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You said a question, see.

This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Marcia Loewi on January 8, 2016 in Borough Park, Brooklyn, New York. Thank you, Mrs. Loewi, for agreeing to meet with us, to speak with us today. I'm going to start our interview from the very beginning and ask the most basic questions. And from that, we will develop your story and share your experiences. So my very first question is, could you tell me the date of your birth?

September 23, 1926.

And can you tell me the place you were born?

I was born in Landsberg an der Warthe.

Landsberg an der Warthe? And so, is that part of Germany?

Yeah, that's there. It was under Russians, so we couldn't go back, and you couldn't get anything. But my parents emigrated to Poland because it started in the '30s, the beginning of '30s they started the movement. And they were scared, so they moved to Poland. And we lived in a Lódz, Poland, after this.

OK, I'm going to step back a little bit.

[PHONE RINGING]

Let's cut. OK. Could you explain something for me because it's not clear to me. You say you're born in Landsberg an der Warthe.

Landsberg am Lech, that's near-- it's in a different place.

Mm-hmm, but Landsberg an der Warthe, this was part of Germany, did you say?

Yes, yes, and when I was born. But later on, the Russians took over.

Do you mean after the war?

After the war, yeah.

After World War II. OK, so it was in the part of Germany that became East Germany, the German Democratic Republic.

Yes, yes.

OK. What large city was it near?

Lódz was a big city.

No, no, no-- Landsberg an der Warthe.

I don't remember.

How old were you when you moved?

Like six years or so.

Oh, I see. So your parents were really German Jews.

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Yes.

And they moved to--

No, my mother was from Poland, but my father was from Germany.

Ah, OK. So tell me a little bit, then-- another question, a basic one, that I need to ask. What was your name when you were born?

Marcia Jacobowitz.

Jacobowitz was your name, your maiden name?

Yes.

OK. And did you have brothers and sisters?

Yeah, we were nine children.

Oh, wow. And your mother and father's names, could you tell me?

My father's name was Shlomo-- Solomon-- and my mother's name was Sara. She's named after my mother.

Ah, your daughter, that we just met?

Yeah. I had a son, my older son. He passed away, like, six weeks ago. He was named after my father.

His name was also Shlomo.

Yes.

My condolences. That must be very hard.

It is. Was special person-- special, wonderful, very learned, very educated person, very talented.

It's a loss. No one wants to bury a child.

No. But he left five wonderful children-- very good children, very wonderful people.

That is a legacy, as well.

Yes. That was my son. and his wife.

We'll look at his picture later.

It was his wedding.

Let's talk first now about your parents. And tell me, how did your father support your family? You say it was nine children.

Well, first, he, for five years after he got married, my mother's family supported him. And he was learning, like in a college, for Judaic studies. But later on, when they had three children, so he had to do something. He couldn't be supported anymore.

So he was being supported--

He sat by there for five years by my mother's family. And he was learning in a college.

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To be a rabbi?

No, just to be a learned person. Not everybody has to be a rabbi. But even when he was working, he was still studying a couple hours every day. But that's the way the families are brought up, that you should-- when you're young, you learn first. So you get the basics of life. And then, you know how to behave. Because people that learn behave different than people-- and they have different interests.

Learning opens up a world. Studying opens up a world.

Yes. Yeah, you look at people and your judge people different than people that are just absorbed with themself and the things that they need. You a little observed with the outside world, and you notice people that nobody else notice, and you try to give them a hand.

Was your father that kind of person?

Yes, he definitely was.

Was he a reflective person?

Even when the horse and buggy, if the horse fell, he would go over. He didn't care if it's a Christian or Jew. He went over to help to get the horse up.

And tell me, when he had to interrupt his studies and he had to work, what kind of work was he doing?

Oh, he was in business.

What kind of business?

He was buying often in factories. It was a textile city, Lódz. So he bought off the raw material that was left from manufacturing. And then, he sorted it-- had people to help him. Then better wool, or better qualities of better thread. And from this, you sorted to make thread to manufacture textiles. So you bought from factories the leftover, the-- what do you call it? How would you say?

Well, it's the leftover--

The scrap, like scrap.

The scrap, yeah.

And from this, they made a little profit. And later on, it developed that he did very well.

Oh, really? Yeah?

Yes, yes. He even helped other people. They were poorer people. His brother was not well, so he helped marry off his daughter. My mother always said they're open home. And if somebody-- you know when you go to the synagogue, and sometimes people come. They don't have where to go. He would always bring somebody home.

And my mother, prepared or not prepared, she always had enough food. First, she gave to guest, and the children, they give a little less. And you yourself, you eat less. If there isn't enough, but they're poor person that comes, you have to treat him like a king.

Well, what a wonderful model to see as you're growing up. What a wonderful example.

Yeah, we did, too.

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OK, so tell me a little bit about your mother.

I mean, that's the idea of being religious and have a background with it. If you have no background, you don't know it. You didn't see it. You could be a good person, but you never saw it. So you don't know how to act. You see he's not dressed nice. He's an outsider. You don't know who he is.

But if you treat people nice, this gives you satisfaction, too. And if somebody goes away smiling, has had a meal or didn't have where to sleep, you find place for him. You put the children on the carpet. On the floor, you put the mattress. And you give a stranger, a guest, you give the bed.

And that used to be how your mother--

In the family, that's how they behaved.

Tell me a little bit, then, paint a picture for me, if you can, about what your home looked like. You had nine children. Did you have your own home?

First, in the beginning, we didn't have a-- it was a big apartment house, and it belonged to my grandmother.

In Lódz-- or no, in Germany.

No, in Lódz.

In Lódz, OK.

And when my father didn't make a good living, we lived on the fourth floor-- I remember this-- on the fourth floor in one room. But when it got better, we moved to the third floor. We got two apartments. But my mother always helped him, too. Even the business, she was involved.

What did she do?

She went when you had to buy the stuff. In the factories, they had, like, a supervisor or a manager. So she went, and she spoke to him.

And she would deal with them.

And she spoke Polish better than my father.

What language did you speak at home?

Oh, they spoke Yiddish and Polish. We didn't speak because we had to go to school, and the people outside spoke Polish. So we spoke Polish. Children adapt languages very fast.

They do, they do. Now, your father was from Germany, and your mother was from Poland?

Yes.

OK, and they left Germany because of--

Of the times that were changing.

Ah, because it was right before Hitler came to power.

Yes.

It was because of this reason?

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Yes.

OK. And when they left, had your mother been living with your father's family in Germany, or was it they living on their own?

On their own. On their own. I don't remember too much what happened there.

Do you have any memories of Germany at all?

Not much, no.

OK. How many children were born in the family before you moved to Lódz?

Three.

Three.

And the others were born later.

So are you the oldest?

No, I'm the third child.

You're the third child.

Could you tell me the names of your siblings?

Yeah. The oldest was Abraham. And then was Hilda, my sister.

Hilda?

Two of us. They called her Hanya in Polish. And I was Masha. I was the third one. And then I had a brother. His name was Yakov Moshe, from both grandfathers. And then there was a sister. Her name was Gurtha.

Gurtha, all right.

Yes. She was-- and then was Gurtha. Then was a little brother, Yitzhak.

Yitzhak, OK.

And then was Yehuda Arya.

Yehuda Arya, that's seven.

And then was Eliyahu.

Eliyahu.

And then was Aaron. He was born 1939, Aaron.

Aaron was born in 1939.

You know, they were religious. They had children right off.

But it was throughout the 1930s, while you were in Poland, that your mother had most of her children.

Yes.

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OK, OK. And tell me about religious. You mentioned it earlier that you don't see. How did your parents live their religion?

Religion because you study. You lived according to what God expects us to live like. That's what you study. The whole study is about how to live and how to behave. And was your father the one who brought this to the children more, or was this your mother?

It was together.

It was together.

They were good team. My mother was busy was the children. And the on certain days, she had to go and help my father.

