

Good evening. My name is Toby Tickin Back and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo. This evening, our guest is Mrs. Chana Goldstein, who was born in Łódź, Poland and lived in the ghetto all throughout the war. And she's going to tell us her story. Chana, will you tell us about your childhood?

Yeah. I was in a family with 100 people. And most of them all got varnished in the time from Hitler. I had a wonderful home. My father passed away when I was seven years old. And my mother was pregnant. Three months after my father passed away, my mother had a little boy named after him. And I had three brothers before me. I was the fourth. And after me, I had three sisters-- two sisters and a little boy.

And my mother raised four kids. Three brothers went to Wilno Uniwersytet Stefana Batorego. My father was a jewelry man. He had business from jewelry. And he had a movie, a half a movie in with a partner. I survived.

From seven children, I'm just one. I have no family at all. I have two children. I have a daughter and a son. My son lives in Toronto with three grandchildren. And I have a daughter here in Buffalo with three grandchildren too. I'm very lucky that after this happened, I have a generation, a second generation, a third generation.

Let's go to your childhood. You had a good childhood? After your father died, how did your mother manage?

I had a very good childhood. My mother is-- we had business after this. My mother bought a grocery store. I had a good--

Were you in the big city of Vilna all the time?

No. We moved from Vilna to Łódź. And in Łódź, my mother had a catering business too. And she was working. And she raised the kids. My two brothers got married. They had two kids. I marry 1939. And I had a little girl.

How old were you when you got married?

I was 18.

You were very young.

Yes.

Were your parents pleased that you-- your mother pleased?

They didn't like it, but I loved the boy. And I said, I want to get married. So I got married. And I had a little girl. She was a month old when we went into the ghetto. They went out in 1939. The baby was four weeks old when my husband, they said in the radio that all men and older men should run out from Łódź. My husband run away. He run to Warsaw with my brother. And he came back. In a week, he came back. In the time they were running, a lot of people was killed.

He was lucky. My brother was lucky. They went to Warsaw. They were sleeping outside in the street. They had no place to go in. The whole week, they didn't wash themselves. They didn't have food. They didn't have nothing. They came back. They was sick and swollen and sick. What can I say? Later went out from the city. They throw us out from the apartments. I couldn't take--

The Nazis threw you?

The Nazis.

When did you first feel the presence of the Nazis in Łódź?

1939. They came in.

They came in right away--

Right.

--and you felt their power?

They came in. But we could still walk in the streets. And we could go from one place to the other. And later on, they said, we have to go. Everybody has to go to the ghetto. Cannot leave. So and we went to the ghetto, and went to the ghetto 1939.

You left your house, you couldn't take anything with you?

Nothing. I took just a sled--

A sled.

--and the baby's bed, and some bundles with clothes, and the covers, and the pillows.

Did you take any food?

Well, food, what we had, we took it. When the war broke out, we couldn't even get food because they closed up everything. So we went into the ghetto with a little food, with a little money. And we had money. But we hid the money. We were afraid to have the money. We couldn't use so with all the money in the ghetto.

So we went into the ghetto. I had no apartment, nothing. I went to-- I was looking. And I find a little attic. There was a little room in a little hall, so big like this table. And I put a little stove there. And I was with my husband, with the baby, and no food. My husband went to work, came back. He was swollen.

Didn't they have a soup kitchen in there?

No.

Nothing?

When you went to work, they give you a soup at work. But in the house, we had nothing.

You nursed your baby.

I nursed the baby, yes.

But you didn't have much food you said?

13 months, I didn't have food at all. My husband used to-- I give him a little slice of bread. We had a bread every week, could get a bread.

One bread per person?

One bread for one, for family.

For one family, one bread. And that's all?

And that all.

No vegetable?

No vegetable, nothing. But every month, we got some vegetable, a little bit sugar, a little bit so we could finish this in one, two, three days.

How was this distributed? Was it distributed by the Jewish community, it sounds like?

No. This was the SS. The German, they had a store like we used to go in. And we had coupons. I even don't remember too much about it. So we got this food for a month. And the food was nothing. Was the beginning, we could still buy a piece of meat.

And I couldn't eat, was horse meat. And some people eat the horse meat already. And I couldn't eat the horse meat. Still, I was hungry, but I couldn't eat it. But in the last time, I bought it. And I closed mine--

Your eyes?

