

It's rolling.

Good evening. I'm Marilyn Reisch with the Holocaust Resource Center. And this is Lola Lipson. Lola is a survivor of the Holocaust. And she will tell us her story this evening. Lola, can you tell us where you were born?

I was born in Łódź, Poland.

What year?

What year I was born?

Yeah.

December 1, 1919.

And, Lola, can you tell us a little bit about what your childhood was like before the Nazis?

I was born into a very prominent, big family. I had been with-- seven in the family.

Seven children?

Four brothers and three sisters. And my sister only survived. The two of us, the oldest ones, survived. The rest of my family moved. When the war broke out, they moved to a different city, to Warsaw, because a lot of people thought that this would be safer. It would be a safer place than the Lodzer ghetto. Because when the war broke out, the German was-- the occupation was Łódź. And that's why they thought that they would be safer to be farther away.

What did your family do in Łódź before the war?

My grandmother had a very big wholesale business selling textiles. And she was also connected and did business with a lot of German people.

What happened to the business after the Nazis took over?

After the Nazis came to Łódź, our city, they put in a German. It was called Treuhander. And he was taking-- he took over the business. In the beginning, my sister, who was working in the business, she was still with him. But later on, it was confiscated. And, of course, everything was taken away from us.

Let's go a little bit further back to when you were a child. What kind of schools did you go to when you were growing up?

We lived in a place where were mostly Jewish population in Poland. I very seldom had contact with other people than Jewish. But I know-- I remember when I was a child that there were times when I could feel that the Jewish people in Poland felt the pressure. And it was antisemitism in Poland.

Can you remember any incidents that would show us about that?

Yes, I do remember one incident. I was very young. And that was a holiday. I think was May the 3rd. And people were demonstrating in the street. And I was looking on. And I heard that they were shouting slogans. And they were saying, out with the Jews, and down with the Jews. And I was terrified.

About what year was this?

I probably was a child, maybe eight, nine years old. I don't remember exactly.

So this was in the '20s, in the late '20s.

Right. Right.

You were hearing slogans, down with the Jews, in Poland.

Right.

And then when you got out of grade school, what kind of school did you go to then?

I had some business school, and also my sister.

What happened when the Nazis took over, when the Nazis invaded Poland?

When the Nazis invaded Poland--

Do you remember that day?

I remember that day. We were up all night. And we said that the Germany took over Poland. The war broke out. A lot of people, mostly men, young men, they were running away from the city.

And we were all petrified. We didn't know what to expect the next day. But not everybody could run away. And really, people didn't know where to run.

Slowly, we got used to it that the German soldiers are all over around us. And it didn't take long until food was very scarce. And people had to stay in line, right away, with the beginning of the war for a loaf of bread.

So you were 20 years old at this time.

Right.

When the war broke out.

I remember my mother, once I woke up in the morning, and I didn't see my mother in the house. And she came into the house. She was scared and white on her face. And she told me she stood in the line for some bread. And they were shooting in the line.

Who was shooting?

The German. They did certain things I don't think that had anything to do with the war what they did when they occupied Poland-- Łódź, because certain things didn't have to happen, like shooting in the line where people were standing for bread.

At that time, was there any difference between the treatment of Jews and non-Jews in Łódź?

At that time, we were not free anymore, like to walk around to see what's going on.

The Jews were not free.

I don't remember-- I don't remember walking around.

Did you have to wear a patch, the yellow star?

We had a patch, first one the yellow patch, and then the yellow star. The yellow star was with the beginning of the ghetto.

So at the beginning when Hitler invaded Poland you weren't in a ghetto yet. You were still in the city.

I was still in the city. And people could still move out to a different city if they wanted to. A lot of people did move out to different cities. Also, my mother and my brothers and sisters, they moved to Warsaw.

What happened to them in Warsaw?

I never had any information what happened to them. And I don't know how it came about that they perished. And this is haunting me for the rest of my life.

I'm very upset when I think about it, what they went through, because my brothers and sister, they were all younger. They were really young children. My youngest brother was six years old.

And I have this picture with me when my mother left the city for the last time I saw her. She was standing in line to board a train, or whatever communication it was. I couldn't get that close to where she was because they separated the people who were leaving from the other people. And as we were waiting to see if she gets on on some kind of transportation, a German soldier came and took me and my sister, grabbed us and took us to work. We didn't know what he's going to do. But as we later found out, we had to do some work.