Tell me, how did they meet, if they were from different places? She's from Poland, and he's from Germany.

Yeah, but through people, through friends. That's how they met. They came to Poland once. And they met my mother. And that's how it happened. They didn't get married right away. They got married years later.

Do you remember what date their marriage was?

I don't remember.

It must have been in the early '20s, you know, in 1920.

Yeah, '22, '23. '22. For my oldest brother-- no, even-- maybe '21.

Something like that, yeah.

Because my oldest brother was born in January.

Of 19--?

1922.

I see, OK. What kind of personalities did your parents have? Can you tell me what kind of personality your father had, your mother had?

My father was very kind and always with a smile. And he explained to the children everything. Like it came for Passover, so we have to say the-- I don't know if you know what it is.

I know.

On Passover, you tell the stories what happened in Egypt and why things happened and what happened. And that's the history that got punished. The Egyptians, they thought who was God, they believe that they are God. So God showed them. So he sent Moses to tell them to stop torturing the people.

[BUSY SIGNAL]

Let's cut for a second.

So my father explained that there was one thing. God gave the Spanish man all the plagues. There were plagues that the water sent to blood. Because they didn't want to stop this.

[PHONE RINGS]

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So your father would explain these stories, these biblical stories.

Yes, because we were children. So he explained it so that we could understand. And I still remember this today.

And your mother, did she also--

My mother was more involved with keeping the house and keeping the house, helping my father, taking care of everything.

Well, that's a lot of work. Nine children is a lot of work.

Yeah, but we had-- you know, in Poland, you could get, for, like, $20 a month, a young girl that help took care of the children, helped a little around the house, did the ironing. And she got food, and she got some money. Because the people were pretty poor in Poland and especially in the small towns.

And so they would come to a big place like Lódz to look for work.

To get work. And the child got-- when the girl was, like, 15, 16, 18-- after school-- they didn't go to college. So they couldn't afford it neither, probably.

So your mother has, nevertheless, her hands full. She has nine children.

Yes, she took care. She kept a very clean home, a very nice home. When they were better off, they furnished it beautiful. Was very, very nice. And she had a sense of elegance. She knew how to make things look good.

Tell me a little bit about your home. I want to understand the level of modern life. Did you have electricity? Did you have--

Electricity we had. We had a telephone.

Oh, you had a telephone?

Yes. And we had water running in the faucet.

So you had plumbing.

But we didn't have a bathroom. Because the house was built, like, 1918 or 1914. I don't know exactly. Was a big building-- four stories and on every story were three apartments. Was a room and a kitchen, nice size. And then, the third apartment was two-bedroom apartment.

So when your parents were better off--

Then we took two apartments.

Then you had the fourth floor and the third floor.

No, we didn't have the fourth. Somebody else lived on that floor. We got two apartments on the third floor.

I see.

And we made it into a kitchen, a living room, and two bedrooms.

And your grandparents, did they live in the building, too-- your mother's par--?

Yes. No. She lived in a small town not far from Lódz.

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All right. And was your home, this place on the third floor, was that in the center of town or in a residential area?

It was more on the out, not in the center but on the quiet, small streets.

Was it a wooden--

The street was a main street, going from the center, but was, like, from one to 93. We lived 93, was quite a few blocks down.

Do you remember your address?

Yes.

What was it?

Pomorska 93.

Pomorska 93.

Yes.

What was the outside like? Were there trees and parks, or was it really city-like?

No, it was a streetcar. When you walked out of the house was like a courtyard. And then was a gate in front, so people-- at night, it was locked. Like a gate. And there was the source in front of the building. And there was a gate between-- it was a small-- on one side were two stores, like a shoemaker and a grocery. On the other side was a store that was selling food for animals, for horses.

Did your father have a car?

No.

No. How did he travel?

Transportation. There was a tramway, a streetcar, that went. And it stopped every few blocks.

I see. And that's how he would get around?

He would get around like this.

If he needed, there were taxis, but they were expensive.

Uh-huh. Was the neighborhood a mixed neighborhood?

Horse and buggies you could rent. They were standing by a car station, by a-- what do you call it-- by a station.

[PHONE RINGING]

--we start? So yes, you were talking about horse and buggies. They would be outside.

Yeah, you see, there was the driver. Like on 57th in Manhattan.

Uh-huh. Oh, like they have near Central Park?

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Yeah, yeah, yeah, Central Park. So you pay them.

And they would be like taxis.

They called it [IN POLISH].

[IN POLISH]. OK. And was your neighborhood a mixed neighborhood or a, you'd say, more Jewish neighborhood?

It's mix. It's mix.

It was mixed.

We had neighbors in the same building, also not Jewish.

OK. Did you have any contact with the Polish people, the non-Jewish people.

Yes, yes, normal, yes. Yeah, all the people that were in our neighborhood. Because I went to school. And when I came home, I helped with watching the younger children and did homework. I was good in math. So I sometimes had a girl that wasn't so good. So they gave me the girl to help her. We had to help the children. They couldn't afford other things, so the teacher assigned you to help.

Help the other child.

Yes.

Did you go to public school?

Yes, public school, yes.

Tell me a little bit about what that was like.

In Lódz, the public school was not mixed. There were only Jewish children, and on Saturday, we didn't go to school.

Oh, really?

And on Sunday, we had music lessons and religion. There were subjects, but the population in Lódz had to pay a tax to the Jewish Gemeinde because they were hiring. The rabbis were paid by the Gemeinde. The taxes that we paid supported it.

So if I understand it correctly, people-- everybody-- in Lódz had a tax, and it was to the municipality. And the municipality then distributed it to the Gemeinde.

Yes. We had to pay maybe-- yeah. And the Gemeinde also supported the private schools. Because there were people that couldn't afford to pay for the boys. And the boys was mandatory. Religious children had to go to learn.

And the Gemeinde, in English, would be like community-- the community.

Yes. Yeah, your community, like a Jewish community. And they paid the rabbi. When there were-- what do you call it-- disputes among Jewish people, so they went for the rabbi to straighten it out, like you go to, if it was not a public but was a private thing.

So you didn't go to court.

They needed to live, those people. They spent their time, and they spent the effort. So they were supported.

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So it, first of all, it was sure they didn't take sides.

That they would be fair.

Fair.

Yeah. So explain to me, too, if you remember, Lódz, how was the population split up in the sense--

It was 300,000 Jewish people in Lódz.

That's a lot. That's a lot.

Yeah. The whole population was 600,000.

And the rest were all Poles?

The rest were mixed. There were Germans. They were people from all over. Because to a big city, people come to make a living.

Yeah. And you mentioned textiles were a huge--

Yeah, was a very huge textile. There was one man that gave work to a lot of people. He was very wealthy. And he built the hospital. His name was Koznansky.

Koznansky?

Yes. And there was a hospital by his name. He had people that should have paid.

Was he a Jewish person or a Polish person?

He was Jewish. He wasn't very religious. But he gave work to girls from religious families. It didn't make any difference. But he gave a chance that they could get work. There were a lot of poor people, and there were rich people, like all over the world.

And amongst the Jewish community in Lódz, were many very religious?

Yes.

Or were there many secular people, as well?

Yeah, very religious. And there were even-- there were two gymnasiums that were not religious. They even went to school. Only they only kept Yom Kippur. You know about Yom Kippur?

Mm-hmm.

And maybe Passover. They didn't keep but certain-- New Years, Yom Kippur, and those holidays they kept. But they didn't even keep Shabbat.

OK. So they were more--

They're mixed population, yes.

What are some of the memories that you have? I mean, we're talking about pre-war time, about Lódz. Was it a pretty city?

It was a very pretty city. It was pretty. And there was divided in different sections. It was a big city. On the main street, what memories I have, it was a nice city. On the main street lived, it was called Piotrkowska.

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Piotrkowska, OK.

Piotrkowska. And over there were the fancy stores, very elegant. And the wealthier population lived there.

