

1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:18,810

2
00:00:18,810 --> 00:00:19,800
[BEEP]

3
00:00:19,800 --> 00:00:22,310

4
00:00:22,310 --> 00:00:27,380
I want you to begin by
describing the deportation

5
00:00:27,380 --> 00:00:30,200
to the brick factory courtyard.

6
00:00:30,200 --> 00:00:31,940
And I want you to
give a context--

7
00:00:31,940 --> 00:00:38,600
your age, your town, who it was,
and roughly what time it was,

8
00:00:38,600 --> 00:00:41,357
and how you went there, what
you thought was happening.

9
00:00:41,357 --> 00:00:44,490

10
00:00:44,490 --> 00:00:49,890
In 1944, April, at
the time when families

11
00:00:49,890 --> 00:00:53,070
were without
fathers' protections,

12
00:00:53,070 --> 00:00:57,480
my father was in a forced

labor camp already,

13
00:00:57,480 --> 00:01:01,860
unattended only by women
to tell their children,

14
00:01:01,860 --> 00:01:05,390
meaning my mother, my aunt.

15
00:01:05,390 --> 00:01:11,180
It came very suddenly although
the atmosphere was there.

16
00:01:11,180 --> 00:01:14,000
I mean, we sensed
that things weren't

17
00:01:14,000 --> 00:01:17,640
right from the beginning
of the year already.

18
00:01:17,640 --> 00:01:21,020
Schools were closed.

19
00:01:21,020 --> 00:01:24,260
Life was just not
what it used to be.

20
00:01:24,260 --> 00:01:29,720
We wore yellow stars to
be singled out as Jews.

21
00:01:29,720 --> 00:01:35,480
And when the Germans occupied--
this was Hungary at the time.

22
00:01:35,480 --> 00:01:38,510
The Germans took over the city.

23
00:01:38,510 --> 00:01:46,670
And in no time we were just
told to pack a 5-kilo package.

24

00:01:46,670 --> 00:01:53,930

And they marched us on
foot to the brick factory

25

00:01:53,930 --> 00:01:56,720

in our own hometown.

26

00:01:56,720 --> 00:02:01,400

We lived there under very
meager circumstances.

27

00:02:01,400 --> 00:02:09,389

My aunt, I remember, improvised
a sled for a bedroom.

28

00:02:09,389 --> 00:02:13,590

We had our own pillows
and slept under the sky,

29

00:02:13,590 --> 00:02:16,290

but we had the sled to
protect us from the sides.

30

00:02:16,290 --> 00:02:20,340

31

00:02:20,340 --> 00:02:22,560

By brick, we built
up the bricks.

32

00:02:22,560 --> 00:02:25,560

And I remember my
mother's concern

33

00:02:25,560 --> 00:02:29,100

that her child had
to work so hard.

34

00:02:29,100 --> 00:02:34,100

And we stayed there
for four weeks.

35

00:02:34,100 --> 00:02:36,740

36

00:02:36,740 --> 00:02:39,680

One night, which was in April--

37

00:02:39,680 --> 00:02:43,610

and everything always happened
when it was dark out--

38

00:02:43,610 --> 00:02:45,500

we were ordered to line up.

39

00:02:45,500 --> 00:02:49,430

Before we knew, we were
in the cattle cars,

40

00:02:49,430 --> 00:02:53,180

taken to work per se.

41

00:02:53,180 --> 00:02:57,680

Unknown to us, they arrived
to famous Auschwitz.

42

00:02:57,680 --> 00:03:00,850

We still didn't know
where we were going.

43

00:03:00,850 --> 00:03:05,560

My mother's only concern on the
trip to Auschwitz in the cattle

44

00:03:05,560 --> 00:03:09,410

car was that we had our own
little corner, my mother,

45

00:03:09,410 --> 00:03:14,530

my aunt, my brother, who was
six years old at the time.

46

00:03:14,530 --> 00:03:21,160

Her only concern was my
father's well-being and myself.

47
00:03:21,160 --> 00:03:28,510
And her words were, I hope
you don't have to starve

48
00:03:28,510 --> 00:03:30,760
or you don't have
to be hungry ever,

49
00:03:30,760 --> 00:03:33,970
because I know you get
headaches, my child.

50
00:03:33,970 --> 00:03:35,890
Seemed like she
had a premonition

51
00:03:35,890 --> 00:03:40,390
that my father and myself
will be the only survivors.

52
00:03:40,390 --> 00:03:43,030
As it happened, we were.

53
00:03:43,030 --> 00:03:45,310
But that's a later story.

54
00:03:45,310 --> 00:03:48,670
We arrived to Auschwitz.

55
00:03:48,670 --> 00:03:50,760
The impression was unbelievable.

56
00:03:50,760 --> 00:03:58,390
There were these striped-clothes
people, dogs, German soldiers.

57
00:03:58,390 --> 00:04:01,120
And it was very, very chaotic.

58
00:04:01,120 --> 00:04:06,310
We were ordered very quickly to

get off or jump off the cattle.

59

00:04:06,310 --> 00:04:13,050

I was still with my mother, and
lined up five or six in a line,

60

00:04:13,050 --> 00:04:15,870

holding on to each other.

61

00:04:15,870 --> 00:04:18,560

And as I said, things
just happened so quickly.

62

00:04:18,560 --> 00:04:20,209

You didn't have
a chance to think

63

00:04:20,209 --> 00:04:24,380

or to know what's happening to
you, or what's awaiting you.

64

00:04:24,380 --> 00:04:26,950

65

00:04:26,950 --> 00:04:30,370

My first impression was of
the stripe-clothed people.

66

00:04:30,370 --> 00:04:33,950

I said, this must
be the crazy unit.

67

00:04:33,950 --> 00:04:38,930

These were the workers,
the Jewish workers that

68

00:04:38,930 --> 00:04:42,000

did the job for the Germans.

69

00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:49,000

After the line up, we came up,
again, as I said, very quickly.