What kind of work did you have to do?

We had to scrub some sidewalks. And we were really petrified. We didn't know what's going to happen. And my mother never saw us later after this incident. The last time she saw us when the German took us both.

To scrub sidewalks.

Right. Well, she didn't know what we are going to do. I can imagine how she felt when she saw two young girls and a German is coming over and taking them.

Tell me what happened between the time that it was still Łódź, the city, and then it became the ghetto. How did that happen?

Well, we had cards. Everything was--

Identity cards?

Identity cards. And you couldn't buy any food. You had a ration of food, which was--

Was that true for everybody or just Jew--

This was-- I don't know what was going on with other people who are not Jewish. I had no idea. But we had cards. And everybody had to do some work. And the people who didn't work, they didn't get any ration. They had to share.

My sister and me, we both were almost the same age. And we were both working. So for us, it wasn't that difficult. Like if you have a big family with older parents maybe and young children, it was very hard. It was cold. And people were starving and dying from the cold. There was no heat. And more and more people were dying.

And then, when everybody had to move into the ghetto, it was a deadline when you had to leave the place where you live and go to the ghetto. And we were really living in terrible conditions.

How did they get the people from the city to come to the ghetto? How did that happen?

Well, they had signs. They always put out signs in German. And they put the date on, from this day on nobody is allowed to live in this area. They made the plan where the ghetto is and where are you allowed to live.

And people had to move in a few families in one small place. My sister and me, we live together with the family of four in one room. There was a divider, which was a closet, which divided us from the other family. And they were completely strange people.

When you got to the ghetto, did it look different than a regular city looks in a regular part of the city? Did it have a wall around it? Did it have guards around it?

The city had a wall around. And it also had-- if you want to cross the street from a certain point, you had to cross a bridge. And there were always guards, German soldiers.

Was there any way of escape from the ghetto?

I don't know of anybody who escaped the ghetto.

Tell me some more about life in the ghetto. You said it was very crowded. You all lived in the same room.

Also, there were signs. And they were all kind of-- they wanted people to move out of the ghetto. When Chaim Rumkowski was-- they announced that he is in charge of the people in the ghetto.

Chaim Rumkowski was the head of the Judenrat, or the Jewish Council.

Right. And they had the quota. They expected him to have so and so many people to give up to the Germans. And they should move out from the city.

Chaim Rumkowski wanted people to be given to the Germans?

No, the Germans wanted him to give up the people.

Why? For what purpose did the Germans want these people?

They said that they are taking them to work. Resettlement they used to call it. They are taking them to work. But we never heard of anybody coming back.

We now know that the word resettlement really meant--

We knew that something probably isn't right because we never heard of anybody coming back.

We now know resettlement was a word to mean to go to a concentration camp.

Well, at this point, we didn't know--

Right.

--where the people are going.

Nobody knew.

No, nobody knew where they are going.

So periodically, there was a group of people who left the ghetto to be resettled then.

They needed these people-- he needed to have a quota of so and so people. So they were looking whom to take.

How did they choose?

It was a terrible thing when they choose to go because if they choose somebody and the person didn't come

at this particular time, they blocked off the cards. And they were starving. They were completely without food.

For instance, if they had somebody in the family, they wanted him. And if he wouldn't go, they blocked off the cards for the whole family, and everybody was starving. How long could the person hide? You couldn't hide too long.

So eventually he had to go?

He had to go.

I understand they industrialized the ghetto.

Yes.

They made factories there.

Young people were working. I was working with hand embroidery. I worked the military emblems. I was making little-- all handwork. I was one who was in charge of a group of people. I think it was 12.

And they were very young children, maybe like 10, 12 years old. And I was teaching them how to do the embroidery. And it had to be done really perfect. These were like the emblems they wear on the uniforms, on the hats, and the swastikas.

What kind of working conditions were there in the factories?

Well, in my place where I was working was a small group of people. That was artwork.

It was specialized then?

Yes, it was specialized, yeah. But people were working in all kinds of places. They were making wooden shoes and rugs. And in the morning, everybody was wearing the wooden shoes. There was no shoes. And you could hear them walking and clapping, like then it was dark. And it looked very sad. Everybody was very sad.

How long did you live in the ghetto?

I lived in the ghetto almost to the very end. My sister was also working in a place in the office. And we could survive on what they gave us. But the last-- starving, but surviving.