Were there cinemas?

What?

Were there cinemas? Cinemas-- movies, movie houses.

Oh, yes, yeah, there were movies.

Did you go?

Yes. We went to movies only on occasions, when they went, like, with the school or with supervision.

I see.

Because--

What about-- you were going to say something?

No, no. If you want, next question.

OK, next-- did you have a radio at home?

Yes.

You did?

Yeah, but my father-- my parents-- listened.

We were children. We didn't listen to it. We didn't listen to the radio. But we had a telephone.

How did you heat the house?

What?

How did you heat the house?

Oh, there were tile ovens in the court.

Oh, the coal ovens.

Tile.

Tile. But you put coal.

Yeah, the coal. You put coal. And on top, it had a door where you kept the food warm. My father worked late. That was how we kept-- it was fed on the bottom of the oven. And then, there was going through the chimney, it warmed up.

In the kitchen was also a tile oven. And it had a metal plate. On the side, it had a warmer for hot water to wash dishes. We had a sink where the water came out. It was a big-- on the top floor was a big reservoir. And the water was-- well, like a big tank-- and it came into the sink, the water.

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So you had indoor plumbing.

Indoor plumbing, but the bathrooms were downstairs. You had to go down.

So were they outside the building, the bathrooms?

In the courtyard. There were two bathrooms, like six bathrooms on each side.

And was there a bathhouse somewhere in town?

Oh, yes.

OK. And is this where people would go to take baths, or did you do it at home?

No, we did it at home. I don't remember if there was a shower. No, there was no bathroom. In the kit-- we had bathtubs for the younger children and for the older children. But we washed off at home. We're pretty clean.

I'm just interested to know what did life look like.

You say it looked very nice. You walked in. There was a bell. You rang the bell. It was a nice door, was a hallway. And there you went the kitchen, then was the dining room, then was another hallway. There was, like, a dinette, a small table. On the dining room, we only ate on Saturday. But during the week, we had this small dinette, like a dinette.

Uh-huh. And that's where people would take their meals?

Meals in the kitchen, too. The kitchen-- the kitchen. The room size was large. So the kitchen was big. There was place for a-- yes, it was like a big tap. But you took the water from-- you had to warm it up on the stove. Was big kettles. And was tile on the kitchen walls and on the--

Who did all the cooking?

My mother, my mother.

Your mother, your mother. Was she a good cook?

Yes, she was very good, very neat, too. She cooked, and she baked. She did everything. I wasn't interested in cooking. I was too young.

Now, did your parents talk much about the events of what was going on in the world? You know, they had left Germany because of what was happening in Germany.

Yeah, well, you see, we weren't interested. We're children. So we weren't involved with it-- like, me. Maybe my older-- I don't know. My sister, she was a little older than me, like two and a half years older. But I don't know. They were involved with friends and with children. They weren't involved with-- during the war, of course.

It's different.

It's different.

We'll come to that. We'll come to that.

The house was a nice home. We had friends come. And there was a big park not far from us. So we went with the children, with a carriage, to the park. And there were sandboxes, and beautiful park, it was.

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What about school?

The school was-- the school was rented in a private home.

Oh, truly? OK.

Yes.

And did you learn about Polish history?

Oh, yes.

About European history.

Yes, we learned a lot about Polish history. We had biology, even the younger grades, like five, six. We had biology. We made experiments with plants and--

Did you like school?

--history and poetry. And we learned a little about the world history. Because in the lessons of religion, we learned about old poets and what was going on in the biblical times. We learned poetry. We learned a lot. We knew a lot.

Did you go to synagogue a lot? Because my father was Hasidic, so they didn't take the girls, only the boys.

I see. So you never--

We didn't go a lot, only on holidays.

But you went on holidays?

Yes, yes. We prayed. I fasted because I was ready after 12. So I fasted on the fast days. We were brought up, and we had, even, a private teacher to teach us Hebrew.

So you knew Yiddish. You knew Polish. And you were studying Hebrew.

Yes.

Were there any other languages that you were speaking or that you were learning?

Not now. Later, after the war, I learned more languages-- after the war.

So if there was any news of the outside world, in your world, in your life in the 1930s, growing up--

No, we weren't involved.

It didn't have an impact?

No, we weren't involved.

And your parents, as far as you knew, if they commented on things, it was just to one another?

Among themselves, not to the children.

OK. Can we cut for a second?

Oh, OK.

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Now it's good?

Now it's better. Do you remember anything from the last summer of 1939--

Yes, I do.

--before the war started?

Yes.

Tell me about that. What was that summer like?

My parents, we used to go to-- like here, you go upstate-- to the country because there were trees and there were woods. So in summer, we used to go, for the summer months, up to the mountains. And that year, my parents went to a spa. And it was the last months before the war broke out.

And when the war broke out, we were alone. And they had to come back to Lódz. They were someplace in the south, near--

Carpathian? Karpates?

What?

In the Carpathian Mountains?

No, it was near Romania. You know, in the south of Poland, towards the east more. We knew the map. We knew not only the map of Poland but of the whole world, the globe. They taught us a lot.

Geography.

Geography, history, too-- geography, history, biology. We learned a lot.

So tell me, where were you? What happened to you? When the war broke out, how did you find out?

We see-- they said that the Polish police-- the Polish army, it was a soldier marching in the city. And when the Germans came in, they all were gone. And we had to go home. And when we came home, the Germans occupied, already, Lódz.

And they already started taking off people, especially religious people that they knew they Jews. They captured them and told them to dig holes. And then they threw them in the hole. So the population, the men started running away because they were killing a lot of people. They told them to dig the holes, and then they threw them in. So they cut off their beards. They tore off--

Did you see these things?

Yeah, I saw it. But then, we stayed home. We didn't go out already. There were some bombardments. I don't remember where. But when we came, we were staying home. And we started to prepare. People are running to Russia, to the protectorate. Warsaw was still under the protectorate.

But before we get there, when you said the Polish police, or the army, disappeared--

No, the Polish army, they ran away.

They ran away.

So there was no protection.

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And were you in Lódz when the war started?

We were in the country. But we had to go to Lódz. And my parents were in Stryi, somehwere. I don't remember the city.

Let's cut for a second. So just to clarify so that I understand, you and your siblings were away from home, in the mountains--

With the maid, with the girl.

--with the maid when the war broke out.

Yes.

And your parents were in a different place at a spa.

Yes, a spa. For two weeks, they went, or so.

I see. To be together.

No, they had arthritis or something. So they went to the spa.

To heal a bit.

To heal.

OK. And do you remember hearing about the war breaking out? Do you remember how you heard of it?

They were talking. But we were in the country. Nobody was-- we didn't know. But when we came back, we notice because it was September when the war broke out. And then there was the holidays. So we couldn't go to pray because they would come and kill the people. So somebody was standing out on guard if they were coming, or something was happening, so people could run away.

It must have been a shock.

It was a big shock. And then, a little later, they started evacuating and attacking the neighborhood, the rich neighborhoods. They tried to plunder, to take stuff. And by the end of the year, they evacuated already the Jewish people from the expensive neighborhoods. So people were running away.

OK. And they were trying to run eastwards, is that what you--

Eastwards. But when they went eastwards, they sent them to Siberia. Because they thought they spies, or they said they spies. Maybe they saw they're not spies. But the Russians weren't too wonderful, neither. So they sent them to Siberia.

And over there, my husband came from a different neighborhood from the south. And their whole family ran away. Because they had two grown-up boys and their father. So my mother-in-law with-- they have one more child, they have only three children-- they ran to the other borders. And then, they sent them to Siberia.

So was your husband, whom you married later, was he from Lódz, as well?

No, no.

Where was he from?

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It was called Sanok.

Sanok. Sanok.

Yes. In this south, in the southwest it was, I think, yes.

Now, this is something you learned when you met your husband, and he told you about what he'd been through?

