

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Ludmilla Page
March 11, 1992
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Ludmilla Page, conducted on March 11, 1992 in Beverly Hills, California on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

LUDMILLA PAGE

March 11, 1992

Beep.

Um, Mrs. Page, tell me what happened when the Germans arrived at your door to arrest your mother. Describe to me that incident.

I was in our apt alone at the time. My mother went downstairs uh to attend to a, uh, uh someone who was sick in the building. You know, my mother was a physician. And uh, there was a tremendous knock on the door, and I went to open. This was very earl--the very early stages of the war, so we were not used to it, any, yet. This was November, 1939, early November, and I opened the door, and I saw one German uh, whatever he was, some kind of a officer, and three uh, uh men uh dressed in black uniforms of the local Germans who were of course the traitors to Poland, and they collaborated and uh before the war, and with the Ger-and collaborated during the war with the uh with the occupiers, and they came, and the, the man said that we are, where is my mother, in the meantime my mother ran up the steps and uh came to the apt, and they said that she is arrested on, on political grounds, and she, they said to take just a few warm things, and uh, uh put all the valuables, money, jewelry on the table, and we didn't know, I was not on the list, so my mother told me "Why why don't you go to your boyfriend." I said, "I don't want to go to my boyfriend. I want to go with you," you know. And um, well, she told me to put the valuables on the, on the table, or no, uh she did, she did it, and then we went to the bedroom to collect uh you know uh, uh warm things, just a few things they let us have, and she said to me in Russian, my mother was Russian originally, she said to me, "Throw these--," uh, uh she had it in a little uh sack, "Throw it in the toilet and flush the water," and I as an obedient daughter did that you know, and um, they took us to, they closed the apt, they sealed it, and they took us to a place which was actually my high school, and there I saw, I thought that we were only arrested because deportation were not with it, uh, uh, uh, uh they were not, uh, uh we didn't know about deportations yet, this was just November you know, and we realized that there were maybe, later we found out there were a thousand people, both Polish Catholics and Jews from Poland. Uh, I would say that this was the intelligentsia of the city. They tried, the Germans tried to quell any kind of resistance, and they did the same thing in all the cities. In the very beginning, they tried to get rid of the people who would provide, uh who would uh resist or something like that, and they put us in uh trains, and at that time it was passenger trains. There were no cattle trains yet, and they took part of us to the city of uh, uh, part of the transport to the city of Czestochowa, and the other part, which I was, my mother and I were in it, to

Krakow. The city of Krakow.

Take 2 is up.

Beep.

Okay, Mrs. Page, I want you to tell me that same story again, but as though you haven't told it before. So that's how the Germans arrived at your door to arrest you.

Mmmhmm. It was November, I think 11, 1939, uh, early evening, and I was alone in the apt. My mother had to go downstairs to attend to some patient in the, in our apt house, and uh, I heard a knock or a ring of the bell ring, I don't remember exactly, I went to open the door and there were three, uh, uh, uh three Germans altogether. One was in a green uniform. I assume it was SS. In those days I, I didn't distinguish it so clearly you know. He was older and two younger men dressed in the dark uniforms of the local Germans who were uh, uh, uh now within the German army, and who before collaborated with the Germans, and basically were traitors before the war. Uh, and they, one of them said that uh, my mother, in the meantime, came upstairs, running up because someone probably let her know that the Germans are uh knocking on the door, and they told her that she's arrested on political grounds. And I was not on the list. They said I can go. But my mother told me to go and see to my boyfriend's house. First of all, I couldn't have gone anyway because there was a curfew, and I couldn't move uh, uh, uh from the house, but I wouldn't go anyway, I told her I want to stay with her. And uh, they told us to take a few warm things, put all the valuables and jewelry on the table, and as we were getting ready, my mother in those days being uh aware of the Germans and, and, and trying to be ready just in case, had her jewelry in the tiny little sack, and she told me, "Take this and throw it in the toilet and flush the water, and I did it." Uh, then they, uh we went out, they sealed the apt and they took us to a bldg, which was my pre-war high school, which I graduated from. In that big uh gyn, on the big, big room, I realized that there were many, many people. Later, we found out it was about thousand, both Polish Catholics and Polish Jews. Uh, it was uh like an elite of the city. I realized that too over the, uh, which was uh we uh, uh which we uh understood later that probably the Germans wanted to get rid of all the sources of resistance at first, the leaders. They did it in every city, or every town that they were in. This was the uh the procedure they went by. And then they put us in uh, uh on the trains, passenger trains at the time because all, it was early uh days of the war, and they took us, part of the transport went to the city of Czestochowa, which is famous for its black Madonna, and uh our tran-part of the transport went to the city of Krakow. We were put in an old Polish fortress in the city of Krakow, from medieval times, I think, and uh, we were put on straw on straw, not even

mattresses, just straw, and uh, we were received by the Jewish community representatives, and Polish Catholics were received by the Red Cross. And of course, we had no money, we had just the basic, basic necessities, we were uprooted, we were uh in terrible uh despair. We, we didn't know what deportation meant at that time because this was what our precedent, this was the very first in, in our city, and I think in all occupied Poland. One of the very first ones.