But the last few days when we were in the ghetto, trucks with German soldiers were coming and looking, searching for people because they wanted to round up everybody in the ghetto already at this point. So when we saw these trucks coming, we used to hide in hiding places. We used to run up to a next-door neighbor who had a place on the attics.

And everybody, quite a few people went in there. And when the last person came, they had a closet to cover up the place where it was the hiding place. And through a small hole, they used to peek out and see if they left already the area.

In the beginning, we were sitting there for half an hour, maybe an hour. And then we used to go back to our house. But it was getting harder and harder to hide because sometimes they stood in the area for about a few hours.

And we were sitting in this hiding place, and girls and boys and men and women in a very small area without any food and without any places to be comfortable. And it was really impossible. So my sister and me, we decided that it's unbearable for us to do it any longer.

And we decided we give up. And we went to the place where they were collecting people to send them away. We did it on our own. But I found out later, a few days later, that anyhow nobody could survive, except maybe a few people who were hiding underground.

But the people, we were hiding out with them together. I met them later in Auschwitz in the same conditions we were. They took us to Auschwitz. And they did with us like probably you heard many times before how they did with people when they took them to Auschwitz.

Well, tell us what happened. How did you get from the ghetto to Auschwitz? What exactly happened?

They took us on cattle trains. And nobody knew where we are going.

They told you to come to the train station? They told--

Well, it was not a train station. It was big blocks. And they were just collecting people.

In the gathering place?

Yeah, from there-- this was the gathering place. From there, they took us to a place where there were cattle cars. We didn't know anything what's going to happen to us.

You had no idea where you were going?

None whatsoever. I remember one incident that when we came to the place where they were gathering the people, outside of this building, I saw lots of blankets, pillows, all kind of things. And I mentioned to my sister that we came just without anything. We just had one set of clothes to change. And maybe it wasn't smart that we left everything behind. And I don't know what's going to happen.

So I mentioned to the policeman that I see people are carrying stuff with them, and we would like to go back and take something with us. And he said, girls, it's not necessary. It's really not necessary. You get everything over there. And it's not good for you to go back because now you are together with your sister. And maybe if you go back, you don't know what's going to happen. Maybe one will go one direction and the other one. So you better stay here.

So we stayed on. They gave us bread. For the first time many years, we almost had like enough bread to eat. And we were happy. We said this was a good thing that we came because it looked like we starved and we were under terrible circumstances, that it was some kind of relief at a short time. But when we went to these cattle cars and going like that without knowing, everybody was very upset and very sad.

What was it like inside the cattle car?

They cramped a lot of people in every compartment, like 30 people. I don't remember exactly.

Was there room enough to lie down?

Not to lie down, no. We were standing up or trying to sit. And there was a German soldier, in every compartment was a German soldier.

As we were going farther and farther, and everybody wanted to know where finally will be our destination. We looked out through very small windows. And I noticed people outside-- that was already at the place, Auschwitz, but I didn't know what it was-- running around and funny looking clothes with stripes and the heads were all shaved up. So my impression was that they are taking us to a crazy house because the people outside, they looked like crazy people. They didn't look normal.

And as we step down, as I said, me and my sister, we were in pretty good circumstances because we were both girls. But the people who came with families, the Germans separated them right away, men on one side, women on one side and children. And it was a very terrible scene.

And as we walked on, the people who were there, who looked crazy to me, they shouted, if you have anything, if you have a piece of bread, throw it because they will take it away from you. And I have to say, I did have a piece of bread. And I didn't throw this bread. I didn't know what's going to happen. A few minutes later, we were just bare without anything.

From the time you got off the train--

Yeah, they took us--

--it took a few minutes--

They took us to big I don't know, houses or buildings. And we had to strip naked, hundreds and hundreds of women standing like that in front of German soldiers. And then they shaved our heads. I'm sure you heard this before.

Well, tell us what happened to you.

They shaved our heads. And they took us to a shower room and checked if we didn't hide anything. And after we were through, it was a terrible shock to go through this.

During this process, did people ask what is going on? What's happening?

Nobody said anything. Everybody was completely shocked. After, we had to go into a shower room and they checked us. And everybody felt like not a person anymore.

Like not human anymore.

