

This is a continuation of the interview with Josiane Traum. Today is Thursday, September 3rd, 2020. And since we spoke last year, Josiane, and had our interview, you remembered some facts that had not been on your mind that day.

So could you tell me what it is that you'd like to add to the interview that we had and the pieces of information that you now have at your fingertips?

Of course. I found-- actually, it's like an index card. And it's actually research that was done at the museum, at the Holocaust Museum--

In Washington, yeah.

--to out exactly my mom's journey when she was deported to Auschwitz.

OK.

And I found that before going to Auschwitz, she was deported actually on-- and taken to a transit camp, which was called Malines. And Malines is in French and Mechelen is in Flemish.

Could you spell the French version? Could you spell how Malines is in French? That is, let's just spell it out.

OK, Malines in French is M-A-L-I-N-E-S.

OK, thank you. And that was a transit camp in Belgium?

That was in Belgium. And apparently, my mom-- the card that I have with the research from the museum shows that my mom was actually in Malines for two months.

That's quite a while.

Yes, it is. She was there-- let me see, she got there March 1944.

OK, do you have a date?

And I have a copy of that. It says in Brussels-- I don't know [? der haustet ?]. And then it says Juden Lager, Malines, which was--

Right.

Yes, it was a camp, but it was a transit camp. And I found this in two books which I have. They actually mention Malines, that it was-- each-- different countries had transit camps.

That's right.

Till they got the Jews on trains to deport them. So my mom was actually taken to Auschwitz on-- let me see-- on May 19th, 1944. She was taken to Auschwitz at Birkenau

OK. And there's a whole list of numbers, which I don't know what they are. And then it says Ravensbruck, which was actually another concentration camp.

So she was in Ravensbruck too?

It looks like-- it says, Auschwitz-Birkenau, which I know Birkenau was a sub-camp from Auschwitz. It was a labor camp--

Correct.

--which is actually where she went daily to work. And there's some numbers after that. I don't know what they are. And then right under there it says Ravensbruck.

Ravensbruck--

So, I don't know if--

--as in R-A-V-E-N-B-- R-A-V-E-N-S-B-R-U-K?

No.

No?

No. R-A-V-E-N-S-B-R-U-E-C-K.

Ah, Ravensbruck, so it is that women's concentration camp--

Yes.

--that is-- so she was transferred. Does it give a date?

No, only that she got there May 1944.

So only that she got into Auschwitz in May 1944. And then you don't know--

Yes.

It doesn't say actually that she was transferred to Ravensbruck. It just has that name.

No.

OK, OK.

It's just has Auschwitz-Birkenau. Then there's a capital N-R, and a capital A, and then 5144.

So this is-- what kind of-- do you know what kind of a card this is? Is this a-- this is a facsimile of an actual German record? Or you're not familiar with what kind of record this could be?

I believe it's-- I believe it's German.

OK.

I believe it is, but I don't know. I guess I could telephone Micheline and ask her. It also says, after Ravensbruck, it says KL Malchom. M-A-L-C-H-O-M.

M-A-L-C-H--

And I don't know what that means.

I've not heard of that, but KL means konzentrationslager, which means concentration camp.

I see. It would be-- it's interesting and important to have as many of the details as one can. And so this document has told you some of the details of-- after your mother is arrested, where the various places were and the dates, at least, when she was there.

Yes.

I think the other significance is that such things, which were so crucial and so central to her story are things that you didn't know for a long time.

Yes.

And so that's also part of-- part of what the experience is. Your experience of what your mother went through is limited. I hate to say it, put it that way, but it is-- I mean, it is--

[INAUDIBLE]

It is--

I don't know details.

Yeah.

Yes.

Yeah. And--

You know--

Yes?

Right after that, it says 29445. I guess that's her--

April 29th, 1945, that's what that would be.

Yeah.

Uh-huh.

Yes, April 29th, 1945. It says Leipzig befreit.

OK, Leipzig is--

B-E-F-R-- I guess maybe that's where she was liberated.

