

Good evening. My name is Toby Ticktin Back, and I am the director of the Holocaust Resource Center in Buffalo. This evening, October 18, 1990, we are at Channel 4 in Buffalo. Our guest this evening is Luba Litterman, who was born in Poland. Luba, will you tell us about your childhood?

I was in Poland, born in Poland, in Stopnica, a little town. And our family consisted of parents and six children. I had three brothers and two sisters. We were three and three. I was the youngest of six.

My father was a businessman. And we had a very comfortable life in Poland. All the children went to high school-- not all of them, really, because they started to being restrictions. But whoever could. And I didn't make it yet, because at that time already, besides being in Poland in 1939, when the Germans came in, all the restrictions started. There was no more higher education.

And besides public school, I went, though, to Hebrew school every single day. It was a very-- it was like almost a day school, and all my other sisters and brothers too. Really, my oldest brothers was almost 19 years older than I was.

19. So it was a different generation.

So it was a very big different. And see, it was a very small city and-- town, really. And he went to a bigger town. And he started as a bookkeeper and worked himself up. And he was married. I had two nieces-- already big ones. And my oldest sister was married to-- I had a little nephew.

And then my brother saw to it that the other children went also there, because there was very hard. See, my father was very Orthodox. And gymnasium, college, was-- they had to go Saturdays, and that my father didn't allow.

So one of my brothers was very, very bright. In fact, I have a picture of him. And he, at 19 years old, going to Łódź. It was a textile city.

Let's wait and see the-- oh, here's the picture of your brother on the screen.

Yes.

What is his name?

His name is Kopel And he won all stipendiums, all scholarships, but nevertheless he didn't go. He went to Łódź.

And at 19 years old, he had a factory of sweaters already.

By himself.

Yes. He was very brilliant all the way.

And so I stayed with my parents because I was the youngest. And before the war broke out, we were thinking of moving also to Łódź. But the war came. And because it was Third Reich-- Łódź was annexed to the Third Reich-- everybody came home-- even the married brother that lived there too.

And when the Germans came, we didn't know how it's going to be.

You're talking about October--

'39.

--or September 1939.

'39. And they started with the yellow stars of David to wear on the arms. And curfews. We couldn't go out very late in the evening. And higher school was forbidden. And all other things. And it started, but it still wasn't so bad, because we had the roof over our heads, and everything.

Was your father still working?

My father-- we had yard goods So even we didn't work that much, we still could sell the yard goods, and have the essentials and more than the essentials.

And in 1941-- and that was going on till 19-- 1941 they started taking people to the labor camps. It wasn't concentration-- labor camps.

And in 1942 they promised, they said--

The Nazis.

The Nazis, yes. If the youth, the young people, would go to camps willingly, they won't touch the older generation I still have. I said-- aunts and uncles, and I still even had a grandmother, and my parents.

And you were all together in the same--

All together--

--town.

--in the same town, yeah. And so four of us, four of us that weren't married, we went to the concentration camp.

To the labor camp?

To labor camp, yes. And everybody was left behind.

By "everyone," you mean your parents--

Everyone. My parents and my oldest brother had two children. They wouldn't separate. And my oldest daughter-- my brother-in-law went, though. But my--

Your older sister.

Yes, but she stayed because she had that little boy, which we never saw again.

And we went. And I ended up in a very-- it was a hard one. It was Skarzysko-- Skarzysko-Kamienna. It was in Poland. And it was a very, very bad one.

They had three-- they had A, B, and C. Where I went was C. And the work that we did, it was ammunition. It was an ammunition factory.

It was so, from the ammunition, everything that you touched, the hair became red, and the eyes, the whites, were yellow. And under the nails everything yellow.

What did you actually do, Luba?

What I did-- see, maybe I wouldn't have survived. But everybody somehow has their own miracle to tell. My miracle was that there was, in charge, a Volksdeutsche. He was from around the border, not Polish, and not-- and he was in charge.

And I always, because being so small, and I was very thin-- very thin-- he kind of took three girls-- two sisters and me-- under his wing. And he watched that we shouldn't have the very, very bad work, because I wouldn't really have survived.

Now in the camp, they gave us-- we worked very hard, 12 to 14 hours a day. And we had ration, a little piece of very, very dark and sour bread. And we had a little soup.

