

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Helen Tichauer
September 7, 2000
RG-50.030*0462

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Helen Tichauer, conducted by Joan Ringelheim on September 7, 2000 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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.

HELEN TICHAUER

September 7, 2000

Question: This is United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Spitzer Tichauer, on September seventh --

Answer: Oh, seventh --

Q: -- the seventh, in New York City, conducted by Joan Ringleheim. This is tape number one, side A. Sippy.

A: Yes my -- madam?

Q: I want to ask you a bunch of sh -- sort of short -- I don't know whether they're short questions, but they seem --

A: How sh -- yeah [indecipherable]

Q: -- they seem like little -- they seem like little questions to me. So, we'll see whether -- cause I went through all of our conversations, so I have some small questions, and I have some larger questions. So, here's my first question, okay? You said, when you disembarked, when you got to Auschwitz, you disembarked in the town of Oswiecim.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that right?

A: Correct. Out -- outside of Stohn, I would say, it's very -- very -- very ofsa town, compared like New York, and maybe Welfare Island. Yeah, a little bit. Just close enough, but outside of the center of the -- of the town, yeah. There wasn't all -- actually, now, after 50 years, I can even show you a map which we have produced, together with the Auschwitz Museum. They have asked me the same question, so we produced some little diagram, a map.

Q: Of where you disembarked?

A: Of where it is in the location, yeah.

Q: Oh.

A: It was outside -- I would say it was not the railway station, but it was the railway station for -- for goods, yeah. Like cattle. They have embarked merchandise, and like here, for example, I don't know how -- how railway stations work [indecipherable] we have people, and we have cattle, and we have all kind of things.

Q: Right, right.

A: Now, in Europe, people -- as the railway stations in Europe are small, because they have the railway stations in -- for little cities, and larger cities, concentrated mainly for people. And everything else is a little bit far out. It stops before the -- before the general railway station, so I would say a couple of miles.

Q: Couple of miles.

A: And that what happened to us. We were not e-embarked -- disembarked?

Q: Yeah.

A: Bark? Embarked, or disembarked?

Q: Dis-Disembarked.

A: Disembarked where people were used to travel, and -- and -- and come or go, but we were disembarked where the cattle --

Q: Cattle go.

A: Right, that was it.

Q: Let me -- I'm going to stop the tape for one second.

A: I-In Auschwitz --

Q: Okay, we're back. Yeah.

A: In Auschwitz, I produced -- I had the same question from the people of the Auschwitz museum, so I predi -- produced together a plan, and the route how we were then walking by foot from the place of disembarking --

Q: Right.

A: -- over to the camp in the -- because Auschwitz, one camp where we were taken, there were only a couple of -- half a mile -- well, ish -- well [indecipherable] close.

Q: It was close?

A: Very close, yeah.

Q: Tell -- tell me what your condition was when you got off. You were with a thousand women, about.

A: Y -- but today we know we were a little bit less than thousand women, but it's supposed to arrive thousand women, and some of the people were taking off before the -- before the people that were put into the cattle cars. [indecipherable] maybe two or three of thousand girl.

Q: Uh-huh, right. And do you recall how long a trip it was? A few days?

A: Oh, that --

Q: Or less?

A: It was for us -- in those days, it appeared longer than it really was, yeah. We have been in the car at least one night for sure, yeah. And the whole day trapped, we embark in late afternoon, so we traveled the whole afternoon, then we traveled the whole night, then we traveled a whole day. So that was for sure. Maybe i-if -- today I cannot even bet. I s -- remember that we arrived on -- on Sunday, late afternoon, and we eb -- embarked on a Friday afternoon. So how much is that? Tell me.

Q: From s --

A: Friday afternoon, Saturday -- Friday night, Saturday, then it must have been Saturday night, and over to Sunday. And that -- what it -- what it peared -- appeared to me then, I even mentioned that in the borders -- borders interview. Today, after 50 years, somehow it is -- it was shrinking in my mind of one day, one night, and another day, yeah. But I don't remember certain night any more, yeah, today. But I d-definitely remember one night. So, that's how it goes.

Q: Do you remember the mood that you had on the train?

A: Pardon?

Q: The -- your mood.

A: Food?

Q: Mood.

A: Oh, so mood?

Q: Yes.

A: There was no mood. Fif -- you know, fi -- we have been one week in -- on stage of isolation in [indecipherable] point, which was cold, but dronga, on the old factory hall. And wi -- we had enough to eat, because everybody who was there brought some food along from home, so that we were living on. They did not supplied us any food. You are not asking an important question, but the people somehow managed to -- everybody had something from home, yeah, and somehow that was our -- that kept us somehow in a mood, yeah, if you are talking about mood. I don't even remember, there was nothing to drink. I don't remember anything to drink, and we went probably the whole week, nothing to drink.

Q: From the time you --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- got into Petronka until --

A: No, there was no --

Q: -- nothing?

A: Nothing. There was no food distribution. That means whatever we had, maybe some fruit or so, replaced the -- some water, and it was -- there was no mood, it was some very strange situation, because we were -- we -- we have never experienced anything like that. We went as young people to -- to summer camps as children, and as teenagers. We -- they were -- we were told we have to -- we will go and do some work in the fields, or whatever necessary, because there's no -- not enough manpower, or woman power, or whatever power, work. There -- there is not enough of -- there are not enough of people for certain jobs available, because everybody's -- the male are on the front, and the women in that -- to work in factories, so do other things, the civilians. So we were actually selected to do jobs wherever we need it -- wherever we are needed, yeah. So, nobody was com -- very excited. The war went on, and so what? But for weeks or months we'll survive and come back home, that what we are told.

Q: So --

A: So there was not a -- really no -- no mood. Just we have taken things [indecipherable], we -- we realize that something must be done, and that is what they want us to do, to do some odd jobs, and [indecipherable]

Q: So there was no suspicion about something terrible --

A: No.

Q: -- going to happen? Nothing?

A: Not at all, not at all. The only people who knew about the terrible things which are in front of us, were -- was the Jewish community's board of -- the so-called Jewish centers, the Juden Centrales, they knew that things aren't going too good for us. But they never disclosed anything.

But I know we know that they knew, after the Wannsee Conference, yeah, what is in front of -- what's in front of the population [indecipherable]

Q: Right. And you think they knew?

A: They knew.

Q: They knew?

A: They knew. They didn't know about the gas chambers. They didn't know about the real f -- that -- that factory, because they knew that it doesn't look good for us, but they couldn't --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- they said they really didn't know. Because when the first people escaped from Auschwitz, those four boys, you know, Wirbra, Vetsla, Mordavich, and Rossi, and when they returned, to report, you wouldn't believe it. All Jewish people --

Q: Don't do that.

A: -- wouldn't believe. So, that's why I know and suspect that, you know, they didn't know the real techniques of Germans [indecipherable]

Q: But when you -- by the time you got on the train --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- to go to Auschwitz, you must have been weak, all of you. Were you weak?

A: Weak?

Q: Weak?

A: No.

Q: You weren't?

A: No.

Q: Even though you weren't eating much or drinking much?

A: We are eating or not, because everybody brought --

Q: Brought something?

A: -- some food along.

Q: So when you get -- you get in the train --

A: Yeah.

Q: Is this -- this is a cattle car train, or you're sitting in s -- how -- what sort of a train did they put you in?

A: Cattle car train.

Q: Yes.

A: Sitting on the floor.

Q: Floor. And did they pack you in, or was it not so bad?

A: It wasn't nice.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: It wasn't nice, but even that, we couldn't -- so we were only young girls, you see. The other -- other people went with families, husbands and children.

Q: Right, right.

A: We were young people, couldn't care less. Even if it was only with [indecipherable] for to work, but not youngsters -- very similar to those f-festivals we had, where the youngsters were squeezed together, and were happy and singing, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: Th-though we were not singing, and we were squeezed together, yeah, but it [indecipherable]

Q: Did people get beaten?

A: Huh?

Q: Were people beaten, were you treated brutally, or not?

A: No, no, no, they were very careful, very careful not to -- not to s -- give us any feeling of -- to become suspicious. No, we were just left alone, I would say. There were no guards inside. Yeah, they left us alone. No screamings, and no -- no beatings, nothing. So first real rough situation occurred when we arrived in Auschwitz itself. Because before, on the trip we were -- I think that was an combined -- combined operation between the guards of the Slovaks, and the Germans. The Slovaks took us to the border, and after the border, the Ger -- the bor -- not the border, it's in Poland already, so Germans, they took over. But -- so, disembarking went very rough, yeah. Un -- un -- unexplainable rough. Obvious different types of people, different uniforms, different commands, everything changed, and then we still didn't know what it is all about. So, it took us a couple of days to get used, while arriving in Auschwitz, and th -- we went through the procedure, in the first couple of days. So, that taught us gradually, that life -- the prior life of ours, is behind us, yeah. And --

Q: Did you --

A: -- we have entered a new world.

Q: Did you understand German then? Did you know -- you knew German.

A: I have German schools.

Q: Right.

A: After the --

Q: So, all the girls --

A: -- [indecipherable] school -- pardon?

Q: -- all the girls understood German?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: But many.

Q: Many.

A: The girls -- as most of the girls were from our capital city, where -- which is an German speaking city, among others. It's ambu -- multilingual city. But most of the Germ -- of the Jewish girls, of course, went to German elementary schools. If nothing else, they went to elementary schools, because the German elem-elementary schools -- the Jewish element-elementary schools were German --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- in those days, it was shortly after World War Two, the people were born, the G-Germans --

Q: You mean World War One, they were born shortly after --

A: World War One, correct, sorry. Th-Those girls were born, the parents enrolled them in Jewish elementary schools because they were good. They s -- have just transferred that from the Austrian system into the Slovak system. So that -- you must realize people, like Jewish parents, always prefer to send their kids to good schools, yeah. They have preferred the German, because that wa -- the elementary schools had the teachers, the language -- I mean the system was already established, while the Slovak system had to be established. There was not even a Slovak grammatic. It has to be developed in those days. But we spoke all -- we had to speak Slovak, and the city had a large Hungarian population from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, but the Jewish people never -- ne -- in our city, Bratislava, never had any -- that -- they preferred the German. The Hungarian was mainly in the hands of non-Jews, yeah. It was the old fa-fashioned m-monarchies, yeah. We had none -- nothing in -- in our community like that. So --

Q: So, let me ask you someth -- I just thought of this. What were you wearing, on your -- do you remember?

A: It was wi -- it was early -- it was early spring, March in Europe, and in that part of Poland was rough, and cold. So, not knowing where we are going, we all had -- definitely we had no high heels. A-As a matter of fact, I can show you a picture of the shoes which I wore.

Q: Yes?

A: Because they were the shoes I have picked just from prior years, during my -- our times in camps, and so on, where I had some special, very good mountain climbing shoes, yeah. I put that on, and not knowing -- I knew that we are not going into a city, but maybe into the fields, or other [indecipherable] rural areas. So I accordingly dressed myself, and shoes were always of importance wherever you went, even -- I mean, those shoes, I took the best and most durable, strong shoes I had. And as a matter of fact, I have a picture of those shoes [indecipherable]. So, what else? And I had on good winter coat, a wool winter coat. I -- and I had gloves, and on cover of a knitted angora -- kind of an turban, something what we wear today, knitted, very nice, in dark green, I don't know if -- in bottle green, I never forget that. So gloves, and the cover of my head. No, that was all I remember.

Q: You don't remember were you wearing a skirt?

A: Ah?

Q: Were you wearing a skirt, or you were wearing pants, do you have any -- remember?

A: N-No, no, I had no -- I've a -- I wore skirt and one pullover.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: And most of the other women that you were with?

A: Similar, very similar.

Q: Similar dress?

A: Very similar, yeah.

Q: And people were not wearing high heels, they didn't.

A: Oh no, definitely.

Q: No. You knew, right.

A: Sporty. Yeah, prepared for some -- a rural -- a rural environment.

Q: Now Sippy, you told me that you saw a sign --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- when you were walking into the area. The sign say, KZ Auschwitz, or Concentration Lager, what does it say?

A: No, that was lots of sign when we went that was exactly on the door entrance.

Q: At the entrance.

A: At the entrance, and it was hitting me like you would have hit me over the head. You see, I told you that I was an trained sandwriter.

Q: Right.

A: A graphic artist. I always looked at letters, and signs, and that's why I could remember so many other things, even now where I don't see, the first thing I'm looking at an area where I am, I'm looking at the road signs, and if I cannot see, then I'm asking people to read for me. Signs are something of importance. And I was reading everything what I could at the entrance. There was one little white sign with black letters. So little, I would say like an standard American --

Q: Foot?

A: Letterhead, [indecipherable] but sheet of --

Q: Paper?

A: Of paper, yeah.

Q: Like eight by 11?

A: Eight by 11, or something like that, in white. And there was on pr-printed, or painted wording -- the wording, it said, Concentrationes Lager. Concentration Camp, yeah. No more, and no less. I have never -- and that was -- I could not share that with anybody because those girls didn't know what it is all about. I had experience with ex-German Jews, who were leaving, and Austrian Jews who left, all immigrants from all parts of Europe, they were coming through our city for awhile, and then left again. And they told us what a concentration camp is, because some of them were even relieved just under one condition to leave Germany, yeah. So, I knew that I entered an concentration camp, in spite of the fact that we really went through the door which said [indecipherable] fry. There were the stop signs, hahlt, yeah. All kinds of -- of warning signs, and important to the whole entrance of the camp, which even today I think you can see. But that little sign of concentration camp, was there, I don't know why, it must have been there for the -- to the rules, yeah, or to international rules. It was there, and I noticed it. And then I know I'm in a concentration camp. In the beginning, I didn't -- we knew that after awhile, but the moment I entered that gate, I knew where I am. That was an --

Q: So that must have been shocking.

A: It was, yeah.

Q: Don't do that.

A: Yeah. It's [indecipherable]. I forgot. Yes, it was. And even then, so we -- look, it was the end of our private, previous life, we knew that. We didn't know what's in front of us, we didn't know

how to cope with our past, yeah. But I knew that I'm in a concentration camp, from the very first moment on.

Q: In this group that you came in with.

A: Yeah?

Q: Were there close friends of yours, or these were just acquaintances?

A: No, it's -- you could -- look, it was funny. Nearly everybody knew everybody, but we were shifted forward and backward, and pushed around. So if you had a little group of people, two minutes later you belonged to another group, yeah. My very first contact in co -- it's very strange. My very first contact with somebody whom I haven't known before, and somehow drove -- drove us close to each other, was Katya, who became then the top administrative inmate of the women's camp. Katya Singr, now how -- what happened? While we were still laying on the straw, on the floor in that factory hall the first day, she's -- had an very deep voice, and that woman started to cry, and to scream loud, and crying, and crying --

Q: This isn't --

A: -- like an bad baby, yeah.

Q: This isn't Petronka?

A: Nonstop. No, she -- there was a reason to cry, of course, we all could have cried, but she just cried, no. I went over to her, just ask her to stop to cry, we are all in the same boat, yeah. And she has no right to scream, and to cry, and to -- it will not help. And I was sitting next to her, and she stopped crying. So we became friends. I was the only person who spoke to her, and so then, we shared our belongings, the food, until we were put into the cattle car. She was in the same cattle car, we stick together somehow, as close as we could, because I felt I can in-influence her in making her a little bit more comforta -- feel comfortable, and she needed something like that,

okay? Now, while in Birkenau, when we arrive -- no, sorry, while in Auschwitz one, when we arrive, somehow it's her deep voice, and all that, she took -- she took control over some of the girls in one of the rooms, and was made immediately an Stubendienst in charge of one room. After awhile they made her charge of the whole half of the barrack. And then she asked me -- yet -- but I went out to work. She asked me if I would like to stay with her, and to help. And I refused, because I thought I ge -- don't want to deal with people. That's about it. I didn't know how horrible the outer work really --

Q: You didn't want to deal with people? What is --

A: Yeah, I did not want to deal with people, to be in command of people.

Q: Ah, aha.

A: Yeah.

Q: Because you would have to do things you didn't --

A: I -- I -- I simply -- it was not -- I did -- I have no desire, yeah, to tell people what to do, or to distribute food, or -- I didn't like it. I wanted to go out to work, and come back and sleep, yeah. In -- but, then I had an accident, a -- a whole chimney -- while we were demolishing houses outdoors, an old chimney was falling on my back, and I felt very bad, and I had enough. So I approached somebody in charge of work detail, of the -- the -- one of the women of Ravensbrück, an German political prisoner, to help me to stay indoors, and if she could, arrange something. If somebody would believe that [indecipherable] and that's my profession. And -- because I still didn't wanted to stay with Katya, yeah. I didn't wanted to become a blockelteste, it's too [indecipherable] or whatever. I simply had no desire. It would have been nice if under normal conditions, but not there, where you had to be rough, or not even rough, but you had to scream, and you had to push people, and all right, that was it. Katya, I refused to help her. But

the other one, whom I approached, she helped me, and put me into -- into charge of -- s-some painting --

Q: The painting.

A: -- the red stripes. That story of the red stripes you have, correct?

Q: Right, right, yes. But I want to -- I want to go back a -- a little bit. When -- when you first arrived into Auschwitz one.

A: Yeah?

Q: Did you go -- you went into barrack 10, or barrack nine?

A: Yeah.

Q: One of th --

A: Upper -- upper part of barrack nine. Which -- all upper parts, which most people don't know, administratively, there's A barracks, and the lower part --

Q: Was the B.

A: No, no --

Q: No.

A: No A and B, only A.

Q: A.

A: Now, block nine, barrack nine was down, and barrack nine A on top, first floor

[indecipherable]

Q: Mm-hm. I see.

A: And 10 the same, and eight the same, the upper ones, they are always the A one. So early writings will mention the A numbers [indecipherable]

Q: And that means the upper, that means --

A: Yeah, the extra floors in Auschwitz.

Q: Right, right.

A: The upper one was always an A -- A -- A [indecipherable] always an A.

Q: Right. Now you mentioned to me that when you first arrived, it was clear that nobody knew how to organize this camp --

A: Nobody.

Q: -- that it was completely chaotic. It's --

A: Extremely chaotic.

Q: And wh --

A: Extremely, because --

Q: As if they weren't expecting people?

A: Who -- who sh -- who expect the people? They never -- people coming in by the thousands?

An transport consisted of thousand men or women, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: They were used to have first people -- prisoners from jails, yeah. Poles, or Germans, who were transferred out of ja -- from jails to the camp. But never transports of certain groups by the thousands. And they were -- th --

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: Tape number one, side B, September seventh, with Sippy Tichauer in New York City. Okay, so -- so they were not expecting, except sort of normal prisoner movement?

A: Correct. And that was the first time that the a-a-ar -- arisar -- RSHA --

Q: H-A.

A: -- transports arrived to Auschwitz, yeah. The very first time, so they had no idea how to go about, and were trying to leave everything to the ex -- to the prisoners from Ravensbrück, who were specially brought over to Auschwitz to help to organize, because they had experience, while spending many years prior to that transf -- transfer to Auschwitz, in Ravensbrück. But even they were not trained, or prepared for such mass influx of prisoners. So they depended practically on whatever we created there by ourselves.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: If people were -- and -- and the prisoners who became, or who wanted to be in charge, they had no experience of handling people, or the -- not at schools, they were not teachers, there were no -- so they're just ordinary house girls, yeah. Never with an -- hardly professionals. Some of them had training in -- in office work, yeah. They succeeded because eventually the SS started to organize, together with the prisoners. I mean, food -- food had to be distributed. They didn't know how to go about that. So they had to learn how to distribute food, they had to learn by -- by experience, day by day, how to go about everything. So, it was not easy, it was in horrible chaos for weeks, and weeks, and weeks. And eventually, after months, when the relocation of the women, in August '44 -- no, '42, occurred, th-the relocation to Birkenau, it was still cow -- chaotic, but people were already used to it. Roll call was -- lasted hours. The SS was never trained, they were not very intelligent people. Very simple, primitive people, and they s -- expected that the inmates will do the job, but the inmates were not trained for such an -- a bi -- big masses of people to handle. They -- I mean, if that would have been -- in the men's camp, in Auschwitz, it was different. See, you had the prisoners, the male prisoners, were all ex-Polish officers, yeah. They knew how to handle their troops, how to control. They were obey -- they

obeyed commands, because they were treating each other still like in the army. But that was the difference of the Polish male, and the older German male, of prisoners, and the women, yeah. Not because they were more capable, but it was an different background, yeah. We had -- many of the Poles were soldiers, ex-soldiers. The Germans were ex-soldiers too, or had military training, or had the -- were -- for example, we had a lot of s -- people who were in the Spanish Civil War, amongst the Germans. So they had -- there wa -- th-there was no problem with the German male -- male pr -- with the -- the male prisoners in Auschwitz. But the problem occurred only among the women, because they had no -- no military training.

Q: So that when you were in Auschwitz one --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- what's going on with the men is totally different from what's going on with the women?

A: Yeah, definitely. And there was no contact, and that there was an policy from the first day on, that if there is any job which a woman can do, in the woman's camp, or the woman's section, than the woman had -- will have preference. But if they don't find a woman, then a male will be brought over to do the job, yeah. And that's how I got my job, because I had a male profession. I was the only male -- woman in -- in -- in my country, in my profession, and when they were looking for somebody who could mix paint out of raw material, and produce those red stripes on the clothing, which I explained in prior interviews with you, they preferred me, because I was a woman who worked with -- perform in the woman's camp. If they wouldn't have found anybody, then the male would have brought.

Q: He would have done it.

A: They would have brought in a -- a man to do the work. So that was the difference. I -- now you understand why we had such an hard life in the beginning.

Q: Yeah.

A: Not because we were women, we had -- we had no military training, that's what I want to say.

Q: Sippy, around the area in Auschwitz one, where you -- where the women were staying --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- was there a barbed wire around it?

A: No, a wall was built.

Q: A wall?

A: A wall was built. We -- we were located in today's blocks from one to 10.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah, after 10 comes 11, the black wall. There were the women. And then, between us, parallel with those -- with the whole row, there was a wall erected.

Q: I brought -- I brought so --

A: I'll show you that on the map, if you like.

Q: Yeah, maybe we'll do it later.

A: Uh-huh. Let me see if I can see. What have you marked here, neela?

Q: That's what I marked, I marked what I think is the women's camp.

A: Now, where's from one to 11?

Q: Here.

A: Where's 11?

Q: 11 is here.

A: Good. The wall was here.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: And when we left, they removed the wall.

Q: They removed the wall. So you had, presumably, your own kitchen?

A: No.

Q: It's a separate kitchen, or --

A: No, no.

Q: -- it's all coming -- the food is coming from the kitchen -- the same kitchen.

A: I couldn't tell you that, because I really couldn't te -- no, no, the kitchen was not an separate kitchen.

Q: It wasn't?

A: No. There was no kitchen on the map, either.

Q: Right, right. Now, did you get somehow registered those first couple of weeks, or what did they do? They --

A: No, we were -- were registered very soon.

Q: You were registered very soon?

A: Very soon. I would say even after two days or so, only we were not tattooed --

Q: Right.

A: -- straight away, but they have then -- we were registered. They thought we were with that little apparatus where they press the numbers in.

Q: And it didn't last.

A: Which disappeared after awhile, and then we had to do it with the double needle. I explained that to you many times, right?

Q: Right.

A: So, we were registered, definitely.

Q: And the registration was on paper, and they also gave you some -- some -- the insignia [indecipherable] nothing

A: The registration was all -- that was an experienced -- experienced situation because the German concentration camp registration goes back to old times, so if you had here an couple of women were asked several questions, and you received your number, of course, and you received -- so that number you carry through the rest of your stay in the camp.

Q: And you had to sew this on your --

A: Pardon?

Q: Did you have to sew it on? Sew. You have to sew it?

A: Sure. And th-this -- you see, we had in the beginning, Russian uniforms, you know that.

Q: Yes.

A: From there the Russian prisoners of war. See --

Q: And these were pants and a shirt?

A: Yeah.

Q: Striped?

A: Pardon?

Q: Striped?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: No.

A: The Russians --

Q: They didn't --

A: The Russian soldiers in striped uniform?

Q: No.

A: Oh look, think.

Q: No, I'm assuming they didn't, but I don't know. When you say Russian uniforms, what is it -- what --

A: Russian uniform from --

Q: The ar --

A: -- their prisoners of war. Prisoners --

Q: So they're army uniforms.

A: Army uniforms, yeah.

Q: And were they heavy, were they light?

A: No, they were light, pretty light. So -- the Russian uniforms were cloths of cotton, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And -- but they were sh-small, because they have used some disinfecting technique which was shrinking.

Q: Right.

A: A steaming, yeah?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Even the steaming -- steaming of -- facilities are still there in Auschwitz, in Birkenau, if you go for a visit.

Q: The -- the big one at the --

A: In the back.

Q: The wa -- in the back.

A: Yeah, even the machine's there.

Q: Yeah.

A: And everything which went in are shrinking. No, anyhow, we had those uniforms, and when the uniforms -- when the influx of prisoners -- of newcomers, was so big that the Russian uniforms wouldn't last, then they introduced civilian clothes of people who brought their stuff. They have taken all the stuff away. The good things went over to -- transported to Germany, and the less good ones were distributed for newcomers. And they have -- they had to be marked with the red stripes, and there where my career started, by mixing the paint and painting the stripes.

That was the beginning --

Q: Right.

A: -- of my real artistic --

Q: Your career.

A: -- career.

Q: No, we'll get that for a minute. Di -- were you able to keep your shoes?

A: Yes, because every times they were -- somebody wanted to take my shoes away, especially with the German women, stopped me constantly, and they wanted to take my shoes off, because they looked so good and heavy. But they always too small, I had a small foot, and a small number, and not one of the German women was lucky enough. So I kept those shoes.

Q: So this was good for you. This was --

A: Oh boy, that saved my life in the beginning, in spite of the fact that in -- outdoor work, we were not allowed to march to the workplace with shoes, you had to go barefoot. You could only use the shoes during working time.

Q: Why were they doing that?

