator or not, I don't know. Anyway, Salik Anulevicz (ph) went to West Europe, and then he went to Brazil. He married a Swiss girl, and he was coming to Toronto every year because he had - he died five years ago. He died before my husband because the two of them were friends like, you know, and not only that, he had a brother Hirsa (ph). He was coming and he always went, like he stayed with us with his wife and whenever we talked to them, he was talking about this Hela. He wanted to go to Poland to see Hela, and the wife was willing to go with him, but she says, "You only know her first name, that Hela. She must have - since then she must have been married. She must have moved out of this farmhouse. How are we going to find her?" He wanted to see Hela who saved his life. All his life, he was talking about her. He died, as I said, about five years ago. We never heard of the eight - no, the seven other guys, and Freun (ph) was killed together with the - with like, by the Germans together with the whole group. So, this is Adrian's story.

Q: Did he fall in love with Hela?

A: Yes, but he was - you know, she was a very simple girl. She was a very simple girl. At the time, he felt that he wanted a Jewish wife. You know, some people are - he was one Jewish, he was religious. He was a nice guy. He wanted a Jewish wife. So, he decided that maybe if he gives her the real estate that they had - houses and apartment houses or something - I don't whether she ever got it because the Polish government took over all the properties, Jewish properties, so nobody gets anything anyway. So, maybe she didn't get it. He wanted to - and his ways, he was okay, but in his ways, he was also simple like he didn't know how to go about it. He didn't know to go to Poland and to go the farmhouse and start looking for Hela.

Q: There's something so humorous about the meeting. He's coming out of the woods nude.

A: And you know, may I say something on the tape? He said it in Jewish he said to him - I will say it in Polish because my Jewish is not too good - he says, "You are lucky that you were naked because when she saw you, she fell in love with you." But those were the circumstances, and this is a real true story.

Q: Unbelievable.

A: Yeah, unbelievable.

Q: So, she got to see everything long before most people.

A: That's what he said. He said it in Jewish, "You were lucky that they undressed you because otherwise nobody would've accepted you." But he was a very good looking man, and he was - he lived in Sao Paolo in Brazil.

Q: But, you think he didn't know her last name?

A: He said he didn't.

Q: He never…

A: Because, in a way, he was quite simple. Because I mean he asks his wife she should go and look for Hela, and she says, "You know what? I will go with you, but that he tells me where it was, he doesn't remember where the farmhouse was." You know, like, he was there, but he was hidden. So, how did he know? You know? He don't know, and he wasn't smart enough to remember, because some people are fast, but Hela, how can you find Hela in Poland?

Q: So, let's go back.

A: Yes.

Q: You are now in the camp, after these boys leave, what is the effect? What did the Nazis do? Or the Germans do?

A: See that was shortly before - that was in 1943, but it must have been towards the end of 1943, close to '44. Well, they didn't do anything. They didn't kill anybody when they ran away. They didn't because - maybe because Schrodt said that he killed them. He killed a person - he young Wilczek (ph), as he said. Maybe he thought that he killed them all. I don't know. I don't remember suffering any consequences because of that.

Q: That seems surprising.

A: Very surprising, yeah, but nothing happened.

Q: And the people who didn't leave, who were part of the group who were thinking about resisting.

A: Yeah, there was another - then later, it was another try of running after them. They were already, how should I say, energized by their running away. And one night people went - they started running - people started running to the barbed wires, cutting the barbed

wires. And when I say a lot, I don't know how many, but I would say maybe a hundred people got killed by the Germans, because they started shooting, the Ukrainians and the Germans, everybody, because they were much more ready to combat all those people after the escape than before, because before it never happened, and - and those - I'm sure that Chris and Renia must have told you the story, how those people were moaning. They were lying there. They didn't kill them, and they - they were crying and shouting and screaming, all those people, because they tried to escape. We didn't try to escape because somehow I didn't see - I mean, where would we go? There was nowhere for us to go. If we could run away and be accepted by someone and live with someone or have some kind of a connection, but we didn't. And we were afraid that if one of us would run away, the whole family would suffer, would be killed, and we didn't - we couldn't leave the father there, and we couldn't leave Renia. I mean, where can you take Renia? I'm telling you, she was a sickly - always sick, always, every Tuesday and Thursday like this - it's a Jewish expression - she had either a cold or she was sneezing. She was always sick. So, we didn't but people did. That was after what happened to the ten, like after they run away, there was immediately the rest of them wanted to run away, too. Because they figured if they could do it, but they run away under special circumstances, and those people started at night. So, they were just shot like - there were so many dead people.

Q: Actually, neither Chris nor Renia told me about this.

A: Is that true?

Q: Did they just spontaneously - this was a plan that hundreds of people were just…?

A: Yeah, when I say hundreds, but about a hundred people, I would say, about that.

Q: And they had no guns?

A: No, nothing. They were just running to the barbed wires and tried to escape the way the others because, you know, they saw what happened that the wires were cut and they run away, so they just blindly - they had nowhere to go. And all the guards were on alert, the Germans would come. I mean, Becker with his troops would come right away. I don't know. That wasn't heroic; that was stupid.

Q: I think we ought to stop the tape here to change.

A: So, we are almost close to the end of Starachowice.

End of Tape #8

Tape #9

Q: When we ended the last tape, we were talking about this second break-out that you thought was really madness. So, all these people's bodies were just left there, and they were left to die, moaning all night long. Was there, this time, a repercussion inside the camp? This was still in Majowka. You were not in the third camp yet.

A: No, we weren't in the third camp.

Q: Did the Germans do anything to you who were left?

A: No, nothing. Because they - there were so many bodies there that they had enough bodies already, and it was close to - was close to us going to Auschwitz already, close.

Q: Did you know people who tried to escape?

A: Yeah, I know, because, I know a lot of people - young girls that ran, yeah.

Q: And, did you know beforehand that they were going to try this?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you try to convince people not to do it?

A: No, because I didn't believe anybody would do it. We all thought about running away all the time. That was - that was our aim, to run away from this horrible camp, but you know when the time came to run away, we were too - too - too scared to because we were afraid. We couldn't take our father out. We couldn't take Renia out. And we are afraid that they would be killed. So, we didn't even try.

Q: You talked about roll call when they were going to do selections at times. Did you have roll call every day?

A: No.

Q: You didn't in this camp?

A: No.

Q: So, how did…

A: We didn't have roll call. They would call all the people - they had an announcement, and they - and they, you know, the policemen then the Ukrainians said to come out and the

Jewish policemen would round us up - round us up and tell us that there's going to be a lecture, or whatever you call it, that we have to go and listen to it. That was the time when Adrian and his nine friends ran away.

Q: So, how would you know - how would they count how many people there were?

A: They were counting, but the policemen would, you know, don't forget when they started counting, they knew how much we have to have, and the Germans were very gullible. Like, I told them, let's say that to talk, as an example, was 1,479, as an example. So, I would tell the policeman that we have 1,479 people. So, they would come and report how many people - people were taken from each barrack when he was rounding them up. They were writing down - he's there. So, they - they made a count that should agree with 1,479, and I remember Altov (ph) saying "*Shtumpt*!" Because he didn't know that we fabricated those numbers because all the numbers he started counting together, not saying the amount that I just told you was a fictitious amount.

Q: So, you would make up a number?

A: I knew the number because they would come - a policeman would come to me and say, "How much do we need?" Like this, I'd say, "1,479." I'm just inventing the number. Okay, so everyone knew. So, the first one, let's say came first and then the last one said, "How much do I need?" You know, I mean, to give the number, and then they counted it together, and then Altov (ph) would come and start counting, "Barrack 3 has so many. *Shtumpt* (ph)!" but meanwhile there were who knows how many missing? But, we had to do it. I mean, we had to do it, and if they find out, I mean they didn't find us out, but if they did. So, we would have had to suffer the consequences, but I mean, that was the only thing that we could do. and Irinst (ph), that's Adrian's sister's husband, got killed because they found one person in the barrack.

Q: That's what I was going to ask. This could be very dangerous if you…

A: Very dangerous - they killed him on the spot, because we counted and the count was right, but there was somebody was - wasn't supposed - didn't come out. So, they killed him on the spot.

Q: Would that affect food distribution because, if saying there were X number, but there were more…?

A: I don't think so because when they delivered to the kitchen - I wasn't in charge of it, so I really don't know. I remember that Sal Kabiren's (ph) wife was in charge of it. So, she - she - but, the Judenrat most likely was ordering or whatever. I know - I really don't know how it worked, whether they ordered it, whether they sent at random so much of this and so much of this. I couldn't tell you.

Q: During the break, you described nightmares that you had after the war.

A: Right.

Q: Did you have nightmares or dreams that weren't nightmares during the war?

A: No, always - during the war?

Q: Yes, during your experience in the camps here.

A: Yes, after the war or before?

Q: No, during.

A: During the war. I don't know. I must have had nightmares, but I don't recall of any incidents of any importance.

Q: Did you sleep well, do you think?

A: Nobody slept well, really, because you were always thinking what happens, I mean, things like that happened and we never knew what's going to happen the next day because there was always something happening in camp. I only told you a few stories that affected me personally, but such stories were - were happening all the time that affect other people. Everyday something happened.

Q: So, do you recall when you went to bed in the barrack that you would close your eyes and begin to see the things that happened during the day?