And that was for a whole day. That means that you couldn't eat at one time the bread. You had to cut pieces and--
To ration.

To ration it and leave it for a little later-- whoever could do it. Not everybody could do it.

And you were lucky. You had the soup. He tipped the ladle a little deeper in. If not, you had really pure water.

But the worst part of it was-- maybe it wasn't so the work, which was pretty bad too. A lot of beating, and a lot of-- but the worst thing were the selections. They took us every single day out, either a day or at night time, even after a night shift.

Did you sleep in this camp?

We were in barracks. And we had bunk beds. And I was with my one sister that I went with. We never separated. We were sleeping on a very small together, two at one bed.

And we were quite a few. I wouldn't know exactly the amount. But it was crowded.

But the worst part was the selections. Even after a night shift, they took us out right after work and they counted us. And then they looked us over. And whoever didn't meet their specifications, criteria, whatever, they chose.

And when they singled you out, you knew that it's not good where you're going. Now--

Did you know where those people were going?

Yes, we did know, because they were two thing-- either work or death. There was no other thing. There were no vacations or anything. Either work or death.

So I remember that very tall-- and the big eaters had it very bad. Maybe I could survive a little better too because I was a small eater. But the very strong, the big eaters, couldn't make it.

And I remember that a selection, how they took that-- how you say? The written paper. It's a red one. And used to--

Oh, to rouge--

Put on their cheeks.

--you cheeks. And when they looked at you, your heart really went away from the place.

Now if somebody tried to escape or do anything that wasn't proper to them, they used to make us watch. There were hangings, shootings. And we had to stay and watch.

And what else they did, which was awful, because they used to count us. And every 10th at random, whoever was the 10th, was chosen to go.

Chosen for--

For death.

For death. And was the death right there in the labor camp?

Sometimes. Sometimes there were hanging, sometimes shooting, and sometimes they took you a little bit out. But once they took you, you knew where you-- where they went.

But didn't they want these people, these healthy people, for work? Why did they take every 10th person?

Because that was a punishment and to give us a lesson.

To terrify you.

To terrify us. See, if you're not even guilty, what was the purpose of it? That you're not guilty at all, just happens that you the 10th, it doesn't matter to them. That what it was.

Or when they made-- when we went to work, we used to see, on the way, some people dug graves. And they knew that the graves are for them, for themselves, they did. And a lot of beating, a lot of mismanage, whatever it was-- [BOTH TALKING]

Now were any of your friends or your family taken away at this time?

No, I had one brother, my sister-- my brother that was right before me and my sister. We were in one-- in the bed, one. But Kopel, that one brother, he wasn't in a little better one. The circumstances were a little better.

When we had to go and wash, bathe, we had to go on the other part to do it.

So you met him.

Yeah, we used to see him occasionally, whenever they took us. And whoever was punished from the other camps, A or B, they took them to C. It was real hell.

And you said you bathed. They let you bathe.

And we had to go there to bathe. There were no conditions. We didn't even have a bathroom. It was outside, far to walk. And very primitive conditions. And so we used to see him.

So we work like that until 1944. Just prior to taking us from that camp, my brother and the other from the other work perished. They killed them.

Kopel?

Yeah, they killed them.

How do you know this?

How do I know? There was a Polish man. And at that time, he shouldn't have been on the premises of the factory that he was. But nevertheless, he came there. And it was sabotaged. That's what the story goes. And he shouldn't have been there. So they ask him why he did come.

He had a letter from my brother. He had a letter from Poland, which my brother received. So to clear himself, he said he has a letter for him.

And they took him in with sticks. They didn't kill him entirely-- almost. And they threw him in a basement. And there where he died. And from all the people and friends that were on the other side, on the other premises, we learned when he died.

Now I don't understand about this Polish man. Was this a guy--

The Polish man was very freely. He could go like we have freedom here. They worked with us, but nevertheless they were free people.

And my brother had somebody in Poland that even for a little money or whatever, like we had yard goods. If we gave-- when we left, and we gave some yard goods to a Polish family, and when they were nice, and we knew them, he used to write a letter. At that time we didn't even know that that's what it was.

So the letter was legitimate.

The letter was legitimate.