Describe the difference between the ghetto and Krakow and the ghetto and Warsaw.

Well, I oh uh I know, uh, uh, we all were in the ghetto of Krakow, and by that time I was already married, and the ghetto of Krakow comparing to ghetto of Warsaw was not as terrible when my mother could not stay, when she stayed with us in Krakow during the pre-ghetto days, when ghetto was established, oh, oh even before that uh people who came after September, 1939, to Krakow, who were not uh before that then, had to leave the city, and they could choose, uh, any city or town within the gen, gen, general government, which was not the Deutsche Reich, the uh German Reich proper, so she chose to go to Warsaw, and for a, uh maybe twice I went to visit her with a special permission. In those days you had to get a special permission to be able to, and I travelled by train, and even then, before the ghetto was not closed in Warsaw, I was not there when the ghetto was closed, I was there before it was closed, but all the Jews lived within a certain district, and it was just terrifying. People were already hungry. People were uh in rags. Uh, there was such a sense of despair over there. My mother was still practicing medicine over there. All along, we tried to bring her to Krakow, uh, uh to us, but it was absolutely impossible. In Krakow, a, uh, on the other hand, it, we were all working for the German war effort of course, you know. There were deportations but it was not as terribly gloomy, and uh, and first of all, we were not that hungry, somehow everybody managed to eat in those days of the ghetto. In Warsaw Hungary was there from the beginning, even before the ghetto was closed.

Okay, we have to reload.

Beep.

So uh, now don't worry about that. -----in chronological detail. Now I want to ask you, who was Oskar Schindler, and what did he do?

Oskar Schindler was a German industrialist who came to the occupied city of Krakow in the early days, I think already maybe September, 1939, I don't know exactly, maybe October. He uh, like many Germans, he was not a military man. He belonged to the Nazi Party, but he was an

industrialist, who lived, he was from Sudetenland in Czechoslo--you know, it was uh, the uh, uh, uh German uh, uh it with the German population of Czechoslovakia, you see, he came to uh Krakow, I think looking for possibilities to do business. This was occupied territory, and so on. Anyway, he took a small, uh, he took over, because each Jewish business had to have some kind of a, a uh German uh, like an overseer, I don't know the exact term for that, so he took over a uh Jewish, an armor factory, which produced pots and pans in the beginning, and he started to employ uh first of all, Poles, and then he I think he got acquainted with the bookkeeper, who was the, the main book uh keep, uh bookkeeper of that factory, and he kind of liked him, and I think that bookkeeper, and maybe Mr. Schindler himself realized that it would be very good to employ some Jewish labor, and he did so. He was a very, very warm man, and from the beginning, the Jews who worked for him worshipped him, you know, because he was kind, and was such a contrast to everybody else that was uh in the whole history of war, I didn't know anyone like him. I didn't work for him at the time, but those Jews who did (clears throat) excuse me, uh, uh had this opinion uh of him. My mother in law had, was an interior decorator, and this is, I'm talking about pre-ghetto days, and he uh one day he came over to her apt, recommended by one of some other Jewish acquaintances of hers, that he uh had a new apt, he moved into an apt and he would like her to decorate it for him. You know, in, in Poland before the war, you didn't buy ready made things, everything was made to order, like uh drapes and tablecloths and everything, and this uh gave my husband's family, his parents, his sister and myself, uh you know, I was married to him in February of 1940, means of survival because um uh, uh, uh you know, he paid for all the services for everything, and besides was very, very kind. Uh, so um, would you like me to tell you what happened--

I want you to describe what he looked like.

Physically?

Yeah.

He was a very tall man. A little uh, I would say, kind of broad-shouldered. Very blond. Very blue-eyed, and had the air of uh, mmm, of uh such goodness emanating from him I remember later on when we were in the camp which he established in Sudeten at the very end of the war, you know, we were always freezing when we saw a German because it meant that either there would be shooting or there would be beating or there would be some other kind of, of, of uh torture, uh, uh moral or physical. But he, when he came, all we could see was head director. We used to call him Herr Director, and he smelled awfully good, you know, and he was always dressed beautifully, and

always dropping cigarettes all over, he was smoking a cigarette, and then put butts around so that the people could pick it up, and smoke it, because of course they didn't have any cigarettes you know. People loved to work for him. Later on, uh, after this uh, uh, uh original period of time in Krakow, in that factory when the ghetto was established, he decided to uh have his people his workers live on the premises. He had his camp, his own little factory, and on the premises, the workers were living. They worked very hard because you know to work with an armor ware, I understand they had to carry these heavy armor parts, and there was a night shift and a day shift, but they were fed, even though it was not easy to feed people in those days. They were fed, they were never, never harassed because the Germans who guarded the camp were not allowed to do things which they didn't ask for permission to do in regular camp because uh Director Schindler was uh bribing them, giving them present uh presents, and so on. They were always treated humanely, so it was such a privilege to work for him that was like a a gift from God in those days to be able to work for Oskar Schindler. Uh, you know, in comparison to have to work in camps like we did in -----.

What was Schindler's List, and how big was it?