I closed mine door, that nobody should come in and see me eat the horse meat. Later, they give 10 grams meat in the ghetto. And we was waiting in line sometimes all night and sometimes all day for the little meat. And sometimes, we came to the door, was no meat. We went home with nothing. And even for the bread, was a time, we used to wait in lines for the bread. I used to make two, three lines in a bakery before we went into the ghetto for a piece of bread.

The bakery woman, she knows me. So she gave me a half a bread in this side and a half a bread in this side. And I came back home. I give it to my mother a half a bread. And I have a half a bread.

It's very difficult.

Was a very difficult time. So in the ghetto, started to work.

What did you do, Chana?

I was sewing shoes, straw shoes for the German Army. Was winter and they were cold outside. And I sewed the shoes. I used to make five, six, ten shoes in a day.

You had a regular sewing machine for this?

No, we sewed with the hand. Another factory used to make the braces. And we used to soften the braces. We used to make shoes. And we used to sew them. And we used to make a couple shoes. I used to come to the SS, used to take to deliver the shoes. He said, you no good. He used to turn them back. And we used to get a soup in the--

Oh, at work. OK.

--at work, yeah. The soup was two potatoes and a little bit water. Was no soup. So I used to drink the soup, and used to take the three potatoes, and thrown out from the camp in the two miles I used to run to take the three potatoes for my baby.

Was two miles you ran?

Two miles.

To your baby-- what was this, at lunchtime, you mean?

It was lunchtime. And I went home. And the baby was outside, looking, waiting for me. And I gave her the three potatoes. And I went back.

She was there by herself?

And she was closed.

She was two years old?

She was two years old. She was closed in the house. She was by herself. She was sitting by the window. In 1942, we came-- they closed up the ghetto, was like a sperrer. I don't know how to say it in English. They closed up the ghetto. And they said, they're going to take out the children and the old people from the ghetto.

This was a selection?

This was a selection. And they came in. And my friend was living downstairs. And she had a little boy. She was with her father. Her sisters, they took away before, a couple sisters. They were, I don't know, seven, eight sisters there. Then she came up. And she said to me, she doesn't know what to do. They came in. They want to take away the children. And I didn't know what to do. Was the beginning just from the ghetto, from the close the ghetto. I didn't know what to do.

And they came in. They took out the baby. The baby was two years old. And she was beautiful. She was just beautiful. And she didn't cry. I cried. But she didn't cry. And she said to me, mama, don't cry. I going to be a good little girl. And I going to play with the children. But my shoes are turned, she said. And I didn't know what to do. She had no shoes. I couldn't buy it.

And they took her out the same night and my neighbor's child too. And her father was a very religious man. And they came in. They asked him how old he was. And he said, I'm-- and the daughter said, he's 55. And he said to his daughter, don't lie. I am 65. And he stand up and put a bottle black coffee in his coat, took his grandson, my little girl, and my brother-in-law's little girl, and went out with them.

Where did they go?

They took him on a wagon with a horse. Was no cars then. And they took him to hospital.

In the ghetto?

In the ghetto. From this hospital, they took him out to-- I don't know, to Auschwitz or to kill him. We didn't know what's going to happen. And there was working, a nurse. And she was my mother's friend. And she came back. And she said that my little girl was crying. And I couldn't help mine.

The same day in the morning came up my-- my mother-in-law came up. She was living in the same house. I was sitting with my husband on the floor. And we didn't know what to do. We're crying. And she came up. And she said to me, I'm so hungry. I'm so hungry. Give me something to eat. And I had nothing in the house, nothing to give her. And she walked out. She went down the steps. And SS man came over and took her.

That same day?

Same day. This was at night. He took the baby. And this was second day in the morning. They took her away. And she went on the wagon with my granddaughter-- with my little girl. With another girl there.

How do you know that?

Because they told me.

The SS told you?

Not the SS. The nurse in the hospital told me that my mother-in-law was on the wagon and--

And the children.

--and the children, and this gentleman was too.

So they all were taken away together?

Two years, I didn't took out the bed from the house. I still had the baby's bed in the house. I went to work, came back. Was terrible. I worked in one resort. I went to the other resort. I went to a resort in a laundromat.

And you changed your work?

And I came there. I changed my work. I came there. And they told me, I just can work nights, not days. Because days used to work the wives, the sisters. And at night used to work the people, the others, the people who they had no family there. So I went to work. And I remember, I came up with steps. And I was sitting in the steps. And I was wearing a white dress with black polka dots--

Still remember.