Not human at all. They had piles of clothes outside. That was already outdoors. And you had to choose from the pile whatever it was available, like if it was a long dress or a ripped or something, just like the-- on your naked body. I understand that these dresses must be from the people who went through the same thing before. So one lined up with the long dress, short or-- and we looked like animals. And it happened so fast that it was hard to comprehend.

Then they took us to stables. And we were standing up there for hours. And finally, they came with some kettles with soup. They told everybody to line up, 5 in a line, 5, all girls.

And they gave us one dish. The first one in front, she had a dish without a spoon. And they filled in some soup to that dish. And they said, we have to divide this between the five of us. Just a sip like that. You can imagine something like that.

When's the last time you had eaten at that time? You had just been on the train ride.

We didn't have any food on the train ride.

So it's been several days.

Right. And imagine they give the first person a bowl like they would soup, and they say that she should give the next one. And 5 people had-- it was really-- add more and more to the shock what we already had. I can't forget this first night what we went through. Like in a few hours, you are completely, I think, worse than an animal.

Dehumanized.

Completely.

And then after the soup, then what?

The next morning, they took us out to a field. And they kept us three days, day and night, outside. And the daytime was very hot. The sun was burning. And our heads were shaved. We felt like we are burning up. And in the evening, we were shivering cold, just sitting like that, three days and three nights.

Just standing--

Just right there in the field hundreds and hundreds of women, sitting like that in the field. And we didn't know what's going to happen. Somebody whispered-- I don't know from where it came-- that they are going to take us to the gas chambers.

You see, they showed from far away, there are some ovens. I said, how do you know? They said that somebody who works there, they told him. I don't know how the news got around. But one whispered to the other. And we really didn't know what's going to happen.

Is that the first time during the war years that you had heard of the term gas chambers?

This was the first time. We had no idea what's going on.

What do people talk about among each other during those days of waiting and wondering?

Everybody was very scared and shocked. I don't remember any conversation.

Were you allowed to speak to each other? Were you allowed any human contact with each other?

Well, we were sitting very close to each other, like almost on top of each other together. But I don't remember any conversation. All I remember is fear.

And what happened after those three days were up?

After the three days, they selected us again. They told us to take off the rags we were wearing-- you can't call it clothes-- and parade naked in front of some German soldiers. And they selected people. I didn't know what they are going to do.

But as I understand now, they wanted to see the naked bodies and to see who is really able to work, if we are not handicapped or how we look. They told us to walk straight. And I was 20 years old. I looked good at that time. But I imagine that maybe some people didn't go through that selection. They probably selected people to work, and they selected people to the gas chambers.

So me and my sister, we were sent to a place to work. We worked in places where they made ammunition for the German soldiers.

Was this on the grounds of the camp?

It was under ground, the factory where they worked. It was--

Was it at Auschwitz?

A whole building, it was camouflaged with some growth on top of the building. It was green on top with something was growing there. And we worked together with the German people.

You worked with Germans who lived in the town?

Yeah. But we were not allowed to talk to anybody.

So people who lived outside of Auschwitz came to work there every day and work alongside the inmates?

We lived in barracks. And every day, we had to get up at a certain time. They counted us. It's called Appells.

They counted us every single day before we left for work. They were very particular with the counting.

I couldn't understand why it's so important to them that every one of us is there. I mean, to us life didn't mean anything. But to them, it was very important to count that everybody is there.

If anybody was missing, we stood there for a long time until they found every single person. And we were escorted by soldiers to that factory where German people worked. Mostly, the Germans worked over there. Some of them were handicapped. I think they were sent back from the front, and they worked. And we were assigned to do certain things.

Do you think the Germans who worked in the factory knew what was going on?

I don't know because we never talked to anybody. All I remember, when it was alarms-- like they were bombarding the city-- they all were running to the shelters. And they took us with them. And we really felt that we would like to stay. We didn't care for life anymore.

But they wouldn't allow us to stay. They said, raus, raus, raus. And we had to stay together with them.

So you don't know what they knew about the gas chambers or the killing?

I never heard anything. And we never had any conversation, not even one word.

At that point, did you know about the gas chambers?

No. No, I didn't know. I didn't know about the gas chambers until the war was over. I also didn't know that I lost all my family until the war was over.

When I found out-- after we felt better, we started to look for names. They had certain points where people could go in. And they had books of names who survived.

This is after the war?

