

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back and I'm the director of the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo. It is December 13, 1990, and we are at Channel 4. And our guest this evening is Mrs. Lilli Haber Silbiger, who was born in what we know now as Auschwitz. Lilli, will you tell us about your childhood?

Yes, I'll be glad to. I was born in Poland, which was western-- actually, southwest part of Poland in a town called Oswiecim, or as it is better known now, the infamous Auschwitz. I was one of five siblings, lived with my parents, and my sisters, and brothers on the outskirts of our town and leading a fairly normal life.

My father was a grain dealer. And my mother was a teacher. As I said, it was a very secure type of life existence. And we lived, as I mentioned to you, on the outskirts of the city, which was about a-- one kilometer, less than a mile, outside of the center of the city, of the town.

And because of that, we had, of course-- we had a lot of living space. We had our own garden. We had meadows, even. And I always felt so free. I used to run barefoot, and climb trees, and climb fences, and was kind of a tomboy. But that lended itself because of the freedom of movement. We were not confined. So as every child, I too in life was happy, contented.

Did you go to school in town?

Yes, we walked. We walked to school every day to town. On the winter time, we would be driven by sleigh because cars, at that time, were very rare, especially in our town. But we would have horses with sleigh in the wintertime. This was our mode of transportation then. We lived very close to the infamous concentration camp. And actually, before the war, there was a river, which was called Sola, divided the part where we lived. And on the other side of the Sola were military barracks. And that's where the military was stationed.

We have a map of that. We could see that. But first, before that, we also have pictures of two of your sisters.

Right. My older sister, Helga, she perished during the war. And so did my-- this is Helga. And this was my younger sister. I would like to mention that besides the two sisters who perished, I had a very young brother, who at the outbreak of World War II was only three years old. When he perished, he was six years old, actually.

So he was the youngest in your family?

He was the youngest in the family.

Excuse me, but we have a picture, a diagram, a map of Auschwitz, Oswiecim.

Oh, yes, this is supposedly the marketplace. And to tell you a little bit about the town, it was a small town by our measured comparison, about 12,000-13,000 population. However, the Jewish population was close to 7,000. We were, and most of them were, Orthodox Jews, living a very Orthodox life. I would say, right in 1939, as we all know, Germany or Hitler invaded Poland. And this was in September of 1939. And this is when normal life came to a halt.

How did that affect you personally?

Well, how did that affect me personally? Well, I would have to gradually talk about it--

Please.

Because, actually--

Please, do that.

--I would say it has to be an order of events that took place. Naturally, as anyone-- I'm sure not only children, but adults

too, are frightened by a massive invasion. And then you feel that, all of a sudden, you are uprooted. You don't have the security anymore and so on.

But specifically, what really took place that we were soon after the collapse of Poland, we were singled out, Jews, for mistreatment, to say the least, and restrictions were instituted, initiated. We were to wear white armbands with a Star of David on it so as to distinguish us from others. We were limited to a, first of all, curfew. Definitely, a curfew was imposed, so we were not allowed after a certain hour in the street. Later on, we were even restricted to certain areas that we were not allowed to frequent or walk the street, certain side of the street.

Did you manage to go to school?

No. Of course, as everything else came to an abrupt halt, schools were definitely closed to us. A few months after the outbreak of-- I mean, of the, actually, occupation of Poland, we experienced a very traumatic thing. All the Jewish synagogues were burned. Books were gathered in a marketplace and burned.

And then the-- continuously, orders were coming in. We had to turn in our radios. Any valuables that we possessed had to be turned in-- furs, or jewelry, and so on. And we continued living, though, in Auschwitz in our home, actually, not only in our hometown.

Was your father was still able to work?

No, he was not. Of course, this was just-- I mean, all the stores or any type of business, or any type of occupation that one was practicing, I mean, everything was just totally eliminated and forbidden.

There was a time that, actually, anyone who has had any designs on, for instance, come and take your property away could just go, and he said, well, I am a Volksdeutscher, which let's say, I am a German that used to be a Pole before. But now, I'm a German. And I would like their property. So they immediately--

They would just take it.

--just like that, and the order was given that we have to vacate the premises. It was interesting because this was a very traumatic experience. An order was issued that we are to vacate our home and give up everything. And my father dealt with the man before the war, who was actually a German. And of course, when Germany took over, he was a true German then.