A: You ask me why? Ask me why.

Q: And did you have to take them off when you walked back?

A: Carrying -- carrying the shoes with you, forward, and backward. What is it? Yeah, yeah.

Q: How soon did they try to tattoo you with a -- those -- that ink stuff that --

A: Which one?

Q: The first time. And it --

A: Soon, very soon.

Q: Soon.

A: Very soon.

Q: But I want to know something. Were they tattooing the men, or were they experiment --

A: No --

Q: No.

A: the men were tattooed.

Q: They were?

A: They were tattooing the men, and then the men were coming over to us, and started to tattoo us.

Q: So how come it didn't work? They had men there for a long time. How come it --

A: Wait a minute, wait a minute. They never used those stamp for the men, yeah. They only started us to stamp. Somebody of the SS had an idea.

Q: That this would be easier or something?

A: Yeah. Bang, bang. But it didn't work.

Q: I see.

A: Then they have send us s-some man to do the tattooing. I was tattooed by -- by a man who -- whom -- who is still alive. I know him.

Q: And you asked him to do a nice --

A: Huh?

Q: You asked him to do a nice tattoo, yes?

A: And I told him to make me a smaller tattoo.

Q: Small, right.

A: He was my second cousin, so he obeyed.

Q: Were you surprised when Katya sort of started supervising in this room, given how frightened she was before? D-Did her behavior in the beginning surprise you, that she was --

A: That she --

Q: Started -- took over like this.

A: That she had leadership qualities, yeah.

Q: Yes, was that surprising?

A: No.

Q: It wasn't?

A: No, no. No, she was coming from a non-Jewish background, from an different world, yeah. I didn't know her background, but I knew that she -- she was good in -- in managing. She was management trade. I think I realized that she was trained in management, yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And she was mo -- good bookkeeper. She had an good background, and she put -- she had so -- understanding of American bookkeeping, yeah. For her to prepare a new system of roll calls, was nothing else like the knowledge of American bookkeeping.

Q: What do you mean she came from a non-Jewish background, I thought she was Jewish.

A: She was -- she had no Jewish education.

Q: Uh-uh, but her parents were Jewish? Or somebody was Jewish.

A: It's -- we don't know that.

Q: We don't -- I see.

A: I have -- she did not know anything about Judaism.

Q: Uh-huh. But you had told me a long time ago that she was Jewish.

A: She was Jewish.

Q: Uh-huh. Is it the case -- this -- this it seems -- this I wrote down somewhere, that who -- well, let me ask it this way, who was in charge of the outside commandos? Was it different from the people who were in charge of the inside commandos in the beginning?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. If you have, first of all, the whole structure, you must understand that you had an -- the SS structure, from top to bottom, was a military -- military-like business, or managerial-like business. You had top management, you had middle management, you had lower management.

Q: Right.

A: And each SS level had their inmate assistance, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: So, if it comes to work, yeah, is a section of inside and outside work, belonged to the German expression I'm going to use, the Abbatz einsatz. The work sec -- the section of -- which arranged your employment, yeah, it was like an employment office, where there was an SS man in charge, and an assistant, which was always of -- an inmate. The inmate had to expedite the orders of his the -- the SS person who receives the order from my level, or from -- or from, yeah, higher level of s -- he -- of -- I mean, on higher authority, which was negotiating this private companies, for work -- for -- for wer -- manpower. If an factory needed workers, 500 women, for

example, especially women, they have asked for it, then it went over to the top man of the SS.

He was giving the order to the camp, a representative of his command of work det -- work work, like an department of work, an office where you -- where you apply for work, yeah? Or an office which is -- I don't know the American word of comparison, a civilian comparison --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- but it's an department of work. You have -- say you have --

Q: So, like an employment office.

A: It's like an employment office. We have had in our bu -- camp office, an section of after the registration of the newcomers, which went by profession, yeah? So if they were looking for people who could sew, or tailors, they need 50 tailors for an factory, they have coming to us --

Q: To find -- to get them.

A: -- that we had the -- the registered people under this -- under -- the women who were telling us when they were registered they were tailors, yeah, or dressmakers. So we had our section by profession. We had [indecipherable] by profession. We had the [indecipherable] and the -- so where -- where am I now, I'm not -- I'm lost. What was the question?

Q: Well, I w -- I -- I think I was -- I was asking a question before the camp office is actually formulated. I'm trying to get some idea of --

A: Of who was in charge of the indoor and the outdoor.

Q: Yeah. In the be -- in -- before you had the camp office, before it beca -- becomes more ordered.

A: Yeah?

Q: I'm trying to figure out the kind of chaos that you're describing.

A: So yes, the chaos was settled gradually, by introducing the old German concentration camp system of abbatz dinkst, and abbatz einsatz.

Q: Mm.

A: Two people -- two SS sections, which were dealing with -- with like an employment office, and the office was supplied --

Q: The people.

A: The people. Now, if they needed 500 road workers, they were just asking for 500 women next morning, to be ready to march out. And then they were just taking the people from the barracks, and --

Q: Right, right, right.

A: -- put 500 together, and off they went. But that went always first to the SS commander, who asks them his counterpart of the inmate who was in charge of those [indecipherable] and -- and -- and the work -- work force, yeah, office. Now we have no words -- I mean I'm -- it's very hard to compare something with our civilian life, and our civilian structure. I'm trying to be --

Q: Right.

A: -- as simple as possible, and to make the comparison, so it should go into your head.

Q: Right.

A: But does it answer the question?

Q: Yeah, well let me ask -- let me ask it in another way. When -- when you're talking about these first few months, including the time you're going out --

A: Right.

Q: -- on the demolition crews.

A: Yeah.

Q: What's the effect on you and the women in b -- in it being so chaotic?

A: Nothing.

Q: Nothing?

A: Nothing. We -- we knew in the morning there were -- if you were in on work detail -- on constant work detail, and the SS leader of the work detail, because each work detail had an SS leader, too, in charge, if he was happy with you, he ask for you, and you --

Q: Again? I see.

A: -- you reported every time -- every morning to the same group of work detail. If you didn't wanted to go, then you were not going, yeah? Nobody -- they never knew where you are, and it wasn't big to [indecipherable] what is said on big, big [indecipherable] in the morning after roll call, the formation of work details. So they just grabbed the people, and --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: 500 here, and 600 here, and 30 here, and that went e-every day the hunt, it was just like a hunt, yeah. I -- well --

Q: What was the -- what was the name of that -- the soldier who gave you an aspirin after you'd injured your [indecipherable]

A: I didn't know his name, but rank was --

Q: You told me it was --

A: -- finner his rank was an finnerish in German.

Q: Oh, that's his rank?

A: Yeah, because --

Q: I thought that's is his name.

A: I tell you why, I tell you why.

Q: Yeah.

A: The inmate who was an kapo, a German woman, is her name there, Elli -- Elli Meyer?

Q: Yes, the -- some -- I have it somewhere, yes.

A: She called him her finnerish. Now, she could not know his name, or you never a-addressed some SS person by his name, yeah. You called the SS people by their ranks. And that was the usual thing. So when she said to him a finneri, it couldn't be his name, it was his rank.

Q: I see.

A: And I don't know what's an finneri, you have to look that up in an German dictionary --

Q: Right.

A: -- what an finneri means.

Q: But he got you an aspirin?

A: And not only that he got me an aspirin, he grabbed -- he took me in his arms, and put me on an -- on an pile of -- of straw, high, yeah. And was looking into his pockets for something, and took an aspirin. He didn't even know that you have to take an Bayer aspirin with water.

Q: And you went into the infirmary?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And is that when this S -- you s -- were next to an SS woman, and she hit you?

A: They hit me -- they hit -- she hit me, and --

Q: Because you were next to her?

A: Because what?

Q: Because you were next to her, or she just --

A: She was standing there, in front of the entrance of the infirmary, and she was hitting everybody, but she caught -- she hit me badly, and I knew who she was. She was hanged in

Bergen-Belsen, and yeah, yeah, yeah. One of he -- her name was Viningher. Folkenrat --
Folkenrat. Her maiden name was Viningher. Anyway ---

Q: Viningher was her -- her ma --

A: No, she was Folkenrat --

Q: Folkenrat?

A: She was known as Folkenrat, yeah. In any case, she was hitting me, and I never returned, and that saved my life.

Q: Because you left?

A: Because I left. Because those people who were admitted, were -- never made it to Birkenau during the relocation. So I -- I left, and then I approached another German woman, and told her about my profession.

Q: So, is this -- what -- approximately how many months were you doing this demolition work, a few months?

A: Demolition work I did, I would say til end of May.

Q: Til the end of May. And then you went, and you said that you have this profession, yeah.

A: Enough is enough, and I went -- she was in the lager aredest, her name was Ava Weigl, an woman from Berlin, and I told her --

Q: And it's W-e-i-g-l, right?

A: W-e-i-g-l, yeah. Now, she said, "I -- look, I know what your profession is, because my husband," or my lover, whoever he was, "has the same profession in Berlin." Now, a couple of days later, she comes -- wait -- yeah. But she said, "Stay at home, don't go out to work, and if the SS woman Drexel," was then in charge of the roll call, "if she would ask you why you are at

home, just tell her that Ava asked me to stay at home, because she has an job for me in the making." Now --

Q: So was that where you recuperated, then? You just --

A: What?

Q: How did you recuperate?

A: That was all.

Q: That was it?

A: That was it.

Q: You just stayed there.

A: I had -- I had no time to recuperate, I have been fighting for my life. It was -- I was badly, badly hit.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: In any case, next -- four days later, one of the top SS men was coming and looking for somebody who can mix paint, and all that, so custom that -- it was custom tailored for me, that job, yeah.

Q: Right, right.

A: And in between newcomers were coming in, and the -- the Russian uniform were going to an end, and so those clothes were -- had to be marked with red stripes. So that was quite an career, it started this way, and it was an coincident, everything, that I spoke German, that I approached her, and she --

Q: At the right time.

A: At the right time.

Q: I'm going to stop the tape now, so --

A: No.

Q: This is the end of tape number one, side B with Sippy Tichauer.

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is tape number two, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer, conducted on September seventh, 2000, in New York City, with Joan Ringleheim. I think we're okay here. Sippy, why -- first of all, who was it who wanted you to paint the red stripe, is it --

A: I beg your pardon?

Q: Who was the SS who wanted the red stripe?

A: It was Aumeier.

Q: And you spell that A-u-w, or A-u-m-e-y-e-r?

A: No. You can look him up. I think it's A-u-m-e-i-e-r.

Q: Uh-huh, e-r. Okay, I'll look that up.

A: But you can look that up again. He was sentenced --

Q: Why did he have -- wa -- oh, go ahead.

A: Why did he what?

Q: Why this idea of the red stripe?

A: Ah. You see, people who are working outdoors in the fields, or wherever, if they wear civilian clothes, then they could have been taken for any civilian person. If they escape, they would have been able to mingle among the civilians, and nobody would have known who they are. But being marked with an special red stripe, the -- even the male -- male prisoners, who some of them, the officials had no stripe th -- on upper clothing, they had the dark blue jackets, yeah, at wintertime, or some of them had -- yeah, dark blue jackets, they had the red stripes in the center of their jacket, so to be recognized as an inmate. That was very, very known in the -- in the system of -- of concentration camp inmates, the red stripe --

Q: Suits?

A: They were marked with the red stripes from top -- from top to bottom, yeah.

Q: So this was sort of typical in the concentration camp system?

A: Yeah.

Q: It was.

A: Right. If you had something which was not --

Q: A uniform.

A: -- striped --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- then it had to be marked --

Q: Marked.

A: -- to be recognized as inmate.

Q: So -- so tell --

A: Sometimes the pants on the sides were marked with red stripes, yeah. And women, well we had to distribute to the newcomers, civilian clothes, had to be marked so to distinguish them between civilians and -- and inmates. It was --

Q: So tell me --

A: Huh?

Q: Go ahead.

A: Pardon?

Q: So te-tell me what sort of paint did you use, so that it would adhere to the cloth?

A: P-P-Paint which does not -- which does not dissolve in water. Some kind of oil paint with an drying agent, to -- to -- to dry quick enough, yeah.

Q: H-How long did it take you to figure out what -- how to put this paint together?

A: To what?

Q: How long did it take you to figure out how to put the paint together so that it would work, or did you know --

A: I didn't need to figure out, I --

Q: You knew?

A: -- have been an trained painter. That was part of our training.

Q: And who came up with the color red?

A: They.

Q: They came up with it?

A: Yeah.

Q: It didn't glow in the dark, did it?

A: No. In those days they -- they were not devel -- they had not developed the colors which are gl -- no, we -- we have developed that glowing business very, very late.

Q: Late, yes, right.

A: Yeah. Pretty late.

Q: So when -- when you first -- when you first developed this, did you -- were you the only person who was painting the stripes?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: So how many women do you think you did in a day?

A: Oh, everyone who had a stripe was ready to go to work. Those who had no stripes, couldn't go. The others in dozens, by the hundreds, yeah one, two, three, from top to bottom down.

Q: And would this happen at the end of a registration process? Is that where -- or where would it happen?

A: No, it happened even before the registration, the moment you received your dress. It depends. Sometimes they had -- so they were selected for work, or for work detail, and they were standing there, and I had to go from one to -- to -- from one to -- and to -- from one to the next, and do the whole [indecipherable] the whole group, and then some -- and when there were no people after that -- after they went out to work, during the day I had -- I -- I had to do the stripes in the store, and prepare that for the next person who received that dress of -- as a newcomer, yeah. So, I had to make things in stock at the beg -- at the -- under -- in the s-stores, where those dresses were prepared for newcomers, that I did during the day, and -- and when -- when there were -- were not enough, and we had more people to go out for work than we could paint. And supplies, oh, I had to do that while standing in -- in -- before -- standing outdoors, and I had to do that on their body.

Q: You mean when they had the --

A: But -- yes, but --

Q: -- when they had the clothes on?

A: -- they started -- I started actually to do that in the store, in the store.

Q: So they would already get clothes with the paint on it, all right.

A: And they would get the clothes -- clothes wi-with the stripes, that's right.

Q: So, did this start happening before you moved to Birkenau? Before August?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Q: So, in May? May - June?

A: It started very soon, very soon. The moment we had no more Russian uniforms to supply, then the -- some of the Russians uniforms appeared again, because people were killed in the gas, and we received the business back, only the numbers had to be removed, because they were the numbers of the dead people.

Q: Dead people, yeah. So, Sippy, during this time --

A: Mm?

Q: -- they were gassing in Auschwitz one?

A: Huh?

Q: During this time --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- before you moved to Birkenau --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- they're -- they are gassing in Auschwitz one?

A: That, no, no.

Q: They're not?

A: They were gassing in Birkenau.

Q: But that in --

A: [indecipherable] house. Huh?

Q: No, no. But before you moved to Birkenau --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- between March and August, is there --

A: See, it was --

Q: -- are there some gassings?

A: -- it was -- there were rumors, but we -- we had no proof. We didn't know. We had no --

Q: You didn't know?

Q: No, we didn't. We knew that non-Jews were gassed, too, but I can't -- we -- we don't know where they were gassed, yeah. We had no sondercommando in our switzwan. So that's why we suspected that even if they have gas in our switzwan, the corpse were not burned in our switzwan. They were sent -- take to Birkenau, yeah, and to -- burned in open pits, or wherever. But they did not -- there were -- there were never people from the sondercommando working in Auschwitz one.

Q: Auschwitz one.

A: They only burned the people -- non-Jewish people who died, and then supplied the urns to their relatives, yeah. They were dead people, not gassed people.

Q: Right.

A: So that is an whole story which has to be explored, and to -- read, how they have developed their killing process in Auschwitz one, and then later in Birkenau. But all I know is that non-Jews were gassed, too, yeah, in the beginning.

Q: In the beginning, right.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Did you believe the rumors?

A: Of course, we -- we knew that they were gassed, because we received their clothes in -- back in the -- after the gassing, with their numbers.

Q: So you didn't think they just died?

A: [indecipherable] just died --

Q: You assumed it was too ma --

A: -- you see, in the beginning it was very hard to -- to control and check rus -- what really happened, because there was no even interest in, or -- I mean, we had no need to distinguish one from the other. If they were non-Jews, then they have returned to earth with some dirt, so they are not even the ashes. But otherwise, I have -- I had very little interest in the whole business, because we have learned of the gassing pretty late, yeah. And -- then later, while in Birkenau, and while I had been engaged, and I received an drawing office in the camp office, and I was engaged to pr -- to produce some diagrams with all the movements in the camp -- in the women's camp. He said I had to produce those diagrams who were then sent over to Berlin. It was only then that I became more interest in the gassing process, because I had to register the daily gassing of women in the camp. And that, I re -- I had reported every -- every end of the month I received some daily reports of those gassings, and had to enter that on the diagram. So that's why I knew about it, and why sometimes we had to -- the people who were already pre -- prepared us, or -- not prepared, but people who were decided o-of their killing, through gas, were still alive while I already had to enter them on my diagram as -- as dead people, yeah. That wasn't -- that wasn't bad, the hardest part of it was between the selections in -- in -- in those selections, yeah, not of newcomers, but those who were living in the camp. The selections, the transfer to the gas chamber, it took sometimes on whole, maybe 12 hours, but in advance, we already had to register them as dead, because they were not alive any more, was in the trans-fer process. It's very hard to explain, and hard to -- to bel -- to -- to understand the -- psychologically how hard it was on my system. Couldn't do much.

Q: Can you explain how hard it was on you?

A: Pardon?

Q: Can you explain how hard it was on you to do that?

A: Who?

Q: How hard it was for you to do that?

A: Could you speak a little bit louder?

Q: Can you explain how hard it was for you to do this? What did it do to you?

A: Hard that you had -- that you have known the people are still alive, and they were registered already, had to be registered already for the next day's dead, yeah. It -- that is hard to explain, yeah. Just like I would say compare with you have in front of you, people who are dying, yeah? You only don't know when they are going to die, but they are in the stage of dying. You feel very strange while you are still here in front of you the living body, and you know they may be dead tomorrow, or after tomorrow, but they are already in -- theoretically, in your mind, dead.

Q: Yeah.

A: That is more or less the -- the same situation.

Q: Yeah.

A: But did you ever have anything like that?

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah? You see -- and if you have masses of people, even if you have -- didn't know them, but you have an group of people by the hundreds, yeah, sometimes even healthy ones, and here they are, already dead on paper, and they're standing outside still on the -- on -- on th -- on the ground, and are still alive and breathing, and -- and -- and don't know that they're going to be dead tomorrow, yeah. That was hard. And just -- just like with an dying person who -- whom you know, and who -- where you know he is going to die, but he doesn't know, yeah? Or she doesn't know.

Q: Right.

A: And it's sometimes just a question of hours. Niya, is that an comparison?

Q: Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

A: Good.

Q: But let me go back to the painting for a moment.

A: To what?

Q: Painting. The painting of the stripe.

A: Oh, you are an artist all of a sudden.

Q: I want to know f -- you did it for a certain amount of time alone?

A: Yeah.

Q: And then you brought in one woman, two women? Other people did it as well?

A: No.

Q: No? Only you?

A: Only me, because I knew -- I knew how to -- to paint, how to mix the paint from raw material, yeah. That was on -- something you had to learn in -- as an professional, and not to -- like an housewife who can cook. Within -- it was the difference like between an chef, and the primitive peasant woman, both could cook, yeah?

Q: Right, right.

A: But the difference how to cook, is between an chef and then -- and then any -- any housewife can cook, right, or learn to cook, now --

Q: But you weren't the only one who put the stripe --

A: Yes, I was it.

Q: You was?

A: Later on --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- when I was entrusted with -- of the printing of the numbers --

Q: Right.

A: I trained some other people to do the stripes, but it was me who mixed the colors.

Q: Always.

A: The paint, yeah.

Q: Right. And for how long was this done?

A: All the time.

Q: All the time. So, if someone did not wear a uniform, the striped uniform which was common, they always had the red stripe.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: But you said that you never had the red stripe?

A: Oh yes.

Q: But yours would re -- you -- yours would come off in the rain? You -- yes?

A: I did my red stripes with water -- on a water bases, so that it would come off, in case I would like to remove it. And I did it before we went on the Dead March, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Then I got myself a new coat from the [indecipherable] yeah, on other -- on coat, on warm coat, I painted the red stripe, which came off in no time, and I was prepared for any situation, yeah.

Q: Okay. So let's -- let's talk about the camp office.

A: The camp office?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Which camp office? Now listen very carefully. I have here --

Q: Not the stopskaboida.

A: Uh?

Q: Not the stopskaboida. Yours. Your office.

A: What are you saying? Not what?

Q: Not the stopskaboida.

A: Now wait a wi -- wait a minute. I have an dilemma.

Q: Yeah.

A: There is an group of people who worked, the secretaries for SS people.

Q: Right.

A: As secretaries for the Gestapo. Each Gestapo man had one woman who worked -- was his secretary, whom he -- whom had to -- who was forewarned not to disclose anything what they are doing, otherwise they are going to be shot. It was an -- you must understand, and you will not understand, but nevertheless, Auschwitz and Birkenau had sub-camps -- so-called sub-camps. Now, to make you -- give you an idea, those sub-camps, in our English language they are sub-camps, but there is no German word for it, yeah. The German system of the camp in Birkenau and Auschwitz, in the German language, in their own language, had two types of sub-camps, yeah. That is now hard to explain, but there is no -- again, no word for sub-camps. They were -- if I would like -- if you would like me to translate that by the wording, I'm going to give you the German name. There was one type of camp which was -- one type of sub-camps, which was called a branch camp, *Zweig lager*, and *Zweig*, Z-w-e-i-g, is a branch of a tree, yeah?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: For example.

Q: Right.

A: And then there was an other type of camps, of sub-camps, which were called Abschnitts lager, A-b-s-c-h-n-i-t-t-s, Abschnitts lager, that means -- abschnitts -- I don't know what -- what it means in English. It's not always wise to translate exactly, because sometimes you get some stupid results out of it. But lets call the other one sub-camp, yeah? Okay?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: An Abschnitts mean -- would -- I would even say section, yeah? So whatever it is, it is still an sub-camp.

Q: Right.

A: Only, but we don't -- but you and all other big shots don't know, is that one of those two were always -- the one will belong to one -- the one group, even if they were allocated two yards from the crematorium, belonged to an -- to heads of privilege -- privilege, in -- in commas, yeah?

Q: Quotes.

A: In quotes. Not to be exposed for gassing. As a matter of fact, they were forbidden to gas the people who belonged to those camps. While those who were part of the section -- what I'm calling section, underwent selections and could have got -- been gassed. Now comes an example, okay?

Q: Okay.

A: Let's go to the women's camp.

Q: Okay.

A: Harmense, Boody, Ricekoff, Shtopskaboida, B-Beetoogee, were all privileged branch camps. There's no history in the Auschwitz -- there's no -- no example in the whole Auschwitz women's camp history, that there was ever a selection in those sub-camps, which I am calling an branch --

branch camp. Never, there was never in the whole history, an selection in Ricekoff, or in Harmense, or in Boody, or in the Shtopskiboidi, or --

Q: Beetoogee.

A: In Beetoogee. That is the [indecipherable] camp, which was next, between crematorium five and four. Good. While the other branch, or the other category of s -- of what am I calling --

Q: Don't do that.

A: Huh?

Q: Don't touch that.

A: What?

Q: Don't touch that.

A: What? Ah --

Q: You're touching my mi --

A: -- while the other category, what am I calling that?

Q: The section.

A: Yeah.

Q: You could be gassed.

A: Could be gassed, there were selections going on. For example, to that group belonged the sealava, yeah, b-b-b-B1C, B2B -- B -- B1 -- B2B, that was a Czech camp, was a Gypsy camp. The C lagers of Czech camps, the Gypsy camp, both camps -- both parts of the women's camp, B1A and B1B, but they were -- that was a -- no, that was -- forget about B1A and B1B, that was the main women's camp, and all others belonged to us, to B1A, and B1B, up to the women's camp. So, I'm giving you here a small example why -- yeah, and they were all administered by the women's camp -- camp office.

Q: Sections. The section -- what, everything was?

A: Everything, both sections, and had to report every day to the roll call -- for the roll call, to our camp office. We were the leading administrative entity --

Q: Right.

A: -- for the women's camp. It was not the Shtopskaboidas --

Q: Right.

A: -- they were an bloody, unimportant, but Laura Shelly brought an -- was giving the impression if they would have been headquarters of everything. They were the SS headquarters, yeah. And they -- there was no cola -- col -- cooperation or camaraderie among those SS secretaries, whatsoever. I have no idea how to explain that to the Whitman girl. He misunderstood the whole -- she had -- she was, what you are calling in German, spinning, yeah.

Now, is that clear, what I explained to you?

Q: Yes, but not --

A: Is that new? Is that new?

Q: Yes, that's -- that -- you haven't said that to me before.

A: Huh?

Q: You haven't said that to me before.

A: I never said it to you before.

Q: No, no.

A: Of course I'd not.

Q: Right.

A: How else could I have said to you during all those years? But I hope that you understand now, better than you would have understood 10 years ago.

Q: But explain something to me. Why -- why would there be a group of privileged prisoners from which there would never be a selection or a gassing? Why?

A: Don't ask me.

Q: You don't know?

A: I don't know. You couldn't ask any -- that -- you couldn't ask the system somewhere in Berlin why.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was actually so -- we were so sure that we helped our ca -- our friends to be transferred to those camps.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. You were two yards away from crematorium five, and were not all -- and were not gassed. Where people had to come from Holland, and from France, and I don't know -- know where from, to -- to be gassed in that crematorium, while the camp around --

Q: They were not.

A: -- two yards only, had never one case of selection, yeah. And we knew it, but very few in the camp office, maybe it was me and Katya, who knew what the real -- and that why we could help. That why we were transferring friends constantly to those parts of -- of the camp where we knew they will never be exposed to the selection. Okay?

Q: Yeah. So, is --

A: Now, anything to say?

Q: About this?