And the reason for beating him up was because he got a letter?

Because the place was sabotaged. Listen, they didn't need so many reasons.

They didn't need an excuse.

They didn't need excuses.

So right away, I'll tell you the truth, that I never gotten over this brother's death. The older one was so much older than I was--

That you didn't really know--

And he was out of town. And with him I had a special rapport. He used to bring me all the books. At 12 years old, I had all Dostoevskys, Tolstoys. And we had a rapport. We had. And my sister too, we couldn't get over this brother's death.

But at that time, they took us to Leipzig. And we were in these cattle cars. And like you're talking about a selection, or cars, like trains. It's nice things. You select so many nice things. You go on vacation sometimes on trains.

To us, these things mean something else entirely. In the trains, we were so-- one was on top of the other. And the beating was going on, and the blood was flowing very freely. And people were begging for a little water, and crying, to no avail.

How long were you on the train?

A few days. I can't recall now. Would you believe? I can't.

Well, you probably blocked out a lot.

And we came to Leipzig. Leipzig, they put us in one room. It was giant, huge. 20,000 women.

In one room.

All women. Yes. All nationalities. We had from Greece, and from Moscow, and from France--

Were they all Jewish?

No. No, they were not. The Jews were only victims. The punishment, they only were at fault that they were born Jewish. The other ones, maybe some were political--

Prisoners.

--prisoners. We don't know.

And again, it started. And there wasn't that ammunition, but we used to make very little things also.

Oh, this was a labor camp.

A labor camp, yes.

And what was the name of this?

Leipzig. Leipzig.

It was called Leipzig.

Leipzig. It was in Leipzig. And we used to do-- put together little things, whatever they told us to do. And again, very little bread, and a little soup.

And in 1945-- we stayed there till 19-- and also, see, in 1944, the abuse wasn't so great as it was in the previous years, because the situation changed for the Germans. They were already weaker, and they knew how they stand. So it was a little more tolerable. And so we work there.

But in 1945, at the beginning, the front, I think the American or the Russian was very close. Very close. So they took us out again. And after a few week we started the death march.

All 20,000.

All 20,000. I don't know. I mean, you didn't even pay attention. You were so worn out.

And all we had is one striped dress. And the climate in Germany is just like here. And if you take March or April, it was brutal-- the snow and everything.

Did you have shoes?

We had-- [LAUGHS] I had a pair of boots. I don't think they matched, but I had them. And some were barefoot. And we had to walk 30 and 40 miles.

A day.

--a day. But you see, at that time, we didn't have any more food. So how did we live, right?

How did you?

We used to go in the fields. And whenever we went-- so let's say we were going in four or five. I don't remember. Sometimes four.

Now you're still with your sister.

I still never separated from my sister. And my other brother that stayed is the same thing. The man, they took to

Buchenwald, Schlieben. Buchenwald.

And he died there?

And no more men and women together. And so we walked like that, without a roof. And we slept on the ground. Could be snow, and rain, and everything. We slept on the ground. And very little food.

So whenever we passed a field, I never went out, but my sister was a little braver, maybe because she was older. She was braver for me, to bring something, either a beet or a potato, a piece of rhubarb, whatever.

But you know what? They were shooting. Very many perished right there--

So you took a chance.

--if they went out. You took a chance. I begged my sister not to go, but she did.

And we were wandering. I mean, I, at that time, gave up-- not in camp. In camp, as bad as it was-- like I'm talking about Skarzysko. I'm going back a little bit. As bad as it was, at times, people did have a little hope. When you're that young, and you wanted to live that badly, and you have a zest for life, I mean you dare to hope. You dare to hope.

And you weren't so worn out yet. It was the beginning.

At the beginning. Yeah, maybe we weren't so worn out. And maybe it's-- the people that gave up perished right away. If you give up, it's right away. Not good.

And I remember even that we used to-- everybody did whatever. We used to get together, of course very secretly, and we used to recite poems or sing, and to give hope, and to-- it was-- how would I say? A camaraderie.

A camaraderie.

Camaraderie. And one tried to help the other. And when we saw that they down, we tried to lift their spirits. And somehow at times we overcame the suffering with daring to hope. And we responded to that by nurturing life. As simple as that.