--and a black belt, a velvet black belt, I remember. And I came. I was sitting there. I was so young. And the manager came in. He told me, what you doing here? Like that. And I said, I came for work. I have to work because were not, they're going to send me out. And he looked at me. He said, oh, you're not for this job. I was not for this job to go. They didn't wash in washing machines.

What, did you use scrubbing boards?

We used to-- used to washing scrubbing boards. So he said, OK, I'm going to give you a job. So they had the dryers, they dry the washing, the dryers.

Automatic dryers?

Yeah. It was a dryer, like big dryer. And they wash for the military, for the army the suits, the suits, and everything. So we used to take out the dry wash from the dryers. And we used to hang them up in a room. I don't know, was warm there, very warm there. Was a dry room there. And I worked at night. My husband worked daytime. We didn't see each other.

What did your husband do?

He worked in a resort from letter. Was no good. So my husband had somebody in the same factory, a friend used to work there. And he asked him for a job for me because he didn't like it I went at night to work. And he worked daytime. Was no good. So got a job there. And I was sewing. I didn't know how, even, to sew on a machine. And I sewed shoes for slippers, the top from the slipper shoes.

That was all for the Germans?

All for the German. Everything--

Everything were.

--the whole ghetto was for the German. You didn't work for the German, you even couldn't get the food too. They sent you away. So the manager was standing after me in the back. And he showed me how to sew.

The manager was a German?

Not German, a Jewish.

A Jewish?

Yeah. And he showed me how to sew the shoes. And I was all right then. The same thing, you get a soup every day. And you used to steal something there because you want to buy a piece of bread. We couldn't buy. Was everything in the black market.

You still had a little bit of your money?

I still had. But the money was-- they changed the money. You couldn't buy nothing for the money from before. They had special money for the ghetto. And in 1944--

Excuse me. Was all your family still with you beside your husband in 1944 except for your mother-in-law?

No. My mother, with the three children, they took her away 1942 for the 12 marks. She took 12 marks. They made a welfare thing. And people who didn't work, and they had small children, they got 12 mark for a person.

From whom?

From the ghetto.

From the ghetto officials.

This was the-- they must be the German used to give what the Jews give this for the people. So she took once that. So they came one night and took her out.

The SS.

Took her out.

Because she took 12 marks, they had her name on a list or something?

To catch. They caught with it a lot of people.

So it was a trap.

A trap. So they took her out with the sisters, two sisters. They were six years apart-- three years apart, one from the other. And the boy was 15, I think. He was a beautiful boy, beautiful children. One sister was engaged already. So they went.

In the morning, I went to my mother. I saw how the house was closed. She was not there. And they told me that they took her away. So I still had in the house a watch, a gold watch from my father with a chain, with a very big chain, a gold chain, and a gold watch. And I had 18 couplets, couplets, silver with gold.

Oh, goblets.

Goblets. And I figure, I don't need it. I going to give this to my mother. She has three children with her. Maybe she going to go someplace. She can sell it and have some money to buy some food. So I run there. I went there. I couldn't go in. It was outside. And I give her, was a-- I don't know how to say.

In a package?

It was not in a package. She was-- I give her the watch. I give her a half a bread. And I give her the goblets. And I said to her, when you're going to go someplace, you can sell it. And you can buy some bread or something for the children. I didn't need it. I was younger. And I figured, I want to save my mother. I didn't know that she's going. But she went. They took her away, was I don't know how many miles from Łódź. And they dig a very big grave.

That day that you came with the goblets, they took her away?

They took her away the same night.

The same night.

And we didn't know where they take them. They just take them away. Later, they said they took them, and they dig a grave, and they--

They shot them and--

--shot them, and they put them there with everything. After this, I went home.

Did the Germans take the goblets away?

I don't know what happened there, nothing. After this, 1944, they throw us out from this apartment still. They said, we have to go in the other side ghetto. So we went my brother lived there.

Do you know why?

They want to cooperate all Jews together in a smaller place.

In a smaller, so they put more Jews in a smaller place?

Yes. And my brother used to live there. My mother was not here already. I had nobody, just my brother.

Well, your husband.

With my husband. And we went there. I was lucky that my brother had an apartment there in the other side. We went there. It was ready to go. We had everything packed in bundles. You saw the bundles the people carry on the--

In the movie about the Łódź ghetto.

--with bundles. I went to my brother. And every two, three days, the SS came in. And they used to make a selection on the backyard. They used to-- everybody should go down. And they select, left and right, left.

Just at random, just like that?