70

00:04:49,000 --> 00:04:51,670

Came to the selecting,
where Mengele

71

00:04:51,670 --> 00:04:58,340

was standing, overpowering,
very tall, looking down on us,

72

00:04:58,340 --> 00:05:00,290

and nodding with his finger--

73

00:05:00,290 --> 00:05:02,180

left and right.

74

00:05:02,180 --> 00:05:05,490

To live, to die.

75

00:05:05,490 --> 00:05:09,660

I was the only one from the
row which was, as I said,

76

00:05:09,660 --> 00:05:15,090

five or six of us, to be
sent to the other side.

77

00:05:15,090 --> 00:05:18,570

But I ran back three times,
wanting to be with my mother.

78

00:05:18,570 --> 00:05:20,040

I needed her protection.

79

00:05:20,040 --> 00:05:21,750

I was only 14 at the time.

80

00:05:21,750 --> 00:05:24,630

81

00:05:24,630 --> 00:05:27,400

And Mengele threw
me back three times.

82

00:05:27,400 --> 00:05:31,410

He practically literally
threw me to the ground.

83

00:05:31,410 --> 00:05:35,370

It still didn't
faze me to the bit.

84

00:05:35,370 --> 00:05:37,650

I still ran to my mother.

85

00:05:37,650 --> 00:05:41,010

The third time when
the gravel hit me,

86

00:05:41,010 --> 00:05:44,780

my mother obviously
worried about her child.

87

00:05:44,780 --> 00:05:48,030

Said, go my child, go.

88

00:05:48,030 --> 00:05:53,720

With the nod of her hand
and her permission to go,

89

00:05:53,720 --> 00:05:58,160

I did, whatever Mengele
threw me down and ordered

90

00:05:58,160 --> 00:06:03,840

me to go to that site,
unknown to me as to my fate.

91

00:06:03,840 --> 00:06:09,150

And this is how I live all
my life, with my mother's nod

92

00:06:09,150 --> 00:06:11,940

of her hand-- go my child, go.

93

00:06:11,940 --> 00:06:12,645

And I went.

94

00:06:12,645 --> 00:06:17,302

95

00:06:17,302 --> 00:06:19,490

Tell me a little
more about Mengele.

96

00:06:19,490 --> 00:06:21,760

How did you know it was Mengele?

97

00:06:21,760 --> 00:06:24,160

I didn't know at that
time that he was Mengele.

98

00:06:24,160 --> 00:06:25,275

He was just the overseer.

99

00:06:25,275 --> 00:06:28,750

100

00:06:28,750 --> 00:06:31,780

He was the one that decided
your fate, whether you will

101

00:06:31,780 --> 00:06:33,640

go straight to the crematorium.

102

00:06:33,640 --> 00:06:36,880

I mean, that was unknown
to us, because we were told

103

00:06:36,880 --> 00:06:41,590

that we will see each other.

104

00:06:41,590 --> 00:06:45,370

And as long as you have hope,
the panic is not so great.

105

00:06:45,370 --> 00:06:50,040

Because the hope is an

unbelievable strength.

106
00:06:50,040 --> 00:06:54,050
Even though it's not real,
but you make it real.

107
00:06:54,050 --> 00:06:56,180
We didn't know
where we were going

108
00:06:56,180 --> 00:06:58,470
or why was I separated
from my mother,

109
00:06:58,470 --> 00:07:00,620
that I'll never see her again.

110
00:07:00,620 --> 00:07:02,060
I just wanted to cling on.

111
00:07:02,060 --> 00:07:05,880
I just wanted to stay with her.

112
00:07:05,880 --> 00:07:07,920
Who Mengele was, I
didn't know at the time.

113
00:07:07,920 --> 00:07:10,920
I only found out afterwards.

114
00:07:10,920 --> 00:07:13,400
So really, Mengele
was very good to me.

115
00:07:13,400 --> 00:07:14,600
He wanted me to live.

116
00:07:14,600 --> 00:07:17,000
He threw me on the other side.

117
00:07:17,000 --> 00:07:19,330
I was still young.

118
00:07:19,330 --> 00:07:23,500
And I guess I looked healthy
enough to get some work out of.

119
00:07:23,500 --> 00:07:26,200
And the rest was
history, obviously.

120
00:07:26,200 --> 00:07:32,530

121
00:07:32,530 --> 00:07:35,390
Tell me about registration.

122
00:07:35,390 --> 00:07:38,100
At the camp?

123
00:07:38,100 --> 00:07:44,610
Well, we were chosen, some of
us, this particular transport.

124
00:07:44,610 --> 00:07:49,850
First of all, we were lined
up, thrown to a barrack,

125
00:07:49,850 --> 00:07:53,780
and we were tattooed.

126
00:07:53,780 --> 00:07:54,860
Well, not everybody.

127
00:07:54,860 --> 00:07:59,210
They chose us to go and work
to the Brzezinka or Birkenau,

128
00:07:59,210 --> 00:08:03,210
whichever name you
are familiar with.

129
00:08:03,210 --> 00:08:09,360
This was the place in Auschwitz

next to the crematorium,

130
00:08:09,360 --> 00:08:12,930
where people arrived.

131
00:08:12,930 --> 00:08:16,010
They went in and
never came back again.

132
00:08:16,010 --> 00:08:22,770
Also, the people that were
doomed to live in misery,

133
00:08:22,770 --> 00:08:26,490
they were given bath, undressed.

134
00:08:26,490 --> 00:08:29,100
They were very hygienic
about the whole process,

135
00:08:29,100 --> 00:08:32,730
because you had to remove your
shoes, if you still had one.

136
00:08:32,730 --> 00:08:35,520
We were given, again,
the striped clothes.

137
00:08:35,520 --> 00:08:38,740
Now I knew what the
crazy unit meant.

138
00:08:38,740 --> 00:08:43,150
Our heads were
shaven completely.

139
00:08:43,150 --> 00:08:47,530
And when we approached each
other with our friends,

140
00:08:47,530 --> 00:08:51,580
nobody recognized each other.