At the end of the war, at the end of the war, by 1944, around October, we realized that the camp in Plashow would be liquidated because the Russians were approaching, and the Germans were retreating, so they were liquidating all the camps around. But Schindler wanted to protect his people. He decided, he went on kind of a uh fact-finding trip to Sudetenland, which was his home, to a small like a wasn't even a town, it was a, a village almost, called Brennan, Brenitz??? In Czech, in German was Brinlitz. And there he acquired two factories.

We have to stop for the helicopter.

Okay.

Four, take 4 is up.

Beep.

Okay, so now tell me how Schindler was going to try to rescue more people for the -----.

Uh, first of all he put on the list, this was how they actually, not Schindler, but the administration of the camp Plashow, to which his factory and the adjoining uh quarters, you know, were belonged to.

We were, they were uh you know, they belonged to the Camp Plaushow, so the administration of the Camp Plashow started preparing the list. The list consisted mainly of his workers, workers which were employed at his enamel fabric, it was Amalia, called Amalia. Uh, then also there was another uh, uh businessman in uh the camp of Plaushau called Julius Madrich, for whom I worked at the time. He was also very good to his workers. Not like Schindler by no means, and when the end of the war and the Russians started to approach, and the Germans wanted to uh liquidate the camps and retreat, Schindler, they were very good friends, Schindler and Madrich, and Schindler approached Madrich to do the same thing to join forces and locate, uh relocate all the workers to the two factories in Sudetenland, but Madrich refused. He said I did everything for my Jews, whatever was possible, but now that's the end I, I cannot do anything else. So Shindler went alone, but from the list of Madrichs' workers, he picked up also um a number of uh Madrich workers, it was a very difficult process because everybody wanted to get on that list. (Clears throat), and uh this way, he, I think, that was about 1,300 people that he was able to relocate to Sudeten.

What did the list represent? If you were on the list were you saved?

Well, we, there was no safety on the German occupation. There was no safety because these people had, they were torturers, murderers, there was no, no logic in it, no reason in it, this was just pure hatred and pure murder all the time, but Schindler assumed that if his workers were worked for the um uh war effort, and he changed it, in uh Brinwitz, he changed his production to a production of shells from enamelware because he had to prove really because they arrested him twice because he they didn't think that he was working for the air, war effort, and so on. So we were uh doing uh, uh making shells, and we were supposed to polish these shells, but all the production was faulty because we on purpose were sabotaging this you know, sa--uh, uh they were never as they ought to be, you know, always was something flawed, flawed in those shells during our uh months in Brinwitz. Mmm and uh this is how he could uh, uh save us proving that his factory was indispensable for the war effort. He had connections always, he knew how to, he was always very well-liked, by Germans as well, he always used to uh give them presents, and and uh do favors for them, so, okay.

Beep.

I want you to talk to me a little bit more about sabotage. Was Schindler involved in sabotage.

Oh he knew about it, of course, he knew that the production was faulty, and uh, he was absolutely involved, involved in everything.

Was he the mastermind? Tell me whether it was--

I, I tell you the truth, I really don't know that much about it, I think that my husband will be able to give you more details on that because he himself was more involved in that than I was, you know, I was just, you know, polishing my shells and then uh, but we knew that uh there was sabotage going and uh, this was about uh 6 months before the war, when we, before the end of the war when we arrived there in Brinwitz, and that's how it turned out to be.

Start from going

Beep.

out from Plaushow.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay.

In uh sometime in the beginning of November, my husband and I found out that we were on the list. The men that who were very happy, we didn't know what will await us, but we knew that we're going to go to something better than, than anything that we could conceive at the time. The men left a week before the woman did, and uh later we found out that they did not go directly to uh Brin-Brinwitz, they went to Gross Rosen, which uh they stayed there I think a few days, and uh, this was a very, very difficult camp, but they finally arrived in Brinwitz. The woman, on the other hand, we left a week later, and we were on, in the cattle trains, of course, packed like sardines, and uh, we were going, we didn't know where we're going, we assumed we're going to go uh to Brinwitz directly. All of the sudden we landed at this very famous now platform ----- platform at uh, uh, uh station in Auschwitz with the SS running like mad people, with dogs barking all over, and they started to push us out of trains, and uh run us to uh to a selection, to a selection process, which was by itself terrible. We had to undress completely. I clutched, in those days I already wore glasses, and I clutched them in my hand because I knew if I don't have glasses, I wouldn't be able to do any work, I wouldn't be able to to see very well, so I clutch, and thank God no one ever uh discovered. Some woman had their heads shaven. I didn't, just cut short, so I don't