And that's how we did it. And whoever gave up had no chance at all. No chance at all.

And one more thing that I want to specify, that as bad as it was, there weren't many suicides there.

Were there any suicides?

No, very little, except if you call that going to the wires, to the electric-- I mean, they didn't know that they're going to be executed.

Electrocuted.

Electrocuted. And no. There weren't any suicides. It's amazing.

It is amazing.

Because they took away our possessions, destroyed our values, and suffering all the time from cold and hunger, we still were clinging to life. And somehow we felt that life is worth preserving. And that's what we did.

I guess, besides faith, that that's what really kept us going, I would say. Because, as I said, whoever gave up had no chance at all.

When you say faith, what do you mean exactly by that?

Fate. That it--

Oh, fate, not faith.

No, not faith. See, with faith I mean two things. It was very easy to give it up entirely, because for what had happened-- but a lot of them became very cynical. And a lot of them were with faith till the last minute.

And you?

I was in-- I mean, I still had faith. I still had because I was raised like that, and I still did. Because the hope with the faith go a little bit together, I think.

Yes.

But a lot of them-- and it's no wonder they became very, very cynical after the war. And they really tried to dehumanize us. I mean, at times, you really didn't feel that you are a person anymore.

Did you have a tattoo? Do you have a--

No. Where I was, they didn't give us numbers. We never were called by name. Everybody had a number in both places. Mine was 44 in Skarzysko.

440.

And my sister 439, one after the other.

But you didn't get a--

Typhus, yeah. I was sick too. I had typhus. And again, you couldn't stay behind in the barrack. So one was pushing. When it came, they called up the number, and you had to go. One kind of helped them push the other one.

They held you up.

And they held-- yeah, and they held. One held up the other one. And a lot of them died because once you were left in the barrack it wasn't good either.

Now during this time, did you know about the fate of your brother and sister, and your parents, and your grandmother?

No, no, no. We didn't know. But seeing all the ovens, smelling that, I mean, we knew what was happening.

Did you have-- you didn't have ovens in your labor camp in Leipzig.

No, not there.

So how did you know?

We knew because working with the Polish people, they had a little bit radios at times that you could listen. We didn't have it in the barracks. But you all talking to them. Here and there you could pick up a little bit of news.

So you knew that the front was being pushed back.

A little bit. Yes, yes. And little by little, and seeing the way they acting and the way they are towards us, that they need us. And we're working. And what's the people-- about the people, and the older.

And anyway, at the selections, whoever was a little older, or didn't look, as I say, to their specifications, went right away to death. So we knew what happened, and with the children, and with the older people. So we knew right away our families--

So you assumed that the rest of your--

We assumed. Yeah, we knew. That we don't know when and how, but we know that they all perished.

Did ever find any--

No.

--any identification or any indication when your family died?

No, no, no. Kopel's, we know approximately when it was, because it was known. And my other brother, he-- we were liberated May 8, 1945. He was still alive May 7, 1945. They took a group 5,000 people, young boys, and we don't know how they killed them.

But you know that he was alive May--

He was alive. Yes, people that were with him. He was alive May 7.

Oh, it's pitiful.

And he didn't make it. When I came back to Poland, I really counted on this brother. I had to go quick, wherever I was, because maybe he did show up. We were sure that he's going to appear at some day. But he didn't. He died.

Now let's get back to the forced march. So you and 20,000 women are--

I don't know exactly if 20,000.

Well, a large number--

I don't know exactly.

--are marching. And where were you marching?

We were marching. They took us 30-- we ended up in Bavaria. From Leipzig we ended up in Bavaria. We never knew where we were. They took us. And not too many watched us. Not too many soldiers who did the--

Could you run away?

I wouldn't. I was maybe too much of a coward. I don't know why. I wouldn't did.

Did anybody run away?

But maybe some did. Maybe some did.

And so we wandered like that till the last day. The last day, they took us to a barn.

Are we talking about April or May?

We talking about closing up, yeah, to closer to May.

They took us to a barn, and everybody was going for two months, seven weeks, eight weeks. And that one dress, never washed, never did anything. And it was cold, as I said. A lot of people died from tuberculosis, from other viruses, from other.

Did you have anything on your head or a scarf.

No, nothing. Nothing. One dress.