141

00:08:51,580 --> 00:08:54,100

After the selection,
we selected again

142

00:08:54,100 --> 00:08:59,260

to this transport which was
unknown to me at the time.

143

00:08:59,260 --> 00:09:02,050

It was called the
Sonderkommando.

144

00:09:02,050 --> 00:09:04,360

Sonder means special.

145

00:09:04,360 --> 00:09:08,200

The Sonderkommando was
one group, the men,

146

00:09:08,200 --> 00:09:14,890

that worked in the crematorium,
cremating and burning

147

00:09:14,890 --> 00:09:18,370

sometimes their own brothers
and sisters or families,

148

00:09:18,370 --> 00:09:20,410

unknown to them.

149

00:09:20,410 --> 00:09:25,450

We were the ones that
selected the clothing

150

00:09:25,450 --> 00:09:27,400

that people undressed.

151

00:09:27,400 --> 00:09:31,730

We sorted those clothes
that went back to Germany.

152

00:09:31,730 --> 00:09:35,110

So we had to sort the clothes--

153
00:09:35,110 --> 00:09:39,190
clothing, jewelry, and so on.

154
00:09:39,190 --> 00:09:42,220
I even found my very own
clothes there one day

155
00:09:42,220 --> 00:09:44,290
while I'm sorting clothes.

156
00:09:44,290 --> 00:09:48,550
I found my aunt's coat who
went to the gas chamber

157
00:09:48,550 --> 00:09:50,500
with my mother.

158
00:09:50,500 --> 00:09:53,560
And doing it day in
and day out, I still

159
00:09:53,560 --> 00:09:59,620
didn't believe I was gazing
at the flames, the torch which

160
00:09:59,620 --> 00:10:02,140
was forever burning.

161
00:10:02,140 --> 00:10:04,720
And I was as far
from the crematory

162
00:10:04,720 --> 00:10:08,110
as far as I'm sitting from
you practically, a few feet.

163
00:10:08,110 --> 00:10:09,165
And I didn't believe it.

164
00:10:09,165 --> 00:10:11,110

I says, not my mother.

165
00:10:11,110 --> 00:10:12,160
Not my brother.

166
00:10:12,160 --> 00:10:15,480
I mean, I was still waiting
for them to come out.

167
00:10:15,480 --> 00:10:17,520
In other words, I
pulled down the shade,

168
00:10:17,520 --> 00:10:19,710
and I said it doesn't exist.

169
00:10:19,710 --> 00:10:25,550
That was my only defense of
my own personal survival.

170
00:10:25,550 --> 00:10:29,270
I kept on pretending.

171
00:10:29,270 --> 00:10:33,160
Realistically, we
knew after being there

172
00:10:33,160 --> 00:10:36,290
a year that people
went in and marched in,

173
00:10:36,290 --> 00:10:39,020
and they just never came out.

174
00:10:39,020 --> 00:10:43,040

175
00:10:43,040 --> 00:10:47,350
So your mind is really
become so blank at times.

176
00:10:47,350 --> 00:10:50,540

Maybe it's helpful or not.

177

00:10:50,540 --> 00:10:55,530

Our job was, as I told
you, sorting clothes.

178

00:10:55,530 --> 00:10:57,960

Sometimes outdoors,
sometimes indoors.

179

00:10:57,960 --> 00:11:05,040

We had our own sleeping quarters
which consisted of the--

180

00:11:05,040 --> 00:11:10,260

we called it the
[NON-ENGLISH],, a step up,

181

00:11:10,260 --> 00:11:15,070

a narrow piece of cot that
five or six people slept.

182

00:11:15,070 --> 00:11:18,410

So if one moved,
everybody had to move.

183

00:11:18,410 --> 00:11:22,670

We used our cup, a
tin cup, for a pillow.

184

00:11:22,670 --> 00:11:27,590

And we had one
utensil, maybe a spoon.

185

00:11:27,590 --> 00:11:29,060

We have to reload.

186

00:11:29,060 --> 00:11:30,800

[INAUDIBLE]

187

00:11:30,800 --> 00:11:31,300

Brett?

188

00:11:31,300 --> 00:11:35,458

189

00:11:35,458 --> 00:11:36,382

[BEEP]

190

00:11:36,382 --> 00:11:37,310

191

00:11:37,310 --> 00:11:43,790

I want you to try to give me
a basic picture of Auschwitz,

192

00:11:43,790 --> 00:11:45,230

how big it was.

193

00:11:45,230 --> 00:11:48,950

And then I want you to
describe to me your work.

194

00:11:48,950 --> 00:11:51,200

And describe it to me as
though you didn't already

195

00:11:51,200 --> 00:11:52,550

tell me about it.

196

00:11:52,550 --> 00:11:55,490

Explain to me how
it was separate

197

00:11:55,490 --> 00:11:59,930

and how different it was
from other parts of the camp,

198

00:11:59,930 --> 00:12:02,540

if you can.

199

00:12:02,540 --> 00:12:05,540

As I mentioned
before, we were chosen

200

00:12:05,540 --> 00:12:09,320

to be the Sonderkommando,
which meant

201

00:12:09,320 --> 00:12:12,230

that after every six
months they would change up

202

00:12:12,230 --> 00:12:13,340

the Sonderkommando.

203

00:12:13,340 --> 00:12:18,020

Because we were the ones that
knew too much for the world

204

00:12:18,020 --> 00:12:19,040

to know.

205

00:12:19,040 --> 00:12:23,900

And the Germans, as tedious as
they were about their own work,

206

00:12:23,900 --> 00:12:25,970

they knew that.

207

00:12:25,970 --> 00:12:28,160

We were the inside people.

208

00:12:28,160 --> 00:12:31,460

We knew exactly how people
came and never came out

209

00:12:31,460 --> 00:12:34,340

of the crematorium.