A: Always, always.

Q: So, it would be difficult to fall asleep.

A: One day, I refused to come to work because, you know, Vaschek (ph) was insulting everyone. I'm not saying that he was insulting me. Calling names - all the dirtiest of names he would call, and I wasn't used to it. He wasn't bad to me. Like, I cannot say that he did any harm to me, but I just didn't want to suffer all those insults. So, one day I decided not to come. So, he sent a Jewish policeman with a pail of water to throw on me! [Laughs] So, I had to come to work, and that was his way of, but he still called me all kinds of dirty names. You know, he called me whatever he wanted to - not only me, everybody, all the girls, the other men, the policemen, everybody. That was his way, but later on not only that I was glad that I worked for him not Altov (ph) or any of the other guys, because I would be dead by now.

Q: So, that day somebody threw water at you, did you come to work wet?

A: Right away, wet. I was scared. I said to myself, "The next thing would be that he would kill me." But, he was very - he knew that I was a very good worker, very consciencious. He can find everything and always, and I kept his records to such a point that he knew right away, like, he was happy with my work. So, I knew that he's not going to kill me and take somebody else.

Q: Do you have any idea whether any of these records still exist?

A: I have no idea because when they threw us out, we went to another camp. Who knows?

Q: So, Christopher Browning, when he interviewed you, did he say that he had found anything?

A: No, I really - I don't know whether he would find.

Q: Did you, by the way, have to make copies? Did you have carbons or only one copy?

A: No, only one copy. I was doing the lists every day. I mean, he didn't need to have those lists, but every day - and then he put - he put, let's say - I don't know how long it kept the records - but he kept, you know, he had - he had them under lock and key so, I don't know whether he kept them for a month, for two months. I don't know. Because he didn't need like from last month's work, he didn't need the lists. I mean, really, he didn't - why should - what would he use it for except for records. But, I really don't know what he did with it.

Q: So, one doesn't know whether they were sent to Berlin…

A: I have no idea, no idea. We had no numbers. We had real names in this camp.

Q: So, there were no - you weren't wearing insignias or anything?

A: No, nothing yet.

Q: You didn't have uniforms.

A: No.

Q: You wore your own clothes.

A: No, the clothes that they were supplying. We didn't - don't - we didn't have not a beautiful clothes. A shirt and some - a T-shirt or - the beds that we got was better than in Auschwitz where we got the uniforms and I couldn't find a uniform that would fit me. I had to change with other girls that the uniform was still here, because then they just threw

it at you. Here, at least, like when the things came, I had the first choice. I could've picked a better one. I, you know, than...

Q: Did you have underwear and a bra?

A: I must have, but where did I take it?

Q: I don't know, that's what I'm wondering.

A: Because we didn't have an underwear - underwear or bra in Auschwitz, but we must have had underwear and bra in camp, but we didn't buy it. [Laughs.] I don't remember, but I must have. We must have had it.

Q: Why do you think you must have had it?

A: I think so. I might not as well had it - have had it. Really, I don't remember.

Q: Do you remember having boots for the winter or what sort of shoes did you have?

A: We wore our own shoes that we came in with. I don't remember.

Q: Do you remember what you were wearing in the brick factory, right before you went in?

A: No, I don't remember.

Q: You didn't have the knapsack.

A: I didn't take the knapsack. We didn't bring it and apparently, I don't know, I asked Renia and she doesn't remember, but some people told me that they saw my mother carrying three knapsacks, and they think that this was the reason why they put her - her to the bad side. Although, because my mother had a card, as working in the *Arbeitsamt*, everybody had a card, a working card. We really worked. My mother didn't work, or maybe she did, who knows? But, she must have had a card, because, like, we were giving out the cards. But I asked Renia. She says, "Oh, no." She says, "Mother didn't carry the three knapsacks." But somebody, I forgot who, some friend told me that they saw my mother carrying all the knapsacks. That's why they pushed her to the bad side.

Q: Why did - it was surprising to me that you said Pohl would come into the *Arbeitsamt* and tell you that the…

A: Not tell me, tell the Nemcheck (ph).

Q: Oh, so you heard that?

A: I heard it. He didn't tell me personally. I mean, I didn't know him that well. I saw him a few times in the *Arbeitsamt*, but he told that on such and such a date - it's going to be - they are going to close the *Arbeitsamt* and on such and such a date, we'll all go to camp. We - we were expecting going to camp because things like that were happening all around us.

Q: So, did all the Jews realize, and so everybody was preparing?

A: Everybody wanted to have a work card, and everybody was preparing to go to camp, whether they know - knew where the camp was, because as far as I'm concerned, I had no idea where the camp was, whether it was Majowka, Strzelnica, or Tartak (ph). I had no idea where those camps were until I came there. I didn't have any idea what they looked like. I have never worked in the factory, the munition factory. I didn't know what conditions there were there. So… But we had so many things happening all around us, that - that we knew that they would liquidate the ghetto, but we didn't realize how they would liquidate. We didn't think that they would be so beastialic like that, you know, that they would be pushing, and - I wasn't there, so I didn't see it, but from what people tell me, it was horrible in this marketplace. So, we thought that they would all take us to work now, and we'll go to camps. We didn't even imagine what the camps looked like inside. We had no idea. We were never in a camp before.

Q: But you saw the people walking to the marketplace, am I right?

A: No. I saw the people going already to the trains. Because the factory where we were was across the road, a little to the left of - not much, I would say like how to describe it, probably five hundred yards to the side. Like, let's say on this - let's say where I - where I'm sitting is the factory. So, it wasn't right across the road. It was about five, six hundred yards to the side, on your side. So, we saw people walking from the marketplace, and the marketplace was also to the left of where we were. So, we didn't see the marketplace. We saw only people already boarding the train.

Q: Where you standing with Chris?

A: Yes, with Chris.

Q: And did you talk to each other about this?

A: We talked - yeah, because we said, we didn't expect it to be that day. We didn't have the knapsacks. We didn't have anything. We went just the way we went to work. We had nothing with us.

Q: Did a lot of people see what was going on or just the two of you?

A: Everybody that worked there saw it because we - we only had to go a little bit upstairs. We didn't have that much supervision there because the ones that supervised us weren't - it wasn't a factory where like - it wasn't where there were people, inmates working there. There were regular people working there. So, some of them were Jewish and some of them were not Jewish. So, it wasn't such a supervision that the Ukrainians or policemen was watching us, what we are doing every minute. We worked and we went to see, and one of us would go and tell everybody else, and a few minutes later, somebody, and then the two of would go and whatever and watch, and then we worked again. So, it wasn't that forced labor. And if it was, we didn't have such - that was a night shift. During the night, maybe they didn't have so much supervision, or maybe they felt sorry for us, whatever, but I don't remember - the work was very messy, and dirty, and hard because, you know, the bricks were heavy, and we had to carry them when they were finished, to carry them elsewhere to dry them and then put - put them in place and so on. So, the work was heavy, but it wasn't forced labor, like I said. Like, we didn't have any soldiers, Germans, Ukrainians, or we didn't. So, we could move around. I mean, not that we - we had to work.

Q: So, now back in the camp, Majowka. You wanted to tell us the story of a Frenchman?

A: Yeah, the Frenchman was - that was in the last camp.

Q: So, describe…

A: Okay.

Q: …before you do that, describe the move to the last. What's going on?

A: They built a new camp for us and that was for the purpose just to keep us there until the train comes to takes us to Auschwitz. We didn't know; we were moved there. I don't remember whether people were going to work from there, because it was a short time, maybe two weeks, maybe three weeks. I really don't remember the times so exactly. But, once we moved into this camp, there were no Ukrainian guards. There were no - the Germans didn't come, but - like we called them the canaries. They were…

Q: Why?

A: The canaries. I'll tell you why. That was a German army. It was an army - I knew the name, now I forgot - it was *Polizei,* just let me think. Those were the ones that were guarding the soldiers that they shouldn't run away. Not, *Sicherheit Polizei*. I knew the name. I forgot. Anyway, it will come back. They were wearing light - they were wearing light green uniforms and yellow insignia all over. The insignia was yellow. We called them canaries because, like, we didn't know who they were. They were all around the camp. There was - Altov (ph) didn't come, any more of our - those people that looked - that were in *Lager* before. They were staying outside the new camp. Every, I would say,

it would be six feet or so. Let's say every six weeks a canary would stay. You know, one of those soliders, but what's their name? I just - I was thinking and I knew it for one minute only - *Feld Polizei*. Those were the - they were guarding the soldiers they shouldn't run away, but, you know, during the battle. I just said it and I forget it. I just told you and I forgot again, yeah, *Feld Polizei*. And we knew that something horrible is going to happen because we didn't see any of the guys that were normally coming to camp, whether they were - no Ukrainians, no Germans, only this *Feld Polizei* all around the camp. They were the ones who put us later on wagons. Anyway, when we were there, we still kept the office, but I don't remember any German being with me because Vaschek (ph) didn't work there for a while. They sent him to Ostrowiec, or maybe they sent - like they just let him go. I don't know. He wasn't needed. So, there was nobody there but the typewriter was still there and I was still there, Jewish policemen were there. I don't remember any Germans except of those canaries outside.

Q: This is in Tarbut (ph), or you are going back and forth, or this is the end?

