

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Alice Jakubovic
August 27, 2002
RG-50.030*0469

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Alice Jakubovic, conducted on August 27, 2002 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.

ALICE JAKUBOVIC
August 27, 2002

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Alice.

Answer: Good morning, too.

Q: Welcome, welcome to Washington, and Virginia.

A: Thanks.

Q: It's wonderful to have you here, finally, after all this time.

A: Thanks, well [indecipherable] to meet you.

Q: Yes. Alice, tell me when you were born. What was the date of -- your date of birth.

A: It was May the 11th, 1922.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Prešov.

Q: In --

A: Slovakia.

Q: Slovakia. And what was your name when you were born?

A: My name was Alice Roth, R-o-t-h.

Q: R-o-t-h. And it's now?

A: Jakubovic.

Q: Jakubovic.

A: Yes.

Q: Now I -- I'd like to get some idea about your family life, about your mother and your father and your brother, and what life was like. So tell me -- tell me a little bit about your father. What was he doing?

A: My father, he was a baker, but h-he didn't start his life to be a baker, yeah? He was from a village, a middle class family. Maybe I can tell you a little story about my father, yes? And that will lead us also to something in Auschwitz. When I was maybe, I don't know, a little girl [indecipherable] so, but I remember myself, a little girl maybe six, maybe eight years old. My father stood in front of me and he said, "You know, when I was born, my mother died." During - giving birth. And I ask, so -- and who brought you up? He said, "My grandfather took me to his place. And my mother's name was Isen." I was a little girl, I didn't know how to react. I was sorry for him. And that's it. We never talked about it, and so went on like that, til I will come to a story in Auschwitz, an interesting story, you read it.

Q: Yes.

A: About Vera Isen.

Q: Vera Isen.

A: I never knew about her, nothing. Only this gave me the idea that she is my cousin.

Q: But you remembered this --

A: The name --

Q: -- [indecipherable] Isen.

A: -- Isen. And when we came here to Canada, in two cases I met names -- two names, Isen. So I ask, are you Isen from this city Taria from Hungary? Said no, so I went on with life til this girl came to me and she said that she is with -- she is looking for her cousin -- no, for -- yes, for her

cousin. So who is your cousins? Alice [indecipherable] called me Aliska -- Aliska Roth. So what's your name? She said, "I am Vera Isen." And that [indecipherable] the family --

Q: Right.

A: -- of my father. So he was brought up then, back in the place of his father. When he married he took him, and he was there. And then he was a soldier in the first war, and he was captured by the Russians, right in the beginning, and he was in Siberia for s -- I think for six years in Siberia. And my mother gave birth to my brother before he went -- before he became a soldier. She didn't know about him, that he's alive. Somebody told her ca -- my mother -- I saw your husband dead on the ground. So she got a heart condition, she fainted [indecipherable] from her. And she believed the whole time that he died, that he is dead. And one day my brother was a little boy and he ca -- came, and he say, "Mommy, a Russian man is looking for you." So -- and he came, he [indecipherable] and so they met, and then I was born, yeah. So my brother was nine years older from me, yeah.

Q: Nine years older than you.

A: Yeah, because Siberia, the war, Siberia, and so -- and then my father struggled. He started with a store, they opened a little store, it didn't work. Then he met a man, a baker, so his father gave him some money and they built a little bakery, because that was a family house, my grand-grandfather's house where they lived. And so they struggled the whole [indecipherable] the whole life, they worked very, very hard. My parents were very honest and very, very hardworking people. My father got up in the morning very early like in a bakery. Later on my mother, and they worked. Then when it went a little bit better, they did took somebody to work there. Since -- I come from a poor -- quite poor family. Since my parent didn't have money to send my brother to school, so they let him to learn some trade. So he was a glasser. And --

Q: A what?

A: Glasser -- glass -- glass --

Q: Oh, glass.

A: -- glass. And he was framing pictures, and he was a very smart, nice, hardworking boy. Then he became a manager in a store, like that. He was also very, very hardworking and very, very nice. Unfortunately, too nice. And the money which he made, the bi -- bigger part he gave to his -- to my mother. And then he usually worked extra. Besides the store he framed pictures during the weekends, he should earn for himself. And that was a little bit easier, because my brother made money, the bakery was a little -- the best business was when the Germans came. The Germans invaded Slovakia. That was the best business in the bakery, because --

Q: Well let -- let's -- let's go back just a little bit. Tell me what your father's name was.

A: I-z-a -- [indecipherable] Roth, Izak Roth.

Q: And your mother's name?

A: Regina -- Regina [indecipherable]

Q: And your brother?

A: Nikolas. Nikolas.

Q: Nikolas?

A: It's Nikolos -- Nikolos. It's --

Q: [indecipherable] right. Were you close with your father?

A: Yes, I was close with the whole family.

Q: With the whole family.

A: Was a very quiet girl, very, very quiet. They liked me, and I appreciated them very much.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Many times in the evenings, when they slept already, I was looking at them, and I thought, oh my God. Somehow I had a feeling, something wrong. But not like that. Only that they worked so hard, that my God, where will all this lead, that they work so hard? I'm so very sorry for them.

And they're very nice, very nice. Very, very nice.

Q: So you were a very sensitive child.

A: Yes. And my brother, I said that unfortunately he was too nice. He makes me the most sad, because my -- when they took the parents, my parents, he was at work, and he was hidden in the basement, there where worked. And when he heard that they took my parents, he ran away from his hidden place, came home to help my parents, to go with them, and therefore he went with them. And there -- I met once in a train, one of his friends who was in the same lager that he -- he says they worked in a forest with my brother, many people went in, and the young men, in Deblin -- in Deblin, it's somewhere near to Lublin. I didn't say -- I didn't see mention these lager, this concentration lager, but it must have been a small lager. They worked in the forest and they [indecipherable] they did take the older people, older. My father was 53, my mother was 51. But that was older then. Th-They take them from the lager, they take them away. My brother wanted again to help them, so he ran away from the forest to help them. And so they took them -- took him also with my parents. That's where they died, all three of them. My mother, she worked in a bakery, and she worked at home. She had many friends in the bakery, many, many friends, people liked her. She liked to talk. A real woman. And so I was a quiet child, working very, very hard, I studied hard because I promised myself that I don't want to be poor. I have to make it. And therefore I studied for a decent future. And like a girl, a young girl, I hoped that I will be happy sometimes. That's approximate the same. Maybe [indecipherable] will -- lived in a big house from my great-grandfather, yes? Apartment was small, but there were tenants there. It was

an aun -- no, it was a -- an grand-aunt. Was my mother's brother there, my mother's sister there living. My mother's two cousins, and then some tenants, all [indecipherable]. They were I think 12 relatives in the same house all [indecipherable]. Only one cousin returned from some or other, not from Auschwitz, I don't remember. I never asked him where he was. He died in Montreal, we think.

Q: What did you like to study, Alice?

A: What?

Q: When -- when you were a child, what did you like to study?

A: I wanted to be always a teacher.

Q: Always?

A: Yeah. Somewhere important and somewhere where I can teach children to be good, to be nice. Not a knowledge -- I am not so very knowledgeable. Not. I have only a good heart, and I wanted people should be nice.

Q: And what made you think that you had to teach people to do that? Did you see a lot of cruelty before -- this is before Auschwitz.

A: Not cruelty.

Q: No.

A: Not cruelty. But some of misery. People were poor, people didn't understand each other. People didn't try to help, they didn't care about each other. It's a like -- like here. Who cares if somebody's poor, if some -- if they are not so poor, [indecipherable] somebody should care about us, but still I saw that it's a big difference between people. Not too much understanding. It's always a -- somehow watching people, how they think, how they -- and so, was interested in people. [inaudible]

Q: Was yours a religious home?

A: At home, yes, we were Orthodox. Now, we had kosher, that's all.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Kosher, my father went on Saturday to the synagogue, and our mother went during the big holidays to the synagogue, that's all, yeah. It was -- the time was like that. It wasn't nice when somebody didn't have kosher, hm?

Q: Right.

A: If somebody didn't go in the synagogue, what kind of people are they? So we had to keep going, yeah.

Q: And did you like this, or this was just [indecipherable]

A: Well, it is natural, it was natural.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. When my mother went during the big holidays to the synagogue, I went to visit her. That's [indecipherable] the Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, I think that was all, maybe. And she had an occasion to dress up with her big hat.

Q: Yeah.

A: Some -- she had some necklace, a big one. So she was [indecipherable] occasion. She had some people which she knew there. So she was happy to go out --

Q: Right.

A: -- you know? Place to go out, to keep in style, that was.

Q: And did you go into the synagogue and stay with her a little bit, or you s --

A: Yes.

Q: -- you stay all day?

A: No, no, no, a little bit.

Q: Yeah.

A: A little bit, yes, a little bit. To be with my mother.

Q: Right.

A: She was happy to see me, and I was happy to see her dressed up and to be happy.

Q: Right, right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And wh-wh-what about Zionism, were your parents Zionists? Or they were not political in any way?

A: No, no, no, no. No, they were hardworking and that's it.

Q: Right. So, since you were born in 1922, when did you start high school, or gymnasium? How old would you have been?

A: Six when I started elementary school, and 12 years old when I --

Q: 12 years old.

A: -- yeah. And then I went -- it was six, and I was for three years in high school. It was like that there, eighth grade or the ninth grade, yes? I was still grade eight, and then I went to a technical women's school, that was a private school. And things went better, so we had so much money --

Q: Right, yeah.

A: -- that we could cover my studies. And then for two years -- it was six -- it was eight years, and then came numerous classes, you know that -- yeah, numerous classes.

Q: Explain that, wha -- wha --

A: Numerous classes mean a Slovak -- Slovak country, or a Slovak state become -- became a fascist state, and they didn't permit all the Jew -- Jewish children to study, so it was a time when

only the best ones did -- what were permitted to study, so the -- that was the last day, the last year, grade three, so this I made like numerous classes. So I made together two and six is eight, and three, eleven classes, yes? And then was not permitted more to study for Jewish people, so since in this technical school -- it was like a home economics school, you know? But also with academic [indecipherable] subjects, these academic subject. So I knew well to sew, I learned to sew th-there also. So at home I started to sew. I made money, and I was so young, but I thought it's so hard, because I wanted. And then I learned -- during this time I learned to weave -- weaving scarves, yeah? And I made a few scarves and I went from store to store to offer my scarves -- scarves. Nobody wanted to buy them. And then I decided, no, I will go into the biggest store in Prešov, and I will try to offer them. So I showed my collection, and I said, I would like to make you scarf, all you scarf. He said, "Yes, I will buy it from you, how many you can make, but with one condition. That we -- you will not do it for anybody else. O-Only for my store." I said yes, and I was happy. So -- he doesn't know that nobody want it. So the whole time I made for them scarf, I was weaving scarves, scarfs -- my mother helped me to -- with the wools, with the yarns. And then I -- he asked, "Will you make turbans?" At the time turbans, they were in style. I said yes. So I taught my mother how to crochet this material, and I picked it up and I twisted it and so, and I sold turbans. And there were in the biggest store in the window, my turbans and my scarves. My father came once home, I said -- he said, "I saw your turbans and your scarves." And I was so happy, and I put in pins and sew. And I made and I sewed, so I made the whole time some money. But the money -- I wasn't so nice, and my brother because they didn't need it, my money. So I was -- I bought for myself clothing, dressing, material, sewing. So I was always nicely dressed, like the richest.

Q: Did you sew for yourself --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- you -- you made your own clothes. And did you create the designs?

A: Yes.

Q: You did.

A: Yeah, we learned to create designs.

Q: You learned how to do that?

A: Yes, I sew [indecipherable] I made those [indecipherable] everything I make [indecipherable].

I save money also, yeah.

Q: That's fabulous. So what were you thinking of teaching at this point, before -- before the Nazis --

A: Before, so I couldn't study. I couldn't. I [indecipherable] night school.

Q: Right.

A: And I thought I will continue from [indecipherable]

Q: Yes, uh-huh. Right.

A: But I s -- I was stopped.

Q: Yes.

A: And then when I came -- I -- I returned home, then I still didn't study, because I needed again money. Yes, I needed money. It was just my uncle -- my father's brother was alive, so he -- he invited me, so I stayed with him, but I couldn't ask for more money, huh? So my husband, Hugo. So he came one day here, knocked, knock, knock. He said, oh we met with -- with al -- with Mrs. -- with Miss Aliska. So I need a cashier in my store. He had the hardware store, so I went to work there, and I gave the -- all my salary to my uncle, whatever I received, everything. But we

were both from the family Roth, honest people. I gave to him all my money, and before the wedding, he returned me everything, yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Every -- everything, the last penny.

Q: That's amazing.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you met Hugo a long time ago, bef-before the war?

A: No, no, that was after the war.

Q: Oh, this is after the war?

A: After the war I came to his city --

Q: I see.

A: -- because there was living my uncle.

Q: Uh-huh. Right.

A: So I worked for him. And we were very [indecipherable] like on the relations [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now when you were growing up, did you have lots of friends?

A: Yes. Yeah. It was, as I said, the house was big, many people were living there, so it was enough, you know, to have friends close.

Q: Right.

A: School [indecipherable]. No problem.

Q: And were you close with your brother?

A: Oh yes, very much.

Q: Was he the big brother who took care of you?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yes, yes. And bought me many things, many things.

Q: He did?

A: Yes, he did. He liked me, he played with me, nine years old, yes.

Q: You didn't fight?

A: Aw.

Q: No?

A: Never.

Q: That's unusual.

A: Never, not.

Q: That's very sweet.

A: Never.

Q: Bef -- before Slovakia become independent in '39, and the war was going on in '38 in Czechoslovakia, did you feel as you were growing up, anti-Semitism in Czechoslovakia, or did you feel comfortable as a Jewish person?

Q: I felt comfortable, comforta -- only within the last year, when I was not permitted, when I had to study as numerous classes, because it was a mixed class, yes. So the children, I didn't feel anything, only the last year because I knew that I am restricted, yes it -- I cannot study forever. And then the newspapers, what I read in the newspapers. I mean, the windows in the synagogues were broken, and so the -- as I was --

Q: So did you also have Gentile friends when you were growing up?

A: Oh yes.

Q: So it was a very mixed --

A: Very mixed.

Q: -- assimilated --

A: With no problem, no, no, not ever, not any problem.

Q: And did you identify yourself as a Jewish Czechoslovakian, or Jewish Slovakian, or was that not even in --

A: Like everybody in their classroom, when we had to say the nationality or so, we have to get up, to stand up, I think that they asked Jewish people as a different nationality we had to stand, I think so. And we didn't write on Saturdays. We didn't write in school on Saturday, Jewish girls, Jewish people. But was no problem. It was no --

Q: Right [indecipherable]

A: Not at all a problem.

Q: So when -- you were only 11 years old when Hitler took over in Germany in '33, did you as a child begin to feel things about what was happening in Germany, or not?

A: Yes, I heard, but -- I heard, yes. It touched me, but I didn't feel it, that something is wrong with myself or with my family.

Q: Right, right.

A: No, only as I said, when the newspapers started, let's see, '38, maybe '39 to write. So I used read it and heard about it, and I was scared --

Q: You were scared.

A: I was scared, yes, I was scared.

Q: Did you know what you were scared about? You ha -- di -- or was it just general

[indecipherable]

A: I was scared because everybody was scared what will happen to -- to -- to everybody. Scared was not comfortable.

Q: Right. And when Slovakia became independent, when Tiso took over, it became worse?

A: Yes.

Q: So, or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. Only that it was numerous classes.

Q: But your father kept his business?

A: He kept --

Q: He kept the bakery.

A: -- his business, yes. But then later on, let's see, was '30 -- '39 or '40, I don't remember exactly, he cannot be regular -- a regular owner, so we had to take somebody to -- to write it -- the firm on him, yes, that he was the owner, some Christian had to pay for him [indecipherable]. But still my father worked there. It was only somebody who came for his salary or something like that, for his payment that he --

Q: So did you --

A: -- how was it called? [indecipherable] th-the name of a ma -- of somebody who -- who was the -- legally the -- the -- the owner, yes.

Q: And did -- your -- it wasn't your father who found this person.

A: What --

Q: This was -- so who found the per -- who -- who came in and became the legal owner? Who made that happen, your father?

A: At the beginning.

Q: In the beginning.

A: No, he had a partner, a partner who was a baker. He came.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: My father build the bakery, and this partner, he was the baker. My father wasn't a baker, he learned from him. But this partner cheated him then, he cheated, he took from him money. So he started again from nothing. But then he knew how to -- how to work there, you know. He learned from the other one to be a baker.

Q: But when the Gentile had to come in and be the actual owner --

A: Yeah.

Q: Did the government put that person in the place?

A: Now, he had to choose somebody.

Q: Your -- your father had to choose somebody.

A: To choose somebody else, was a woman.

Q: It was a woman?

A: So -- yeah. And when I returned home, I went to visit her, and she said that she paid taxes for my father, and she was really angry at my father that she -- when he left -- when he left, then she had to pay taxes for him. And I told her -- I didn't have money, but I told her, I will pay back for you everything to the last penny. And I did that.

Q: And she's talking about when she left when he was deported?

A: Yeah.

Q: To be killed. And she's angry?

A: She was angry. She said, exactly, "Your father should burn in hell because I had to pay for him taxes." So I said, "Don't worry, I will pay for you back in installments." And I paid.

Q: You did pay?

A: Everything, to the last penny. Cause I didn't want somebody should be angry at my father, you know.

Q: Right. We're going to have to change the tape, right?

A: Yeah.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: Alice, I was a -- I was asking you a-about this woman who was so mean about your father, and it's quite a -- it's quite an amazing story that -- your response to her.

A: Yes. I did it for my father. When I finished my payment, I never went into her store. Never, I never saw her. Finished the thing for my father, I repaid it to my father, not for her, I didn't pay it for her, I paid for my father.

Q: Because you didn't want her to say anything mean --

A: No, I didn't want anybody to have some -- some bad thinking about my father. Nobody had to curse my father. I'm sure she was happy, if even she cheated me.

Q: Yes.

A: And I'm quite sure that she said more than she had to pay, yeah. She was happy, and she forgot about my father. Didn't think about him. It was not her business to think about my father, or anybody's [indecipherable]. He was a lovely man, was an angel.

Q: And she was a terrible person, clearly.

A: I didn't know her before. I went sometimes into her store, and I didn't know her after. She was -- for sure she was a greedy person, not an honest person. But that was not my problem that time, how she was.

Q: I would doubt that many people would have done anything like that.

A: I know that. I know. No, when I came to my -- back home, so we -- I had a home, and we had a bakery. So I went to the bakery, not inside. Was looking into the bakery, and a man was there standing and lurking at the oven. I looked around from the outside, and I saw the equipment and furnitures and everything in a bakery. Somebody came to me, probably his wife, and h -- she asked, are you looking for somebody? I said no. I am here at home. And I turned away. I never

entered my home, I never entered a bakery, and I didn't ask from him money to pay for equipment or furnitures, I couldn't. Because it didn't make any difference. There was not more my father, and that didn't belong more to me now. Not my home, and not the bakery. I didn't want anything. I left. And I went many times into that courtyard.

Q: Just to look.

A: To look, and then I -- there were some tenants and there were some friends, which they -- the family, which -- a Gentile family. They were living there, so when I was wa -- when the -- so I went to visit them, and there were two big gardens, one belonged to us, and to the family of -- of my mother, and the other one to her aunt, and there were berries, gooseberries [indecipherable] and so on, this lady was so nice that she prepared me always, things to take home from Prešov to Humenné. Said, Aliska, here, make from this wine. I made even wine from ri -- this. Take this, and so -- so I went always there to see. And then they -- they got it -- their rent from the tenants also, they took care of the house. And how much they gave me, they gave me, yeah?

Q: Right.

A: So I went to the house, but I never entered the home. And I never entered and didn't ask for the bakery. I didn't want anything to have more in the garden with -- which belonged to me -- to my mother. There were plants, nice beautiful, big plants -- plants, and I wanted to -- to please my aunt in Humenné, yeah? So I went to ask for plants and I took them home, I wanted to take from my aunt. I took a big, big suit -- suitcase, because I knew that there are many plant. So the lady on the other side, was different from this side, she came -- she came to me and she said, "Aliska, don't take all the plants. I need them for my children." And I said, "Don't worry. It will be a time that you belong again to me." Because she felt that the house belongs to him. And I took the plants and I left, but I never went again to -- to -- to the garden, to this garden til it was not on my

name. Then I couldn't legally take it, yes. I didn't want to. Not greedy, no. Nothing could be -- replace me my family, nothing. Not plants, not bakery, not home, nothing. They were not there.

Q: Right.

A: No.

Q: So now let's go back.

A: Yeah.

Q: Slovakia enters the war in 1941 when -- when --

A: I think so [indecipherable]

Q: -- when the Soviet Union wa -- wa -- when the Soviet Union is a -- is attacked.

A: Attacked, yeah.

Q: And then in m -- March of '42, this is before you become -- you be -- you get deported to

Auschwitz, there is a ghetto in Poprad, is -- am I correct, or no?

A: No. Th-The military concern, military barracks. Soldiers --

Q: So -- so you are still living with your parents when you hear about the fact that you have to go to Poprad, is that right?

A: I didn't know that I have to go to Poprad.

Q: You didn't -- you didn't know. What's the -- what happened?

A: No, it was only a registration. My father brought some formal -- some papers from the -- from the Jewish community, to register the girls.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And he had to put on the name Sarah, in front of Alitsa -- Alika. Sarah Alika was my name.

He had to register me and to take it back. And then, on March 20th, it was one day before they took me, came my brother home from work. And he said, tomorrow the guardist -- they were like

the fascist here, the guardist will take the girls. He didn't know where, and when. Tomorrow the guardist was -- on Friday -- tomorrow on Saturday the guardist will come and they will take the girls. That was -- I didn't know that the Poprad, or [indecipherable] Auschwitz, nothing, they take them.

Q: How did your brother know? Do you know?

A: Somebody told him.

Q: Somebody told him.

A: Yeah, he just --

Q: So you only thought you were registering.

A: I was registered, that's all, and we were afraid for -- for a reason. Why are we there, I -- I -- I am registered, or are we registered. I don't remember if also the family also -- I don't remember, that I cannot say. I know only that I was registered, and it bothers me always that they put me name Sarah, Sarah I was here, Sarah. A typical Jewish name. Suddenly I'm somebody else than I am -- I was.

Q: Was there any discussion in the house about not registering?

A: No, no.

Q: About just trying to escape? Nothing.

A: No, because we were so naïve. We talk about it very often, we were so naïve, and so honest, so -- so stupidly honest. They said to register, then have to register. That's the rule. Yeah, today I wouldn't register for sure.

Q: Right.

A: And I wouldn't go, I would run [indecipherable] run.

Q: So your brother tells you that you're going to be going somewhere, but somebody's got to say you must leave the house. How did you know to go wherever you were going?

A: Yeah. So, in my -- after my brother said it, so we realize that they will come, and they will take me, yes?

Q: Yes.

A: So we had supper on Friday evening, and then my mother took me and we went to a house, to a Gentile's house, whom my mother trusted. She knew her from the bakery, a nice lady, yes. And she knew that she will take me there. So we went there, and my mother asked her, "Could you let Aliska to sleep here, because tomorrow the guardists are supposed to come." She said okay, sure. So I slept there, yeah. But in the morning, my mother came -- let's see, I don't know. Before noon she came and said, "You have to come home because the guardists came and they were asking for you. I said you -- and I don't know where you are. So they said when -- til noon you will not be on the fire station, then the policemen will look -- be looking for you, and they will take you there." And that was a shame a policeman should take me. So I dressed up and I went home. My suitcase was prepared, a empty suitcase. So I packed my things, and I went. I went, by myself.

Q: You walked by yourself to the -- to [indecipherable]

A: And tried to -- to -- to arrive til noontime.

Q: And what did you pack? What did you put in there?

A: Clothing, nice clothing.

Q: Nice clothing?

A: Nice clothing. Suitcase -- suitcase, quite a [indecipherable] and a rucksack also, to have enough, to have everywhere I go, I should be well dressed. A new coat. A hat. That time they wear hat, boots.

Q: And you were wearing boots?

A: Yeah.

Q: It was cold?

A: It was cold.

Q: Yeah.

A: Was a cold year.

Q: Gloves?

A: [indecipherable] and I don't know, maybe a purse, I don't remember, for a purse I don't remem -- probably yes. Was 19 years old, yes. Wanted to be elegant.

Q: Do you remember saying good-bye to your mother and father?

A: Oh yes, sure.

Q: Well, that must have been really hard.

A: Yeah, I said first good-bye to my father. We had a mezuzah, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: So he said, come here. He put his hands on my head, yeah, and he was crying, and then my mother, I said good-bye, she cried. To my brother I said good-bye, and I left. My mother came to the -- the street to accompany me. She was standing there, standing where she could see me, because I turned always back til I could see my mother, she was standing there. And then when I was on the fire station, so I spotted my mother -- the fire station, she came after me, and she spoke to a guardist. Was looking, and she was pointing at me, at me. She brought my lunch,

because I didn't have breakfast. And then we were just standing maybe for two, three hours in the -- on the fire station. There was the order to go, so we left, all of us. And then I saw my brother, nobody else was on the street, my brother. And she -- he took my suitcase, he wanted to help me. But then came a guardist to him, and he told him to leave. My brother was crying, has tears. He gave me over suitcase, was cr -- and then, where we came to the train station, there was a low fence. There were -- many people were there, those who stayed, and on the other side, those who left. My mother is -- my brother, they were there also. Say good-bye.

Q: And your father was --

A: Father stayed at home.