210

00:12:34,340 --> 00:12:39,840

We were part of
their work schedule,

211

00:12:39,840 --> 00:12:43,050

as far as we knew that those
things were sent to Germany--

212
00:12:43,050 --> 00:12:48,090
the clothing that was being
separated, the jewelry that was

213
00:12:48,090 --> 00:12:50,080
sewn into people's clothing.

214
00:12:50,080 --> 00:12:53,950
We found many times
in the pants where

215
00:12:53,950 --> 00:12:57,342
the waistband is long jewelry.

216
00:12:57,342 --> 00:13:01,150
I mean, it had no value to us.

217
00:13:01,150 --> 00:13:03,810
Well, it did, because we
could get a slice of bread

218
00:13:03,810 --> 00:13:09,730
for it because we could do
some business with each other.

219
00:13:09,730 --> 00:13:13,200
So it was worthless to us.

220
00:13:13,200 --> 00:13:18,390
Of course, the way we worked,
there were two Germans always

221
00:13:18,390 --> 00:13:22,560
watching the barracks, that we
should work properly and fast,

222
00:13:22,560 --> 00:13:25,440
because you couldn't
stop for one minute.

223
00:13:25,440 --> 00:13:28,590

We, in turn, had
our own watchmen

224
00:13:28,590 --> 00:13:32,370
to see when the
German was coming.

225
00:13:32,370 --> 00:13:35,790
And we had a password,
which was geshem,

226
00:13:35,790 --> 00:13:39,040
which means rain in Hebrew.

227
00:13:39,040 --> 00:13:41,560
And whenever we heard
geshem, then everybody

228
00:13:41,560 --> 00:13:43,540
was working very diligently.

229
00:13:43,540 --> 00:13:49,090
And otherwise, in our
own way, we sabotaged.

230
00:13:49,090 --> 00:13:51,760
If we could, we cut up
everything to shreds.

231
00:13:51,760 --> 00:13:54,400
Not that it helped,
but it was good for us.

232
00:13:54,400 --> 00:13:57,328

233
00:13:57,328 --> 00:14:00,710
We were no human beings anymore.

234
00:14:00,710 --> 00:14:05,730
We were stripped of our
humanity, our dignity,

235

00:14:05,730 --> 00:14:10,060
our pride, our existence.

236

00:14:10,060 --> 00:14:16,230
But we had to have some
sort of a strength within.

237

00:14:16,230 --> 00:14:20,380
This was some of our
way of resistance.

238

00:14:20,380 --> 00:14:22,530
I know it wasn't
much, but it made

239

00:14:22,530 --> 00:14:25,080
us feel like we're
doing something.

240

00:14:25,080 --> 00:14:28,060

241

00:14:28,060 --> 00:14:30,490
And the minute, as I said,
that we heard geshem,

242

00:14:30,490 --> 00:14:33,310
everybody was doing the
right thing in the right.

243

00:14:33,310 --> 00:14:38,580
That was sorted out,
put into bundles,

244

00:14:38,580 --> 00:14:42,430
and stacked up in the barracks.

245

00:14:42,430 --> 00:14:45,250
So there were mountains of it.

246

00:14:45,250 --> 00:14:48,300
And once, towards

the end of the week,

247

00:14:48,300 --> 00:14:51,460

a big truck would come and
take all the bundles away.

248

00:14:51,460 --> 00:14:56,400

And then we would get a reload
of new transports coming in.

249

00:14:56,400 --> 00:15:01,570

250

00:15:01,570 --> 00:15:04,630

This place wasn't even
ready for occupancy

251

00:15:04,630 --> 00:15:08,500

because they were just building
the hotel when we arrived.

252

00:15:08,500 --> 00:15:16,380

So for the time being, we were
stationed at Camp C, the lager.

253

00:15:16,380 --> 00:15:17,590

A Lager, excuse me.

254

00:15:17,590 --> 00:15:23,440

Not C. And we were called
the white kerchief transport.

255

00:15:23,440 --> 00:15:26,830

They gave us white
babushka or kerchief.

256

00:15:26,830 --> 00:15:28,930

How would you call it?

257

00:15:28,930 --> 00:15:31,840

And we marched every day.

258

00:15:31,840 --> 00:15:39,880
And we passed the crematorium
going to Brzezinka,

259
00:15:39,880 --> 00:15:42,260
not realizing what's
going on inside.

260
00:15:42,260 --> 00:15:44,830
But it was always very
solemn when we passed it.

261
00:15:44,830 --> 00:15:47,740
I mean, nobody spoke.

262
00:15:47,740 --> 00:15:50,630
Nobody dared to
move, really, when

263
00:15:50,630 --> 00:15:53,050
we passed that area,
even unknown to us

264
00:15:53,050 --> 00:15:54,250
this is what it was for.

265
00:15:54,250 --> 00:15:58,100

266
00:15:58,100 --> 00:16:00,300
Maybe we didn't want
to accept the reality.

267
00:16:00,300 --> 00:16:00,860
We didn't.

268
00:16:00,860 --> 00:16:02,340
I know we didn't.

269
00:16:02,340 --> 00:16:06,350
And after a month, they
built up these barracks,

270

00:16:06,350 --> 00:16:08,210
and we were able
to be housed there.

271

00:16:08,210 --> 00:16:13,400
And we remained
there till January,

272

00:16:13,400 --> 00:16:17,810
until the camp was disassembled.

273

00:16:17,810 --> 00:16:20,640
In other words,
there was resistance.

274

00:16:20,640 --> 00:16:22,850
The Sonderkommando
that I was telling you

275

00:16:22,850 --> 00:16:26,960
about who worked the
men group, among them

276

00:16:26,960 --> 00:16:32,550
was a very close friend
of ours from our hometown.

277

00:16:32,550 --> 00:16:38,590
We talked to him one morning
through the barbed wires.

278

00:16:38,590 --> 00:16:41,220
He said, we have it too good.

279

00:16:41,220 --> 00:16:47,190
We are being fed well, and we
sleep under beautiful covers.

280

00:16:47,190 --> 00:16:49,210
I mean, why that made
such a difference to him,

281

00:16:49,210 --> 00:16:51,690
but silk covers.