Gloves?

One dress. That's all. That striped blue and gray.

Was it wool? Was it cotton?

That was some kind of synthetic. I don't know. It wasn't wool. It was too expensive to give us wool dresses.

And we came to that barn. And I remember it like now. And some were more daring, some girls. And they ran down, and they brought sugar in their dress. Sugar. And everybody--

Where did they get the sugar?

Downstairs from the landlord. I don't from the people. From the German people. It was a sack of sugar.

You mean where the barn was.

Yeah. And they grabbed it in the dress, and they came. And then they came down again, and they said nobody is there.

So we started running. We started running. And all of a sudden, we saw soldiers. And we thought it's Germans. So we knew what our fate is going to be. But they were Russians.

And then, little by little, they took-- here is seven girls, four girls, two German women. We washed. And they had to give us clothes.

The Russian soldiers.

No, the-- yeah, the Russians took us.

And they took you to--

German--

--German houses.

--houses. And we had clothes to change. And we washed, finally.

What was the attitude of these German people towards you?

Well, at that time, they were very quiet, and they kind of listened to whatever they told them to do. They had no choice. And a lot of them later died of dysentery because once--

You mean the survivors.

The survivors. Because once you didn't eat for such a long time, and you grabbed everything inside, very many people perished, died from dysentery.

Were you ill?

I was ill. Yeah. I was ill. But not--

Not that--

--died, no, no.

And your sister?

Also the same way, because we watched. We watched. And we were sick, but not-- but tuberculosis, a lot of them.

I remember one girl who was very sick. And when we came-- well, with the Russians wasn't so easy neither. Young girls, they looked for us.

I remember we hid under a table, and she had to cough. And we always choked her. We took the hands, and we wouldn't let her cough. It's the truth.

Was it hard to keep away from the--

Yes.

--to keep the Russians away?

Yes, it was. It was. Because I remember we traveled nine, nine young girls. And it was. Yeah, it was hard. But we survived.

Now you didn't know where you were. Where did you get help?

No, we didn't know where we were. We knew we are in Germany. And then we started to think about going back to Poland because even we knew that not many people survived-- maybe nobody-- but we had to go and see for ourselves. Maybe somebody by a miracle was saved.

And so again we went, and the Russians helped us.

How did they help you? They put you on trains?

They put us-- we were with horses. He protected us both ways, to go, and protected us from the Russians too.

Who was this person?

A higher one.

An officer?

An officer, yeah. Not all of them were bad. Maybe they weren't so bad, but they liked girls.

Well, sure.

And so we came to Poland.

How long did it take you?

Oh, quite a few days. Quite a few.

And you traveled via horseback?

Yeah, yeah. We--

Had you ever been on a horse before?

No, it wasn't by a horse. It was cars, and they had horses with them.

Oh, it was horse-drawn cars.

Right. Right.

So you were sitting in the car--

With [INAUDIBLE], yeah, that to protect us.

And the nine girls were together.

The nine girls, we all came. One didn't survive. The one that was sick died later. She did die. We heard.

And it's such a closeness. We were so close, going through all these things together.

You'd seen so many things.

Yeah. And we came. And we waited, as I said, for my brother, which never--

You went to your hometown?

No, I went to L³dz. L³dz was like the second home for me. I knew if anybody is going to come, they're going to come to the bigger city, to L³dz. And we had there already girls that were liberated from the other camps, but they were liberated in January. So they were a little established. What I mean, established, they had a bed to sleep on.

Where did you stay? Did you have homes?

No, no. I knew two girls from my hometown. They took my sister and me in.

Into what?

Into a room. One room.

Were they renting a facility?

They were renting at that time. They came already half a year before.

And where did they get money to rent?

That there was money. Whoever was-- I really don't know how it was arranged, but I imagine that, knowing them, that even gentile people or whoever gave them a room. I mean, they were good. Not all of them were bad. There were good people too. So they took us in.

In their one room.

One is in Israel and one is in Cleveland. One, she's still there.

Do you still see these--

Of course. Of course. We all--

And you all slept in one bed?

No, no. Again, see, I didn't want to talk about it, but I met my husband. I met him the second day as I came there. And I was working--

Did you know him before?