Just random. Once, we went down, went two little boys, a twins. And we came down. And they had the rucksacks on the backs. And the SS told them, why you have the rucksacks in the backs? And they said, they didn't know. The mother gave to him this. And because they had the packs on the bags, he took them in the left side, two young boys. They were already

Just like that.

--nine years old. And in this, I was lucky. I was lucky because I was young and I was good. I was still--

Strong.

--strong. And the only time they, select me in the right side.

And your husband, too, was feeling good?

Once, my husband was hiding. And he said, he wouldn't go down. He was afraid to go down. They're going to take him away because he was swollen.

Oh, he was suffering from malnutrition?

He was right. He was swollen. And he was afraid. He said, I'm not going. They can kill me. They can take me. They can do what, but I'm not going down.

Was he still working there?

Yes. He was working like that. He had to work. Were not, they would send him away. So night, he went to my brother and were hiding in a basement. The basement is not like today the basement, they have windows, they have everything. This was a basement, just have a cabinet there, piece of wood, and on this was a piece of carpet. They were running to the basement. I was there, my husband, my brother, his wife, and a little boy, he was six years old, without food. We all got sick.

Must have been damp in there.

We all got sick. We all got the runs. We were running.

Where was the bathroom, outside?

Outside. We were running. We have no food. And we got angry. And we said, I'm going to go.

Where would you go?

I'm going to go, going to wait outside. They come in, they're going to take us. And we went. We went to Marysin, where was a concentration from the Jews.

That was the Umschlagplatz--

The liquidation.

--the center place?

Yes. This was the center place. This was September 19.

1944.

1944. So I went, and my husband, and my brother, and my sister-in-law, and a little boy, and another brother-in-law with his wife, and a sister-in-law, went the whole group together. We figure way we want to stay together. And my sister-in-law and my brother too. I said that. So we went there. We came to Marysin. And we took with us the bundles. We had the bundles outside ready and a bread.

One bread for?

One bread, and took a bread. I had one bread. And I was with my husband. My baby, I haven't got. So I went with the bread. And we took some clothes with us. We went to the trains. And we went in all to one train.

Were these cattle cars?

The cattle carts.

And the Germans just told you to go?

Right. And we went to Auschwitz.

Excuse me. Before you go to Auschwitz, we understand that in Łódź, there was a big textile factory. And there was the head of the Łódź ghetto, Chaim Rumkowski.



Chaim Rumkowski. So he was there, the head from the ghetto.

Could you say a few words about him? Here was there president from the ghetto with Getler. He was from the Arbeitsamt. He used to work for-- I don't know how to say. He used to work for the food. He used to give the food to the people.

The commissary for the food.

And when they take away the children, he used to say that we should give the children. And the older people should go because we're going to take them to good places. The children going to be in kindergartens. And the old men going to be in homes. And the Getler-- and later, the-- I don't know what happened to them. Rumkowski, they killed in Auschwitz. He went to Auschwitz.

Do you think that they believed the Germans, this Getler and Rumkowski, that if they kept working and did what the Germans did, they'd be able to save some people? Do you think they honestly--

No. No.

No?

No. This was a liquidation, a death liquidation to kill all Jews, not just all from the ghetto, from other ghettos too. So we went out to Auschwitz. We came to Auschwitz. We said, we went down from the trains. And we let everything in sight. Said not to take nothing.

How long did you travel on the trains?

A couple days.

And did you have food and water?

In the trains was a pail, people, you have to go. And food, we took with us what we had, a piece of bread. I don't remember even did they give some food in the trains. I know water, they give some water in. And a lot of people got sick in the train. And we came to Auschwitz. They select again.

And they asked, do we have something to give away, some gold, something? My sister-in-law had seven gold watches. And was Jewish people there. They were working for the crematoriums. And they came. And they said, do you have some gold? Do you have something? Give away because to the Soviets all, they're going to take away. So she didn't give them.

She didn't.

She was waiting. And I had still the bread with me. We came out.

You still had your gold watch?

No, I had nothing. I had just-- my sister had the gold watches. I gave away mine. We thought, in the ghetto, they said that everybody-- was a day, they said, everybody should bring down everything what they have-- the gold, the furs. They take everything away before we went out in 1944. They took before everything away. So we had nothing. I just had a little ring from my baby in Auschwitz.