A: Mm-hm. Is that -- that is now -- are you surprised what I told you, no?

Q: Yeah, it's -- in one sense it's surprising, in another sense there -- there's some recognition that there was a certain kind of -- I don't -- I don't know whether I want to call it protection going on, if you had a certain standing. But that it would be particular commandos is a surprise to me. I mean, I understood from what you told me, that having been in the camp for x number of years --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- would mean something to the SS.

A: No, no.

Q: No?

A: No. No, because [indecipherable] so few, that you did -- had no -- that means they didn't know who -- who was who, if you have an -- that -- what would mean to the SS? The headquarter SS, they can -- they had nothing to do with it.

Q: But in a certain way, this doesn't make any sense. Do you know what I mean?

A: No, it's just --

Q: Do you know what I mean? Not that the s -- the system doesn't make any sense.

A: The whole system didn't -- the whole system didn't make any sense. But I'm telling you now something which was the real -- the real issue, it -- that was it.

Q: So how did you -- how did you know? I mean, at what point did it become clear to you and Katya, that these are protected commandos?

A: From the beginning.

Q: From the beginning? Because they didn't treat those people in the same way they were treating other people?

A: No, we -- we -- we knew -- Katya was close to the top SS woman, o-or man who were in charge. What are you looking for?

Q: I'm just -- because the tape is going to stop.

A: Yeah. No, we knew it. I don't -- I knew it. I didn't even investigated why I know it, where from. I knew it. So --

Q: Okay. Let's -- let's stop for a second. This is the end of tape number two, side A.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is tape number two, side B, with Helen Tichauer, on September seventh.

A: Look, I give you an example. In '43, we were tr -- always trying from the beginning, once I got into the -- into the -- with the position of the camp office, how I got into the pen -- office is another story.

Q: Yeah, we'll talk about that.

A: Yeah?

Q: Yeah.

A: But, once I've been in, and I have noticed that there are no selections going on over there, yeah, in those camps -- in those part of the camp, we have started [indecipherable] I was running to Katya, Katya, I need a job, let -- let's transfer her, let's do that. So we did it. We have transferred the people to safeguard them, and to save them, yeah, into those comma -- into those work details. And only once in my lifetime, for which I'm even today very unhappy, is that very good friends of mine, in the beginning, when everything was still very bad, and the new art [indecipherable] work detail in -- of those branch camps were established, and among them, one was called Boody, and I have helped an lot of girls to go to Boody, because we knew it is one of the branch camps, and there were never selections in Boody. Unfortunately, some of the German kapos started to massacre the Jewish girls. But that had nothing to do with the system, yeah. And

there were -- I still have sometimes sleepless nights, because my best friends wouldn't be helped, yeah. They got killed. So what can I tell you? But that's the only place where they died -- the only time they died prematurely, and they were not killed by the SS. They were killed by German inmates who were in charge there, as kapos, and so on. You know the story of Boody. But otherwise, you show me one camp -- sub-camp, where there were selections of those I have mentioned to you. Never.

Q: Did the women know when they got there, that that was the case, they su --

A: Pardon?

Q: Did the -- when the women got into these -- into this -- the branch camps --

A: Yeah.

Q: They understood?

A: They knew they in a good --

Q: They're in a good place.

A: -- they're in a good place.

Q: Yeah.

A: Of course.

Q: Yeah.

A: They knew, very much so. They are all alive, they all survived. I [indecipherable] my problems, you know the -- the Whit-Whitman girl, yeah. She made a job out of her paper, and telling about the camaraderie, and the solidarity, and I don't know what nonsense about that group of people, and they were the -- they -- they are all alive, you can ask one by one, if she ever had a friend among them. They were afraid of each other.

Q: In these dif -- in these branch camps, or just in sta --

A: No, in -- no, in the Shtopskaboida, yeah.

Q: In the stop -- in the Shtopskaboida. Yeah. Did Susan work in the Shtopskaboida? She did for awhile, right?

A: Yeah. And ask her about the camaraderie, ask her. She'll laugh into your face.

Q: Yeah right? Tell me about the beginning of the camp office. How di --

A: Huh?

Q: How do you remember the camp office starting? How was -- how -- how did it happen that you had this tripartite --

A: It -- we already had an camp office in Auschwitz one.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And there were some women from Ravensbrück, who were engaged in the starting of the system, yeah, who keeps the Haupt book. There was an -- in each camp they had an ha -- principle book, a big one.

Q: That's a howt book?

A: Haupt, yeah, was principle book that was in every camp, so they had to enter that by day and by number, by professions. Whole story on one -- one big book, like that. They kept that, then they had already mainly they engaged th -- the -- i-it was an very, very wishy-washy system, and when we relocated to Birkenau, there was an German woman still in charge, but in October [indecipherable] September, end of September, she was replaced, and obasarin Drexler, who --

Q: Drexler, or --

A: Drexler. No drek --

Q: Drexel.

A: They calling her Drexler, yeah.

Q: So it isn't -- I can't figure out who it is.

A: Drexel.

Q: It's Drexel?

A: Yeah, Drexel, no Drexler.

Q: Okay, okay. Go ahead.

A: Uh-huh. As she became the rapport fuhrering, so that was an rank, in charge of the roll calls, yeah.

Q: Drexel?

A: Pardon?

Q: Drexel became in charge?

A: Drexel, in charge. And this charged the -- all other women, they were -- they were engaged, and got herself Katya, to become the rapport shabering. That means, you had an rapport fuhrer, or fuhrering to lead that, that was always an SS woman, or an SS man, and you had the inmate who was then the one who did the job.

Q: Right.

A: And I have been, during those couple of weeks in September, hospitalized, because I had typhus, and all kinds of junk in my body. I was very sick. And the whole block was selected, just ready to be gassed. And I have been taken out as the only one from the whole selection of I don't know how many thousand, on that particular day, and transferred to the camp office. What is it?

Q: There's the phone. We've now returned.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: We've now returned.

A: They transferred me immediately to the camp office.

Q: Who -- who took you out?

A: The Drexler, and Katya was standing there. Yeah, who took me out? The camp leader, because his secretary was an friend of mine, and when she saw me there on that big heap of people to be -- just to be taken on the truck, she was running to him, and asking if he would help me. Because a couple of weeks before, I used to paint some numbers in his office, on the wardrobes for the individual SS men.

Q: Right.

A: But I haven't finished, because I -- I had to -- I was transferred to the hospital, and she was an -- an --

Q: Was her name Honey Yaeger?

A: Yeah. She -- she was -- she had an yellow and purple star, because she had an Jewish lover.

So --

Q: And --

A: And he was Mueller.

Q: Mueller.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yeah, and his first name?

A: Ha -- I think -- no, I must look him up.

Q: Okay.

A: He only was two months there, two months in the camp.

Q: And he was --

A: He's a very -- very seldom that he is mentioned in any literature, but I --

Q: And why do you think he responded to her, to hon -- to --

A: Because he knew me.

Q: He knew you.

A: And she -- he took -- he asked Shtevitz, was another famous SS man, to come over, and to check if I am capable to carry on with the work. And so he asked me several things to do, up and down the bed, and jumping over the -- what is it?

Q: A pit? A ditch?

A: Ditches, yeah.

Q: A ditch.

A: Little he knew that I was an very sporty type, and that I was used to go up and down the ladder, yeah. For me, all that, even as sick as I've been, was no big deal, yeah. So I passed everything he wanted me to do.

Q: Even though you weren't feeling well.

A: Huh?

Q: Even though you were not feeling well.

A: I was very sick.

Q: Yeah.

A: There comes the man who was in charge of the selection, and of the whole business then, on that day, that was that Heinrich Schwartz, another SS man, an ugly one. And so when Stevitz told him that this Mueller want me to -- out, he said, okay, only if I have no fever. So go to the -- they commanded me to go over to the hospital station, and there they had to measure my fever, my temperature. Now, I nearly collapsed, but they told me not to worry, because even if I have fever, they won't tell. They took me int -- so they were selecting the people, the whole barracks, complete, even the blockelteste went. And -- no I don't think some of the blockelteste -- no, they

-- no, they left the blockelteste behind. But what happened is that -- that Schwartz wacom -- was coming every five minute. Has she fever, or hasn't she? He was so concerned about one person, yeah. And they constantly said, she is not ready yet, not ready. They were pumping in me some medication, Bydrian, I remember that, and Anna Weiss was the physician.

Q: Anna Weiss?

A: All -- Olly was there, Gerda Sneider, the whole hospital hierarchy, they just assured me they will not say that I have fever. And finally, when -- when he returned, and everybody was already gone, so he was just waiting for me, so when they ask him -- when he asked if I have fever, they said no, okay? And there was an SS man, who witnessed the whole business inside the hospital compound. And he was coming then, and brought me pen, and a piece of paper, and said sit down and do some drawing, start to work. So I s -- I was totally deaf, and blind, and I couldn't remember the letters, how they looked. I was tot -- look, I was out of the world, with high fever. So I said, "But I don't know how the letter looks." He said, "Do whatever you want." You know, if I would have today be able to keep that, what I draw, it would have been a wonderful analysis for some of those psychiatrists, yeah. The results of my -- the condition, and the results of my whole situation, and what I did. In any case, the moment all everything was gone, I had my -- yeah, and the SS man said to me, "Look, do anything you want, but just work." So okay, I did -- I don't know what I did, but after awhile the door opens, in comes Katya, and [indecipherable] and Drexel, with an sheet of paper in the hand to transfer into the camp office. And that was the beginning of my career. Two months later, Mandel arrived as an oboffsairn, yeah, in charge of the whole camp, and Mandel cat -- was really -- respected me from the first day on, and made my life very tolerable. Her boyfriend was in charge of the bowlightung of the camp -- building

office, yeah. And he established me my drawing office. He supplied me with wonderful instruments, and material, and --

Q: What did she see in you?

A: Huh?

Q: What did she see in you, do you think? Why --

A: I was the one who was [indecipherable] it's the only one, and she didn't know why. The only one from the whole thousands and thousand of people, yeah. And she couldn't -- she didn't know why.

Q: She didn't know why.

A: She didn't know why. But they --

Q: How -- how was she with other people? Was she a very cruel person?

A: She was an very beautiful woman. I wouldn't say she was cruel, no. But she didn't like the prostitutes, the German prostitutes. She didn't liked -- she liked -- I don't know what she liked. I don't know why she liked me.

Q: But sh -- but she liked you.

A: I will never forget -- yeah, I helped to organize the orchestra too, during -- under her -- under her time. When she noticed that I'm artist by profession, that I'm a musician, so she -- she -- and I spoke good German, and so once she called me and asked me to put an dedication in an book. So th -- I noticed she made another SS man an birthday present, but normally, I don't know what people are -- what the SS was giving each other. She made him a present of books. So I was starting to think, yeah, that was one quality which I never expected, yeah. And asking me to put an dedication in. And on that day, I noticed -- I said, but [indecipherable] that is my birthday too, yeah, on the same day. So she said, "Oh, so go [indecipherable] you have an sheet of paper, go to

the package room, and get yourself the biggest parcel they have.” Yeah. And do you know who was in charge then, already, in the package room? That SS woman who --

Q: Who slapped you?

A: Who so she started to respect me.

Q: You too. What was Drexel like?

A: Ugly. Oy, was she ugly. And she want -- she ask me -- Katya is standing there, and I was coming, and walking, and she called me back. You’re short -- your dresses are too short. I want to see you tomorrow with I don’t know how many inches longer, and wanted to hit me. And I was running away. I don’t know what happened to -- she could have shot me, yeah. And Katya c-comes later on and said, “Sippy, you know she -- she complained that Sippy’s [indecipherable].” She was running away from me, and I wanted to hit her. So, I don’t know what Drexel was. She was -- I noticed that she did selections, she participated in selections, while Mandel did not. But Mandel once signed an sheet of selected paper, and because of that she was hanged. So.

Q: Uh-huh. [inaudible]

A: Look, it was an very hard -- well, it was very hard to understand, what really went on in the mind of the -- that Mandel woman, that she had, as an partner, an h-high official, and an trained - - an engineer -- an engineer by profession, or an architect. And she -- as I had mentioned to you, that was an sign of -- on bit of an higher level -- mentally higher level than all others, while giving another SS man a book as an present, yeah, for a birthday. But would -- how would you have judged that? That they were thinking different.

Q: Differently.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: She was from Austria, but with her, I had good luck. In -- at the end of '44, there was an friend. The Germans wanted to establish the biggest women's concentration camp in the world, in -- not too far from Dachau, yeah, in Kaufering. And we have heard about it, and Mandel should have become the biggest shot -- big shot of the biggest concentration camp on earth. So sh-she selected some of the Auschwitz people which she wanted to take along with her, and nobody from the camp office, and nobody knew what's going to happen, whom she's going to take. It would have been an advantage, because there would have been no crematorium, yeah. So they prepared a list whom she selected in the camp office. We had one typewriter, and one woman typed the list. So I wanted to know if I am on the list, because it was, after all, an big event to leave Auschwitz, and join the staff of the biggest SS woman in the world. And -- but the woman who produced the list was mean, and didn't wanted to tell us. So, what am I doing, the list was prepared, and it went to Berlin. And while she was carrying the list to deliver the list, I went into the wastepaper basket, and there were some carbon paper. So I've been on the list.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: And Katya was on the list?

A: Katya was already gone, because she had an affair with an SS man, and was -- disappeared from the earth of -- from the face of the earth. Katya was stupid, because I didn't know that she had the affair. He was coming there to the office to visit, every day. And I went over to Katya, and I said, "Katya, who is he? Who is he?" What is -- no, I did-didn't said who is he. "Katya, what is he doing here?" She said, "He's coming to visit me." Her. I said, "Katya, that's an mass murderer." She looked at me. I noticed him shu -- sh -- killing the people at the black wall, from

I visited while still in Auschwitz, I went from block nine to block 10. There are still today the wooden -- wooden timbers, yeah. But in between the timbers you could look. And I have witnessed the execution of hundreds and hundreds of people, which he performed. And I said to her, "Katya, that's a mass murderer." She never said anything to me. Our relationship went -- slowly cooled off, yeah, because of that. And then she was arrested, put into the bunker, and was sent away, and he was sent to the front. So nothing really happened between the two of -- he was killed, and she was stupid enough to risk her good life she had. She had an important -- she had an important life to carry -- to -- to lead in Auschwitz. She could help, she could do a lot of things. And all for an SS man who was really a mass murderer. But I'm glad that I told her that in my lifetime. I was honest enough to forewarn her, yeah.

Q: And what happened to her in the end?

A: She died.

Q: She died. In Auschwitz? Or she was sent away?

A: No, she -- she was sent away, but she survived. We have met after the war.

Q: Yeah.

A: She visited me, I visited her in '75 in Prague, but she died of an -- of an kidney failure.

Q: Did you talk about it after the war? What she was -- what she had done?

A: Oh, every second that I have -- I have on record -- not a record, a tape.

Q: Tape?

A: I have sent Susan --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- over to visit her, and she didn't wanted to speak to anybody, but when I told her that I'm sending somebody and she remembers Susan a little bit. So, this Susan was stupid. Instead to letting her talk --

Q: Susan would talk.

A: -- Susan was talking all the time. Not -- of -- in any case, that's the story of my -- my entrance to the camp office, and it was relatively an important job, and we could do a lot, yeah, and we were helping a lot.

Q: Who decided that the -- the drawing office would be created? Who made --

A: Mandel.

Q: Mandel? She thought of the idea? Because she knew what you could do?

A: She knew what I could do, and her lover was an architect, in charge of the architectural office, of whole Auschwitz, yeah. I had equipment and material, and whatever I want. I had a good life in that drawing office. It was an independent, no competition. Nobody was giving me the order except she, yeah.

Q: Not even Katya, so it was you directly.

A: Katya yes, but they --

Q: Together.

A: -- knew what I'm doing, and [indecipherable], as sometimes SS women were coming with a little of work, yeah. And -- but it became too much, yeah. I tried to s -- to satisfy everybody, but then it became too much, and I complained to Mandel, said, "I don't know what to do.

Everybody's coming, and wants some little work, and I cannot fulfill, I cannot do everything."

She said, "Okay," said, "if anybody comes in future, just tell her or him to see me first." That was the end, yeah.

Q: Tell me --

A: I could talk to her, that was funny, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she was the one, when she was arrested, she was Catholic, one of the Polish woman -- and I'll show you on some photograph. She is in that book too, "Fighting Auschwitz." One of that woman was arrested after the war by the Polish Communists, and sentenced to death because of her anti-government feeling. And they put her together with Mandel in one cell. So, they had enough time to exchange their views and so on. And then Mandel one day ask her -- even what's his name, Lankban describes the whole affair in his book, too. One day, Mandel ask her if she would forgive her. So both were Catholics. She said, "Look, why are you asking me? I forgive you, but He upstairs, it's up to Him." So that was authentic, and she told me the story, too.

Rachwalova was her name. Mandel ask her to forgive her.

Q: What was the woman's name? Raquel?

A: Rachwalova.

Q: Rach?

A: Rachwalova.

Q: Rachwalova. That's her last name?

A: R-a-c-h-w-a-l-o-v-a. I forgot her f-f -- her first name, my God. I have a photo here with her, we have met after the war. And it's in fighting for -- "Fighting Auschwitz." She's in the literature at Forenzia.

Q: Katya --

A: Huh?

Q: How do you spell Katya's last name, with a Z, or an S?

A: Was S.

Q: An S.

A: S-i-n-g-r.

Q: And her maiden name was Petronka?

A: Huh?

Q: What was her maiden name?

A: Singr.

Q: That was her maiden name?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. I think I'm going to stop the tape now, because there's so little time left on this one. So this is the end of tape number two, side B.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

[Q: Okay, again I'm getting hiss in the channel, it doesn't have a microphone, but in the microphone channel it sounds alright. Testing one, two, three. I am talking -- I am talking with the microphone down here, as you would be in a normal interview situation. Test one, two, three, four. What I'm hearing in this side is my voice very loud, but with the --]

Q: This is United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tich --

A: But they just said louder --

Q: No, I'm talking to the machine.

A: Oh, you're talking to the machine.

Q: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum --

A: Uh-huh.

Q: -- interview with Helen Tichauer, on September seventh, 2000, in New York City, conducted by Joan Ringleheim. We were talking about the beginnings of the w -- the camp office. The camp office actually was in some way in existence in Auschwitz one, and it moves to Birkenau, yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is Katya working on it in Auschwitz one?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Katya was there on blockelteste.

Q: Okay.

A: Of block nine.

Q: Okay. So she only becomes involved with the camp office --

A: In -- in -- after October -- e-end of September.

Q: Okay, and you come in and --

A: '42.

Q: Right.

A: I come out of the selection.

Q: Right.

A: I'm helping to establish the -- the camp office --

Q: Okay.

A: -- by designing the card -- cardex for different purposes. We had an cardex system for the living, an cardex system for the dead, an cardex system for the -- for the work details. Then there were many functions in that -- in the camp office, like again, the principle bookkeeping. People were engaged by collecting daily darts of nationalities so that they could supply me for my diagram, and for the statistics which I had to -- of whi-- of which I have been engaged on an daily basis. There were many functions and many employees in that office, but I could start -- I mean, we had to -- I established the individual barrack books which each blockelteste -- I think Mrs. -- what's her name? S -- Sheila Romano [indecipherable]. Well, you interviewed Palarchik.

Q: Yeah.

A: She made an enormous mistake when she said they were keeping a book for nationalities, a book for professionals, a book for -- by number, and a book by names. Now, as I have been in charge of putting the columns, and making the columns in those books, because they were blank sheets in the book, I don't remember ever to have supplied four books to each barrack.

Q: Each barrack.

A: Huh?

Q: You had one book?

A: It was one book, where we had the columns, yeah. Now -- and because of that, I engage sometimes, people to help, and to draw those columns, and to mark the different columns. People -- mainly people who were discharged from hospital and needed time to recuperate, and then time to be transferred to a m -- kind of a good job. So that -- there were so many people who went through that drawing office, just in the stage of recuperation -- of recuperation, yeah. So it was quite -- very satisfying. Among others, what's her name, Susan was working there with us, too, while she was just out of hospital. That's how we met, actually, in Birkenau. Okay? Now you know, Susan Chernakshpatz.

Q: Right, right. But -- but she didn't write very well.

A: Huh?

Q: She did -- her handwriting was terrible, right?

A: Horrible. To -- her handwriting is now the one of an real old person. Have any of you noticed that?

Q: No, I said her handwriting then, I thought, was terrible.

A: No, no, no.

Q: No?

A: She was just drawing lines.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: Yeah. No, I wouldn't let -- no, who learned very nicely, and who did quite a good job, was Magba Helinger.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: So if I would ask -- what you've explained to me is that Mandel is the top.

A: Ah, you mean --

Q: Drexel is next.

A: Ah, you want to have an -- an o-organizational chart?

Q: I have one, but I don't know that it holds everything.

A: But Mandel, and -- you see it's -- those jobs have changed, and sometimes people were on the same level.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well anyhow, what would you like to know? You have on top, in the camp, always the oberhafsierens.

Q: Right.

A: The top -- top SS person, where they had positions and rank, so you must always use both.

With SS man is the same. If somebody was an -- an rapport fuhrer, that was his position, but his rank was an military one, yeah. So that is always to be taken in account, too.

Q: So what was Mandel?

A: His rank. The military rank.

Q: No, no, no. What is -- what was Mandel's position and rank?

A: She was no soldier.

Q: Right.

A: She was ober -- amongst the women, the personnel, there were only -- they only had one title.

Q: They only had a position.

A: She was oberhavsiehidien.

Q: Right, okay. And Drexel?

A: Once -- she was, among others, oberhafsieren too, but before that, she was rapport fuhrering.

Q: And what is her relationship, organizationally, to Mandel? Is she under Mandel?

A: There was a time when they were on the same level, yeah. There were times when they were on the same level.

Q: By the way, did you know the woman who was there before Mandel? A lat -- Lang?

A: What? Yeah.

Q: There was a woman who was in that position before Mandel came in.

A: Yeah, but she was before -- she -- she was Langerfelt.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Actually died in between.

Q: She died?

A: Yeah. She was a good woman.

Q: She was? Cause you know, in that Auschwitz book that the museum publi --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: That the museum published.

A: No.

Q: Yeah, you do know. The one that -- that was published -- you know, the book that -- that was the edited book about Auschwitz that came out a few years ago. There's a -- there's a couple of articles about the women's camp, and they describe her as being particularly brutal and disorganized, and the SS sent her away. That's not so?

A: Who described her?

Q: I'll show you.

A: Yeah, but who described her, any specific person?

Q: No, the article does. I don't know where they got the information from.

A: No, she was not.

Q: Okay. So underneath the oberhafsieren --

A: But it depends on -- wait a minute.

Q: What?

A: You see, you must realize that there were times that that -- the picture has changed constantly, yeah?

Q: Right. I'm not sugge --

A: Picture has changed, and I'd -- could -- while Mandel was oberhafsieren be-between then and then, yeah, you must realize that --

Q: Right.

A: -- you have to bring those people how -- how the camp has developed, and that you will find -
- I would not make now, or waste my time or yours, but they are working in Auschwitz now with
a researching the development of the women's camp, and they will have the datas much -- very
well defined, very soon.

Q: Oh good.

A: Then we can use that. Then we'll be able to use that.

Q: Okay.

A: Partially, yeah.

Q: Right, right.

A: Ah, the ranutachek is not very reliable, because she can only report on things which are f --

Q: Were reported to her.

A: What -- reported to her, or what people have -- testimonies, and testimonies are sometimes so bad, I -- I'm have certain testimonies from Auschwitz that I would never use, yeah. Brrr, what else?

Q: Alright, but let me ask you this. The camp office that -- if there are three off -- at one point there are three off -- there's the camp office, there's the work detail [indecipherable]

A: All in -- all in one -- in one -- we had one barrack, and that was block four.

Q: Right. I understand that.

A: B -- B2 -- B1B in block four.

Q: Right.

A: Most of the time. In the beginning, in Birkenau, it was in the -- in B1A. B1A on barrack I think 12, I have to check that, because from there I have been hospitalized, and there I had typhus, and there I lost my mind. But the real camp office, in function, was after our relocation from B1A to B1B, and established in the -- in block four, where half of the block wa -- the camp wa -- were offices, and the other half were quarters.

Q: Quarters.

A: Yeah.

Q: Quarters, okay.

A: And in the front, where all the offices were, all the offices, the work detail office, and the camp office, and the drawing office.

Q: Work service?

A: Yeah.

Q: And where was the work service office?

A: Huh?

Q: The work service office?

A: W-Work detail -- work detail office, not work --

Q: Well wait a minute, but when you spoke to me before --

A: Ah yeah, [indecipherable] no, no --

Q: But you distinguished between arbide zychen, and arbides deenst.

A: Deenst yeah, but the arbides deenst had only one -- one f-female employee, and she had her office outside where the SS blockfuhresterwer was. No, they -- they were combined. The block -- it was the arbides einsatz who had many, many employees, and who had an cardex system. The arbides deenst had only one thing to do to make available the -- the amount of people, but the -- to make available the people --

Q: Was the ar -- was the work service.

A: -- by -- by demand of --

Q: Right.

A: -- qualifications, were the work detail office. They had to collect constantly the people from different barracks, because they knew where they are, we had the cardex system established.

Q: Now wait a minute. Now, I'm confused. What is arbides deenst mean? Is that the works detail?

A: The service -- service.

Q: That's service?

A: They made available the amount by asking the work detail office t-to get the people, yeah.

Q: And so the work detail is arbides zychen?

A: Arbides einsatz.

Q: Arbide -- so --

A: And the arbides deenst, I would not even mention, because that was not a function, it was only one person who had many, many things -- was numerous and coordinator between the employer and the employee.

Q: No, you got -- you got to go back, because --

A: Oy.

Q: -- you -- you keep change -- either you keep changing the words, or I'm not hearing it right.

A: Look, it's -- with ma -- me it's hard, because you v -- I -- to translate from German into English, it doesn't make sometimes sense.