A: This is the end. This is the camp that was the end camp. Anyway, one of the soldiers came up and he asked me in German whether I could - I could type a date on the envelope, he's sending a letter. But he had such a French accent and I don't know why I said this, so I said, "*Moi, je parle francais un peu. Donc, si vous voulez, vous pouvez parler français.*" So, he looked at me as if I came from another world. He said, "How do you know French?" I said, "I don't know French. I learned a little bit at school. That's all I know." He says, "How do you know I'm French?" I said, "Because you have a French accent." Anyway, I - I put the address on his envelope. He took it and he says, "Thank you very much," and he went, and I didn't see him anymore. Then, came a time for us to go to like - the train came over, and they were putting people, a hundred people - a minimum of a hundred people in each cattle wagon, a minimum of a hundred, because I know that in some places there were 125 people instead of I don't know how many horses they put in a wagon. The train was a small train, and it had two little windows with bars, and they were closing the doors by sliding one door, so I don't know how many horses, maybe four or five horses. But we were in the last, like, there were mostly men's - men's trains first and then they were ladies' friends - or trains, ladies' trains. So, we happened to go, Renia and Chris and I, happened to go in the last train. They pushed us in. So, and the train moved and we knew and we heard crying because people were fighting with each other. They could only stand. In our wagon - in our train, we could sit down. We couldn't lie down, but we could sit down and, you know, when the people are like that, and they were hungry and thirsty and they were fighting with each other so we heard moans and stuff like that, and the train was very, very slow. So, when the train moved and this *Feld Polizei*, they were sitting on the roofs, you know, they had - they were sitting on the roofs of the train. They all went with us, as if we were the most dangerous criminals. They would because they - they were with guns. Anyway, as we were going, it was time for us to get some water because at a certain station, they stopped the train to get pails of water and to just put the pails of water for the people to have water, like Renia and Chris - not Renia and Krysia, but people - and I tell, the people

says, “We didn’t get any water.” But anyway, this one guy, this guy, this French guy came in and says, “The girl that speaks French.” I didn’t even get up. I forgot that I speak French, because I only spoke with him once. So, he says, “The girl that speaks French.” So, I came to this little window and he says, “Take a couple of other girls because we are going for water. To bring water for them.” So, he had some pails. So, I called - I thought that I took Krysia and Renia, but Krysia went with me, but Renia says she doesn’t remember. So, I maybe I took - like, I asked another girl, but Krysia definitely was with me. So, we went for to bring the water. Everyone was getting either one pail or two, I don’t remember. Anyway, when we came to the well where the water was to be, you know, like we pumped the water, he says in French to me, “I am going to let you runaway now. You just run when you want. Don’t worry, I’m going to shoot later. First, I will pretend that I didn’t notice.” He said it in French. “I pretend that I didn’t notice. I don’t want you here, run!” So, I looked at him, and I thought to myself, “He’s crazy. He’s going to - we will run and he will kill us.” So, I said to Chris in Polish, “He wants us to run, but I’m not going to run. I don’t trust him.” And he said again, “Run, and I’m going to shoot. Don’t worry, just run.” Where are we going to run? We are somewhere all strange. We didn’t know where to go. So, I said to Krysia, “I’m not going. I’m going back. My father is there,” and I thought Renia was with us, but I asked her. So, maybe Renia was there, so we didn’t want to go. And so we went back. He says, “I warned you.” And then he says, “Okay, if you don’t want to run away now,” because I said to him, “I don’t have where to run.” So, he says, “If you don’t , but don’t write it down, just remember, what I’m going to tell you know. Just remember. My name is Leo Bernard. My address is Merignan Mine (ph). Don’t write it down anywhere, but if you ever have a chance or any of you have a chance. If you remember to tell them to come, I’ll say - you could stay whatever.” Like, we would have an address where to run away.

Q: Hold the story. We have to stop the tape.

A: This story’s almost finished.

Q: Okay, go ahead.

A: So, anyway we came back. We didn’t trust him. We stayed there for a long time until we came to Auschwitz. We didn’t trust him. From time to time, he open the door and he’d put a few parcels of some food that he - I don’t know - for anybody, and this is the end of the story. When we came to Auschwitz, he says, “I warned you, because from here, there is..” He came to me again and says, “I warned you because there’s no escape from anywhere from here.” And, this is the end. So, when I came to Canada, which was, we came to Canada in ’48 - I was thinking about it. I said, “I wonder whether he told us the truth.” So, 20 years later or so, I wrote a letter to this address. I was just wondering whether such a person - whether he was lying, whether a person like that would exist, that whether he really wanted to save our lives, whether he wanted to shoot us. I was never sure, so I thought I would write him a thank you letter for his good intentions. I wrote in

English, and the letter came back “No One Under this Name” So, did he lie? Did he say the truth? But, he really and truly told us to run.

Q: Okay, we’ll change the tape.

End of Tape #9

Tape #10

Q: I want to go back to Majowka for just a moment. I want to ask you whether, as far as you remember, were there more men in the camp or women?

A: More men.

Q: By a considerable amount?

A: Considerable amount. I would say, let's take a thousand as a unit - I would say there was 700 men and 300 women. I mean, roughly; I'm just estimating. Because I go by the amount of barracks. There were more men's barracks than girls'.

Q: Do you think that's significant in any way?

A: Because when they were picking people to work, there was more jobs for men than women. There were very - like the munitions factory, I had _____, they had different departments, but they were doing, like, iron in the hot fire and the women couldn't do work like that. So, they had departments like that where you had - you had to have the strength for this kind of work. So, there was always more men than women.

Q: How long do you remember the trip being to Auschwitz?

A: I would say that at least we traveled two nights because I remember a day and then a night, and I remember another day and another night. So, it's possible that we came on the third day, we came to. I was talking to Renia about it. She thinks we went there faster, but those trains didn't go fast. The train didn't go on a regular route. They trains were going on side roads and they were very slow, very slow, and they stopped from time to time for crossing, for different things, and I remember two nights when they closed the doors and then when they opened the door slightly for us to get a little bit of breeze, and as you know, on the way to Auschwitz, a lot of people perished. Some were trampled by other people. As a matter of fact, my husband's brother and father died in the - because there was so many people, 125 people, and they had to go to the bathroom and they had to do, you know, those things were not provided. I don't remember anymore going for water except for this once, and also a lot of people jumped the trains and they couldn't have jumped the trains if the train was going fast. One of them, some of them, like I remember, but I forgot the name of that man but I knew him well, but a lot of people jumped and they were killed. They were killed because the guards - the canaries - were shooting at them, you know, like the train was going slow. So, I would say that two nights and two and a half days.

Q: Did you have a pail to go to the bathroom?

A: No, we didn't.

Q: So, did you just go?

A: Just go.

Q: This must have felt horrible.

A: Horrible. The stench was unbelievable.

Q: And were people crying and screaming?

A: Crying and screaming and that's why they jumped, because it didn't matter to them. They jumped the train because it was better to be shot then to go wherever, I mean, in such conditions. We didn't where we were going, because I believed that we were going to another camp to work, like, to another labor camp to work, but that was me. I wanted to believe it. But other people, I don't know whether they knew we were going to Auschwitz, but some people preferred to die than to go there.

Q: And, what did this, as you were - what did this do to you as you saw people trying to escape?

A: We heard - we heard shots and we heard moans and we heard screams. We heard it all, all the time, and I mean, you know, it was - that was a very traumatic time. Different people reacted differently. I remember - I remember Krysia. My hair was shiny and I used to wear it like this with a - with a…whatever. Krysia used to say, "Oh, I'm so sorry for you, because if you die with such nice hair."

Q: So, you, it was macabre jokes that you...

A: Macabre jokes. But it was, you know, like we didn't know what to expect, where we are going. Like, later on we found out that we are in Auschwitz, but I mean, we didn't even know how horrible Auschwitz was, because you heard things but you really didn't believe it.

Q: So, had you heard the word Auschwitz?

A: We heard it, but we never believed that it could be worse than Starachowice camp. Like, the camp, consider going - don't forget they killed us slowly. First there was the ghetto, then was a smaller ghetto, then there was the camp. So, I mean, we couldn't believe that anything could be any worse than we already went through. Like, you never believed that they're killing people in Auschwitz. You heard about it, but you didn't believe it.

Q: Were you frightened for your father as you were riding in the train?

A: I was. Because I - I knew that he wasn't the same strong man as he was before, but we were also afraid of us. Like, I was afraid that Renia would never survive because - not because I was afraid that they would kill her or anything, but that she was not healthy enough to survive such hard times.

Q: But, she had already survived a couple of years.

A: She did, but she was still - she was always the most frightened, because I was very daring. I wasn't afraid. I was daring, but - and Krysia, too - but, Renia was always afraid. She was always shaking, always afraid.

Q: But neither you, you or Chris were not in the same way.

A: Not in the same way. I think that Chris was the most realistic person. She organized things for us, whether it was food in Auschwitz or whatever, she was able to do those things. I, on the other hand, wasn't afraid of the devil. Like, if they told me to go right at something, I wouldn't have gone. I wasn't afraid because - I don't know why, but I wasn't. But Renia was - she always was hiding in corners. She was always cold. She was always sick. So, that was our worry, but we were very lucky that we kept together. We always watched for one another, and I'll tell you that, at a certain time when we were going to Auschwitz, not - from Auschwitz to Ravensbrück, when we were walking the death march, if not my sisters - I lost my conscious. I didn't know where I was. I couldn't walk, and I was the tallest. Both of my sisters, Renia and Chris almost carried on one side. It's not far anymore, let's - a few more steps, Hania, a few more steps. They saved my life, the same way as, in other moments, I saved their life.