Q: Stayed at home.

A: Yeah. Many people were there, people were talking. It wasn't too much to say. No, we -- we didn't feel comfortable [indecipherable]. I asked a trainman who worked there, "Where do we go?" He said, "You go to Svit," that was next to Poprad, that place. You go there. And what for do we go there? Oh, there is the Bata -- Bata, you know, shoes, Bata, here is the company Bata.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: So you go to this Bata company to work. For how long? For two -- three month -- for two months. And I believed him. Two months of Bata not so bad, yeah. When I was there at the fence, so a young man told me, jump through this fence and stay here, don't go. I looked around, my suitcase, my -- all my dresses, my everything that I had. And the girls chatting all around, ah, I will go, not so bad to go to Bata to work, yeah. It was a -- it will be an adventure to work in a factory [indecipherable]. Yeah, big adventure.

Q: Yes. So how did you get from Prešov to Poprad?

A: On a regular train.

Q: On a regular train.

A: On a regular train. We came there, it was late night when we arrived, I don't know if the trains stopped on the train station, or -- or next to the barracks. I don't know, I don't remember. I know only that it was there SS, an SS. And he had our names, and he checked our names, he called our names, if we all are there, and that was very scary. An SS man to say -- we saw the Wehrmacht or so in the city, when they occupied there, but there we saw an SS. [indecipherable] that hat, yes, the SS, I didn't know that's SS. They said [indecipherable] that hat. And I --

Q: So when did you find out it was an SS? Later?

A: No --

Q: Oh, you knew then?

A: No, then. I -- I saw that something strange, something strange, so we were scared, yeah. And are you interested how I learned where we go? Was a -- all of a little story. When we came into our rooms, we had straw only, straw on the floor. There we were, a empty room, they were sitting and sleeping. We were there for maybe three -- three nights. And a SS came, strictly in German, he said the rules how we have to behave, and he -- yeah, and also he said that we have to go on turns to the kitchen for -- for soup and for water outside in the courtyard. So -- and when we -- I went for water with [indecipherable] outside. And they were -- was a soldier, a Slovak soldier, Slovak, not an SS at the pump, water pump [indecipherable]. And he said -- til then I thought that everybody's from Prešov, yes, I didn't look around. Many girls. So -- and he s -- who is here from Prešov? I said, I am. He said, "Stay here, I want to talk to you." Soldier, this Slovak. And then he mentioned some names, Jewish names, boys from Prešov. I didn't know all of them, but I knew the names. And he said then -- suddenly he said, "Do you know where you go?" I said, "No. Is it Bata? Is it Svit?" He said, "No. You are going to Poland, and your families

will go after you, and you will never return from there.” So I was shocked. He didn’t say anything. I turned away and I left. I didn’t say to the girls nothing because I didn’t want to create some panic, and I don’t -- didn’t want for him make some problems, so I didn’t say anything. Only in the lager, when I was in Auschwitz, so I thought about him many times, I thought, well maybe this soldier wanted to help me, because we were somehow only alone there when they [indecipherable] only him and me. And so went by time, I returned. I was working in a store. I was married that time. I became a manager in the store. I was sitting in the [indecipherable] and this Slovak soldier arrived into the store, a uniform, an officer. I looked at him, I said, oh that’s him. And I ask him, “Tell me, where have you been in March 1942?” He said, “In Poprad.” I said, “I remember you, and I was thinking about you many times. And I thought that you were willing to help me. Do you remember me?” He said, “Yes, I remember you.” He said, “Yes, I wanted to help you.” Maybe he wanted, maybe he said it after the war, I don’t know, but that’s what he said. He left, and I never met him again, he never entered the store. Was interesting.

Q: That’s interesting.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. So now you go back and you’re with these, what, close to a thousand women, 999 women, is that right?

A: Yes -- yeah, that was on the list, yes.

Q: Did you know a lot of the people, because they were a number of women from Prešov.

A: From Prešov --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- I knew everybody.

Q: You knew everybody.

A: Everybody.

Q: So, you're the only one of the group who realizes that you're going to Poland

[indecipherable]

A: Yes, I was only one there.

Q: So you must have been really frightened then.

A: Yes, I was frightened, but I didn't want to say because I thought, what can I do?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I didn't think about at the time to run away, that he will hide me or something.

Q: Yeah.

A: Were not times for -- for -- for thinking like that, that was the first transport.

Q: Right.

A: During the second, some of them, they were smart, some, because I learned later. But even many of them didn't return. And even this man who suggested me to jump through the fence, he didn't return.

Q: Mm.

A: No.

Q: Had you been hearing anything about the killings of Jews in the Soviet Union when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, or you heard nothing?

A: I wasn't there that time. Was I there? No, I didn't ha -- I don't know --

Q: Cause in '41 --

A: In '41.

Q: -- when -- when they -- so did you hear rumors that the Germans were killing --

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

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

Q: So your fear is -- is based on your -- your own experiences --

A: My instinct.

Q: Your instinct.

A: My instinct.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: [Indecipherable] are different time, my instinct. There were signs Jews cannot go into a park, Jews cannot this, this. Some were [Indecipherable] broken glasses in synagogues, even in Germany or somewhere else. Was an instinct, a fear, a fear, yeah. But I didn't know. Only but -- from the newspapers and so.

Q: So you're there for three nights in Poprad, right?

A: I think the 21st we came there.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And 25th we left. That means 24, two, three, four --

Q: So it's four nights.

A: Four nights, probably -- probably.

Q: So did they feed you?

A: Yeah, they gave some goulash, but we didn't eat too much. I think that four nights, I couldn't swear on it, three or four.

Q: Right. But you're not doing anything?

A: No, just --

Q: You're just waiting.

A: -- sitting and listening to rumors. Somebody went out to the toilet, what he saw, what he heard, and so when he records somebody they send to clean the toilets and things, scary, unpleasant thing. Yes, and between, we had to go for some ber -- I don't know if everybody, or I had to go, I don't remember, but I know only -- no, we had to go pictures, we had pictures, and we had to take it into the office. And there was a young man, a Jewish man, and he said that my uncle, my uncle -- he was a teacher. My uncle came there to Poprad, and he said that I am supposed to teach in a village. Somehow he made some papers up. That was all. But they did -- they didn't let me out. He came to take me --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- away, yeah, and he didn't [indecipherable]. Somebody was there, it was no way to -- to leave or so.

Q: Did you become depressed during these few days before the --

A: Oh yes.

Q: You were depressed.

A: Oh yeah. There in Poprad?

Q: Yes.

A: Everybody was depressed. No more adventure to Bata company, no.

Q: People knew that -- everybody knew after a certain amount of time, they weren't going to the shoe company?

A: I don't know if they knew, because I didn't ask anybody, I -- and I wasn't sure that the soldier say the truth --

Q: Yes.

A: -- because you know you want to reject things which you are scared of. But I was depressed, sure I was, and everybody was depressed. On straw to sleep, to -- to -- to -- to sleep there, wasn't a pleasant thing, so everybody was depressed.

Q: Were peop -- people talking a great deal, it was very quiet, was it [indecipherable]

A: It was quiet.

Q: It was quiet?

A: I think it was quiet, if I remember well. For sure they were talking, girls were talk -- chatting, but no laughing, no joking.

Q: Were people crying?

A: I don't remember, I cannot say. I don't think so, I don't think so. Because we were not sure, I don't think so. Even Auschwitz, I didn't -- I don't remember to her -- to cr -- to cry, no. We are nervous, nervous.

Q: Right.

A: No, no.

Q: So th -- oh, okay. I think I want to stop now and change the tape, cause --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- I don't want to start.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Alice, so you're waiting for somebody to tell you that you're all leaving?

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: We are waiting what will happen, not that are we leaving also, because this Bata company was next to Poprad.

Q: And you were still hoping?

A: We didn't think -- at least, I don't know what the other ones think -- thought. I didn't ask anybody anything. I was waiting what will happen. And for sure the other ones were waiting also, I feel that. So we -- the future stopped. Everything stopped. We are here, and now we are waiting what will be scary. But, was the first transport.

Q: I know. Does somebody come into this room and say you're now leaving, get up?

A: Probably yes.

Q: Do you still have your luggage with you?

A: Oh yes, everything.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable]. I had -- I didn't had a -- a housecoat, you know, only in dress, a dress [indecipherable]. I had one coat -- one long dress, which is a little bit loose. It was a nice dress. I will make on it buttonholes and buttons I will sew, so I will have it for [indecipherable] morning. So I was doing that, sewing. I had scissors, I had needle, I had thread, I have buttons, I have everything. So I cut the dress through the center. I was sewing buttonholes, put on buttons, and now I am -- I am ready, I have everything what I need. Also a housecoat.

Q: You have a toothbrush too?

A: Everything.

Q: Everything.

A: I -- on the way to -- to the -- to the fire station, I ran into the store. I went to buy something, I don't remember what it was, I know that I needed some little thing, I don't know, soap, or brushtooth -- I -- toothbrush or something, or toothpaste. I didn't remember, I got -- I know only that I went into the store to buy something, I should have really everything.

Q: Everything.

A: I had everything.

Q: Do you remember the time of day when you left to go into the train, the cattle car? Was it morning, was it evening?

A: No, it was evening, but early evening, because I remember it was between three and four when we left the fire station, between three o'clock and four in the afternoon. And there we were maybe for one hour, maybe -- maybe it was -- would have been around five o'clock, they went into the train around five. And then we were sitting there, and chatting on the train and then we left. And so it was -- it was late night when we came to Poprad. I don't know what --

Q: But now when you were leaving Poprad to go to Oswiecim even though you don't know yet that that's where you're going --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- do they take you from Poprad in th -- at night, or in the morning, do you remember?

A: That I don't remember. I think it was during the day sometimes, I don't remember. I don't remember. I don't. But they took us on all -- in these wagons, in these --

Q: And these were cattle cars, these were open without seats, obviously, right [indecipherable]

A: No, there were some seats.

Q: There were some seats?

A: No-Not seats, there were some boards.

Q: Benches, uh-huh.

A: Some benches in there.

Q: And did you still have your luggage with you?

A: Mm-hm.

Q: You still had your luggage. So were you able to sit actually?

A: Yeah

Q: You were?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So this is not like some of the stories much later where people are standing the whole trip without -- you --

A: I don't know if everybody was sitting. I remember that I was next to the window like this in -- in -- in horizontal direction next to the window. And it was not like a bench, it la -- was like a board next to it -- I don't know, fixed up, I didn't [indecipherable] no, I was sitting there, and I don't know others, they were sitting, if everybody was sitting, I really don't remember.

Q: And again it's quiet?

A: Quiet. Quiet. We were talking.

Q: But not noisy at all?

A: No, no, no, no. We got a -- a bucket inside where we need, yeah.

Q: That's all.

A: That's all, yeah.

Q: Was there water to drink?

A: No, no, no.

Q: No. So you had no food with you?

A: Well, we had this -- we took some, I -- maybe, I don't remember. I remember when we came to -- to Auschwitz, then where we dropped our belongings, the -- one of my neighbors from our house, she had a -- sardines in her pockets, and she shared with all. There were three, and I was the fourth one. So four girls, we ate one box of -- pack of sardines, so [inaudible]

Q: So how long -- do you remember about how long you were on the train?

A: The 25th, went into this cattle [indecipherable], on the 26th --

Q: You arrived.

A: -- we arrived to Auschwitz. 26th, and it was early. I don't know if it was noontime, maybe before noontime, I don't -- don't re -- I know that was light, and during the day.

Q: Now, did you arrive at the camp, or did you arrive in Oswiecim the town and have to walk?

A: We had to walk, we had to walk. They opened the camp the -- lagers, oh my God, and right away, raus, raus, out. Oh, these SS, raus, raus, out. And there was -- was a commandant, his name was Tibbets. Had quite a good memory. Today I remember less. 60 years, no?

Q: Right.

A: But I remember. I picture things. And he said, in German, ferf -- do you know German [indecipherable]

Q: A little bit --

A: No.

Q: -- but say it and then you can translate it.

A: There is a [speaks German here]. That means, damn it, they are all attractive human being -- beings, or something like that. 16 til 30, everybody in boots. They -- Germans they had also

boots, yes. Was cold, so we jumped out and they -- they -- they said, raus, raus, out, out, it's now what it means, yes. So we jumped out, and it was so quiet, we were so quiet. That was very scary, so many soldiers, so many SS. And what we spotted was this -- I think on the train station, there were a few men, I don't know how many, maybe could be 10 - 15 men, 20 men, or more than 20, in this uniforms, this -- this off white and blue stripes, and a little cap, with shovels working. And this is -- uniforms, they were new, and they didn't look at us, they were working. Then we knew that something wrong, cause they were so dressed, and used these shovels and didn't look at us, so -- so [indecipherable] it was my purpose that we see where we are and so. And then we had to line up in five, and we had -- we took the direction to -- to the entrance Arbeit Macht Frei.

Q: Right.

A: There we were.

Q: You entered Auschwitz one.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was this a half hour walk, do you remember, an hour walk, was it --

A: I don't know, maybe between half a-and one hour, I don't remember. Cannot remember.

Q: Did you happen to see any sign? Was there a sign that said lager [indecipherable]

A: No, no, only Arbeit Macht Frei, and a fence under electricity, yes, under electricity, and on the towers, soldiers with bayonets toward the lager [indecipherable]. So, we didn't have to know too much more.

Q: You knew this was not going to be the best situation.

A: Wasn't [indecipherable]. Not the Bata company for shoes, no, that be -- yes, and during the way -- during the trip, during the trip, when the trains stopped somewhere, it was still snow, not

the 23rd, the 25th, was still snow. We went to a forest, and with my knowledge of geography -- Hugo would laugh at me, I thought maybe we are in Siberia. It's cold, snow, forest and forest and forest, where are we? So then stopped the train, and some people were at the train station there. So I asked in Slovak, "Where are we?" And somebody said, "You are in Poland," in Polish language. So we knew that [indecipherable] we are in Poland, and I was sitting next to a girl who was teaching in a kindergarten, so we started to talk about escaping. We will escape from here, from Poland. Was very easy to make plans, but -- we came there, we didn't stopped --

Q: You didn't.

A: -- she didn't arrive, she didn't survive, no.

Q: She didn't -- uh-huh. You were fl -- you were fluent in German?

A: Yes, we spoke at home German.

Q: Yes -- right

A: Now, I am less fluent. But that time, I -- it was my mother tongue. My first tongue. So we came there, to Auschwitz, into the lager, after the Arbeit Macht Frei, everybody was watching, means Arbeit Macht Frei. And the SS ladies, the SS women, they said, "Drop all your belongings here in the corner." So we left everything we dropped there what we had, every -- my rucksack, my suitcase, everything, and zaehlapell, yeah? So line up into five. And one girl went to the SS woman and she said, "There woman took my shoes from my suitcase." They were haftlings, inmates, they came a day before from Ravensbrück, in these stripey -- so she said, don't worry, you will get it back, you know. So [indecipherable] dressed, so we lost --

Q: So whatever you were dressed in.

A: Yeah. We lost everything. Still had my hat, probably.

Q: Did you have any piece of jewelry with you, something that was personal?

A: Yeah, yeah, still kept it.

Q: Still? Right.

A: [indecipherable]

Q: Still. Right. Still ha -- you have [indecipherable]

A: Watch [indecipherable]. Everybody had something here.

Q: Right. So then you line up, and what do they do? They just count you?

A: They said the rules of behavior and obedience. And they said, when you will work, you will get out from here, because Arbeit Macht Frei.

Q: So what were the rules?

A: To obey.

Q: To obey. Whatever you're told to do.

A: [indecipherable] yeah, to behave, and to work when I will have -- when we have to work, and then we will be free. And it was, you can imagine how quiet it was there. We lined up in five.

We have to stretch our hands, it was always [indecipherable] the distance that's between us --

Q: The dist -- uh-huh, right.

A: -- you can -- they can go through the distances, and so --

Q: So you had to be that distance between you on the sides, and in front, and then --

A: Yeah, mainly before. On the side not so [indecipherable]

Q: Not so.

A: Yes. And I remember we were standing too long, it was very difficult to -- to count us.

[inaudible] being here and [indecipherable] there, the --

Q: Right. So you go into one part of Auschwitz one, there's barracks one through 11, I think, and they -- there is a -- a wall around it?

A: Yes.

Q: In Auschwitz one, that they built because they knew the women were coming.

A: Yes, was a -- yes, a fence. It was a fence between -- between the lager, was also the men lager -- men's [indecipherable] yeah, and yes electricity was on [indecipherable]. We yelling, we were quiet. Really so

Q: So it's a very brutal experience, I imagine, so different from anything that you've ever experienced or imagined in your life.

A: Next to me in the line, next to me was standing a girl, she was before -- in -- in high school, she was my schoolmate, we were friends, Martha Cohen was her name. And she told me when they dropped her things, she said, I am -- I am diabetic. And my in -- and I never knew that somebody needs injections. She says, my injections are in my suitcase. And I will not take injections, I will die. I didn't see her next day, maybe she was somewhere further, but -- but I never saw her any more. But injections were there, she couldn't take [indecipherable]. Then when we were standing -- but no, later on [indecipherable] when we're in the barracks, then 10 girls disappeared, that's the rumor, oh she -- she -- she is not here. 10 girls disappeared right away that first evening and we were scared what happened to them, 10 girls went away. So we were always occupied with something. The entertainment. In the morning we were again on zaehlapell, 10 girls came, passed by in -- in -- in military uniforms, shaved he-heads, and -- and -- and covered head -- heads, and -- in Holland, these wooden shoes, you know these [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, clogs.

A: -- those are some crazy people, where are we? So -- and they started to call names, Anna, Maria, or who knows what. So oh, it is them.

Q: It was the si --

A: They fixed them up in the evening or early morning and then they let them go through that we realize where we are, a-a-and what will happen to us.

Q: So they're wearing uniforms, these girls?

A: Yeah, we were also wearing.

Q: You were also wearing uniforms. So they immediately took your clothes. Did they do that within the first day or two, they took your clothes?

A: No, right away we dropped everything.

Q: Yes.

A: So we stayed on -- only in our clothes, and in the morning they took us into the sauna.

Q: Right.

A: And we had to strip everything, and we -- and our jewels we had to put in a box. And there we were naked. So we possessed only our naked body, nothing, nothing else. Unbelievable, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: Everything. We're standing there nakedly, nothing more left. And then there came some men, I don't remember them, and now we were shaved -- then we were shaved, here, here, here, everywhere.

Q: Everywhere, your privates.

A: Everywhere is shaved.

Q: Everywhere on your body that was hair -- that had hair.

A: We were shaved so we didn't have even hair. So we were naked without hair, nothing, we're standing there. And then we went in the [indecipherable] in the next room, and there was -- was a

big basin. And we went into the basin and a German woman, these kapos or so, which they came in yesterday from [indecipherable]. They have sharp brushed, ea -- each one has a sharp brush, like you scrape the floor. You know these brushes? And they started to scra -- to wash us, they started to wash us. I had a little handkerchief still in my hand, which belonged to my neighbor, from my house, from our house. It was nicely decorated. And she -- give me this one, she asked me. And I said I cannot, because not mine, doesn't belong to me. So she started to brush me, brush me, til bleeding. I was totally bleeding, cause I didn't giver her this handkerchief. I didn't want to give something what didn't belong to me, what I saved in my hand when I became naked.

Q: So what was on this brush? This was d-disinfectant of some kind, or soap --

A: The water was disin --

Q: The water?

A: -- in the basin was disinfected.

Q: So was everybody so red and bleeding as -- as you?

A: I don't -- I don't think so, I think she --

Q: She was --

A: -- took her revenge that I didn't give her the handkerchief. If everybody was bleeding -- no, I don't think so, not so --

Q: Did you begin to get angry as well as depressed?

A: Depressed and sad and angry and everything.

Q: Everything.

A: Everything, yeah, everything. But we were all in the same basin, maybe we left and came, but water wasn't exchanged.

Q: Same water for everybody.

A: Yes. So there without hair, bleeding --

Q: Without [indecipherable]

A: -- not clothe. With -- you stepped out from the basin, and they gave us a Russian military [indecipherable] uniforms, summer uniforms, summer, with under -- long underwear, Russian military -- a little girl, and a -- a -- a shirt, an undershirt, and then we had to take care the pants wouldn't fell down, so we had to bind them somehow here and so and turn and turn and turn and fix up. Yeah, these -- these -- these uniforms shouldn't fell down. It was March the 27th.

[indecipherable] some --

Q: Explain something to me, you say you were in a basin.

A: Yes.

Q: You were -- do you mean that literally?

A: Literally, a big basin.

Q: In a big basin, all of you were there, and that's where they were scr -- scraping you?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's where the water was? Was there water up high?

A: Yes.

Q: It was, ah.

A: But I don't remember if all of us were in there --

Q: At the same --

A: -- the same time, yes, that I cannot say.

Q: Right.

A: I was thinking about myself, that she's brushing.

Q: And how did you get in?

A: Stairs.

Q: Stairs into the basin, I see.

A: Into the basin, yes.

Q: So then they give you clothes, you don't get a tattoo yet?

A: No.

Q: Tattoo is later.

A: No.

Q: Do you get a number?

A: No.

Q: On this -- on the uniform, there's nothing?

A: Nothing, nothing.

Q: So --

A: Nothing. Next day they go -- then you go into the barrack, yeah, a day before the -- the evening before when we enter the barrack, the -- or place, there were also [indecipherable] place, not in there. And they brought us all supper, the first supper. We couldn't eat it, because we felt something in the food, in the food. But then we learn that it was a sedative, bromide, or brom, and -- and we couldn't eat it. But it was good, it was useful for us, because we stopped to have menstruation for three years, we didn't have menstruation with these sedatives. And then we -- we became calm when we enter the place, the barrack, then we were very nervous, was very yelling, and so then we released all tension from the last days, everybody was noisy, and -- but this later on. You know, they didn't eat, we literally were scared not to eat, we throw it in the --

in toilet, the food, somebody came and so toilet was blocked. And there we had in Auschwitz, we had the regular toilets.

Q: In Auschwitz one.

A: Yes, Auschwitz, we had regular toilets, yes. We had also water there from --

Q: You had running water.

A: -- there were some horizontal pipes, and [indecipherable] but we could wash and so -- so where are we, yes, so there we [indecipherable] for -- for supper, and -- and [indecipherable] this one, and then, as I said, this bromide, brom, we felt is sedative in. And --

Q: When did you -- when did you find out?

A: Later on they said to us --

Q: That there was --

A: -- we learned, yes --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- that there is some medicin -- some chemical there. And then next day -- next day, that means one day we arrived, second day we went to the sauna, and the third day we went to the office to register -- register. And there was the -- there were these applications, concentration camp Auschwitz [indecipherable] concentration lager, con -- concentrationes lager hausen. So we knew we are in a concentration. What means a concentrationes lager, yes? But then was a question that haftling number. Haftling, so what kind of a haftling, where are we? So then we realized we are somewhere -- some prisoners. I mean, haftling, that means a prisoner number. What kind of prisoner, what did we do? Did we kill somebody, did we steal something? What are we, different from others? Where are we, what are we? So we had to register.

Q: So you -- did you have to write on this registration form?

A: Yes. But I don't remember, I -- we couldn't have numbers that time, no. Numbers we got only when the men arrived, maybe in May they arrived, men to the lager. And there came a sloven -- Slovak boy. I remember still his name, Lally was his name, Lally, he was called Lally. I think he was from Kashmirok, and he spoke with -- to us in Slovak. And he made it [indecipherable]. And then I get a number, the number [indecipherable] 1287. See, I have a scar here. I didn't have to take this blouse. You see this scar?

Q: Yes. You took off the number.

A: Yeah, I took off the number. Here in -- in -- in Montreal, when I came to Montreal. I was teaching, so I didn't want. In Slovakia I made up story, I was joking, that's my phone number, I was a very bad girl, so my parents didn't want me to be lost, and so the reason I had that number, I was joking. But in Montreal I couldn't joke, so I decided to teach writing, but first [indecipherable] took me out. I had a paper about it.

Q: Right.

A: From the doctor. 1287.

Q: 1287 was your number.

A: Right, yeah. The first transport.

Q: Right.

A: One of the low ones [indecipherable]

Q: Absolutely, cause the first 999 were from Ravensbrück.

A: Yeah. I don't know.

Q: So [indecipherable] the first Jewish transport women.

A: It was 1,000 and --

Q: Right.

A: [indecipherable]. I met someday in Montreal, somebody who had some lower. She's sick now, she becomes -- is becoming blind now. So I don't think that I -- it couldn't be many.

Q: No, not many [indecipherable] one of the lowest numbers of the Jewish women.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's for sure.

A: Yeah.

Q: You know that some people say there was nothing put in the food.

A: Yeah, it was -- it was.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Hundred percent, I can swear on it, brom or bromide. Because when -- when it was possible to avoid the food, and we did have times when we could some -- somehow get potatoes or -- or -- or something like that, so you [indecipherable] prepare to avoid food of this sedative bromide [indecipherable]. That's it.

Q: Right. So yo-you think it was a couple of months, it was sometime in May when you got the tattoo?

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: Do you remember what -- what he used to do the tattoo, was there a --

A: Some needle.

Q: Some needles.

A: Put in some colors in the --

Q: Did it work the first time?

A: Yes.

Q: It did?

A: Yes.

Q: It stayed?

A: Some of them, they had to repeat, but some other --

Q: Some of them, but with you it was okay.

A: I really [indecipherable]

Q: What was that like for you to have a tattoo? What a strange [indecipherable]

A: I had a tattoo, that's it.

Q: That's it.