282
00:16:51,690 --> 00:16:53,760
This is exactly what he said.

283
00:16:53,760 --> 00:16:57,000
This means the end, end for us.

284
00:16:57,000 --> 00:16:59,820
But they are not
going to gas us.

285
00:16:59,820 --> 00:17:02,790
And just then, a
German approached.

286
00:17:02,790 --> 00:17:04,619
And he had to run away
because we weren't

287
00:17:04,619 --> 00:17:06,960
allowed to talk to each other.

288
00:17:06,960 --> 00:17:12,560
Next morning we were
awakened by gunshots.

289
00:17:12,560 --> 00:17:15,980
And the whole barrack
had to go out.

290
00:17:15,980 --> 00:17:19,550
And we were shown
all the dead bodies

291
00:17:19,550 --> 00:17:25,069
right at the barbed wires, to
show what deserters are doing.

292
00:17:25,069 --> 00:17:27,680
These were the
deserters, the ones

293
00:17:27,680 --> 00:17:31,630
that refused to be cremated.

294
00:17:31,630 --> 00:17:34,780
So they shot them to death,
and then they cremated them.

295
00:17:34,780 --> 00:17:40,110
Among them was this friend
of ours from our hometown,

296
00:17:40,110 --> 00:17:43,410
who told us that he knew
what their fate was.

297
00:17:43,410 --> 00:17:46,830
So that was the changeover.

298
00:17:46,830 --> 00:17:51,450
By then, there was also another
conspiracy that we heard of.

299
00:17:51,450 --> 00:17:56,010
There was another camp
in the city of Auschwitz.

300
00:17:56,010 --> 00:17:57,280
This was Birkenau.

301
00:17:57,280 --> 00:17:59,070
There was a city.

302
00:17:59,070 --> 00:18:02,250
There was another crematorium.

303
00:18:02,250 --> 00:18:05,100
And people had jobs.

304
00:18:05,100 --> 00:18:07,170
For instance-- and I'm
ashamed to tell you,

305

00:18:07,170 --> 00:18:09,720

but I have to say
the way it is--

306

00:18:09,720 --> 00:18:16,200

Scheisskommando, which
was the sanitary group

307

00:18:16,200 --> 00:18:19,590

that was transporting
it from camp to camp.

308

00:18:19,590 --> 00:18:23,910

They had an access to visit
different camps because

309

00:18:23,910 --> 00:18:28,630

of their so-called
job, dignified job.

310

00:18:28,630 --> 00:18:34,270

And they were able
to bring news.

311

00:18:34,270 --> 00:18:38,680

And the conspiracy was that
this crematorium and the one

312

00:18:38,680 --> 00:18:42,790

in the city, they will burn it.

313

00:18:42,790 --> 00:18:44,530

The inmates.

314

00:18:44,530 --> 00:18:46,870

They were planning on it.

315

00:18:46,870 --> 00:18:49,720

Well, from then on the
crematorium stopped.

316

00:18:49,720 --> 00:18:51,910
I don't know how
successful they were,

317
00:18:51,910 --> 00:18:53,980
but partly they
damaged it so they

318
00:18:53,980 --> 00:18:56,620
weren't able to use it anymore.

319
00:18:56,620 --> 00:19:01,390
Now, by then, the Russian
and the American planes

320
00:19:01,390 --> 00:19:03,190
were flying over us.

321
00:19:03,190 --> 00:19:03,910
You know what?

322
00:19:03,910 --> 00:19:05,980
I still don't
understand up to date.

323
00:19:05,980 --> 00:19:12,890
I remember they were
taking pictures.

324
00:19:12,890 --> 00:19:16,170
The planes were so
low as the ceiling.

325
00:19:16,170 --> 00:19:18,500
We could see the
pilot out of there.

326
00:19:18,500 --> 00:19:22,130
And still they
didn't bomb the area.

327
00:19:22,130 --> 00:19:25,310
That was already in December.

328
00:19:25,310 --> 00:19:26,900
End of November.

329
00:19:26,900 --> 00:19:29,720
They knew where the camps were.

330
00:19:29,720 --> 00:19:31,520
They spotted us.

331
00:19:31,520 --> 00:19:34,010
And we still went
through from January

332
00:19:34,010 --> 00:19:41,840
until the cremations
stopped in Auschwitz.

333
00:19:41,840 --> 00:19:45,750
We were again put through
the different transports.

334
00:19:45,750 --> 00:19:47,640
Before we were
taken to the road,

335
00:19:47,640 --> 00:19:50,370
which was called the
famous death march,

336
00:19:50,370 --> 00:19:54,060
from January till
April on foot in the--

337
00:19:54,060 --> 00:19:56,190
Wait, let's back up
before we go into that.

338
00:19:56,190 --> 00:20:00,115

339
00:20:00,115 --> 00:20:05,130

In your work in sorting
clothes, how close

340
00:20:05,130 --> 00:20:07,500
were you to the crematorium?

341
00:20:07,500 --> 00:20:10,020
I mean, were you part
of the Sonderkommando?

342
00:20:10,020 --> 00:20:13,050
Or were you another group?

343
00:20:13,050 --> 00:20:19,150
And tell me how your life
was and how you were treated.

344
00:20:19,150 --> 00:20:24,010
We were not part of the
crematorium Sonderkommando.

345
00:20:24,010 --> 00:20:27,550
This was another
unit, the working unit

346
00:20:27,550 --> 00:20:31,240
of separating the clothes.

347
00:20:31,240 --> 00:20:36,040
We were treated like
animal inmates because

348
00:20:36,040 --> 00:20:41,080
of the Zehlappell, which meant
to be lined up every day, rain

349
00:20:41,080 --> 00:20:42,550
or shine.

350
00:20:42,550 --> 00:20:44,430
They forever counted us.

351

00:20:44,430 --> 00:20:47,440
We were very valuable for them.