Q: So, Renia is the scared one, the baby. Chris is the organized, practical one.

A: Organized, most practical, she always found us food. She was very, very, very good at that way. And she always shared not only with us, she shared it with others. And I was a devil. I wasn't afraid of anything. I was just not afraid, and I'll tell you, since I was the tallest, there was always a risk that whenever there was a selection or they looked for somebody to work for a job or whatever, they would always - always - even if I was in the back. Like, Krysia says, "Don't stay in the front, stay in the back. They'll take you to take blood. They'll take you to do this." So, but no matter where I stood they - because I was a tall sticking out - so, "This one." But, sometimes it was good and sometimes it wasn't so good.

Q: Does that mean you took risks?

A: I took risks.

Q: Bad ones?

A: Well, I don't know if they were.

Q: They obviously didn't turn out bad.

A: Pardon me?

Q: They didn't turn out bad.

A: They didn't turn out bad because I wasn't afraid somehow.

Q: So…

A: You know I helped us to escape from this last, last…but this will be another story.

Q: You arrive in Auschwitz, the doors are open. As I understand it, your father is in the car either behind your or in front of you?

A: No, we were in the last car. I think that my father was in the car before us, or two before us, because I don't remember whether all the women were one after the other or they picked a car full of women, then men and then women. I don't know, because we were in the last car, and I know that my father was fairly close by. So, Krysia thinks that he was in the car right after us. I was under the impression - because we talked about - I was under the impression that they kept women separately so, they must have been in the third car, but he was close.

Q: What was it like when the doors were opened? Was it…?

A: When the doors were opened to go out?

Q: To go out.

A: First of all, we had a very bad experience because the guards that took us before they took us to change our dresses and everything, we went very close by a crematorium, or if that wasn't a crematorium, we were told it was a crematorium. So, I remember having a bottle of whiskey that this Frenchman - I forgot to tell you that the Frenchman left in Auschwitz, he says, "If they take you to the crematorium..." So, we had this bottle of whiskey. I never drank in my life, but all the girls - I told the girls, so when they German soldiers stopped us in front of the crematorium, or he called this crematorium, so we took this bottle and every girl had a taste. Not a taste of it, but you know, like we were thinking that we're going to die now so let's just be merry. We never drank in our lifetimes, but the whole bottle went. Like, as far as it went from us, and then they took us to the place where they cut our hair, and after that he stayed with us there for a few minutes to scare us or to whatever - to whatever, and then they took us to the place where we had to leave everything we had, to put on the uniform or whatever you call it, a dress

with stripes, and they cut our hair. This is another story how I suffered the most out of all of three of us. And, then we went to the barrack. So, I'll tell you maybe how they first brought us in and told us to take all our clothes off and they put nothing else, we had no brassiere, this I remember - because I was so - it felt so strange to just have the dress on - and they gave us the dress. The dress was too short on me, so there was a small girl that I don't know who, we changed dresses to fit us. Because we were all very skinny, but nobody was as tall as I. They were mostly smaller people. So, there were just a few long dresses. I was glad that somebody exchanged with me the dress. Then, they cut our hair to here. They checked our hair for lice. They put this stuff in, disinfectant or whatever you call it, in our hair and on our bodies before they gave us the dresses, and I remember, they took away my shoes. So, they gave us such wooden shoes - wooden shoes - and this was a case where the wooden shoes - we were already in dresses and men from another camp were distributing the shoes, and the guy says, "Take it, take it." To me like, in Polish we have - like in English you say "you" it means everything, but do you understand French or German? So, they say "vous" or "tu" or in German they said - they say, because here you say "you", in Polish also you never talk to a lady by calling her "Dou"(ph), you caller her "Vu" like, and the guy says, "Take those, take those." Well I just said, "How dare you calling me 'dou'?" Okay, it was so stupid. And, then so anyway I put those dresses - I couldn't walk in them, and then they put us five people in a row to march to the barracks. So, we were five, and so - Krysia, Renia and I were three and there was three others. They didn't want to part and we didn't want to part. So, this woman goes, she says, "What's the commotion? The couple there." You know, I just came to a new camp. I didn't like the way guy says to me "Dou," and here she screams at me. I wasn't really used to it because you know nobody really mistreated me when I worked before, and she says, "Go to the back." I say, "I'm not going to the back." She says - I say, "Those are my two sisters." She didn't even want to hear. She took me by the hair, grabbed me by the hair, to the German man there that was cutting the hair, and she says, "Make a cross on her head." So, you know, she was mad that I talked back to her. So, first he made the cross, and then he felt sorry for me and he shaved my head, but I was the only one with a really shaved head of hair. You know, like, I didn't have anything on my head - just - I don't know whether I looked like a boy or whatever. Anyway, finally we just didn't want to be parted and I didn't care what she says. She couldn't kill me, like I was daring. I said, "I'm not going, they are my two sisters. I'm going with them." So, she got mad. She pushed us. Anyway, we're together. I didn't want to part from them, because if I went to the back or whatever, I mean, it wasn't the next row - we would have never been together. When we came to the barrack…

Q: Can we go back before you get to the barrack?

A: Right. Right.

Q: Is the sequence that you get your hair cut - you take off your clothes…

A: Yeah.

Q: Then you get your hair cut?

A: I think so.

Q: And, then you get a tattoo, and then you get the clothes.

A: Oh, but you know, when did I get it there? When did I get the tattoo? After we had the shower, after we had the shower, and we got the dress, we went there and we got the tattoo. Before we went to the barrack - so, I must have had already my hair - I must have had my hair cut short already. I - I was already with shaven head. I was the only one. Everybody had had hair to here because, you know, when we went to - they wouldn't have touched us. This is my logic now - they wouldn't have touched us before they disinfected us. Don't forget when we were - when we went under the shower, we shed our clothes and we got whatever clothes to put on. We were already, like, we were already clean. It was after the wash. They sprayed such a horrible thing on us. It smelled horrible, and it was stinging us because it was against - I don't know against what - a disinfectant. So, I'm positive that they wouldn't have touched our hair if we didn't go through disinfection before. That's my logic now; I don't remember the sequence.

Q: Do you remember that it was men who cut your hair?

A: Yeah, I remember that a German cut my hair.

Q: A German what?

A: A German man - soldier.

Q: A soldier.

A: He must have been a barber. He must have - a German soldier shaved my head. I don't remember who cut my hair or - because that was a routine. Like, everybody was just getting their hair cut, but this one was a punishment for being disobedient, for talking back to the *kapo*.

Q: After you got your tattoo and the dress, do you remember getting the tattoo?

A: I do.

Q: Did it hurt?

A: No, it was like - like with a needle, that's what it was. It didn't hurt, but as if you put a lot of needles all the time, and we have numbers.

Q: Sequential.

A: Yeah. I have 1736 or something and Krysia has the next number and Reina has the next number.

Q: You had 14176, Krysia has 14177…

A: Yeah and Renia has…

Q: Has 14178.

A: Yeah, I remember that we had numbers one after another.

Q: When you got - you remember getting striped - all of you got striped?

A: All of them.

Q: Did you then get a patch to sew on?

A: You know that I don't remember, but we had a patch there. No, we didn't have - we had yellow patches. The Polish people had - a triangle.

Q: One triangle?

A: One triangle.

Q: With a bar above it?

A: Was it a bar above it? I don't remember, but that was a triangle. So, that was in Auschwitz.

Q: Did you wear it here? Did you wear it…

A: No, I wore it on my sleeve because in the last camp, we had red ones because we had registered as Poles, but this is - in this camp, we had yellow, yellow triangles. I remember having the lower part here and like this. It wasn't a white armband, this was in the ghetto.

Q: Did you have to sew this on, the triangle? Do you remember?

A: I don't remember. Most likely, but I didn't have a needle, but maybe it was a glue that they glued it on. I don't know. I don't remember, but we wore yellow triangles.

Q: Do you remember whether they knew your names? Was there a list of all of you who went to Auschwitz?

A: I think that, when they gave us the tattoo, they wrote down the name and the number, and from there on we were numbers. There were no names.

Q: So, there was an identity card in the…

A: No, we didn't get a card, but when they registered us, because the Starachowice group came separately, and the Starachowice groups came separately. All Starachowice groups have this number, you know, like one after another, and I forgot what you asked me.

Q: Well, I asked you - identity is the wrong word. It's a registration card.

A: We didn't have a card.

Q: Right, but there was a registration that was…

A: They just wrote our names. They wrote down our numbers, and from there on, we had no names. Like, we called each other by the name, but if they called - if they called you for some reason, they called you by the number.