So my father sought his help. And the men intervened. And they did permit us to stay in our home. And we remained there until 1941. But to go back a little bit, before we left, we were actually shipped out of Auschwitz, which was in the spring of 1941. We also were witnesses to the building of the concentration camp.

Did you know? What did they say they were building?

Oh, they weren't saying what they were building, naturally. But we did see the chimney that was the crematorium. They simply were-- people had to report-- Jews had to report to work forcibly and so on, or at least the Jewish committee had to present so many people, so many males every day to go and work on the construction there and build a concentration camp. Later on, they demolished half of the town and extended this. And there was a larger.

Are you saying the Jewish residents of the town were asked to build there in Auschwitz?

They were made to build, absolutely.

Did you know if any of the 7,000 Jewish residents actually landed, ended up in Auschwitz?

I'm certain of that because I can see from the numbers that many of them returned, among them my family too.

Your family as well.

As a matter of-- yes. We didn't know it then, but in 1941, an order was given that our town is to become Judenrein, which meant that they were liquidating the-- the Jews were being deported to another town. The town that we were sent to was Sosnowiec. We could only take our personal belongings with us.

And we arrived in Sosnowiec, where already, a ghetto was being formed, and again, an area restricted to just the Jews. Times were very difficult there. Food was scarce. And we lived in constant fear because there were continuous raids that they would just come in and raid, either come into the house or in the streets when one walked, and take people, and send them to Germany to forced labor camps. So I remember myself being so frightened, not for myself, but they shouldn't take my father. And so naturally, it was a life of, again, of constant fear.

May I ask you if--

Yes.

--you didn't go to school, what did you and your siblings do during the day?

Well, while we were home yet, my mother, fortunately, being a teacher, we did a lot of-- she was teaching us and studying. And we were doing all kinds of-- we had our own responsibilities and so on. But once we arrived in Sosnowiec, which was in 1941, things were becoming very difficult. Also, there were more frequent deportations of mostly to forced labor camps. They did not deport yet people for--

Concentration.

--concentration camps or annihilation. And we were fearful because we knew that this was actually coming. So we were assured that if the more members in a family are employed, then we would be safe. We wouldn't be deported, as long as we worked. And by being employed means for German industry.

My father worked. I don't know what he was doing, but somewhere in a factory. I don't remember-- my sister. And it was very difficult to even get a job. And I remember that people were frantic. They wanted to work because they felt, this way, they will save themselves--

This would save them.

--save themselves from deportation. Somehow, I had a friend in Sosnowiec, who through her uncle, was able to work in a city about 11 kilometers from Sosnowiec. That city was called Katowice. Katowice, once Poland was defeated, became like a German city. But it was really a Polish city, only there was a lot of German spoken, a lot of German people lived there. So this became a totally German city.

Our job would be then we would be commuting from Sosnowiec to Katowice daily with the train. And our job was to work on a garbage dump. Now, there were about 18 girls that were doing that job. Then there were about 50 boys who were collecting the garbage. There was sanitation department. Those trucks were coming to the dumping grounds. And there, our job was to grade it, pick out the cans, glass, anything. And this was all going for war efforts because they were using it. They were recycling it.

In the wintertime, we were cleaning the streets of snow and carting, many times carting the ice away, and snow away, and so on. And this continued. So we were at least commuting, coming home at night, home.

In 1942, in the August of 1942, an order came out that we are to report to places of our, let's say, like my father's employment. They are only going to check our papers. And if we are employed, there is no fear. They want to check it through. And we will be able to return home. So we gathered in those respective places. Soon after, they had all the people together. They shipped us by trucks into a huge-- a football stadium. And there, I would say there must have been about 25,000 people.

Were you with your parents and siblings?

I was with my parents and with my siblings. After spending there almost the whole day, they had us go through certain-- they had certain checkpoints. And the SS was standing-- or not certain, but one checkpoint. And of course, we were all together with the-- the family was together. And as we approached the checkpoint, the SS men, they did not check our papers.

My mother was holding my little brother by the hand. And they immediately told her, to the left, my brother and me, to the right, and my other sisters and my father to go straight. We didn't know what it meant at that time. But soon, we found out that my mother and my little brother were marked for deportation. We were sent-- I worked in Katowice. So we were actually sent-- I was sent to Katowice. And my brother was sent, then, to a forced labor camp.

What happened to your father and to your sister?

My father was sent home. In other words, he could still remain in the ghetto with my sisters. I was working in Katowice. And actually, it wasn't bad because we did have food there. We worked, and conditions were bearable, absolutely bearable.