This was after the war, after I felt good enough to do it. I remember I met somebody on my way. And I said, I'm looking for my family. They were all in Warsaw. And I was hoping that somebody is alive from a very large family. And she told me if they were in Warsaw, nobody, almost nobody survived.

How many people of your family do you suspect died in Warsaw?

Most of my family died in Warsaw because they all moved to Warsaw.

Most of your family--

Two of my uncles-- my sister and I stayed on in the ghetto. Two of my uncles tried to escape from the ghetto when the ghetto was closed in the very beginning. They heard about some transportation. It was called [NON-ENGLISH], [? Goetler's ?] car, auto, that for some money, you could leave the ghetto and they will take you to a certain destination where they wanted to go.

One of my uncles was married. And he wanted to be together with his wife. And the other one wanted to be together with the family too.

And I know they made some arrangements to leave. And they left. And we never heard about them anymore. There was no sign where they took them and what happened to them.

So you don't for sure--

No--

--about anybody except your sister who lives in Israel now?

Yeah, who was together with me all the time. I didn't find anybody. We looked in books. We didn't find anybody.

Well, like I mentioned before, I met somebody on my way to that place to see if anybody survived. And she told me that the Warsaw ghetto was all burned. And even before, if they didn't perish in the fire, they took people to other camps. And they gassed them to Majdanek and Treblinka. And I was very upset that I was alive because at this point I felt, if I wouldn't be alive, I wouldn't have to feel so sad about the whole family.

Whole family missing. Do you remember about that very last day at the camp, about the day of liberation?

Yes, I do remember. I remember I was laying in places on the floor. People were very sick. And we didn't have enough room on this floor to stretch out. Like people were pushing and shoving. Everybody was trying to get a little place, like to rest his arms maybe and legs. That we were all cramped in these barracks on the floors.

Just on the floor? So there's no place to even lie down?

Nothing. And I really don't remember how I got into a barrack. It's something missing there. I don't know how.

But I remember that I was laying in a place where they had these bunk beds. And underneath, a woman was dead. And I was laying on top of her. And underneath somebody was dead.

And somebody came in, and they said the war is over. And I felt no reaction whatsoever. I felt the war is over, so what? I felt that it's too late for me to-- like I didn't feel-- I was not happy or anything, no emotions at all.

But then I saw that they took some German soldiers. They stripped them. I saw them that they looked scared, scary. And they had to come into this barracks and take out the dead people.

Who did this to German soldiers?

I saw some people who brought them in.

People who were in the camp?

No.

Oh.

I don't think so. It must be people who came to liberate.

The Russians?

Right. Well, I was liberated through the English.

Through the English?

Right. When I noticed that they are scared and they taking out the dead people, that hit me a little bit. I felt a certain satisfaction that I live to the day to see that they broke the Nazis, that they really could stop them from doing what they did for so many years. It was a certain satisfaction I had. But I was very sick.

How was your sister?

My sister was very ill. She was wearing the same clothes for a very long time. And she couldn't control

herself. And walking around like that--

She had dysentery?

Dysentery, right. And she was walking around very, very sick. I was afraid that she will really not make it even the war was over.

When the Red Cross came to take people, they used to come every day. And they took a few people. They look to see who really looks like they're most sick and they needed the most to go to the hospital. And they left the rest behind. Even the war was over, people were still dying. And--

In the camp, people were still in the camp?

Yeah, people were still in the camp. They were still dying. I was very sick. They had some food and water, but I couldn't take anything. My stomach was sick.

I couldn't digest any water. If I took a drop of water, I had to give it back. So I didn't care about the food. But maybe it was just as well, because I heard the people who took food and soups what they offered, they were really dying almost immediately.

Still at the camp?

At the camp. Well, I remember for a few days, they came back, the Red Cross. And they took people. And they still didn't take us. And I was afraid my sister would not make it.

So I told her when they come the following day not to wait until they take her. I told her just to strip and just lie down on these stretchers and maybe they will feel sorry for her and take her. And that's what happened. They took her. I remember after this, they didn't come back anymore.

So people were still at the camp and--

People were still at the camp. Some of the people maybe felt better, and they could take food and help themselves. But some of the people were just dying, even the war was over.

I could walk around, move around, but I couldn't eat. I don't know how I could survive in a condition like that. I asked my doctor now how it's possible that I could go around. And he said that maybe my body was immune already, it was like hibernated. Because when I finally got to the hospital, then I was very sick.