Q: Now, did people recognize you when you got your…

A: Now I'll tell you the story. I, myself - okay, we came in. They gave us a barrack, three rows of bunks, bigger bunks than we had, but I would say six - five to six people slept. We had to sleep like sardines. One this way, one this way, one this way, because - and they were boards, just boards, because in camp in Starachowice, we had straw underneath. Here, you know, like it was a straw sack with straw inside. So, it wasn't so bad. This was on the bare thing and we - there wasn't enough room to sleep one way. We had to have the heads one way… But now I'm going back, because when we arrived, there was a little window similar enough to the windows without bars, but similar to the window in the train that I told you, a small just to let some light in. So, I , you know, I'm tall, so I stood there and I see - I see there's a man there, and I looked at - I looked, it was myself, but I didn't know. So, I say, "Man!" I looked out this way. I don't see any man, but then I looked in the mirror, and there's a man there. So, I started moving my head. I realized that's me. I didn't recognize myself. I would never believe. I was very skinny at the time and very tall, and my head looked like a pin drop, like with the hair, you know, my head was very small by comparison. Like, I couldn't recognize myself, and it was funny because one day I was walking the streets and, you know, the men was coming - were coming to do the toilets in the ladies' - the ladies didn't clean - it wasn't a toilet - how do you call it when there are only holes?

Q: The latrine.

A: The latrines. The men were coming to clean the latrine and one of our guys, a boy from Germany - I remember his name, Lothar - he was picked to clean the toilets. So, he came in and he saw me. He was so happy. He comes, he says, "Tell Hania that your father is alive." I looked at him and I was so vain, I didn't tell him for a minute that I was Hania, because I didn't want anybody to know that I looked like that. He didn't - I don't know - I don't know. I didn't ask him, but I came home and I said, "I'm so glad he didn't recognize me." Like, people are stupid. I mean, I'm talking about myself. So, then we went into the barrack. The barrack was run by four people. There was the *Lager Älteste*, which was responsible for the barrack. There were two thousand people going in one barrack, you can imagine how many people. So, there was the *Lager Älteste*. She was a Czechoslovakian girl. Her name was Yolichka (ph). Then there was a *Shreiberin* who had a job like I had. She kept records who went to work, and she was doing all the office work. Her name was Felicia Berlant (ph). She's still alive. She saved our lives. She was the *Shreiberin*. Then there were two *Steuben Älteste*. The barrack was divided in four and each *Steuben Älteste* which was responsible for this part - for like two parts of the barrack on this side, and two parts of the barrack on that side. She kept, she kept, she made us clean the places where you slept. She made us responsible for, responsible for cleanliness, that's all, and order in the places. When we arrived, this Yolichka (ph) spoke Czech to us, but we understood. This Fela Berlant (ph), she got the job because she could scream the most and she had a language similar to Vaschek (ph). So, when we arrived and we didn't stay straight she says, "You…" - I have to translate it because - "Quiet, you whores from Starachowice." She didn't call us any other - not that she was bad. She saved our lives and many other people. She was a good woman, but otherwise she wouldn't have had the job if she didn't speak like that. She called us names of all sorts. And when we arrived, and we got the job, we were working outside the camp, outside the camp, and we were cutting bulrushes in wetland. So, we stood always in cold water, wetland, cutting, and those - we had those knives that the Germans gave us at the place of work already, that we had to cut, but it was so woody, like it was so hard. It was the hardest job I ever had. My hands were bleeding because the bulrushes when they grow for such a long time, they become woody, and to cut it with a knife it's very hard. He had - he had german shepherds, like he took us to work. We cut it. We were cutting those bushes, two german shepherds - like, I don't know how many of the guards were there that took us, but two huge german shepherds and as a matter of fact, the first day he taught me a lesson. Of course, I was picked because I was tall again. So, he wanted to show us that if - because we were outside the camp and the reason why they were cutting those bushes because they wanted to clean up the barbed wire walls in order, if somebody wanted to run away and hide there or if there was a partisan attack or some attack, so they could hide in those bulrushes. So, we had to cut them. So, he wanted to show us what would happen to everybody - to anybody that intends to run away. So, he called his dog and he told him to - he told him to start biting my dress, and he must have told him in German, because he didn't touch me. He just tear my dress to pieces, and of course, I froze because I am afraid of dogs, like especially touch, you know, the mean dogs that bark so, and the teeth were so bad, and he stopped at him at a certain time and started again. So, the dog didn't bite me, but he bit, like, my dress was in shreds. I got another

dress from Fela when I went back. But, that was a time when I was really scared, very scared, because I thought the dog was going to kill me. So, I just stood there, and so we worked there for three months. After three months…

Q: Let me ask you something. Did you take your shoes off, the wooden shoes?

A: Yeah, no, I - I didn't have any other shoes. I had to wear the wooden shoes.

Q: So, you wore the wooden shoes in the marshes?

A: In the marshes - no, in the marshes we took off the shoes.

Q: So, you were barefoot?

A: And, as a matter of fact, we even washed our dresses as much because we didn't get them so often, maybe every two weeks or so. We didn't go to showers every day, you know, the showers - I'll tell you a story about, a separate story, but when I came home Fela gave me right away another dress. So, that was okay.

Q: One second - how are we doing? Okay let's change the tape. You had showers there?

A: Not showers, we went every week they took us to such a place where they were - once a week we went…

End of Tape #10

Tape #11

Q: Okay. We were talking about the marshes and the dog, but you were also beginning to talk about the fact that you had, not exactly showers, but you could wash.

A: Yeah, we were going to - I don't - in Birkenau, in another section, where they had a place where most likely they were taking the inmates - I call them inmates - regularly, once a week or once every ten days, whatever time, you know, and we were going to those things to have showers. So, I don't know how often I did that, I don't remember, but I think once a week or once every ten days. When we arrived there, we undressed, they took our clothes, they put it through the same function, like they gave us - okay, what they had to do to put this stuff to disinfect all the dresses. So, they gave us - they took another bunch that they already disinfected from another group, and they gave it to us, and we had a new dress, but each time it was a new old dress. Each time, I had to fight to get the longest, but I was very lucky. The girls always cooperated with me because otherwise they would have to have a dress like this. So, that was the procedure. So, whenever we went there, German soldiers would come - like, we would be - I mean, this wasn't in the plan, but I think that was the character that they wanted to do it - they would come to the room where we were, and they would take a hose with cold water, put it on the highest tension, and they would just not only tease the girls, but they would come and they would just try to spray you with this - with all the force in your private parts. If you screamed or you danced, they did worse to you. So, we knew that we had to stand still. We had to disregard it. We had to say nothing, just stand there and pretend that it doesn't happen to you. So, that - so, we weren't looking forward to the showers so much because we had to suffer, and nobody - I'm sure that it wasn't like, it wasn't meant to be like that, but they did it.

Q: Do you remember which barrack you were in?

A: Yeah, 20…20. My sister thinks it was 25, but I think it was 20.

Q: Have you ever looked at a map of Auschwitz?

A: I never went back. I couldn't do it. Like, my sister…

Q: No, a map? Not going there.

A: I didn't look. No, I didn't look. I'm almost positive it's 20, because I trust my memory, but my sister thinks it's 25. Krysia thinks it's 25.

Q: Well, I'll see if I can find out where Fela Berlant (ph) and this other woman were.

A: Because we - we differ on that, because I remember - because Miles went to - went to - when he got the barrack, he wanted our barrack, and I was under the impression that they

gave him, our barrack. I'm not sure, but he said that when they offered to give him a barrack for the museum, and he said when he goes there, he's going to ask for it, because they don't care which barrack. They had to dismantle it anyway to send it to - so, he says he will try to get our barrack. Whether he did or not, I couldn't tell you.

Q: Weren't you in quarantine for a month before you went to this barrack?

A: You know, that I don't remember. I don't remember.

Q: So, your recollection is going directly to this barrack?

A: Yes.

Q: So, you don't recollect sitting around for a couple of weeks doing practically nothing.

A: No. I remember that we had to - I don't know whether it was the next day, but it was soon after we came, we got this job.

Q: Do you recall when you discovered the real truth about Auschwitz?

A: Right away.

Q: Right away, and you believed it?

A: I believed it. I believed it.

Q: So, this is the first time the thought you had in your head about what was going on was really destroyed?

A: Yeah, because we - the crematorium, we felt it. The stench of the, like, it was very easy because we met other girls from different barracks, and the stench from the crematorium, you know, the bones burning and the hair burning and the heat and the fire that was going out from there. So, we knew that people - I even knew - I remember, someone told me that 3,000 people can go into one of those crematoriums after they are gassed, apparently, that's what I was told. I was never inside, but I'll repeat what I was told, that 3,000 people can be put at one time into the gas chamber, and apparently after they're gassed, the floor opens and they go, and the fire starts burning. So, they don't handle it, they only handle ashes. They don't handle the bodies. That's what I was told, and I asked - I remember, they told me 3,000 people at one time.

Q: And this was just another prisoner in the camp that told you this.

A: Yeah, another woman prisoner from - maybe Fela told us or maybe Yolichka (ph), or maybe one of those that were a little bit longer, the girls that worked there. They could

have told us, but I remember asking and that was the answer I got, and I could smell it myself all day, every day.

Q: Could you see fire?

A: Yes. I mean, from the chimneys. I didn't see fire as fire, but they had such long chimneys and some flames were coming out, and they were making the air impossible, like it was impossible to breath.

Q: And were ashes coming down on your clothes?

A: I don't remember.

Q: So, how long was it - well, first of all, how was your treatment in this barrack? Was the…

A: I'll tell you what. This Fela took care of us immediately. She liked - I think she liked Krysia the most. I don't care, but she was so good to us, whenever she had an extra piece of bread or something, if she had something, the three girls - she just - she just was, I mean, as bad as she was - maybe she wasn't bad. She had a huge, big mouth. She screamed, because otherwise she wouldn't have had a job.