So Leipzig is the city. And the befreit, yes, befreit means to be free, to be made free.

Yes, yes.

OK, so that's-- OK, that--

See, I always thought she was-- she was liberated on the Elbe. There was a battle between the Germans and the Russians. And that's when the Russians liberated her. That's what she had told me.

Well, it could both these things be true. We'd have to take--

Exactly.

We'd have to take a look where Leipzig is. And my geography is not that strong for Germany. But it could also very well be close to the Elbe River.

Yeah.

So I wish I could say that off the top of my head. But you do have these pieces of information about--

Yes.

--about-- is there any-- about your mother's incarceration. Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us today to be part of her interview?

Well, it does have her name, and maiden name, and her parents' name on this piece of paper. I did find out last night-- I spoke to my cousin, who lives in Canada, and who's my mother's sister son.

OK.

When-- when Belgium was liberated-- Belgium was liberated in 1944, which is before the rest of some of the countries in Europe.

Of course.

And as soon as Belgium was liberated, my mother's sister came looking for me. And actually found me.

So that is the-- so, OK. So she found you at some point in 1944, probably towards the end of the year. I think that's when the--

Yes.

--allies were preparing or were part of the Battle of the Bulge--

Yes.

--which took place not far from where you would have been.

Right, right. My understanding is that they were also hidden in-- during the war, through the underground and through churches. And there was this network. People could somehow find each other. And that's how she-- they found me and brought me to their home.

And, of course, it was so different.

Yeah.

--being with family. And, you know, it's so strange, I spoke to Charles last night. He lives in Vancouver. And we were talking about it. Because he mentioned-- he said, do you remember how we teased you and everything? And, of course, they did, the three boys, tease me continuously, which I loved. I did-- see, I was like their little mascot.

So just being with the family-- we were talking about it. And he reminded me that my grandfather, my mom's father, my maternal grandfather, had also been taken to Malines.

Yes.

And-- yes. And then they took him to-- I have the name of it. They took him to-- also to Malines and then to another transit camp. And apparently, they tortured him so much that he died before he got to Auschwitz.

Oh, my.

I always thought that he had died on the train going to Auschwitz. But my cousin Charles told me that, no, he had-- he was tortured and actually, he died. So--

So these are these-- these are bits and pieces of information about what happens to the family that you are still discovering to this day.

Yes.

What is your cousin's his first name? You mentioned it, but I didn't catch it.

My cousin?

Yeah, in Vancouver.

Oh, Charles

How do I--

Charles.

How do I spell it?

Charles. Well, I spell it the French way, which is probably the same-- C-H-A-R-L-E-S.

Oh, Charles. OK.

Charles.

Charles, OK. I call him "Charles."

I see. I see. OK.

Just like he-- he calls me Josiane.

Yeah.

Which nobody does, because it's French and they can't say it.

But it's how-- it's how he knows you and how you know him.

Exactly, exactly.

OK, well--

So Charles was two years older than me. The three boys were all a few years older than me. And I was there until my mother came back.

Yeah. So they have memories of these things.

They do. They were a little bit older.

OK.

So I think they probably have more imagery and memories.

OK. Well, thank you, Josiane. And if that is-- if that is what you would like to add to our interview, we have now done so. And is there anything else that you'd like to add before we conclude?

I don't think I have any other information. But I just-- I realize how much my mother suffered.

Yeah.

And when I think about it, it is so difficult to comprehend.

Yeah, yeah. And you're so helpless, because you could do nothing to take it away. That's the--

No.

That's part of the suffering that someone who loves that person also experiences. Because of course, you just being provided her with a great deal of not only comfort, but reason to live.

Yeah.

But you couldn't physically do anything to take away what she went through.

Right.

Yeah, I know, I know. Well, thank you. Thank you again for sharing this and for making it part of the interview, so that if somebody hears this later they'll be able to put it-- get a fuller story of-- a more detailed picture of it.

And I will now say that this once more concludes the interview, the addendum to the interview with Josiane Traum. And the addendum is on September 3rd, 2020. And I will stop the recording at this point.