It's hard to believe that I could walk around. And the minute they got a bed, a clean bed for me, I was burning up like a fire. It was very high fever.

And my sister-- I couldn't find my sister right away. I was searching for her. Once a friend told me that she knows that the people who are taken to the hospital-- she also had a sister who was taken away from her-- that they are not far from us. Maybe we could go and find them and see if they are alive.

And I was very anxious to see if my sister is alive. So we walked out from that place. And she said she knows where it is. I started to walk. But I couldn't follow her. She was walking slow too. But I couldn't keep up with her. And she left me. It was a good friend of mine.

I just don't understand how people felt at this time. And they were not human anymore. She left me. And I was all alone. I didn't know what to do with myself. And I started to crawl, follow her and crawl.

And I don't know how long it took me, but I finally got to the hospital. And I looked for names on the doors to see if my sister is between the patients over there in the hospital. And I didn't see her name. And I was very upset.

And I didn't give up, even I didn't see her name. I opened every single door. And one of the rooms, she was

there, looking better already in a clean bed with clean sheets. And I was very happy that she's there.

But I also felt sorry for myself because I was still not taking care. I wore wooden shoes. I think for the last seven weeks I didn't take them off of my feet. They were like molded into my feet. When I finally took them off, I knew why they were. My feet were so swollen. They were like they grew into these shoes.

And when you got to the hospital, were you given a bed and taken care of there?

All I remember is that I was given a bed and clean sheets. And they took me to a separate room, not to get together with everybody because I was very sick. And I had high temperature.

I couldn't understand how I could walk around and when I'm lying down in bed I'm so sick. And I really felt that this is the end, that I'm dying. And I was so happy that I'm dying in a clean bed with clean sheets, that I lived to the day to see that I'm really clean, and I have a white sheet, and I don't have anything to bother me.

But I survived. Sometimes I'm not so happy that I survived and the rest of my family perished. Also, after I got married and I was pregnant, I also had feelings, mixed feelings about bringing a child to this world where so many bad things happen to us. And I felt that it's so cruel that it's almost too hard to bring a child and too afraid that something bad shouldn't happen to them.

Where were your children born?

I came to Sweden. After I survived and I was feeling better--

How did you get to Sweden?

They announced in the hospital that the Swedish people are willing to take in people and care for them. So me and my sister, we came to Sweden. That's where I met my husband. And my older daughter was born in Sweden.

Is your husband a survivor?

Yeah, my husband is a survivor.

How did you two meet in Sweden?

Well, they sent the young people, a lot of young people, to work, to Sweden.

So he came from another town--

He came from another--

--another area?

From another town. We met over there. He's from the same place I was born. It was a lot of sentiment to somebody who also came from the same place and also went through the same thing.

So he understood--

Yes.

--you and the war?

It was very important to have somebody who understood.

And your sister, what happened to her?

My sister also got married in Sweden. And she has one daughter. And my first daughter was born in Sweden. And Sweden was very kind to us. And it was good to recuperate over there. And later, we came to the United States.

How were you able to get into the States? Was it easy?

We had to wait many years for our quota. We waited 10 years.

In Sweden?

Well, we didn't wait. We lived in Sweden. But from the time they announced that the United States is willing to take in people, we waited a few years. I really don't remember how many. And we made our life here in the United States. We picked up the pieces and started all over again.

But what we went through will never-- the views and the sceneries and what we went through will never disappear. And I feel the best mostly with people who went through the same thing, like other survivors. We feel very close to other survivors. We feel that they understand.

And it's impossible to tell somebody the story that they should understand how we felt. And it's impossible to tell everything. So it's a feeling, like another survivor when we talk about something that they know exactly how it felt and what we went through.

Elie Wiesel often says that there's no language to use to describe what happened and was only living it that one could understand.

I read Elie Wiesel's-- some books. He wrote about the Holocaust. And I really appreciate because not everybody is able to write and to tell the story. I really feel very good, like he's speaking for all of us when he talks about the Holocaust and tells his stories. Of course, everybody has a different story to tell. But it's very good to have somebody among us who is able and he can tell about certain incidents what happened.

It took Elie Wiesel many years before he was able to tell his story. Did you find it hard to talk about your experience?

In the beginning, we were not willing to talk. When we came to Sweden, they wanted to know what we went through. It was hard and embarrassing. And also, it was too fresh. It was too painful to talk about these things in the beginning.