352
00:20:47,440 --> 00:20:55,440
And if you looked
bare or weak, you

353
00:20:55,440 --> 00:21:00,600
were transported elsewhere,
which meant the crematorium.

354
00:21:00,600 --> 00:21:02,820
They only kept the
people that were able

355
00:21:02,820 --> 00:21:07,110
to, in their estimation, work.

356
00:21:07,110 --> 00:21:10,530
Now, we were a foursome
with my girlfriend,

357
00:21:10,530 --> 00:21:16,020
her sister, and her mother,
who I claim was my strength.

358
00:21:16,020 --> 00:21:20,040
To be able to aid her
and give her strength

359
00:21:20,040 --> 00:21:22,560
gave me strength
to go on, because I

360
00:21:22,560 --> 00:21:25,170
felt whatever I would
have done for my mother

361
00:21:25,170 --> 00:21:26,820
I could do for her.

362
00:21:26,820 --> 00:21:31,000
She gave up living the

minute she got into camp.

363

00:21:31,000 --> 00:21:34,640

There was no will there.

364

00:21:34,640 --> 00:21:38,390

After her hair was shaved
and started growing back

365

00:21:38,390 --> 00:21:39,350

it was white.

366

00:21:39,350 --> 00:21:42,200

And she was pitch
black her hair.

367

00:21:42,200 --> 00:21:46,460

I remember because she was
maybe 36 years old at the time.

368

00:21:46,460 --> 00:21:49,290

To me she was an old lady.

369

00:21:49,290 --> 00:21:53,550

When the hair started
growing, it was pure white.

370

00:21:53,550 --> 00:21:56,170

371

00:21:56,170 --> 00:21:59,910

She looked like a
75-year-old old lady.

372

00:21:59,910 --> 00:22:04,550

Not 75 young, but 75 old.

373

00:22:04,550 --> 00:22:11,820

And when we would stand in
Zehlappell, in this lineup,

374

00:22:11,820 --> 00:22:13,440

we got beets for food.

375

00:22:13,440 --> 00:22:16,860

That was our delicacy at times.

376

00:22:16,860 --> 00:22:19,830

We kept the beets just
to put makeup on her face

377

00:22:19,830 --> 00:22:21,270

that she should look healthy.

378

00:22:21,270 --> 00:22:25,440

We rubbed the beets on her face.

379

00:22:25,440 --> 00:22:28,650

And we would just try
to put her in the back

380

00:22:28,650 --> 00:22:32,200

that she shouldn't
be too noticeable.

381

00:22:32,200 --> 00:22:33,820

And we carried on.

382

00:22:33,820 --> 00:22:37,390

I mean, we kept her
alive for as long as--

383

00:22:37,390 --> 00:22:40,930

up until the very
last minute, which--

384

00:22:40,930 --> 00:22:41,715

We have to reload.

385

00:22:41,715 --> 00:22:44,926

386

00:22:44,926 --> 00:22:47,330

Is somebody upstairs?

387
00:22:47,330 --> 00:22:47,830
Yeah.

388
00:22:47,830 --> 00:22:54,060

389
00:22:54,060 --> 00:22:58,110
Interview with Agi Rubin.

390
00:22:58,110 --> 00:23:03,930
February 25, 1992.

391
00:23:03,930 --> 00:23:05,040
Detroit, Michigan.

392
00:23:05,040 --> 00:23:09,070

393
00:23:09,070 --> 00:23:10,310
Is she moved too much?

394
00:23:10,310 --> 00:23:11,030
[BEEP]

395
00:23:11,030 --> 00:23:12,990

396
00:23:12,990 --> 00:23:13,890
[BEEP]

397
00:23:13,890 --> 00:23:15,240

398
00:23:15,240 --> 00:23:21,000
Can you again tell me
the story of the people

399
00:23:21,000 --> 00:23:24,180
who ended up being shot, who
knew that the end was coming?

400

00:23:24,180 --> 00:23:29,617

And tell it to me with the
background of who they were,

401

00:23:29,617 --> 00:23:31,200

how you met them at
the fence and they

402

00:23:31,200 --> 00:23:34,170

tried to tell you what they
thought was going to happen,

403

00:23:34,170 --> 00:23:38,850

and why you think that happened,
what they were planning.

404

00:23:38,850 --> 00:23:42,590

405

00:23:42,590 --> 00:23:45,920

This friend of ours who
was our family doctor

406

00:23:45,920 --> 00:23:50,510

and a friend of
the family, we were

407

00:23:50,510 --> 00:23:55,160

in the back of their fence.

408

00:23:55,160 --> 00:23:59,570

Our back yard faced
the crematorium.

409

00:23:59,570 --> 00:24:01,550

The barracks where
we were sleeping in.

410

00:24:01,550 --> 00:24:04,430

Not working, where
we were sleeping in.

411
00:24:04,430 --> 00:24:08,340
Inmates were not allowed
to speak to each other.

412
00:24:08,340 --> 00:24:13,490
So it was just in a glance.

413
00:24:13,490 --> 00:24:19,200
And this friend of ours came
very close to the barbed wires

414
00:24:19,200 --> 00:24:25,070
and told us in a hush-hush
way, we have it too good.

415
00:24:25,070 --> 00:24:27,010
They are feeding us well.

416
00:24:27,010 --> 00:24:30,370
We sleep under beautiful covers.

417
00:24:30,370 --> 00:24:34,330
They are feeding us
up to kill, because we

418
00:24:34,330 --> 00:24:36,200
are next to be cremated.

419
00:24:36,200 --> 00:24:42,010
But I promise you that we
are not going to be cremated.

420
00:24:42,010 --> 00:24:44,510
They will shoot us.

421
00:24:44,510 --> 00:24:50,500
Next day, we woke up for
the sounds of the guns.

422
00:24:50,500 --> 00:24:51,880
They forced us out.

423

00:24:51,880 --> 00:24:58,400

They lined us up right in
front of the barbed wires.

424

00:24:58,400 --> 00:25:02,990

All the men, the whole
group, was shot to death.