Where did you live?

They formed a camp there, with the 18 girls and 50 boys. And they kept us there. But then once in a while, because the ghetto was still in existence, so once in a while, they would permit us with the-- we were actually accompanied by one of the camp leaders to go to Sosnowiec. They went on some business. And they would allow some of us to come and visit our family.

And I was able. When you asked me about my little sister, I was able to see my father and my sisters for a while. I mean, I was there a few times that I was fortunate to come and see them for a few hours. And then we were taken back to Katowice. In 1943, apparently, things were getting very tight, and very uneasy, and uncertain. And that's when they decided to liquidate this Katowice work site.

And they sent us to what we call Durchgangslager, which meant a transient camp. From there, we were to be assigned to areas in Germany, right, to forced labor camps. The interesting thing is that when I was there, we knew that the ghetto situation was very grim, that the ghetto will be liquidated. Rumors were already spreading at that time.

We were begging that they should allow people to come into the transient camp and to be able to be shipped to Germany to forced labor camps. And I knew someone there. And I begged her whether my sisters could come. And you understand that they would take them in. They didn't. From there, so we spent about a week or so in that transient place in Sosnowiec. We were shipped to Germany to, actually, Lower Silesia, they call it-- Niederschlesien, rather. And we arrived in a group of girls, about 50.

You were, at this time, about 14-15?

Right, yes, 14, yes, going on 15. And we arrived in a town called Bockenheim. There, we were to work in a weaving factory, like a weaving mill. And again, those mills were all producing, again, for the war efforts. And what they were-- I mean, the weaving factory, actually, what they were producing is we were to weave silk for parachutes. And from wool, wool was woven into blankets for the soldiers.

Did you know this?

No.

Did you know what you were doing?

No, but I didn't know when I came, but I knew what I was doing then. Yes. I mean, I knew that.

I mean, for what reason for it.

Well, we were told that.

You were told.

We were told because we were-- in no uncertain terms that if anything goes wrong, they will consider it sabotage.

That was my next question.

Right. I was given four looms to operate, huge. And that was really quite a job. We worked there about 10 to 11 hours a day. But considering what happened later on, when you look in retrospect, this was heaven. We were fortunate. There were 100 girls in that camp, in that forced labor camp. But somehow, by a fluke, we were fortunate to get a German woman who was the *lagerführerin*. *Lagerführerin* means the leader of that camp.

I see.

She was a stern and very almost forbidding-looking woman. She was you thought, wow, this is-- we are really going to have it tough. But her demeanor was so deceiving. She was a very good woman. And she would go, and besides the rations that we were assigned, given, she would go and organize-- like once, I remember, she took few of us girls on a truck and took us to get potatoes from the farmers. So really, in comparison to what was going on, we were fortunate to be in that camp.

She took care of you. And of course, she got labor from you as well.

Well, we were ready to work -- anyone was ready to give it all, except let us live.

Was your brother still with you?

No, he was not. This was already in a forced labor camp. And he was sent somewhere else. After several months, this factory, either it closed down-- I don't know what really happened. But they took us and divided the 100 girls into two groups and sent one to Merzdorf. My group went to Landeshut. Again, I was fortunate that the group that went to Landeshut-- that was another weaving and a mill-- was the *lagerführerin* went with us to Landeshut. So our conditions were not bad.

In Landeshut, we worked on night shifts for 12 hours and slept during the day. Our quarters were above a barn. And it was an attic, actually, and that's where the 100 girls were living. Things were bearable, as I said, as long as no one was there to really starve us or make our living or our conditions so unbearable. We went on and we worked.

Were any of the girls friends from your hometown?

I didn't have anyone from my hometown. But I was close friends with girls that I met there, very close friends. In the spring of 1944, orders came to liquidate those small camps. And we were all to be sent to a concentration camp. And we were shipped to Gräfenberg, which was-- belonged to Gross-Rosen, one of the concentration camps. When we arrived there, there were 1,000 girls there.

And things rapidly started to deteriorate. There was no food. We were working very hard. And we had there a German who was, I believe, the director of the factory. The men used to wear a ring, a huge ring, with a *totenkopf*, which was a skull. And whenever he wanted to hit anyone, he would just turn that inside out and just smash your face. But the man was actually a sadist.