A: I took things how they came. Could I avoid it? No. So what should I bother with it?

[inaudible]

Q: So you had a certain kind of calm about you in a -- in a way?

A: Yes.

Q: That this was what the world was, and this is how you were going to do that.

A: Yeah, yeah. To try to survive day by day and not to think of the -- after tomorrow, because who knows if the after tomorrow will be [indecipherable] survive today, not to think about that. To hope --

Q: Yes.

A: -- to strive, to believe with nobody -- and I will survive. But basically nobody will survive, nobody, because at the last time, at the last day, they will -- they will throw bombs or something. The last day they will kill us all. So if alls I hoped, I believed, but logically, nobody will survive.

Q: Okay, let's --

A: Scary.

Q: Very scary.

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: Alice, did you see yourself in a mirror v-very early on, during the first few days?

A: I will tell you what is mirror, also a good story.

Q: Yeah?

A: That is such a [indecipherable] story. After a few days when I was in this uniform, I went up the stairs, and there a window was not in the frame, but leaned on the wall. They removed it, or they -- something was there. And I saw somebody to walk up the stairs in the window, and I turned behind, who is after me? Nobody was there. That was me, a new person and new eyes. That was all so scary. I didn't recognize myself, no. Very scary.

Q: It was better not to see yourself, do you think?

A: Better not, yes, and in these Holland slippers. I don't remember if I had something on my head, but I don't know if I had some -- covered my head. Later on we had -- everybody had covered heads, I don't know if we received it or not, that I don't remember.

Q: But you were wearing cl -- those wooden clogs?

A: Yeah. And this uniform with this long [indecipherable] and here the waist fixed up and -- and -- and -- and everything and the scary eyes, and no more --

Q: So did you turn away fast?

A: Yeah. I stopped to be myself.

Q: You stopped to be yourself?

A: Yeah, yeah, a few days after [indecipherable]

Q: So you -- once you saw yourself, that -- that hurt you for the next few days? It was difficult for you?

A: That was forever somebody else. Nothing the little cute girl with the hat and boots and new coat.

Q: No more.

A: No, this really clo -- cold, and so [indecipherable] a red collar, got good material, yeah, good, tailor made it for me, cause I made money, so I --

Q: Right.

A: -- it was nice. It wasn't the same [indecipherable]. No, even inside wasn't the same somebody.

Q: So everything was transformed?

A: Everything.

Q: Including your insides?

A: My inside, everything. I stopped to be myself. Not this little girl. I grew up. I grew up. I had to grow up. No crying [indecipherable]

Q: And you were lonely.

A: I was alone. I was alone. Everybody was alone. Now on the bunk where we slept, so when somebody sleep there whom I knew from home, I knew him. But somebody else, I didn't bother about his name, or her name, no. Everybody was alone. We came there, and we lie down.

Q: So if you knew somebody, you were able to have communication, and if you didn't --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- know them, you didn't -- you didn't bother.

A: No, I bother, but name or so --

Q: Nothing.

A: -- didn't mean anything, that's her, from the bunk or so.

Q: Right, right.

A: Later on I made friends there. I had a very, very close friend who became like a sister to me. I still didn't forget her. I never had a sister and she was like my sister.

Q: What was her name?

A: Dieter Rishter, from Bratislava. Was a story -- I have so many stories.

Q: That's great.

A: When I was home, at home, my uncle the teacher, he was not much older than me because he was from the second husband of my grandmother, yeah. He wasn't much older. Even I liked him like [indecipherable] boy, and so -- so I went once in his room, and I saw there a letter lying on the table, I was looking at it. And there was a little picture, little picture of a girl, and it was signed like, eira Dieter, eira Dieter, yeah. I didn't ask anybody. I always had the nature not to ask, I don't ask people anything. When they s -- you say something to me, you say [indecipherable]. So I was -- and I remembered this name Dieter, yes, and I knew that was from Bratislava, because he went, this cousin, to visit. That's it. And went to [indecipherable] in the lager, and there -- you see, when people cannot fight enemies, yeah, Americans with the Canadians, with Mexicans and so they turn against groups, yeah. So was in lager also. The first day, the girls started. Oh you western girls, be ashamed, all you eastern girls, yes. I was from west Slovakia, or east Slovakia -- my direction is always [indecipherable] -- east Slovakia, Bratislava was from west Slovakia. So -- and once, in 1942, we were in Birkenau right aw -- right away, yes, was maybe in -- in -- no, I don't ri -- in winter after we came there. We were standing the whole Sunday outside, was cold, very cold. We are standing there. And that time I think we didn't have more these uniforms, we were somehow in civil dresses, and we had the line. [indecipherable]. There was a group of girls and they played around and talked and so, and

they were from the other part of Slovakia, and they asked me where I am from. I said from this part of slo -- said, oh, you are the same like we are. You are -- you don't belong there [indecipherable]. I was very honored, yes. Bigger group. So and there was a girl and they played around with her joking, and said -- oh, somebody said, oh my Dieter. Dieter, yeah. And I ask her, "Are you Dieter Rishter?" She said, "Yes, I am Dieter Rishter." So -- because he told me her name is Dieter Rishter. So I said, my uncle is whoever. She said, oh, I remember him very well. And then I stayed with them, and she said, come with me, come with me, we will be together. Because we could move our bunks, yes, and in this barrack where we were, there were beds, everybody had one bed, not this bunk. [indecipherable]. But two -- two girls slept together because these beds were -- come, come with me, we will be together. She has a -- she had the older sister there. So then I stayed with her, and we became very, very good friends. We worked together, we were in the same commando and we were together. But she became sick. And when we had our biggest, biggest selection, 1943, so she had swollen legs. We were sitting in the sauna the whole night on benches and so, so she had up her legs and I was massaging her legs, she was very, very sick. I took care of her. And then in the -- the whole night we were sitting there in the sauna, and during the morning we had to line up, and it was a selection, and that was the biggest, biggest selection, because always when the lager was full, it wasn't place where to sleep, then they made the selection. Between that time we went back to the other barrack, we had -- we slept on these bunks and so -- and so it was a big selection, very big, first they took one, then five left, and so on and so on and so. So I asked myself someday, how come that they never selected me, that they never pointed on me. So I came to the conclusion, maybe it's true, because I never looked at them. [indecipherable] like this. I was straight, and I never looked up there. I says, and maybe they pointed and I didn't see. But I think [indecipherable] maybe

[indecipherable]. Anyhow, so I put Dieter in front of me, Dieter do -- she spoke German, you go in front of me, and I will follow you on the selection, because I was so sure that I will make it, that time. So she pointed like that, and she went, and I was praying, oh my God, help me, Dieter should pass by. [indecipherable]. So -- and she went, she passed. They didn't take her to the gas chamber, she passed by. I was so happy, thanks God. Dieter went through sick. And then we had to line up again and then they send us to barracks, to different barracks, here, here, we stopped, so, so, so -- so I lost her, no. She went somewhere else. And the next day in the morning, I don't remember if we didn't go to work or so, or maybe early morning, I went from one barrack to the other one to call her name. Dieter Rishter, Dieter Rishter. No answer. So I went to the next barrack, and to next barrack. And somebody said, "Dieter Rishter died." She survived the selection, but she died, sick and exhausted. So what happened? She went down from the [indecipherable] from the bank [indecipherable] she had to go down. She went down, she fell down. And she wasn't [indecipherable] they took her to the -- through to -- to the other [indecipherable] and I lost Dieter. I cannot still forget her, such a nice girl. So -- and before -- excuse me -- before her, her sister died, before her, you know.

Q: So you were together for a -- a year --

A: A few months --

Q: A few months.

A: -- or maybe longer, I don't know, maybe longer. We made even business together, because she was [indecipherable] work -- working on a place with clothing, you know, from the gas chamber when the people arrived. They had to drop there the things, they didn't arrive to the lager to leave them. And then they carried the things to our company and we had to -- to -- to fold them, to bundle them, and they send it, probably to Germany. And people had some

jewelries, diamonds, and -- in their clothing, yeah. So it was there a pile of this clothing and they have to sortir it, and she was on the pile and I was folding, yeah. So she said once, when I will call summerkleider, summer dresses, so you come, that means that I found something, some jewelry, something. So once she found ducats -- ducats, golden ducats, golden [indecipherable]
Q: Mm-hm.

A: So I took it a few ounce, I think eight or so. And there was a man, because he worked in a -- in a -- in a -- in the compound where men were, so there was a block -- she was hannah blockalteste, he was a blockalteste, Polish man. I used to see him to come in -- into work place, so -- and I noticed that he takes something from girls and then he brings something. So I stopped him, I said I have ducats, I have golden ducats, I gave him. So for these eight big golden ducats, he gives maybe four little breads, and -- a-and a margarine, I think a [indecipherable] for this one, so we had for two, three days.

Q: Was that Pinkus?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Was his name Pinkus?

A: I don't know.

Q: You -- you don't know his name.

A: I don't know his name. You heard about?

Q: I her -- I think he may be the same person, I'm not sure.

A: I don't know.

Q: I'm not sure.

A: I don't know.

Q: Let -- let's go back before Birkenau. You -- y-you are in Auschwitz one from March 26th until --

A: To August.

Q: -- au -- August six -- si -- si -- August six you move to Birkenau. So --

A: I think that's sixth.

Q: Right?

A: Yeah, I think it's sixth.

Q: Think it's the sixth.

A: Yeah, I think it.

Q: You have some jobs --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- when you're in Auschwitz one.

A: Yes.

Q: You worked in the laundry. Is that right?

A: Yes, I worked first in laundry, then I worked in a naishtuber.

Q: That's the sewing.

A: The sewing room, til May -- til -- til older women came, they exchanged us, and then I went to work into Ausenkommando.

Q: Which is a demolition.

A: Demolition. Demolition with picks and so, concrete buildings, which they were demolished and we had to finish them.

Q: Right, you had a -- like a big pole, you were --

A: That's -- that's right.

Q: You were on --

A: [indecipherable]

Q: -- the side of this pole, yes?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And [indecipherable]

A: All -- also, also.

Q: Yes.

A: These picks, and --

Q: So let's go back, wh-when you got the job in the laundry, who assigned people to the job? Do you have any reco -- recollection?

A: By accident probably, but I asked a girl, she was in this block 10, her name was Bluma. I think she was from Bratislava, I am not sure. She passed away [indecipherable] from Tsipi. She worked as a assistant to the kapo, I don't know how she got this job, in the laundry, and I asked her to take me to the laundry. I thought the laundry cannot be so bad. So she took me for night shift. So I worked there as a -- during night shift, but it wasn't good for -- I wasn't a strong girl. I was a weak girl, and I had to rest, and I couldn't relax during the day, during -- during night I worked. So I came to -- during the day to the b-block. So it was noisy, always on mo -- I couldn't sleep. So I was very tired. But I went on and on and on, we had to -- to wash and so, and that happened an accident to me. You know these disin -- disinfection water was in a -- in a bucket, and when we worked there one day the kapo said that we have to come to the other room where they [indecipherable] because a transport was coming. So we made order clean the basin, and everything there. And there was a bucket with -- with disinfection water, and she pointed on me and she said, this water, this water, that she said, she didn't say what, in German, this water. To

me it seemed to be a dirty water, so I poured it into canal. So she came to me and she slapped me and slapped me, so that I couldn't feel my -- my face, was numb totally. And then she -- she slapped me so far, that I -- I di -- I was standing there, I didn't feel anything more, slap, slap, slap. But next day when I went back, I thought, what can I do? She'll be angry at me. I will go and I will apologize. And I went to apologize. I said, it didn't hurt me that you beat me so much, but it hurt me that I made something wrong, that I made you angry. And as an award, she gave me a half a lemon.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, and I said, oh, lemon. And then I stayed for a few weeks, to work there.

[indecipherable] to go to sonder -- to Ausenkommando. And during that time -- during the day I was free, so before I went to sleep, I went to the naishtuber, and I asked there in the sewing room, could I work here? I know how to sew. Said yes, you can work here. So I worked til May there, til the women exchanged. And then, when the women exchanged us in May, and we went in August to Birkenau, to Auschwitz two, so I went to Ausenkommando. Then I went to Ausenkommando, in May, and I lost the naishtuber. It was a good job to sew on the machine and so --

Q: And you were inside when you did that.

A: Was inside.

Q: Let me just ask you something. Whose clothes were you washing, do you know?

A: Probably haftling clothes.

Q: Really?

A: But I [indecipherable] it was white underwears, and underwears is white ones and rough ones, so --

Q: Right.

A: -- probably something like these uniforms, these man uniforms, I think so. I think so.

Q: Now, were you able to wash yourself, because there was one -- running water in the barrack at Auschwitz one?

A: Yes.

Q: So you had a certain kind of hygiene that you could --

A: There -- til August, til August, yes.

Q: That's -- yeah -- yes.

A: Til August.

Q: And then it changes quite radically.

A: Drastically.

Q: Yes. And the sewing room, what are you sewing?

A: Repairing.

Q: Repairing.

A: Repairing.

Q: And repairing uniforms or clothes that people -- the haftling are wearing?

A: Haftling wearing this -- these lines, these lines --

Q: Stripes, yes.

A: -- with stripes, yes [indecipherable] wear.

Q: So that's what you were repairing?

A: Yes, yes, repairing.

Q: Now, when you go --

A: To my -- when it brings me -- yes.

Q: Yes.

A: I had -- in -- in my memories, that haftling uniforms.

Q: Right. Male and female, or just female do you think?

A: I cannot say.

Q: You don't know.

A: Don't remember.

Q: Right, right.

A: No, don't remember.

Q: So then you're put on this demolition crew, and I gather that's where you meet Helen Teshauer, Tsipi. Or not --

A: Not on demolition.

Q: Not on demolition --

A: Not, not --

Q: -- you -- you [indecipherable]

A: -- on a field.

Q: -- in the field you met her?

A: I met her on a field after -- after -- there was -- it was in a high summer, because piles of hay were there, I remember piles of hay here and there and so. And we had to cultivate the -- the soil there with -- with hoe, hoe is called like this one. So we were standing together and -- and -- and cultivate this, this hoe. And get done that day, nobody bothered us, I mean the SS. Somehow we were alone, and all [indecipherable] people, we couldn't run away because it was a certain point where we could stay, so there we -- somehow I found myself with Tsipi, with a hoe, and we talk. What -- what was your name, or -- or -- or that's my name, where are you from and so. And then

the sit -- the situation there we [indecipherable]. So I -- I liked her approach very much, yes, I -- I felt some chemistry yes, that we agree with ourselves and so I spoke and spoke and -- and I enjoyed it very much, and I -- I didn't try to get this name Tsipi, the only one there which I remember with whom I worked, Tsipi. [indecipherable] don't -- so I don't remember. I said, Tsipi, I remember you, we worked once there, and so and so.

Q: And why did you like her approach, what was it about her that you remember?

A: Logic.

Q: Logic.

A: She didn't whine and I didn't whine. Somehow we made -- we analyzed the situation, yeah that's all, we analyzed.

Q: So would you say that you both had a kind of practical approach --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to what you were in?

A: Yes, yes, yes. We had the same logic, to analyze the situation there, what we can do, what -- what -- how -- how is life there and so practical. Two practical girls.

Q: So she was short, and a little stocky, is that what you said, a little --

A: Yes.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: A little short.

Q: A little short.

A: Yeah, and a little stocky.

Q: Now, did you meet her after you were doing the demolition? This is before Birkenau.

A: Before Birkenau, yes -- no. Before birke -- I don't say after demolition because that was summer. Demolition we did during the wintertime. I think demolition was being [indecipherable]. No.

Q: No

A: May -- winter '43 -- '43 also -- I don't remember, I can't -- I think after demolition, I think that after dem --

Q: Cause you did demolition after the sewing room.

A: After sewing room. Must have been after.

Q: Afterwards.

A: Afterwards, yes.

Q: Was -- given your description of yourself, that you were small and you weren't so strong, was demolition difficult for you?

A: Yes, very difficult. Once happen that with this pick, with this steel equipment, I hit my finger and it was bleeding and I had some scar -- not scar, some -- some -- scar? Yeah [indecipherable]

Q: A scarf?

A: A -- a scarf, yes, on my head. So -- and I took the scarf into my teeth, and I tore a -- a piece, and I turned around my finger, and the kapo came and she said, poor child, poor child, because I had around this, I was bleeding, yes. It was very difficult for me, but --

Q: This was the --

A: -- I managed.

Q: -- the -- the instrument that you used was like a long log with -- with iron-like -- something to hold onto on the sides, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: And so that you were what, like eight women, or 10 women --

A: Oh, that -- that what you -- what you say, but this was by myself, we --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- we had to -- a -- a basement, let's say, to -- to take apart, which was demolished, yes?

Q: I see, it was already, I see.

A: Yeah, with dynamite or so, and we had to take apart totally, and that -- that was a wall, then we haul this little stick -- not a little -- big steel stick, many of us, and boom, boom, and then the wall fell down. And then we had to separate the bricks.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then to pour on [indecipherable] yeah.

Q: And so you did that for what, a couple of months?

A: No, I did it for maybe a couple of weeks. See, I always took risks. It wasn't so difficult to go from one place to the other to work -- to line up in the morning --

Q: It wasn't --

A: -- when it was place, yes. It was possible, it was possible to move around. So probably f -- may-maybe for two months I could have done it, two -- mostly three months this one. Then I went to work on a -- where we were digging soil and preparing a place for roads, for road, digging soil. Then we took the soil from one place to the other one, and so prepare for roads with the this one. Sometimes I went like the time with Tsipi on a field, too. Sometimes we went -- in the wintertime I remember we went -- we took over some straw from one place to the other one, some useless things. And for months, for a few months, I was working weeding out the field for - for gummy plant [indecipherable]. Gummy? Gummy? Gum plant a --

Q: Gum plants?

A: Gum, not gum, oh gummy, gummy [indecipherable]. No, for --

Q: For rubber?

A: Rubber.

Q: Rubber.

A: Rubber from [indecipherable] that wat -- was very bad for the back and for the fingers, yeah.

Then sometimes went something else to work. We had different places. But these demolishings could have been two, three months, yeah, two, three months in '42.

Q: Did that make -- did that help your body, did you get stronger, or did it make you weaker?

A: Oh my God, no, no, no, no.

Q: You didn't.

A: And still in this -- in this military clothings --

Q: The -- the Russian -- is those pajamas.

A: Yes. Not pajamas, military --

Q: [indecipherable] military uniforms.

A: Military un -- uniforms and we didn't have gloves or we didn't have sa -- stockings. So sometimes I had stockings for gloves --

Q: Right.

A: -- on -- it was very cold on the chest, so we were happy with impossible things. We -- we were happy when we found old newspaper and we put it here on the breast, or we were happy straw -- to find some from the straws, that we took out straw, and we put it here inside to make us warmer.

Q: Warmer.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you have trouble with your feet because of the shoes rubbing on your feet? Did you get sores?

A: I had troubles. I think that was during the march time, when we marched in January.

Q: Oh, that's late.

A: Yeah, the late.

Q: But not -- not early?

A: Not that early.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I had sore soles because it was -- I-I will tell you then about Himmler, in connections about Himmler. I came so far to Himmler, to Mengele. Oh yeah.

Q: Yes, so we -- we'll stop the tape and you'll --

A: I knew all of them.

Q: Yes?

A: [indecipherable]

Q: That's later. Okay.

A: As I will tell you later.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: We were talking about the shoes.

A: Yes.

Q: And -- and the problem you might have had with your -- with your feet, and it was leading to another story, yes?

A: Right [indecipherable]

Q: Yes, so tell me.

A: Tell you?

Q: Yeah.

A: Okay. So, it was at the beginning, I was still in Auschwitz one, in Auschwitz one, and I had good shoes with laces, high shoes, good shoes, but it was I think in the spring, because I remember that the sole was wet sometimes, and -- and cold still. So I don't know which month it could have been, yes. Maybe between -- between the naishtuber, laundry, maybe between the laundry, because from laundry I went to the naishtuber between -- before. So we had to wear impossible thing, our shoes on our shoulders. You tied the shoes to put on the shoulder, and barefoot in to walk to a forest where there were little stones like gravel, yeah? And we have to walk, so -- and [indecipherable] little gravels, they were cold, and they were wet. And first of all my -- my soles, they became hard and -- and painful, yes, you mention, like that. Later on the soles, they became hard, trained well, no problem. But my eyes, probably from an infla -- an inflammation from these cold stones. So on my eyelashes, they were some kind of glue. You know, when I woke up in the morning, I couldn't open my eyes, cause they were so dry on the eyelashes, got dry glue. So I had to take off little by little, little by little. And then next night again happened, yes, so I was -- I was f -- quite for a few -- for a time with this -- my eyes, and --

and one morning, I w -- yeah, so we -- we had to walk barefooten, we worked with the shoes, and then we had to take off the shoes, and to come back again barefooten, again this -- to this -- through this -- was so bad, thank God, I still feel chilly when I think about it. So one day I was standing on zaeh -- zaehlappell, and I used to stand in the -- I don't know why, in the front, first one. And suddenly was quie -- very quiet, very quiet, and I heard this name Himmler. I knew who was him, who was Himmler. I looked around, not frar -- far from me was standing Himmler, with his fancy gla -- eyeglasses. Oh my God, I was so scared that Himmler will look at me, and he'll see my -- my -- my eyes, I thought this [indecipherable] I heard the Gypsies, they used to have [indecipherable] too. I was so scared he would send me for death. I didn't know that time gas chambers was in Auschwitz. So I moved slowly, slowly in the back, he shouldn't see me, I should save myself from Himmler. He was standing there looking.

Q: So you did take risks, didn't you?

A: I took --

Q: Cause it was risky for you to move.

A: I took always risks. I took always risks. And I couldn't when I saw the situation is bad, I cannot lose anything, then I took risks. But I cannot lose anything, only my life, and this was a risk by itself. Yeah, so I --

Q: Where did that come from?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't know. But I had to do. What can I lose? Nothing.

Q: Did you see dead bodies in Auschwitz one?

A: Body?

Q: Dead bodies.

A: Dead bodies?

Q: Yes, corpses.

A: In Auschwitz one, I don't remember, no. But in be -- Birkenau a lot, a lot.

Q: So in Auschwitz one, there was a gas chamber, yes?

A: Yes, but we didn't know about it.

Q: You didn't know.

A: No.

Q: So you didn't smell anything funny?

A: No, nothing.

Q: Nothing. And nobody's said anything to you?

A: But we knew when we were standing in the evening on zaehlappell, so far away, like in a forest, there were moving people, bodies moving, somehow it was far, so it seemed to me, or it m-meant to me that they are in white uniforms, they are moving around, and flame, we saw flame there. And there was a rumor always, we talked about lager.

Q: Right.

A: Said there is the place where they burn people. It was flame, and people were moving there.

But later on I learned that they burned outside the crematoriums, people.

Q: Uh-huh, right [indecipherable]

A: But I didn't see close to me.

Q: Did you hear about shooting in -- in Auschwitz one, that there was a punishment block, that they were shooting, did you -- did you hear about that when you were there? No.

A: Not about that, but I -- I heard it.

Q: You hear -- you heard it.

A: Yes, very silently, very, very silently. I was in block 10 -- block 10, that was a last -- well, you said it, in Auschwitz were 11 blocks.

Q: I think. In Auschwitz one.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: You are right.

Q: And you were in 10.

A: I was in 10.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And on the 10, on block 10 on the -- and I was sleeping next to the window at the end.

[indecipherable] block, block, block, the end, and I was sleeping at the window at the end. And there were boards on the windows, boards, but there were little distances between the boards, yes, wooden boards. Little, little distances, and used to look during the day when I came -- it was light, yeah, but at the beginning I even didn't go for a few days to work because I was washing the stairs and the -- and -- and the -- the floors and whatever. It made me sickening, that was depressing. So anyhow, during the day when we came early probably, I don't know what time, I cannot say that, but I know that was light then, until August was lighter in the day

[indecipherable] the little distances, I saw these high, high poles, steel from st -- I think from steel, wood, or steel, I don't know. They were high poles, that's for sure, a pole like this, and

then crosswise on the top, and there I saw a man, young men -- they were high, again I say high, higher than a man. They were hanging like that, the hands in the back like this, like this, and here betwe -- they were hanging on the poles so that their feet didn't reach the floor -- the earth -- the floor, yes? The earth -- the concrete or what.

Q: So they -- they were being hung by their hands behind their back?

A: Yeah, they were hanged there. So I saw this one, always a few, few, few. And then during the night, sometimes -- sometimes, not always, sometimes I -- but I was always scared to look there, I knew I don't have to see that, was a silent shooting, very silently, cause I was at the window. And I didn't look out so I wouldn't see, because it was darkness probably, I don't -- no, I didn't look. But I heard silent shooting. So I thought, oh, now they are killing, and now after the war, I was in Auschwitz, and I asked somebody there [indecipherable] when I left [indecipherable] I met her in Birkenau. I said, I didn't see these poles where the people were hanging. But then later somehow on -- before I -- before I ask, because then bef -- then I went through these barracks, becau -- and I saw in one place these pole. And my son, I said, you see, these are these poles where people were hanging. And she said it was a quiet [indecipherable] I says, and every night I heard a very, very silent shooting. She said yes, during the night was this silent shooting. And there is now a wall, a-and flowers and Slovak people put flowers. I think it's black. And even the wooden walls, I think they are black now.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, because she asked me, was it painted? I said no. From this side was not, I didn't see it from the other side.

Q: Yeah, Alice, when you say silent shooting, what -- what do you mean? You mean that there was -- there was a silencer on the gun that -- or that you were so far away you could only hear it a little bit?

A: I wasn't far.

Q: You weren't far.