425

00:25:02,990 --> 00:25:09,950

And we had to witness
their death there

426

00:25:09,950 --> 00:25:15,050

with a warning that this
is what deserters become,

427

00:25:15,050 --> 00:25:16,110

shot to death.

428

00:25:16,110 --> 00:25:20,150

So in other words, if we
would attempt anything heroic,

429

00:25:20,150 --> 00:25:24,190

we should just forget about it.

430

00:25:24,190 --> 00:25:29,830

They knew, and they were
going to die a heroic death.

431

00:25:29,830 --> 00:25:33,400

And in my book,
in my estimation,

432

00:25:33,400 --> 00:25:39,020

they were the heroes of
survival, the heroes of camp.

433

00:25:39,020 --> 00:25:43,170

Where there was no
way of fighting back,

434

00:25:43,170 --> 00:25:44,940
this was their resistance.

435
00:25:44,940 --> 00:25:48,390
Like in our unit
the resistance was

436
00:25:48,390 --> 00:25:52,440
to cut clothes to shreds that
it shouldn't get to Germany

437
00:25:52,440 --> 00:25:55,170
or to slow it down.

438
00:25:55,170 --> 00:25:58,380
This was their way of defiance.

439
00:25:58,380 --> 00:26:03,340
Without ammunition,
without strength,

440
00:26:03,340 --> 00:26:10,750
without human physical ability,
but they were resisting.

441
00:26:10,750 --> 00:26:13,220
That was the last
time, of course.

442
00:26:13,220 --> 00:26:15,760
As I told you, we saw
them dead on the floor.

443
00:26:15,760 --> 00:26:23,130
And I was faced with a meeting
with this doctor's son,

444
00:26:23,130 --> 00:26:26,940
who lives in Washington.

445
00:26:26,940 --> 00:26:31,450
And he dedicated his
life to the memory

446
00:26:31,450 --> 00:26:35,920
of his father and his friends,
almost in a sickening way,

447
00:26:35,920 --> 00:26:44,430
because where I'm seeing it, it
became an obsession with him.

448
00:26:44,430 --> 00:26:46,620
What were his
father's last words?

449
00:26:46,620 --> 00:26:49,260
And then there wasn't really
much I could tell him.

450
00:26:49,260 --> 00:26:51,720
This was it what
I'm telling you.

451
00:26:51,720 --> 00:26:54,330
But he sent me numerous tapes.

452
00:26:54,330 --> 00:26:56,460
I should tape it for him.

453
00:26:56,460 --> 00:26:59,370
I met him when we
had the Holocaust

454
00:26:59,370 --> 00:27:01,470
reunion in Washington.

455
00:27:01,470 --> 00:27:04,990

456
00:27:04,990 --> 00:27:09,460
He went back to the camps
to look for his father.

457
00:27:09,460 --> 00:27:12,970

In other words, he never
accepted his father's

458
00:27:12,970 --> 00:27:14,560
disappearance or death.

459
00:27:14,560 --> 00:27:18,310

460
00:27:18,310 --> 00:27:20,890
Again, talk about
how you resisted

461
00:27:20,890 --> 00:27:25,180
facing what was going on and how
you finally came to realize it

462
00:27:25,180 --> 00:27:26,860
and accept it.

463
00:27:26,860 --> 00:27:29,130
And how you felt.

464
00:27:29,130 --> 00:27:30,690
Accept?

465
00:27:30,690 --> 00:27:33,240
We had no choice but accept.

466
00:27:33,240 --> 00:27:34,620
It wasn't an acceptance.

467
00:27:34,620 --> 00:27:40,620
It was-- well, I accepted it,
but by pulling down the shade.

468
00:27:40,620 --> 00:27:42,300
That was my way.

469
00:27:42,300 --> 00:27:44,220
It's not happening.

470

00:27:44,220 --> 00:27:49,560

I can't realistically say,
now that I'm looking back,

471

00:27:49,560 --> 00:27:55,470

whether I was hopeful
to be liberated,

472

00:27:55,470 --> 00:27:58,050

but we still talked about it.

473

00:27:58,050 --> 00:28:05,430

The lady that I mentioned to
you who became so old overnight

474

00:28:05,430 --> 00:28:07,590

and she was the
pillar of my strength,

475

00:28:07,590 --> 00:28:12,010

in as much as I
was for her, I feel

476

00:28:12,010 --> 00:28:15,330

that she was mine
more than I was hers,

477

00:28:15,330 --> 00:28:19,500

because while we
worked and went--

478

00:28:19,500 --> 00:28:22,230

what are we going to
eat when we go home?

479

00:28:22,230 --> 00:28:24,690

What is your favorite meal?

480

00:28:24,690 --> 00:28:26,700

And we would go
over everybody's.

481

00:28:26,700 --> 00:28:29,490
But she always cooked
my favorite meal,

482
00:28:29,490 --> 00:28:34,290
which was chicken paprikash
with lots of good bread in it.

483
00:28:34,290 --> 00:28:36,600
Up today, when I make
chicken paprikash,

484
00:28:36,600 --> 00:28:39,780
I don't have the heart to
eat it with bread because--

485
00:28:39,780 --> 00:28:43,080
I mean, if I make it, I
make it because of her.

486
00:28:43,080 --> 00:28:45,930

487
00:28:45,930 --> 00:28:48,210
I shouldn't say
because, but I have her

488
00:28:48,210 --> 00:28:51,300
in mind every time
when I make it.

489
00:28:51,300 --> 00:28:53,160
And I didn't know how
to cook at the time,

490
00:28:53,160 --> 00:28:56,250
and she was going to
make my favorite meal.

491
00:28:56,250 --> 00:29:00,000
These were our most
important pastimes.

492

00:29:00,000 --> 00:29:02,260
We didn't read books.

493
00:29:02,260 --> 00:29:05,760
We listened to music
because in Brzezinka they

494
00:29:05,760 --> 00:29:11,410
had the first group of
inmates that comprised

495
00:29:11,410 --> 00:29:13,750
of an entertaining committee.