know how they did it, uh probably you know just picked certain, certain people. Then, and of course the Germans were making uh laughing and making uh you know uh uh uh dirty jokes, and uh it was just terrible, we were completely uh not prepared for this because we thought we're going to Mr. Schindler, you know, to his camp. Then they took us to the so-called Zelna, to a delouse, you know, getting rid of lice, delousing process. We had to put all our clothes and our bundles, everything in one room, get undressed, go to the showers, then go uh through um uh to get our clothes, and the clothes were on the heap, and each one of us picked whatever we could, you know. I remember I got some kind of a white shirt, and some rag, you know, which uh was probably from somebody dead already, and some kind of a dress, no underwear, and of course, no shoes. I had to take the clogs, you know, wooden clogs. Then we were led, this was Birkenau. We were led to the barracks. We uh arrived there everybody in despair, but at the moment when we were picking our clothes and we put them on, how strong human nature is in spite of everything you go through, or maybe this was youth, we were young at that time, we started to laugh hysterically in that room where we were putting on those clothes because we couldn't see it ourselves because there were of course there were no mirrors, but uh, we looked so ridiculous that we started to laugh hysterically, and I forgot to uh say that before that in the Zelna, of course, there was no hot water uh, forget that, but uh there was no soap of any kind, just freezing water. November in Poland is very, very cold, and uh, uh so there were no, no toilet paper, no, no paper at all in the latrines. Then after we got dressed, they took us to the barracks in Birkenau. The mud in Birkenau at that time and probably in Auschwitz maybe not so because it's uh the roads you see in Auschwitz uh within Auschwitz were paved more or less. In Birkenau, you walked and, and the clogs stayed in the mud, and you kept on walking you know, it was just terrible. We arrived and in Plauschow we slept like uh two to a bunk. You know, there I think we were ten or eleven or thirteen, you know, we were sleeping like sardines. Though they give us some kind of a old dirty comforter, and all of the sudden, in that barrack, somebody called my name. This was my friend, she was on the upper bunk. She came with a transport before us, a couple of months before us, and she was working for a, a German office, uh, in, in the office, anyway, and she gave me a piece of bread with honey, at that time, I will never forget it because I never got it uh again. Uh, we didn't know anything about what happened to our men. We assumed the same thing happened to them in some other camp. And we were waiting uh, I think that all of us would have died even before being gassed because we were all terribly sick with dysentery. We were terribly hungry, and we couldn't that terrible food that they gave, some very watery soup with uh a few beets inside, and a tiny piece of bread every day, which also caused our dysentery, it was this kind of bread. We were all sick. So, I don't think if Oskar Schindler, after 3 weeks through his uh, uh through his uh trying to get us out through his connections and, and presents that he gave all around, and everything, I don't think we would have survived. So, finally, uh after about three weeks, I think we lost the count of time, uh

over there, they told us, they uh someone came, probably a blockeldest, you know, or some German, I don't remember exactly, and started to call our names. Well, that was already good because we knew we are the 300 womans uh woman, and she called us by name. We didn't know what she wants us for, but they led us to a side um a train station like on sideline, and they put us in the trains again, packed like sardines. Of course, no toilets. There was a, a pail in the middle. No food. We didn't get any food. I don't know if some of us had a little piece of bread from, from uh, uh from Birkenau, we had, and after a while, the train started to go. We were only guessing, we didn't know where we're going because first of all there are no windows in the, uh in, in the cattle cars. We stopped, I think on the way. The German soldiers let us go out for a while, you know, to and we had some snow that we took from the ground and kind of uh in instead of a drink. And finally we arrived in some very desolate station, and it said Brinwitz. It said Brinwitz, so of course we were terribly uh excited that finally we arrived at our destination, but in the background, we saw some very tall chimneys. And as we marched to Schindler's camp, what we assumed will be Schindler's camp, we marched by fives, and I was walking, among other friends with a girl who came originally from Germany but she was deported from Germany to Poland and in Poland to camp in Plashow, and with us to Birkenau and to Schindler's camp. Her name was Margot, and she said to me, "Oh my God, now we're going to die. Do you see these chimneys?" And I said, (cries)...and I said to her, "Margot, you know, we cannot die, because if we were destined to die, we would die in Birkenau." I was always an optimist. And finally, we were marching and marching and we came to a bldg which was

We have to change film????

Okay, I'm sorry but I always...

Beep.

Okay, we'll just back up to where Margot said, "Oh no, this is..." and saw the chimneys.

We saw the chimneys, and Margot said, "Look at the chimneys. Now I'm sure they're going to kill us. Look at them." And I said to her, "Margot, I'm positive they won't do it because if they wanted to kill us, why transport us to Brinwitz, bring us here, and I'm sure they won't do it." And we marched, we kept on marching until we arrived at the destination, which was Schindler's factory. It was kind of a, a we saw a building, which was a two-story building. The lower uh floor, and then the upper was all uh had balconies all through the width of the building, and the door was opened, the, the gates rather were opened, and we marched in, and as we marched in, I saw men in the