And we came to Auschwitz, came down, we went into the baths. And I had made some shoes for myself in the ghetto and my sister-in-law too. And we came in. And they cutting off the hair. They take away everything. The shoes-- I didn't want to give my shoes because I couldn't walk without shoes. And my sister-in-law went over to her and said, why take her away the shoes? She cannot walk without shoes. So she hit her a couple times.

It was a woman guard?

A woman guard. And she cutted off my hair. She cutted off her hair. And we went into the shower. She took away my shoes and her shoes. And we came out from the shower, we didn't recognize each other. We were look terrible.

Did you get a tattoo?

No. Then was a couple of days, they did make with the numbers. Was the last night from the crematorium where they branded people, the last night from the crematorium. We came out without people had money in the clothes. They had some diamond, gold they saved. We took off the clothes. We left everything before we went to the shower. We went into the shower. Later, we went out. They had some clothes. They select some clothes for you. They give you just a dress, without anything.

No underwear?

Without underwear, without brassieres. I got a black dress, a long one, with red buttons. And I was looking for nice shoes because I didn't know where I'm going. So I didn't look for good shoes. But I look for nice shoes. And I took a pair shoes. I wear them maybe two weeks. They fall apart. And the dress is a long dress. We had nothing under, nothing, no brassiere, nothing.

What month was this, September?

This was September. We went to the barracks. In the barracks-- you saw maybe the barracks in Auschwitz. We were 10 in a pitch-- 10 people, five in the front, five in the back. Food we used to get in one pot without a spoon, without nothing.

How did you eat?

Everybody get a sip when the all 10 was sitting in the bridge and was sipping from the pot. And to the bathroom, couldn't go. Was a time the kapo came in and took us to the bathroom. When you have to go, you couldn't go. We were on the bridge.

Where was your husband and your brothers?

My husband? Yeah, I didn't say. All right. When we came to Auschwitz, they select the people. They select the mens another side, and the woman another side, and the children another side. So they took away my husband. They took away my sister-- one sister-in-law, they took her away. And the baby, the boy, six years old, he was running. Three times, he run from the SS back to his mother. And they took him again.

They took him away from his mother?

Yeah. Three times, he run away. And they took him back. Then we went to the bath. And from there, took us out. We went to the-- were sitting outside in the grass all night without clothes, just with the dress. And it was cold. Was in September already. It was cold at night. And the crematorium was burning. We saw the door.

Did you know what was happening?

Yeah. And we was afraid, at any minute, they're going to come, they're going to take us to the ovens. And it was really cold. In the morning, when we was sitting there all night, in the morning, they took us to the bridges, to the beds. And we were there three days. We got the periods. We had nothing there. I tearing off a piece of dress. And I use it. I couldn't--

You didn't have anything else.

It was terrible, was nothing. And all of them did the same thing. Was women, was 500 women there. And we were lucky.

Were you working?

I was eight days now in Auschwitz. And we went to a barrack in Auschwitz with we had no water. They give some food there. They came in with big pots with food and poisoned the food. They put something.

You got sick from it?

Because they were afraid that so many people could get the periods. What they going to be? They going to be terrible. So they poisoned the food. And after 10 days, they came in, there was no water. It was a little--

Little stream?

Little stream there. People were washing there the hand, the faces. So we asked the people to bring in a little bit water. And we drink. We didn't got sick, even. We eat all kind food. We eat pieces we can find it. We eat from the garbage pails.

And you didn't get sick?

We didn't get sick.

That's a miracle too.

This was, I don't know, it was a miracle. I myself, we passed by with garbage pails. We used to go in. We used to find a piece of apple, piece of this. We used to take it out and to eat it. We were hungry, were all the time hungry. We didn't have. So we came. I get so excited.

So you were in Auschwitz for nine days?

Yeah. We were nine days in Auschwitz. After this, they said, we going to go to work. We went to Bremen. The same again, people were sick. They couldn't walk. They couldn't or to pass by. And people were standing outside in Auschwitz. And they said, you're very lucky people. You going to go off to work. In Auschwitz, is terrible. You're going to go to work.

So we went. We went to the train again. People couldn't go up because the train was very high. And we used to take the people to throw in to the train. We used to pick them up and to throw into the train.

We went to Bremen. We went to a barrack in Bremen. Was there, I think, German soldiers before. And we used to go to work, take us to work. We worked outside the streets when they bombed Bremen. We used to clean up the streets after the bombs.

That was your work?