Q: And, where was she from? Do you know?

A: Yeah, she was from Helm (ph). I know, because I just saw her. I'm - we are friends because she really saved our lives, really saved our lives, and I'll tell you right away how. So, anyway, when we were there for three months working so hard, she tried to always give me a better dress, or you know, if she had something that was special, she would always give it to us and really treat us a little better then she treated everybody else. And then, one time, there was a Polish uprising in Warsaw, not Jewish, Polish uprising, and they caught all the people - Polish girls to - that they caught, that they thought that took part in this uprising, maybe men, too, but they came to Auschwitz, and they were Polish people, so they didn't go to crematorium and they didn't go to a barrack where they send them to hard labor, and what they did - whatever they brought with them, the suitcases and everything, every piece of clothes had to be recorded, and when they - and they had red triangles - and when they finished their sentence, because they were not convicted for life or taken to camp like that, but when they finished the verdict for two months, half a year, a year, they were getting the clothes washed and ironed, and they went home. So, at that time, Jews never worked in this department, only Polish people, but because of the fact that Polish people were coming and they didn't want any problems, they needed 20 girls to go there, to write down the, you know, to sort out the clothes, to write down the clothes, to hang up the clothes, to wash the laundry and stuff like that. So, they decided to take 20 Jewish girls from our - from - and of course the *Shreiberin* got the order - the first two of us, she picked me and Krysia right away, and she had the 20 girls because we begged her to take - to give Renia. She's like, "I can't. This is office work. She looks -

she's too young. They want - they will never take her." So, we begged her and begged her. So, she went to Yolichka (ph) who was the *Lager Älteste* - the barrack *Älteste*, and she asked her. She said, "Well, all I can do is to ask the German." You know, the German guy that's going to pick them up if he agrees, but she says, "I can't take all of them, because they need 20 people." So, anyway we were so nervous, I remember, the German came in. Fela was there standing, and Yolichka (ph) went to the German soldier who was transporting us to the new job, and she said to him, "There's three sisters, the youngest is the best, but she looks a little bit small, but she isn't that young. She only looks young and she's the best of them all. She can organize…" I don't know what happened to the German. He said yes for Reina. She brought her in. She was the 21st, that never happened before. I don't know whether it was pure luck or whether it was Fela who did that for us, or whether it was Yolichka (ph) that did it for us, or whether the German just felt sorry for whatever reason. We were transported to a new life. First of all, when we came there, this department wasn't for Jews. So, everyone - although we slept, I don't know, ten in one room, but we had - we had cots for separate, like, it was also three "floors" I call it, but they were single. They were single, and they had sheets and everything, like no *appels*, can you imagine? No - I didn't tell you a story about *appels* before. No *appels* of any kind because there was only 20 of us, and some of the Polish girls, they left a few Polish girls to teach us how to do the work. Some of them, we found out after the war, they were Jewish but they were on Polish papers - some of them. With one, Krysia is in contact with one Polish girl she's in contact with lived - that worked there. That was the best job we could get. The Polish girls were coming. They gave us the stuff. In their presence, we wrote down everything they had. We put it in a sack. The sack was hanging there with their number. And, when they were going out, we had to wash and iron their stuff, but we - we weren't there long enough to wash and iron, but we were taught to do that. So, it was the best job. There was 21 girls that had - I mean, we weren't there too long because we went there maybe in November and in January we were transported somewhere else, but I didn't believe it's Auschwitz. It was the best job and I said now that we were so lucky, because can you imagine, there was so many of us, and we were lucky, the three of us, that we got this job in Auschwitz. I mean, it was the best possible because it wasn't meant for Jews. It just happened that they needed - they didn't want Polish girls doing it.

Q: I gather this was a shock to you that there would be protective *kommandos* in Auschwitz.

A: Yeah.

Q: In certain places, there would be no selections.

A: No…

Q: Because there was no selection in…

A: Not with us. We had to stand *appel* every morning, four o'clock, five o'clock. It was dark when we out for *appel* in Auschwitz, in Birkenau. But in here, we didn't have to do it because, when they brought - like, we had to work at any time they brought the - when they arrived. When they arrived, we had to take their stuff away. They went to sauna, because there were the saunas were. As a matter of fact, as a matter of fact, I reminded myself now, that from camp, people were coming and you know what we were doing for them, like when they were coming for - to the saunas? We took, like for drinking water we had such - it wasn't a pail, it was such a thing with a spout - so, we would steal from the Polish - from the Polish bags or suitcases or whatever a pair of underwear, a brassiere, because, you know, whatever we could put. We went for water, nobody asked us anything. We didn't have any German people supervising us. It was an easy job. So, we went there for water, and then whatever we had in the pitcher - it was a big pitcher what we were getting drinking water from. So, we would go there and distribute it to the Starachowice girls, and whoever wanted anything. So, we would - whatever we could steal from the Polish girls we gave it to them.

Q: Hania, do you recall where the *Effektenkammer* was in relationship to where the last barrack you were at was? North of that? It's in Birkenau?

A: In Birkenau. It was called - I know in Polish what it was called.

Q: Say it in Polish.

A: *Rozowy effekt*. Pink *effekt* because they were where the Jews where when they took all the clothes was it was called Kanada, and it was Red *effekt*, but they - we didn't work in this department. This was for specifically, not for gentile, but Polish people, you know, this one, from the - maybe it was another department there - but after the uprising in Warsaw by the Polish people, very many were arrested. So, that was - it was called *Rozowy effekt*, which means Pink *effekt*, whatever it was. The other was called Red *effekt*, and it was called Kanada. I don't know why.

Q: And it was near the saunas.

A: The sauna was there because, I remember, at first I didn't remember where we were going, but I remembered that those people were coming. I remember ____'s sister, she wanted a powder box. I said, "Where would I find a powder box?"

Q: A powder box?

A: Well, she wanted such a box to put powder in, with powder. But, you know, it was strange but I mean, when you are in camp and you think that they could get anything, maybe just to look at it. But that was the best job we had, because we didn't have to stand *appel*. We had enough food because there was only 20 of us. The Polish girls that were there were getting parcels from home, and I remember they had onions, and the parents

were sending them stuff, food that was called like very nutritious, because we didn't get any apples or pears or anything. So, when the parents would send, and the Polish girls were allowed to get parcels from home, and this girl Ioasha (ph) who is still alive and Krysia with her in contact all the time, she found her when they went to Warsaw. When she got a parcel, she always shared it with us. So, we weren't - in addition to the bread and the soup that we were getting, in this camp - we weren't there too long, in this barrack - but we were there all I say from the end of November until January the 18th, a couple of months, because we arrived in Auschwitz in July, and so we were there July, August, September, October, November - five months. I said three months - five months in Auschwitz where we did the bulrushes, and then the two and a half months in this place or two months.

Q: So, did this bring back strength to you?

A: Yes, it did, because we didn't see any Germans, like, there was only the supervisor and the supervisor was the Polish girl who was really Jewish, but there she was nobody. She had a Polish name. She, as a matter of fact, she wrote a book about Auschwitz and she told - in the book she says her name was Landau, but there was Jevulska (ph). She had a Polish name. She was from - because there was just a few Polish girls that were supervisors because before that there were other girls, but as I said, after the Warsaw uprising, they wanted Jews there.

Q: Does Renia get better, as far as you're concerned? Does she actually work?

A: She worked. She worked very - she was so efficient, believe me. Renia did the same job as we did, because once she got there, she was treated - nobody bothered with her. She worked very well. As a matter of fact, she was a very good worker. She was one of the best.

Q: So, did she - did you see her start getting stronger at that point?

A: She was always a physical weakling. She was never very strong. Ever since she was a child, she always was susceptible to different sicknesses.

Q: So, how did you find out that the camp was going to be evacuated?

A: We were told that, on the 18th of January, we are going west, because whatever it was, we knew that the Russians were very close. As a matter of fact, we were told that the Russians were 70 kilometers from Auschwitz, and they were sending the people west to Bergen-Belsen and to all sorts of camps, but first we had to go through Ravensbrück. So, that was the death march because the trains - it was, the weather was very bad. The trains didn't go fast enough. It was very cold on the 18th of March. On the 18th of March, we left Auschwitz.

Q: No, the 18th of January.

A: Sorry, 18th of January. I don't know why I said March. On the 18th of January, I said, it was snowing and blowing, on the 18th of January we went to Ravensbrück. I'm sorry. We went to Ravensbrück, and the train was going slow, and part of it we were walking, and my shoes were all frozen. I couldn't put them on. I had to put them in the car in the train. I put - to wear my shoes to just be able to slip them on because they, you know, when I took them off to - for the night, I couldn't open them. And, then we…

Q: What kind of shoes did you have when you left the *Effektenkammer*?

A: Later, we got other shoes. I'll tell you, when we came to the - to the place where we worked with - the last place, we could pick up any shoes there and put my shoes.

Q: The *Effektenkammer*, you were able to choose shoes.

A: Yeah, that's true.

Q: But, let me ask you something, you had begun to describe that on the death march, you began to fall asleep, but Renia also describes that she thinks for the whole time, until you got on the train, she was sleeping.