Yes.

But at the time, when the first months of the war and people are leaving, was there any news of what was going to happen to them when they get into the territory controlled by the Soviets? Did you know, in Lódz, what was happening in the east?

They didn't know. Everybody was running. All the young people were running.

I see. What about your brother?

My brother was only 17. He wasn't so old. It was 1939. So he stayed with the family. He was studying out of town, but he came home for vacation. And he didn't go back when the war broke out. So he stayed with the family.

And as a matter of fact, when, years later, in 1944, they evacuated the-- started evacuating the ghetto. There were raids before. They came to take young people. And they took children and mothers. We didn't know what was doing and where everything was. Obviously, my father had the radio, and he knew more than we knew.

So this is going into--

So in ghetto, I worked.

We'll come to that in a minute. Right now, I still want to talk about those first months.

It's the first months. Then, we also tried to go away. So my father, we hired, you know, like-- what they use to transport merchandise. So we covered it with a canvas. And we went to the protectorate. That was not far from Warsaw. It was Lowicz.

And over there, we came. And we came to a family. It was Saturday. We couldn't drive anymore. And in Lowicz, they came to a family. And my youngest brother had croup. So he couldn't-- and then, they started evacuating to Lódz, the city. And they started the ghetto. So we came back.

And my father, it was called Lom-Fém. And they needed the raw material to make, for the army-- what it called-- uniforms for the army. So they had to buy the material. And they allowed some Jews that gave material, they gave a green band. We used to have a band with the Juden on the arm.

So you'd have a green band.

We had to go with the band.

Were you in the ghetto already, or were you still in your own home?

We were still in the city. But then, they started evacuating to the ghetto. And my cousin knew somebody who lived in the area. And he gave him his apartment. And the Polish man that used to be his customer gave him his house in the ghetto area. And we moved, together with my cousins, to the ghetto. But my father stayed in the city. He had the permit, a green band.

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So this place that you moved to, what was that like, the place you moved to in the ghetto?

Was like two bedrooms and a kitchen on the first floor.

Smaller.

It was a small house. And they used to have a barn for the horses downstairs. And my cousin took the downstairs apartment. We took one upstairs. It was a small house, like a private house. They had barns outside, around the house. Was small, like on an outskirts, not like in the city-- small houses.

Once you moved into the ghetto, were you ever able to leave it?

No, there was a barbed wire around the ghetto. But later on, they gave work. And there was, the highway was why it was barbed with wire. But in one place was a bridge to go to the other side of the ghetto. And when they took us to work-- there was no school-- so they took us to work. And I worked. And it was called Klein Mabel Fabrik.

Klein Mabel Fabrik?

Yeah, they made, for the kid, for the children-- what do you call it-- the playpens, children's cribs.

So it was small furniture for small children.

Children and also handles for a pail, you know, the wooden handles, like, the carved wood. And I helped there because I was a Jugendlicher.

You were a youth, then. You were a teenager.

A teenager. So I was working there. And there was a supervisor for the kids to see how they treat them. So of course, the people that work, they were also tired and hungry. Because in the ghetto, already started not the same food. We couldn't buy food, only what we got.

And was there any possibility to keep kosher at all?

No, we couldn't. We were happy to get some barley. And potato was a big deal. And we got already the portions of the bread. But you had to pay for it, too. So we worked. They payed something, not much. In the ghetto, there wasn't food already.

So the first year, when we had to heat the house, no, we didn't get any coal to heat the house. So they had the barns. They boys broke it down. We used the wood. And the next year, in spring, we turned the ground, and we took the eyes from the potatoes. You cut out the eyes from the potato, and you put it in the ground upside down. And we turned the ground.

And there was a pump downstairs. So we got to work. And when I came home from work, I was taking care of the garden. I was the gardener. So we did potatoes, little tomatoes. We planted things. Of course, there was no gates, so people stole. They were hungry. But the potatoes on the ground was a big help--

I can imagine.

--to get what to eat.

Yeah, yeah. And unusual that you'd have a plot of land to be able to plant it.

No, because we broke down the-- we needed the wood.

You needed the wood. And so, the land the barn was on.

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Yeah, on the ground, the ground.

Yeah, on the ground.

And we didn't have horses or cows.

No, but your father was allowed still to go in and out of the ghetto.

Inside the ghetto, we could go, yes. My father worked in a straw factory. I worked in the furniture factories, Klein Mabel. That was over the bridge. We had to go to the other side of the ghetto.

What about your older brother and sister?

They also worked.

Where did they work?

They didn't work the same place I did. I think they worked were you straw or something else-- to be honest.

You don't know, huh? You don't remember?

I don't. No, my sister worked in an office. And my brother worked in a factory someplace.

Your mother, did she also go to work? Or did she stay home with the other children?

With the babies she stayed home. There were little babies. So you couldn't leave them. The seven-year-old they took to the straw factory. They did work. And my father, there was a problem because Saturday, he didn't want to work.

So the meat, there was horse meat. Now, horse meat isn't kosher. My father never ate meat in the ghetto. He never ate. But the children, they were hungry, and they're growing. So he permitted, to what they gave, we ate. But my father didn't eat the meat.

The Lódz ghetto was one of those that existed the longest during the war. And it was run by Chaim-- Rumkowski.

Rumkowski. Did your family have any dealings with him? Did he touch your lives in any way?

No. They made up, even, songs, like some that were sarcastic. Rumkowski Chaim

[YIDDISH] means badly. It was like the manna that God gave in the wilderness. So he felt everything in the manna. Because there was no food, but it fell down from heaven.

Like the manna did, yeah.

Yes. So they made the joke, like he gives us barley. He made the ghetto. It was [INAUDIBLE]. And he says it is gerecht. So that was like his song, like his satire.

Did people, then, not like him very much?

No. But it wasn't his fault. He did what he had to do.

Did you ever see him?

Yeah, we saw him, not very much, not very much. But there were stations where you picked up the bread for the week. And the bread was so heavy because should weigh more. So wasn't very well baked. But somehow, we bought, because my father was in the city, so we had some extra money to buy on the black

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market.

There was a black market.

In the ghetto?

No, people that work buy food, like it's all over. So they tried to take something home. They didn't have money to buy out the card, the rations. So they had the money. So they had some flour so you could buy little flour so my mother baked something on Friday. So we were a little better off.

So your father, was he able to--

That's till 1940. When the Russian war broke out, everybody went to ghetto. Then it was finished.

Oh, that's what my question was, that he was only until-- it was 1941.

'41, when the Russians went to war with Germany.

Then he had to be in the ghetto, as well.

We were in the ghetto till 1944. August 24, 1944, we left the ghetto.

Tell me some other things about ghetto life before we get to that point. You're in the ghetto, then, for a good four and five years. That's a very long time, from the time that you are 14 years old till the time you're 18 or 19.

No, I was 18.

You were 18?

Yes. So I worked there. And then, the man came from the school department. And he said that I am good. So they took me to the office to do the evidence. Every morning, when you came to work in the factory, had to go to the office to report--

Yeah, that you're there.

--that you're here. And you had a cell number, the floor number where you worked. And everywhere, you had the number, a registry number. I happen to have a good memory. So I work in the evidence. After a year or so, they took me to work in the office. There wasn't a registry office. So it was a little easier. Because I remembered so it went fast. When people came to work in the morning, they had to register.

And they registered, then, with you.

Yeah, there were more than me just. There was some other girls, too.

Were the conditions easier in the office?

Yes, you had to carry the heavy wood pieces. They were heavy sticks for the furniture. And also, you have to chisel. It was hard on the fingers.

And office work is easier.

Much easier.

Was it warmer? Did you get any extra food?

No food extra, no. You got the soap, and you got a piece of bread.

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[PHONE RINGS]

That's all you got.

Let's cut.

OK, we were talking about office work and work in the factory itself.

In the factory, yeah.

I want to ask a larger question. Were you always hungry, or were you not so hungry in the ghetto?