Q: I understand, but --

A: No, no.

Q: -- from a long time ago --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- you called the work detail --

A: Arbides einsatz.

Q: No.

A: Yeah.

Q: Didn't. You didn't do it then. You're saying now it's ar -- it's arbide --

A: Einsatz.

Q: Einsatz.

A: Yeah.

Q: And that's only one person.

A: No.

Q: See, that -- this is where it's confusing.

A: No.

Q: Because what you originally told me --

A: No.

Q: -- was that the work detail was where the cardex of all the skills.

A: Correct.

Q: So that's work detail.

A: Work detail.

Q: But the work service was where they --

A: One person. And actually, the li -- liaison between employer, and -- and employees. That means the companies or individuals who requested the service, went through the one person.

Q: That person in the work service.

A: Work service, they say --

Q: So they would say I need 50 road workers.

A: So the work service went to the arbides einsatz, and said select al -- your specialists of your people who can do or perform the job, yeah. Because she had no -- you see, the work service had the request for 50 people who can do road work, okay?

Q: Right, right.

A: She went to the work detail office.

Q: To say who can do it.

A: And ask, get me 50 people. The work detail office went to the individual barracks, because they had in their cardex the road workers, good road workers. Where are they? They're there, in there. And had contact -- made contact with the blockelteste, and ask them to send so and so, and so and so, and so and so next morning, until they had the 50 together.

Q: Okay.

A: But the work service did other things, too, which is not really defined. She made all kinds of jobs, she made all kinds of other things, yeah. After all, you had to do a job for -- for hundred and thousand of inmates to -- to administer on every possible level, like food and -- and clothing, and -- and in -- it was -- it's co -- a complicated business --

Q: Well, it's -- yeah.

A: -- but if it comes -- now, let's forget about the logistic, let's do the work of -- of how to supply the work force to the employers, yeah, who are requested. [indecipherable] requested.

Q: All right, so they request 10 people.

A: They request.

Q: They go to the work service and say, "I need 10 people." The work --

A: Ah, no, it could have happened that they went to the work -- they went to the head -- work service got the order, yeah, 10 people tomorrow morning, in from dobseldor.

Q: Okay.

A: She made sure that the right people were selected out of the cardex, and out of the availability of surplus.

Q: So, it would move -- the request goes to the work service. She made -- I'm just talking about this one piece of it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay? She will then go to the work detail where the cardex exists. Let's say they need 10 tailors.

A: Yeah.

Q: They need something very specific.

A: Correct, correct.

Q: So they will look through the cardex --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- find 10, say here are the names, or do they --

A: No, no.

Q: -- they say we will --

A: No, she -- she will go and ask for 10 tailors.

Q: Right.

A: When do you need them? Tomorrow morning. They went to the different barracks --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- selected -- got the 10 tailors, according to their cardex and names and numbers, and have asked the blockelteste to bring those 10 tailors tomorrow morning in front of the camp office, or wherever [indecipherable]

Q: Right. Now, would the people in the work detail --

A: Wait a minute, then --

Q: Oh okay, all right.

A: -- the 10 people, marching out the door to their destiny, which they received by the work service person, yeah. The work detail did only the administrative job. The work service physically delivered the people.

Q: Okay. And there was a specific place that the was -- that these 10 people were told to go?

A: Yeah. And [indecipherable] door, and --

Q: [indecipherable] and wait there until the person from the work service came and said, this is your -- this is where you're going.

A: Correct. Because she requested it, and she got it, yeah.

Q: Right, okay. Now, when the work detail looks in the cards.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do they have to go through Katya before they go to the head of the -- to the blockelteste or not?

A: Of course, they had to go through our cardex, and either to transfer the people to other barracks, to other places, to other sub-camps, yeah.

Q: Right, because you have to be able to -- to --

A: They had to be delivered to the -- to the -- they had to be made available to the people who re-requested the services, yeah. Now, that could have been on transfer to another camp, or just to be available every morning, through the blockelteste, make her responsible that those people will be ready every morning, until they are going to can -- be cancelled, or until they die. And that was one of the responsibilities of some blockelteste too, that if they had to be -- if they were selected for an particular job, an -- or an -- a steady job, to be there, yeah. Once they have been told to supply those 10 people every day, they had to stick to the request. There was a b -- v -- from the moment a blockelteste was involved with Katya, our office was involved, too.

Q: [inaudible] Hm. Okay.

A: It's very hard to -- it was -- those situations have changed constantly. But the -- it is true that - - but if you were an real professional, and there were certain work details -- constant work details, that -- that the -- that was an routine -- it became routine, yeah. Of certain work details had an certain number, yeah. So they were registered as a work detail under that -- in that number. 10 people, and sometimes only eight could come, because two were sick, so she had to engage again two more.

Q: Two more, right.

A: Through the same process, yeah.

Q: Right, right.

A: Look, it was not simple.

Q: Right. No, I understand that.

A: Yeah. It was not simple, and each -- really, it's hard to believe that in an group of so many people with different situations, and different backgrounds, that we had manage -- that we have managed to bring law and order into the place. And there were times then, that we have managed to -- to supply everybody with his ration. Those times were gone that we were coming home from an outdoor work and the blockelteste told you, "We have no more food for you." Yeah. That never occurred under Katya. Rations were supplied, we had -- or they arranged special rations. Katya really made what she could in the time of counting the work -- the -- time of counting the -- during the roll call time was cut down to an s -- minimum amount of time, yeah, and that meant more relaxation, more sleep.

Q: I was going to get into this, but go ahead. Go ah --

A: What?

Q: -- go, continue.

A: Yeah, that is all what I'm trying to say, that it was not so simple how people think, and to manage an -- and t-to manage the food distribution, the clothing distribution, the bedding, you name it, all s -- s -- clothing ides, including shoes. That is -- was not -- was -- became always, during those years or th-those months, improved, improved enormously, yeah. Then we had enormous [indecipherable] blacks of Hungarian Jews in the four -- middle of '44, and so on. That was an big problem, yeah, but as they were sep -- as those newcomers there, there was a lot of

movement. Newcomers were coming, and old-comers were sent on transport, because they were requested in factories in Germany. A lot of people had been requested, but also a lot of movement, and we had to account for each person, and the roll calls again became more complicated, but the system improved by sticking to it well, and -- and selecting more intelligent blockelteste, and block administrators, so it was always the tendency of improvement, and of [indecipherable] re -- raising the standard of living [indecipherable]

Q: In spite of -- in spite of the fact that you're in a situation that is meant for people to die?

A: Right. We had to carry on.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And we did not believe for one moment to give up, yeah. Never. That was an ama -- that I have learned to survive. Even now, I can be half dead, and if I have a -- an job to do, I'm doing it. But we -- we were carrying on, not knowing if you are going to live tomorrow, yeah.

Q: Sippy, can you list the functions that the works -- th -- I understand that work detail only took down the cardex of information. But the work service seems to be more complicated, and the camp office has many more different functions.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: The camp office seemed to -- is the largest --

A: Right.

Q: -- and the much more com --

A: Correct.

Q: -- complex of all three, right?

A: We had to di -- we had to control the punishment detail. We had to control the supply of not only -- it was not enough to ask for people, and to supply the people for work, but it was an

question of, as I said, food rations, clothing, bedding, hygiene, cleaning of the barracks, cleaning of each bed, a -- delousing, de -- and we had to -- we had to work very closely with the work detail people. The work service had very little to do with the rest of those functions. They only have supplied upon the request, those people they have -- that was an request for people, and they had to supply, and nobody could care less how we did it, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Or how they did it.

Q: Right, right. Is Canada, the hospital sauna, also under the camp office?

A: Canada is an work detail, had -- the camp office -- not the camp office.

Q: Not?

A: Or the work detail office, had any influence on any -- on any work detail.

Q: So Canada had nothing to do with the camp office?

A: Wait a minute. Canada was one of many.

Q: Right.

A: Are you talking about the Canada camp?

Q: Yeah.

A: Camp, or the work detail?

Q: No, no, no. No, the work detail.

A: Work detail. One work detail m-more or less. Why Canada? Why have you selected Canada?

Q: No, no, no, I'm just asking, are there --

A: Th -- nothing special, they were just another work detail. They had their -- now, in those different work details, you had an structure. You had the oberkapo, under -- underkapo, for-

foremen, and all kinds of functions. So Canada was just one of a work -- but just one among many work details.

Q: All right, so, but then, what I'm trying -- what I'm trying to do is figure out what -- what is the function of the camp office?

A: Oh.

Q: It's to oversee all of the work -- no. You explain it, I'm not there, you're ex -- you explain it to me. If you have to say to someone who doesn't know anything, what is the camp office supposed to be doing? They have a number of different functions, right?

A: Now, can you imagine that you have s -- hundreds of barracks, correct?

Q: Right.

A: You have, first of all, the camp office had to administer all sub-camps, and branch camps, yeah. We're that start.

Q: All sub-camps and branch camps, okay. Let's -- let's --

A: So ther --

Q: -- let me -- let me turn the tape.

A: Yeah.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is tape number three, side -- tape number three, side B, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer on September seventh, 2000. Okay.

A: Now, let's start with the main procedure. The very most important function in all concentration camps, were the daily roll call. Once or twice. Now, to have individual branch

camps, individual sub-camps, or what -- service camps, or whatever I am calling that, had to be roll called every day, okay?

Q: Right.

A: To do that, you had to report every day, once or twice, and every day once or twice, hours and hours were spent on the roll call. Now, if the come -- if the people were, during the roll call time, in the camp, or working outdoors, or working outside, it made no difference. The amount of the people had to coincide with the estimated amount which was set every day. We had -- that was an very complicated and important, quote unquote, thing. Only [indecipherable] to be busy, or to be engaged was already a -- a -- a big job, the roll call. Hours and hours [indecipherable] you had to prepare the food intake and distribution, which -- I mean, the distribution was done by the individual blockelteste, but you had to order it, you had to request it, every day. How could you do that? According to the roll call. The roll call -- you had -- for the roll call incoming transports, outgoing transports, transfers from hospital, to the -- to the camp, from the camp to the hospital. The dying, the corpse, the gassing. It was an constant report on check control and check control, yeah. You had only the relationship between the hospital compound, and the releases, and the requests for transfers from the camp to the hospital, from the hospital to the camp. There were functions which involved with the cardex system. People were dying, out of the living cardex, into the dead cardex. There were reports to be written daily, on certain thing which they requested by headquarters. I had -- I myself had an lot of work to do, which I cannot explain right now. You had the interaction between the work detail office, and the camp office, due to those movements, they are already an full time job, yeah. And it had to be exact, and n -- we couldn't -- you could not afford to have one person mislaid or misplaced, yeah. So that was an very, very ups -- painstaking, or how do you call that? Painstaking?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Event, and we were always concerned about one thing. God forbid some -- the figures don't coincide. That means the whole night to stand until the figures -- until the -- the figures are right.

Q: Right.

A: So that was not our fault, it -- the SS, the idiotic system, to build the whole, everything on that roll call business was taking -- was keeping us busy for hours and hours and hours, daily. What can I tell you?

Q: Why do you th -- why do you think so many survivors, who were in Auschwitz --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- do not remember, or do not know that there was a difference between roll calls at one time or another. All of them seem to talk about long roll calls.

A: Wait a minute. I don't understand your question. Why do I se --

Q: Most -- most -- most aus -- Auschwitz survivors --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- who were ordinary prisoners, when they talk about roll call, they never talk about short roll calls. They only talk about long roll calls. Why do you -- why do you think that that's so, when what you have is a very clear memory that the roll calls got shorter as time went on.

A: Of course.

Q: Not longer.

A: Because we improved that.

Q: But why do you think -- do -- do you think that they're --

A: Because they have no memory, and they cannot distinguish the time -- span of time. But we had our -- our stopwatch, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: And we were counting [indecipherable] working with a stopwatch, to -- to eliminate, and to improve the roll call.

Q: Can you explain how you improved it?

A: Of course.

Q: I know you've explained it to me before, but do it again.

A: By being more efficient, by -- by preparing the roll calls in an -- with an special system of -- of pre -- pre-roll call -- pre-roll call report.

Q: Right.

A: You -- we knew at evening, preparing the whole business that in the morning, barrack so and so, after the transfers were made from the barrack to the hospital compound, and from the barrack to an transport waiting at the railway station, and from that barrack on transfer to I don't know where, and the same barrack receiving so and so many from the hospital, and receiving so and so many newcomers, must be 24, yeah? And in the morning, those 24 report -- were reported by preparing that the whole evening, yeah. So we have, before the roll call in the morning, every -- it was an system we established, every block administrator reported an hour earlier, we will have 24 people on our barrack, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: So when the roll call people were coming to count, they knew there must be 24. They were not counting how many were there, but there had to be 24. That -- we have called that an forappelle. [indecipherable] the appelle, yeah.

Q: So they were simply verifying what the report said.

A: Pardon?

Q: They were verifying what the report said.

A: What report?

Q: The -- the pre-report. The pre --

A: The pre-report, they were very find what the pre-report said.

Q: What -- as opposed to just counting?

A: And there was nobody missing. Couldn't.

Q: Right.

A: So that already had eliminated the unnecessary forward and backwards, and shifting and running, and -- and guessing, yeah. We had everything prepared every evening. It was an full time job of an whole staff.

Q: Right.

A: Including the -- the -- it's so people don't have the slightest idea what went on.

Q: Bef-Before you would do these reports --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- what were they count -- I mean, i-if they didn't -- it's interesting.

A: Th-They didn't know what they are doing.

Q: If they didn't know -- they di -- they didn't know what they were doing.

A: No.

Q: So how -- what were they counting for? They were simply counting, and -- but they didn't know what they were getting.

A: Correct. And if that was Katya who introduced all the whole system, we once went on with an stopwatch, and discovered that the highlights of one counting, took only three minutes. You know how many lives they save? How many people could relax instead to suffer in the snow, in

the heat? Now whatever the survivors are telling you, they have no idea. I'm telling you, they have no idea, our researchers have no idea. As I said, Yergen never entered an German concentration camp. Is he an expert now on concentration camp? Had -- what's her name, of the woman Nerhamatek writes books now on concentration camp, has no ideas what's an concentration camp is. So you cannot always rely on the which -- on -- on the so-called experts, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: You have to go deeper, and ask them to -- to look in -- to do what you are doing right now. It's not easy to work with you. It's not easy to answer your questions, don't you think so?

Q: I don't know.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Only you can judge that.

A: But I don't know if -- if you understand what I am saying.

Q: No, I think I do understand what you are saying.

A: Good.

Q: And the effect on the SS, they were -- they were glad not to be outside either.

A: They were glad to go home, to be able to go home, yeah. There was less beating, and less -- less -- less of everything, yeah.

Q: Now, I remember when we were discussing this when Irwin was alive. And he described the men's camp as creating chaos.

A: How?

Q: And the women's camp as creating organization, and that it was a very different way.

A: Okay, but it was not always, yeah? They couldn't afford to do that always, because eventually they got tired of it, yeah. And the people [indecipherable] they created that was just for awhile, while they were newcomers, and they were new -- numerologists, yeah?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: And I don't know what. But that was not an constant habit. They couldn't afford to do that all the time.

Q: All the time.

A: Yeah.

Q: But that was something that they wanted to do, and that was not what the women wanted to do.

A: Ha -- the women, they were [indecipherable]. The women were just happy to go to bed, to go to sleep. That was never on our mind to -- to make things complicated during that time. You don't know how hard it was for us. We were still -- no. Why the man did it, they were -- man is a religious man. They were crazy, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They were not allowed to count. You know Jews --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- are not allowed to be counted --

Q: Right.

A: -- and things like that. It was not an very heroic act whats is com -- what they committed there. But after awhile that disappeared, that disappeared. We had all kinds of situations. In the beginning, everybody wanted to together with her sisters, her mother with her, cousins. But then

they have learned that -- that the appelle is not an social gathering, yeah. Have learned it very quickly. Anything else, please? Carry on.

Q: Okay.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: You once said to me that the SS did not have any control over the camp office.

A: No.

Q: It didn't?

A: No.

Q: You guys ruled the roost, you created the rules?

A: Huh?

Q: You guys created the rules? How -- how could it be that they didn't have control over you?

A: Because they had nobody who understood.

Q: What you were doing?

A: Yeah.

Q: So you created this -- not even Mandel understood?

A: Huh?

Q: Not -- Mandel didn't understand what you were doing?

A: Not really.

Q: And when --

A: She just wanted results, yeah. They couldn't care less what we are doing, as long as they got what they needed. So results, as long as Mandel had from me, at the end of each month, a beautiful made diagram with 18 or 20 different curves, which went to -- over to -- to Berlin, she couldn't care less when I did that, how I did that, why I did it. She once caught me in the middle

of the after -- of an afternoon in bed, while making an surprise visit to the barrack, and I was in bed, yeah. But I was known -- "Wh-why are you here?" I said, "I have cramps." So she said, "Carry on, sleep, and get better." Yeah. But she knew very well that I did my job, and I [indecipherable] what -- what I'm -- what they wanted from me. And they have known me very well that I have worked during the night all the time, yeah. Because I wanted to have the day for myself, to visit and so on, yeah, all the running around so that -- that what's his name, Garovitch called me, I was a runner, he thought I was a runner, okay? You remember--

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: -- on the tapes.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Okay.

Q: But you didn't sleep s -- you didn't sleep very much, then?

A: No.

Q: How many hours did you get, you think?

A: I slept sometimes during the day. I engaged sometimes an -- the guard, which watched the door, and I said I'm going to sleep, call me if somebody is in the vicinity, so I could sleep nearly every day.

Q: So did you get four hours, five hours?

A: I mi -- more.

Q: More?

A: I -- I had my -- I slept, but I worked at night, and nobody knew when I slept, but as I said, they watched out for me, I -- I had the -- I slept that -- during the day a little bit, and then I was running a little bit. At night I was working, so nobody disturbed, yeah. And sometimes the SS

was coming in at -- to those who were in charge, at night, cause there was lights in the barrack.

So they just got -- got used to it that I'm working at night.

Q: And what did you do during the day when you were running around, you were seeing people?

A: Visiting my friends.

Q: How could you be the -- weren't the people on work details? Weren't there do --

A: Yeah, but those who were some blockelteste, some block administrators, nice people, yeah.

Q: So what did you talk about?

A: Huh?

Q: What did you talk about?

A: Everything. Just like anybody else.

Q: What do you mean?

A: We were talking about anything.

Q: Did you talk about what was going on?

A: Yeah, and got reports from newcomers.

Q: About the war, and where --

A: What they were telling us, and w-we were just talking about it, and all kinds of things. Then they had news from their boyfriends, and also outside world, and all kinds of things.

Q: Did you feel you were in sort of an Alice in Wonderland world, that it was really --

A: Huh?

Q: -- it sounds very strange, Sippy.

A: What?

Q: All of it sounds very strange, because it's a very -- it's -- it's a fascinating combination of the completely macabre and awful, and the ordinary. Do you know what I mean? I mean sor -- a sort of ordinary life is happening in the midst of the most extraordinarily --

A: Yeah, but you must realize I have -- I myself had -- was -- had an creative job, yeah. I was very creative. On the other hand, I was building even one model of the camp, I told you that.

Q: Right.

A: And then [indecipherable] creativity was therapeutic, I worked in the orchestra, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: So that was my -- my luck, that I could be -- that I could disengage myself from -- from the he -- from hell, yeah.

Q: But part of your work you couldn't possibly disengage yourself from the hell, right?

A: Yeah, but for -- sometimes from -- for hours, it was good enough.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Then you were back again.

Q: Right. And you never got depressed?

A: No.

Q: Never?

A: No. Just like now, I'm not getting depressed.

Q: Did you get angry?

A: No. No, I -- I -- I have a --

Q: Did you not have feelings?

A: Listen, I have an heart, and --

Q: I know that.

A: -- I had to protect my heart. If I have the feeling of in an state of beginning to be angry, I -- I've had to stop myself, and to tell myself, don't get angry, don't get excited, save your heart. I want to live, I -- you see, I -- if I would get excited and angry o-over everything, I could have -- I could have a heart attack, and I want to avoid that. I was not -- never angry. I'm avoiding anger, I'm avoiding fights. I -- do you know -- do you know anybody with whom I am fighting?

Q: No.

A: That's --

Q: And you were -- and you were like this when you were in your 20's?

A: Huh?

Q: You were like this when you were in your 20's, in Auschwitz? You did the same thing, you backed off of -- so you tried to maintain a level emotional field, yeah?

A: Mm.

Q: Did you cry? No. It's rather amazing, you know.

A: What can I tell you?

Q: Does that surprise you when you think about it?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. I th -- I am grateful that I am able to do it.

Q: You think it helped you survive?

A: Hm?

Q: You think it helped you survive?

A: It helps me to survive now.

Q: Now.

A: Yeah. If I would -- if I would be angry over everything what is going on, yeah, I could -- I couldn't -- I could -- could not live. There were -- that Ben Mead, for example, just to watch what he is doing, and what he did all those years, and what really nobody hears, yeah. And is on top of everything, yeah.

Q: But that does make you angry in some ways.

A: It makes me angry because I have approached him so many times.

Q: Right.

A: That I would like to be engaged in something, yeah. That makes me angry.

Q: Yeah. But you hold -- you hold back the anger.

A: I hold back the anger.

Q: See now?

A: And then I see Madonja. The moment I start to hold back the anger, I see Madonja, think about something else. Yeah, what are we going to do now?

Q: Want to take a break?

A: What's the time now, three?

Q: The time is 25 of four.

A: Yeah, I don't need a break, I can carry on. You --

Q: Do you want some more water?

A: Not -- no, I had enough.

Q: Well, let me ask you a few more questions --

A: No.

Q: -- and then I think I may need to take a break.

A: Are you tired?

Q: Not so much, not so much.

A: Look, am I making you tired?

Q: No, no, no, you don't make me tired. You don't make me tired.

A: Good.

Q: Sippy, you sa -- you -- you mentioned the fact that one day when Mandel walked in, you were taking a nap, and you told her you had cramps.

A: Yeah.

Q: So that meant you were menstruating?

A: Huh?

Q: That meant you were getting your period?

A: I had -- I had menst -- menstrual pains.

Q: Menstrual pa -- did you get your period? You did. But not for the first 14 months?

A: 14 months.

Q: So how do you -- to what do you attribute the change? Do you have any idea?

A: Yeah. I started to eat differently, yeah. I had mixed my camp food with an little bit of self-cooked food.

Q: And where did you get that food from?

A: I had a girlfriend with whom I worked together, and all she did, she -- we had our bread rations in -- divided into one part to eat, and one part to exchange for potatoes, that's all. And the potatoes we have mixed an little bit with margarine, which we obtained. So we were eat -- the feeling that you can eat -- that you are eating a little bit differently, yeah, contributed to your well-being. It was nothing special. Then we had parcels received. I -- I had two rations from the special rations from the orchestra, and the camp office. And there were fruits and there were

other goodies, yeah. Those special rations, special parcels which people were receiving from the parcel section, from the pack -- package room, because there were all good things, they bring things which we did not have before, in the beginning. So I had that. Then this -- we have received from Switzerland, the Slovakian girls, there was by some of the organizations, of the Czech organizations, they paid through -- in Switzerland they purchased sardines, yeah. We received those sardines, we received some chocolate from time to time, yeah.

Q: The Jewish girls could get these?

A: Yeah. There -- there is even a description of the organization who sponsored that. They had to pay for each person who was deported. They had to supply and buy, even if they were alive or not -- if they were dead -- regardless if they are alive or not. The SS collected all the dead people's parcels, but those who were alive were -- received the parcels. So every -- every little bit added to -- to the body's re-recovery, yeah. And that was among [indiscipherable] reason, but you know I even menstruated when we went on the Death March, with heavy cramps.

Q: So when you were in the camp office, how did you take care of the period physically? Did they -- did they have --

A: Yeah, the --

Q: -- certain --

A: -- the package -- not package, but clothing barrack, yeah, had -- not --

Q: Napkins?

A: Napkins.

Q: Feminine napkins. They did?

A: I obtained some napkins from them, not officially, but I obtained some. [indiscipherable]

Q: And did other women in the camp office also get their period, or was it -- did it vary? Did you know?

A: You know what?

Q: You didn't know?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: Not really, no.

Q: That's interesting.

A: Uh?

Q: That's interesting, because there's such a -- a -- so many women mention --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that they didn't get their period.

A: For the first 14 months, nothing.

Q: Nothing.

A: Yeah, but then when things became a little bit easier and better -- emotionally it was an very lifting -- morally, I mean, it was an very important thing to know that -- that you have a little bit of an better food intake than you had before. In the beginning, I mean, I had all kinds of up -- I was so sick. There is no ailment I did not went through without medical treatment. And I survived, and then with better food, you [indecipherable] hoping -- do you know that my friends from Bratislava, from my city -- a gir -- I had a girlfriend who was half Jewish. She was at home, and when I have learned that the German post office is functioning vair, and parcels are arriving to non-Jewish prisoners from their home in Germany, I made it my business to write a letter, because we were able to write from time to time cards, post cards. I wrote to one of my friends

who was half Jewish and half German, to send me -- to -- oh no, not to send me, but to greet -- to send my greetings to two people. They were not people, but they were -- one was an butcher shop, with the delicatessen shop, and the other one was an cake shop. So I have sent the greetings, to send me greetings through Petrizharka. Petrizharka was a city at the border where I've -- see, I'm -- they understood that to go over with the parcels of -- of -- the greetings were the parcels I mentioned that I want some food. They went over to the city on the border, Austrian border, and mailed me exactly what I -- like -- instructions I was giving, send me greetings through so and so. I received parcels from them with good food, with clothing, with you name it, and it functioned, yeah. So, they handed that over to me, because the SS woman in charge, who was hitting me, was all of a sudden respecting me because -- you know, I told you why.