No, I was working with his brother. He came and met me. And it was-- that was it for us. So we knew each other two years there. And then they--

In L³dz.

--no, in the camp.

Oh, in the camp.

And then a year they separated us. He went to Schlieben-- to Buchenwald. And after the war, when he learned where I am, he came. So we didn't have to wait for anybody. And my brother-in-law came too at that time. So we were married very shortly after the war.

So you went on your own. You left those two girls.

Yes, yes. And then we wanted to go to Palestine with the illegal immigration-- Palestine at that time. We wouldn't have gone. We would have ended up in Cyprus at that time. But we went there, and they caught us, and turned us back.

And where did they catch you?

In Bratislav, near the Italian border. And we came back. And they took us to Bavaria, to Landsberg.

Who's the "they"?

From the--

The border police?

The police. It was illegal. We were going as Jews from Greece. And we weren't Greek.

But you had not passports.

No.

You didn't have any papers.

No, but we just went. Some maybe went through. We didn't.

So we ended up in Landsberg am Lech. And it was a displaced persons camp. And we stayed there four years.

Four years.

Yeah. It was run by the Americans.

By HIAS or Joint?

HIAS. Joint, maybe. HIAS. And the pictures that I have here, the dress that I'm wearing--

Oh, let's see what the pictures are and tell us. Explain.

OK.

Now tell us about that?

Which one is that? The yellow dress?

No, that's you by yourself without the two men.

Well, that was also a hand-me-down dress from somewhere. And we used to go. They used to have a big warehouse. And we used to go for clothes, like here you give to the Salvation Army or whatever.

Like a thrift shop.

Yeah. There wasn't a shop. It was a warehouse especially for that purpose. And we used to go there. And I could sew a little bit, so I made it--

You made it fit.

--fit.

Now could you tell us about this picture, Luba?

The other one is there, Rubin.

Rubin is to your right.

To my right.

Yes. And who's on the left?

A friend. A friend also that we knew.

And are you married here?

Yes, I was married already. I was also-- and that dress is also from there.

You look very little here.

It was a-- yeah, I was little, and thing.

Now what did you do in the camp for four years?

For four years I was knitting, and we made all kinds of sweaters and gloves for the Army, that green--

The khaki.

Yeah. And we were working. And for that work we used to get a month-- I'm talking about monthly-- a carton of cigarettes, and a little bit of flour, and a little bit of maybe coffee. And we were lucky, because we didn't smoke.

So you sold--

So we sold it and bought the essentials, what we needed. And we were like that for four years, seven years of our life.

Seven years or four years.

Three years and four years.

Three years--

Three years in concentration camp and four years in displaced persons camp.

And did you-- did you meet any of your other family in the concentration-- in the DP camp?

There was nobody left from the family.

Nobody from--

No cousins. No, nobody.

And nobody from your husband's family.

Nobody. No, no, no.

What did Rubin do?

Rubin was-- there were six boys in the house, and there were four certified accountants. And Rubin was the youngest-- twins. And it must have been in their blood. He was good. He never went to school for it. But when he came he started right away bookkeeping, not knowing the language, the second day he came here.

No, but what did he do in the DP camp?

In DP camp we were waiting for the quota. He was in the police. He was a sergeant in the police.

Oh, in the civilian police.

Yes. He was a sergeant, and also got the same privileges-- the carton of cigarettes. We both were working.

And because we were looking to go to America, he remembered an address that his parents used to receive the mail. And it was the right one, to a cousin.

A cousin in Buffalo.

Yes. And that's why we came to Buffalo.

To Buffalo.

And my uncle-- his uncle-- made right away, started the papers. But it took a long time.

Then they had to be affidavits, that we'll never be a burden, that we will be able to work and all that. So it took quite a few years until our quota came, and we came to--

Now what kind of living circumstances did you have in the DP camp? Did you have your own room?

No, no. We were a few couples together. Even my oldest daughter was born in Munich, Germany, even with the kids. We had a little room and quite a few families, everybody together.

So you were in Landsberg but your daughter was born in Munich.

Yeah, because Landsberg was a displaced persons camp. So when the time came, we decided that Munich was a big city. And I went there.

You went there to have the baby, or you stayed there?

To have a baby. Only to have the baby.

And then you came back to Landsberg.