A: I'm far because I was -- I slept at the win -- next to the window.

Q: Uh-huh. Which was close to that wall.

A: It's the closest to the wall.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: So maybe was silent gun, I don't understand [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah, but what were you hearing, a pop? Just a --

A: Yeah, something like that, yes, not like boom, boom, in the war.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: In combat in the field. Not like that. Silently.

Q: You -- you didn't help at all in building Birkenau. Some of the prisoners were doing that.

Were you ever over there?

A: In building?

Q: Mm.

A: No -- yes, the roads.

Q: Roads.

A: We were building the roads and we were demolishing the houses, which they were demolished partially before.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: We came like to a village, yes, like the village, and that we, for three months were demolishing.

Q: And that became Auschwitz-Birkenau?

A: I think --

Q: You think so, but you you're -- but you're not sure.

A: I think it. I am not sure. I know we demolished it there, that place --

Q: Right.

A: -- and I know we worked on the roads that we -- we made it straight, how to say, plan-planate -- planarate -- in -- in, I would say --

Q: Planing?

A: Planing, maybe in German, I would say planating --

Q: Making it smooth?

A: We made it smooth and straight, yes, so we had to dig it, and shovels to dig out and to -- and to put it in this wooden container -- container --

Q: A wheelbarrow?

A: Yeah, something and take it to another place, and so on and so -- many useful thing -- useless things we had to -- from one place to the other one. So we did something, yes. And it was at the beginning where we worked at the roads, we [indecipherable] the roads, there was also a civilian who was leading this probably [indecipherable] and the kapos, and SS men, and we worked. And then they were looking, so we were working when they were not looking and not working, and [indecipherable] see in -- in -- in German number -- number eight is acht.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Acht -- acht, and -- and be careful is achtung, no -- achtung, so the SS came close, when he turned, so we said that in Slovak is acht -- is acht -- achtung, so we said awesome is -- is -- awesome is acht. [indecipherable]. Then we worked hard. We couldn't work always like that [indecipherable] it easy.

Q: [indecipherable]. Right.

A: We cannot be always a honest worker.

Q: No, not in a situation where they treated you so bad.

A: No [indecipherable]

Q: No.

A: No, so if I -- if I helped to -- to build, so I hel -- helped to destroy a place, and I helped to build the roads, yes.

Q: Were there lights in Auschwitz one? Was it -- were there actual lights there?

A: I think that there were in the barracks.

Q: In -- in the barracks?

A: Yeah, I think so, but around the fences there were.

Q: There were.

A: There were high lights during -- with this high voltage electricity during the night. When we arrived, the day when we arrived, and then always during nights, and the guards they were standing on towers and guarding us, the soldiers, yeah, was a [indecipherable]

Q: So when did you find out that you were all -- all the women were being -- I know me -- men were going into aush -- into Auschwitz-Birkenau, they were already there.

A: The men?

Q: [indecipherable] and being --

A: Of the men I didn't know. I knew that the women went there because when we came there, they were -- was some life there.

Q: They were there, yes.

A: About the men, I -- I don't know.

Q: So how -- you don't know.

A: I didn't bother.

Q: So did they announce to you what -- get up we're going to ow -- Auschwitz-Birkenau? I mean ho-how -- how did that happen?

A: I don't know. Probably it could happen that we were on a zaehlappell on a roll call, and they said now turn and we go.

Q: And you go.

A: There's nothing to take. Moving was very easy.

Q: Nothing to -- nothing to pack, easy, right.

A: I cannot remember, I think and think if this container in which we ate, you know the bowl.

Q: The bowl.

A: If we took it with us or we -- or we left it in the -- in the barrack and -- and then we got it when -- received it when we ar -- I cannot -- I don't remember, this I don't remember.

Q: Did you carry the bowl with you all the time?

A: No, that what I don't remember. I know that we had some little sack hanging, and I don't remember where we took the material to sew it and a needle. I don't remember. I can see myself only suddenly hanging here something.

Q: Something.

A: Mm.

Q: And what was in it?

A: And a little -- a little bit of bread which we saved from the evening.

Q: I see.

A: And maybe a -- a first knife or s -- when somebody found somewhere on the field a little -- a little steel or something, and we sharpened it on -- on -- on a stone, and we cut our bread. So maybe these -- maybe we found somewhere a -- I don't know how we got a spoon, I don't know, I don't know.

Q: You weren't given a spoon, you were given the bowl.

A: The bowl, but I don't remember we carried the -- with us when we went to work far, where we were serve. I don't think -- I cannot see the -- the move around, I know we have only this little sack, and a little bread, and if we had a little plate, this is to cut our bread and

[indecipherable] I don't remember that, this I don't. I know only a little bread, and on the way to work, always a bite. It was easy, because we didn't have to think too much, we -- our thinking went so far as into the [indecipherable] I have still a slice of bread, I get still a little bit.

Q: So -- so your mental state becomes smaller and smaller?

A: Smaller and smaller.

Q: So that you think about very few things.

A: Yes. The emotions, they tend to apathy, total apathy. You think, I do this, I will think about food, I will think about when they will -- no, only when we arrive -- when we arrive back afterward, we think if we have a blanket to cover ourselves. Little things, we -- if it is cold, if it is --

Q: If you picture the barrack and your bed in Auschwitz one, do you see the bowl there? Do you think that you left the bowl on the bed?

A: Not on the bed, maybe there was a little room, concrete floor, maybe -- may -- there were servants stumalteste, stumdienst, maybe. Maybe they got there, th-that they put it there, and they washed it there, but it wasn't dirty because if you didn't wash it -- in Birkenau, we didn't have water. So couldn't be so dirty that [indecipherable] after food. So probably they carried from -- probably. I don't know -- know, I speculate on it. Probably they got from the sauna, water, the sauna in a bucket or so, and they washed it there and they left it and then we took it from there. A little room at the end of the barrack -- of the block. I -- I don't remember how it was.

Q: So do you remember entering Birkenau in August of '43, do you remember --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- that first day?

A: Yes, yes, I remember.

Q: What -- what can you tell me about it? What was it like?

A: We entered and -- and difference was that they were brick barracks, brick blocks in Auschwitz, also brick blocks, but they were lower -- lower brick blocks. And in Auschwitz we had beds, bed, everybody has a bed, or we didn't have -- and there were these bunks, in Birkenau were bunks, one, two, three.

Q: And it's three, three high, right?

A: Three, yes.

Q: And more than two people are sleeping on each bunk?

A: Oh my God. Yes, depends how many people were in the block. There were also sometimes five people, and -- and so I fell once down during the night when I had to go on it, so we were four like that, and above us like that, crosswise. And I was afraid to s -- that I will sit on -- on this

person who is crosswise, so I went to the end, very end. So I -- I went to the end. So I fell on my back on the concrete, and was a big boom. In the morning I went to work, and back pain.

Q: In a lot of pain?

A: Oh, ho, how. I still remember. I was young.

Q: But it's interesting, because as bad as Auschwitz one was, Birkenau was much worse.

A: Much worse.

Q: Yes.

A: In b -- in Auschwitz, we didn't know about the gas chambers. We didn't know. We worked, was very, very hard to work. We didn't know about the gas chambers. When we came from work we ran around into the -- into this washroom or whatever, there were horizontal pipes, went to clean up, and maybe we washed something. There were toilets, there were toilets, I -- I remember, so maybe I am wrong, but in my memories that there were -- yes, surely there were toilets, because there were toilet rumors. We went in the toilet and we heard rumor that the -- the wagons are from Slovakia here, they came to pick up us, and so on, so -- there were toil -- there were toilets, there is wasser -- water [indecipherable] more. We were not gas -- there were gas chambers, which I saw after when I went, after the war, two or three ga -- not gas chambers but crematorium. Were no gas chambers, at least we didn't know about the gas chambers. We worked very hard. The same food, but it was easier.

Q: It was easier than in Birkenau.

A: Yeah, yeah, it was easier.

Q: So Birkenau becomes a shock. There is no running water, right?

A: No run -- only in the sauna. In the sauna they used for us and we went for delousing, get delousing. And that time [indecipherable] the delousing we went to a -- to a real sauna where

they used hot bricks, hot bricks and they pour water on it, so it was a steam, so we went in the steam. And there were showers in the sauna, in the same building, yes. It was -- but outside was - - it was not -- it wasn't a toilet, was a latrine, yeah. And we had to go far up.

Q: Right. It's a -- a room with just lots of holes in it, right?

A: Not holes.

Q: Holes?

A: The hole was open.

Q: Ah, period, completely open.

A: Open, and there was like a bench, and we had to -- we went on the bench, and -- and we lean to there, and -- and we hold it on. It was also -- they had also -- it was on one side up the hill, and down there were toilets, but a German haftlings, for the German prisoners. The Germans. They had -- had toilet, but not a toilet like that. Was something also like a latrine, something like that, that was a clean one and so for the Germans. They didn't let us at the beginning, only at the end then, the -- they said the Slovaks [indecipherable] Slovaks.

Q: The Slovak?

A: Yeah, the Slovaks there had [indecipherable] Slovaks make a [indecipherable] and in our barrack where we were, and I was [indecipherable] and with Tsipi. You know with Tsipi? You know her name?

Q: Tsipi? Helen Teshauer

A: Yeah, yeah, her, her.

Q: Yeah, yes.

A: So there we -- we had toilets, regular toilets, there we had toilets.

Q: You did.

A: Yeah, we had -- it was elite -- elite barrack.

Q: That's a little later.

A: So I came up, up, up, up, up, up, up.

Q: Yes, up, up, up, right.

A: Was a risk, yeah.

Q: So, you go to B1A, right? The b -- the -- the part that was the women's camp in Birkenau.

A: Yeah, B --

Q: B -- B1A.

A: Yeah, we called it Birkenau -- Birkenau A, yes, ba -- bar -- yes, and the -- yeah.

Q: And -- and the men were in B1B.

A: Probably, I don't know.

Q: Do you remember what barrack you were in?

A: I --

Q: In the beginning?

A: In -- in Birkenau --

Q: Yeah.

A: I think it was 27.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I think so.

Q: Right.

A: I cannot swear. I think so. I'm quite sure, but I cannot swear.

Q: Right.

A: I cannot so -- it was 27, I think so.

Q: So how -- how soon is it that you realize in Birkenau there are gas chambers?

A: Saw the crematories -- the crematoriums.

Q: [Indecipherable]

A: In these -- in block seven in Birkenau, I was only -- when I was a [Indecipherable] registrar.

Q: Register.

A: Yeah, before all [Indecipherable] I don't remember.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I don't -- before I cannot say one number, that was when I was a registrar. Behind us I know was block 25, of the gas chamber.

Q: The quarantine block, where they kept people.

A: Not quarantine -- they kept them --

Q: And then they --

A: Til they had enough for the gas chamber.

Q: Right, yeah.

A: Mm-hm. Quarantine.

Q: Well, they kept people there --

A: Yeah.

Q: And then they took them to the -- to the gas chamber.

A: From there, yes.

Q: So --

A: Sometimes.

Q: So -- and sometimes not.

A: Sometimes not and it was -- when it was selection, they took them right away to the gas chamber.

Q: Right.

A: Only when they -- when they took here and there somebody and they didn't have enough so they kept them there.

Q: But they started to have -- there were some selections in Auschwitz one, yes? So -- or you don't know?

A: I don't know.

Q: But in Birkenau you started to have selections?

A: Yeah. In Auschwitz one --

Q: One, yeah.

A: The -- no -- yeah, it was Auschwitz one, we saw during that zaehlappell, sometimes a black closed car, a -- a truck or so, a closed one a black one. So we used to say they take somebody. And like these my friend, these -- who had insulin in -- in this one, the purse, in -- in the suitcase, I didn't see her more, that means they were taken. And also up the stairs was a little like a loft, a little room, and some family was looking out through the window, they didn't go to zaehlappell and they loo -- used to smile at us, you know, they were so happy that they are there. They didn't go to -- but they disappeared also. So they -- probably with these black car, they took people out. An-And we used to hear or say that they're in the forest with this white uniform, was where that flame, we say that they take there, the people to burn.

Q: To burn.

A: Yeah.

Q: So were you working in a demolition, in an au -- in Ausenkommando when you were in Birkenau at first, or did you immediately start working sorting clothes?

A: No, clothes I didn't sew more, because --

Q: No, sort -- sort clothes, you [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, to sort -- no, no, no, no, no, no, Ausenkommando --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Ausen.

Q: Ausenkommando first.

A: Oh yes, first Ausenkommando, to let's say the fall, maybe October.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It was cold. And then I took a risk.

Q: Yes, and what did you do?

A: I -- I knew that I cannot make it more. I was so tired, an-and hungry, and everything, and when I will go on like this, next selection I am going, they will take me, I cannot take it more. So I took a risk and I stayed in the barrack, in the block, I didn't go to work. And I knew that I take a risk because when -- sometimes, once in awhile the SS, somebody from the SS came through, they went through the barrack, the blocks. And when they found somebody who didn't go to work, they took to block 25. And I took this risk. I said, I cannot. I have to take risk that they will come today and they will take me to block 25. I cannot walk, first, then I was lying there on the - on the bunk, and the -- for lunchtime -- for lunchtime I went to the kitchen to -- to carry this food, that I helped them [indecipherable] and I was lying there. And a girl came the afternoon, and she said, in the lager, they are selecting for a new commando. So I went there, she said exactly where. And that was the place where the -- we saw that there's a new commando, it was

called [indecipherable] a new uniform, stripe. In the morning I lined up and I went to [indecipherable] this one. And I was not safe, I was happy. Had good work, yeah. I stayed there for -- for October, ma-maybe through summer or so, '43. Yeah.

Q: 1943.

A: Yeah. If I didn't take this risk, I collapsed, I couldn't move.

Q: We will stop the tape now and take a break.

A: Mm-hm, and drink a water.

Q: Right.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: Alice.

A: Yes.

Q: We were talking about the first job that you had in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A: Yes.

Q: Which is after August, 1942.

A: Yes.

Q: Which is working in the [indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable]

Q: [indecipherable]

A: This means wh-white cap, because we had this white scarves.

Q: Scarves, and that's what you were wearing, I see.

A: Yeah, that's it.

Q: And this was where you were sorting clothes?

A: Yeah, because there was [indecipherable], in -- in Birkenau was a commando sc -- which they wore red scarves, so they were red scarves and that was the Canada called. So they were the red scarves and we were the white scarves.

Q: So what was the difference between the work that you were doing sorting clothes and the work that Canada commando was doing sorting clothes, do you know?

A: I couldn't say exactly. I think that we had from the gas chamber, things in the gas chamber, and people arrived straight there. And those I don't know. We had that. Maybe they had also from the gas chamber, but it was so much that they divided there, [indecipherable] that.

Q: And -- and your commando wasn't connected with Canada commando?

A: No, no.

Q: No, it was totally separate.

A: Yeah, only when -- when the commando was closed, then we were transferred or suggested to go there --

Q: I see.

A: -- yeah, to Canada.

Q: Did you like working in that commando?

A: In Canada, no.

Q: No, no, the other one [indecipherable]

A: Yes.

Q: And wh-why did you like that and you didn't like the Canada?

A: It was so relaxing there, relaxing. We relaxing in [indecipherable]. The commander, the SS, Scharfuehrer, was very nice, a nice man. He was very helpful when it was longer -- for longer at zaehlappell, yes, roll call, and during that time was sometimes a selection after this roll call, so -- or when the commanders arrived, then he kept us longer there to work. We didn't work, but he kept us longer and he phoned into the lager that we are very busy, that we have to stay longer, and so probably he saved many people.

Q: I see.

A: And we had to cross only from one -- from one ba -- not barrack, from one part to the other part through a big door, so we -- we avoided the main door also, by coming home and selection we avoided. And then when it was -- it was typhus epidemic there, so he let many girls to sit on, and not to work. And he asked for tea, for enough tea to drink. So he carried in a lot of tea we should have enough, fever -- feverish and who couldn't work, didn't have to work. He was a ma

-- ma -- nice man. That was very important. And the other one, maybe he was also nice, but I didn't like him, he was so noisy. During the first lunch when I was there -- during lunch, as we ate, he said lie down all of you. We had to put the food down and to lie down in the mud. And then when -- after work, the girls -- not always, I wasn't there for a -- for a few days, but sometimes we had to undress and so he looked through ours if we didn't take something. He was so s -- crazy. Didn't like it.

Q: Do you remember the name of this nice man [indecipherable]

A: Yeah, I think it Ambrose.

Q: Ambrose.

A: I think that Ambrose was his name, I think so. Or something similar, because we called him Scharfuehrer.

Q: Right. Were you surprised that there would be somebody who was so nice in that position?

It's an odd position to be in and then --

A: I wasn't surprised, I was pleased.

Q: Mm. So how did it happen that you moved from this commando? It was closed?

A: It was closed. He -- it was closed, but in the meantime he wasn't more there, the other one, somebody else came. I don't know what -- sometimes they placed to other places. Maybe he was too nice, I don't know, but -- what the reason.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: And the other one, he wasn't for long there, but he suggested me there for, because one day he came and he asked, who knows the difference between pure silk and artificial material. I say, I know it, cause I learned at school. So then I was, from the bundles I had to find a pure silk lingerie to take out and to bundle it differently. So he knew that I am not stupid.

Q: Right.

A: I was -- I was quiet, but I knew things. And then the other one, the new one from Canada asked, "What's your name?" And I didn't answer [indecipherable] say -- so he said, "How is she -- how is she smart, she doesn't know how to talk even." And he said, "Yes, she knows how to talk." So he took me. But I didn't like him, you know, it was -- for -- for a Auschwitz, wasn't the attitude, not the -- the girls they were used to him, so they laughed, they joked with him.

Q: Yeah [indecipherable] but you didn't --

A: I couldn't, no. Didn't want to.

Q: Were these commandos protected commandos, there were no selections?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: There were selections?

A: Were selection. They came also later from Canada. They came also later, so sometimes they avoided selections. But this one [indecipherable] be avoided. Once happened that in the morning one girl didn't arrive, and somebody told him. He was -- she was selected in the afternoon, or in the morning. So he t-took his bike and he went there, and then in -- he returned, he said that he told them that she's the best worker in his commando, when they will not return her, then she has to -- he has to close the commando, so then he brought her back.

Q: And he brought her back.

A: Yeah, he was a -- a really -- a good man.

Q: But were there selections inside the commando?

A: No.

Q: Only from the barrack?

A: The -- not from barrack --

Q: The say -- zaehlappell, when you --

A: Zaehlappell, or when they arrived --

Q: Right.

A: -- when we arrived from work or so.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Or that time when I met this Dieter Rishter, and we're standing the whole Sunday, after, when we came into the lager, there was a ditch, a ditch. So we had to jump through the ditch. And who didn't make it, went to chamber.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you had to jump over the ditch?

A: Yeah, through, through.

Q: Through it?

A: Through it. It's a ditch like this, yes, from here to there.

Q: Oh, you mean -- so you went --

A: Over --

Q: -- over it --

A: -- over the ditch.

Q: -- over it from one side to the other.

A: Over -- side to over.

Q: And if someone fell --

A: I-I wasn't there, but --

Q: That's what you were told?

A: -- the back -- they said from the front that who cannot jump over, they take you away because [indecipherable] standing there, but it was before.

Q: So when you went to the Canada commando, you didn't stay for very long.

A: No, no.

Q: How long?

A: Few days, and I wer --

Q: A few days?

A: -- no, for a few days, for a few -- and then I went to Ausenkommando.

Q: And that was less difficult for you. You liked that better, being outside [indecipherable]

A: I decided. I decided I go rather to Ausenkommando, what will happen will happen. And then, from that, what I -- it was a good decision because I would have stayed in Canada. But from Ausenkommando -- Ausenkommando I took a [indecipherable] a risk. Say that's enough, now I have to do something else. So -- and then I became a Laeuferin.

Q: And how did that happen? Can you explain?

A: Yeah. That was risky. There was -- was a Rapportfuehrer, an SS, his name was Hans Tauber, Austrian. He was very bad, he was very bad. Always on the back and he was hitting. He had always something in his boot, here, some -- some -- I don't know, [indecipherable] or what. He was hitting --

Q: A whip? Yes?

A: -- he -- every pers -- yes, he was hitting, and he was selecting, he was everything bad. The both men in the la -- the both -- both men in the lager. And I heard that they will open the other entrance, other entrance to the lager from the outside, entrance [indecipherable] and that they will need Laeuferins, you know Laeuferin? Well, it's like they send, run here, run here, there's a

Laeuferin come, go to the other door [indecipherable] go to this barrack, to this block and so -- so they needed, I heard that. So I decided -- decided, I says, I will talk to Tauber, the worst. And after the appell, after that zaehlappell, I was on the road, on the sidewalk and he went on his bike, this strong Tauber. And I stopped him from the bike, and I said, Herr Rapportfuehrer, haftling [speaks German here]. Mr. Rapportfuehrer -- you will understand, yes, that want to talk - - talk to you. So he went down from the bike, and was standing looking at me. And I said, I am here from the very beginning -- it was true. I didn't say it between I was a [indecipherable] beginning, and I am -- I worked in Ausenkommando. And I know that you are the only one who can help me. I heard that you need Laeuerin, other Laeuerin. I would like to be a Laeuerin. And he said, "Go to Katya," she was the -- the -- the main registrar. Yeah, the Schreibstuber, Katya Singer. "Go to her and say that I send you that she should place you in a other block where the Laeuerins are." So, thanks a lot. And I let -- ran to Katya Singer, and I said, Tauber send me. She said, I need a -- a written note from Tauber. Couldn't do anything else. Next day -- morning, I went to Ausenkommando again, and then in the evening when it was zaehlappell, he came to the block, and he was choosing the other girl for Laeuerin. So I went out to him, and I said, "Herr l-lager -- Herr Rapportfuehrer, I spoke to you yesterday and I went to Katya Singer, and she said that she wants -- she needs from you a note, a written note." She didn't say -- he didn't say anything, he said to the -- turned to the blockalteste and said, "Take her also to Katya, take both to Katya." So she took us to Katya, and I became Laeuerin. And then I was safe, I didn't go to selections, and I had a bed for myself, I had a nice block. Became an [indecipherable]

Q: Did you -- did you know of Katya Singer before? Had you met her when you were in Auschwitz one, or --

A: No --

Q: No.

A: -- in Auschwitz one I didn't meet her.

Q: You didn't.

A: No.

Q: But you knew about her -- when he said Katya Singer you knew --

A: I -- everybody knew.

Q: Everybody knew?

A: Everybody knew [indecipherable] he didn't have to say Singer, Katya.

Q: Katya, and you knew it.

A: Go to Katya, everybody knew Katya.

Q: Did you know also that Tsipi, Helen Teshauer was working with Katya?

A: Yes, they --

Q: At that -- by that time you --

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: No.

A: I didn't know anything about Tsipi, Tsipi disappeared. I spoke once to her.

Q: And that was it?

A: And that was -- no, no nevermore.

Q: Okay, ne -- nevermore.

A: No, only when I spoke to her by phone, she said that she was in Novaki with Katya, and then they said, I never saw you and I forgot about you. She said sh -- I went to ask Katya and she put me some -- some -- somewhere -- some nationality, this statistics [indecipherable] because I said -- I went because, you know, through this, this, I said no, I don't know about. I went every day to

the Schreibstuber because a -- [indecipherable] and I had this statistic, take to the Schreibstuber.

She said that was for me. I worked on that.

Q: Right. Do you have -- how would you describe Katya, what was she like?

A: Very nice.

Q: She was nice?

A: Very nice. Very nice person.

Q: It was a very big position for a Jewish woman, wasn't it?

A: Very big.

Q: In that situation.

A: Very big position and she was very friendly, nice looking, elegant, very friendly. And then she was sent or wanted to [indecipherable] no, I think to bel -- bels -- bel -- Bergen-Belsen, how you spell that?

Q: Bergen-Belsen?

A: Bergen-Belsen.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I think there she went, Bergen-Belsen. Yeah.

Q: So now you become a Laeuferin, which is essentially a runner, you -- you are --

A: Always running.

Q: You're always running and doing errands and sending messages --

A: Messages.

Q: -- cause there is no phone system.

A: Like a messenger here.

Q: Like a messenger.

A: Yeah, like a messenger. I think that they had some -- some form in the -- in the main offices, in the SS, I said -- because I remember when -- when the other Rapportfuehrerin told me, go there to the -- to Lagerfuehrerin and say that the telephone doesn't work. So maybe they had between them --

Q: Yeah, right, but --

A: -- between one and entrance and the other entrance, they had something, yes.

Q: -- but not -- but obviously not all through the whole system.

A: No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: So -- this is going to sound like a really stupid question --

A: No, nothing is stupid.

Q: -- but is there -- is there training? I mean, what did they tell you --

A: No.

Q: -- no. They just say go do this, go do that, whatever --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Right.

A: No training.

Q: So where do you start living? You move out from the barrack you were in, and you move into barrack four? Is that where all the --

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: I moved into another barrack before --

Q: Mm-hm.

A: -- but it four [indecipherable] there translators, they were Laeufferins before, they lived already there in a other barrack. No, I was in block -- in -- in bar -- in lager A before, yes?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then I was moving -- moved into lager B in wooden barracks, wooden.

Q: Wooden barracks, yeah.

A: Wooden barracks, and everybody had his own bed. And in the same barrack lived Mala Zimetbaum, which run away --

Q: Right.

A: -- with her three colleagues there. We stayed there, we were [indecipherable] that time -- we stayed there, I don't know how long, maybe a month, w -- I don't know how long, and then we were moved to block four, where the Schreibstuber was, the main office.