A: That's possible, too, because I remember that if not my sisters - I couldn't walk. I was dragging my feet and I saw pictures that didn't exist. I saw horses and people, maybe I had a bad - a bad vision there, but I couldn't have had, because I started so long I was working, always was working like this. So, I saw things that didn't exist. And, if my sisters wouldn't have kept me, I don't think I would have survived. Maybe Renia had ____, or maybe I woke up a little and we carried Renia. That was the - then you saw so many dead people because the Germans were pushing us to go west with their dogs, and whoever couldn't go, they would just shooting, like they couldn't - and, you saw those people. One person was sitting under a tree - was sitting there. He was dead, and you know, what the worst part was that the people that were walking were taking the shoes and the - when they saw a dead person, quickly they would get the jacket or whatever they could grab. Nobody worried about it - what shoes or whatever they could get quickly so the Germans wouldn't send the dogs after them, and they walked - we just disregarded all the - the dead people. But to me, the man that was sitting under the tree, he looked so real and so alive and he was dead. Maybe, he just sat down to die. Then, we came to Ravensbrück, I don't know, three days later, two days later. I don't know exactly what date it was, and there was no room for us in the barracks, and it was freezing and it was snowing, so we had to stay outside - sleep outside. So, we slept in the snow together, like we just warmed each other from the bodies, you know, with our bodies, we just warmed each other, and slept in the snow. Then, in the morning, we didn't get anything to eat. So, we took this dirty snow - most of the times, we took the snow from trees or something - and we drank it and ate it. For three days, we had no meat - because they didn't have any

room. From every side the people were sent to Ravensbrück. They didn't have - they didn't even register us. They didn't even write our names. So, after three days, they send us to a camp called Retzow, which was…

Q: Wait a second - isn't it the case that somebody asked for your names and you decided you weren't - one of you decided that you were not going to say a Jewish name.

A: No, that was…

Q: You said "Gorska." Or is that only in Retzow.

A: I think it was in Retzow. I'll tell you in a minute how it was, but I have to remind myself whether it was in Ravens - no, it was - we were there three days, I don't remember. I thought that they didn't register us, only in Retzow. But I will tell you this story. Now, I get confused. I would have to ask them. When we stood in line to be registered, I think it was in Retzow, but I could be wrong, maybe they did register us and that was in Ravensbrück. We decided, like I told my sisters that if the Germans - the Russians were 70 kilometers from Auschwitz, and sound away (ph) fire in Auschwitz, like before we were moved, we were taken on the death march there to Ravensbrück, we saw fire. And somebody told us that they are burning all the records. You know, and I believed it was true, because the Russians were so close, they didn't want to have the records. So, we said - I said to my sisters, "We can save our lives by pretending we are Polish." So, Chris had a boyfriend; his name was Kleinburg. Kleinburg is a small mountain, you know, that's what it means in German, like, if you translate it. So, she translated it into Polish: mala gorska. I said, "That's too long. Who is going to...? Let's eliminate the 'mala' and we'll have the 'gorsky', 'gorska'." So, we had to remember, what was the mother's name. So, my mother's name was Pola Blum - Tannenblum, but they were called Blum. So, I said, in Polish, a *blum* is a flower, it's like *fiatek*, so Fiatekosky, because if it was *fiatek*, you couldn't say *fiatek*. What was your father's name? So, we said "Gorsky" because our name was Gorsky, and the first name, his name was Isaac, so we said "Anje" because Anje was such a typical peasant Polish name. So, we gave this name to them. Then if they asked us any other questions, we have to remember that we are Polish; we are never Jewish. And of course, when we registered, we got the red, the red triangles. That means political prisoners, so, you know. And immediately, when we arrived, I met some people that I knew, and they didn't want to talk to me because they had the yellow - we call it *winkl*e (ph) - yellow triangle and we had the red one, and they didn't want to cause any problems for us that are Jewish and we are Polish, so they didn't talk to us, but later we told them not to worry about it. When we arrived in Retzow - this is very, not a very interesting, but that's again a personal story.

Q: Let's pause for a moment because I think we only have a little bit of time left.

End of Tape #11

Tape #12

Q: We're in Retzow. What's happening in Retzow?

A: So, we arrived in Retzow, I think we registered there, and then we lined up for work. So, the man in charge - I don't know his name, but I know his title. It's a mouthful: *Haupstunshaufführer* (ph), and he had - there was a barrack, the German barrack where they worked, and it was this *Haupstunshaufführer* (ph) and then they were *kapos*, women, and then they were guards in the camp. What we did there was when we arrived there, he lined us up for work. He needed about, I would say, 12 people I think or so to clean the German barracks. Some people were going out to work. I don't know what they did because we were either too short and I wasn't working outside. So, first of all, the cook came in and he picked Krysia. That was the biggest, you know, as if she won the lottery because - because if she is going to work in the kitchens, we would have what to eat because we just come from a place where we didn't eat for three days, and from Auschwitz where the food was so scarce that we were fainting most of the times. So, Krysia got the job in the kitchen. Then, they started picking people to clean the barracks. The Germans - those were the best jobs, don't misunderstand me, the best jobs. So, anyway, he picked me first, and he started picking people and Renia got also in this group. So, then he showed where we are going to live and so on, and then he showed - he told us where we are going to work. So, he picked me to work in his office. So, I figured, what am I going to do here in the office. I - I thought I'm going to be a secretary or something. So, he comes in and he tells me - he asks me, "*Kannst du putzen?*" "Do you know how to clean?" I think myself, "Of course I know - that's the best job I could get to clean those barracks." So, I said, like, but then I see, there is his desk with all the papers and the radio is playing. I think if I'm going to play smart, I won't get this job, because, you know, I have to be dumb to know how to clean the floors. So, I decided that I'm not going to tell him that I know German. I don't know why, but at that moment, my mind started working, and I figured to clean the floors, you don't need to be intelligent, just be as dumb as you can. So, he says, "Can you…" I'll speak English. "Can you speak German?" So, I said [so-so gesture with hand]. And he said to me, "And how about - what do you speak?" So, I said, "Polish." Polish he couldn't speak. So, he says to me, "So what can you do?" So, I said, "*Putzen*." I mean, he told me already that I'm going to clean. So, that's what - I didn't know. I never did the - I never cleaned a floor in the house, in my house, never touched it. So, then he says to me, "When you clean, I don't want you to touch anything on my - on my desk because this is all private. I don't want - if you want to - from time to time, I'll clean it, and you will be able to clean. All I want is to clean around, to clean the floor, but don't touch it, and don't touch my radio." So…

Q: Now, he's saying this to you in German.

A: In German.

Q: In simple German?

A: I pretend that - the way he shows me around, I pretend that I only understand a little bit. So, then he sees that I'm - I always - since I walked in, I decided that I'll play dumb. So, then he says, he looks at me, he tells me, he shows me how to do this, how to do this, okay. Then, he says not to touch those - I mean, he was showing me because he knew that I could only speak a little - then he says, "Can you read?" So, I look at him. I pretend that I don't understand and I says [shakes head]. "And write?" So, I says, again a listened. I pretend, so he shows me. I said [shakes head]. So, he said - I remember - Krysia will tell everybody my "So gross ker faxen so dum". Do you understand this? She's "So gross ker faxen" means "She grew so tall and she's so dumb." You know, like that's what he said. I wanted to laugh, but I really, believe me I was telling myself that I was the most clever girl. I got the best job. I got the cleaning. So, I was reading all his - since I didn't know German well enough. So, he didn't clean the desk. He was leaving the papers. I read all the papers because, if I was very careful, I could just pretend that I'm cleaning the table and read the papers. I listened to the German broadcast, because the radio was on. I couldn't understand, so he was - he got himself the best cleaner. We weren't there too long, but during that time…

Q: What did you hear and what did you read?

A: That's what it is - I read all the orders. I knew that the war is being lost. I knew - I read all those - the letters that he gathered. That's how we ran away. Renia was cleaning another room. I would go back to Krysia - how she fed us. She was marvelous, but I'll go back to this portion. I'll just talk now about this situation here. So, I read everything and then, the Russians were already so close that he got orders that on such and such a date to let everybody go except the guards, because they weren't sending the Jews anymore to work, because they had to go out of the camp. So, that - we had the - like, we were Poles, but we took off our triangles because then the people that work outside had white crosses across the back with the paint. Like, whatever - if you worked outside, you had the white cross painted like this right across the back. So, Krysia and I, we came to a conclusion that she works in the kitchen, she gets some flour and water, and she'll be able to make the crosses, new crosses, on our clothes, because we - we had clothes there. We were also distributed some clothes for us because it was a small camp. It wasn't a big camp. We were all girls. And this, we decided that we are going to run away, but we had to have a strategy. We had a Jewish girl from Lublin. She was blonde and had blue eyes, and she spoke perfect German. She was one of us working in the barracks because there were either ten or twelve of us working the barracks. I don't remember. Since she could speak so well German, we decided that she's going to steal the *kapo*'s - you know, *kapos* were wearing a black cape, a black cape what covered whatever - they didn't wear uniforms, just a black cape with a hood. So, she stole this hood from her, and then Krysia - we decided that what we can do to take the crosses off, all we had to do is this, is to just crumbled the - like we had to wear the crosses inside, but in order to get outside, to run away from camp - I knew exactly because my boss didn't come to work that day. I don't know whether he came later or so, because it was ten days before the end of the war - ten