Q: [indecipherable]

End of Tape Three, Side B

Beginning Tape Four, Side A

Q: Number four, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer, September seventh, 2000, in New York City, conducted by Joan Ringleheim. When you said you bartered for -- with the piece of bread for potatoes, with whom do you barter? Where --

A: Not me, I never --

Q: No, oh your friend -- your -- did your friend --

A: -- with -- with the kitchen.

Q: So you go to the kitchen and give them bread?

A: That wasn't -- that was normal -- normal procedure, because bread and cigarettes were the currency. So if you went to the kitchen and asked the women there to give you some potatoes for bread, they took the bread, because they could exchange the bread for cigarettes.

Q: For cigarettes.

A: And then use the cigarettes for who knows what. I never -- I've -- couldn't do it, so that girl, she was a better businesswoman. So we were cooking together, and I had a stove in my drawing office. Don't forget that.

Q: What kind of a stove?

A: A good one. A very specially built stove, and have this on -- ro -- tube, which went up the smoke, yeah. And on that tube, we were ironing our --

Q: Your dresses?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Everything.

Q: So it wo --

A: The tubes were hot, so we just ironed our stuff over there, like.

Q: So did it have burners on top?

A: No, no, no.

Q: It was an oven -- oven, so --

A: Ov-oven -- iron -- iron oven, yeah. And you had just an iron platter -- the pl -- the plate, and the tube, but the tube was an important thing, we'll always look very pretty, everything was ironed, and good looking.

Q: And where did you wash your clothes?

A: Washed?

Q: Did you wash anything?

A: Yeah. No, not the clothes, but --

Q: Yourself?

A: -- underwear, every -- every --

Q: Was -- w-was there -- there were sinks and latrines in the --

A: Huh?

Q: What wa -- what was in barrack four, block four? Did you have running water?

A: A-Across barrack four was the sauna.

Q: The sauna, right.

A: So we went every day for an shower, and there we could wash ourselves.

Q: So you were able to go every day.

A: Huh?

Q: You were able to go every day.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's unusual.

A: What?

Q: Being able to go every day.

A: Yeah, but you know, I developed some kind -- at wintertime I develop -- everybody had a hot shower, I developed an itch on my body, and the hot water made me more itch -- gave me more itch. So I had to -- th-the one winter, I had to shower myself in icy water, and that helped me to -
- to stop the itch.

Q: And what did you do for towels?

A: Towels?

Q: Did you wipe yourself off?

A: No, they -- we had towels.

Q: You did have towels? And where'd you get s --

A: Organized from th -- Canada, yeah.

Q: Canada? And soap also?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: So o --

A: I -- I never organized anything from Canada.

Q: Other people organized for you?

A: No, Katya gave me everything. They brought her so many things, and other people, I never made any contact with those people, I did not wanted to be -- to -- to be bribed, or to be as -- I really kept distance from the Canada people. I had enough. Katya supplied me, cause she had so much, she was sending it constantly, beautiful blouses, underwear, any time I need it.

Q: And why were you -- why were you so hesitant?

A: Because they were corrupt. Corrupt, and -- and they were smuggling with gold, and these other things, and I've never wanted to be involved with anybody, just in case.

Q: So why would you call them corrupt? What were they doing, who were they bribing, SS, or the pr --

A: On-only top -- top management.

Q: They were bribing top management? For what, since they were already protected?

A: Yeah, still, to be more protected.

Q: I see. To be more sure.

A: I never had anything to do with anybody, thank God.

Q: Did you know people who got into some kind of trouble because they did? They were -- they were in a compromised situation?

A: I don't know, I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: No, I don't know, no. did not.

Q: Tell me about the canteen, because it's something one --

A: Canteen?

Q: Yeah, does -- one doesn't --

A: The canteen was established with -- you had -- there were times when you received bonuses, and with those vouchers, you could buy --

Q: There's a piece of --

A: Huh?

Q: It was a piece of paper that you got?

A: Yeah, a voucher.

Q: Like a -- uh-huh, like a ticket?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And they supplied that to some of the people, I had some too, but you could very little purchase, a bit of mineral water, or mustard, or mussels, or --

Q: Mussels?

A: Mussels, that was good protein, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And so --

Q: So who ran the canteen? Prisoners?

A: The canteen, I'll tell you, I don't know much about the canteen. I only know the person who was placed into my drawing office, to -- to stick the coupons on a sheet of paper, just like those green stamps, you know? And that was her job. Sometimes the German women brought me a present, a bottle of mineral water, yeah, that was a big present, cause they had more -- they can -- could go into the canteen and buy, yeah.

Q: Because they had money?

A: They had money, officially.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they would buy bonuses of -- I don't -- I don't even know any more what it was, because it was so unimportant.

Q: Where was it, though? Where was this little canteen?

A: I didn't -- I never went there.

Q: Oh, you never went?

A: No, I just ask people there to use my bonus.

Q: But it was in the women's camp?

A: Yeah. It -- outside, I think, somewhere. Look, you asking too much.

Q: Okay.

A: I really don't know.

Q: Okay.

A: And later on it became unimportant, because we had so many good packages, that those mussels and mustard were not -- no value whatsoever.

Q: Right, right.

A: In the beginning, when there was nothing, it was very helpful.

Q: Huh.

A: No.

Q: Right. Okay. Let me ask you a little bit about how the hospital, in so far as you know, how the hospital was run in the women's camp. Do you know?

A: I don't wanted to know, I don't want to know. I had no good relationship with the hospital administration because they were Poles, and were Polish women, and anti-Semitic. But some of the doctors I have known, and I've kept touc -- in touch with them up -- up til now. I am in touch with Dr. Schreiberwined, I'm in touch with Emma Pronska, Emma Weiss, and some of the nurses, but I tried to keep out of sight, because it was an very infectious -- infectious environment, so I never entered the hospital if I had not -- had to -- I mean, I tried to avoid the hospital.

Q: Right.

A: The whole business. But they had their own systems, they had there every day the roll calls, they had to report to us every day, just like any other -- other sub-camp, to include the --

Q: Right.

A: -- strength of their patients, and bed runs, and so ex -- the bed runs, the transfer to the gas chamber, the transfers from the camp to the hospital, the transfers from the hospital to the camp, back again. So it was con -- in constant movement every day, every day, every day. It all went on the appelle sheet, yeah. On the roll call sheet.

Q: And what did you know then about what was happening with pregnant women and the babies?

A: Pardon?

Q: What did -- wh -- at the time --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- what did you know about what was happening with pregnant women who were having babies, and what was going on with the killing of the babies?

A: Jews, or non-Jews?

Q: Both.

A: Huh?

Q: Both. What do you mean?

A: The Jewish -- non-Jewish women, they could keep the babies. The Jewish women who were pregnant upon arrival, or during the early st -- or post arrival time, were simply killed, with their babies. That was all far as I know. Then the Hungarians were coming, many of them were in -- pregnant in the early stages.

Q: So they --

A: There were abortions performed by the doctors, secretly, and that was all.

Q: Did the -- do you -- do you --

A: Huh?

Q: Did the women know that they were having abortions? Did they realize what was going on, or was --

A: They wanted to have it.

Q: They wanted to have it.

A: They wanted to have it, otherwise, how would it -- would the doctors have known that she is pregnant?

Q: How in heaven's name did they perform --

A: Huh?

Q: -- how did they perform abortions there?

A: Mm, very simple, with everything -- they had everything for -- for instruments, and everything. That Dr. Pearl is telling lies in her description of how she aborted baby with the dirty fingernails on the floor, I mean, that's crazy. There was soap, there was everything. She didn't -- she made an joke out of the whole business.

Q: And where did they do this?

A: In the hospital compound.

Q: In the hospital they did it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. You s -- you said that --

A: Mm?

Q: -- that you did your reports very imaginatively and artistically. What did you mean?

A: Pardon?

Q: You once told me that the reports that you wrote for Berlin, you did them imaginatively and artistically.

A: Yeah.

Q: Explain. Don't touch that.

A: Why?

Q: Why? How -- wh-what -- what's that mean, you did reports imaginatively?

A: Imaginative, no.

Q: Or artistically?

A: Huh?

Q: Artistically?

A: Artistic.

Q: Yes, cause the --

A: Because an diagram, yeah --

Q: Is beautiful.

A: -- if you have some material, if you have the colors, and if you know your graphics, and i-if you know your graphics, you produce something which looks -- I would say easy to follow, easy to read, and with taste, yeah?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Professionally, maybe I s -- use the word professionally.

Q: Maybe.

A: Yeah. That I would -- would have used. Of course, you've -- why not artistically? It was important that it is just an diagram, it's just like an composition. If -- if I want you to understand

something, I am using an simple dialog. If I can transfer the message through graphics, then you have to do that on the simplest, and most -- the best way to make your recipient feel good.

Because otherwise you get an feedback which can put you into trouble.

Q: And they liked your reports?

A: I don't know, I'm -- have never had a compliment -- pardon?

Q: They liked your reports, they never complimented you?

A: Who should have complimented me? They were letting me live. You know th-they liked my work, because again I'm telling you the lover of Mandel was in th -- in charge of the architectural office of Auschwitz, now -- and Birkenau. And h-he always -- I'm sure that -- and Mandel, with that monthly report, was always very proud, and she could -- she received probably from him several compliments, and she never -- they never objected to anything.

Q: Did writing these reports depress you?

A: Huh?

Q: Did writing these reports depress you?

A: To -- I never write -- wrote the reports.

Q: No, no, no, no, no, I mean the gr -- the -- the graphs, the graphs, it didn't --

A: No, no. That was an -- a very creative -- very creative. Why, what is wrong to make a nice curve of the daily incoming people, yeah?

Q: Yes, but you would also have to make a curve of the people who died.

A: Those who were gassed, too.

Q: Right.

A: Of course that didn't -- made me sad, but that was it.

Q: Right.

A: You are sad if somebody dies here right now. If you would make diagrams of the city of New York, how many died, and how many were born, you would be amazed, you are just doing it very, very -- you are dist --

Q: Distanced from it.

A: -- no, there is no feeling.

Q: Yeah.

A: I cannot do both.

Q: Did you ever try, after the war, to replicate --

A: What?

Q: -- to -- to repeat what you had done on these diagrams, to --

A: What for?

Q: I don't -- because --

A: You d-don't repeat something that there was a daily movement.

Q: No, no, I understand that. But to -- in some sense, sh --

A: A diagram might -- I did -- I worked after the war, I produced many other things, which were -- have nothing to do -- a diagram is just an ordinary, simple expression of figures.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you did two copies, right, so that you hid one?

A: Yes, I left that there, and nobody knows what it is, and where it is, and what happened. And it's possible that it stands there in a corner still today, if they haven't already [indecipherable] in Auschwitz.

Q: But you've told them.

A: Whom? Who -- who are --

Q: You didn't tell Teresa?

A: Who are they?

Q: You didn't tell?

A: But does -- but does she know what a diagram is? Look, what do you -- what do historians know?

Q: Well, a diagram, if you found it in Auschwitz, you would realize you were getting part of the history, right?

A: It would be like the -- like the Dead Sea Scrolls, right?

Q: Yes, right.

A: I know that. You don't know -- you don't know the world outside New York City, or Washington, D.C. If I would have a chance to go to Auschwitz, not only that I will find my work, yeah, I would be able to declassify some document --

Q: That others can't.

A: Huh?

Q: That other's can't, yeah. Did the men do the same kind of reports, from the men's camp?

A: Pardon?

Q: Did the men construct the same kind of graphs for Berlin?

A: No, no, no.

Q: Was this the women's idea? Was this Mandel's idea, Katya's idea, yours idea, whose idea?

All of you? All right --

A: I created the job for myself.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And they had no -- nobody in the man's camp.

Q: And how come -- well, how -- you -- it's a stupid question. I wa -- this is what I was going to ask you , but it's not answerable.

A: Well, go ahead.

Q: Why, if Berlin was -- was glad to get your reports --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- didn't they say to the men, we want these reports from the men's camp? No, of course you don't know.

A: How should I know?

Q: I don't know, Sip.

A: As you can see, we repro -- we did things men couldn't do.

Q: You did the res -- reports once a month, right? And so that they would be different graphs for different -- showing the different circumstances, you at one point told me --

A: [indecipherable] movement.

Q: -- there were 18 different curves and colors. 18

A: 18.

Q: Every single month.

A: Yes, sir.

Q: So -- so name some of the things that you were graphing, that's --

A: Hm?

Q: You were -- you were graphing people coming in, so you were graphing population changes of -- in -- of incoming.

A: Incoming, outgoing.

Q: Outgoing.

A: Dying, gassing, work details.

Q: So that would be a number of them.

A: Huh?

Q: Different -- different ones.

A: With th-the work force.

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable] work force.

Q: Right.

A: So?

Q: It's a lot of work.

A: It was.

Q: How did you come up, or why did you come up with the idea of making a model of ow -- of the women's camp? Did you just come up with that?

A: I tell you. I had an desk, working desk like that, big like that.

Q: Like a -- like a kitchen table -- like a dining room table?

A: Yeah, mm-hm.

Q: Right.

A: And every time an SS man was asked to go to a certain barrack, he was -- they were coming to the camp office to ask where the barrack is, yeah? Now, then they have sent them to me, I should tell. So, after awhile I've decided --

Q: You were the tourist office.

A: Yeah. After awhile I've decided I'm going to make an -- with a pencil, an plan on the desk -- top of the table, to put in those blocks, how they are located, with everything in the scale from one two. So I measured out the whole camp, and everything, and made myself a line drawing with pencil, on the top of the desk, and put the number of the block in. So when an SS man was coming, and asking where is the block, I told him I could show him immediately where it is. So when I noticed it worked so nicely, I had the plan flat on my desk, I said I'm going to build the barracks, and in colors exactly, and I'm going to make an little model, without asking anybody. The material I had, and when I started, and Mandel once visited, and thought what I'm -- and saw what I am doing, she said [indecipherable] and Hessler was there. "Carry on, you can do anything, you can measure out whatever you want. But, don't include the crematorium. You can put anything on, but no crematorium." Okay. So I engaged in little -- Hans [indecipherable] was an architectural student in Poland, or in France, and we are started to build that nice little model. It was so nice we made [indecipherable] barbed wire, everything was on. So -- soil, glued -- put the glue on, and sprinkled sand on so it stuck. I made an professional model, okay, out of the camp. Now, then I had an friend who was one of the Polish underground workers. He was an electrician, and him I engaged to put me in front of the entrance an little barb, electric barb like an -- like an -- what we had over there, and underneath I had the battery, and so when you touched the two things, the camp was illuminated, yeah. Was an good model, very professional. Then, one nice day they were -- put me on an glass top on that, and were taking it out to the commandant, Hesse, into his office. That was the end of it. Do you know it's possible that it is still standing somewhere.

Q: Somewhere.

A: And what I did, I put my number, I marked the model with my number.

Q: Oh, you did.

A: It's signed.

Q: Did you paint it --

A: Huh?

Q: -- so it was really -- it looked really professional, you painted it?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Did you put people in it, too, or just the --

A: No.

Q: No. So you didn't have any -- did anyone take pictures of it?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Who?

Q: I don't know.

A: Who, we? Of the inmates?

Q: No, no, no, no, no.

A: I have no idea what they did. But every time, whenever somebody was visiting, an high official, instead to -- what they did in prior years, to demonstrate how people are getting 25 on their buttocks, they brought the high officials into my office, and showed him the -- the model, yeah.

Q: Yes, you said that, that rather than watching somebody being beaten, that this became a substitute.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: Isn't that strange?

A: Why?

Q: Well, I don't know. How does one substitute -- this was a way of entertaining them?

A: Because -- look, I don't know, it happened that -- it turned out that it was very beneficial for the camp, that there was never -- there was never again, since I made the model, they had -- you see, they were showing off with something always, but nobody ever performed the 25 since then. They were proud of their model, yeah.

Q: So they wanted to show that.

A: Isn't that funny?

Q: Strange.

A: Yeah. I don't even know what high officials I had in that drawing office, because there were really a lot of very important looking people. I know one thing, Hitler wasn't there.

Q: Right.

A: But, with those primitive SS people, I once made a joke, but it was not a joke, it turned out to be a very good -- good weapon. They always asked me, "What kind of a profession do you have?" I did that, I did that, what kind of a pro -- I said, "The same like your fuhrer." Yeah.

Q: Did they keep quiet then?

A: Oh.

Q: Yes?

A: Can you imagine? No, we are laughing now, but it was --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- for me then, I -- I tried to -- to keep those people out of my way. Same profession as your fuhrer. Son of a bitches. Now, what can I tell you? Any other question, or are you too tired?

Q: I'm s -- I'm s --

A: Would you like to wa -- a cup of coffee or something?

Q: I'm starting to get tired.

A: Huh?

Q: I think we'll st -- we'll stop the tape right now, at about 4:10, on September seventh.

End of Tape Four, Side A

Beginning Tape Four, Side B

[blank]

Beginning Tape Five, Side A

Q: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer, on September eighth, 2000, in New York City. This is tape number five, side A, interview conducted by Joan Ringleheim. Sippy, is there -- is there anything after we left each other yesterday --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- that you thought you wanted to clarify?

A: I went to sleep.

Q: You went to sleep, okay.

A: I was tired. I just realized afterwards, clarify we will, after you've make an -- after we'll make an transcript.

Q: Right, okay.

A: That I can correct, yeah?

Q: Okay, okay.

A: There I will be able to clarify better th-than -- you see, I must see certain things in front of me.

Q: Right, okay.

A: I'm a visual person.

Q: Right. Well let me -- let me ask you something.

A: Yeah?

Q: What is it -- what -- what is it about the structure of Auschwitz that you th -- the women -- the women's camp, that you think most ordinary prisoners who went through --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- and are being interviewed, don't understand?

A: I can't tell you --

Q: Is it everything?

A: -- it's very -- it's not Auschwitz only. Let's compare -- and I like to compare Auschwitz with the present civilian environment, yeah?

Q: Okay.

A: Because we are living in a normal life, in a normal environment. Who f -- f -- I mean, New York is an big city, but a little village, a little -- an borough, whatever community, what does the ordinary person know about the structure of the city hall? In spite of the fact that we have television performance, exposure, we know that people can come and discuss it, and present their problems, and there's a group of people, com-committees, and so on, who are listening, who are going ahead, and are engaged in problem solving, and betterment of certain malfunctions, t-trying to help, and to make life more bearable. But who -- who knows how -- how the system works? Who knows the mechanics? Now why should the ordinary person in Auschwitz have known the mechanics of the camp, or the camp leadership? Why are we expecting that? Only those who were engaged, or are engaged today in city hall business will know, and know, and know how to go ahead, and how to conduct the certain sessions, and how to conduct the leadership. I mean, how to engage in the leadership, and what to do. The ordinary -- I don't know what the -- how they are -- how it works. And there's no plan of -- of s -- simplified to explain to the public, not even who is who. And who -- who's -- who is doing what. Wh-Why do we expect -- know that ev-every ordinary, poor, ex, dirty, stinky inmate, hungry, half-dead musselman, should know what happened in Birkenau, and in Auschwitz? Is that an answer?

Q: That's a good answer.

A: Good.

Q: But let me -- let me ask you it in a -- in a different way.

A: Yeah.

Q: It's one thing for ordinary people --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- not to know exactly what the structure is, and -- in any kind of detail.

A: Yeah.

Q: It's another thing for them to not know that there's any structure. So -- so, a lot of people, certainly before I met you --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- many years ago --

A: No.

Q: -- I never -- it could be my stupidity, of course --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- as opposed to anything else, but I never thought that there was -- I never thought about a structure. Di -- di -- do you know what I mean? And I think that that's true, I think that's true for a lot of people, el -- over the years.

A: Good, we were prisoners.

Q: Right, right.

A: Yeah? There is a prison system in the United States.

Q: Right.

A: Who knows about the prison system? Who ask about it? Who cares about it?

Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah? The prisoners themselves, today, they're interested in one thing, to have food, to have medical care, to -- not to e -- be exposed to brutality by their guards, but -- and some of them may be interested in the jury leg -- jury -- legal system, yeah?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And learn more about the law, and they have a chance to -- even to study, but how many of those people will, after their sentence, be engaged in the cil -- in civil law? Just few who are interested. And same thing as here. Those who survived and were -- became interested later on, what really happened to them, they have learned, and they know a little bit more than the average person. But they participated in one thing, all of those -- of those who -- who are able to speak out. They mu-must remember how they were -- how they were perform -- not perform, transform from being an civilian into an inmate. They remember, even if a little bit, and not everything, how they -- what happened to them when they were stripped naked, when they were shaved, yeah, when they were registered maybe, yeah. Then driven into an barrack, and all those basic things, they have remembered them.

Q: Right, right.

A: They remember they had an blockelteste.

Q: Right. No, you're right, you're right.

A: Yeah? Now what -- why must they remember anything else what they never ec -- never -- they were never exposed to anything else, yeah?

Q: Yeah, right, yeah, you're right.

A: So it is not just the people don't know, they were never exposed to anything. And they were interested in one thing, to sleep and to eat. They were the two enemies, sleeplessness, I mean --

Q: And starvation.

A: -- the lack of the chance to sleep enough, and to eat enough. And s -- hygiene, and then comes medical facilities, let alone a medication, or well-being during an -- an roll call, yeah. The roll call was actually the center of everything. Everything was built around the roll call, yeah.

Q: So food is built around the roll call?

A: Depended on the roll call, the food supply, if there were a thousand people, and you have received 900 rations, yeah, there was an problem. So as we mentioned yesterday, and I explained to you that the male prisoners -- the non-Jewish male prisoners, who were there much earlier than the Jewish prisoners, male and female, the male prison -- non-Jewish male prisoners were mainly ex-military people, fren -- from France, from each country. They knew what an roll call is, they knew that an -- the formation into five and all that, is of importance to make things easier and quicker, but the women did not understood, and the Jewish male, especially of the religious sect, did not understood, yeah. Now they think that they have committed an act of resistance, those idiots, yeah? That was no act of resistance, to -- to made it impossible to be counted, that was an k-killing situation. They were beaten, they were -- they have extended the duration of the roll call, and a -- the s -- it -- stupidity of they're not allowed to be counted, and all that, did not help, so again -- and we were not soldiers, the women were not soldiers, ex-soldiers, we didn't know what it meant in the beginning at least, and then later on, of course it -- we have learned what -- what the roll call is, but it was an torture, because we hadn't -- the people had no experience, they didn't understood. And everybody wanted to stand during a lo -- roll call with her sister, while moving forward, and backwards, and they were -- they had the ti -- never made any sense. They -- they did not understood, nobody's there to explain, yeah, so.

Q: Di -- wh-when you -- when you f -- when you folks came up with your system of doing the roll call, the pre -- the pre-appelle.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, right.

Q: Did you try to create a system where the blockelteste would explain to the women what you were doing, so that they wouldn't act in this chaotic way?

A: The blockelteste, no. Th-There was told -- look, people in charge had certain obli -- had certain -- no -- had an obligation, certain obligation to tell the people, come out, we have to count you. Stand in fi -- in -- in five rows, yeah. Who had time, in an hungry, wild, hoard, th -- the -- it was an wild hoard of people, yeah, who had time to speak and to explain, and who was listening, yeah? There was an ordered, do that, yeah. If you didn't --

Q: And ordered what?

A: -- a order, do that, go stand in five --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- in perf -- in five of rows, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was the order. If you did it, fine. If not, you were hit. There was hitting going on, pushing, kicking, screaming. So that was not an normal situation, you had hungry, wild people, who didn't know what is going on, and nit -- did not understood, and you could not talk, because there was no time to talk. You -- if you wanted that people should do something, you s -- the f -- you were giving an order, and if they did not obey to the order, they were be-beaten, and once they were beaten, things -- it was an horrible situation. And then the SS came in, and they were coming with dog. They had to be -- it -- it was an wild horde of hungry, miserable people, yeah, in the beginning. Later on, when they have learned -- it took awhile, that if they are going out, and they do that quick as possible, they can go back quick as possible. That meant they could rest longer, they could sleep longer, there was no beating. But it took awhile, but there was no tal --

look, you're Mrs. Lehrman, in one of her speeches that were printed in -- in the newsletter, explained that she was -- something happened during roll call, and the blockelteste took an bucket of cold water and -- and -- over her body, I don't know why. She must have been wild, too, because she must have ec -- behaved just like what I explained to you before, that an blockelteste will use water fe -- every drop of water was so precious, she must have behaved impossible, yeah. But that she doesn't know, and does not even bother to explain. Then she mentions the name of the blockelteste, yeah. That woman lives here, and I know her very well. She was not an bitch, she was a normal human being, who was living later on in a displaced person camp, and believe me, she would have been such an horrible woman, she wouldn't have survived one day. So, she doesn't even bother to find out who that blockelteste was, yeah. You know s -- her name, she mentioned her name. So the bucket of water, that was the big -- big event that she used a bucket of water to calm her down. But can you imagine how wild she must have been? And we had man-many, many of those people, who just turned crazy.

Q: Did the camp office workers have to go on roll call?

A: Yeah.

Q: With -- with just -- in the ba -- the barrack -- barracks four, five and six -- I mean that's barracks four -- barrack four.

A: Every -- every --

Q: Everybody.

A: -- roll call was in front of the barrack.

Q: Right. But you were how many people in that barrack?

A: Nearly hundred.

Q: And all of -- everybody working for the camp office?

A: Or individuals who worked in one capacity of secretaries or so, outside of the camp, who went out every day. But they were part of the camp office. On the -- the work place or somewhere, not concentrated where we -- yeah, it was the camp, it was the office -- the office workers of the camp.

Q: So -- so let's -- let's do this just a little bit again.

A: No.

Q: The roll call really is -- is the information, in order for almost everything to function.

A: Logistic -- logistics.

Q: So it's -- it's food, it's clothing, it's work, it's movement, everything.

A: Everything. It was the -- real heart, the be-beating heart of entzil. It was the most important function, the most important function of the whole camp, and it is just too bad that Laura Shelley did not understand what she did with the secretaries of that.

Q: No, it's interesting, because the only thing that you get --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- as far as I can tell, when women talk about the roll call, is how difficult it was.

A: Yeah.