And I came back with the baby, yeah. So it was sort of a collective. You got fed. You had a communal room or a dining room.

Yes, we had a room. Yes. And to bathe the baby, I mean, we had to boil the water. I mean, it was also very primitive, everything.

What about your meals?

The meals? The meals you cooked yourself.

You didn't have a general dining room?

They did have some-- later on, when Rubin was in the police, they did make some kind of a dining area. I can't remember how it started. But it was something like you said-- communal. It was. But later on. But we cooked at home.

You had a little stove. Yeah, a little stove. And horse meat. We ate horse meat. Well.

Now did you ever get to meet, in Munich or any other place, any Germans?

Well, when I was in the hospital, they were mostly Germans. Germans, of course. It was a big hospital.

And how-- what were your reactions?

I mean, when you in labor and having a baby, I don't think you think about anything else. Not at that time.

And then I went home. I stayed a few days-- probably eight days. They used to keep us at that time. And then we went home.

And Rubin used to commute every single day. He came by train, took four hours one way.

To Munich from Landsberg.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Every single day.

For those eight days.

Uh-huh.

So there were a lot of babies born in the displaced person--

A lot of babies. A lot of-- from the Americans, the Army. A lot of American babies were born there too.

Oh, from the armed forces. Did you ever go back to Poland?

No, I would never. No, I never-- I have no desire to go. And I don't know if you're familiar with the Kielce pogrom. Are you?

Yes, yes. That happened after the war.

I never did. Rubin went back, because he asked me that if his niece, he thinks, his older sister, gave to some Polish people the daughter, and if she would be alive, if he could bring her. I said, of course. You go and you'll bring her.

But they never gave her. I don't know if she was alive or not.

Oh, he didn't find her.

Didn't find her. And we never did want to go back. He went to Plock-- he was from Plock-- for that purpose only. And then we heard that was a very big pogrom in Kielce. They killed a lot of--

And that was about the time that he--

It was the same time, and mostly survivors, yeah. So but I really didn't have a desire to go. There was nobody left. We knew our house is demolished, because we had yard goods. And my sister, the oldest, they had shoes. And everything was there.

And they demolished the houses, took everything out. And nobody was around. So why go?

Did you ever think that maybe your parents hid some--

No, no, not at that--

--money?

No, not at that point. At that point you have to really not think right, to believe that anybody was-- did survive after all that brutality, and after all that we--

No, I thought perhaps before they were taken away. We hear stories about burying--

No, no, no.

Listen, in Europe--

--family heirlooms.

--at 50 years old, my parents were. At that time 50 years was old. People, that the lifespan wasn't so like it is now.

Yes, and they weren't as healthy.

And we knew what happened to the children, and we knew. And so we didn't have any hope. For that brother, yes, but not for the parents or the other-- or the aunts and the uncles. They were all older.

Now tell us--

If I was 18 or 19, 40, 50 was old.

Of course. Of course.

And so we didn't even think--

Now how did you-- on what kind of transportation did you have to come to America?

To America, we came by a ship, a Army ship. It was so bad--

With armed forces on it.

With a Army ship we were married, and the little girl, and we couldn't stay together. The men had to stay separate, no matter you married or not.

And I weighed 84 pounds when I came, because on the boat I was very sick. Couldn't eat. But we couldn't stay together.

And we're talking about, what? 1950?

In 1949.

1949.

'49. And when we came, the family was waiting for us.

In New York.

In New York. Yeah. My cousin from Washington came with his family. And in fact, the papers were lost. And he is a lawyer. And he kind of looked into it. And he made different papers.

And we came. And his whole family came to take us off the train, took us out to dinner, and then put us on another train. And we came to Buffalo. And here the aunts and the uncles. And we stayed with Rubin's uncle.

In their house.

In their house, yes.

And how long did you stay with them?

We stayed four or five weeks. And then we--

Was that very hard for you?

They were very good. Rubin, the second day he went to work. But they were, again, they were maybe a little older, yet. They must have been, at that time, maybe close to 60. And we were young kids.

And we had a little baby. And you know how children are. And they really felt very bad when we started looking for a place, because they did want us to stay. But I thought maybe it's hard for them too.