striped suits uh you know, which we they didn't wear in uh Plaushow because in Plaushow one still could wear uh their clothes, you know. But, all, everybody was shaven. A group of men standing on the balcony with shaven head, with a so-called Lausen Promenade, which means uh Lice Promenade, you know uh, uh shaved, stripped of hair, uh, uh, uh, uh of skin rather, completely shaved, and they were waving to us, and, and crying and laughing. First they, they thought that we are in a terrible shape because wore those rags first of all in which they never saw us before, and before we left Birkenau, they painted us with paint, like red, yellow, red or in order so that we would not escape during our uh journey. And I saw among those men my husband, and of course, uh, my happiness had no uh, uh no limits. And then, but downstairs, we saw a group of SS men, but in the middle of them, Mr. Schindler, with his little Tyrolian hat, with a little feather, you know, and completely ignoring the, the lager fuehrer, that means the head of our camp, and all the SS men and woman, he said, "I greet you. Don't worry. Now you're going to be well-taken care of. There is hot soup waiting for you, and don't worry, you with me now." So then we proceeded to go to the big uh, uh, uh the big halls of the factory itself, and of course, there was hot soup, and a pretty good hot soup, and uh we, somehow, subconsciously, we were not afraid anymore. Our living quarters were not ready yet. There were no bunks. Everybody slept on, on straw, but nothing mattered anymore, you know, because we knew that he will not, he will do everything, it was not absolutely sure, but we believed that he will do everything in his power to uh let to, to help us survive the war.

Tell me

(Cough, cough, clears throat)

Beep.

Tell me about--

Some of the things that Schindler did for you like getting fabrics in hand, and maybe getting even weapons.

Yes. From the beginning, Schindler tried to do everything possible for us to make our life more comfortable. We didn't have very many clothes. I mean we didn't have any clothes, only what we had on. So he managed, I think, he allowed our men to steal some wool from a neighboring factory, which was kind of already uh empty, uh, uh, uh I mean uh you know, they were not working anymore, uh probably people left it. And, so our men got that wool, and they made also on the machines in the factory knitting needles, and the woman started to knit, sweaters and uh little uh

mufflers and so on, you know. So uh then uh, uh men wanted to smoke. Then, I don't know how, but they got hold of some next door also from some onions and they were burned, they were really smoking the onion leaves, uh, uh, uh skins. Uh, Schindler, as far as food is concerned, all the surrounding areas were being slowly evacuated, so it was very difficult even for the Germans to get the food but somehow he got food, we were, we were not (clears throat) we were always hungry, but not like in Auschwitz, you know. We were hungry but with, with hope for a better tomorrow. He tried to always uh give us a little piece of bread. I had a bunk mate who was a really a master in cutting the pieces of bread. She cut it, I believe, in thirteen very thin slices, so I used to give my husband about 8 and I ate the 5 because for me it was enough, he was much bigger than I was. And, then when the uh, uh, the, the, the surrounding areas uh were uh uh getting evacuated, the factories were empty, he took a few men with him, in a truck and they went (clears throat) to a neighboring town, and got some fabrics from an empty factory, which he put in our warehouse, in our camp, and told the men who were in charge of the warehouse when the war is over, remember to distribute these fabrics evenly so the people will have something to start their lives with. They can sell it, they can barter it, they can uh do something for them themselves, some clothes, but let's wait till the end of the war. Uh, then also, without the majority of us knowing until the very end, he acquired some guns. A big, again, my husband can give you because he knew more about guns than I, a big uh I think it was a machine gun and some uh handguns and some uh, uh other uh arms so we would be prepared if the Germans would try to kill us at the very end of the war because this is what they tried to do. We had a lager fuehrer, uh the head of our camp, uh, his name was Leopold, and he uh was already started uh, uh give orders to dig trenches for us, you know, to be put and, and shut in case of the Russians approaching closer, and somehow, Schindler realized what's happening and asked uh Moshebaskey, Moshebaskey today is the Supreme Court Justice in Israel, and at the time, he was a young man, very good in forging documents, you know, he was kind of an artist, you know, he knew how to forge documents, and he forged a telegram to Leopold, telling him to go uh calling him to the front, which Leopold very reluctantly did, but we got rid of Leopold. And, uh we heard another of the men who became the head of our camp, and but he was a lower rank than Leopold, and he was not too bad, because the Germans at that time realized the end of the war was near, and they knew they will be, have, they will have to account for their deeds. Uh, so that one was not too bad, but Leopold disappeared, and we had the guns when wh--Schindler wanted us to be prepared if the German either tried to kill us or retreating Germans would try to overpower us and also kill us, he wanted us to be prepared. (Clears throat).

Tell me about his birthday on April 28th.

On April 28th, because May 8th was the uh the end of the war, the liberation day, but A-April 28th

was his birthday, and we wanted to do something for him for his birthday, so each one of that of us, of the prisoners gave a little portion of their, our bread, and a little por-portion of our terrible jam or marmalade, whatever it was and, and, and um, mmmm, margarine, and someone who must have been very, very handy among us, I don't remember, I don't know who it was, made him a birthday cake. I mean, they didn't bake it, but just made it out of the bread, and the this, and we all gathered in the big hall, and Schindler spoke to us. He told us, and again, all the camp staff was there, all the woman SS, and the men SS, and the head, the Commandant, the the Commandant of the camp, the new one. Everybody was there, but he was absolutely not afraid of them, and he told us, "The end of the war is near. Please be uh think good thoughts because you will survive the war, but as you survive the war, try to be human beings." And that's uh how he.

We have to reload.

Beep.

Let's back up and talk a little bit about the speech, and then tell me about the presents that you gave to Schindler on that birthday.

About the ring right? Okay.

You can start.