We worked six days. And on Sundays, when we would have a day to rest, we would have to be-- or we would be called

to appeal, which was the roll call, and stand for hours. And then he would do a very good job trying to break our spirits, just to crush us. And he would say, the only way out of here is through a chimney. You will never see any freedom.

So I remember then thinking, how I wish that I was given a sentence and was a prisoner in a regular prison. At least I would know that whether I'm given two years or five years, that after that, I will be free. But there was absolutely no hope for us. Then one asks, how do you manage to really maintain an equilibrium and go on?

Well, I guess being young is one good feature. You don't understand the enormity of what is happening to you or you refuse to understand it. And you are hopeful. You feel that you are almost immortal, that you cannot die. And I guess this is what sustains you and keeps you going.

Was the element of faith or God any part of that.

Oh, definitely. I must say that I prayed every night. I mean, coming from a Orthodox home, I prayed every night. And I believe what sustained me more than anything was my belief and my hope that the way I was trying to survive and get through, that my family was doing the same thing, that somewhere there, after all the struggle, we'll all meet and be a happy family again.

And right, now, in 1945, it was about the end of January, we heard artillery fire. We heard things are going on. What actually was happening is that the Russians were approaching from the east. And we didn't know then, we just heard the artillery. We just heard artillery fire. And we heard sometimes planes flying over and so on.

And one day, they brought in about 2,000 girls from another camp who have marched already. And I believe that they came from Auschwitz or from those areas there. We found out then that we were to leave the following day. We were to leave the camp premises and go on a forced march.

Did you know where you were going?

How would we? Not only didn't we know where we were going, we did not have any idea. You see, everything was kept in such secret and so away from us--

Another aspect to terrorized you.

--absolutely-- that we had absolutely no idea what was going on. We were ordered to, again, assemble outside. And then they divided us into two groups. So I would say there were 1,500 girls and 1,500 girls that-- and we were marched out of the camp. This is when the horror started.

Were you in fairly good shape, physical shape up until then?

No, actually, when I came to GrÄ¼nberg, to that camp, again, I was in good shape then. But within weeks, I lost about 20 pounds. And situation was such that food was very meager there and scarce.

What was the food? Maybe you'll tell us.

Well, we, would get, actually, twice daily, we would get-- during the day, we received a bowl of soup, supposedly. But it was mostly floating leaves. And if you were fortunate and found a piece of potato on the bottom, that was great. And we got a slice of bread. And this was to sustain us for 24 hours.

Twice, those were two meals like that, both the same?

Well, no, we would only receive soup once a day and a slice of bread just once a day. OK. It's interesting because if we were fortunate to find a piece of potato, we would save that potato. I say we because I had two very close friends that we shared everything. If one happened to get a little bit better, the soup was a little thicker, and the other one had watery, we shared it together. This is how, you see, so we never lost our humanity. We never lost our-- do you know

what I mean, that--

Your spirit.

--spirit and maintain that dignity that we are. We didn't allow ourselves to become animals, as happened in many cases. We would, if one of us found a piece of potato in that water, we would save that. And then when we returned from work in the evening, we would take the slice of bread and put that potato and slice it.

And that tasted like a hard-boiled egg. You wouldn't know that. When the war ended-- I always say, when the war ends, that's all I want to know is to have is enough bread and potatoes so I can slice them and feel like I'm eating bread and hard-boiled eggs. So once we started on the forced march, we already were in bad shape.

Did you have shoes and warm clothing?

I had still my pair of-- it's interesting that I had my own pair of shoes that I still had from home. And we just saved it. And I mean, I wore it and had to do the best with it. Clothing, we did not have the prisoner's garbs, the striped ones. We had our own clothes. But on those, we had written in lime, huge KL, which was Konzentrationslager. And this was painted on the front and the back of us. And of course, you know. And so we were well visible. The march started. And we were doing 30 kilometers every day.

What month are we talking about?

We are talking about end of January, the wintertime.

So there's snow on the ground.

Absolutely. The first, when we-- at the end of the day, they would make arrangements to have us sleep in a barn and then, the following day, continue on. I remember, the first time when we came into the barn and after-- it was snowing, naturally, and cold. And girls took off their shoes. Well, the next day they couldn't put them on because they were just totally swollen because the shoes were wet and all that. And this was frightening. We learned fast enough that never to take off our shoes.

We marched for several days. And attempts were made to escape. Here and there, some girls were fortunate that they would escape. And one such day, we were marching with a highway. On both sides, you had woods. So if you were fortunate, you could, if you wanted to, if you could try, to jump into and see that you escaped their attention.