You see, it was harder for boys. Because I didn't grow too much anymore because there wasn't the food what teenagers need. But I wasn't so hungry because they used to give kohlrabi. I didn't like it.

But I was occupied here in the garden. I had this, but the boys were hungry. I could have used another piece of bread. But you couldn't complain because what could they do, the parents? It was much harder for the grown boys.

Were there many Germans soldiers in the ghetto? Did you see many of them?

In the ghetto? They were guarding by the wires, by the barbed wires, that people shouldn't run out from the ghetto.

But they didn't patrol the ghetto?

They patrolled the borders.

OK, so you didn't have any real contact with them?

Oh, the Germans came every so often. They came to grab people, whoever they could. They took them to concentration camps. Before us, we were the last transport. And they took children. They took men. I had an aunt that lived from my mother's side.

When they had the rations, they came, and they went into every house to see if there's people. And they took out whoever they wanted-- old people, young people. So my father-- it was a small house. And under the steps was a place where you could go in.

So my father opened the floor. He cut the floor open, and he made a hiding place they shouldn't come. Because they took children and everybody to take for killing.

So when there were the rations, we lived on-- it was like you see here. The streets went like this. So like, you lived on this side of the street. On the other side, there was a small place that you could go through to the other street without going around. So this place, when they were [INAUDIBLE]--

Where they were taking people away?

People away, my brother got a band as a policeman. And he came to warn us we should hide in the hiding place.

So your brother was working as a ghetto policeperson?

No, he just--

He just got the band.

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He just got the band. He wasn't a policeman. He just got the band from the police station. And those days, you paid something, you know, like a loaf of bread. And so he came. So we went down with the children. Also was an old lady. They were also afraid they'd take the old people for killing, too.

So he dug a hole. And from the sand, he made two, like, benches to sit-- you put a piece of board-- so the people could hide. And we knew that if we heard the steps, so we locked the children's mouths so you shouldn't hear noises. And when they went away, so my brother came that we could go out, ready to go into the houses.

And did this happen a lot?

It happened.

Did you happen to look in your home?

It happened. But the last time it happened, my mother was so scared because there were shots outside. And she imagined that they killed my brother. So we gave up, and we went away. But there was already the end. Two weeks later, the whole ghetto was evacuated.

I see. So that's at the end of the time. But throughout the ghetto time, I mean, you had so many small children in your family. It was a risk.

Yes, so we had to hide. Yeah, it was a risk. Because they took away-- they had no use for small children, so they killed them. They killed them. We don't know where they took them. My aunt, we heard, she had two boys. Her husband went to Russia. And she stayed with two boys.

So she lived not far from us. And we took her in whenever she was all alone. So she also was hiding there. And we heard that they took them to the ocean, to the Baltic ocean, and they threw this transport of people into the ocean, alive. We didn't know what happened. But then we heard from people--

Later.

--after the war. That's what happened. So she had two boys. One was nine. One was 11. And the husband died in Russia. He never came back.

In the ghetto, did you see people starving? Did you see people dying in the ghetto when you were there?

Well, going. Now it was closed after a certain time. In the beginning of January, February 1940 was close the ghetto.

No, no, no, what I mean is within the ghetto, during the years that you lived there--

If you met people, yes. After work, there wasn't-- people that lived in the area you saw. You didn't have time to go because we worked.

My question was different. My question was, did you see people dying? Did you see people hungry?

Oh, yes. You saw people like skin and bone because they couldn't live from what they lived. And sometimes, they were all the people, they didn't even have the money. You had to pay for it, too, to buy it. So they sold. And it happened that people kept the corpse to get the food. They kept the corpse after they died to get-- they were hungry. So they got the food, that they could live.

So they were starving.

Yes. They were starving. It was very bad. We were hungry in the ghetto. There was a joke that-- it was a song-- I have for you a good thing, a roll with butter, that this would be the best thing for you, you know, like a little something.

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So the other boy answered, I cannot laugh because if I look at my sick father, I cannot laugh, and I cannot enjoy anything. You know, a child conversation was-- in a song, they made up jokes. But it was not a joke.

Yeah, it was through tears.

What?

A joke through--

Through tears, yeah.

Did your parents' personalities change at all through these types of hardships?

Of course, they change. But your main thing in a Jewish family is your family. That's what you live for, for your family and to help people if you can. A person isn't born just for yourself. You are born here that sometimes, I need you, sometimes you need me. But people need people. I don't know if I'm expressing myself right.

Oh, absolutely perfectly. I'm just wondering how your mother and father took it, how they were able to handle this. Because they have nine children.

Oh, yeah, but my brothers-- my brother was already big. And the ones that were over 10, you know, you grow up faster in a big family. Over 10, 11, 12, you already people. You had responsibilities. In a big family, somehow, everybody's close. You care for each other.

Did that help you survive, do you think?

Yes, yes. It helped me survive. You know, sometimes people ask, how did you survive? Honestly, I don't know. God wanted it. It was the way that, when they sent us to Auschwitz and when they shaved our hair, I couldn't recognize my sister next to me.

My other sister went with my mother straight off. And I saw through the bath house where we took the baths and when they cut us, off the hair, we were standing. There was big windows downstairs. And there were people standing out line. And I think I saw my father with the two-- all the boys, like, eight-- eight, nine, 10. And my mother, we never saw. Since we left the train that brought us to Auschwitz, I never saw her. But the kapo that took us off was the Jewish police. My sister went with my mother. So he told her, don't go there. This way, they going to kill you. They gas you, and they burn you. So she said, no, it's my children. I want to go with them. They told us that the mothers will take care of the children, which wasn't true. Was it true? It wasn't. And on the way, when we went from the baths to the barracks where we stayed, there was a big road that was pebbles. And they didn't give us shoes, so we walked on the road. Oh, you're leaving?

Yeah, I'm leaving at 2 o'clock.

OK. Let's step back a little bit. I want to hear everything that you have to say about this. But let's step back and paint the picture in the sense, you're saying that the last time you hid under the stairs in the ghetto, your mother was frightened because she heard shots.

We heard shots outside.

So then, what happened?

So she said-- she was very-- she got hysterical. And we were still in the hole there. This, the last time, we didn't see. Until we saw him, we didn't know that he's alive. So my mother said to my father, if we cannot take it, what could be? Said, it looks like the end.

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So my father knew something about Auschwitz. So we went on those-- you could only take a bag, a duffel bag, on the--

So you left your hiding place.

--with nothing. Well, after the hiding place, went upstairs. We ate something. And when they came next time, we were there. They took us.

So it wasn't that time, but it was the next time.

Yes.

And they took you to-- to Auschwitz. This was August. About two weeks later, the ghetto was liquidated.

So this is August, 1944.

Yes. We left on the 24th.

Were all of you together, all nine children?

All were together. We struggled to be together. But we all went. And then, when the train stopped, my father went down. And he saw this sign Auschwitz. He knew about Auschwitz. We didn't know.

How do you know he knew?

What?

How do you know that he knew?

Because he told my brother and my oldest sister don't tell Mommy anything. It's not good. And he gave us-- when he sold the merchandise from when the Germans bought the merchandise. So he bought diamonds. Because you couldn't run with the merchandise, and you couldn't run with money. So he bought diamonds.

So he gave all the children, he gave each one a diamond. And I had a wisdom tooth here. I had the cotton over. So I put one diamond-- he gave me two-- one diamond here and one here. And I didn't know whatever he gave me.

He said, if you have to save your life, give it away, or if you need to get food or anything. He knew something what was going on. So he gave all the children, the three older, for all children, for all the children-- my sister, too.

Was this in the train going to Auschwitz?

Before we went off the trains, he gave us. We were already in Auschwitz, yeah.

So you were on the train. I see.