Q: And -- and you knew Mala Zimetbaum?

A: Oh yes, sure.

Q: What was she like?

A: Was like --

Q: How do you remember her?

A: Very proud girl, very proud. Courageous.

Q: Courageous.

A: Courageous. Nice person. Yes, somehow -- so a little bit proud, proud, yes. And when some officer came by car in, I used to go and open the door for him, and she was always angry when she saw that. Don't open the door, don't do anything for them. But I wanted. I wanted to be nice to them. Not a big thing when I open the door for them.

Q: Right. And what about the other two, there were two other women who were also Laeufferin --

A: Yeah, I think they opened also --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- the door, yes.

Q: Now, was the situation in that block as good as it was in block four or not?

A: In which block?

Q: The -- the earlier block, when you were with [indecipherable]

A: Nobody bothered with us. We were Laeufferin, so --

Q: Right, so you were safe.

A: Yeah, this was so private somehow, like we were -- we had the same -- the same food, we didn't have more than them, at the beginning, yes. But we could go to the -- to the [indecipherable] it's the -- the clothing where they had the -- we could choose some dresses, some clothing, so we were well dressed. That was the different. We could go into the sauna to wash --

Q: To wash yourself, yeah.

A: Wash myself and the clothing to wash. We could go to the [indecipherable] to the [indecipherable] hospital.

Q: The hospital, yeah.

A: And I needed very much to go to the [indecipherable] because I was full of pus, full of pus. Furuncles, and the big full furuncles they were called carbuncles. They had more heads, you know? When I was running, oh ho, now opened the car -- full of pus, the carbuncles. Here I had - - under arm I had pus --

Q: And where does that come from, what is that --

A: Let me tell you.

Q: Yes.

A: Here I had full of -- I was full of pus.

Q: Really?

A: Lack of hygiene.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: La-Lack of nourishment, yeah. I survived, but how.

Q: How?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is there medication? Was there anything that you took?

A: No, I -- when I was Laeufferin and there was a Dr. Ross, a Jewish doctor, and I went to her to as -- she gave me this well known ishtiole, you know ishtiole? So this made ripe these -- these furuncles and these -- and some [indecipherable] she gave me, and -- and I don't know. And then was -- I don't remember, is white ointment, was when the furuncle was opened and you put it on, white this one. And then slowly, slowly I was nursing myself on my bed when I came, and I went to wash myself, to shower myself. And I ate better than before. So it healed, it healed, it healed, but I still have scars.

Q: But in that condition, had you not been a Laeufferin, and in a protected commando, you probably would have been killed, because you would have looked sick.

A: I didn't look so sick.

Q: No?

A: No. And fortunately, we didn't ha -- sorry, we didn't have to undr -- I don't remember that I had to undress. It's only to have straight shoes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: To walk straight.

Q: Right.

A: Fingers, we have to go like this, and I don't know what, a lock, you know. That what -- would have been worse and worse and worse, yes. For sure -- for sure it wouldn't help.

Q: Right, right.

A: It wouldn't help, yeah.

Q: Were you surprised at the conditions in block four? That everybody had -- you had your own bed, and --

A: I wasn't surprised.

Q: You weren't?

A: No.

Q: You knew that that was --

A: Yeah, because they looked nice, they looked healthy, yes.

Q: Right.

A: And then in -- in a four -- block four, there were girls from the [indecipherable] where the s -- the non-Jewish people, they received parcels, they received packages and some of them, they died, but not in the chamber, not the non-Jewish.

Q: Right, right.

A: So they were always on the left overs of packages. So and gir -- the girls from the [indecipherable] from this package place, they lived also in block four. So they had permission, it was a ver -- extras. They had permission to bring in, [indecipherable] they gave us something [indecipherable] all we ha -- we received from there some [indecipherable] something that we -- so, was not a problem, or because they ate from there, so more food stayed in -- of our portions,

you know? So then it became, Laeuferin, we had enough food to dinner. We had food, we had water, so we were saved. Only something accidentally could happen that --

Q: Right.

A: -- for some reason -- because anything was a reason there, he had to send us to --

Q: Now, are you saying that you did not know tsip -- Tsipi, Helen Teshauer in block four? So she was in that block --

A: No.

Q: You didn't -- you never -- you never saw her?

A: No. Interesting, huh? No.

Q: So there are what, about 90 or a hundred women there.

A: Or more.

Q: More.

A: Just a half a block, half.

Q: I see.

A: Because the Schreibstuber was, the office was, and then we had three a-a-and maybe five, maybe [indecipherable] no, maybe, not more -- no, for sure no hundred. Less than a hundred.

Q: Less than a hundred.

A: Yeah. But she was in front.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: There were rules. Katya has the room.

Q: Right.

A: Mala had the room, her three colleagues had the room. Together, Mala and her three. And Tsipi said that she had, I don't know, that she had her own room also, so we passed by --

Q: But she often worked at night.

A: Tha -- Tsipi?

Q: Tsipi. So maybe that's why you didn't see her, you know.

A: Yeah, it could be, yeah.

Q: But it seems funny that you didn't see her.

A: Yeah, yes, yes.

Q: You would see Katya.

A: I would see Katya [indecipherable] in the office, yes.

Q: I see.

A: And I knew her.

Q: And you know her, yes.

A: Knew her so I noticed her.

Q: Right.

A: There were also others which Tsipi mentioned, do you know -- did you know this -- this --

Q: Right.

A: I said no, I didn't know, because they were sitting beside the -- behind their desk, so --

Q: So you didn't know.

A: -- I didn't bother.

Q: You knew Anna Pilarchik, Hanka.

A: Hannah -- Hanka.

Q: Hanka.

A: She was the blockalteste.

Q: Alteste, right.

A: And then was the other one, a tall one, I don't remember her name.

Q: So how did people get along --

A: Very good.

Q: -- in that? Was it good? It was okay?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: So did you now feel if the war ended --

A: Yes.

Q: -- that you would be safe?

A: Yes. No. I felt safe. I felt safe, but still I didn't think so far, because as I said at the beginning, I was afraid, or I -- I thought that the last day they will kill us all, they will throw a bomb, or -- or I don't know how [indecipherable] what way --

Q: Right.

A: -- but they -- they will kill us, yeah.

Q: Now, did you menstruate, did you get your period?

A: No.

Q: You ne -- you didn't get it even then, because some women there were getting their periods.

A: When we came, the first day we're in the sauna, everybody had menstruation, everybody, from fear, maybe [indecipherable] and that was --

Q: No, but I mean in block four.

A: No. In block four for sure they got -- they had menstruation, because they didn't eat the food with brom.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: Right.

Q: Right.

A: Katya for sure didn't eat with brom. For sure not and I don't know Tsipi and the other ones, I don't know.

Q: Right.

A: Those which they worked with the [indecipherable] they didn't eat there probably, I don't know, maybe sometimes, but that was not the main dish, but for me still it was the main dish. What I got extra was only extra.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: So describe what a day might be like. What would you do, when would you get up, would there be a roll call in that barrack?

A: Yeah, yes, every barrack.

Q: Early -- everybody -- every barrack would have that.

A: Everybody at the roll call. I don't know. I think maybe at six o'clock we were outside maybe.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Maybe at six o'clock.

Q: And then who would then give you an assignment? You would wait?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: You go to a place, and whatever they need.

Q: And who was the they, who would give -- who would tell you what to do?

A: Who were they? Mainly Rapportfuehrerin, the Rapportfu -- SS, or from the office also, from the office. I was sent sometimes from the office. Somebody, I don't know who, gave the order, but somebody -- maybe Tsipi was also among the -- I don't know. That's interesting, that was life there. Some -- I told you, she said that once we went for -- to -- we were sent together for stationeries to bring for the office from some -- I said, I don't remember that, no. So -- but --

Q: So she remembers that the two of you had met each other in barrack four?

A: Yes.

Q: Had seen each other. And you have no recollection.

A: O-O -- only that, that we went for that --

Q: Only that -- right, but --

A: -- you see, I was more visible because I was out at the entrance --

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: -- yes, but she was inside.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. And then everybody knew the names of the Laeuerin because we were not many, yeah, and they were more of them, so --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- so -- so -- so -- wa -- I say.

Q: So someone would --

A: Yes, from --

Q: -- send you --

A: Somebody would come, anybody from the office, for me, and would say today you have to go there. Not always, when they needed somebody special, somebody extra, so they said f-first of --

for example, today you will go to Auschwitz -- to Auschwitz one, to the [indecipherable] you know that [indecipherable] to the Gestapo let's say I think, they wear also uniforms. You will go there today. [indecipherable]. Or today you will go to the [indecipherable] when they had the lot of work. They sent always me, maybe -- maybe I spoke the best German, probably. You will go to that [indecipherable] to the other lager and so on, it was always accompanied by an SS to go there, to translate. So therefore I know what they did. So --

Q: So you would translate from what to what?

A: From Polish to German.

Q: And you knew Polish?

A: I knew Slovak and that is very --

Q: And it's enough -- it's close enough.

A: Close enough. Once happened they translated the Polish and -- and German and then SS continued. Hitler [indecipherable] spoke in Polish. I thought oh my God, how lucky I am that I didn't say anything else. I didn't instructed him also. Yeah.

Q: So was a lot of your work doing translations? Was that a great deal of the work?

A: The work, yes, even they send, go there, go there. You know, it's one block to the other one, everybody had to know German.

Q: Right.

A: But maybe [indecipherable] you had to know better to [indecipherable] I don't know --

Q: You don't know.

A: Yeah, I -- yeah, I didn't sp -- we didn't speak in German with my colleagues, girls, no, we spoke always in Slovak.

Q: In Slovak.

A: Yes. I cannot judge how far they spoke.

Q: Right. But you could speak with the Polish women who were there?

A: Yes, we learned.

Q: [indecipherable] you could -- you learned how to speak, yeah.

A: We learned, yes, similar. And I came home and I spoke to somebody Slovak, they continued in Polish.

Q: Polish.

A: Yeah. Three years, makes a difference.

Q: Right. All right let's --

A: Yeah, you know.

Q: -- we're going to take a break and we'll change the tape.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: Was there a Christmas celebration of some kind in block four that you remember?

[indecipherable]

A: I don't remember in block four, but I remember, and sometimes I think about it, because I don't know where to place the Christmas tree, that once was somewhere a Christmas tree. I was thinking about so many times. Because in Auschwitz one couldn't be, we were there from March til --

Q: Til August, so --

A: August, okay, well no, Christmas -- I don't know, but I don't think that I am -- had a dream about it. But somehow I -- I -- I imagined once a Christmas tree.

Q: Anna Pilarchik -- Hannah -- Anna --

A: Anna -- Hannah --

Q: Did report that there was a Christmas tree and a celebration in block four --

A: Well, then she says --

Q: So it's possible.

A: Yes, then it's poss -- then --

Q: It's possible that that's where you --

A: Yes, I --

Q: But that -- it's a vague memory for you.

A: A vague memory, but I picture a Christmas tree somewhere. So when she said so, then she knows.

Q: Hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: At a certain point, when the transports are coming in to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and from the outside they're killing so many people, do the -- do the internal selections get less, so the people who are already there --

A: I think that yes.

Q: -- are less likely to be selected?

A: I think that yes, yes, I think that yes, they didn't have time.

Q: Right.

A: It wasn't place to burn for many, cause when the Hungarian came, it was a time when they had to burn outside the crematoriums, yeah.

Q: Because there was too many?

A: Too many, yes.

Q: So what was this like for you, you're seeing these people, you know by now --

A: Yes.

Q: -- the people are being gassed.

A: Yes.

Q: These are not simply people who have died and are being cremated, this is a factory of killing.

A: Yes. [indecipherable]. We were standing at the entrance, and in front of us, like you -- no, further, let's say, opened the wagons, cattle wagons and stepped out people from there, and they were hurrying like [indecipherable], and they holding tight to their belongings. They were holding tight to their families, and they were hungry and they were thirsty and it was hot. Nearly, when they -- when the Hungarian came, this was the 16th of May, hot. They didn't have enough air, they're smelling an-and shiny. Water was -- was running from the [indecipherable] that religious men were in these black caftans with beards and with hats. And two of them came to

us, we were two at the entrance and said in Yiddish, that you are Jewish children, give to us water. They left everybody and they came to us. What could we have done? I went to the Ausen, and she was -- her name was Grese, Ausen Grese, a beautiful lady -- girl, a little bit crazy, but she wasn't so mean. I went, I said -- and I had to report why they came to us, yes, was dangerous. So I said, these two men came and they ask for water. What can we do? We didn't have even water. She said, don't bother with them, because it could happen that they will take you also with them. So we were standing, looking at them, and didn't say even anything. It was very sad, very sad to see so many people. And they had to leave their belongings, they had to leave the families because the SS said line up, line up. They were their prisoners also in these uniforms. They had to help with the belongings, their suitcases. But they ran all over among them, among the newcomers and they said -- they suggested, mothers with children, give over the children to the grandmothers. Men, you say that you are younger. Boys, when you are told, you say that you are older. When they ask you about your profession, you say that you have a trade in -- not in German I don't know [indecipherable] they could understand each other. And the SS, they yelled los, los, and line up. So suddenly in five minutes they didn't have their belongings, they didn't have their families. Some mothers, they give over to their grandmothers, some kept them. They had to line up again, men to me -- with men, women with women. Women -- mothers hold the children, and then came the doctor, and selected with one finger. He didn't bother too much, he didn't think too much. And so they came with a little wand, they took the sick ones first, yes, and then they took them. They didn't know what happened to them. It was so sudden that they didn't know what happened to them. And they were carried away. And some of them then came to the lager, but not right away, not right away, they took them some [indecipherable] place and then they came into. And in a short time you saw the flames. So that

was very often a st -- we were so close, the crematory wasn't far from the entrance. So often was there a strong smell of burned flesh and burned bones, very often, more often than not, from the burning people. Was very sad. They came, they came, it was time and they came and came. Never stopped. Was time and for weeks nobody came, maybe for a month, I don't know, don't remember. It was really when the Hungarian came, very often.

Q: Did you ever want to commit su -- did you ever want to commit suicide?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: So --

A: I wished only once to die regular, when I was left with a few girls in the lager, in this A lager, everybody was moved away, and we were -- I had the feeling that -- we are only maybe 10 - 15 girls, because we stayed behind to make orders there, and nobody took us. [indecipherable] good how good will it be to die now, nothing [indecipherable] nothing there.

Q: Because you were tired, or because --

A: I was scared.

Q: Yeah, uh-huh

A: Cause was so easy to take us to the gas chamber, we were some extras that time, the emptied A lager, they put it in a other one, and we left -- we were left behind to make order there. Made order, was ready, and nobody know, nobody took us.

Q: Now you mentioned the name of a woman guard, Irma Grese, who many people say wer -- was very cruel, but that's now how you remember her?

A: No, because at the -- at the entrance, she wasn't cruel.

Q: She wasn't cruel.

A: No, there, no, there she wasn't.

Q: And was that the only time you had seen her?

A: No, I saw her --

Q: You saw her other times? But she was never cruel to you?

A: No, no.

Q: Wow.

A: She was sitting there, it was her post there, if she was in a --

Q: How come you were there, standing at the entrance?

A: As a Laeufferin.

Q: Now, why was Laeufferin standing there, is -- in order to translate if there was a need to translate, or --

A: To translate or -- or like a messenger, but they needed to send to some block, some barrack, to say something, some message to give over.

Q: No, no, no, I mean when the transports are coming in.

A: Yes, that was our post, our place.

Q: So would you translate for -- the Germans were not speaking Polish?

A: No, no, no, no.

Q: So if they would say something in German --

A: No, no, we didn't have anything to do with tho --

Q: You -- having to do with people, nothing.

A: No, no, we were there for the SS when they needed somewhere to send this -- a message, yes, or when they needed -- let's say it came a -- a prisoner to the door, and they couldn't communicate with them yes, so they would ask us, yes, yeah, we did --

Q: Now were you also standing when they took the family camp, the Theresienstadt camp out to be gassed, were you there? Am I wrong, or --

A: No. The -- it was during the evening, or -- late evening, summertime. Nobody was there, nobody was at the lager, nobody. Somebody came only from the office and told me, you have to stand between that -- not in the front. The -- the Theresien lager was cross the street from -- from Birkenau [indecipherable] lager. But between the A and B lager was a door, yes. Nobody was there, and from the -- as I said, from the office they -- somebody came, I don't remember who, and said, you will stand today between A and B lager, that is your post in the evening. I didn't know the reason why I will stand there, so I went. I would have gone also [indecipherable] cause I had to when they send me. They're sending -- standing, and as I said, nobody was in the lager, it was not permitted, because the guards stay there on the towers, and suddenly I heard a cry, and -- and -- and -- and running around, and so -- and that was the time when they took the people from Terezín lager, or the family lager it was called. Because it was like that that this famil -- those families from Theresienstadt, they were together, and that was called family lager. And later on only when I am here, so I read somewhere that it was written on the -- on the wagons, SB, Sonder Behandlung, and that meant -- that what they write in the book, that meant that six -- for six months, or -- I think six months, they had to stay there as a family, and then they sent them. And that time, that evening, or that night when I was late night there, they -- in the morning I heard -- in the morning somebody said that they put them on -- on the -- on tracks, on tracks they put them, on car -- on tracks, they took them to the city of Auschwitz, and they

carried them the whole night all over, to -- to -- to mix them up, that they don't know where they are going, and then they put them in the warehouse, or somewhere into a place, I don't know, I wasn't there, and then they gassed them there, in some warehouse, or somewhere, a place. That was -- I wasn't there --

Q: Not in Auschwitz, that's the pl --

A: In Auschwitz, but outside of the -- not in the gas chamber. Outside of Auschwitz that time. Other times I don't know, because they gassed them other times also. And then in the morning, or the next day I heard that in one barrack they found a place where a teacher was there, and he wrote down everything what happened in the lager that night. That what I know --

Q: Right.

A: -- people said, I wasn't there.

Q: Right.

A: I wasn't there. I was standing between the two barracks, between two lagers, which didn't have anything to do with Theresienstadt, only the noise. Maybe that nobody should be outside, but there were the guards. That I know about Theresiens --

Q: But being outside and watching that must have been very upsetting.

A: Yes, for sure.

Q: Yes.

A: I was the only one outside and over me the soldiers --

Q: Right.

A: -- on -- on the towers.

Q: What about the women's orchestra, was that important for you?

A: Oh, Alma Rosé.

Q: Alma Rosé.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Tell me about it

A: It's the nicest thing maybe there, only one nice thing in lager, what I -- what I experienced, Alma Rosé. She came at the beginning sometimes when I was Laeufferin, and I c -- became Laeufferin, it was still warm. [indecipherable] remember -- I remember her dress, it was satin, black dress with polka dots. Pale --

Q: With polka dots?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Pale, little bit chubby in -- in face. And she came from Auschwitz, from block 10, because they brought her -- she was deported from Holland -- from Holland, they took her for an experiment to the block -- bl-block 10 where I was before, became an experimental block, yeah.

Q: This is in Auschwitz one?

A: Auschwitz one.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was in Birkenau. So they took her there, and somebody said there that she is a big musician, yeah. And they -- somebody I think me -- somebody's birthday was -- I don't know whose, so they are order f -- ask her to play on -- on a violin [indecipherable] a violin she play. And she was a real big musician, because they played together with her father in Vienna, Austria. She married through Holland, so they b -- they s -- brought her from Holland, yes. She mentioned that sh -- her second husband was a Czech, because I said I am Czechoslovakian. And so -- so -- so they took her from this experimental block, and they brought her to Birkenau, and they made

her as a [indecipherable] after [indecipherable] maybe. So she was playing with them. She had such a small stick, a thin stick play, and she used to complain that her stick is too heavy for her, and we used to laugh that this is heavy for Alma Rosé, and we use all equipment, we have to work and so -- so -- and she played beautiful. For Sundays sometimes, or more often, I don't remember if every Sunday, she played by herself. I-I was young, and I-I didn't go to these big places and so -- but I couldn't imagine something nicer than she -- when she play -- when she play, and there came also high rank officers were standing around and playing -- and listening.

Q: So it was actually a recital. It was -- or ju -- was she just practicing?

A: She played with the orchestra, but some days she was playing, like an au -- like a concert in tube --

Q: Really. And where would this be, where in Auschwitz would this --

A: Just a place where I -- where my duty was, in the entrance of block B, where the people went to work.

Q: I see.

A: So when -- when they went to work, to the orchestra played these march songs, and march music, they should -- they should march in-in military steps, yes. And we had to lead them by -- shall I tell you how?

Q: Mm.

A: By [speaks German here], yes. When somebody didn't march well, so change there, they had to march in that --

Q: So they had to march in unison, together?

A: Together yes, in lines, and she played with her orchestra. We had to tell them how to mar -- how to start and so on and so. And when they came and returned from work, they had to march

also by we -- without orchestra when they return, I think without. We had to lead them, but sometimes we didn't, when nobody was there from the SS. [indecipherable] She was ha -- she was a musician, oh mine God, never her [indecipherable] yeah and then she died. It was April the fourth, I remember. I remember it from -- from reading. April the fourth, 1944, when we heard Alma Rosé die. She was invited to a party and they said that she was poisoned there. And then they came [indecipherable] we began with the orchestra, which wasn't the same.

Q: It wasn't the same.

A: No, not -- there were concerts and even not -- it wasn't Alma Rosé.

Q: Now, there are some people who think they remember the orchestra playing when people went to the gas, and other people saying there was never an orchestra.

A: Never an orchestra?

Q: Yeah.

A: I wished only -- that was my wish, that when I will go to gas, it should be --

Q: Really?

A: -- Alma Rosé should accompany me and it will be easy for me. That was my wish.

Q: So the music for you was really important.

A: Very important. This was the only one thing what was nice for me.

Q: Did you know that Tsipi was in the orchestra, that she played mandolin?

A: No. No. She was? She was there?

Q: She played mandolin and when they went -- they -- they marched out, so they would play for people who were going to work, they would come by block four and pick her up, and she would go with them and play. I don't know if she ever played concerts, but she played --

A: No, I don't --

Q: You didn't know that.

A: -- I see she was there every day --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- we -- we -- we saw each other.

Q: Yes.

A: Because when the transports they came, I wasn't every time there because --

Q: Right.

A: -- we exchanged duties, but in the morning I was there.

Q: In the morning you worked, she was playing [indecipherable] know.

A: Interesting. I know, well, people were coming, going and we didn't -- we didn't even know they [indecipherable] but no, we didn't think about, because we couldn't think about so many people.

Q: Right. But other than your friend Dieter Rishter --

A: Dieter Rishter.

Q: -- did you have another -- any other close friends, or was she the closest person?

A: She was the closest person. I had friends then, also.

Q: Yes, but she was really --

A: She was the closest person.

Q: So that was very hard on you to lose her.

A: Very hard, still hard.

Q: Still hard?

A: Yeah, Dieter Rishter [indecipherable]

Q: I see what you're saying.

A: Still hard. See, once she went by her -- on her own to -- in front of block 25, somehow once I lost her during the day, maybe it was Sunday, I came to the block and asked, where is rish -- where is Dieter? Somebody said she went to block 25. With some of them, that was suicide [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: They were sitting there and waiting til they opened the door, and I -- it was in front of -- of the lager, so the first -- in the first row from the door -- from the -- from the e -- entrance, where the SS were, so they could see the -- and I went there, and I said, "Dieter, come." She said no. I tried to pick her up, and -- and -- and I -- I had to fight with her, I fought with her, Dieter, come, come. She said, "No, it's not your life, let me -- leave me alone. I want to die, I want to go." And it was also a risk, somebody sees me, then go with her. But I managed to pick her up and he came wi -- she came with me. She came back to that barrack. She was very close to me, I liked her very mu -- nice girl, a simple, nice, good girl. Yeah, nice girl, Dieter.

Q: Were -- the -- the women that you saw, did most of them have one very close person?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know how they -- how it was working.

A: I don't know --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- because I know that many of them, they came to sleep, they left and so --

Q: Right.

A: I don't know, and I don't -- didn't know in the commando, also the names. I don't know, I don't know, probably yes. Nobody wants to be lonely.

Q: Right. Did you ever see men coming into the camp and working?

A: Sometimes, yes. First of all from the gas chamber, they deliver to us this clothing, we worked on it [indecipherable] they pulled like -- like horses, they came there.

Q: Wasn't it the case that there was some -- somebody who was working the Sonderkommando, who spoke with you about what happened? Some person who saw you in Auschwitz, and talked to you, who came in the women's camp? Didn't you write about that?

A: Yes, it happened --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- happened, yes, happened, I don't know if I wrote about it, but it happened.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I had there a friend, also a man. He was so sick and so -- a Polish man, his nose was -- was running and so [indecipherable]. And once he came we had the little [indecipherable] with [indecipherable] a little piece of salami. And he asked -- this was winter, I should boil it for him, I should make him a soup. Not wa -- this was sick and I made it for him and then he came always, he brought a -- a piece of bread and salami, or only bread, to make him a soup and so [indecipherable] but not so somebody should see.

Q: Yeah.

A: [indecipherable] the back, and here and there, or -- or he drew me a -- a -- a letter or a picture or so. And so I learned about his life before and so -- so I knew about him. And then I was so happy when I saw him with a mirror to look in, and his cap, he fixed up and so [indecipherable]

Q: Yes?

A: So happy. And then when he became maybe the nicest looking boy from that place, yes, that commando, yeah.

Q: He found a mirror? This was after the war, this was --

A: During the war, during it

Q: -- during? He found a mirror and so he was fixing himself up.