And did people die on the way?

Well, this was in the beginning, OK. That wasn't yet-- I'm talking about the first few days of our march. But what has happened that has had a very traumatic effect on us was that several girls attempted to escape into the woods. There was a small forest. And I believe there were about 10 or 12 girls. Well, the guards stopped, naturally, and surrounded that small forest, routed everyone out, and then we had to stand. And in front of us, all of them were shot, killed. And this was to us a warning that this is what's going to happen.

We continued walking daily. And people were, by then, falling by the wayside, as you say. They were collapsing. And if they could not go on anymore, then they were shot and left there, or buried in some. We were ordered, actually to bury them in very shallow graves.

Did you get food along the way?

Absolute very little, very little. And I would say that we continued on sheer, I would say, nervous strength or some determination to keep going. Perhaps two or three weeks into our march, there was an incident where some of the girls, I believe, stole a few loaves of bread from the wherever they were kept there.

The storage.

We came to it from the storage and where we stopped for the night. The punishment was that they lined us up. We had again the roll call, appell, and then there was almost like a selection. The SS would go and pick out whoever they want to have them walk out of the line and stand on the side. They selected about 50 girls. And I was also called out, too, with a group of other girls, perhaps five or six.

They took the other girls on the wagons. And they took us-- I don't recall whether we were on wagons or walking. And nevertheless, they handed us shovels and told me and the few girls that were with me to dig a grave. We didn't know that it was a grave.

But after some time, we have done that, we were digging. And it was a very shallow there. They brought the 50 girls and shot them all. They were already sickly. And I assume that they picked them out because they already looked like they would be--

Dying, ultimately.

--dying. And we had the task to come then and cover them. And this was hard. When I return to that place where we stayed, supposedly the overnight shelter, my girlfriend was there. And of course, she was-- they knew already what was happening. And when she saw me, she was just ecstatic that I was alive.

That you survived.

Yeah. And we continued. As I said, the numbers were getting smaller and smaller. This went on for from end of January until beginning of May. To tell you, perhaps, one-- my personal, also, involvement here, I had, as I mentioned-- I don't know if I mentioned to you. I had two very close friends with whom we shared everything. One of my friends was getting weaker by the day. And we would just drag her because we knew that if we--

You didn't, she wouldn't make it.

--if she couldn't, then she would die, she would be killed. And we contemplated escaping many times, but we would not leave her. And she was not in a condition anymore to even attempt to escape. On May 1st, she died. We were then sleeping outside. And I was with her. And then they told us-- she was next to me. And then they called us out to give us some food, some soup. And as we were standing in line, someone said, [? Halinka ?] Spiegelman is dead.

And then I remember coming back into the barn. And the clothes that she had on her were taken off her body because everyone-- do you know what I mean? And she was just naked there. And everyone was stepping over her. I was very weak then. But with the last gasp of my strength, I couldn't see that anyone would step over her body. And I pushed her aside, outside, sort of out of the way of those that were tramping over.

But this was already a matter of fact thing. We would go to sleep in a barn at night. In the morning, we would wake up and there were corpses all around us. But so on May 1st, she died.

Then things were so bad that I and my other close friend, another Halina, we said that we knew that we cannot continue, that we will be the next ones to really collapse. And we decided to take a chance and escape. If we are lucky, we will perhaps save our lives. If we are not, either way, we are goners, as they say.

So this was already toward the end of-- on May 4th. It was already almost the very end of the war. And there was only a very small group left of us. At night, was very dark. And we walked, as I said, on the highway. There were woods in between. We simply jumped in and lay flat. And we heard one or two shots. But I believe by then, the Germans themselves were not that interested anymore. They knew that the end was coming. So they went on. They continued on.

And we stayed in the woods until the next morning. But we couldn't remain there because we had to have something. We had to get some food, otherwise we would die out of-- I mean, we knew that we couldn't last another day. So there



were two dangers-- we are in German territory. How do you approach anyone? They saw that visibly--

Also had the dress and the name.

--that we were concentration camp, yeah, inmates. It took us a whole day to climb over, almost like a hill. And on top of that hill, we saw that there were some farms there, a couple of farms. And we said, we have to drag ourselves, and come in, and ask for some food. And we came to a farm, totally isolated, took us almost like three quarters of a day to get there. And we came in.