Okay. Uh, uh, uh, we also gave Schindler on his birthday, we gave him a present. One of our prisoners had some tooth, uh a tooth or two extracted, you know, we had a couple of doctors in our uh, among us, and more than two I think, and a dentist, and he donated, he, the gold from his tooth to make a ring for Schindler, and on it there was an inscription: He who saved...now let me see, I don't want to uh, to, to, to, to make a mistake...He who saved a Jew I think,

One Jewish--

one Jewish soul save the world.

Tell me that story again. Tell me about the ring. Just tell me that he gave the speech--

He, he, he, ga, he gave us a speech, and also we, we gave him, do you want me to talk about the speech itself?

No.

Well, he told us to, to uh, uh that he assured us that we will be liberated. He assured us that uh we will survive the war, and as we survive the war, he ask us to be human beings, to behave like human beings. You know, he probably wanted to avoid, you know, the, the actions uh of people who were desperate, and then so long uh, uh in, in, in prison and so on, so uh he asked us to behave like human beings, which we always remembered anyway. And he got and also one of uh, uh our people ga--donated gold from his extracted tooth to uh a jeweler who was in our camp, and he made a ring for Schindler uh which bore the inscription: 'He who saves a, a Jewish soul, saves the whole world,' which is an old s--Talmudic, I think, saying.

You one time said that you thought Schindler was trying to save a cross-section of Jewish--

Absolutely, he, he called it his Noah's Ark. Uh, among us there were doctors, there were uh teachers, there were uh locksmiths, there were carpenters, there were uh tailors, uh, so kind of a cross-section, men, woman and also children. We had a few children. Unfortunately some fathers uh, when they left Plashow, a few fathers who were on Schindler's List, were able to get their boys also on the list, and they came to Brinwitz, but the Lager Commandant, Liepold, whom I mentioned before, uh gave the order for those children to go back uh to to be sent to Auschwitz. Of course the fathers refused the chil--for the children to go alone, and they all went with them.

Um, what was Schindler risking? What did he do and what did he risk?

Well, first of all he risked his life because under the, the German, under the Germans, helping a Jew, not saving him, but giving him bread or whatever, endangered his life, and also the life of his family. He was endangering, he was arrested a few times by Gestapo, uh one time for I think some black market dealings which he had to do in order to feed his people, and uh one time I think for uh, uh the they discovered some kind of a sabotage in his production, something like that. But, every time, he got out. That, that was not in Brinwitz, this was still when we were in Plashow, in Poland (Sandy talking in bkgd.).

Were you like a family to him?

I think he did not come to Krakow with uh preconceived notions about it, you know. It somehow developed. He formed very close relationships with his workers. He realized he liked them, he

respected them, and he, as the time progressed, and he realized what the Germans were doing, that that was a final solution process that he was uh, uh there was uh, that his people would be killed sooner or later, he decided he has to take some action and do something to prevent it.

How many people do you think he saved in all, in rough numbers, and also talk to me about whether or not you feel he was a hero.

Uh, he saved about uh, uh 1,300 people, men and woman, and then there were a few children who were a little older than the little boys who were sent back uh to Auschwitz. They were maybe teenagers. He saved those too. But in the, the total amount, I think more or less was 1,300 people, and definitely, I think he was a hero. He was--Yad Vashem recognize him as a righteous gentile, and uh he was one of the few of the very first righteous gentiles whom they gave the medal of Yad Vashem, and allowed him to plant a tree uh in the alley of the Righteous Gen-Gentiles in Jerusalem, and I think a very few Germans. There are a lot, many Poles over there, the Righteous Gentiles who helped uh the people, there are many uh I think Czech people, Swedish people and so on, and Da-Danish people, French people, but no Germans, Germans are very very few, and Schindler was one of the first ones to be recognized like this by Yad Vashem.

Talk about how you feel about how few people like him there were.

Well, I feel, that's why uh, uh, uh I feel that uh the testimony about Schindler should not be uh understood uh as whitewashing of the rest of German people because German people as a whole are responsible. There were very few like Oscar Schindler. If uh, uh I want to be very generous I will say like ten maybe, you know, on the whole. Maybe they had a single person some of them, very rarely, but to saved, to endanger your life and save 1300 people, feeding them, uh, uh fighting for their needs, uh we were talking about glasses before. Some people didn't have glasses. He went to some town, neighboring town (clears throat) and got them glasses, so he was really very unusual, and the Germans on the whole were, were perpetrators of the most tragic murder of the history of humankind. And if there was no precedent of his--in history, uh, uh of something like this on a scale like that, this was premeditated, this was done according to Hitler's plans, step by step.