A: Yes, and before he was -- his nose was running and so -- yes. But in sometimes they pass through when they brought --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- other things, they said something and so -- so we knew the names from those who --

Q: But there were a number of times when you actually saved people, you risked your life.

A: I did.

Q: Not just with -- with your friend Dieter, that was very dangerous to go into block 25 to bring her out.

A: Not to, in front.

Q: In front, even in front.

A: Yes, I --

Q: Cause clearly she was waiting.

A: Yeah, yes. I did steal people, saved.

Q: And how did you do that?

A: Once five people, from Mengele -- from Dr. Mengele, when I was Schreiberin, you know, registrar. And when they emptied block A -- barra -- yeah -- were -- lager A they emptied, yeah. So our block had to -- the Jewish women, they had to assemble in -- in the sauna. The sauna, to go to the sauna, I had to go with them as the shi -- block Schreiberin went to write down who

stays in, so -- and at the door was Mengele, and a other prisoner, Slovak doctor, she wasn't finished [indecipherable]. She played the doctor, the wise Inna. Was a -- a door with him -- with meng -- Dr. Mengele, and they had to line up and to go through the door where he was standing, and it was a small room, and there all -- the small room on the other room, yeah, life or death. And my father's sister was there, my father's sister, my aunt. And I said to Inna, my aunt is coming, help me, yeah. Said, tell me when she will be here. And she was on the way, I said, she is coming, yeah. [indecipherable] because Mengele was the -- she said, I cannot help you, you help yourself. I knew that she cannot -- couldn't help me, we tried. So I didn't -- I could not help neither, so I let her go through selection, he selected her. Then came a other one from the city where I was -- where I became married, because my uncle was [indecipherable] so I knew her, I met her there. So they were maybe 45, or so, yes, the nine hun -- 19 -- maybe 45 years, around. So I let her also go, I let everybody go, he selected, yes. Then came -- then came a Hungarian women from Budapest, I let her also go, and I let everybody go yes, and I waited til Mengele will leave, and then I went to the little room where they -- those two -- two -- two -- that selected were, and I said silently, [indecipherable] is -- is in Hungarian, like end, I said, Frieda [indecipherable] come. [indecipherable] with one hand, and I took them out from there, from commandos. And then I saw there a sister of one girl which was sent to live, yes, so I went to her, come. And then was there this lady from Budapest, and she said Aliska, and I saw there in the back, a girl, she was maybe 16 years old, also Hungarian, I said yes in -- in Hungarian, yes if she prom -- and I had the girl shon -- als -- shon -- I had the girl where my hand, I carried her. I said yes, will you promise me that you will be her mother? She said yes, I promise you. So I put the two -- two together, and I took them out. So that time I took five people out from Mengele. Was a risk. And then my cousin, which I said, from she was already in block 25 --

Q: So I-let's stop the tape and we'll start with that --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- on the next tape with you -- with getting Vera out.

A: Yeah.

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: Okay, before we talk about your saving Vera Isen, tell me what impelled you to do this? It was so dangerous, you could have been caught in a second and killed.

A: Yes. I knew it.

Q: What made you do it? How --

A: S -- to save people. I didn't think about the danger. I knew that I have to do it, be -- that I -- since I had th-the opportunity, it was a way til -- til -- I knew that it was a way how to take them out, so I had to do thi -- I -- I had to do it.

Q: And nobody saw you, Irma didn't see you. Irma -- irm -- was Irma Weiss, right?

A: Irna.

Q: Irna, rather, right.

A: No, I don't know, she left with him, but I told her that I want to save my aunt and she said, I cannot help you, you help yourself.

Q: Right.

A: So probably she --

Q: She knew.

A: -- knew probably, I don't know. I never spoke to her before and after, that she was working in the -- really in the [indecipherable] house.

Q: But if they were going through the -- th -- the process, this wasn't outside, this was inside --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- were they not taking down names?

A: No, no. That was --

Q: They can -- not that -- it was just n -- just moving people.

A: Just moving people.

Q: I see, so --

A: This was my work.

Q: I see, so they can -- there was no way to check if you --

A: No, they di -- couldn't check, no. They left, he didn't remember whom he sent because he sent a lot of people.

Q: I see. Now, there were other people in that room.

A: Yes.

Q: Did they realize what you were doing, or you don't know?

A: See, no, wait. I had bad conscience about one woman, who saw what was going on -- on, but that was my limit, I could not -- but, I am happy ho -- what happened, okay? She was a real musselman, you know what's musselman, you heard this expression?

Q: That was people who were deteriorated and -- and close to death also, right.

A: Yeah. She was tall, and very skinny, and she came to me and she said, help me, because she saw, she saw. I said, I cannot, because when I take yo -- if I take you out, everything wis -- will collapse, I'm sorry, I cannot. And I left her there. But my conscience was very bad, that oh my God, she died and so and so. Til once happened that somebody told me after the war, that a woman, very tall and skinny, a real musselman, she somehow came to the lager, to the other lager.

Q: So she escaped herself.

A: She escaped herself, and I was very quiet and very happy. Til then, til I didn't hear it, my conscience was very bad.

Q: Right, right.

A: But I couldn't, because five people, I had to risk five people and myself.

Q: Right.

A: That was the limit and I couldn't go even back to take more, five.

Q: Yes.

A: Too much time. [indecipherable] them, too much time, I couldn't.

Q: And what gave you -- were you holding onto this young -- this 16 year old girl when you said to this other woman if you -- if you will take --

A: Yeah, I just took her.

Q: You just took her.

A: I just took her, I went to her, I didn't say anything, she didn't know what -- what I am doing.

Q: [indecipherable] you just took her.

A: I took her, I hold her, and this lady said -- she was a little bit chubby, I don't know if she was 50, that time 50 was old.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she said, Aliska. And I said yes. And you promise me that you be a -- be a mother to this gi -- to this child, I take you. Said, I promise you.

Q: And what brought --

A: And I -- I put them together, the hands and

Q: -- together. And what made you th -- I understand this was some instinctual thing --

A: Yes.

Q: -- o-on your part, but what made you say that to her? Because you didn't think that the 16 year old would survive if she didn't have somebody?

A: Yeah, she was very young, according to this set up. Yeah, she was not -- she needed somebody, I think so.

Q: Did they sur -- did they survive?

A: Yes. No, I don't know about the Hungarian woman, but I know about the girl that she survived becau -- it happened my -- my roots, you know, I met so many people there which -- which they belonged to -- belonged to me. I met a -- a b -- a -- a woman which was very handy there and very nice when I was Schreiberin, and said stay, and she worked always something other, I said, stay here, be a -- be a Stubendienst, yes, a servant here. And she stayed and worked and so [indecipherable] after my work and after the war I went to the city Koshitzer, and I met her on the street and she said, come, visit us [indecipherable] go to a restaurant, she said come, visit us and we'll have supper with us. So I said, what's your name and what -- I knew her first name -- I said what's your name and what's your address. So she said her name and I said, we have here a relative, who work there and there and there. She said that's my so -- my brother-in-law. She was my cousin's wife. And she told me -- I didn't say anything to her but she told me about this girl that she lives in -- she has this cousin or something in California, and she mentioned her, described her, so she lived in -- in California, in America after the war. So I know that she's --

Q: Right.

A: -- she survived, that my aunt survived -- she passed away now, this lady from mana -- from my husband, the three, I know that they survived. I don't know about Koshitzer, I was in Koshitzer, I never asked about her, but I'm sure that [indecipherable] was healthy, and I don't know about this Hungarian lady, I don't know. But three I know.

Q: So tell me the story about Vera Isen.

A: I told you, no? With my father, aha happen, what happened.

Q: No, you didn't. What happened, yeah.

A: I came to the -- came to the barrack and they were sending a nice looking girl, young, maybe 20 or so. I said -- and I knew that she's not from the barrack, because I would know her. I said, "What are you -- are you looking for somebody?" She said "Yes, I am looking for Aliska Roth," or for -- yeah. So I said, "Why are you looking for Aliska Roth?" She said, "Because she's my cousin." I said, "Your cousin, what's your name?" Vera Isen. I said, "Oh, so what's the problem?" I didn't say anything to her, what's the problem [indecipherable] wasn't interest to talk too much. I said, "What's the problem?" Said, "I am on 20 -- on block 25." So I said -- I didn't ask why, I didn't know why she's there. I said [indecipherable] afternoon, I cannot do anything, I will try tomorrow to do something. Come with me, I go with you to 25. Since I was -- before Laeuferin, I was Schreiberin, so I -- people knew me, so I had some position. So I went there, there was a Slovak lady, older than -- she was a mother of a girl [indecipherable]. I said [indecipherable] didn't ask who we are, what -- what [indecipherable], no, nothing nothing. I said, "Now this is my cousin and she's here in your block." It was impossible to take out from there. "She's in this block, I want to help her, but today is no time because late. So I-I -- I will come tomorrow, so please hide her," and I looked up there where the dished, and some storage. I said, "If something would happen during the night, place her there, send her there, she should hide there. In the morning I will be here." She said okay. And I am wondering how she could do that, because she had her on the list, yeah. She says okay. So -- and I went in the morning there. I said, I came for my cousin. She says okay, so I took her. I took my cousin and I went with her to the sauna, because I knew that that time they were sending the haftlings to -- to Germany to work, you know, Philips and so on and so. They went there. And there was an SS,

[indecipherable] and these SS people they knew me, because I was standing there. Her name was Ziatz, and I knew she's a simple woman, older woman, in her 40's, somehow, I never heard her voice, she must be a nice woman. So I went to her and I said [indecipherable], I said this is my cousin, look how beautiful she is, she is nicer looking than I am, I gave her some [indecipherable]. And she's in -- the problem with -- with her that she's in block 25. She has to go to the gas chamber. And she can go as a nice looking girl, then I can go also. I am not so nice looking than her. Please help me. Send her away with the -- with these people to Germany to work. And she looked, and she said, leave her here. And I left her there, and I believed her, this [indecipherable] I left her there. And that's it. And I had the feeling, that's a good feeling, the girl is safe. After the war -- war, when I came to Prešov, I met a girl from Hungary, from there, and we were so [indecipherable] saw me, knew the name. She said, I was in [indecipherable] with the -- they had a -- a grape garden. So I met there Vera Isen, and she said you should come there to pick up grapes. So I said, well I don't know. But I knew that I will not go, I wasn't the mood to travel with grapes, forget about it. And then I said, are you go back, tell her that I thank, that I'm here and I thank, and -- but I will not be here, I will be in Humenné, I go to my uncle. So then I received from her a letter. I'm not sure if I wrote her or she wrote me, that I don't know. [indecipherable] was a little place, Humenné was also a little place, was enough to know the name, okay, [indecipherable]. So I received a letter that she's with her brother there and they want to go to the States, to New York. But that time wasn't permitted from Hungary to write to New York, wasn't permitted somehow connection [indecipherable] I should write -- she wrote me the address to New York, I should write in Hungarian [indecipherable]. So I wrote there, and that's it. I never heard about her, never, never, never. After years and years my cousin from Koshitza, from Slovakia wrote to me that she -- she received a letter from Israel -- from Israel

from my other cousin, that this cousin from Israel was in New York to visit a other cousin and that Vera wi -- Vera Isen was there and she's in this book about Auschwitz, and she said the story that the -- she was select -- she was selected to -- for -- for Germany to work, and I didn't know that time that she had a sister and she had a mother there. And the other blockalteste came there, and managed -- because she was the last one, that they took her out from the line, and she put her sister or her cousin or somebody, this blockalte -- somebody instead her, and they took her from there to block 25, ye -- and that I took her out, and -- and so -- and sh -- and this cousin from Israel said that she wanted my [indecipherable] wanted my address where I live now, to tell me that she's alive. So I wrote to her, but she didn't write for a long time. So I said, when she doesn't write, ask from Israel her address. [indecipherable] I -- I never said to her -- she doesn't know the story of my father, that my father had her -- I don't know what -- what kind of reli -- relative was his mother and so -- so as was -- so a few -- then she in -- then she invited me to Florida, I should come, I knew that I will not go. I said maybe. And then she called I shouldn't go for January because her children are there, sh -- I should come for February. And I said, I will go rather to -- to New York. Then I had my hip operation, I said [indecipherable] called me, I said I -- I cannot go because I have a hip operation. Then she called me again, I said I want to go to -- to Washington first, and I will come from Washington, maybe I will come to visit you. I never went and she never called or never --

Q: So you've never seen her since that day?

A: No, I saw her only once. But then I wrote to the [indecipherable] my new cousin, my new cousin.

Q: Right, right. Did you tell her when you brought her to -- to the sauna, did you say I am your cousin, or you never told her?

A: No, I told her, oh I -- I --

Q: Oh, you did tell her.

A: -- I -- no, I didn't tell her I am your cousin, I reacted as I will help you.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I ra -- reacted as a cousin.

Q: As a cousin

A: Come, I will help you. But I never wrote to her that my fa -- what my father told me, that he lost his mother, who was an Isen.

Q: Right, right.

A: And so I met a few ones. Some of my roots. A few ones [indecipherable] few ones.

Q: So how do you understand yourself doing all of this?

A: Yeah, I had other times also when I saved.

Q: Yes?

A: So -- but how I understand myself, after many years -- and I was happy that I could help.

After many years I sometimes ask was it worthwhile. Who cares, nobody cares. If it is worthwhile to be a [indecipherable]. Then but sometimes maybe. Nobody said ever, thanks.

Q: Nobody?

A: Nobody. Nobody. So they were thankful it's -- my aunt and the other lady, but I don't know if it is worthwhile to risk your life, as I risked my life. I risked also [indecipherable] Polish -- I wrote it, Polish women. They wanted to take them to Visla to [indecipherable]. I mean, the SS came and he said where are -- I had to line up. It was a rec -- convalescent barrack where they didn't go to work, they stayed there. And he came, where are they. Polish women. I said, we

don't have here Polish women. He left, but I had statistics, I had -- I wrote every day stat -- and they would say, show me your statistics. I finished [indecipherable]. He turned and he left.

Q: And you had just faked everything?

A: I didn't faked anything, it -- my -- my book was there, my notebook was inside in there.

Q: But he didn't look.

A: He didn't ask. I looked so little, innocent.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah, [indecipherable]

Q: But don't you, even if people don't thank you, you have some feeling in yourself about what you did.

A: Yes, yes, sure.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: I know that I did the right thing.

Q: Yeah.

A: I do know that. I'm satisfied. I'm satisfied I did the right thing, yeah, even they don't care, but sometimes I think that nobody -- no, I -- I -- a-always when somebody -- I did something for some, ask me what should I [indecipherable] I said, now you want to repay me? Yes. Give me a smile. It was always my reaction. Yeah, it was very risky. Once somebody saw me from the sauna, was also a -- some relative that I knew her before. And I went to the Schreiberin that time, I said, take her a -- take out her name, yeah. She said, find me a razor -- an eraser. So I went all over, I found the eraser, so she wrote through and erased, it should be so mixed up that she made the mistake. When I took her out, was evening. Then one Polish lady who was then my blockalteste when I was Schreiberin with her in the last barrack. She came to -- now you stole

this girl, you took her out from the -- I said no, no, I didn't. She said yes, I saw you. I said no.

But then when I came onto her barrack, I said -- said, you remember that evening? I really took her. Yeah.

Q: But something -- something must have been in your family, there's a certain kind of justice, or evenness, even what you did after the war, that even though this woman had no right to get money from you.

A: No.

Q: None --

A: None, because --

Q: -- whatsoever. But you -- it was more important for you to shut her up essentially --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- so she wouldn't say nasty things about your father.

A: Yeah, was my responsibility --

Q: It was your responsibility.

A: -- I felt.

Q: And it's a -- oh, there's -- there's something, something.

A: Maybe that that my father was a very honest man, maybe. Maybe that. Maybe, I don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was -- it was this way.

Q: Right.

A: I was this way. No, I didn't question myself.

Q: You just did it.

A: And I was ques --

Q: You just did it.

A: I never question, yeah. Never question what I am doing again, so -- have to do it, I do it. I can do it, so I do it.

Q: So you did it.

A: And that's -- I looked so -- I knew that I looked so innocent, a little girl. Who wouldn't believe a little girl.

Q: But you know, when you said -- when we were talking before, about having -- being practical.

A: Yeah.

Q: In a situation that was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- clearly completely crazy.

A: Yes.

Q: But in order to live in it, you had to think in a practical way --

A: I had to think --

Q: -- not in some fantasy land, right?

A: -- yes. No.

Q: So you were thinking and strategizing --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and seeing --

A: Yes.

Q: -- little ways.

A: Yes, that's right. I had to --

Q: To save yourself and to save some [indecipherable]

A: I understand you.

Q: Yes.

A: I understand you.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. But it was somehow worthwhile to -- to risk.

Q: Yes.

A: It was worthwhile to risk. It was worthwhile to risk.

Q: I-I would think it would make somehow living with that experience a little bit easier, but you actually acted --

A: Yes.

Q: -- on behalf of other people.

A: Yes.

Q: And didn't simply watch -- you got saved and watched --

A: No, no.

Q: I don't think you could have --

A: No, I couldn't do that.

Q: Yeah.

A: I couldn't do that.

Q: Right.

A: First of all I -- I was counting at the end that we will anyhow die, all of you. Again, I didn't risk too much. I didn't risk too much, no.

Q: Yeah. Because you thought it was going to be over anyway.

A: Yeah, it will be over anyway, if I die before, or later, it doesn't make too much difference, and I can help them, so it will never go too much difference.

Q: Now, your job as a Laeuferin --

A: Yes.

Q: Was stopped because Mala Zimetbaum --

A: Yes.

Q: -- left with her boyfriend Galinski, yes?

A: Yes.

Q: I forget what his first name was.

A: Edek.

Q: E-Edek, right.[indecipherable]

A: Edek's very impressive man.

Q: What did you think about that? Of course you didn't know she was going to escape, but when --

A: That she was -- wasn't smart.

Q: It wasn't smart.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because she had to think about it, she will be caught with the SS uniform to go -- no.

Q: And she was in a safe position --

A: She was in safe pos --

Q: -- as a Laeuferin, sh --

A: She was in safe, she was on the top top --

Q: Right

A: -- Katya Singer and her.

Q: Right.

A: She didn't have to do it, wasn't smart.

Q: Do you have -- given that you knew her a little bit, do you have some understanding of what she thought she was doing? That she --

A: Yeah, she was too much courageous -- to much courage.

Q: Oh.

A: And too much self confident and proud. As I said --

Q: Yes.

A: -- she's a proud women, a proud girl. Two years older from me.

Q: So do you think in some ways she's unrealistic? Is that what ---

A: Yes, she was unrealistic --

Q: Oh, uh-huh.

A: -- because she could have -- and two -- two weeks after came her sister from Belgium. She -- unrealistic because she would survive to the end end, to the last day.

Q: Yeah.

A: For sure to the last day, nobody would touch Mala.

Q: Right.

A: Til the last day, and if she stays alive -- stayed alive, she would have made a big career, because she was a girl like -- was not only good and nice, but she knew to put forward her best, yes?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: She -- you would notice her. She wouldn't be this little modest woman as I am. I don't say -- I don't say even that I was in lager. Many people, they don't know, my closest friends, they don't know even. They just -- did I say to Jim, or to Mike, I don't know -- here a man who comes for 25 years every Sunday for supper.

Q: And he doesn't know.

A: He doesn't know. Now, Hugo said we go to -- to [indecipherable] what for? I said, we are invited to say about our e-experiences, that's all. And I was thinking about it, and I said [indecipherable] to tell him, maybe I have to say to him that I was in Auschwitz.

Q: I think so.

A: Yeah. And he's a teacher who's teaching the course of -- of -- of Holocaust.

Q: So show him the interview.

A: I don't know. I don't know, somehow that's my -- that's me, my pers -- I don't know. But not many people know. At school, my -- my college, they didn't know, I didn't say anything about. What should I be special? But Mala was somebody, you know. She was beautiful, an-an-and she was a personality -- not personality, a leader type, yes?

Q: Right.

A: The people, if they come into somewhere and they will be right away lead -- visible, yes? And that was Mala. Was not smart.

Q: No.

A: Too much self confidence. She went over the limit, stepped out from the lager in SS uniform.

Q: In a male uniform, right? She was --

A: No, no, no, she had --

Q: No? She was [indecipherable] a woman?

A: -- woman, and he as a man.

Q: Uh-huh, I see.

A: And he also had -- very attractive man, smart and everything, courageous and proud.

[indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: He did something what didn't make sense, you know?

Q: Yeah. So when they were caught, were you -- were you there when they took her to hang her?

A: They didn't hang her.

Q: I know they didn't, but weren't they -- they were bringing her.

A: Yes, I was there.

Q: You were there. So you saw what happened?

A: Yeah, it was everywhere.

Q: It was everywhere. So tell me what you saw.

A: Yeah. And we were exchange, we were placed into -- in-into the blocks, yes, I was -- became Schreiberin. And --

Q: This is aft -- after her escape, they took all of you --

A: After her escape --

Q: -- out.

A: -- yeah, and they put 16 years old girls, and I had to see the Lagerfuehrerin with a message, yes? And I had so -- so much courage that I said to the Lagerfuehr [indecipherable] was the Lagerfuehrerin. I said, Frau Lagerfuehrerin, is this possible, to work with children? Yeah. Maybe I wasn't [indecipherable] and she said, for us is everything possible. Yeah [indecipherable] so I left, turned and ran. So after that, a few days later, somebody came into the barrack and said

Mala is back. She stands on the entrance, she is on the entrance. She is back in lager. They brought her [indecipherable] from the prison. And then somebody said the other one -- I think that -- I think that Sally -- Sally was her name, Sal -- I don't know, one was Herta, the other one was Leah, I think. But the third one, I think that's Sallah, I don't know. And that I don't [indecipherable] that she went to -- to the entrance, and she gave her a razor blade, in case she has to cut her veins. And then was a whistle and all of us who was in the lager, had to go into the B lager to stand there. We were standing and they brought, I don't know who came with her, Mala. She was there to [indecipherable] Mala is here. Wasn't so simple. And there was the Lageralteste, and was a Scharfuierer [indecipherable]. Lageralteste Mandel, and Scharfuierer [indecipherable]. And Mandel, the la -- the SS Mandel, she said to -- the short speech, and she said, we got a message from Berlin, this Mala has to be put into a crematorium alive, alive.

Q: She said that aloud?

A: Aloud, for everybody. And whoever would escape, will happen for everybody. And then -- then Mala took the razor blade, and she cut her forehead -- forehead, yes, forehead like this, and turned her arm, and blood dripped from her, and with the right hand she slapped this thir -- yeah, and the thir -- the [indecipherable] she too -- he took razor blade from her hand out, so she slapped him, yes. And blood was dripping. And then he took her hand down and sent her I don't know, I don't remember who went with her to the [indecipherable] to the [indecipherable] to the emergency or something like that. They went with her, and we were standing there, and then she returned and -- and bandaged her forearm, and then I don't -- don't remember if [indecipherable] or there they put her in some carriage, and somebody pulled her out of the lager. And then in the morning we heard that when she arrived there was an SS man, and he said, oh that's you. He recognize her, because they went out and -- it's you. I will not throw you in the oven alive. And

[indecipherable] we know that -- knew that from the Sonderkommando who worked there, somebody said that he gave her a pill, and -- and here, poison yourself. Or the mer -- there most probably was that he shot her -- I will shot her -- shot you first. And the third version was that she took a pill, that she had the poisonous pill. She killed her -- poisoned herself. And Edek was hanged.

Q: Yes.

A: Edek was hanged [indecipherable]

Q: Right, okay.

A: Mm.

End of Tape Eight

Beginning Tape Nine

Q: Tell -- explain what a Schreiberin is. That was your next job after the Laeuferin. What is -- what does a Schreiberin do?

A: She has to have evidence of people, somebody's placed to the barrack, somebody's placed from the barracks. And nationalities, how many those, those, those, those, those, according, a list has to be put together, and to take to the Schriebstuber. Then we had a reconvaescent lag -- block. That meant some people, they -- which they were sick and they were not sent to the gas chamber, let's see, the non-Jews, they were not sent to the gas chamber, yes. You are sick, you went to the Revere, to the [indecipherable]. And then they send them for a few day -- let's say for three days or four or five, six days or [indecipherable] mostly to a reconvaescent block. And then you had to place them from the reconvaescent block according to regulations, back. And back from there they came, yes. So, when we had to send them back, we had to go to the same route as who was there when Mala -- was Mala, who me she slapped, for permission -- he had to sign that go to place, and so on. But again, I didn't place back. [indecipherable] I knew when I was Laeuferin, he was there in this -- that was his office. So I used to go to him, I said, Herr -- it was the Arbeitsfuehrer, something like that, please sign me, sign me this. And he used -- used to smile, so -- he didn't look at me, only smiled, and signed, didn't say anything. And I sent to the - to the sewing room, sewing, because there we were exchange for young -- for older people from Auschwitz. But the -- here was older people, so mainly older people came. So sent them there, or I kept them longer or so -- so we had to be in [indecipherable] maybe he didn't know, maybe he smiled only like, I don't know, I never ask him why he smiles, I didn't care, he sign. So we had to be in connection with this -- this Arbeitskommandant. We had to go to the Schreibstuber, and the Zaehlappell had to be correct, yes, so that was -- now, and beside that, we

help, from -- we order, and so food came, too. Sliced bread to -- and the portions of soup -- the stoup beans the -- the stew beans, they gave them food, but bread to prepare every evening again, so I would work around, there were many people in there. I don't know how many hundreds of people sometimes in a block.

Q: Right. So you now know that those reports that you were doing was -- were going to Tsipi?

A: Now I know.

Q: Now you know, you didn't know that.