That was my work. Went there and we had no stocking. We had no shoes, wooden shoes. I couldn't walk. And I used to work outside. Was a little-- I don't know how to stay-- a little, little store that sell it-- the German, they used to say [GERMAN]. It was like they cooked the frankfurter in the water. And they used to sell the water from the frankfurter. And I was cleaning up there. And sometimes, they gave me a little bit the water from the--

From the hot dogs.

--the hot dogs. But when we came back from work, we got a soap, piece of soup and a piece of bread. Were you still with your sisters-in-law? No. I was by myself. My sisters went with my mother. And they got killed with my mother.

And your sisters-in-law too?

Yes. I just was by-- because I was married. So I went my separate way. Were not, I would be with my mother too. So I was married. So I went separate. And I didn't know that they took her with my mother because I was looking for her. She was not there. So later, I find out, our neighbor told me that they took her away.

So in Auschwitz, we went to Bremen. In Bremen, was a little bit better. And we used to work outside. And we used to get a soup every day and a piece of bread. Got a piece of bread, was-- I don't know how to say-- a quarter from a little bread, like a rye bread, a quarter.

A quarter from a regular loaf.

And some people were hungry so they eated up the piece of bread. And all day, they didn't have nothing to eat. I could concentrate myself. So I could make four, five pieces from this piece of bread. And when I came to work, like lunchtime, I used to warm up a little bit water, put a little bit salt, and I used to put the piece of bread on the water. And I used to eat it. And when I came home, 6 o'clock, from work, I still had a piece of bread.

You were highly disciplined. And we came home, we ate a soup every day. The soup was all right. Second day, some day, she left me in there, in the barracks because I was a good worker. And I used to wash the floors in the barracks, 23 floors a day, used to wash it. And I got a double soup for this. I'm shaking. And sometimes, I didn't want to do it. It was too much. I would better go to work because 23 floors to wash, with another girl, was not so easy. But I couldn't do nothing. They want me there.

You had to follow orders.

It was a little bit cleaner. We had a little bit water more, could wash. I used to run out in the window, like 4 o'clock in the morning. There was a little washroom. We went and washed us a little bit up.

Is that where the bathroom was too?

Yeah, got to walk out a little bit. And every day, like 8 o'clock, we went to work and came back, got this same thing.

Did you know what was happening in the war?

We didn't know nothing.

No radios, nothing?

We didn't know if somebody is alive or not alive. We didn't know a man is alive. We didn't have-- we didn't see mens still the liberation. In 1945, we went to work. And we had to go to work. When we wouldn't go to work, we wouldn't have even this soup too. And after this, we went. 10 days before the liberation, the SS came in. They said, we have to go out. We have to go to Bergen-Belsen. I went to Bergen-Belsen. We was walking, in walking from Bremen to Bergen-Belsen. Nights, we came. And I couldn't walk. I had wooden shoes.

And I was young. I was very young. And I bent down to put on my shoes. They fell off on my foot. And a SS came in the back and hit me in the back with a rifle, the back from the rifle. I have a hole in my back six inches. And after the liberation, even one year, I still have. I was operated after the war in Hanover. Took me out a piece of this from my back. Auschwitz was-- we came--

To Bergen-Belsen.

--to Bergen-Belsen.

You walked from Bremen to Bergen-Belsen?

Yes.

It must have taken you weeks.

We were 800 women, were 500 Hungarian, and were 300 Polish women. We came to Bergen-Belsen at night. They didn't know what to do. We got a piece of bread. And I had all the time where I went, I had a little bit salt because in Bremen, there was a lot of salt. Was a lot of water there, a lot of bridges. So I don't know. I went to a place there was the barrels with salt. And I took a bag salt with me all over where I went.

Came to Bergen-Belsen. I had with me the salt. And I had the bread. And we came in at night. They let us in in a barrack. And we didn't know or we can sit or we can stay. Was no light. This was 10 days before the liberation. They were afraid to put on the light then. And we were sitting on dead people was there.

On dead people you were sitting?

On dead people. Was a barrack with dead people, I don't know how many. And they were covered up. And we didn't know is dead people because they were hard. They were bones. Was skeletons. I figure maybe is wood or something. And we woked up in the morning. And we saw was, I don't know, a couple thousand dead people there.

And later, the same day, they took us in a room without a bed, without a chair, with nothing, it was sitting by the wall, we was sitting one in each other, just woman, not men. We didn't know even is exist a man. In the middle of the night was not a carpet, was like dirt, was cement. And we was sitting. And one woman was-- one was screaming, why my foot? And one was screaming, my back hurts because we weren't-- we couldn't lay down. And a kapo was standing there. And she was listening.