It took many years. Mostly, we talk about-- the survivors-- about people who went through the same thing. It was very hard to open up, even to our children. We wanted to spare them from that what we went through. We didn't want them to be shocked and to know what their parents went through. I remember that my daughter was old enough to ask me why I didn't tell her all these things. It took me a long time to be able to talk.

Did you wait till your children were almost grown before you told them?

Well, they were grown up when we talked about it. And I think even now that they read more about the Holocaust, they read more about it than we talk to them about it. I still find it very painful to talk to my children about it. I would like them to feel free and feel like any other people, not exactly have this mind all the time what their parents went through.

Do you find that this comes into your mind many times during the course of a week or a day or--

Well, it really stays with you all the time. And also, when we meet other people, Holocaust survivors, and we have happy occasions, but it always comes back to talk about it. Very seldom it goes by an evening that we wouldn't mention about what we went through.

How do you feel about German people today? Recently, we had this incident with President Reagan visiting Bitburg. How did you feel about that?

Well, we were very upset that something like that came up because we survivors are still alive now. And in our lifetime to see something like that, it was really not necessary to go to a cemetery where Nazis are buried. There were many other places where President Reagan could honor the German people if he wanted to do so and not exactly at that cemetery, Bitburg.

I was very upset with it. I was following and reading the paper. And I cut out every piece what I saw about Bitburg and watched the news and was very upset-- obsessed with it.

Do you think that perhaps President Reagan didn't know what the difference between an SS soldier and a German soldier was?

I'm not sure that he knew exactly.

Can you tell us what an SS soldier was?

Well, an SS soldier, I heard that they had to be voluntarily go to the army to be SS.

They're specially trained.

Specially trained, yeah.

To do what kinds of work?

Especially that was the elite. And they choose voluntarily to be in the SS.

At the camps?

At the camps.

So those were the people, the SS, who were in charge of the camps and in charge of the labor and in charge of the ovens and in charge of the extermination process, were they not?

These were the people, right.

So those were the people who were buried at Bitburg, the SS soldiers-- some of them.

Some of them.

Some of them were SS soldiers.

Yes, some of them.

And this is one of the major problems in that visit.

It was very painful in my lifetime to see something like that happen.

There was a tremendous outcry.

It really was.

There was and a lot of pressure was put on the president.

Yes, I remember. I followed everything. And I was very obsessed with it.

Well, we have just a few minutes left. Is there anything you want to tell people who will see this tape, who'll learn about your experience?

I'm very upset to see that in my lifetime talking about antisemitism and also about Nazism. I'm very upset with it.

With what aspect?

That there exists now today--

Still.

Still.

After all these years.

After all these years what happened that there are still people who are believing in Nazism, and they like to go in this direction. And I'm very upset with it.

Well, one of the reasons we do these tapings is to show that indeed it happened and perhaps never again. Perhaps we can all learn.

It's very hard to me to think about it that could ever happen again. I remember when we were very sick before the war was over, I used to tell my sister, if we only survived that war, we will be so happy and so lucky. It will be so good for us.

And now, when I see that the Holocaust is minimized and that it's also like they try to put it in the background, like something what happened, and it's not so important anymore, it hurts a lot.

There are those who say it never happened now.

Well, and this is a terrible thing because they have a lot of books and literature and survivors who are still alive. And I think it's a terrible thing for a person to make a statement like that that it never happened. I mean, it's unbelievable that somebody could say that.

I saw some films, they show-- they take the German people over there to the crematoria to show them, and that they are shocked with the view. But this is nothing compared to how it looked before. Now, it looks like a museum. Grass is growing and flowers are around. And they are also keeping the ovens.

But if I would go there now and visit, I probably wouldn't feel the same way. I see it different than it looks before. It's hard to imagine how it looks before and how the people look, you can see pictures and films. But it's hard to believe how it really was.

Sometimes I see films and I see pictures of that. And I see it's nothing like it was. It's unbelievable. It's almost a shame that they show it this way. The sun is shining. The grass, the flowers all around, it looks so beautiful, like a museum. And it hurts me because people can't understand. And they can't see it with the same eyes we saw it when it really happened.

Perhaps never again, and that's why.

Well, we hope so.

Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Lipson.

Thank you. Thank you. And I hope it will help somebody to understand better what we went through at least in a certain way, in a certain measure because it's impossible to understand fully how it was

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Thank you.