A: I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

Q: She was making reports to go to Berlin of what was happening in the women's camp.

A: Yeah, yes. I didn't know it was --

Q: You didn't know, right.

A: -- tso -- Tsipi. I didn't give it exactly to her, she said, that came to me, they gave it to me.

Q: Right.

A: Isn't that interesting, we were in the same room -- in the same barrack, yes, she was in a little room, about a -- elite --

Q: Right.

A: -- yes, among the elite, and I was a little lower in the same barrack I were when I went as a Schreiberin made -- this my notes and I sent there, I give it there, and they gave it to her from -- is interesting, no? And now we meet.

Q: That's very interesting.

A: With a phone call --

Q: Right.

A: -- and I recognize her only by my memory just --

Q: Right.

A: -- and she knew also my name, and --

Q: Yes, she actually introduced us.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: Is interesting?

Q: Yes, I think it's very interesting.

A: Very interesting.

Q: I don't know when this happened, but at some point you said that an SS man visited the blockalteste's room drunk, and was asking --

A: Yeah. Yes, yes. Let me tell you this story.

Q: Why did he -- yes, can you -- was this in block four?

A: Block four? No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: No, this was another block, this was --

A: That was when we left -- when we left A barrack, the A lager, and we left A lager when I said that we s -- we were there -- left -- we were there, only few girls yes, and I was scared, but we'll have [indecipherable] to die, I was scared --

Q: Right.

A: -- and so on, and so what will. So one day came an SS, and he took us to a other lager, to another lager, only by foot, it was close, yeah. And I came to this blockalteste, who saw me that evening that I took somebody from this road that was outside there, standing, here they were standing, and then -- but that's interesting, that this girl became a woman, and she committed in Israel suicide. Whom I took from the sauna, you know it?

Q: Yes, that one you took from the sauna?

A: Which I -- the -- the other --

Q: Yes.

A: -- Schreiberin erased her name, and so I took her from the sauna, she went to her [indecipherable] and I took her to the other one. She came to New York, she divorced her husband, left her son with her husband, went to -- to Israel, married again, and then she committed the suicide. Destiny, yeah. So the question was, this drunk SS.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. So from there we went to the other and this blockalteste who saw me to steal her [indecipherable] I came there, and she said that she wanted a -- I wrote it there -- somebody as a Polish, a Polish woman, as a Schreiberin, but the other one, who worked with Katya [indecipherable] means miss, misses, yeah. She told me, the blockalte -- probably not [indecipherable] that I have to take -- she didn't know me, I didn't know her, we saw each other only this evening, yeah. She said that Aliska has to be her Schreiberin, because when Aliska was good to -- to save the Polish women, you know, from the Visla that she sent to the latrine, go to the latrine, then she's got to be Schreiberin here. So I became the Schreiberin there, and it was the a-assistant blockalteste a Polish woman, a other one, they were sitting together, two Polish women. And I was with them, the Schreiber. It was -- I think it was late -- yeah, in October we came there, I think maybe in October, could have been winter or -- or so, it was cold, I know it -- we didn't have a calendar there. I didn't know the date, I didn't know the day. Sunday we knew because we didn't go to work. So, open the door and an SS man came into [indecipherable] room, because blockalteste, Schreiberin and assistant, we had a little room, yeah. So we were sitting that time there, and this drunk SS came in, took off his hat, put on a chair and said -- put --

took off the gun, put on the chair and sit there and said, I will stay here with you, and I will -- I will sleep here on the floor with you, or I will go into the barrack and I will sleep on the bunk, the bunk [indecipherable]. I don't leave from here, I will stay with you here. An SS. And this other -- the -- the assistant -- the assistant blockalteste, she was so strict to him, she started to spit on his head, and so -- and then he said -- but he was very, very drunk, and he said, I don't want to live. And there -- therefore, I don't want to go from here, I -- therefore, I want to stay here, because I am not worthwhile to live. I killed so many girls from Holland, Dutch girls. They were so beautiful, and I went up the gas chamber, and I threw inside Zyklon B, Zyklon B, and I threw and I killed them, and they were so beautiful, and therefore I don't want to live. Now we were scared. A drunk SS and talk like that, and she spitting on his head. That was tragic, yeah? So it -- what to do? So I didn't say anything, and I left. I left them, and I went at the end of the lager was a office for the SS men. They stayed always there, I saw them to go into there, yeah. Never had anything to do with them. I saw them there. So I went into that office, to the SS office, and I said, we have in our block an SS who is drunk, and he has a gun, and we are scared of his gun, and of his -- could you please come to pick him up? I didn't say what he said, only that. And one of -- I don't know, there were two or three there, I don't remember. Maybe I didn't notice, even. So he got up and he followed me again, came into our little room, took him, didn't say anything -- he was scared when he saw him. He took him, and -- he took him.

Q: Right.

A: And that was.

Q: And he took the gun as well?

A: The gun as well. This SS had also. Was dangerous, dangerous.

Q: Dangerous, but -- but interesting that -- that any of them would have that response, and come to you.

A: Yes. N -- to me accidentally to --

Q: I mean, no, no, I know that, but coming to the prisoners --

A: Yes.

Q: -- to the haftlings --

A: Yes, that's right, yes. His conscience [indecipherable]

Q: Yes. It's almost as if you could give him forgiveness, or being with you could --

A: Yes.

Q: -- save him in some --

A: Yes, conscience. It -- why did I do it.

Q: Did you ever see him again?

A: Nah, no.

Q: No.

A: I wouldn't recognize him. One SS, other SS.

Q: Yeah, they're all the --

A: The same.

Q: They're all the same.

A: No.

Q: Does this -- did this happen before the October --

A: Evacuation.

Q: It ha -- before the evacuation, but before the October -- the revolt and the blowing up of the crematorium? October 1944 --

A: October 1944.

Q: -- was when they blew up the crematorium.

A: No, no, no, that was after October.

Q: It was after that?

A: After October, because --

Q: Do you remember the --

A: -- yes?

Q: Excuse me, go ahead.

A: [indecipherable] forget.

Q: I interrupted you, go ahead.

A: October -- it was in October 1944? You see, I don't know. I know that I was in the lager, yeah, October 1944, which means I wasn't more Laeufferin, because I was til the end of June. It means I was -- October 1944? Yeah, before we left, before -- maybe it was before I left -- before we left a -- A lager --

Q: Right.

A: -- which was -- that was sometimes in the fall. And I said that in October, probably we left A lager. So suddenly I saw -- we saw people running, running and with the running, running, running, and [indecipherable] was it blowed up? Probably yes. Running from there, from -- from [indecipherable] where the crematorium, people were running and now I really don't remember. I couldn't -- I cannot state that I saw to you the dynamite to blow up the crematorium, but probably yes. But I remember for sure what I can picture how people run away. And that was the Sonderkommando. Not Sonderkommando they [indecipherable] so -- and that was -- then was a rumor that it was a boxer -- boxer, a boxer, a French boxer?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Among the Sonderkommando, and he said -- he said it to the SS, that they are planning to blow up the crematorium.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And so they discovered it, and they ran. Was funny to see that somebody started to run in the lager, you know, the la -- lager to run, we couldn't understand, I was -- I think, I'm not sure, I cannot state it again, but I think that one disappeared, I think so, but I am not sure. Did you have some information like that?

Q: Wh-What do mean, one disappeared, a person?

A: From the Sonderkommando men --

Q: I don't know.

A: -- I don't know. I -- I am not sure.

Q: Right, you're not sure --

A: I am not sure.

Q: -- you don't know.

A: I don't -- I cannot state it, because I don't know and now I know only that, that I saw them to run. It was during the daylight.

Q: And had you heard rumors that there was resistance and people were taking powder out from the union factory, or you --

A: Yes, I know.

Q: You had heard -- you had heard about this?

A: I heard about some girls --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- girls took. I think one girl was hanged or -- or something.

Q: Actually, four.

A: Three, four?

Q: Four.

A: Four?

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't -- don't remember.

Q: But had you heard about that before it happened, or as a rumor, or only after?

A: Only after.

Q: Only after.

A: I think they -- they used it for a breach somewhere in -- in [indecipherable] or somewhere like that.

Q: Uh-huh, mm-hm.

A: Think so. Because that happened they -- that wasn't in Birkenau, that happen in Auschwitz, they [indecipherable] somebody in Auschwitz [indecipherable] any other lager. So --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah. I cannot say.

Q: Do you remember when you left Birkenau before you actually were evacuated? Did you evacuate and go back to Auschwitz one? Or did you leave from Birkenau and start the Death March immediately?

A: We started the Death March.

Q: Right away?

A: Yeah.

Q: And that was January 18?

A: January 18.

Q: So, before you do that, let me -- did you smoke when you were in Auschwitz?

A: Sometimes.

Q: Sometimes?

A: Sometimes.

Q: I understood that men were allowed cigarettes but women were not.

A: Not. And that's why I smoked.

Q: And do you have any -- do you have any understanding of why women were not allowed to smoke and men were?

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

Q: Isn't -- isn't it strange?

A: I don't have --

Q: You -- you -- in your --

A: -- too many diplo -- understandings, no.

Q: But it was clear to you that you were not supposed to do it?

A: No, no, no, I don't -- wasn't, but sometimes I smoked.

Q: Sometimes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it helpful to smoke?

A: Yes, that I to -- did something which was not permitted and I did it. My revenge.

Q: And where did you smoke?

A: In block four.

Q: In block four?

A: Yes, in block four.

Q: And did other women in block four smoke --

A: Oh yeah, sure, sure, yes, yes, yes. The other ones, somebody give me a cigarette

[indecipherable]

Q: I see.

A: Yeah.

Q: So that's how you got, somebody would just say that you want a cigarette?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Only like that. I couldn't buy it, I --

Q: But how would people get cigarettes, they would barter with something? H-How did these women get cigarettes do you think?

A: Yes, they would bargain. They were so -- let's see, where I worked, okay?

Q: Yeah.

A: So we -- we took some stockings or something and -- and the German women, they had cigarettes. So they gave bread or cigarettes for something, for clothing.

Q: So you had access in that barrack to things, because you could walk around and you also were able to do that, whereas most women couldn't do that in the camp.

A: What, to smoke?

Q: No, you had access to be able to barter with the Germans.

A: Oh. I wasn't a good business lady.

Q: No?

A: No, no, no, no, no. I took sometimes -- I had one girl, she was my bir -- first blockalteste in Auschwitz [indecipherable]. She became a blockalteste in -- in a -- Revere. And I took for her, I gave sometimes, an ar -- glass, regular glass, she said that she gave it to some SS doctor, or I don't know, some things, stockings or so to her, she was the only one. And when I came there, she used to give me bread, but not as a bargaining, as a friend from the same city.

Q: As a [indecipherable]. Right.

A: So to her. But once happened that -- too many things -- that her doorman -- doorman -- doorlady, she let me in. And where do you go? I said, I go to Berta. Oh, you cannot go there. And I got such a cramp in my fingers and I was so nervous [indecipherable] that they -- she send me away like -- like a beggar, no? It was really [indecipherable] and I never went there. But other times -- I took also something, and I placed it in the strozak --strozak, and I was happy when somebody stole it. It's true.

Q: Really?

A: I-I-I-I couldn't. Couldn't. No, it doesn't -- the [indecipherable] happened that good Scharfuehrer, the shu -- good commander, the good one. We went, and we used to steal there. And I worked in the front and I put two pairs of stockings in my shoes, I had big shoes, not these lace -- these lace, you know the shoes. Somebody gave it to me. And he went through everybody, he ask, and so on, so on. And when he came to me, he said -- looked at me, that I don't know if he saw me to steal, and he said, Zagmuzi, tell me, how many pairs of -- of stockings do you have in your shoes? And I looked at him, I didn't know what to say. Suddenly, I said none. He said go. I was sure that he saw me to put, yes. But he was so nice. He knew that I am s -- that I am lying.

Q: Right. But he wouldn't do anything.

A: He ne -- let me. But I am for sure [indecipherable] and [indecipherable] the stockings. Maybe sometimes I sold, I don't know, I don't remember. I know that was my [indecipherable] to bring it sometime, put it there and -- and I don't know. Was business I wouldn't be all right.

Q: You couldn't do that?

A: No. There are things that -- starving -- a big thing, a slice of bread.

Q: It wasn't that --

A: Like you said, our interests, they shrank, they shrank, bread.

Q: That -- that became the biggest.

A: Biggest thing bread. Or to have the thick part of the soup when they served.

Q: On the bottom.

A: Bottom. That became the big thing.

Q: Did you talk about food together? Did -- did women talk about recipes of food?

A: No, no.

Q: No.

A: The Hungarian --

Q: The Hungarians did.

A: When the Hungarian -- I couldn't stand it when they -- they -- they spoke about recipes, these recipe, how to make goulash, how to make --

Q: So why do you think the Hungarians did it, and the other people didn't --

A: They liked --

Q: They liked --

A: -- they liked to cook, and they liked to eat, and they were not so long there.

Q: That's what I was going to say, they weren't so long.

A: They were not so long there. They came in May, started going May '44.

Q: '44.

A: And we came in March '42. So somehow hunger became a part of us.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.\

Q: Do you remember the mud in Auschwitz?

A: What?

Q: Mud.

A: Mud?

Q: Mud.

A: Mud

Q: Mud, the --

A: Mud?

Q: Mud, m-u-d.

A: I -- I know, but mud, why should I remember mud? No. Mud -- maybe some, it was raining, yeah.

Q: So the -- the roads were not very muddy? It was not something you remember, because other people --

A: No.

Q: That's interesting.

A: No.

Q: Do you remember people being beaten?

A: Oh yes, sometimes.

Q: You were hit that day.

A: I was hit that day.

Q: Is that -- was that the only time that you remember?

A: Once in this -- in this work where we were sorting clothing, yes. We had to [indecipherable] after commn -- one if this part of this group. Had to write her name and to put into the bundle, yes, into the bundle. So I was responsible for one group like this. And once the kapo called me, kapo [indecipherable] prisoner kapo, and there was the Scharfuehrer, the commandant, the SS, and she -- and one of those showed me my name, my name on a paper in a bundle of man coats - - cold man coats, winter coats. And these -- there in this bundle was a coat which was muddy, just muddy. And he said, why did you put this -- your name -- the SS, why did you put this in -- your name in this bundle and it's dirty, you didn't clean it. I said, I never worked with -- with men coats, I never worked there. I worked there in the front with the linen, bed linen. I never worked there and I -- and she slapped me, this kapo slapped me once, twice. He didn't say anything, he asked only. And I still said I didn't, and was never he -- and that was all, so twice, she was slapping me, and she was slapping me for about -- oh, for --

Q: Really hard.

A: Really hard, because she stated was my name, that means my responsibility. Was easy to -- to get slapping. [indecipherable]

Q: What did that -- what did that -- did that do something to you as a human being, to be slapped? It must have been --

A: Yeah, humiliation for sure.

Q: Yes.

A: How come? [indecipherable] I said no and it is, and I didn't say anything else. Humiliation.

Q: Right. Okay.

A: It wasn't more, no.

Q: When someone says the word Auschwitz to you, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

A: I don't like to hear about it.

Q: You don't like to hear about it.

A: No, no, when they talk about it at home, or somebody, I say, please stop it. No, I don't like that. Or very rarely I will say something, you know.

Q: So do you -- do you have a lot of friends who were from Auschwitz, a lot of people you know, or you -- you don't?

A: No, no.

Q: And so that you don't -- over the years you haven't talked about this very much?

A: Not too much, but I meet people which they were there, or they -- they lost their families and so they were yes. No I -- I would say the contrary. When Jewish people meet, they come always to this the end. They always end up with this lagers, with whom they lost and so forth.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. The -- they mention, remember him, him, him, my friend, this, this. So most of the time they end -- or we end up with Auschwitz, or with -- with lagers, you know, I cannot. And my onk -- others which I met here, which I know here, new friends, or n-new acquaintances, I don't talk, I don't bring up this thing.

Q: Right.

A: But most of the time, or almost always, when people which -- which they were friends before we had -- which had the same friends and so -- so they end up or we end up to talk about it. No, it's a -- something what we never miss when we are among our people which they grew up in the

same city as it. We have a friend with my husband, we are every Sunday together, besides the other one who doesn't know, but he is somehow a little bit mixing up maybe. He said [indecipherable] why do you go to -- to Washington? He said, oh they called her from museum. And then I started to talk about something else.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. But when it is somebody from our group whom we knew, we almost always end up about Auschwitz. And my thinking, my feeling is sadness, almost, or very often about the lager.

Q: Do you dream about it?

A: I don't dream directly that I am in lager, but I dream often that I am lost. I go -- I go somewhere, the place where I don't know, and I'm barefoot and I don't have money, I don't have anything, I'm -- I'm only dressed up somehow and I'm lost, I lost everybody, I lost my husband, my -- my son. Nobody's there and I'm by myself. Always I -- I go somewhere and I don't know where. Yeah, something like -- I think something [indecipherable]. With my family I don't dream so often. I was in Auschwitz, I used to dream with my brother. I knew, now I will go to bed and I will dream the same. Was still alive that time [indecipherable] thinking about it, and you have no idea. That was my life, that I am with my brother.

Q: With your brother.

A: Yeah, my life. My real life [indecipherable], yes. But I imagine. When I wake up, I have to get up because my thinking comes [indecipherable] so I get up, stand up and I should finish. And I go out to the kitchen cooking [indecipherable]

Q: Right. Okay.

End of Tape Nine

Beginning Tape 10

Q: -- ing about your brother in Auschwitz, or dreaming --

A: Yes.

Q: -- as if you were dreaming with him? Is this what you were saying? Explain that to me.

A: I was dreaming that he is there.

Q: That's he's there.

A: That he's there.

Q: Ah, you're having dreams with your brother in it.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. So when -- did you find out in Auschwitz what had happened to your brother and your mother and father, or was it after?

A: No, in Auschwitz -- in Auschwitz, I found out that they left -- that they left --

Q: That they left.

A: -- my family left.

Q: Yes.

A: Nothing more, that they left. But when I returned, then I met in a train, one of his friends or -- or acquaintances who was in the same lager. And he told me in the train, I was with your brother, I worked with him in the forest, and he run away when he heard that they take the parent of the people to help them. He said, and then I stayed there, I went again to work there, and somehow I met partisans and the partisans took me with him -- with them, and so I was saved. Was a smaller lager ne -- next to Lublin. And that -- that he was hidden. I think that he said that he knew from him, or the lady where he worked, but I don't know who told me that he was hidden, and he came home when he heard that they took hi -- but he told me this story and it's a true story.

Q: Yes.

A: That he was -- he worked with him in the forest.

Q: So twice your brother left a place --

A: Yes.

Q: -- where he might have been saved.

A: Yes.

Q: Once when he was hidden and he went to your parents to help them when they were being deported, and then the second time he left the forest to be with them. Do you know where they were sent?

A: I don't know, but I imagine that to Auschwitz.

Q: You think to Auschwitz?

A: Because this -- the small lager they sent people to Auschwitz, I think so.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Maybe I was -- I wasn't standing there, because it was '42, and I came through there --

Q: Right.

A: -- '43. Probably not [indecipherable] before.

Q: So, you go on the Death March, and you obviously see there are a new set of guards now, right? These are not the guards you know.

A: Wehrmacht, Wehrmacht, not SS --

Q: Wehrmacht, uh-huh.

A: Wehrmacht.

Q: Really. So these are all strangers?

A: I saw Wehrmacht. Strangers.

Q: And there's a lot of shooting, isn't there?

A: Yes, at the beginning --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- a lot of shooting. I was al -- almost always among them, because I wasn't enough strong to march. I had to lean on somebody. We were four girls.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: For me it was the most difficult part.

Q: Really?

A: I couldn't -- so they pulled me in.

Q: And so they pulled you.

A: Pulled me.

Q: In some way like you pulled Dieter out of --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- quarantine 25 --

A: Yeah. [indecipherable]

Q: -- they kept you going, yes?

A: Yeah. It was there -- Wehrmacht -- Wehrmacht. Not everybody was bad, not everybody. I couldn't say that everybody was bad. And when they -- it was a order to -- to -- to rest. And -- rest [indecipherable] and hi -- I had a -- a raincoat, a raincoat, a tin raincoat and it was very cold, 18th of January, and my shoes with laces, but they were narrow, they were not enough big. After the war I had an operation, a bunion operation, both of them, because they became so big my -- see this line here?

Q: Right.

A: And --

Q: You had big bunions from those shoes.

A: I think so.

Q: Yeah.

A: And frozen, too.

Q: Yeah.

A: I couldn't march. My hip. So when they said [indecipherable] I was lying -- I always lied down in this -- my raincoat in the snow, others also, but I always, see? And this SS, he was, I know from where, he was from Düsseldorf, Dooler, what Dooler? It will come to my name -- my memory, Willie Dooler from Düsseldorf, and -- a Wehrmacht, and he said get up, get up. I said no, I am so tired. He said, you will get a cold. I said, I don't care. I really didn't care, I so tired. [indecipherable] get up, get up, because when you will stay in the back they will shoot you. So somehow I managed. And so he was really often beside or behind us and he said go, go, go, go, so we went. He found us all the place to sleep, because some of them, or most of them, they slept in a barn, and he's -- he found us a place to sleep in a house. Was a woman there, a Polish woman. He asked her to cook -- prepare us supper. She made us potatoes and ham -- and ham? Ham, yeah, potatoes and ham. And after so many years, we --we slept in a bed.

Q: On the Death March?

A: On the Death March, during the night. The other was in a barn. And I told him I want -- he -- I loved his approach yes, I saw that he's so earnest. I said, I want to stay here, I want to hide. He said, if you want to, hide, but you take a risk because could happen that the Germans will -- will burn the village and you will burn with them. If you want I will give you bread. You can stay, but rather go on. It's a risk to stay. So we went on and on, like him -- with him. And between

there -- between this time, they -- they were shooting people [indecipherable] the most sad part which I saw was when I saw a woman lying and a ho -- a brain next to her. They shoot her through the brain. And then a other one when -- a woman, she was Italian, not Jewish, she was pregnant, and she was in my block where I was Schreiberin so she noticed me from somewhere on a higher spot, she was standing with somebody. And it made -- she made a impression that she is giving birth. A big stomach and so -- felling down and looking at me [indecipherable] but I couldn't -- first of all, I couldn't go out and I wouldn't risk that I couldn't do, and then I couldn't walk myself. It was very sad, this marching. I had these tied shoes, and even th-that time were -- were not pantyhoses, only stockings, remember, and girdles, yes?

Q: Yes.

A: And my girdle went into my flesh, so this was bleeding, and in -- in my flesh there. The girdle, and my shoes were tied, my -- my raincoat was cold. So we went.

Q: And this was miles --

A: Hm?

Q: -- that you walked.

A: I walked. Miles.

Q: Miles and miles and miles in very cold January weather.

A: Was very cold [indecipherable]

Q: Did you have gloves this time?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember.

A: I don't remember. It was so difficult that some people managed to have some bread in the rucksacks. We had some material, we could -- we made ourselves some rucksacks, and they

threw on the -- on the road, see loaves of bread. Because before, the day when we left for this march, somebody opened the storages, the bread storages and they were stealing bread, so some of them, but th-throwing everything, even -- even a little clothing, whatever somebody had, thrown. Everything was too heavy, was very bad.

Q: Yes. So how many day -- do you have any idea how many days you marched til you got to the train that took you to Ravensbrück?

A: Yes, I think that only two days because I remember two nights that we slept on the way, two nights, yes.

Q: Did you sleep two -- two nights in some --

A: Yes.

Q: So this man arranged on the second [indecipherable]

A: Yes, he arranged the first day, and then the second day he arranged in a house where on the first floor were sleeping SS -- not SS, soldiers, probably Wehrmacht, they were sleeping there. And we were upstairs, and he was so nice. We were two Jewish girls and two Christians. One of -- probably was Jewish and she said that she is Christian because people said that she is Jewish, so I don't know, but re-regularly were two and two. And he was so nice that he said to the two Christian girls, Polish girls, to tell us we shouldn't say that we are Jewish in front of the soldiers or the people because that would be bad for us. We -- we wouldn't say anyhow, yeah. Yeah, he helped us.

Q: Were there people in the Polish population that saw you as you were marching?

A: Yes.

Q: Wi -- di -- did people say anything, did anybody give you anything?

A: Yes. It was -- I wrote about it. In one village, I don't know -- I don't -- didn't know the villages, I didn't know the times. There were a few women standing with buckets full of water and with little containers and they -- they passed on. I was on the other side, I didn't get a water, but on this side, they -- standing, I don't know, maybe 10 - 12 women, Polish women.

Q: Standing there.

A: And they hand over water, yes, it was very touchy.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah, it was waiting --

Q: And the Germans didn't stop them?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. Maybe -- maybe they were between --

Q: Right.

A: -- them. And I don't remember even it was first day or second day, I don't remember.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Probably first day because we were rushing, and so they could help --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- they helped with water, and that was a big thing, a big thing.

Q: It must have been important as a human being to see it, yes?

A: Very important, very important, even I didn't get the water, was very important to see that some people are nice, and they were not scared of the Germans, they gave us water.

Q: Right, right.

A: See that means water, when you don't have it --

Q: Yes, it may be more important than food in some ways.

A: Yeah, more important for sure, yeah.

Q: So do you get on a train to go to Ravensbrück?

A: Yes, on a train.

Q: Is it an open --

A: Open -- open.

Q: So you're still freezing?

A: Yeah. Mm-hm, and in the meantime the men were there already, and probably they were the whole night there on the station, because they threw them out-out, off the trains, frozen, like pieces of -- of wood. They take a piece of wood --

Q: And throw it out? [indecipherable]

A: Th -- they were only in a -- in -- in the uniforms, thin, from cotton probably, and a little cap.