Q: Not the way it functioned -- at -- and you're right, how would they know, but in spite of the fact of studying it for so long, I myself have not, until now, really understood that without that, you can't do anything in that camp, for good or ill. Either killing people, or saving people, that's the heart of it. That's very interesting. So tell me something. In terms of food rations, di -- amounts of food --

A: Yeah.

Q: Who made the decision what a ration was for one person?

A: Wait a minute. Those decisions were made for -- merely for the whole system in all Germany, so it was made at an very high level. I couldn't tell you where, and who was responsible for it, but just like the civilian population had their food rations, and which applied to each German citizen, and -- or applied to -- to the German population of an certain working group, like light industry, or heavy industry, or whatever, there were certain standards set, yeah. Now, so they were set certain standards for the concentration camp population, and we have information of the caloric intake, and the caloric standards, or supplies for the civilian population, and for the working population in the -- and in the working -- in the camp population. Now, those special rations which every two weeks or so were supplied to heavy -- to indus -- to workers who were working in heavy industry -- prisoners or civilians were sometimes identical, yeah. And there are studies made, there are tables, there are reports on that. I couldn't tell you that by heart, but it is available, and the East Germans did that already after the war, and published that.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: In many publications, so if that is of interest to you, you can go into the files and -- and look into that, easily.

Q: Right. But all right, so however, you -- the camp office would say, there are X number of women.

A: Oh no.

Q: And -- and -- and -- then so who -- how does that --

A: X num -- no, the population in the camp, man or women, had the same supply, food supply, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: And the order what to supply, on an daily or weekly or monthly basis, was not decided in -- in the camp. Not in the camp, not in the headquarters of the SS. It was -- it was coming from an higher authority, I couldn't tell you where from, yeah, but when every day is a kitchen -- it was a kitchen where you have to collect your bread, in the kitchen you -- the bread rations of an gi-given day, yeah. All week they were five -- for five people, one bread, or four people, or two people, yeah. And accordingly, they had supplied to the barracks, some bread rations.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: If there was margarine, the kitchen had the order to supply for 10 people one cube, or five people, whatever. The kitchen was the one who -- who supplied -- you supplied the kitchen with the amount of people, and you were rec -- you received the amount of rations. But they had the orders from somewhere, yeah, I couldn't tell you where from. We had nothing to do with that, the -- we couldn't care less.

Q: Okay, but wo -- suppose you said, I don't know, 10,000 people --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- need to be fed today --

A: Right.

Q: -- right? But they only gave you -- I mean, would it happen --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that they would give you rations for only 900?

A: No.

Q: It wouldn't happen?

A: No. But that happened in the beginning, because they were not quite sure, and they never received the proper amount --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- of people, because the roll call was not organized, and was contro -- out of control, because the system was not established. But the moment when Katya took over, there was no way that somebody would have gone hungry to bed, yeah. For each person, it -- if -- for each person reported, there was an ration, the daily ration. No matter what. It never happened.

Q: But --

A: It did not happen. And if by accident something happened, then the blockelteste was clever enough to su -- to -- to divide the rations so that everybody had something to eat, yeah.

Q: Now, the rations, were they mainly soup, and bread, and some margarine sometimes, and sometimes --

A: Yes, and twice a week, an little piece of -- of sausage. There are people today, listen carefully, who swear they have never seen an piece of margarine. They simply don't remember. Who swear they never had -- no -- never even knew that there is something else. They had sometimes an bit of marmalade, sometimes cheese. That was everybody, but they don't remember any more, I don't know why.

Q: So how -- how would -- how would these come to the barrack? The soup was carried in big kettles.

A: The people from the barracks --

Q: Would come?

A: No, they have f -- the -- the block stubendienst, yeah, those who were engaged in the block personnel, they had to go in the morning and get the -- the tea, or coffee, or whatever they had, they had to go in between and bring the bread, al-always to the kitchen. The kitchen supplied everything, yeah. In the kitchen, the portions were cut. In the kitchen everything was prepared,

so it was easy to -- to count if one cube of margarine was for 10 people, so 100 people to be supplied, you had 10 -- 10 cubes, yeah? It was not -- no big deal. The soup was always carried -- the kitchen supplied an -- an -- pa -- the personnel from each barrack had to go to the kitchen and collect their -- their portions.

Q: So the kitchen worked very hard?

A: Very. There were very strong people working in the kitchen, too, but it was mainly reserved for Poles. In the women's kitchen were Polish women only.

Q: And you had said that they were members of the Resistance that had come in?

A: Some of them, some of them.

Q: Some of them. But you always said that they were fair.

A: Who?

Q: The Poles in the kitchen. Different from when the Hungarians came.

A: Oh yes. The Hungarians were stealing. Oh God, oh God. And not only that, the Hungarians were cruel, stupid -- some of them -- stupid people. There were an couple of -- of Norwegian prisoners in the camp, males. They were so mean to them, they did not understand Europe, yeah, they were coming just like the people out of the ghetto in -- in Romania or where -- where Elie Wiesel comes from, those little shtetls. They never heard of a rest -- the rest of Europe. And right in the camp, there were Norwegians, big, clumsy, yeah, good types of pe -- but couldn't speak anything. Definitely not Yiddish. And they were calling the Norwegians the Eskimos, can you imagine? And were making fun of [inaudible], and were mean. After the war, it's very little known, the Norwegian government took in Jewish refugees, under one condition, no Hungarians. No Hungarian Jews. They were not allowed to enter no -- Norway, and nobody knew why, yeah.

It was an silent, secret, unwritten regulation and law, yeah. But I can tell you why, yeah. Let -- but I -- I would not mention that -- oh, I would like to have that off record, yeah.

Q: You at one time said to me that when you would get the morning liquid, the tea or the coffee -
-

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that rather than drinking it, you would clean yours --

A: We were washing ourselves, yeah, yeah.

Q: -- yes, and that that would be s -- it would have been smart for everybody to do that, rather than drinking it.

A: Yeah. We -- not -- not smart, I mean we were hydra -- dehydrated, too. So if you have used an couple of sips, was good enough for your body, but you could clean your genitals, you could clean your face, your hands, whatever. You can, with an piece of a rag, if it's wet, can clean your whole body, yeah. You know that. Even patients in an hospital are washed with a little bit of water, and that is good enough. So, that what we did.

Q: Did a lot of women do that, or mainly in the camp office? I'm just wondering.

A: I don't know --

Q: You don't know.

A: -- if the people in the camp office. I did it in -- in the camp office we had water. In the camp office, we had other conditions.

Q: Oh.

A: But I did it in an time when we had no access to anything, in the beginning, especially. I did it, but I don't know what the others did, really not.

Q: Now the margarine, you said you also put on your face --

A: Exactly.

Q: -- so that it wouldn't dry out.

A: Every day, I have used more margarine on the face then, than I am using cosmetics today, yeah. And I massaged my face every day, every day in the morning, after I washed the face with margarine, and not only that, the rest of my hands, I've smoothed, went over my hairdo, yeah, and it was shining. So I looked pretty well groomed, by using the existing -- the existing -- what shall I tell you? It's existing na -- material, or whatever, yeah. That what I did. I don't know what the others did, yeah. And definitely never discuss what to do. It was an drive, it was an natural drive to look smooth, to look good, because to have cracks around your lips, or s -- on your skin m-meant sometimes death. People were selected for that, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: I have massaged my fingers, my hands. I never -- I really had better -- in those days I looked better much more often [indecipherable] today. Today I am using ordinary water and soap. There I have used at least cream, and I don't use any lotion. I don't know why, but I massaged my face, around my eyes, just like the book said, with margarine. And during outdoor works, the sun made such an nice -- such a good work, the sun and margarine is giving you such an beautiful tan, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: You didn't know that.

Q: I'm going to have to stop the tape.

A: Good.

Q: Okay? This is the end of tape number five, side A.

End of Tape Five, Side A

Beginning Tape Five, Side B

Q: Okay, this is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer, September eighth, 2000, tape number five, side B, conducted by Joan Ringleheim. That's quite a story.

A: What's a story?

Q: The story about how you used the food in order to protect yourself.

A: I have an other woman here, an girl who used to be a girl, she lives in Australia now. I received some photos from her, she is over 80, older than I am, looks good, beautiful face, s -- everything looks good. So, at an occasion, while being on the phone with her, I have ask her, "Tell me, when did you had your last face lift?" Yeah? I -- I was very honest, and expected an honest answer. She said, "I beg your pardon? Didn't you told me to use margarine in Auschwitz for my face? I never had a facelift, and I have the best skin you can imagine, and thanks to you."

Q: So she used margarine? It was a very cheap way of getting a facial.

A: Yeah, but she -- she learned that from me there.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you didn't remember telling her?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Oh, you do?

A: She noticed what I'm doing, so she did it too.

Q: So maybe we should tell everybody to do this?

A: Look, what do you -- what do you think about my face?

Q: It's in very good shape.

A: Pardon?

Q: Very good shape.

A: In good shape?

Q: Yeah, you don't have a lot of lines.

A: If I have lines, they are from the time when I had my -- my skull broken, and my -- and my face was split open, and there's the scars, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: But I don't have any lines over my chin.

Q: Right.

A: Not chin, what is that? Forehead.

Q: Forehead.

A: I don't have any lines like the crocodile of -- you -- have you ever -- ever noticed the face of -- what is the name of the cosmetic company? Helena Rubenstein, the old lady. If you look at her, that face of her, on her -- one of [indecipherable], she looks like an crocodile, and she had all the -- the best possible way of using her cosmetic for herself, right? She had the money, and the massages, and everything. So, if she would have used, instead of whatever she used, margarine, she would never develop -- she would have never developed the crocodile skin. No -- anyhow, I once said --

Q: So did you use margarine after the war, too?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: But I have -- you know what I have used? They should pay me for that, what I am saying now, some -- I should collect some -- what are -- what are you calling that in English, if -- if you

get interest, of -- no, not interest. I am not -- in an commercial, yeah, you get so and so much if you make an commercial, and if you repeat that [indecipherable]

Q: Right. Residuals.

A: Huh?

Q: Residuals.

A: Okay, I should get now those residuals for -- from them, but I have used them all my life, yeah. Nothing else, but nothing whatsoever. N-i-v-e-a.

Q: Nivea?

A: You know what that is?

Q: Nivea? Nivea.

A: Nivea.

Q: Yeah. That's it?

A: That's it.

Q: Okay. Sippy, what about clothe -- distribution of clothes?

A: Yeah.

Q: When -- when people were -- were registered --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and they lost their normal clothes --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and they had to be given stuff. The Jewish women are not given uniforms, or they're given uniforms? It's not a uniform, right?

A: In the beginning --

Q: Yeah, you had Russian -- the Russian uniforms, yes.

A: Yeah, in the beginning, but then there were no Russian uniforms more, so they have taken -- while sorting the stuff which they have taken away from the newcomers, the good stuff went to Germany, into the Reich, and the less -- th-th -- those which looked more cheap and -- and not so good, were then supplied the beglidinskammer, the clothing barrack, and were stored there, and distributed to other Jewish newcomers, while the non-Jewish newcomers received the striped clotheses. But, so if you have s -- then, when people were selected for better jobs, Jewish women, they were dressed into striped clotheses, too.

Q: So is that what you wore?

A: Yes, but after that, we switched back to civilian clotheses, but good ones, yeah.

Q: Why?

A: Huh?

Q: Why?

A: Because they wanted us to look -- it was summer, and it -- summertime the striped stuff was too heavy, so they even supplied the non-Jewish women with civilian clotheses, but they were all -- b -- they were all lightweight uniformed -- uniformed material dresses, specially sewn for the prisoners, yeah.

Q: And who sewed them? In the prison, or -- or in Auschwitz, or

A: I don't know where --

Q: You don't know where.

A: -- they were coming from. We don't know who did the striped clotheses, yeah. That we don't know. I don't know, at least. But th-they are not produced in Auschwitz, no.

Q: And ki --

A: Well, it was for the whole German --

Q: Yeah, the system.

A: --prison system, yeah, so.

Q: Right. And when they gave out clothes --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- to the newcomers --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- to the Jewish women --

A: Oh, they exchanged clothes between summer and winter, yeah.

Q: Even for the Jewish women?

A: Huh?

Q: The Jewish wi -- the j --

A: It -- the clothing barracks -- the whole bi -- business over there, they -- in the beginning, they had, for each newcomer, a dress, yeah, in the women's camp, and for the men they had their trousers, and whatever. And exchanged -- clotheses were either exchange after delousing process, not always. Sometimes you received the same stuff back, but sometimes they just took the stuff away and supplied you with different things. Now, what is it you would like to know?

Q: Well, people would say that women would get, if they were short they would get large clothes, if they were tall --

A: S-So what?

Q: -- s-so that -- what did -- what did they do when they --

A: Now who cared, who cared? The -- we had no Bloomindales over there.

Q: No, I understand. But if you were very short, and you had something very long --

A: Yeah, no --

Q: -- it would be very difficult, so what would -- people would switch clothes?

A: No, but you could go to your -- to your kapo, or to your -- see, kapos were at the workplace, or to your blockelteste at th -- in the barrack, and demonstrate, and the blockelteste could then go to the -- to the cl-clothing barrack, and a -- and ask for an exchange, yeah.

Q: Distinguish for me the difference between the beglidinskammer --

A: I beg your pardon?

Q: Distinguish Canada --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- commando from beglidinskammer -- the clothing. What is the difference between these two?

A: Oh, well the Canada commando was the commando who sorted all incoming belongings from the people -- from the new arrivals. They were not only clothing, there were --

Q: Everything.

A: -- everything. And that was on the sortings facility for everything, yeah. And they had nothing whatsoever to do with those people who worked in the clothing barrack, because there were clothes -- clothing and shoes, and linen -- not linen, clothing, shoes, some underwear, some head covers for the prisoners only, yeah. There were hundred and thousand, and thousands, and thousands of prisoners. So, don't think that there was nothing to do.

Q: No, no, no, I -- I'm -- I'm not saying that, but --

A: Canada had --

Q: -- is it nothing to do --

A: -- nothing whatsoever.

Q: So, what is coming in to the beglidinskammer is the -- is the --

A: The leftovers --

Q: -- is the issue --

A: -- the leftovers from the Canada, which could not be sent to th -- to the Reich, yeah.

Q: I see.

A: Those things which were -- those dresses which were of low quality, were supplied to the beglidinskammer for distribution.

Q: But the beglidinskammer also got sort of German issue. They got uniforms that were coming in from the outside. So they had two kinds of material coming in. Lefto --

A: Two kinds of supplies.

Q: Plies.

A: Right.

Q: Right.

A: But -- yeah. And it was quite an big enterprise, yeah. There were 600 people working in that business.

Q: In the beglidinskammer? So it was a big storehouse?

A: It was the incoming stuff, and outgoing stuff had to be counted, had to be prepared, had to be bundled, yeah. Was constant movement. And don't forget the beglidinskammer had to supply the branch camps, wherever a woman was, just the same, yeah. They sometimes changed very often their clothes, more often than -- than the outdoor workers. So they have supplied them with new clothing, or clean clothing, and received the dirty one, yeah. It was an clearinghouse for constant change, especially the odds -- the branch camps were very well looked after, yeah, they are always well dressed, clean. That was an very important function, the function of the -- of the clothing from barrack, yeah. Very important. In the beginning they were full of lies, but later on,

it was whenever you have -- whenever you could see somebody from those branch camps, they looked just like out of the box, beautifully dressed. Everything was beautiful, clean.

Q: But that wasn't true of people who were in Auschwitz itself, o --

A: No, no.

Q: Right. So they would clean the clothes for the -- the branch [indecipherable]

A: Every -- a-all the clothes, it's not --

Q: But not --

A: -- not only for -- they would clean for the indoors too, but not -- not under -- under such care, and -- and --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It depend --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: Huh?

Q: [indecipherable]

A: It -- the -- in -- inside workers of the camp -- of the main camp, were well dressed, too, yeah, clean. They could -- the blockelteste had som-sometimes an problem to take the whole barrack, and to exchange the -- to stand there in front of the beglidinskammer, in front of the clothing barrack, and exchange dresses, yeah. So they received clean ones, and they left the dirty ones.

Q: In the -- in the wintertime, when it got very cold --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- who wa -- who was able to get coats or jackets, or sweaters? It certainly --

A: You could -- you could -- the blockelteste could ask for sweaters, and receive for each member of the barrack an sweater under the clothes, to wear, yeah.

Q: So it would depend upon the -- I don't know, the --

A: Yes, it was an regulation.

Q: That said it was okay?

A: That the people are [indecipherable] to receive that, or that, or that, yeah? Or they were forbidden to have that, that, and that, yeah? For example, a woman was not allowed to wear the brassiere. While we in the camp office, we had brassieres. Nobody -- nobody bothered, yeah.

Q: And what about underwear? Panties?

A: Those who had striped clotheses, there was -- there were under -- underpants, not very -- very sexy ones, but there were underpants, and some kind of an undershirt, and the others, the Jewish prisoners, who wore dresses, or whatever, they -- they were allowed to -- to wear an -- sweaters, under the dress.

Q: Under the dress? Not over the dress?

A: No, because sun -- they had to be recognized as prisoners, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: You could wear under -- under the dress, anything you wanted. Underwear, you organized. They were stealing. They were -- I sometimes ask some girls from the clothing barrack to get me some panties, a dozen or so. So I took the whole dozen on my body, went to an barrack, undressed myself, supplied that among the people, and returned without.

Q: What about gloves? Did anybody -- was anybody able to get gloves?

A: Yeah. But sometimes they were s -- shri -- they were shrinking those gloves, sometimes an real glove looked like was that -- like my fist, small, because they went through -- through the steam cleaning machine, and was shrinking. But in some of the outdoor work -- workplaces, they were allowed to wear gloves, and received gloves.

Q: Socks?

A: Gloves.

Q: Yeah, how about socks?

A: Yeah. Pardon, socks?

Q: Socks.

A: Nobody cared, yeah, if you wore socks, or if you had rags. Soldiers wear rags too, so it was not officially supplied, yeah, but somehow they couldn't care less. Everybody looked after them -- after herself and people somehow had what -- what they -- some of them had no chance to protect themselves in wintertime, they fr-frozen toes. Some of the girls had frozen nipples. It's a pity that you don't speak German. I have here some good literature of -- of -- of interviews. I have here some interviews of people who are describing their pro-problems at wintertime, yeah.

Q: Well, maybe you can tell me the reference, and I can have it translated. So -- before I leave.

A: Yeah. I may give you an copy of an -- of one paper where -- no, [indecipherable] it's a -- references, no, it's enough if I tell you that the girls had frozen nipples.

Q: So what did they do about it?

A: They were coming to me, and -- and as I have learned from one of the doctors, that cod liver oil is very good for frozen -- frozen parts of the body, and -- and frozen nipples. I collected cod liver oil every day from the garbage heap of the -- of the [indecipherable]. There was no garbage heap, but the package room, where the non-Jewish prisoners re -- would receive packages from home, were opened before they were supplied to the -- to the owner, and they have taken out all the vitamins. Every package at least contained an bottle of cod liver oil from home, because it was so good, and important. But the SS removed from each package, the cod liver oil, and the vitamins, and throwing that out in front of the barrack, and in the morning -- early morning, the

cleaners, they are coming, collecting that, and into the garbage. Now when I have learned that, as the package room was next to our barrack, the package barrack was number five, I was living on number four, I went out every morning, and collected all the cod liver oil, not the vitamins, but I took all the cod liver oils into my camp office. I re -- consumed every day, one bottle of cod liver oil. I was stinking. From miles away you could feel that somebody who was -- who was smelling after cod liver oil, but I think it saved my life. It saved a lot, because if -- to have in your body, every day, an bottle of cod liver oil, meant something, yeah.

Q: What does it do?

A: Huh?

Q: What does --

A: Drinking, drinking.

Q: No, no, no, what does it do to -- for you?

A: Cod liver oil?

Q: I know I took it as a kid, but --

A: Good, then go into the library and read.

Q: And find out.

A: Read what it does. But, besides that, I drank -- I was drinking daily one bottle of cod liver oil for months, maybe a whole year. Then, I supplied the hospital, my doctor friends, with cod liver oil, so that when patients were coming they could treat them, and friends of mine who had frozen nipples and toes, I supplied them with cod liver oil so that they can treat themselves.

Q: And rubbing --

A: Right.

Q: -- cod liver oil helps. Really?

A: Yeah. If so -- if it was not overdue, because sometimes the toes were falling off, yeah. But everybody noticed an frozen nipple, so most of the girls were coming, and I supplied them with cod liver oil, okay? That's an story, too.

Q: Yeah, absolutely.

A: Huh?

Q: Absolutely. Tell me about shoes.

A: Yeah. Huh?

Q: Who got wooden shoes, and who got normal shoes? O-Other kinds of shoes, I shouldn't say normal shoes.

A: All the workers got wooden shoes.

Q: Outside workers?

A: Yeah.

Q: Got wooden shoes?

A: Yeah. And inside workers got good shoes, not -- you see, the cont -- the whole system was not designed for the well being of the inmates, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: And sometimes you had big shoes, and sometimes you had small shoes, so it was a mite -- nightmare, the shoe business. I, for example, could not get boots. And people were allowed to wear boots at wintertime, and I couldn't get boots, do you know why? Because most women were taller than I, and the size of the boot was too high. It was hitting my knees. So I never -- I never, never, during all those years, I've been able to get a pair of boots to fit my legs.

Q: And what happened to those sh-shoes, those hiking shoes that you came in with?

A: No, th-then when the summer was coming, yeah, it was too hot, and then I had a better job already, I couldn't walk around with those shoes, you know, in the camp office.

Q: Not even in the winter?

A: The first.

Q: The first one?

A: The first winter, yeah.

Q: And after that, what did you wear?

A: Shoes.

Q: Just regular shoes.

A: I could any -- any pair of shoes in the -- shoe in the clothing barrack. I just se --

Q: But if you went outside during the winter, when there was a lot of snow, it was --

A: Well then, I had my -- my boot.

Q: Then you had your other ones?

A: Yeah.

Q: I see. So you kept them the whole time?

A: As long as I could.

Q: Right. So that was lucky, because --

A: Very.

Q: -- you couldn't get other --

A: Very, very.

Q: -- boots, yeah.

A: And for my size, yeah. I never had an -- what are you calling in English? You get s-some hardening -- the hardening --

Q: Corns?

A: Corns, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: I never had a corn in my whole life.

Q: Really? How interesting.

A: Never had a corn. Because I have always taken care of my shoes, which I wore, yeah.

Q: But shoes were really crucial in Auschwitz, weren't they? So it could kill you, or not.

A: They are as crucial in New York as in Auschwitz, believe me.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: What do you think, why have they developed after so many years, that kind of walking shoes people wear, even with fur coats, yeah? By the way, I had -- I developed one bunion, several years ago. Now, that has nothing to do with Auschwitz, what I'm telling you. And a bunion is no fun, and most people must undergo surgery because it hurts. I have decided not to undergo surgery, and I have decided no matter how expensive, and how pretty the shoe is, I have cut out an hole on each pair of shoes, where the bunion grew. And if you are looking today my -- at my li -- leg, I have no bunion any more.

Q: It just went away?

A: It just went away, because normally, if you have the pressure --

Q: It keeps it going.

A: And I -- people were laughing at me. Here, in New York. I was well dressed, beautiful shoes, and the cut up -- and the hole, and I couldn't care less, yeah. And it was a good decision. I'll show you.

Q: Let's see. No bunions.

A: Huh?

Q: No bunions, no corns.

A: Okay, you have learned something now.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: It's worthwhile to ruin your shoes, than to ruin your leg.

Q: Absolutely. I agree with you.

A: And just an ordinary little hole, and if it's too little, then you can make it bigger.

Q: Yeah.

A: Even if the whole bunion comes out. If you have black shoes and wear black stockings, nobody notice that.

Q: Okay Sip, let's talk about washing in the latrine, for most of the prisoners.

A: Washing and what?

Q: Going to the bathroom.

A: Yeah, the latrine -- oh, the famous latrine. Yeah, what would you like to know about the famous latrine?

Q: People are out on roll call. Do they -- are they allowed to go to the latrine before roll call --

A: No, you can't --

Q: You go right there?

A: [indecipherable] you don't go right there. And nobody was allowed to leave the roll call, for heaven's sake.

Q: No, no, no, I don't mean that.

A: No, no.

Q: When were people allowed to go to the latrine? After roll call, before roll call?

A: N-Not during.

Q: Not -- no, I understand not during. Before?

A: It depends. Before, or after, but not during, yeah. During roll calls you had to be there.

Q: Right.

A: And nobody bothered if y -- it's after or before. If the roll call was announced, people had to gather. And if the roll call was terminated by a missile, people could disperse.

Q: And they could go to the latrine if they wanted to.

A: They -- they -- yeah. If it wasn't too late in the morning, that they had the formation of work details and so on, yeah. But if it was an urgent matter, you had to go.

Q: Sippy, ordinarily, what time is roll call in the morning?

A: The -- very early.

Q: I know that it cha -- I know that it changed over time.

A: Very early, very early. It was still dark, yeah. So, it winter time, when is it dark? Still --

Q: Six, seven?

A: Roll call started, actually, the waking up -- I couldn't tell you exactly the time, but it was around five o'clock. And until you -- six o'clock, I think, you had to s -- wait until the SS man was coming and counting you.

Q: So did you wait outside until they came and counted you?

A: Sure.

Q: Yes.

A: We had -- Katya, during our time, when we tried to make life easier for the people, under all circumstances, on an rainy day, on an windy day, or on bad day, we allowed the people to had --

I mean, we arranged to allow some of the people, where applicable, to stay indoors, yeah, and to be counted indoors, yeah.

Q: Indoors.

A: If I say applicable, if there was no room for such an usual amount of [indecipherable] thousand, because there was no space.

Q: Right.