Well, everybody likes their own--

And with the food and with everything. I mean, you eat different. You need different things. But they were--

They were very good to you.

--good, yeah.

Now what happened to people who didn't have family to vouch for them?

The federation took care. A lot of people came through them. In fact, my sister came like that too.

Your sister didn't--

Through the HIAS.

And did she come in the same time?

She came three months later or four months later than we did.

And she asked to come to Buffalo?

Yes, they wanted to take her to another city, but we arranged that that would be a room for her, and there would be work, whatever was needed, that they should stay here. Yeah. And so, yeah, she came three, maybe four months later than we did.

But it's a HIAS. Through the HIAS a lot of people. They paid for everything-- the transportation, where my uncle and aunt paid, but then they had the money back. They had the money back. So my aunt insisted that we should go and buy, like, a couch and a couple of things with that money. Yeah. But the HIAS did refund them the money.

And what about learning English? Did you go to school? Did you go to Americanization classes?

Yes, we had to. After five years we became citizens. And everybody work. Rubin went to school, to college. And everybody had to work on their own the best they could. One was reading, and somehow learning like that. However we could.

And we were from the lucky ones. Why do I say that?

Why do you say that? Yes.

Because we were lucky enough not to live in the past. And some people never could rise above it. I mean--

They were depressed much of the time?

They were, yeah. And they lived in the past. And in fact, you must know by now that not only our people, but that it affected the second generation too in a lot of places, because it depends a lot too-- you had to be lucky too. But it depends how the atmosphere was in the house.

Like, one girl from the second generation said that she never remembers that there was ever laughter in the house.

That's a sad house.

Can you imagine to grow up--

Without--

--where there never was laughter in that house.

But your house was--

Well, as I said, maybe we were a little bit luckier than other ones. I think my husband had a lot to do with that.

Well, you had a frame of mind that you were going to make it.

Yes, that we-- yes, that we going to go forwards, whatever it is. And we struggled. It wasn't easy. Nobody gave us ever a penny. It wasn't easy.

You did it by yourself.

But we did it all. Yeah.

Now your children were lucky they had an aunt and uncle, but they must have asked where the other family members were.

They did. My oldest daughter used to say that how come that families have two sets of grandparents, and so many aunts and uncles, and they don't, and no grandparents at all. Well, I waited for a while until I told them-- not right at the beginning. When they were a little bit older you kind of told them what was going on.

Did you tell them all the stories about your--

Approximately.

--life before.

Approximately. As the time was right. And we didn't talk to my family. I mean, our aunts and cousins, we didn't dwell on it, because nobody at that time really was receptive. Nobody wanted to listen, and they didn't ask us questions. And maybe-- I don't know if we were ready at that time to talk. I think that our wounds had to heal a little bit too.

But the most important thing is that it was, that there weren't listeners. Nobody wanted to listen. They weren't receptive.

And I think that people started being curious, and ask questions--

When was that?

--after the Holocaust.

After the--

After the TV show.

That opened it up.

Yes, that opened it up. And even it was so understated, it really was, in comparison to what we went through. Nevertheless, people started to be curious, and they started asking questions. And once they started, we were willing to talk.

And that was like 25 years later.

Yeah. And then more and more.

And your children, do they ask you stories? Do they ask you questions?

Well, they know-- they know all this. I mean, "all." I mean, nobody will ever know. I mean, even you give a background and you give a presentation, you cannot say all. You cannot say everything.

But they have the gist of it. They know what we went through. And they know the situation. And by now, the whole world--

Knows.

And sometimes I think that we were left here. We have a special responsibility the survivors to remember and to bear witness. And as long as we are around-- because each day, the number diminishes of the survivors. And with the things that are contested, nobody can stand up and say, it's true. I was there. We can do that.

Yes, you are the witnesses.

And that's why it's important, like, to incorporate it. We should see to it that in every school the curriculum is incorporated.

With a study on the Holocaust.

A study of the Holocaust. And everybody should learn, every student on his or her level. And we should tell the people about the genocide development. And I really, like I did today, a little bit give them a clearer sense of specific forms and dimensions of that systematic murder, to make them aware of what happened, really. And nobody should ever forget it.

Thank you very much, Luba. Thank you very much.

OK. This hour is over?

[LAUGHTER]