Talk about uh resistance by being good human beings--this is in various experiences. You told an incident about an egg, you talked about sharing in camps and things like--talk to me about how you feel about--

Yeah, we uh, uh mmm, I came to the conclusion that we were actually very good human beings. I'm talking about uh people that I knew and uh in, in Plashow and in Schindler's camp. We were helping one another, we were sharing, we were trying to be supportive if somebody lost one of their close ones, we were very supportive. We uh, uh Shind--uh tried to really, because we could have under the treatment that we received, we could have very easily have become ----- . It was very easy to become like this, but we were really very supportive. I remember one time in Birkenau, every morning and every night, we had to stay not on the other parts but in front of our barracks, in the bitter cold and the bitter, and (cough) -----, and the S-SS woman uh were going by and if somebody looked a little pale or a little, didn't stand very straight, or something, they pulled them out and put them to a barrack for, which was designated to be sent to uh death uh in a very near future. So we tried to have, and I remember one time, we were standing like this early hours of the morning, maybe 4 o'clock, and uh we were standing, and I could feel that my uh knees were bending, you know, and I would fall anytime, my back was hurting, I don't know what happened to me all of the sudden. So, the girl in front of me and the girl in the back of me, kind of supported me, you know, and uh, uh, in little things like we tried to uh I shared my toothbrush, when I came to Brinwitz, my husband had a present for me, several presents. He had a little old medal.

We have to reload.

Beep.

Mrs. Page, I want you to tell me again about roll call and your legs getting weak, and I want you to say I was on roll call in Birkenau, it was cold, okay.

Okay. During one of the roll calls in Birkenau, we always had to stand on roll call early in the morning and in the evening, and I was standing, weather was freezing, November in Poland, and uh, uh we were standing by fives, and I had a feeling uh that something is wrong with me. My legs started to, my knees bent under me, my back started to hurt terribly, and I, I felt I, I would fall. And falling down meant being taken out of the group and put in a separate barrack, supposedly unfit for work, or unfit to live or whatever, so two of my friends, one who was standing in front of me, one who was standing in the back of me, were supporting me. Uh, and uh somehow, sometimes we had to rouge our cheeks. We took the beets from our soup, and we rouged the cheeks a little bit, not to look very pale. Um, we really helped one another in little ways trying to be human beings, not getting angry even though everybody was uh very uh nervous at the edge of their rope, so to say, and I remember in Brinwitz my husband prepared uh some gifts for me, he

gave me a toothbrush, which was made I think from horse's hair, or something like this, and that toothbrush I shared with my bunkmate, because of course we had no toothbrush. Um, later in Schindler's camp, we had some kind of a uh soap which was like, not soap like uh soda, you know what I mean? This is what uh powder. And of course, cold water, but we didn't have lice because we were deloused when we came. Not right away, but later because uh the, the, the lousing chamber was built after we came.

How do you see goodness of humanity being resistance?

I'm sorry, I don't--

How do you see the goodness being a form of resistance. You talked about--

Well, we unfortunately had no opportunity to resist in any other way, because what happened to us, first of all was unprecedented in history. We were very gradually uh you know, the Germans did it gradually like uh in my city, they took away uh, uh, uh you know uh, our right walking on the streets, then uh, the children could not go to school, the doctors could not practice, and so on, slowly, and we hoped, everybody said the war will be over in 2-3 months, you know. We, we believed in that wholeheartedly, and then slowly, they tightened the screws, and tried, deported to one place, and deported to the next, this was absolutely uh planned very desig--uh, uh designed for uh, uh, uh for, um annihilation of people, of the whole people, so any means of trying to survive, even being good to one another, especially being good to one another meant some form of resistance. Not giving up--was very easy to give up. You know, many people did.

You talked something about a child who saved a potato for his father. Can you tell that--

Yes, this was um, that happened when we were leaving Birkenau, as I told you, our train was standing on some sid-station, and all of the sudden, uh a great dear friend of mine, who lives now in New York, heard the whistle, familiar whistle, which she realized was her husband, and she thought, "My God, what is--" and it came from a direction of the camp. There was a fence near that side station, and on the other side of the uh that fence, there was a group of people standing in striped uh, uh, uh uniforms, and she realized that one of them was her husband. She couldn't understand what happened, he is supposed to be in Brinwitz. How come he's not in Brinwitz, he's in Birkenau, and they started, uh she asked for permission to step down the train, just in front of it, and they started to shout to one another, and she found out that Liepold made her husband, uh he didn't want children, so he, her husband and her little boy who at the time, when the war was over,

he was about 13, so he could have been maybe eight, no, no, this was 1944, maybe 12, maybe 11, something like that. So her little boy and her husband came to Birkenau, and somehow, they found out, you know through the grapevine--in camp the grapevine goes all the time, they found out that the transport of woman is leaving and they went to that particular point, and they realized that that transport of woman were the family of woman, you know, he realized it's his wife, so he start, they started to talk to one another, shout rather, and her little boy said, "Mommy--."

Let's cut, this motor is too much.

Okay.

Sync take 10 is up.

Beep.

Okay. So they're yelling through the fence. They're yelling through the fence, and the little boy, his name was uh, his name is Alexander, Oleg, diminutive, says, "Mommy, mommy, I am taking care of Daddy. I saved a potato for him." And there was another lady, who was the mother of -----, of the little boy that my husband told you about, Richard Tolovitz, the photographer, and she saw her little boy with his father over there, when she expected them to be in Brinwitz. Of course these women were terribly, terribly devastated, you know. They thought they will be reunited with the family, and it didn't happen, so, uh, uh so that little boy who later was liberated in Auschwitz, was Richard Tolovitz, he was also on the other si-uh side of the fence. They were cousin, Al Grossner and Richard Tolovitz, they are cousins.