A: So, it was always close to the barrack, where they were protected from the weather, and from the sun, or so. But, usually it took place outdoors, because th -- if it was too heavy, an heavy rain, the SS didn't wanted to get wet, either. So it was never done for the inmates -- I mean, they would never allow that for the benefit of the inmates, but for their own benefit. And we have used that, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: We have used that, by talking them into indoor -- indoor counting.

Q: The tape is now stopping again. This is the end of tape number five, side B

End of Tape Five, Side B

Beginning of Tape Six, Side A

Q: One second. This is tape number six, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer, on September eighth, 2000.

A: Blah, blah.

Q: Blah, blah. Could -- could women go to the latrine at night? Because many people talked about --

A: No, no, no.

Q: -- there being a bucket in the -- in the barrack.

A: No, there was curfew, curfew, curfew.

Q: And curfew started when?

A: Late. Around 10, I think. But I couldn't tell you that exactly, we had no watches. Whenever they decided curfew, there were whistle -- whistles -- the whistles went on, and there was curfew, and then you were not allowed to leave, otherwise you could have been shot.

Q: And before curfew, could you go to the latrine?

A: Yeah.

Q: If -- you could.

A: Hm?

Q: You could?

A: You could.

Q: Did most of the latrines also have washing facilities, or not?

A: Some of them had a little bit -- a little bit, but not really. It depend where. In Birkenau the la -
- la -- the wooden barracks -- yeah, the wooden barracks had buckets. The brick barracks had buckets, too. The latrines were actually real buildings, wooden buildings, or brick buildings,

behind the whole row in the -- in the women's camp. Beho -- behind the row of brick barracks, there were barracks who -- in -- were in use for -- for the latrine. We have -- they are still in good shape today, they still exist. You can see for those if you go to Birkenau, you can see how the latrines looked. There were holes --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- where you were sitting, and doing your business. It was an ugly business.

Q: Why?

A: Very ugly.

Q: Want to explain that?

A: Uh?

Q: You want to explain? Why was it ugly?

A: Oh, to sit there, and to be pushed around sometimes, be -- there were more people than holes.

Q: Is that where you went, or did you have a -- was there a latrine that --

A: I went on the barrack -- on the bucket, but in the beginning I was living there, too.

Q: Did you have diarrhea?

A: And I had diarrhea. And I don't even want to think about it.

Q: It's awful.

A: Horrible. Bloody diarrhea, no medication, dirty, couldn't clean yourself. Wait -- wait until the next morning, you had an bit of tea, and then you had to use that to clean yourself, and to wash your tookas. It's horrible, horrible.

Q: So to -- h-how does -- I know when, in ordinary circumstances, normal circumstances --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- when you get diarrhea, it's very difficult. You have to make sure that you don't get dehydrated, it's exhausting.

A: Who -- who could think about dehydration? We had nothing to drink.

Q: Right.

A: Because the water we've -- they've supplied us, that caused the diarrhea, was infected water. So th-that, you cannot imagine, it was -- was like an vicious circle. If -- I really don't know how everything work -- how I -- how I overcame all those things. Hard to believe. You see, diarrhea is something unpleasant, even here, when you have all the facilities, let alone where you had no facilities whatsoever to clean yourself, or to -- to -- to use an toilet whenever you had the urge, yeah. And there was not diarrhea only, as you had some -- always two or three different conditions. I don't know how we did it, I really don't know. I tell you what I did, during the heavy time, and hard time, somehow I got myself a tin -- a tin, and whenever I had the urge to do something during the night, I used the tin. Then -- put that in front of my legs, in that bed where we were laying, but some of the women used their -- their eating --

Q: Bowls?

A: Bowls for both, and that was an big tragedy, because they never -- they couldn't survive. You see, you -- you infected yourself, and re-infected yourself. You couldn't -- and no matter what we did to explain not to do that, it didn't help. So, I can tell you what I did, but I can not ec -- explain why the others used only th-the same bowl for their business they used for eating. I never did it. I got -- got myself a can of -- it was approximately as -- ama -- an two pound can, tall like that. Was just good to use as a -- for urinating. Also, I never had to go down when -- I like to live always on the top, where most people didn't wanted to climb, cause they had no -- no energy. I could always climb, I was always on the top, and there used my -- my -- and then all I had to go

was going down in the morning, and s -- and empty that into the bucket. And then I left the can again on my bed, and -- and the block personnel, who checked those beds, and sometimes even arranged the beds, they never -- never throw those cans out. They knew what it is used for. So that is the way how I really survived.

Q: So -- and --

A: How I managed, yeah.

Q: Right. And other women did similar things, as far as you know?

A: Some of them, probably, yes. Nobody -- there was no consistent --

Q: Right.

A: -- to tell you what to do, yeah?

Q: Right, right.

A: You acted on your own instinct, and own judgement. There you were really alone. What are you doing?

Q: I was just checking.

A: Oh.

Q: Tell me about the bedding, the matt --

A: About what?

Q: The mattress, the -- what people s -- what people slept on.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did most people have some hay, or whatever it was, what was it?

A: No, no, no, we had mattresses with straw.

Q: Mattresses with straw.

A: Oh yes.

Q: So they were covered? The -- the straw was covered by some material?

A: Yeah, yeah, in -- yeah. It -- mattresses -- I mean, it was not a mattress like --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- you go out and buy a mattress, but it was an -- kind of an pillow k -- a large pillow cover, yeah, with an hole in the center, where you stuffed in straw. So it was covered, and protected, yeah, and then we were sleeping on that.

Q: And how was -- how was that -- did all the bunks have that already, or did people have to bring it when they --

A: No, no, no, the bunks had the wooden -- wooden bottom, and the blockelteste, and the block personnel, had to get those from an special unit, who supplied mattresses, and the straw, yeah. They -- that had to be carried from an special unit, into the block.

Q: Uh-huh. And how long did they -- one mattress --

A: Forever.

Q: You just -- that was it?

A: All the time.

Q: It was all the time, they didn't change those?

A: No.

Q: So after awhile, because of --

A: They were thrown out, and I -- they were ye -- probably full of urine, or who knows what.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: After awhile, but it took awhile.

Q: Pretty un --

A: But -- huh?

Q: Go ahead.

A: Again, you had to s -- you had to ask for it, and then you had -- you were supplied with -- you have -- or they arranged the supply of any request from time to time, yeah.

Q: And in the beginning, did you sleep alone on the -- on the bunk, or did you have two, or three, or four people?

A: 15.

Q: 15 on one?

A: On -- on one bunk, yeah.

Q: 15?

A: 15.

Q: Short people?

A: You mean -- which bunks?

Q: Well, when you first came into Auschwitz one --

A: Ah, Auschwitz one, we were on the floor.

Q: Right.

A: Then we were in wooden beds, there were no bunks.

Q: Okay. Wooden beds?

A: In vi -- wooden beds, those t-t-tri -- t-three bunk --

Q: Yeah, bunk beds.

A: Bunk bed, ah. There were always two people in one.

Q: So did you s --

A: We were never alone, never alone.

Q: So did you sleep head to foot?

A: Yeah.

Q: One person's head on one side, and --

A: Foot -- foot -- foot and head.

Q: Yeah. And when you went --

A: And if you were more on the loving side, and you had your lover, then were sleeping the way you wanted, right?

Q: Uh-uh.

A: But normally people slept so that we could accommodate ourselves.

Q: And were there a lot of relationships that were closer than --

A: Yeah.

Q: There were?

A: As -- it was actually introduced by -- in the beginning, not amongst the Jewish girls, but in the beginning, where we had so many German from Ravensbrück, the first thousand, you had many who were there for years, in Ravensbrück, and they have developed some relationship among themselves, and those who had no partners, were looking -- seeking for partners amongst the Jewish women. And Jewish women were introduced to lesbianism, as German women from Ravensbrück. They didn't know one thing, they didn't know the difference, they didn't know anything, yeah. So, it was very hard to distinguish who is really a partner or not. But people were looking for love, and warmth, and companionship. They're lonely.

Q: Was that helpful to people, you think?

A: I don't know. I have never experienced anything, because I had friends from home, from the youth movement and so on, so we were used to live together in the summer camps, and so on. So there was no lack of -- lack of -- we were not lonely, yeah. Girls from school, neighbors, we

always were seeking for some old relationship from home. We were young then, and sports -- from the sports club, or so on. So it -- it -- if is me, I had no -- I personally had no problems, I always had company, and that was good enough.

Q: Wh-When you think about the majority of women that you knew, not just -- not just your close friends, but people that you saw.

A: Yeah?

Q: Did they tend to have a relationship with one person, or two people -- no -- including people who became lovers, but was that more typical?

A: [indecipherable] it -- look, the -- the problem among the people was -- was a language, yeah?

It's not enough just to be attracted by a body, right? In those days, we needed communication.

You had to learn how to survive, you had to learn many things, and that couldn't be done without an verbal communication. So, people who knew the language, the German women, spoke German. Our women, from Slovakia in the beginning, spoke enough German to communicate. They were -- but we were mainly looking for the companionship of political prisoners, because those who were professional prostitutes, were not very attractive to us, they were different, was an different -- different category of people. And the political prisoners had their own companionship with -- since Ravensbrück, who -- there were couples who were already established couples. And those who had no partner were not even seeking for any partner, because they had their husbands at home, or in -- during the war, somewhere on the front, or they were old, and were never married, and had no -- didn't know what it means to have a partner at all, yeah, spinsters, who were -- but they were decent people who were idealists, because that was the reason why they were put into the camp as Socialists or Communists. So, I myself always looked for good people. I had an good friend who was the wife of an -- she was German,

but had an Jewish husband, and two sons at home. And she practiced, more or less, medicine. We had such different ailments, like in civilian life, all of a sudden, everybody -- most of the women -- at least I, among others, we were lot an -- pus in my whole mouth, yeah. Between the teeth, the tongue, everything. I couldn't talk, I couldn't swallow, I couldn't do nothing. It was an awful situation. I don't know where from, how she got it, she was coming every day with something. And I had to keep that in my mouth for awhile, and then spit it out, and she cured me, yeah. Because she knew from experience, what to do under the camp conditions. Having her husband to probably practice medicine there an different way, but I had an woman what -- during my malaria attacks, who was an Jehovah Witness, who brought -- and worked in the SS pharmacy. They were stealing every day, one tablet of shineen, yeah.

Q: What is shineen?

A: Shineena. That is the medication if you have malaria. Shining, hining, shining, how do you pronounce it? C-h-i-n-i-n-e. Good?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So, I had a pool of helpers help us, yeah? Of good people, and I would not s -- would not deal with -- with the rough or low -- low grade -- low grade morally, low grade people. I -- I was selective, and that was my luck, yeah. Could speak the language, and it was my luck that I was selective. And so -- but nobody approached me, ever.

Q: But --

A: I was an ugly -- must have been very ugly with my short hair.

Q: Sippy, I remember --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- when -- when Irwin was alive --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- and talked to me about this when we -- when we all would talk about it. And he said that -- and it wa -- I'm not now talking about lesbian relationships, but --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- he said that men did not pair bond, and women tended to pair bond. Insofar as you know, is that the case, that women tended, whether they were lovers or not --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- to be with one other person, very close?

A: You always had an camp sister.

Q: Yeah? You always had a camp sist --

A: If nothing, always. Why? It was practical, more practical to have two rations together to share, than to have only one ration, yeah. You could manipulate, if you had two pieces of bread, two rations, and two pieces of margarine, yeah, you could go and use together only one ration of margarine together. Limit yourself. And one ration of bread, but exchange the other half for something which was more important than the ration, yeah? And I was never in the exchange business, but n -- I had a partner, a very religious girl, whom I found there in the camp office. I have known her brother at home, and because of that she was more attracted -- I was more attracted to her, and she trusted me. With her I was even sleeping together in one bed. She became my partner, but very religious. And she's still alive, she lives in Jerusa -- in the -- Jerusalem. She was a business women. She went out and exchanged sometimes, she returned with some garlic, or with an onion, yeah, what the girls were smuggling in from the field where - where they had to perform. Now, I knew that that is important, more important than a piece of bread, so if we were eating garlic, and onions with margarine on bread. Even if only half of it

wat -- the vitamins were more important than the starch, yeah? So that was an relationship where she was a businesswoman, she supplied me with all the goodies, and -- but she became my -- my ca -- then later on, I became to shabbas goy, it was Pesach, and she wouldn't eat bread, so we had to exchange the bread against potatoes. And we had to cook the potatoes illegally. I had already my drawing office, I had an stove, yeah. So I cooked inside of the stove, because outside we were not allowed to sh -- to cook. And that was an relationship of eating together, and doing business together, and most girls v -- eat -- nobody was eating alone, that -- I can tell you that. Th-That was an -- an habit, to have an partner with to eat, yeah, together. So, I don't know if the men did it. Irwin must have known better. I never spoke with him about it.

Q: He said no.

A: Huh?

Q: He said no.

A: He said no. But maybe in his experience.

Q: You're right. It-It's hard -- it's hard to -- to generalize with so many thousands of people.

A: Yeah, but that was -- had nothing to do with love, or with lesbianism, or --

Q: Right.

A: It was just a necessity of going to an restaurant, you'd rather sit with somebody and eat together, than to be alone in an corner. Right, or not?

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: Same, I mean we were human, the same feelings, the same instinct.

Q: But it -- it -- it --

A: Among women, it was more important, no?

Q: Perhaps, than for the men.

A: Yeah. I can -- have never experien -- sometimes you had only one -- one -- what's his name? Bowl. So you were forced to eat two people out of one bowl, yeah.

Q: One bowl.

A: If they like it or not.

Q: Right, right.

A: And we're entitled to two bowls of soup, so once they've finished the first, they could collect the second, but they were forced to eat together, or they had only one spoon, or -- look, they were [indecipherable] funny circumstances, which drove you into -- into together in, yeah. It was not the -- the men probably had their own bowl, and could eat their own soup by themselves, yeah.

Q: And why would that be the case? Was the s -- was the circumstances in the men's camp different --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and better than the women's? Physical circumstances.

A: It depend -- Irwin was never in Birkenau.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. So, c-call mine was different, and in Auschwitz, he was better off than anybody in Birkenau, and still he described in his book his -- the camaraderie between an couple of men, among themselves, how they manage. That is an good book he wrote, yeah. But noth -- n-no mystery, and no I -- I -- I, yeah? It's very well done. I will give you one book to carry with you, because whenever you will have a chance to have somebody who speaks German, it will be helpful to translate you an little bit --

Q: Right.

A: -- step by step, bit by bit, yeah. Do you think I'm right?

Q: Yeah.

A: Good. Now, what else please?

Q: I'm just trying to think if there's --

A: It -- does that answer what you -- your question about the camaraderie? The shortage of bowls -- bowls, or bowels?

Q: Bowls.

A: Bowls?

Q: Yes, bowels are different.

A: Okay, b-o -- b-o-w-l, yeah?

Q: Yes.

A: And bowel is?

Q: B-o-w-e-l.

A: E-l? Uh huh.

Q: Right, right.

A: Bowel movement.

Q: Right, so it's different, yeah.

A: Good, now I know.

Q: But Sippy, let me ask you something. If you have among the women, ha -- mainly pairs --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- sometimes it may be three or four --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but mainly it was two people.

A: Yeah.

Q: What did that mean between those two people, and another two people? Was there -- di -- were there circumstances where there were a lot of difficulties in a barrack between groups of people, either groups of different nationalities, or -- no. But everybody wasn't nice to each other?

A: Everybody wasn't what?

Q: Nice. It was a difficult circumstance, so people have complicated ways of --

A: Look, the people amongst themselves in the barrack, if th-they were living in an barrack, and worked in the same work detail, yeah, are so tired at the evening, and were so busy to look after their own business. That means eating, and sleeping, yeah. There was no time for being nice or not nice. You will have today among people in good conditions living, neighbors are fighting neighbors, yeah. It's human. Some people, they're fighting with their mouths, yeah. Fist fights, nobody wanted to lose any energy. So it's harmless if you scream at each other. I don't even consider that as not nice, just human to let it out. And I really don't know -- or don't think that to make an big issue out of it. People were very tense, or weak, or tired, or sleepy, or hungry. So sometimes they screamed at each other, and screaming is harmless. I don't think that screaming is a crime. Not even if the blockelteste were scre -- the blockeltestes were screaming. To -- to judge blockelteste and other screaming personnel, f -- only for one reason that they were screaming, is not justified.

Q: Sippy, you not only didn't have watches, you didn't have calendars, right?

A: Uh-huh, yeah.

Q: So how -- if people were religious, whether they were Christian, or they were Jewish, how did they find out, and how did they respond to the various holidays, as far as you remember?

A: First of all, newcomers brought in the news of the day --

Q: I see.

A: -- and events.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Some had contact through the camp office. One person only, she wer -- was able to discover the date, or the -- yeah, that spreads very quickly. There was the latrines, where people have communicated, even if they have known each other. That was no problem.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was no problem. [indecipherable]

Q: So the people tried to celebrate holidays?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Did you?

A: No.

Q: No. No holidays, didn't matter?

A: My religious girl, she -- she knew everything.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She had the calendar, we had in the camp office a day, and everything. There were newcomers who brought exactly the -- all news in, and cross -- cross we -- we could cross check, or they could cross check the Jewish holidays. But it had no -- no significance for me personally, because to be in a place like that, it -- it could have become schizophrenic, to be in the hell, and to -- and to sing like in heaven, yeah.

Q: And -- and you -- this religious -- this woman who was your -- your partner --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- who was religious, what did she do about being kosher?

A: Kosher? She was not eating anyth -- any sausage --

Q: Really?

A: -- when we had -- when we had the rations. I gaved her my cheese, and she gave me her sausage. So I ate her sausage too, and she was eating my cheese.

Q: I see.

A: And that how we managed. Pesach she was not eating any bread, but she was living on potatoes, and that was it.

Q: I'm stopping the tape.

End of Tape Six, Side A

Beginning Tape Six, Side B

Q: Tape number six, side B, United States Holocaust Memorial interview with Helen Tichauer, September eighth. Sippy, what did runners do?

A: Who?

Q: Runners. Like Mala.

A: Oh, runner.

Q: Yeah.

A: There were different types of runners. There were even runners, I can show you very nice pictures of Indian tribes in the old times, and Indian tribes today, South American Indian tribes, where people live in the high plateau of the Andean mountains, where they have no other communication, like verbal communication between one tribe and another, by using individuals, the so-called runners, yeah? They walk from one village to another and communicate, or convey messages, and so on. So the runner business is not an invented one of the concentration camp, but as we had no vehicles, the ter -- the distances between camp -- in the camp, between

barracks, were pretty large. Bicycles were not used for -- for -- inmates couldn't u -- did not have any bicycles, only the SS, some of them were able to use bicycles. The SS runners actually had bicycles. An runner is somebody who conveys messages, or who has an job to do, to do it fr -- [indecipherable] from one point to another, and ha -- with a certain order to do something, to bring some people from one barrack to -- to another, to -- to the front entrance for any reason, or to -- is a messenger service, more or less. Now, there were no -- no other way of communication, no-not even telephones, yeah. They have used people who were messengers, yeah. So, sometimes they had dual -- an dual duty. Sometimes they were runners who were sent from one - - from the main e -- from the camp office, for example, to an barrack, and convey an message or ask the blockelteste to come to the camp office, or some similar orders were given from headquarters, from the t-top management to us, and we had to execute that through the runners, yeah. Through those people who are sending them through different barracks, or different facilities to -- to convey an certain order, or message, or whatever. And they work mainly in couples. When the one couldn't do it, then the other took over, yeah, or when one was on lunch break, or in the toilet, and something has to be done in a hurry, the other took over. They were couples molis. But then you had an other function of certain runners, who made an -- had an dual function. They were multi-lingual, and could be used as translators. So, such, for example, was Mala, was an runner, and an translator between German and French, and German and I think Polish, she could speak Polish.

Q: That's Mala Zeemadbel.

A: Zeema, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Then you had another runner, which was -- and an translator, which was not one to be identified, but I know where -- her name, and I know where she lives. Her maiden name then was Ava Pomeranz. She was an -- an -- one of those runners who took, like Mala, and many others, who were taking sometimes people from the camp office, who were asked to report to our camp office, and were then taken for -- with those runners, and an SS man, over to the Gestapo for interrogation, yeah. That was one of the activities, too, to accompany certain people who have to appear at the SS headquarters in the shtopskaboida for interrogation. That was ma -- one of the main activities of the shtopskaboida of personnel, SS with their secretaries. Now, there was Mala, there was Ava Pomeranz, and so on. So, there are some still alive, and I know where they are, and I even made myself a list of all the runners. So, it was an important activity, because without telephone, and without vehicles, and with such an big enterprise was -- there was so many movements going -- so many things going on, that they had that -- that it was a messenger service among others, yeah.

Q: So -- so at any one time, about how many runners would there be?

A: Oh.

Q: You think?

A: Wait a minute, [indecipherable] and two, four, six -- I would say a dozen.

Q: Mm-hm, and where were they living? Were there -- was there a particular --

A: As a -- in the individual barracks, or th-they were not living in private rooms, just located close to -- in -- they were living in -- in barracks, just like anybody else.

Q: Did they have -- did they have a particular insignia on their arm or something --

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: -- to -- so that --

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: -- she was -- they were clear that th --

A: You must realize that the la -- if it comes to insignias on the arms, there were the ar -- the arm bins, yeah?

Q: Arm bands?

A: Bands, yeah. The la -- you had n-n-nearly every function was marked, yeah, in the camp. The blockelteste, the block administrator, the lagerelteste, the rapport schreiber, the -- every runner. Many, many people were marked so that you could recognize who they are. And at the workplace, the same thing. You had the kapos, the sub-kapos, the foremen, and many other functions in the wor -- at the workplace, were still -- were marked just the same. So that wasn't my job to do just the same, I did all those -- those arm --

Q: Arm -- arm bands?

A: Correct, so I -- as you can see, I had an important job, yeah?

Q: So what sort of an insignia did the runner have? What did it say?

A: Runner, it was --

Q: It said runner. And what is that in German?

A: [indecipherable] loifa.

Q: Loifa.

A: Yeah.

Q: And did they -- were they considered privileged in some way? Were they not in --

A: They were privileged, yeah of course, they had an job where they could enter any building, where they could run, or be outdoors any time of the day, even if there was curfew during an selection. That -- that was it.

Q: So do you think that some of these people actually ended up being in touch with the resistance because they could then bring messages, or was that --

A: They ended up like what?

Q: Were some of these women --

A: Yeah?

Q: -- I don't know about the men, I'm assuming the men had runners, too.

A: Yeah, good, of course.

Q: Do you think they were -- some of them were in contact with the resistance, because then they could --

A: With whom?

Q: Resistance.

A: Oh. I cannot answer that.

Q: But it would be an opportunity, right, because you could bring messages? They could bring more than just the --

A: Because you have an idea, do you think the SS wouldn't have had the same idea?

Q: Of course they'd have the same idea. That doesn't mean it wouldn't happen.

A: So, you had -- you had -- you were very careful, because you see, if you -- everybody was careful with those people, you never know for whom they are running, yeah?

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh, right. No matter which side, yes.

A: People in the resistance were not visible.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right. Of course.

A: If today's -- ev -- anybody who's telling you the story, resistance [indecipherable], they were invisible people.

Q: But somebody was in it.

A: But they were not visible.

Q: Right, right. And do you not trust the people who've talked afterwards about being in the resistance?

A: Everybody's telling you now he was in the resistance, now what kind of business is that?

Q: Tell me about Mala Zeemadbel, what kind of a person she was.

A: Selfish, stupid girl.

Q: Selfish, stupid girl.

A: Show-off, big mouth. She had her own contact reels, yeah, the Belgian Jewesses, and she could help, because she could come into our office, and ask for favors any time, and she was [indecipherable] yeah. Any time, she -- she had to go through us. And if she needed something, she could come and ask for a favor. But what we are talk -- making out of her, it's nonsense. If she wouldn't have been stupid, she wouldn't have planned -- or she actually didn't planned her escape. If she wouldn't have been stupid, she wouldn't have done what she did. She had all the chances to survive. What was the hurry?

Q: So why did she do it? Because she's stupid?

A: Look, when she arrived, I was then still working -- you know I worked in the -- among others as the printer of those numbers --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- fo -- f-for newcomers, yeah? New arrivals.

Q: Right, right.

A: I was there when she arrived with an Belgian transport.

Q: Right.

A: It was late afternoon, must have been winter off -- late afternoon, but it was dark. So there were -- I -- I don't know how many hundreds newcomers and to register them, and to process so many, and until they are passing through everything, and finally got their numbered labels, and -- sewn on, they were standing in one corner, and waiting until the whole group was processed, and after that, the blockelteste, for whom they were designated to be transferred, was coming, and took them to their barracks -- to the barracks. And that what happened with that particular transport when she arrived, where she was in the Belgian transport. I was sitting there, and watching, and all of a sudden, somebody went up on a table like that, and giving orders to the crabat -- to the whole group. She didn't know, is she crazy? I went over to her, and I said, "What are you doing here? Get down from the table." She didn't understand. I said, "Get down. Look, you are now in Auschwitz. You are not in Belgium, I don't want you to show off. The moment you show off, you've -- the SS will remember you. Get down off here -- from here. Get off the table." So, a-after awhile she went down. And then the next days -- she took over leadership, yeah? Next days, she was presented by the blockelteste as somebody who speaks languages. In the arbatz einsatz, yeah. Was in our building, in our office, in our [indcipherable] my drawing office, so she was sent -- given the job as an runner. And from the runner, she became translator, both. And from there on, she had every day to come in the morning to the camp office, and take orders, and what to do, and what [indcipherable] she got her work order every day, in the morning. And that's the way how I have been with her on an daily basis, and I met her every day, and it was a normal relationship between me and the others. But that's the way -- that's the time when we met for the first time, and when I jumped at her to get off, yeah. Because wa -- the

moment the SS noticed somebody with such qualities, they picked you and made -- gave to you an big job as an -- as an camp vi -- I don't know what, and it was not very nice to witness somebody to be recruited f-for an cruel job, yeah? So in any case, that went on, on and on. She did her job, and she was coming every day, and when she needed some favors to help the girls from Belgium, she had an easy -- easy approach to us, because we helped her. Now -- then, all of a sudden, the day when she escaped, you know that she had malaria, and she used to have attacks from time to time, and we knew that. The day when she escaped, same day I we -- she was living on number six barrack, in the barrack where the people from the -- the klidonskcamera, they are living. And I went at lunchtime, over to six. There was Ava, my friend who lives now in Israel, whose husband I made for -- the sign, yeah.