And there was a man of about 70 came outside to meet. He had dogs were barking. And he came out to see. And he said-- and we told him, we said to him, we are Polish concentration camp inmates. We didn't say Jewish, that we are Poles. And could we get some food? And he said, yes, come in. And he put us up in his barn, brought us some bread, and kept us there.

He would bring us some soup, some bread, some dry potatoes. In the meantime, few days passed. And then he came and told us-- about seven days passed, he says, the war is over. We did not know. The war is over. In the meantime, my girlfriend developed gangrene. She had frostbite--

Frostbitten.

--on the feet a bit. And she was in excruciating pain. And she was-- gangrene was setting in. Well, after the war ended and he said to us-- oh, he told us that the war is over, he says, I know that you are Jewish concentration camp inmates. When I saw you, I thought that you came from the other world, that you were just skeletons. I mean, we must have looked just horrible because he says, I thought that you just-- as corpses have stood up and risen.

And he was very compassionate because he was in-- he told us then that he was in a prison of war in Siberia. And he knew. He immediately, he went through a lot in the First World War. We are talking about the First World War. But the man was really very compassionate. But then after seven days, he brought us into his house and gave us, I remember, the first egg, to eat an egg. And he said, do you know, if I had given you anything more, if I had given you butter, if I had given you milk, if I have given you--

You would have gotten sick.

--you would have been dead. You see, the man--

He knew.

--had such-- he knew that so I had to gradually give you just that you-- otherwise, you wouldn't have survived. You would have been dead from not being able to--

To accommodate it, yeah.

--accommodate, yeah. The food wasn't-- your system would not be able to take the-- adjust or whatever, digest the food. And it so happened that many people who survived the war died after they were given normal food to eat.

After seven or eight days, my condition was still bad, but hers was absolutely, it was just critical. So he took us with a wagon to the town where we were liberated, Prachatice. And then we were placed in a hospital. Halinka was operated on. Fortunately, they did not have to amputate her toes. But they had to scrape. And OK, we remained in the hospital.

Was that an Allied hospital?

This was actually-- now, I did fail to mention that this was-- when we were liberated in Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia. And Sudetenland, if you probably know, was annexed by Germany just before invasion of-- in 1939. And he annexed it and made it part of Germany. But this was really Czechoslovakian territory. Many are Germans or German-speaking

people lived there, like this man that saved us was really, he lived in Czechoslovakia, but he was a German or German-speaking. And he was German. So when we arrived at the hospital, as I said, they--

They took care of your friend.

--took care of us, of course. And my friend was taken care of surgically. And they kept us there to bring us back to our health. And in the meantime, there was a division of a station of American soldiers stationed in Prachatice because it was the Americans that liberated this part of Europe.

And they soon learned that there were about 18 girls, 17 or 18 girls in the hospital there. They arrived and took us under their wings, but in such a way. First of all, they found out that those were Jewish girls. And those were Jewish soldiers and in the army. A chaplain also was attached to that group. And not only did they give us so much hope and--

Support, yeah.

--support, but they have also nursed us back to health. Food was very scarce everywhere in Germany and all the European countries. And so they would feed us. They would bring us vitamins and all the good American nourishment. And soon, we came to ourselves, I mean, after a few weeks-- as a matter of fact, the little picture that I showed you.

Oh, yes. Let's put that on the screen, and you tell us about that.

Now, this one, the man in there, on the back, now, those are-- I am on the left or right, as you call it, is the dark-haired one with the long hair, and then other two girls from my camp. The young man in back is an American soldier. And he was one of those that has taken care of us. And those girls were also in the hospital there. And this was about six weeks after the war ended. And they have just really been a terrific moral and all-around support for us, boost them.

Did anybody ever keep in touch with any of those soldiers?

No. No, we didn't, with none of them. But they have been, really, the angels to us, yeah.

Did you keep in touch with the man who saved you at the end, the German?

Well, that's an interesting-- I'm glad you mention it. Now, we were liberated in Czechoslovakia. This is an incident that I want to show you how-- how much time do we have?

We have 10 minutes.

OK. The man, the farmer that saved our lives, found himself soon in a situation where he was the object of almost of persecution. How it happened? We were in Czechoslovakia, right? Germans that lived there were, naturally, undesirable element. And someone reported on him that he has been doing whatever he did wrong during the war, or perhaps he hurt some Czech people, right?