A kapo?

A kapo was listening that the woman was screaming. She took the pail of water and just--

Threw it at her?

--threw it at the people their water, and was sitting on the water too like that.

And it's still cold outside.

Still cold, right.

Did you have to go out for roll calls too? Or at that point, you didn't have roll calls anymore?

No. No. We didn't go to work. We was in the barracks there. We got every day, they bringed in a soup. Bringed in, and the soup, the same thing, they came in with a yellow powder. They used to put in the yellow powder to mix it. And we haven't got the periods. I was in concentration camp. And I had--

Had stopped it, the powder.

--one year, I haven't got. I came out in the concentration camp maybe six, seven months, I didn't have my period. I figure, oh, how many people didn't got back? And they had children before. And they took them away the children. And they couldn't have children anymore. They were castrated.

They were castrated and--

Drugged. I know a lot of them.

--and all kinds of experiments.

I know people, they had two and three kids. And they came, they have no children at all. So I still was lucky.

Yes.

I still was lucky. I survived.

Now, tell us about liberation.

The liberation was in the 15th of April.

You'll never forget that day.

The same day from the liberation, we went out. They took us out, took us out in a place, like outside. We were standing. We didn't know where to go. And what we have, we eat it up. We had a piece of bread, a piece of something else. We eat it because we was afraid that they're going to take us in to the crematoriums. This was the last-- same day we liberated. And we didn't know.

So I was with my sister-in-law. And I said to her, you were wrong. Maybe, we were going to go to a place and going to have a bed. And she was running. And I was running after her.

We came to another concentration. It was the same Bergen-Belsen. It was in another place. There were beds. There was beds. But we came in, the people were sick. They had typhuses. The people were dying in the street. Was worst when we were in the first. We didn't know where to run.

Didn't know where to go.

You couldn't run. So all night, I was standing on the wall with my sister-in-law. And I was afraid to lay down. I was praying for a little bed to lay down-- couldn't because people had typhus, all people there. And never in my life, I can't forget this. We were on the streets, the people, dying, same day from the liberation.

So sad that if they could have had enough strength to hang in there.

To hang it in, who know how long they were there? We came 10 days before the liberation. They were there for a long time. And I was standing all night by the wall. And I didn't know what to do. I'm with my sister-in-law. And I said, nah, I'm going to die here. Because we cannot. We have no food. We cannot lie down in the beds because it's impossible. And the same night, the same day, 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the American came in. And the I think England.

English.

They liberate us. They open up the doors. And we run out.

You knew you were free then.

Were free. I didn't believe it myself. We went running. We were running. We ran on foot. We had-- for wintertime, they make the graves. They put the potatoes on this. And we're running. And we picked a little bit potatoes. And we maked a fire. And we cook a pot potatoes.

And the American came in. And they start to give food. They bring in, the first time, they bring in sweet milk, the condensed sweet milk. I couldn't eat. I couldn't swallow. I couldn't eat. I was sick. I was running. And I didn't sleep. And I went to a doctor then. I could go. Went to a doctor. And he give me three luminal pills, sleeping pills.

Sleeping.

I didn't know what this is. And I didn't know how much to take it. I took all three of them.

Oh, so how long did you sleep?

Three days. They must have been so frightened, your sister-in-law didn't know.

I didn't know. I woked up and I fell asleep again. I was sleeping three days. And after this, I woke up. And came somebody to me, said in Polish to me. Look, you wouldn't go to a doctor, you're going to die. But I didn't go. I still was because my sister-in-law got sick. We start to eat and didn't care. They start to eat. And they were hungry. And they all got sick, all got typhuses. So many people die--

At the very end.

--after the end, form the liberation. I didn't go to the hospital. I was afraid even to go to-- I don't know. I think I was-- I still was all right. I was awake, and I had the runs, and I couldn't eat. I couldn't swallow even a piece of bread.

Did you stay in the camp? Did all the survivors stay?

I was still in the camp, yeah. So the same thing I did, I find a can. And I went out, took a little bit there. I make a fire. And I cook the milk. And I put the bread on the milk. And I start to eat like a baby because I couldn't--

You couldn't.

--couldn't swallow. I couldn't eat nothing. So I learn how to eat.

Was your sister-in-law still with you?

My sister-in-law was still with me. But she started to run to the farms there. And she got some food. And she came home. And she cooked. And she eat it. She got sick. And I was so be careful how much I had strain in me. I said, no. I wouldn't eat meat. They came in, they had-- the American came in and they had cream of wheat with milk or wheats, all kind of wheats, cooked.