or twelve days before the end of the war. So, in the morning, we got up this Helena was her name - she put on the cape, we made sure that there was no sign of the cross, and she - we came to the gate. She told the post that she registers with him ten people going to work outside, whatever - she knew what to say, where outside, and he says - he showed us to go. We went to the road, and all - from there on, we didn't have to worry because all the Germans were running towards west. They were afraid. The Russians were very close, so the Germans were leaving their homes and everything marching, running away from the Russians. They were afraid. So, we were in the group. Nobody noticed us. Nobody bothered us, but we didn't have what to eat and we didn't know what to do. But, we run away. We're out of the camp. As a matter of fact, one girl from Radom that I suggested that she goes with us, she didn't want to go because she had - somebody gave her spreads - some sardines, a box of sardines. She had it with someone. She didn't want to leave it, or she didn't - she didn't want to give it to her, and she didn't want - because she wanted to eat it, she didn't want to run away. So, they went to another camp from there, you know, after - the Russians were - they must have gotten orders to go more west, but we were already free. So, we - that was it. Those were the camps. Now, Krysia - she worked in the kitchen so, she stuck, you know, she cooked and she - she was sending to us - she was working on the second floor and so, we - we used to go under - stand under the kitchen and have our metal thing with the handle. She would push down a string. We would put the string on the handle. She roped it, and she would take - because there was meat, like horse meat, but we didn't get it; the Germans - the Germans got it. We only got the soup. So, she would take a tongue or whatever, you know, she had there a big piece - a big piece of meat she would send it back. We would take it and divide among all the girls. So, everybody had something, not only something to eat, but we were not used to such - so rich food. It was tremendous. One day she tells me this story. She worked there. She stole a pound of butter. It was, you know, one of those pounds in foil, and she says she didn't know what to do with it because, I mean, the Germans was - her boss, the German cook, was watching her. So, she put it in her pants so that she could take the butter to take to us, and when she started working and cleaning up, the butter started dripping, and she got so scared she almost died. She - but anyway, she managed somehow to bring the butter - the butter to feed us. So, we really in Retzow we didn't have a bad day, because she was supplying all the food. She was stealing it, but she was supplying all the food and nobody - all the girls that knew, they noticed that I went out to get whatever, they were already waiting. I mean everybody was hungry. So, that was also lucky. We were lucky there. But, this is all about Retzow. There's very - we don't have much to say about it because we weren't there too long.

Q: Did you feel liberated when you left?

A: Right away. Right away. We walked with the Germans. We went that way, but we decided to…

Q: One second. I was asking you did you feel liberated when you left?

A: We did. We did, but we were far away from home. We didn't know where we were going. We decided to - we decided to stop going west because we were going - by going west we're getting too far away from home, and we - and we - we heard already Russians speaking. So, we decided to get off the road, and just managed to go back - to walk back, but we were afraid because this way where we were going west, nobody could - nobody was suspecting us of running away from camp. We're running away to the west where all the Germans, you know, with all their possible treasures that they had. They had horse and wagons and stuff like that, and they were all going west running away from the Russians, but then at one point, we decided, all ten of us, we had one Russian girl, not Jewish, with us, too. Most of the girls were Jewish. Helena was also Jewish, but she didn't look it. She spoke perfect German. She could get away with being German just in case if something would happen, and we got off the road and we started going through this forest. We started going back home. Back home! We were far away from home, but back to the east.

Q: I'll tell you what. I think that we've spent a very, very long day today, and I think that we should just plan at some point that we continue this. That is enough.

A: That would be great. Thank you.

Q: And I really thank you.

A: I thank you very much. I really thank you for your consideration and for being so delicate with me, because I was always afraid of this - not afraid for, I was always - I felt that my body, I mean, I'm not healthy enough to take - to think about Holocaust for so many, you know, hours at times because 'til now I was not successful in not suffering afterwards, but really it was so nice of you. I feel good, and I'm glad I give you this interview.

Q: I'm very grateful.

A: And to you.

Q: Thank you.

A: Thank you.

Q: Okay, you can start Hania. Who are these people? [picture shown]

A: On the right side is my Aunt Drachela (ph) with above is her husband and on the left side is my mother Pola, and I am in the middle.

Q: And the husband's name is what?

A: Carmenson. I don't remember his first name.

Q: So, we're now going slowly into the photograph, and you are about how old? Does anybody know?

A: I have no idea. A baby.

Q: You look like you're one or two.

A: Maybe, maybe as much. I really don't - I didn't even have the picture. Renia showed it to me.

Q: And, your mother is wearing a pince-nez.

A: Right.

Q: And is he, your uncle, wearing one, too?

A: Yeah, yeah. My grandmother and my father both wore glasses like this.

Q: You're very cute, with a ribbon in your hair.

A: I can't see the picture anyway, not even from close. Renia, what other pictures do we have to show them? The three of us, no. [Another picture shown]

R: You are on the right, Krysia is after you in the middle. I'm on the left.

Q: Are we rolling? Okay.

A: This picture is of the three of us. I am on the right. Chris is in the middle, and Renia is on the left. That was taken in 1992. And, this was pic - this picture was taken when I was 60 years old.

Q: We're not there yet.

R: [Another picture shown.] This family picture.

Q: Why don't you say that you're talking?

R: This is Renia Gelb, Hania's sister, describing the large picture taken in Muskoka (ph), Canada, in 1984 to celebrate Hania's husband's Adash's 60th birthday. Looking at the top line from the - from right to left, Barry Corbin, Hania's son-in-law, center - Adrian Wilson Hania's husband, to the left, Dr. Tom Wallin, Hania's and Adash's second son-in-law. Bottom line going from right to left, Ruth Wilson.

Q: Wait…

A: Okay, should we start from the beginning, again top line?

Q: Yes.

A: Okay.

Q: Okay, just watch the TV, as you see in the TV…

A: This is a family picture of the Wilson's taken in 1984 in Muskoka (ph), Canada to celebrate Adrian Wilson's 60th birthday. Going from right to left top row - Barry Corbin, the son-in-law of the Wilson's - husband of Ruth Corbin, who is right below him. Holding a baby, second child of the Corbin's, Jonathan. Moving on again, in the center top row, Adrian Wilson. Moving on to the left again, top row, Dr. Tom Wallin, the husband of the Wilson's older daughter Pauline, who is right below, and actually surround - he is surrounded - Tom is surrounded by his family - Pauline on the outside, right in front is Denise, the younger daughter, and above it is the older daughter, Janice. Moving now to the right from the left - Hania Wilson holding little Daniel Corbin, the son of Barry and Ruth, and the brother of Jonathan, and that is the younger daughter of the Wilsons with her family.

Q: You mean the younger son?

A: No, Ruth is the younger daughter of the Wilsons, and she is the wife of Barry, the mother of Daniel, who is the older boy, and Jonathan, who is the younger boy, and that completes the lovely picture.

Q: Thank you. One question for you about this picture. Did you say one of the daughters is named for your mother? Which daughter?

A: Pauline.

Q: Show me which one.

A: Pauline is sitting on the ground in the front row, the extreme left.

Q: The one in the pink.

A: In the pink jacket is Pauline named after our mother.

Q: And then the other daughter is named after…

A: Ruth, after Adrian's mother. Ruth on the extreme right is named after Adrian's mother.

Q: Is this the only picture of Adrian that we have? [Another picture shown.] You know what you can do? You can just leave it that way.

A: This is Renia speaking for Hania, the picture of the three people was taken in Pennsylvania in 1980, on the occasion of Janice's Bat Mitzvah. Janice is the daughter of Tom and Pauline. Going from right to left - Adrian Wilson on the right, in the middle is Janice Wallin, the daughter of Tom and Pauline Wallin, and on the left is Hania. [Another picture shown.] This picture again is in 1980, taken in Pennsylvania in the same occasion. This is the Corbin family. Going from left to right - on left side is Barry Corbin, next to him is Ruth Wilson-Corbin.

Q: Let's do that again.

A: This is Renia again talking for Hania. The picture is of the Corbin family taken in Pennsylvania in 1980. Going from left to right, Barry Corbin, next to him Ruth Corbin, next to her little Jonathan Corbin and next to him Daniel Corbin. 1980- excuse me, 1990. [Another picture shown.] This is the family picture of the three sisters with their husbands taken in Pennsylvania in 1990. Going from left to right, top row - Adrian Wilson, just below sitting down is Hania, above in the blue dress is Renia standing next to Victor Geld, sitting down is Chris or Krysia Lerman with Miles Lerman above her, and that's the three sisters with their husbands. [Another picture shown.] This is still the same occasion in Pennsylvania. The year is 1990. Going from left to right - standing is Tom Wallin, to his right is Denise Wallin, going from left to right sitting down is Janice Wallin, sitting next to her daddy, and to the extreme right is Pauline Wallin. That's the Wallin family. Hania's son-in-law, daughter and the two lovely granddaughters. [Another picture shown.] This picture taken in Pennsylvania again, in 1990, going from left to right, sitting down is Hania, standing is Renia, and on the extreme right is Chris or Krysia. [Another picture shown.] This is a picture of Adrian and Anna Wilson or as they are also known Adash and Hania Wilson. The year is 1997.

End of Tape #12

Conclusion of Interview