Immediately, he was summoned to the police headquarters. And the captain of the police precinct was a Czech concentration camp survivor. Now, he was the one that-- but he was not Jewish. He was just a political prisoner. And when they summoned him, when they brought him to the station, he said, he told them that he saved two Jewish girls, that he saved their lives.

So they called us. We came in and we told them this story. And they said, you are defending a German? And we told him, we are not defending a German. We are defending a human being, who has shown so much heart and compassion. And do you know? They let him go. And he could have been done with because that's all you needed to is just to say one derogatory word about and they would do away with them.

And then we were, after several weeks, the American unit was leaving. And they didn't want to leave us there. There were just 17-18 girls. So arrangements were made that we were to go to Austria, and from there, try to go illegally to

Palestine then. And that's how we ended up in Austria. Things were not going well for the illegal immigration, as you know. The British were making it very difficult, and sending back the ships, and so on. So we kind of were stuck in Austria then.

Were you in a DP camp?

I was in a DP camp then. I did not know of anyone that-- if anyone survived. We did look. I did look in all those books or all kinds of files that you had on survivors, wherever you-- if anyone survived, they would go and register in different points. Nowhere, did I see anyone from my family.

Do you know what happened to your father and your sisters?

Well, yes. My father and my two sisters were deported, and they were to Auschwitz. And I have learned that later. This happened in 1943, when they liquidated the ghetto in Sosnowiec. And 15,000 Jews were sent to Auschwitz. And this is documented. My mother and my little brother were deported in '42, as I mentioned to you, also to Auschwitz.

And when did you meet your brother again?

About two months passed. And I had absolutely nowhere, no knowledge. And whoever I ask, no one knew, do you follow me, that whether he's alive. And we looked at those lists of survivors. And then I became very--

Depressed?

--depressed. The way I fought, with every ending of my nerve ends, with everything that I possessed to survive, because as I was fighting for survival, I felt that my whole family was doing the same thing, and that someday, we will meet. And that's what kept me. That's what really kept me going.

But then when I found that there was no one left, I just gave up. And I became very indifferent. And then I truly didn't care whether I live or die. It was a strange period of my life. After two months, through some miracle, I found out that my brother was alive. And of course, that's when we did get together and so on.

I did arrive in the United States in 1947. And started a new life. And my husband, who is also a concentration camp survivor, whom I met here in the United States, and we were fortunate to raise a family and build a life for ourselves.

Really, we don't have too much time. And you mentioned that you wanted to talk about something that is very important to you.

I do because I'm simply-- I seem to feel that at this point of my life, it seems like my past and my experience, though it is important, but it's secondary to what I feel the future generation, our second generation, our children, and their children, how this will affect, how they are affected, and they have been affected, and how our past has affected them.

It's interesting because I have to relate-- I don't know how much time we have-- but I do want to relate a article, tell you about an article that I read by a concentration camp survivor, who talks about a man he befriended in Auschwitz. And one day, they were standing at an appell, at the roll call for hours, and hours, and hours. And people were fainting and falling. And it was just horribly unbearable in the wintertime.

And he glanced at his friend who was standing there, and the friend was praying. And he said to him, what are you doing? And he said, don't you see? I am praying. He says, why are you praying? It's not your morning prayer. That's too late for that, too early for your afternoon prayers. He says, I am thanking God. He said, what are you thanking God for? For not making us barbarians like they are.

And this leads me into that we have brought up our children. We have gone through such horrid experience. Nevertheless, it was our intent to bring up our children, and teach them all the values, and that the world is good and honest, and to be sincere, and caring, and responsible.

And we did not want to burden them with that they should feel the brunt of what we have gone through because we felt, had we displayed bitterness and hatred for what was done to us, we would have really crippled those children. And we felt, then, Hitler would have won in the long run. And we wouldn't allow that to happen.

And that's your message. You've risen above that barbarism.

And we have risen above that. And we have taught them that the world is good, that people are good, to believe in humanity, and be responsible and caring. And I believe we have accomplished that because our children turned out to be what we have hoped for. We have lived through them. Our children were really our world. Thank you.

Anyway, I do feel, though. And this is actually what disturbs me. Though we know that they are wonderful individual, and law-abiding, and caring, and responsible, they are deeply affected by what we have gone through by our past. And I just hope and pray that they will not suffer or suffer that because of their parents, that they have to carry such burden and such a responsibility for future generations.

I think on the contrary, there will be strength. Thank you very much, Lilli. Thank you very much.