He gave us this. So I put one here. But the night-- so we went to the barracks, on the way, we saw in the distance, in white uniforms, a band was playing Vienna waltz. And in the background, we heard the screaming. To deafen down the screaming, so the band was playing very loud. But you could still hear something.

And then my throat got so dry. And I wasn't hungry. I wasn't thirsty. I was just feeling like I'm choking because I knew what's going to happen. He told us open that they gas you and they burn you. So I imagine all this. And then, we went to the barracks. You're tired. We didn't eat, and we didn't drink. And the first night, we slept on the floor.

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Was the whole family still together?

No, no, just me and my sister.

The older sister?

The boys went-- my younger sister. My older sister went with my mother.

So when you got off the train, you were split apart.

We were all together on the train.

OK. But when you got off the train--

They selected-- left, right, to work, or mothers and children on the other side.

And your father, too.

And father, too. My father was a little away, too. But he told me not to tell Mommy anything because she shouldn't be a shock. What happened that night on the way, we didn't get shoes. We just got some-- they took away everything we had, and they cut off the hair.

And we waited there. They put some sanitizer on top of the. I didn't recognize my sissy, who looked different without hair. But we were standing there by the big window, and we saw outside, lined up, the men. And we were only girls here, on this side. So and I heard them singing. I felt I'm choking.

But what can you do? We can't do anything. We came to this Lager. The first night, they didn't send us to the right place. And another lady were, like, lying down. And on top of you was another person.

The next day, they sent us to Lager 20 or 21. And we got already bunk beds-- on straw. But was an improvement on laying on the floor. And then, every night at 2:00, they came. We should coffee [INAUDIBLE]-- to drink coffee. So some girls went. And that night, we were already a few weeks in-- maybe six weeks in Auschwitz.

And the diamonds were always in your mouth.

One I lost right away, the first night. But one I saved. The better one, I lost. But this one, I saved. And when we got to that room, I was afraid to drink or eat anything. I didn't realize that I lost this one.

So the diamond-- there was a girl, she came to the same place where we had the bunk beds. And she knew how to-- so I was very scared. I was watching it so much. because my brothers gave it away in Bergen-Belsen for food so they could get something. We didn't know, but after the war, we met.

And after we drank coffee, 2 o'clock at night, we had to stand outside lined up in five-- and it was already cold in Poland-- without shoes. Some girls got, like, Dutch wooden shoes. So I put the foot a little on the back of their foot. I shouldn't stand on the ground so much. My legs got frozen. Because over there, the climate is different than here.

And then, in beginning of October, they sent us to a working camp, to Sudetenland.

In Czechoslovakia.

In Czechoslovakia. But you went under quarantine.

Under quarantine?

Yes, quarantine. Because they had to make sure that we healthy to go to work. It was at an ammunition

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factory.

Did you have shoes by that point? Or were you still barefoot?

I had a cold. I think, then, they send us-- they gave us-- in Auschwitz, I didn't have shoes. But I think when they sent us out to Halbstadt, I think we got shoes. And my friend cut off from the nightgown a piece to cover that we were without hair, so to put like handkerchief on the head.

So we went. And I was sick. And I pinched my sister, she should look healthy. And I was scared, too. If you didn't look healthy, they wouldn't send you to work. And we were happy to get out. And my friend, we so friendly. We stayed all the time till the end of the war together.

She knew how to sew. And in that working camp, there were French working, also, in the same factory, in the ammunition factory. So they brought us a needle and thread. And I sewed it into the nightgown because I was always so scared that I lose it.

So you had it in your mouth until you went to Halbstadt, and then you sewed it into the nightgown?

Yes. It was very tough. I didn't have, when I ate, I took it out.

Yeah, because you could swallow it easily. So explain this to me. What was the name, first of all, of your friend, the one that you were-- Ruth Berlinska, but she got married. After the war, she went to France. And she married there a boy from Lódz. But they lived in France. And when we came back after the war, we went back to Lódz to look for family.

We'll come to that. I want to ask, at this point, when there was the selection when you get off of the train, at that point, it was your father--

The whole family was.

Yeah, but your father was selected. Your mother was selected.

No, they took the whole family. They put us on the trains.

I understand. I'm saying, when you get off in Auschwitz, and they're making the selection, who was sent to the gas chamber, and who was not?

One to the right, one to the left. The mothers and children the one side.

So from your family, it was your mother--

[PHONE RINGS]

And three-- OK. So I'm sorry. We were interrupted a little bit. Who was it that was sent to the chambers right away from your family?

From my family, my mother, my sister--

Your older sister.

My older sister and the two youngest children.

The young boys, the young babies?

Yeah, Aaron that was born in '39 and the one--

Eliyahu?

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Two years, he. Yeah.

Eliyahu.

Yeah. He was three years old. I found a picture in Belgium from this little boy.

Excuse me?

We found a picture after the war. My grandmother's sister came before the war to visit, and we gave her some pictures. So she gave us after the war. Because we didn't take anything along. We couldn't.

So it was your mother, your older sister--

And the two little boys.

--the two little boys.

And my father had the other two little boys. But what happened with him?

They also sent him, with the children. They took care of the children. They didn't take care of the children. Nobody saw my father no place.

So it was five of the children-- your sister, two little boys with your mother, and two little boys with your father. Mother, father, and five children.

Five children. My sister, they begged her not to go. Because they knew. And she was beautiful, blonde, very pretty girl. And she wanted-- you know, we didn't know all this. Maybe if she knew. Maybe it wasn't so good that we didn't know. Because then-- but this Kapo, the one that was taking off the people off the trains, he told her, don't go. Don't go.

To your sister?

To my sister.

And you heard this?

[INAUDIBLE]. I heard it.

You heard it.

And what was the chairman at the time. I forgot at this moment. I don't remember the name-- the one that took the people off the wagons, that did the selection, getting people off the trains. I don't remember his name. So he also sometimes said, don't go. Leave the children. But which mother leaves her children?

So when you were in Auschwitz, you realized what had happened?

Yes. And they told us, you know. Because the people that work there. But you still, you know-- subconsciously, you hope that maybe they made it. Maybe they will live. But with my mother, I knew right away, and with my sister and the two younger children. I knew it right away, that it's not good. But you helpless. What can we do? What could we have done?

[BUZZING]

And even in Auschwitz, there were also wires--

Hang on a second. Excuse me. I'm sorry we were interrupted.

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That's OK.

So you were saying about-- you had hope. You knew about your mother.

You know, but subconsciously, you say maybe, maybe, maybe. As long as you don't know positive, you still believe that maybe.

Yeah. So in the end, it was you, your younger sister, who was--

And my older brother.

Abraham.

And my younger brother, the Yakov Moshe.

Yakov Moshe.

For my oldest brother and then the one younger than me.

OK. So it was Abraham, Yakov--

And me and Gurtha.

Gurtha-- Gurtha, OK. So it was the four of you. But you weren't together when you were in Auschwitz.

Yeah, we two were together. And when they-- sometimes just closed the gate when they gave the coffee. You escape. We shouldn't be separated.

Yeah. Did you know what happened to your older brother and younger brother at that point?

No, we didn't know until after the war, no.

Did they survive the war?

Yes. They went in Bergen-Belsen in Germany.

I see. So they were in Auschwitz, and then, from there, to Bergen-Belsen.

Bergen-Belsen. They sent people different places. They were working there because they were young. So they could work.

You are in the Halbstadt.

Yeah, and my sister, too.

Sister's in the Halbstadt. Did she get any diamonds?

She also lost one. She didn't-- she was young. He gave her one. But she lost it-- swallowed it. Maybe swallow. Go look in Auschwitz. You had to go to the bathroom. You had to report. You couldn't go to the bathroom when you wanted. There was a time, and you had to report.

Every time you have to go.

Go to the bathroom, you had to report.

When you were in Halbstadt--

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Yes, was different.

Tell me about that. Tell me about what it was like there.