Right, soft food. So you ate that.

And I eat that. And this saved my life.

Did your sister-in-law survive?

Yes. She survived, but she died later in Israel. She got-- became a cancer and she died.

So what happened after the war? You you stayed in Germany?

I lost my husband.

How did you know where your husband was?

Because somebody came back and told me, from the same concentration camp.

And he died or he was killed?

He killed himself, even with his brother. He killed himself in the concentration camps. He figured he wouldn't live anymore so he killed himself. So you finished already?

No, we have 10 more minutes.

So after the war, I got married.

You married someone from the camps that you met in the camps?

Yes. I married somebody from the camps. And I went to-- I was in Germany a couple of years.

Did you want to go back to Poland? Did you ever go back to Poland?

No.

Why didn't you go back?

Because why? I didn't want to go back. I had nobody to look for there.

You knew that everybody was gone.

I knew that everybody got killed. Now, the people, some people say that Hitler was not here, is not a true story. I am a living proof that Hitler was there. And he killed everybody. When I wouldn't be alive, my whole family would be vanished.

So you're the only survivor of 100 people?

Now, I'm the only survivors from 100 people. Now, I have my children. And that's why were I would die in the concentration camp, would be nobody even to remember.

Your family.

Now, I'm still alive. I have beautiful children and beautiful grandchildren. You know them.

Yes, you have beautiful, beautiful family.

And this is my life.

Chana, after Germany-- how long did you stay in Germany?

I stayed in Germany till 1949.

And what did you do during that time?

We were in business. My husband was a butcher.

You got married shortly after?

Yeah. And I got married in 1947. Lea was born. I was married 1946. Lea was born in 1947. And I went to Israel. Lea was 17 months old. I went to Israel. In Germany was all right. I was living there and was in business, the same butcher business. And we went to Israel. And I had my little-- I had in 1952, my son was born. And 1952 was epidemic from the polio.

Oh, yes, I remember that in Israel.

My son got the polio. After this, all my suffering, and all, everything, my son was born. He was born. He was a beautiful boy. He's still a beautiful boy.

Yes, he is.

He's very bright. He's very-- he's a nice boy. But he was born was that-- the last year from the epidemic, the last year before Salk--

Discovered the vaccine.



And he was very sick. And his hand is still no good still.

But he was able to go to school?

He was able. He's very bright. He's very smart, went to school. He finished school. He is with computers. He has a wife, has three beautiful children. And because of my son, I came to America.

For medical treatment?

Yes. I want to help him. I was in Israel. I did a lot. I couldn't do any more for him. And I figure, I going to go to America. And I'm going to help him. I came here 1958 with two small children. Lea was nine, my son was five. Without money, without--

Did you have-- oh, you didn't have any family? Who did you come to?

My husband came here. He was two years before I came. He had a cousin here. And he made papers for himself. Later, he bring me over with the kids.

So you were by yourself for two years in Israel with two young children?

I was with my children two years in Israel.

You went through so much, Chana.

Oh, god. I can write a book. When my English would be a little bit better, I would write a book.

Yeah, you should try.

And I came here with him. And I started to go with him to the doctors. And I think I wouldn't do it what I did, he wouldn't be like that. He would be much worse.

So it helped considerably.

Helped, right. So this is my story. What can I say?

We're going to conclude, end now. Did you want to say anything in conclusion? You've told us a very long, sad story.

What can I say? I say, I'm thankful I'm alive. I'm just thankful that I'm alive because of my children that I'm alive. I have nobody. I went through a lot. I still didn't say more what I went through. And especially with mine age, I was so young.

You lost out on your childhood.

And yeah. What can I say?

Chana, thank you very much. I'm sorry.

It's all right.

Sorry. But sorry doesn't mean much.

I cried before I came. And I'm going to cry later a little bit. And I cry every day. And I cannot watch even the pictures. I watch the pictures, I shut it off.

You have to look at the pictures of your children and grandchildren.

I didn't even want to come because I get very emotional.

Yes, I understand.

You lose-- he was a-- but when you lose a child--

It's very, very, very difficult.

--it's very difficult.

Thank goodness for your children and your grandchildren.

And I hope my children would understand my a little bit better. But what can I do?

I'm sure they do. I'm sure they do.

And a lot, went a lot.

Thank you very, very much. Thank you.