Okay, is that noise all right? Yeah, it's all right. I want you to tell me again, I'm sorry to ask you to do this again, but I want you to tell me again the Germans coming and knocking on the door to take your mother away because there was so much noise, ----- . Tell it as though you haven't told me before.

Okay. In November, 1939, Poland of course was under uh German occupation, and we had some restrictions, uh in the city, uh we had to wear the yellow armbands, we couldn't go walk on certain streets and so on, but we still lived in the city, not in the ghetto, in our pre-war apartment, and one night in the early November, uh, I, my mother went downstairs to attend to a sick patient in the same bldg, and I heard a strong knock on the door. When I opened the door, I saw 3 Germans. One in the green uniform of the SS, I think, must have been SS, and two black uniforms of

German, the Germans, local Germans, who already were part of the German army, and who before the war were traitors.

Let's just stop. The plane is too noisy.

Beep.

Okay, pick it up there.

I opened the door, uh, and I saw those 3 Germans, one in the green uniform of the German SS, and the other one, uh the, the 2 other ones in black uniforms of the so-called Volksdeutshen, which were the local Germans who sympathized with Hitler before the war, and they were traitors to Poland, and when Germans uh occupied Poland, they all joined uh, uh, uh the German army or whatever unit they wanted, and the German in the green uniform said, "You are arrested on political grounds, puts uh together, a few warm clothes, and all the valuables, your jewelry, your money, put on the table." (Clears throat). Uh, in the meantime.

Let's stop.

Oh, I'm so--

Beep.

So what did he say?

He said, "You are arrested on political grounds." In the meantime, my mother came upstairs running, somebody notified her that the Germans are on the ap--apartment, which was bad by itself, without knowing uh what's going to happen, and he said, "You are arrested on political grounds. Uh, put together some warm things, and put all your jewelry and all the valuables uh on the table. Otherwise, you will be, that will be a death penalty, would be shot. And he also told my mother that I was not on the list. If I want to stay--So, I, I remember now, it dawned on me that I, my mother asked, "Can I stay in the apt?" He said, "No, the apt will be sealed." Anyway, I prefer to go with my mother. I didn't want to part with her. And as we were putting our things together, my mother had her jewelry put in a little sack, which she carried because those were very uh dangerous and uh, uh, one never knew what the next minute will bring, they, so she carried that with her, and she handed it to me, and she said, "Throw it in the toilet and flush the water." So I did. Then they

took us uh out. They sealed the apt., and we went to uh a bldg, which used to be my high school before the war, from which I graduated. And there, to my great astonishment, I realized there were many, many people, many of whom I knew, some of my teachers, some of my friends.

We have to stop. Put one more roll in, we'll try to finish????

Beep.

Okay. After we uh, they took us to a bldg, which I real--was my pre-war high school bldg, and as we walked to the big tremendous gym uh hall, I realized that I see many, many people there because there was no precedent before as far as deporta--uh, uh in deportations, we didn't know about it. We, we, this was the first one that we heard, accordingly to the list especially by names. And I realized there were many people that I knew. There were doctors, there were uh my teachers and my friends, and afterwards we found out this was a transport of about a thousand people. It was a selected group, Polish uh Catholics and Polish Jews, uh selected uh probably the elite of the city because they, the Germans always did that. They considered the intelligentsia, the leaders of the eventual resistance, and, and they tried to prevent that, so they transported uh, uh they divided the transport, one transport went to Czestochowa, and the other one went to uh Krakow. I was taken to Krakow with my mother.

All right, let's cut and keep rolling for the room tone.

Okay, um now before we wrap up--

Piece of room tone for interview with Ludmilla Page.

Also my husband

Beep.

because that happened when he in his barrack, you know in Plaushow, when the Germans came in and during the prayer or something--

All right tell me about what you know.

Yeah, but I don't know that much about it, no.

Well, tell me about--

Yeah, I tell you.

Okay go ahead.

Oh, okay. Uh first of all, uh you know, um, I come from a very assimilated family, and before the war, I never uh, uh, you know, had an occasion to meet very religious Jews, and I remember never forget, when we were leaving our barrack in Birkenau, and two of my uh, uh, uh we were always kept in fives, and two of my friends were twins. They didn't look alike at all. They were from a small town near Krakow, and I remember when we were leaving the barrack, one of them started to pray, you know, scneis were, at that time, I didn't even know what it meant, you know. God is uh, uh great, you know, and so on. They were very religious all the time. They always prayed, and there were many Jews who in those circumstances kept their prayers and, and uh tried for instance, during Yom Kippur, many of them wouldn't eat, as hungry as they were. You see, because you're supposed to fast that day. So that was uh, many of the uh, many people showed a tremendous moral strength in face of what was happening all around them.

Was that punishable, praying?

Oh yes, that was not allowed, absolutely. This was had to be done in the clandestine way, that means that the Germans should not know or always somebody stood outside and watched, you know, if they approached.

Okay, can we get quiet room tone and room tone with sheet metal?????

End of second piece of room tone, somewhat cleaner than first one, again for interview with Ludmilla Page.