You see, it was a small town. Was an ammunition factory there and a Weberei. Some girls were sent-- in the same building where we stayed, or two floors down, was a-- what do you call-- a weaving company. And some girls were sent there, some of the girls.

I met one after the war once. It was in our hotel, in the lobby. I saw people, they looked like similar. So ask, where are you from? She said, I'm from Lódz. So I say, where were you during the war? She was in the same place. We slept in the same place. But she worked downstairs. But we knew each other. There were 500 girls altogether.

And what did you do? What was your job?

I was cutting with a stencil machine. It was such pieces that you use for the aeroplanes. And they had, like-- so it was machine. You got the case around. And the piece was cutting out, like when you move gauges. Like in a car, I guess, in an aeroplane. There was a small piece. And you just--

You cut ridges in it?

It was a machine. You had to get it down and cut out. It wasn't easy work. I was hard work but better than Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, you didn't work, but you were standing hours outside at night, instead of sleeping. Here, at least, you could sleep a little.

And on Sunday, you could get a shower, and you could wash your clothes. You had a Sunday. It was more humanely. And even the people-- I mean, one [IN GERMAN] was nasty.

One guard was nasty?

Yeah, nasty. And one night, I fell asleep by the machine because there was no work. So she came over, she knocked out two teeth. Because I fell asleep. Their supervisor didn't care. He saw there was no work. And she came over. And when we had to go to the bathroom, we also had to report to her. And she was always nasty.

And there was another one, Ursula. She was a sweetheart of a young girl. And she was also German. But she was sweet and nice. You had to go, she left you go to the bathroom. And the French people used to bring us sometimes an apple. to Ruth. Ruth, she was very pretty girl. I don't know if he fell in love with her, but he was kind. So but I worked by his machines.

By the French person's machines?

Yes. So when we got an apple, we went to the bathroom. We shared it.

How long were you there?

We went in October till May 5.

So you were liberated there?

Yeah, we were liberated. But a week before we were liberated, or maybe a few days, they told us that we going to go someplace else. We should be ready. But they wanted to send us, and what happened, the Russians came faster than you thought. And they didn't send us. But then, we found out-- the French told us. They knew more than we did because they had the radios and they lived with families together. That weren't like we because they were from the border between Germany and France.

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Aha, OK. Now, were these French military people?

No, no, they worked like we did.

I know, but--

They were also prisoners but with families. Like where we lived in the ghetto, they lived over there. But the French prisoners, were they all men? Or were they also women and children?

The men worked. We didn't see any French women. Only the men worked. But they had families there.

Their own families?

Yes. They lived in there. But they didn't come to work. The men came to work.

Ah, I see, I see.

And we were only girls that worked there. Some girls were-- maybe one was 25, one was 26, 27. Those were the older girls. But otherwise, they were young girls working.

Did you have any sense that the war is coming to an end, that the Germans are losing?

No, we didn't even realize when they told us that we going to a different place. The French told us there's mines on the road, and they wanted to send us to test the mines before the Russian came. They wanted to test if the mines are working. So they wanted to send us as--

As mine blowers-up. And if you blow up, well, that's too bad.

It wasn't a big thing. It was just Jewish children who was it. But, you know, God leads the world, not the people. Even the big people don't lead the world. That's people that believe believe that God leads the world.

Did you pray when you were in Auschwitz and in this place? Did you have any--

Yeah, we prayed by heart, what we knew how to pray. We didn't have books.

Did you have any conversations with God?

Yes.

Did you ask, why is this happening?

Well, we were bitter. We were very bitter, even after the war. Why did it have to happen? Those children never sinned. They were little kids. They never did anything.

Some people lost their faith because of that.

Yeah, we lost for a while. We weren't so religious for a while.

What did it take for you to get it back?

We saw that God took care of us. We were like lost sheep. We didn't have where to go. We didn't know. Even when the war ended what choice was it were. We thought that if the war would end, everybody would run and try to help us. There was nobody to help.

No, I wouldn't say-- the Czech government wasn't bad. They gave us money to go home. And when the war was over, the French came in. They sent the [IN FRENCH]. And they said, the war is over. But where did we

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have to go?

So it wasn't the Russians--

We didn't have money.

--who liberated you? It was the French?

The Russians, but they were drunk. And they came from Afghanistan and Caucasus. They were Russian-- very wild, drunken soldiers. It was scary. It was very scary.

Were you frightened of those soldiers?

Yes, yes. There was one major that came from Minsk, from a big city. And he said that I am Jewish and try to get out of the way. Because they're not out for any good. Because they were drunk, and they wanted to have a good time. What were they interested in?

Did that happen with many Jewish girls?

Yeah, one girl ran away. She was very tall. Then we ran away from that place where we stayed in that factory. Because the Russians came in and to them, you know, they are on the way. They wanted to have a good time. We were very scared. So we found a house that the Germans left, just like we left. Because they ran away, too, from the Russians.

So we were hiding there. And there, once, a Russian came, too. And he picked the tallest girl. And it was already night. And we didn't know. So she ran to a place where little rabbits hide. And she was very tall. She said she doesn't know how she do it. He was drunk. She ran away. And all night, she stayed in this place--

Rabbit hole.

--in the rabbit place. And in the morning, when it was light, she saw he isn't there anymore. She came back to the house. And then, we got scared to stay there, too. So we went to Prague. The authorities-- I don't know what the story is. I can't even remember.

We stayed in the place, in that factory place, where we slept for a while. But then this Russian came. And we were scared of them. There was no place where to go, what to do. Then we went some-- but they told us we could go to-- they gave trains to Prague. We stayed all night one night. And well, scary for young girls to be anyplace.

You were alone.

You weren't safe anyplace.

So when you got to Prague--

To Prague, they gave us money. And then we went to Poland to go home. So we went with trains. They gave money for the trains. And they took care of our papers. So I don't know.

Was this the Czech authorities, or was this the--

Jewish Czech.

The Jewish. OK, OK.

I don't know if it was only-- the Czech were very nice, even the supervisor in that factory. He was also very nice.

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He was Czech?

Yes. He spoke German, but he was-- they behaved different-- different people. We weren't so scared. They were normal, kind people. They couldn't do anything for us, but at least they didn't scare us.

Did you make it back to Lódz? Did you get back to Lódz?

We got back to Lódz. But we didn't have much money, neither. The first little town we got, coming over the border from Czechoslovakia to Poland, there's some Polish ladies by the station, one of the first station. And they said, so many of you are still alive? We were three girls-- three. I don't think there were more than three girls.

But then, we met somebody told us that our uncle-- my mother's brother-- is alive. And they told us already they went back to look for their family, their two older girls. And they took us for the night to their house.

And they were so nice. They called us children. So they got out of the beds, and they slept on the floor and gave me and my sister the beds to sleep and gave us money to go to Pabianice to see to my uncle.

Pabianice is close to Lódz?

Yes.

OK. And this was an uncle on your mother's or your father's side?

On my mother's side.

On your mother's side.

Yes. So he got freed in April because he was in a different place. And he got free either March or April. The Russians came in before. Then he went home. And they used to have a bakery. So he bought his bakery.

And they had what to eat. And they took us in and took all the-- what do you call it-- children that lost their families-- orphans-- they took. They were also teenagers. But they took them in. And they took us in, too.

And so you stayed with your uncle.

Well, for a while. And then, my aunt was pregnant. She was expecting a baby. And we were scared to be in Poland. Because in small towns, they killed Jews. Lódz was a bigger city, was not so dangerous. But we were scared.

And then, we found out-- when you came to Lódz was like a big board, and your registered who's looking for whom. So my brothers registered from Bergen-Belsen that they are looking for family. And then, they stayed. The younger brother stayed in Germany, and my older brother came back. And he came back to look for us.

So he came to my aunt. But I was sick. I went to some place with my uncle to buy flour. And then I got the typhus, and I was in the hospital. So when my brother came back, he couldn't see me, only through the window because--

Right, you were quarantined.

Yes, I was under.