Q: And that's it.

A: No glove, nothing else, no, no.

Q: So a lot of them died? They just threw them --

A: They threw them down --

Q: -- like they were twigs.

A: -- threw them down, skinny, yes. Musselmens.

Q: So were the women in better shape than that -- than the men?

A: That time I think that they were --

Q: So --

A: -- because I didn't see anybody, only what -- who was shot, but I didn't see anybody through -- through them, because we came and we entered the -- the train, the open wagon.

Q: Yeah. Right.

A: But they were there pr -- they were there when we arrived --

Q: [indecipherable] yes.

A: -- so I had that impression that -- and somebody said also, among the men that they are very long here, I don't know for how -- how many hours or the whole night, or so. And they got frozen there on the train, on the train station they got frozen because they arrived there, so they were there. But they couldn't make it. After we left, we -- we -- the train stopped in Berlin, was bombed that time. And the women said that they don't know about Auschwitz. Girls ask, do you know about a place, Auschwitz, where they burn people? No. But then they took us to different places, train stopped, and we went further, further, because it was no place. Everything was evacuating from -- from pop -- from Poland. So we went, went til we came to Ravensbrück, and there started the other misery.

Q: It was really bad there.

A: Bad because no food, only the second day or third day some food, but we didn't have containers. Only our friend Vera Kubario, she had some [indecipherable] containers she brought, and she gave us sips to take, we counted the sips. Now you will take five sips, now five, five, five. And once she hit me, because I -- now, she was nice, because I took small sips. Said, you will be hungry. Take bigger sips.

Q: Bigger sips.

A: Yeah, that was [indecipherable]. We didn't have place where to sleep, it was a big place. We sit down, we didn't have even to -- to sit where. Legs one on the other one and so were very bad. And they didn't let us in to drink water, the old ones said we -- we are bringing from Auschwitz pests. So you cannot come in. So we were drinking snow. Snow. In the morning was snowing,

was snow. Through the evening when it didn't snow, you see th-the -- the -- the earth, brown. So we ate the snow, and -- and this la -- ice-sicles?

Q: Icicles.

A: Icicles, icicles. And snow.

Q: And you are hearing rumors about the progress of the war?

A: About?

Q: The progress of the war.

A: No. We didn't know --

Q: You hear nothing?

A: Nothing.

Q: So you have no idea?

A: No, we knew only when it was an attentat on Hitler, that we heard. We didn't know anything.

Q: But you didn't know anything, you didn't know that the -- the Russians were coming this way --

A: No, no.

Q: -- and the allies were coming that way, and --

A: No. We -- when we evacuated, then, these s -- these soldier, the German es -- this Willie

Dooler, he brought me a map, he brought me a map, and marked with red that look here, the

Russians are here, here, here, they are after us. Not long and they will be here. So

[indecipherable] I heard from him where are the Russians. But the Russians, they stopped there in -- before Auschwitz, they stop.

Q: Right.

A: They didn't continue, so -- no, we didn't know.

Q: And they continued later, after you left.

A: And they continued later.

Q: Yes.

A: But we didn't know anything. It was a time during summertime in '44, because I was
Laeuferin I remember, that in summer -- at 11 o'clock in summer, every day, I -- we knew that's
el -- eleven, I don't know from where, so there were airplanes flying over the lager and leaving
this -- this lines -- there lines, so we were so happy that they are but it pass by and it is.

Sometimes happened that the SS, they run somewhere to hide. But they ran and los --

Q: Right.

A: -- we didn't know nothing, no. Was so hopeless.

Q: So did it become more and more hopeless? [indecipherable]

A: No, and then came the march.

Q: Right.

A: Was difficult, so was ho -- was no hope that we survive --

Q: Really.

A: -- from this march. Then when we came to a other lager, there was good, where was ha --

Q: Redshof.

A: Redshof. That was he --

Q: That was okay?

A: Oh, that was heaven. But it was so long that was afraid that I will lose my mind. There were
some girls which they started to be crazy, yelling and so. They couldn't take it.

Q: Because it was to -- cause it was

A: Too much.

Q: -- was never going to end.

A: Yeah. I don't know if their for so, but they -- mentally, they came.

Q: So you were in Redshof February, March, April, or January, February? You came in January to Redshof?

A: January, March, the end of January.

Q: End of January.

A: Yes, so January is February, March, through 29th of April, then we left.

Q: And you were evacuated again?

A: For one day only, to go to -- but the whole world was evacuating.

Q: Yes.

A: All --

Q: Everybody was [indecipherable]

A: Everybody, everybody was evacuating.

Q: Did you feel that you were getting closer to being free?

A: Yes, yes, that's --

Q: You did?

A: Yeah, that time, yes. We were from -- we left from Redshof, and we saw the Germans they evacuating, and the soldiers to run, everybody was running. Everybody was running.

Q: All right, let me ask you one question about Redshof. When you were in Redshof, did you think you were going to start going off your mind too, because you were --

A: Yes.

Q: Even though it was better physically.

A: It was very good --

Q: Yes.

A: -- very good. But I was afraid that I am getting out of my mind. I couldn't take it more.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Was too long. I used to go out and watch the -- what?

Q: The stars?

A: The stars, yes. I am [indecipherable]. I watch the stars, was looking. Maybe somewhere somebody's looking at the same star I am looking. That was my therapy. I had to find some bridge, some space to belong, yeah. It was too much, you know, it's too much. And that's all.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But then we went and we saw everybody's evacuating, we knew that's the end.

Q: Right.

A: But I must again [indecipherable] to march home, but we were free, we were free.

Q: But it doesn't end easily, it's not as if you're liberated and everything's fine

A: No.

Q: All of Europe is devastated --

A: No, when you come ho --

Q: -- and families are gone from --

A: Families are gone, you are alone, and you are not the same as the other ones who are fr -- who were free, you are not the same. You don't understand each other. The values are different. They talk about different things. They are interested about different things. It's not the same. And to fit in into the free world is not so easy. We are not the same. Not the same, because --

Q: Can you explain that more? What were people talking about that you were not talking --

A: It's not in t -- because it is not interesting to us, but [indecipherable] for important. Not interesting for us, no. They will -- we will try, let's see, let's see, now I make it up. Let's see they will dress up, or -- or they will [indecipherable] something expensive, or I don't know. So it's not interesting. We're alive, so we have to survive and it's not -- and they don't take you as -- as the same. They take -- they think that you are different, yeah. They take all -- by myself I feel I am different from them now, yeah.

Q: And did people ask you what happened? Did they care?

A: Once we went to -- to a city. I met people on the -- on the way and so and so. We went through a city, that city was called [indecipherable] and one man from Prešov, I s-saw him on the street because I had the business on the same street [indecipherable] from me. But I talked to him and we went -- I kept with them, with him and with two friend -- two friends? Yeah, and with two friends. They went three mile and I was with them. And he took us to a house, to his relatives, to his relatives in [indecipherable]. And they gave me a room, and they had the other room. They were nice, they gave me a -- something -- something to wash up and so. And I heard how the woman, Jewish -- Jewish couple, older couple, a woman said to the man, did you hear what these girls said? They said [indecipherable] or they will be -- and he said, you don't have to -- to listen and to -- to -- to -- to -- listen to -- to believe her everything. You don't have to believe her everything, what he said. And then I decided I don't want to talk more about what happened there. That was very painful. I come to a first house --

Q: And they don't believe you.

A: They don't believe me, no.

Q: So, did you stop talking?

A: Not totally, but I didn't say that I wasn't no -- nowhere or so, but I didn't explain, I didn't explain. Maybe to my uncle, maybe like that. He -- he lost also ev -- some [indecipherable] yeah. No, I -- and since then I sometimes mention it for among people. I don't want to talk about it because that time, right away, on the way, he said to her, you don't have to believe her everything what she says. No.

Q: You went back to Prešov, we talked about that in the beginning. And then you went to your uncle in Humenné.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And you met your husband.

A: Yes.

Q: You met the person who became your husband, if you will.

A: Yeah he came -- became his boss.

Q: Yes. Why did the two of you decide to stay in Slovakia, or was there no choice, until '68?

A: Yeah. It's a reasonable question. Life was good there. After the war, people were happy. They were not -- we were also to dancing, so still, if also [indecipherable] different who was there, not everybody was there, because not everybody returned, yes?

Q: Right.

A: But those who were there, they wanted enjoy life. So life was joyful and even the economy was good, because nothing was there more, so when somebody started business or so, so he made -- he was doing well, or -- or he got a job, or so. Nothing was there, everything was like a vacuum in Slovakia. People were missing, so everything had to be built again, so economy was good.

Q: Wow.

A: And it was also music, and it was -- here and there somebody returned, so they were happy, so they used to say, oh here will be better than in America, so I will stay here, yeah. But then slowly, slowly we realized that it's not the same life than it was, because first of all, we missed our families.

Q: I was going to say, it must --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- must have been very difficult to be there.

A: Yes, it was, it was. Well, it's -- I married. I had the home, yes. I -- I wasn't -- I didn't have to be hungry. Was a reason --

Q: Right.

A: Now, I liked him. We didn't go out, no -- nothing. He was a [indecipherable] and I was a -- and suddenly -- I was engaged to somebody. And somebody -- suddenly he asked me if I want to marry him, I said yes. But beside that, yes, beside that he was a -- was a nice boy, quiet boy and so, but I was happy that I have a home, yes, have a home, and I have somebody, somebody close. I needed somebody to talk. Somebody who would understand -- who would be willing to understand.

Q: Right.

A: Who will be willing to listen [indecipherable] so it was not reason to go out. Then later on we wanted to go here. My uncle left for America, for New York, and he wanted me to come with him, he wrote to his relatives they should send me an affidavit --

Q: Right.

A: -- but they didn't. And -- we have to stop, huh?

Q: No, go ahead.

A: And then my husband got an affidavit from his uncle, from Texas or from where. But affida -- and then he asked for me because we were engaged, til the affidavit came, we -- we worked on a passport. The numbers were very high in the States, yes, registration number. And til -- and he has his -- he had his store, his house and so on, til he deci -- he -- til he started to be -- to turn to the Communists. So til then we asked for the passport and we send the last minute the pa -- the affidavit to the consulate, to the American consulate, and it was late, was late, because -- because why? Because the numbers were high. So somehow it didn't work, til we decided that we want to leave. So the numbers were late, and we stayed. And then it was impossible to go.

Q: Right.

A: For years. And then we left still, to s -- we came to New York in 1966. They permitted us for a -- for a visit. They believed that we will return. But we didn't find that what we -- what we were looking for in New York. We stayed for two months, and we had -- had on jobs. So we didn't have to -- where to sleep, we slept once here, once there, we have shift from place to place, yes. So we went back. And then we started again --

Q: Again, right.

A: -- and we came there, then we returned.

Q: [indecipherable] to stop, yes?

A: Yeah.

End of Tape 10

Beginning Tape 11

Q: Is it Alice or Alicia, which is -- which do you like?

A: Alice, Alicia --

Q: Ali -- Alicia -- Aliska --

A: Aliska. Whatever, is so many -- whatever you want. Alice is --

Q: Alice is it.

A: -- regularly, yes.

Q: Okay. Do you have -- when you think about your life, do you think that Auschwitz changed you a great deal? Or how -- how do you think that -- be-besides the loss, I mean that's clear --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that the loss is tremendous and there's nothing -- but you as a person, do you think it changed you a great deal?

A: Yes. I don't find things so -- some things for s-so important than -- than many people, ye -- yes. I don't find little things so very important. Things are which -- you will leave and they will stay and nothing will change. No, I -- I don't know how I was there at that time, because I was so young.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I didn't have certain [indecipherable] for life. I didn't have certain -- any [indecipherable]. I wanted to be well, I wanted to be happy, and that's it. So I -- I didn't have [indecipherable] I want this, this, I -- my values are this or this. But only for now, I -- I feel sometimes different from others in this aspect, that not everything is for me so important like for you here in the States, who didn't go through these harsh times. And maybe I understand better people. I look for a reasons when somebody is not as I want to. So I try to find the reason why is he not,

because I believe that everybody has some reason for his way, how he thinks, yes. And everybody is right, in his way, and that perception is different, but is a big value to you. Doesn't have to be to me, or to others. And then, not everybody has the strength to -- to struggle the same way for life, yes. You will go for -- you want to be, let's see, I don't know, maybe you are the director of the whole museum or something, or a minister of -- of welfare, or something. And somebody will not have courage, or I will not have courage and you do it your way because you believe in your strengths and so somebody doesn't believe, or you believe in -- in mankind, somebody doesn't. You will risk your life for somebody, and some -- whatever. It doesn't mean the other one is better or worse. That's your -- your -- these are your values and your beliefs.

Who believes and values the same thing, yes? You believe in this [inaudible]

Q: So, it -- has it in some strange way made you more tolerant than you would have been?

A: Yes. I think so.

Q: That you're easier on people, you don't judge people?

A: Yes, I don't like to judge people.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I like to understand people.

Q: Yeah.

A: And not to judge people. This the difference maybe, yeah. That's a good evaluation.

Q: Do you think you were not that way when you were younger, before --

A: I say --

Q: You don't know.

A: -- I don't know, because --

Q: You don't know.

A: -- I was nothing. I was nothing, I -- I wanted to be happy, I wanted to be nice looking, I wanted to be liked.

Q: Right.

A: I wanted to be -- to make something of my life. But I -- I didn't have -- maybe somehow unconsciously I had these beliefs but I didn't know about it because I didn't have to deal with real life. I went home, I have my food, I have my bed, I have my -- my love from my parents, from my family. So I didn't -- didn't have to speculate why it's like that or like that. Life was simple. Was a [indecipherable] yeah, but I don't -- didn't have my own [indecipherable] and I have to make up my own [indecipherable]

Q: Yeah.

A: -- and that is [indecipherable]

Q: But it's interesting that such a brutal place as Auschwitz --

A: Yes.

Q: -- could somehow -- whether it brought out in you, or you simply made of who you were as a child and didn't know it.

A: No.

Q: Because clearly, certain values that you had came out there. You didn't become a brutal person --

A: No.

Q: -- in Auschwitz.

A: No. No, I didn't.

Q: So maybe in some funny way it didn't change you. It changed the course of your life.

A: Yes, could be.

Q: But maybe it didn't change your character.

A: Yes, maybe not, maybe not.

Q: It's interesting.

A: I didn't try to understand people, because I didn't have to understand them.

Q: Right.

A: Yes. Didn't have to evaluate them because I was a young girl, could I evaluate older people, for politics or something like that, no.

Q: Right, right. But you did realize a dream that you had when you were a child, and that was to become a teacher.

A: Yes, I wanted to become a teacher.

Q: And you did.

A: Yes, and after the war I wanted double to be a teacher. Not [indecipherable] so much to teach, but how to behave and didn't succeed always, not all the students were good, but I tried, I tried.

Q: And what did you teach? What was the subject for which you --

A: My main subject was home economics.

Q: Yeah.

A: That is family living, that is what -- housing and design, that is nutrition and cooking and sewing and material. That's my -- yeah. But in Canada is like that, that you don't -- sorry -- that you don't stick only to one subject, you teach everything what you need to teach, okay? You teach it. So I taught many things. I studied mathematics, which I am not so good in mathematics, I couldn't say, but I didn't know [indecipherable] taught me, and even physics one time I had to teach, lot more. I taught many things, what they needed, yeah, so.

Q: But what you were really teaching was [indecipherable]

A: Well [indecipherable] that was family living, that means -- I studied human relations and family living see, for eight years at Magill to -- to make up my -- my -- my studies, yeah, for update my studies [indecipherable] what did I stu -- yeah, I had special education [indecipherable] and then I had there a teacher certificate and here I made the [indecipherable] three diplomas here. But they -- everywhere was psychologic, everywhere was psychologic.

Q: Right.

A: To understand people, that was my first thing. And I think I master this one, to understand people. I try evaluate people, and then to understand them. That is my main thing in life, toward people.

Q: And what did you enjoy most about teaching?

A: Mostly check. I used to say, you don't like your -- your -- your day, think about the check. Or -- or think about the -- some people work also in a mental hospital. But I -- I used to say really was -- I was joking, that if one -- if only one student understood me, if I changed only one student, then it was worthwhile everything to study, to teach and so -- to change them, to change them, to -- to -- to give them self confidence -- first of all self confidence, that's very important. And self reliance and -- and things like that to -- to help them to -- to make a living, to help them to make something about themselves. But then I saw that, that as soon changed, he didn't believe in himself. Sometimes I gave him a better mark, and I implanted into him that he is good. And sometimes it worked that he believed in himself. That is the most -- that was the most important part to me. And they should respect people and so, but mainly self respect. I used to say, and you don't respect yourself, nobody will respect you. That was [indecipherable] I believe that's the main thing.

Q: Right.

A: Courage, self respect, self confidence.

Q: Did any of the students ever ask you about your European past and where you were? Did they

-- any -- any of your students ever know that you were in Auschwitz?

A: No, nobody.

Q: No, nobody.

A: Nobody. No.

Q: And that was a very conscious decision on your part --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- not to tell them. Do you think now maybe it would have been okay?

A: I wouldn't say.

Q: You wouldn't say.

A: No, I wouldn't say, because I have to be one of them. Nothing has to be in my life which would differ me, which would make me different, yeah?

Q: Uh-huh, I see.

A: Cause they were not in Auschwitz. They have to deal with life how it is.

Q: [indecipherable] is.

A: How it is, they have to deal this way. It's their [indecipherable]

Q: Right.

A: And they -- they have [indecipherable] to work out their life as it is [indecipherable] them up, no.

Q: I would imagine you were a wonderful teacher.

A: I was a good teacher.

Q: Yes.

A: People liked me, yeah. Not everybody was -- had discipline in my class, no, because on the other side they counted on the that I am soft, maybe, right?

Q: Right. Yeah, well --

A: Oh that's right, yes, I couldn't say for sure I was so respected and so, but they liked me, and they trusted me, yes.

Q: Yeah. So is there anything that we -- I know you have all sorts of things in your life that we haven't talked about, but there -- is there anything important about your experiences during the Holocaust that you want to talk about that we haven't?

A: Maybe about this lady, it's amazing, the German lady whom I met. She was lageralteste. This was lagerfuehrer, an SS, and a haftling was lageralteste. She came, I met her, and she said that she was a lagerfuehrerin. In a lager she was an SS, and that she opened the door and she let out the prisoners and so she became a haftling. I mentioned her in my thing. And she -- and so she became a prisoner. Then I didn't see -- see her too much. And we discussed with her -- I suppose I spoke to her, discussed about human relations, among human feelings, about beha -- humanly to behave. And she said, it's very easy outside to behave humanly, according to etiquette, and according to -- to -- to rules, human rules. But here it's very difficult, because first of all, we have to think about ourselves, yes. Was difficult. So that outside I am very -- she said, outside in the world, people move with masks on their faces. They smile, they speak nicely, it seems that they care about themselves. But here you have to talk, you have to think about yourself. So it is not so difficult that here you see the human being as it is -- as he is, as he is. There it is a mask. It's a play. Outside, the world is a play, in lager --

Q: It's not like that.

A: -- is the real human being. Y-You show yourself -- you present yourself as you really are.

You don't try to cover up yourself. However, who -- how is -- whoever -- how he is, so he -- he presents himself. That's the real life, that's school.

Q: And you think that's true?

A: That's true.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's true, that's true. Yes, it's very true.

Q: So -- so, if that's true, then was, in some sense, living outside the lager difficult, even though it was horrible in Auschwitz, there was something about it --

A: No, nothing [indecipherable]

Q: No.

A: There you learn how to face people, how to understand people, you search in them how they are and you take them how they are. You understand them how they are. Not difficult.

[indecipherable]

Q: But outside, it's harder.

A: Outside, well, there are people which they -- which they try to -- to -- to present themselves better than they are.

Q: Right.

A: It's hard for them to change, they should be really as they think that they have to be, or they want to be seen. Understand that?

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's the mask.

A: That's the mask. You have to take off the mask and --

Q: Yeah, and be real.

A: -- be real, yeah, and try to help and don't wait anything for -- somehow for a -- a reward.

Nobody has to thank me that I helped somebody [indecipherable]. I do it myself. I did it and it is, yes. No, it -- not for money, nor for favors, nothing. Yeah, you see [indecipherable]. And you cannot change people totally. You can adjust -- you cannot change too much, you have to try, yeah. You cannot change all that -- we say that you cannot change all that, well you change, you know, you cannot. Exterior, you cannot change, you have to change your other, yourself.

Q: [indecipherable] yourself inside.

A: Inside, yes. And maybe you influence people this way, yes. You treat somebody nicely, he has to be also nice, no? You be rough to somebody, or he will be rough, or he turns away from you, you know?

Q: Right.

A: I think so. Life's not easy, but you have to manage, you know, right?

Q: Well, I want to thank you so very much for coming to Washington and for being willing to say as much as you have. It's really been an honor to be with you.

A: Thanks. But it was something that I had to do. I had to do. And I think that I will feel more free. Not free that -- not surrounded by fences, but free that I said what I had to say, yes. It was many times my wish that everybody for the whole world should stay here for one night and for one day and then to go home, to see how life is here [indecipherable] America.

Q: But everybody should have seen what Auschwitz was like for one day and one night?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And then go home.

A: And then go home.

Q: Yes.

A: [indecipherable] to see.

Q: Yeah.

A: See, it was such a hermetically closed place that even -- I don't think -- even birds didn't fly there. I never saw a bird to fly there. Such a smell.

Q: The birds were smart.

A: Hm?

Q: The birds were smart.

A: [indecipherable] here so. So thanks --

Q: Thank you.

A: -- for bringing me in.

Q: My pleasure.

A: And to take your time to listen to me, yeah.

Q: Thank you.

A: Thank you.

Q: And tell us about this picture. Who is this? Who i -- what was this picture of?

A: Oh that's -- we went with our class for a picnic.

Q: And about how old -- you were about how old?

A: About how old, I know. Was grade 11 and six -- 17 years old.

Q: 17 years old.

A: Yeah, we were there. Some of them they were older.

Q: So that would have been 1930 --

A: Seven -- '39 --

Q: '39.

A: -- nine -- '38, maybe. Maybe 1938 --

Q: '38.

A: -- '39.

Q: Who is this person right here?

A: It's who I am, I am.

Q: That's who you are. And you said there was something special about this young woman?

A: Yes, she was my classmate and I liked her very much. I never met her in Auschwitz, but I didn't meet her after the war. That means somewhere she --

Q: She [indecipherable]

A: -- vanished, yes.

Q: But you dream about her?

A: Yes, I have often dreams. Lately not so much, but at the beginning very, very often. And I was thinking what should I do, should I light candles or -- or -- or -- or sh -- should -- what can I do? I felt maybe she is not -- something is wrong or so, that she wants to be listened to or so. I might -- I --

Q: What's her name?

A: Martha Bunzl, Bunzl, B-u-n-zet-l, Bunzl, Martha. Nice girl.

Q: Okay. Okay, and what's this picture?

A: The first one, this one, is my mother's brother, my uncle.

Q: And this is the uncle who lived in Humenné? Who was a tea -- no.

A: Who was a teacher in Humenné.

Q: Who was a teacher.

A: Who -- who was the friend of Dieter Rishter.

Q: Right. And he was the one who tried to get you out of --

A: Out for Poprad.

Q: Poprad, and saying that she was a teacher and she needed to go.

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: And he didn't succeed.

A: Yeah.

Q: And he didn't survive the war?

A: He didn't survive. He was hungry and he ate poisonous mushrooms.

Q: Yeah.

A: He died.

Q: Okay. Okay, and the picture on the left? That picture.

A: Yes. A few months after I arrived, maybe three months after I arrived --

Q: In Prešov? Back in Prešov? Is that in Prešov or is this --

A: No, from Humenné, but yes, I arrived, yes.

Q: Uh-huh. So you were in Slovakia?

A: In Slovakia, yeah.

Q: And you speak about that picture and say, look at my eyes, doesn't it say everything?

A: Yes. I think that my eyes say everything, my sadness and everything.

Q: And the second picture -- second picture.

A: This when I was married, it was maybe one year after I arrived, or two years. One or two years after I arrived.

Q: So 1947?

A: Seven probably. '46 I was married.

Q: It's a lovely picture. When was this picture taken?

A: It was taken in -- oh, I know, in '71, 1971. That --

Q: In Canada?

A: In Canada, yes, and I started to teach, yeah.

Q: And when was it you had your tattoo removed?

A: 1971.

Q: Just prior -- just afterwards?

A: Yes.

Q: So you have a shot of the tattoo?

A: Number [indecipherable] people --

Q: Okay, what is this a picture of?

A: Plaque that 6,000 people were killed from the city [indecipherable]

Q: From Prešov?

A: Prešov.

Q: And how many Jews were living at the shelter [indecipherable]

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

Q: Okay, maybe I can look it up somehow. What is this? [indecipherable] on the side like this?

A: A souvenir from Germany.

Q: Yes, what kind of a souvenir? Explain, explain.

A: We ran to this -- we ran to this city hall in the city of Gotune in Mecklenburg, and the mayor's wife opened the what? The cabinets and the places where she kept some things, clothing

and little things. And she offered to us that we may take whatever we want to from her place. So I took these as a souvenir.

Q: And what is it?

A: For powder, her little container. It was a bigger also for make-up and a comb, to comb up my hair.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. So I was left this one as a souvenir. So that was that I got from there what I wanted from them, from the Germans, I wanted to have a little souvenir that I was once there.

End of Tape 11

Conclusion of Interview