Q: What's her last name? Ava?

A: Valansuela is her name now.

Q: Uh-huh, alright.

A: And I went over with her because I think some of the Poles -- Polish men were coming, and wanted to meet with the girls in my office, I always vacated my office, I d -- I went walking. I went over to Ava, to number six. Four, five, six, and Ava had a boyfriend, he was visiting her, an Dutch boy, so I didn't wanted to interfere. Then I finally noticed the barrack was totally empty, but -- because they were working in the beglidinskammer the whole barrack, but there was Mala in her bed, and next to her, her boyfriend Edek, standing next to her. So I thought she had again her malaria attack, yeah. I went over, and went to ask her how she is, here was Edek standing, she seemed to me quite normal, so she had no -- no malaria attack, so I didn't wanted to interfere. He visited her, okay. Why she was in bed, I wi -- don't know. In any case, I left. An hour later, the siren went on. That was the last moment before she escaped, I may have been the

last person who ever spoke to her, yeah. Now, s -- they were caught, there are several stories, but it is true that she had a malaria attack during her ordeal, and while escaping, and he panicked, and went to the village doctor. And that was it.

Q: And the doctor told on them?

A: Hm?

Q: The doctor contacted the Germans?

A: So the rest is history.

Q: But what's the --

A: Huh?

Q: -- from -- from your perspective, the different stories about what happened afterwards.

A: What stories do you know?

Q: There -- there stories that she -- when she was going to be hung, she had a razor blade, and she had cut herself.

A: That is true. She had the razor blade from Herta -- Herta Rote, who was another lifer, who's dead by now, and she cut herself.

Q: And this was before they took her to be hung?

A: Yeah.

Q: When she was --

A: She wasn't hung.

Q: She wasn't hung?

A: No, no. They wanted to hang her, she cut herself. According -- you see, I always avoided anything like being present. Everybody had to come and to witness that, the whole camp. And I locked myself up in my drawing office, nobody could see me, that I am there, and I never went

to the execution, yeah. And so I cannot tell you what really happened, but according to the others, she cut herself, she was supplied by Herta Rote with an razor blade, and Mandel -- see, according to the people, she was hitting Mandel with her bloody hand in her face. Then she was ordered -- then -- then the Hauptchafuehrer Maul, ordered her to carry her into the crematorium, where she was shot by him, and that was it. Then the father of the -- Edek was brought in from an village, was hanged in front of his son, and then he was hanged. So that was an badly planned escape. That was selfishness. She put so many people into -- into trouble, and lost her life. And she could have survived easily, like all us, and could have led a normal life. She had an boyfriend at home that she abandoned for Edek. I don't think she was very clever.

Q: What year was that? When did she --

A: Huh?

Q: What year was that when she escaped?

A: '44.

Q: '44, and she arrived there in '43?

A: Ah, wait a minute, what are you talking about?

Q: When did Mala arrive in Auschwitz, do you remember?

A: Arrive?

Q: Yeah.

A: Ah, '40 -- '43. End -- no, end of '42.

Q: End of '42.

A: End of '42.

Q: And this was the summer of '44 when she escaped?

A: Escaped, yeah. But I would not like to bring Mala in at all, because everybody writes about Mala, Mala, so let's everybody -- I -- I have -- I knew her on the first day she arrived.

Q: Right.

A: I spoke to her the last hour before she left, yeah? That is all I rem -- will -- want to remember.

Q: Yeah. Tell me about Rosa Robbat. What was she like?

A: A normal girl. Very clever, very shrewd, and s -- again, as they had no Polish Jewish girls in the camp office whatsoever, they had a hard time to help each other to get -- Polish Jewish girls had no good positions because of that. So, there were some work details which were better. For example, the work details, indoor work details, yeah. Pretty good, and [indecipherable] the Polish girls could be accommodated. Rosa helped -- tried to help them through me, yeah. She made contact with me, and whenever she needed something, she approached me, and I helped her. But sh -- I was never recruited by her for anything else, yeah. We had an entire different relationship. She knows -- she had what she wanted from me, I had what I wanted from her. I -- She organized for me all my underpants, and all the ma -- bowls of -- rolls of material to make, quickly, handkerchiefs for your head, to cover when newcomers arrived, especially from my city, in the lase -- late autumn, '44. She brought me a lot of material when I could go to the barrack, and supply the people, they never received -- it was cold, [indecipherable]. They never received any covers, so there where she helped me, and she helped me to steal from the clothing barrack, whatever -- whatever I needed, and I helped her by placing people, whenever she asked me. Then, that's about it.

Q: But what about the aprons, didn't she --

A: Well, shall I tell you the story?

Q: Yeah.

A: Did I told you the story already?

Q: I think you did. I think on the phone once, you told me some of it, but I --

A: Yeah, she brought me s -- always a custom tailored aprons, of -- so I accepted that, because we were -- that was very fashionable in the camp office, to have over your dress a nice apron, yeah.

Q: A regular -- like a kitchen apron?

A: No, no --

Q: No [indecipherable]

A: -- nicely -- nicely tailored.

Q: Yes?

A: Yeah, they were pretty. I maybe have to make one to sketch how they look like. And from time to time she was coming pretty frequent to exchange, bought me a new one, took the old one. And I always begged her, I don't need more aprons, and leave me the one. "No, I want you to have it." So, by now I am -- I was -- and later on, when all that happened, I was suspicious if they didn't -- if she did not use me as an carrier of her -- of her -- of her smuggled stuff, because I remember later on that the aprons had one -- were nicely sewn, but at the end, they had something like that, yeah, two or three seams at -- at the end of the --

Q: Yeah.

A: And it could have been here inside --

Q: Side.

A: -- that she's -- was hiding stuff, because she supplied those I -- aprons to several people who were in high positions, yeah, probably knowing that nobody's going to -- to check their -- their belongings what they wear. And that's the way -- I have never spoke to anybody about it, but

that must have been the reason, yeah? And among others, she used me, too. So, what can I tell you? Then she collected the apron, and brought me a new one. So she -- I don't know what -- she collected probably the one which was full of stuff, and brought me one empty. And that's how she worked, because for what reason she brought me aprons?

Q: Right. Many --

A: Can you imagine? Huh? Then I have found an -- a woman, I still have to look for it, in Australia, who brought an story that she had -- she was sewing aprons for -- for -- for Rosa. Special ones, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. Were you surprised when they were captured, the [indecipherable]

A: When she was captured?

Q: Yeah.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Did you have -- you -- you be -- you were already suspicious that she was doing something?

A: No, I was not.

Q: You weren't?

A: I was not, no. I was not. We had -- she was among those people I like, and we had nice chats together, but she never recruited me, also. She asked me for favors, I asked her for favors, but that was normal business, like to help the people, yeah. And it -- because she has -- I knew that there are no Polish Jewish girls in the camp office, so I gladly helped her out.

Q: Now why was that the case? Why were there no Polish Jewish girls in the camp office?

A: Because the camp office had a lot of Pole -- Poles, non-Jews. Camp office, and the arbatz einsatz, yeah, and the rest were Slovakian girls. We were there before the Poles, before the Polish Jews, and the Poles were more or less simultaneously coming with us around the same time. So, we have occupied the good places, while the Poles -- Polish girls had no German knowledge, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: That was among others there mi [indecipherable] their disadvantage.

Q: Right.

A: And that's about it.

Q: Okay.

A: There's no more to add. Everything else is speculation and is blow -- blow -- blown up into something so that people can write. But Rosa Robbata was an ordinary girl, who just did what she felt is important, and she did it skillfully, and I don't know how she got -- how she -- how she was caught. That I'll never found out.

Q: Okay, we're at the end of tape number six, side B

End of Tape Six, Side B

Beginning Tape Seven, Side A

Q: -- Memorial Museum interview with Helen Tichauer on September eighth, year 2000, conducted by Joan Ringleheim, this is side A.

A: May I ask you something?

Q: Yes.

A: Do you really s -- remember that everybody ignored me at the first meeting that's --

Q: Yes.

A: Because I never had the feeling that I was ignored, I just have taken the people how they are, but I didn't know why.

Q: No, that -- that meeting, 20 -- I don't know when it was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- 20 years ago.

A: Yeah.

Q: It's my recollection, but it's not that clear, but there's some recollection that you said a few things, but people didn't want to pay any attention. That's my ere -- that's my recollection.

A: Who were the people with the --

Q: I don't remember.

A: Did -- wait a minute, do you mean the other people, or you mean Einstan the lecturer?

Q: The lecturer, and the other people I'm not sure. It didn't seem to me that people were able --

A: Understood.

Q: Understood what you were saying, and were able to concentrate on that.

A: Yeah. So that was their bad luck.

Q: That's right, absolutely.

A: What about you?

Q: I don't remember me. I probably didn't know what to make of anything. I don't -- I don't remember it, Sippy, I really don't.

A: I --

Q: So let me ask you this. I'm going to continue what you just said to me when we were off the tape. When -- when Anna Polarchik was being interviewed, she made some statement that she thought you were in the underground.

A: It's on her interview, in Polish.

Q: Right, right, right, right.

A: Not she thinks, she is sure.

Q: She's sure. Okay. So what -- what is it about what you were doing that would make somebody think that -- that you might have been in --

A: I had an daily visitor, and that was a man, an Pole, who was known -- who was the only man who was living in the women's camp. And his name was En -- Hen -- Henyek Borepsky. Henyek Borepsky was the official electrician, who was in charge of checking the wirings, electric wiring, all over the whole area. Henyek Borepsky was the one who buried s -- many of the Jewish and non-Jewish reports the people wrote in all their languages, in -- who buried that during our stay there, and then after the war, made it possible to un-bury the stuff. We have more stuff, the information we had after the war, thanks to him, and due to him. Now, he isn't -- he isn't quoted in most of the literature by important historians, like Lunkbine mentioned him too, but he is described very well in the book by -- called "Fighting Auschwitz," yeah?

Q: By Garlinsky.

A: As he visited me every day, she didn't know what business he has to do with me, yeah? Who am -- what -- otherwise he -- there was no love affair, he was not my boyfriend. He was just visiting me, and she doesn't know what we -- what business we had to do, except he was the representative of the top man, who was leading the Polish underground, yeah? So that why she suspected me, I must have had something to do with them. That's all. And he asked me for hundred thousand things to do for him, and I never have asked any questions, I did it. So, I probably worked for the Polish underground without know -- I knew I worked for somebody, or I did things for somebody, but I have not ask any questions. That was an very basic rule, if you do something, either you do it or not, and if you are doing it, don't ask questions, because what you know -- you should never know, in case you were caught.

Q: So why -- why -- were there people that you refused to do things for? No.

A: No.

Q: So you trusted -- is it because the right kind of people came to you, and you trusted them?

A: Because it was very hard to approach me.

Q: Why?

A: For men. So -- you could not enter the camp office just like that, yeah.

Q: So who --

A: And -- and you had no -- and people I have not known of through -- even if not talking to each other, but there were, in certain jobs established -- for example, I'll give you another example. You know Gerovitch?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: He was an outsider of everything. He was an Bundist, but there was one leader of the -- of the Bundists, whom he mentioned in his interview, and that was Nonyek. Nonyek was an French and

Polish Jew who was coming from France. Later on, he became an medical student, after the war, and practiced medicine. But it was Nonyek whom was one day arrived to the camp office, straightforward to me, and said, "Sippy, I need the figures of French women, how many arrived up til now, and how many are still alive." Now, I could have told him, "Why do you ask me, ask somebody else," yeah? But I had access. He researched me before he came. I had access to everything, because I designed the card totake, yeah. So I --

Q: Designed the what?

A: The card totake. The types of cardex.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I designed it.

Q: Yeah, I know, but you just use -- you used a word, what's that word? Cardatteck?

A: Cardex is an --

Q: Cardex.

A: Cardex.

Q: Okay. So he knew that?

A: I knew that -- I knew -- they knew that I -- I can have the access to it, because nobody would have questioned me, what are you doing there, right? So, I -- and two minutes later, I was coming with the answer. After all, I had constant reports of certain things, I told you that I did the diagrams and so on, so I didn't -- I knew exactly w-w-what to look for, and where to look for, and quickly, so that -- because there could have been any time, somebody coming from the SS, and so on. But we always had some people out at the door entrance to watch out. In any case, Nonyek arrived, and asked me for information. He got the information, which he reported afterwards, but I couldn't care less how, and to whom. But I know through Gerovitch now, in his

interview, that Nonyek was the leader of the Bund, okay? So that what I'm trying to tell you. I haven't ask him what do you need that for? When I noticed he was coming with something important, of question, he got his answer. And that's how I worked. Whoever was coming with important questions, he got his [indecipherable] he got the right answer. I don't know what I did, and to whom I was giving, and how much I did, yeah? Or that Henyek, what he have asked me, is hard to believe, but that's an whole story, you have to -- to -- Henyek was always asking me impossible things.

Q: Like what?

A: To -- to a shell of an watch, yeah. And t-to write down doxsa, that was an trademark. I said, "Henyek, you can get at Canada, as many doxsas you want. Why do you want me to write on that particular watch, which is empty inside, doxsa?" "Just do it." That what he said. Now, what he did afterwards with that, if they have smuggled something in the container, if that was just to recognize that it is an different doxsa, because my writing and my -- must have been different than the original print. But then, from then on, he was coming with similar mishugas, yeah, to do for him, and I did it. I never asked any questions. But I know that not only that I did something valuable, I have been protected by the Polish underground, just like they protected them -- themselves, and their agents. That what I know. I really made my office available for their get together, yeah.

Q: So you would leave?

A: Huh?

Q: You would leave, they would come in and you would leave?

A: Who?

Q: When they got together, you left the office?

A: I left the office. At -- I was running all the time around the camp, and [indecipherable] thought I'm a runner.

Q: So did they -- did they just come in and say --

A: Nothing. The first time when they were coming, and all the women from everywhere were coming, the first time in, they said, "Sippy, leave us alone." I did that, and when they co -- were coming afterwards, and I left by myself.

Q: They didn't have to ask you.

A: Huh?

Q: They didn't have to ask you.

A: No.

Q: So in what ways did they protect you?

A: What can I tell you, in what way. They -- they were watching out I should -- nobody should do any harm to me, yeah. They watched -- look, th-th-that -- they were an very close-knit group of Polish officers, and their wives, but I belong -- I was one of them, yeah?

Q: Tell me how your reputation got into the men's camp. Irwin said he knew who --

A: Into what?

Q: Into the men's camp.

A: My reputation?

Q: Yes, because Irwin said one day when I was here, "I knew who Sippy was."

A: Huh?

Q: I knew who Sippy was.

A: Yeah?

Q: Before she -- before he met you.

A: Yeah. Oh, that was different. I tell you. One nice day, Hessler was coming, and said, "Sippy, we are going to transfer you, I have now taken over some -- some duties at the onione factory." I, Hessler.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: "And we are going to transfer a -- you to the onione as technical draftswoman." I said, "But I was not trained as an technical draftswoman. I'm a graphic artist." He said to me, "The way how I know you, you know everything." That what Hessler said to me. So, I didn't know, but Irwin told me afterwards, while we were married, what happened. S -- Hessler was coming, and explained to the civilian engineers there, "We are -- we are -- we are going to get now a woman, a draftswoman. She's very peculiar, very exact, very moody. Empty fund room for her, bring in instruments, bring in everything. She will be as -- from now on, your draftswoman. And Irwin is going to supervise her."

Q: So, what happened?

A: I was fighting, hiding behind Katya, and Drexel, that I don't want to go. And they were winning. I didn't had to go. And I never arrived to the onione. Good. So he knew that I exist, but he didn't know that -- who I am, yeah. Just a woman, a draftswoman.

Q: Yeah. But he knew your name?

A: Yeah.

Q: Sippy.

A: Good. Now -- then Mengele was coming. He wanted me as an draftswoman when he heard about me, as a microscopic draftswoman. There I was fighting again. I am not -- I wasn't trained as an microscopic draftswoman. But we will find for you somebody, and we have found for him -- what is her name? That woman who is now fli -- claiming her work?

Q: Whoop, the phone. We're back. That was the fax, not the phone.

A: So, that why Irwin knew about me. I stayed at the camp office, and that was it. But we wanted to talk about something else. You were just s -- putting in -- in that Irwin business. What was the next question?

Q: No, I was asking you about the requests that people made.

A: About what people's name?

Q: What people were asking you to do.

A: Oh. Several -- several things. No people. I have been working for the French Bund, through Nonyek, and fr -- for the Poles.

Q: Right. No, I guess it was because you were talking about the Poles, and I was ask -- then asking you how did Irwin hear about you. And that's -- and that's how --

A: Oh, right, but that how, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: Because that was just an one ti -- time when he was fighting for my transfer --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- but lost, yeah?

Q: Right. That's such a co -- funny coincidence, isn't it?

A: Yeah, it's an funny coincidence. You know, the prostitutes in the onione, who were the foreman, some German women, Irwin told me even made fun out of me. They said, "Look, that woman, she makes -- she goes on the -- you -- you know, in German, mangleet umstreesh. If you are an prostitute, you are going where the stripe is marked, and that is called -- I don't know in English, if -- if they use the word, the stripe --

Q: You mean on the road?

A: Yeah. For prostitutes, they -- they are not allowed to cross.

Q: Really?

A: But in Germany, it's a stree -- mangeet umstreesh, yeah? Mangeet umstreesh. Now, I painted the stripes.

Q: Right.

A: And then [indecipherable] then she made her numbers, yeah? And th-that was an joke, but it was true. Look, there was humor in Auschwitz, too.

Q: Yes, I understand. Tell me something about revenge.

A: Revenge?

Q: Yeah. Or let -- I can put it more simply. If there were kapos, or blockeltestes, or other prisoners, who were treating other people badly.

A: Yeah.

Q: You told me a long time ago that you could get people punished. Katya could put people on a punishment detail.

A: Yeah. Now, I tell you what we did, and I can tell you that honestly. The book of the punishment detail, was kept in the camp office under -- strictly under Katya's supervision. But, as I mentioned before to you, that most book were supplied with plain sheets, only lines, and we had -- I had to put, or designs, or columns necessary for an particular situation, like block books, where we knew how many columns, and for what. So where the columns established in that br -- punishment book, where you had the names, numbers, the punishment, the duration from, too, yeah? Transferred then and to -- to be released then and then. And if there were some of the kapos, or some of the blockelteste, who accidentally, for any reason, had -- have been transferred to the punishment block, if they were lousy, bad people, Katya took the liberty to ask me to

extend the duration, okay? And that was the only way how we could take revenge on those people. Now, that is unofficial, but I'm telling you, that's what we did. And it was good that we could do it.

Q: So did -- did people understand that that's what you were doing to them --

A: Pardon?

Q: -- so that -- did people know that this --

A: I never menti --

Q: I don't --

A: -- to whom should I have spoken about it?

Q: No, no, no, did they figure it out?

A: They?

Q: Yeah.

A: No.

Q: No. They didn't?

A: No.

Q: But you did tell me the story of one woman, who was a kapo, and that you -- somebody planted cigarettes on her, so that she would get caught -- this is what you told me, so see if it recalls --

A: I told you this?

Q: You told me this. She was sent to a punishment detail.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then she came back.

A: And?

Q: And she said she wanted her old job back. And Katya, or somebody said to her, "We'll give you the old job back, but if you start doing what you did before," I don't know what sort of a threat there was, but there was a threat. Do you have any recollection?

A: It's too -- I would have, if you would explain that the way I said it.

Q: Well, I'll go back.

A: Yeah.

Q: I will find -- I will find --

A: Find -- find --

Q: -- how I put it down.

A: That's better.

Q: Okay.

A: But I have to check my -- my fax.

Q: Right. Okay.

A: Wait a minute, you have to take that off?

Q: We're going to stop -- we're going to stop for a moment. All right, we're now back from our little break, there was no fax. And at a later time, we'll go back to this example, and then --

A: Yeah, sure.

Q: -- maybe you can explain -- you can explain more. Was -- were there any instances where you could denounce an SS? So n --

A: N-No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: If an -- if an SS was having an a -- a German was having an affair with a Jewish woman, could that be -- it happened.

A: Could be. Yeah.

Q: Rarely, but it would happen. He was in great danger, wasn't he?

A: Yeah, very great.

Q: Why did they do it?

A: Why do people --

Q: Do anything.

A: -- kill each other? They're in danger too, to be locked up, and they are doing it. That I cannot answer.

Q: Yeah. And there were no instances that you knew of an S --

A: Why that Jewish woman was falling in love with an SS man, yeah?

Q: Yeah, right.

A: Why did she do it? [indecipherable]

Q: Were there any instances of the -- of an SS man who fell in love with a Jewish woman, or who had an affair with a Jewish woman where the -- he was denounced? Yes?

A: Balitch.

Q: Balitch?

A: And Katya. Stupid woman.

Q: Edick?

A: Hm?

Q: Th-The man that she was with?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was an SS? He wasn't a prisoner? Uh-huh. I guess I should have known that. At so -- at some point you said to me that the SS were afraid of Katya, is that true?

A: Everybody was afraid of her because she had such influence on the top management, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. And why was she so respected?

A: Because she was clever. She did a good job, and nobody could fool her, yeah.

Q: How --

A: And her --

Q: Go ahead.

A: Fool her.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she -- her job, not only that she helped herself and some fellow inmate, but she pretended to help the SS, but she did not, yeah. She was very, very, very skillful, and -- by manipulating the whole business, yeah.

Q: Was she your age?

A: Younger.

Q: Younger?

A: Yeah.

Q: So how younger was --

A: One year younger.

Q: So that made her what, when you entered Auschwitz?

A: Wh-When she entered the camp?

Q: Yeah.

A: For -- I was born in '18, and entered '42. I was 23 when I entered.

Q: So she was --

A: She was 22.

Q: Two.

A: Uh ha ha.

Q: Uh ha ha. You said to me that --

A: What I said now comes -- now I am getting -- going through the mill --

Q: You're right.

A: -- like -- like an interrogation, like an judge, or like an prosecutor.

Q: No, I just want more information.

A: You said -- no.

Q: I just want you to know that that's where I'm getting it from --

A: I know. Okay.

Q: -- first. Okay. You said that by the -- actually, Irwin said the same thing to me, that the beatings -- the regularity of beatings of prisoners stopped in '40 -- stopped.

A: What stopped?

Q: Beatings. The regular beatings.

A: Ah, beating, yeah.

Q: Beating, the prisoners stopped by the end of 1943. Now this is what Irwin said.

A: Yeah?

Q: Irwin said the SS found it more convenient to steal things, than to beat prisoners. That's what he said. But you said that while it was a standard for the dignitaries, the Germans when they came in, to watch beatings at first.

A: Yeah?

Q: Once you had the model, they came into the office, and your office was a -- a their entertainment.

A: A showcase, a showcase,

Q: Yes. All of it.

A: Huh?

Q: All of it. Your tools, your model, everything was a showcase for them.

A: Right.

Q: And they didn't mind that that was a substitute? They didn't --

A: They didn't know. They didn't know, because they were not there before, yeah. And they haven't asked for anything. So they -- they haven't asked to per -- to perform the beating.

Q: Beatings, right. So who deci -- I mean, wha -- I know this is -- sounds like stupid question.

A: What?

Q: But, why would they bring in these people, and then what they show them is the beating?

A: Because that is --

Q: Power?

A: -- SS mentality, yeah. That how we deal with our prisoners.

Q: Uh-huh. So --

A: Cruelty was -- cruelty was introduced as an -- as an skill, and an so-called science. It was part of their daily -- daily routine.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: So let -- I don't know if you know the answer to this question.

A: No.

Q: But when they would do those beatings --

A: Yeah, uh-huh?

Q: -- those public beatings, were they simply picking anybody, or th --

A: No, no, no, no, no.

Q: -- or these were really punishment --

A: [indecipherable] it was part of --

Q: -- for partic -- something particular.

A: They were punishment -- look, there were prisoners who were sent over from prison, or from other camps, with an order to receive 25 beats, or 12, or 10.

Q: Right.

A: It was part of their -- of their punishment to receive, and they were keeping that for the visitors, to -- to demonstrate how they are doing it, yeah?

Q: Yeah, right.

A: And that's gone crazy, and crazy, and there was an doctor present, and when the people collapsed, they were brought to the hospital compound, yeah. And they were mainly non-Jewish prisoners.

Q: Who were beaten?

A: Because they knew where -- ba -- mainly non-Jewish prisoners, because they were coming through an police station, or through another jail, or through -- or sentenced by an judge to -- to receive the beating, yeah. They were mostly non-Jewish prisoners.

Q: Did you observe these beatings?

A: No, you could -- it was never an open -- open -- open show. There were always dignitaries there of the camp dignitaries, or -- I was not a camp dignitary, or some SS people.

Q: So they --

A: And sometimes the camp dignitaries had to do the beating. And if the beating were not done properly hard, then the same dignitary was put on the -- on the -- that type of tool -- not tool, an desk, or whatever it -- I must show you one day how it looked. And he was beaten, or she was beaten by somebody else. So, it was quite an s -- science, yeah.

Q: So they didn't use it in order to show the rest of the camp?

A: Oh no.

Q: To frighten anyone?

A: No.

Q: No, this was really a internal show.

A: It was mainly done inside of an building.

Q: I see, I see. Okay, Sip.

A: What else?

Q: I th -- I think for today, I'm finished.

A: You are finished, okay.

Q: And so are you. So this is the end of tape number seven, on -- tape nu -- tape number seven, side A, on September eighth, 2000, with Sippy Tichauer.

End of Tape Seven, Side A

Conclusion of Interview