But your sister was there?

My sister was in the house. And I was in the hospital.

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So tell me, at that point, did you still have your diamond?

Yes, yes.

You still had it?

Yeah, and then, when we all got to Germany, to Berlin-- my aunt had the baby in December.

She also left? Your uncle left with your aunt.

Yeah, he sold the bakery. Whatever the money they got, we had to pay money to smuggle us. We were on trains with coal. And we paid the people working. And they put trust between the coal.

And why did you need to be smuggled out of Poland?

We didn't want to stay there. It was dangerous.

Yeah, but why couldn't you just freely leave or go on a train?

No, you couldn't.

Why not? Why not?

You couldn't because they wouldn't let us in.

Germany wouldn't let you in, or the Poles wouldn't let you out?

The Poles would-- the Poles might-- I don't know why. They took care of it. They paid them. And we ended up in West Berlin.

I mean, one of the reasons why I'm asking is that I suspect it's because it was occupied by Soviet forces, and they weren't letting people out-- I suspect. But I wanted to find out whether that's the case.

Yes, probably the Russian. The Russians wouldn't let us out because the city was divided into French, English, Russian, and American.

You're talking about Berlin?

Berlin, yes.

Which section did you arrive into?

In American.

Uh-huh. You go to the American section. OK.

We could go to the French, but we had plans, either we go to Israel or to America. There was no other places to go.

So it was that your brother came back to Lódz. They found you.

One brother. Then we went back to pick up my other brother. He was in Germany. And then, we stayed-- the government, the Gemeinde gave an apartment to my aunt. It was the first Jewish child born from those people. And the American gave my uncle a bakery. So he begged for the Americans.

And this was in Berlin?

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Yeah, in Berlin. And there was a deaf boy between those orphans, was a boy, a deaf boy, from that city where my uncle lived and three girls. And my aunt's two girls got married. And the deaf boy stayed in Berlin. I don't know what happened. One girl went to France. She had an uncle there. And the other one had some family in Israel, so they went. We couldn't go to Israel. They wouldn't let us.

I have a question here. You have four children who survived--

Yes.

--your older brother, your younger brother, your younger sister, and you. Did you end up living together again?

Yes.

So you didn't stay with your uncle and your aunt? You lived separately?

After a while, we lived separate. We didn't go to the DP camps. We lived in the city.

OK. You lived in Berlin.

Because of my aunt, yeah.

OK. And I think you told me--

At this point, we sold the diamond. We were on our own, and started doing something.

OK, so you sold your diamond in Berlin.

I gave it to my brother. They took care of us. Because the girls, you know, it's different.

And so, did your sister still have a diamond to give to him, as well?

She didn't, actually. She lost hers.

She didn't have. She lost it.

And I lost my second one, too. But nobody worried about it. That was helpful.

It's what your father would have wanted. It's exactly why he wanted you to have them.

And it was a good thing. Because who would give you anything? It's good the uncle and the aunt took care of us. But you know, they had already a baby, and they took care of the other. The deaf boy was a little helpless because he couldn't speak. But then, I don't know, maybe somebody in the Gemeinde took care of him.

Now, you're in Berlin. And I think you told me. What section of the city were you living in?

In Kreuzberg.

In Kreuzberg. How long did you stay there?

Five-some. From December '45 till '51. I got married in 1951.

Oh, so you stayed six years in Berlin?

Yes. I went to school. I learned languages. I learned to prepare manicure, makeup. I don't know. They were from the HIAS. They helped us.

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So you had some training.

But even with this, we were-- what could too much? We could not. And my sister went to a nursing school. She finished high school. And she went to a nurse school. She was younger than me. Then she wanted to go to medical school. And I got married. And we got permits to go to America.

How did you meet your husband?

In Berlin, I met him.

How?

Through friends.

I see. And how did he get there? How did he leave the Soviet Union?

He was Soviet Union. They came home to Poland with his mother. And the brother was sick. He had TB on bone-- TB. So my husband worked very hard to get him to Switzerland. They had a sanatorium there, too. He healed.

Did he?

Yes.

He got better?

Yes. My husband had already a heart condition. I didn't know. But somehow he lived. And God gave us four children. And he took care of us. Now that's why I believe in God. Because we see it, that we were very helpless, and who helped us?

Is there something else you would like to add to your story for today? We've talked about an awful lot. And in a few hours, you can never get the full story of a person. But here, we're close to the end. And I wanted to ask, is there something else you would want people to know about what you've gone through, what you experienced, and how you came out of it?

The only way I could explain that God took care of us. Because we, by ourself, we had no way to go to Israel. Because children transport weren't allowed to go in the time when we. We didn't have where to go. And we didn't know what to do.

And somehow, God showed us a way. We didn't do it by ourselves. So whatever happens to us, it's not that we so smart, that one is smarter than the next one. Some people are smart, and it's not meant for them to have anything, and they struggle. Some people get very rich. And some people are not so rich, and they happy, make the best with what they have.

But the main thing in my life is whatever I did anything good, that I helped somebody when you needed me and whenever I could, I was able to, I'm not sorry. I'm only sorry that I maybe didn't do enough. But we tried to do when we could.

Did you tell your children about your experiences during the war? Did you share this?

Not when they were young. Now I did. Now, when they understood, they were ready, I did. My husband spoke more about it, what he went through. But he injected the belief, and he showed me many times in life, I thought it is not going to work, it's not going to be good.

My husband was sick, and I was pregnant with my third child. I didn't know because, in the beginning, we struggled plenty, too. But everybody does. So he told me-- I said, but he was sick. He had a small heart

attack. He was in his 30s. So he said to me, don't be scared. See, God takes care of us. And if God will want me to live, I will live. And don't worry. God provides for everything.

And he injected into the children the believe and trust in God, and believe that's the truth. And it's a true thing that you could only trust in God. Because he takes care of us. Because ourselves-- we think we smart, we can do. It's not.

And what happened that night, a friend of his went to a wedding. And he passed across the street to the subway, to get the subway from East Broadway. And a motorcycle came. And on the spot, he was dead. So he said, there is no insurance in life for anything. If you're supposed to live and you have to live, God helps you. But if you supposed to die, in one minute, you're dead.

So then I say, whatever it was, we manage. And life, it's what you want from life. We not here just for our pleasure. We have to be here for other people. And whenever we had a friend-- or my son went to school away, to Switzerland, and a man came. He was also a Holocaust survivor without a hand.

And the principal directed him to our house. It was holiday. So he came and wasn't an easy person with one hand. And my younger daughter had to take him across the subway. He was scared. But my husband said, he is a guest. You have to treat him better than yourself. And if he needs your bed, you give your bed to him.

Those are the values.

So he injected it into the children, too. And thanks to him, we have good children.

I think not only thanks to him but probably also thanks to you.

Yeah, but-- yes, I did, too. And whenever he brought somebody home, I never said-- I always took him with a smiling face and made them feel good. I guess I got it a little from home, too.

Yeah. Well, Mrs. Marcia, thank you so much. I've appreciated that you've taken the time to share your story with us.

Yeah, but I appreciate you. You're such a wonderful person. There isn't many like you. And I really admire you as a person. I didn't know you, but I wish you all the best.

Thank you. Thank you so much.

They claim to say that Holocaust survivors have the power to bless people because they went through-- that's what the rabbis say-- because they like.

Well, thank you very much. Those are very kind words.

So I wish you a long, happy, and good life. And you should have joys that life should bring to you.

Thank you. Thank you deeply.

Yeah, I don't if it's the right thing.

It was absolutely beautiful. It's a real gift. Thank you. And I will say, with that, that this concludes our interview, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview, with Mrs. Marcia Loewi on January 8, 2016 in Borough Park, New York. Thanks again.

Thank you, thank you. Thank you. It's a pleasure. I learned from you a lot of things. Because there isn't many people like you. But thank God there is people.

Thank you. That's very kind. OK.

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