496
00:29:13,750 --> 00:29:19,600
When the groups would arrive,
we were awaited with culture.

497
00:29:19,600 --> 00:29:22,840
There was a band
of musicians that

498
00:29:22,840 --> 00:29:31,780
greeted us, to show the mass
that things are great here.

499
00:29:31,780 --> 00:29:36,760
That was a very smart
way for the Germans

500
00:29:36,760 --> 00:29:40,650
to-- because people didn't
go crazy immediately.

501
00:29:40,650 --> 00:29:43,290
They were just getting to it.

502
00:29:43,290 --> 00:29:52,360
So the quorum was kept by trying
to create a calm atmosphere.

503
00:29:52,360 --> 00:29:54,790
So we even had that.

504
00:29:54,790 --> 00:29:57,190
But aside, among ourselves.

505
00:29:57,190 --> 00:29:59,870

506
00:29:59,870 --> 00:30:03,220
the most important
thing was survival.

507
00:30:03,220 --> 00:30:08,140
How far can we stretch one
slice of brown bread, which

508
00:30:08,140 --> 00:30:10,090
was like brick.

509
00:30:10,090 --> 00:30:12,870
How far will it go?

510
00:30:12,870 --> 00:30:15,390
Because we never knew
if we got one next day.

511
00:30:15,390 --> 00:30:21,790
Or when we would line up for
soup, if you were the very end

512
00:30:21,790 --> 00:30:25,480
they probably ran out of
it, which was only water.

513
00:30:25,480 --> 00:30:28,420
I don't know what
was in it, but it

514
00:30:28,420 --> 00:30:33,220
must have been the peel
of the potato, if any.

515
00:30:33,220 --> 00:30:35,500

Something was floating in it.

516
00:30:35,500 --> 00:30:40,060
I can't tell you the taste, but
it was something like water.

517
00:30:40,060 --> 00:30:45,130
And you lined up and they
poured in like the prisoners

518
00:30:45,130 --> 00:30:47,740
here, except it was not food.

519
00:30:47,740 --> 00:30:51,970
And they talk about
the future or the past,

520
00:30:51,970 --> 00:30:56,740
what we did at home, how
were the holidays, how

521
00:30:56,740 --> 00:30:58,060
were the families.

522
00:30:58,060 --> 00:31:02,670
We fortified ourselves
with nice things.

523
00:31:02,670 --> 00:31:05,940
And if you had nice
things in the past,

524
00:31:05,940 --> 00:31:11,430
that does fortify you at
your present misfortune

525
00:31:11,430 --> 00:31:16,230
or for the future, because that
foundation nobody can take away

526
00:31:16,230 --> 00:31:20,270
from you, which is
your inner strength.

527
00:31:20,270 --> 00:31:22,310
Again, what gives
you inner strength

528
00:31:22,310 --> 00:31:26,760
is if you possess
something before.

529
00:31:26,760 --> 00:31:33,370
If you possess the feeling prior
to it, that will carry you on.

530
00:31:33,370 --> 00:31:35,730
In my case, it was a
beautiful childhood.

531
00:31:35,730 --> 00:31:42,550
And I always look back to it
as my virtue of my strength,

532
00:31:42,550 --> 00:31:48,930
because I was able to
have a nice childhood.

533
00:31:48,930 --> 00:31:53,040
I didn't look at it that this
was a temporary existence,

534
00:31:53,040 --> 00:31:54,840
but I didn't think beyond that.

535
00:31:54,840 --> 00:32:00,670
Only towards the very
end of the war, when

536
00:32:00,670 --> 00:32:04,900
we were at the
death march, that I

537
00:32:04,900 --> 00:32:10,240
had a secret feeling or a
premonition about my father

538
00:32:10,240 --> 00:32:16,060
being alive, because in one
point, as we were marching--

539
00:32:16,060 --> 00:32:19,690
and it's hard for me to
describe to you that march,

540
00:32:19,690 --> 00:32:23,440
or I would have to open a
different chapter to that

541
00:32:23,440 --> 00:32:25,090
altogether.

542
00:32:25,090 --> 00:32:32,380
People that hardly walking
because energy-wise we were

543
00:32:32,380 --> 00:32:34,330
[NON-ENGLISH].

544
00:32:34,330 --> 00:32:37,450
Shoes, oversized shoes.

545
00:32:37,450 --> 00:32:40,300
If I wore a 37 shoe
in European number,

546
00:32:40,300 --> 00:32:44,710
it was 42, if I found one,
which you were wiggling

547
00:32:44,710 --> 00:32:47,110
back and forth.

548
00:32:47,110 --> 00:32:53,440
On snow-covered roads, and if
you were to step aside from

549
00:32:53,440 --> 00:32:58,990

the road that you were supposed
to line up and go march

550
00:32:58,990 --> 00:33:00,130
directly like--

551
00:33:00,130 --> 00:33:02,110
[PHONE RINGS]

552
00:33:02,110 --> 00:33:08,900

553
00:33:08,900 --> 00:33:14,440
Anyway, if you stayed out
of the line, you were shot.

554
00:33:14,440 --> 00:33:15,930
So you had to behave yourself.

555
00:33:15,930 --> 00:33:18,530
You had to be strong.

556
00:33:18,530 --> 00:33:25,420
The way we slept, five people
in the row, four held on to one.

557
00:33:25,420 --> 00:33:27,910
We took turns sleeping.

558
00:33:27,910 --> 00:33:32,570
One slept five minutes,
then we woke each other up

559
00:33:32,570 --> 00:33:33,800
while walking.

560
00:33:33,800 --> 00:33:36,650
That was our existence.

561
00:33:36,650 --> 00:33:40,730
And that lasted from January
till practically the end

562

00:33:40,730 --> 00:33:42,440

of the war.

563

00:33:42,440 --> 00:33:47,400

But when I saw the German
truck and the soldier,

564

00:33:47,400 --> 00:33:49,990

I identified my
father as a soldier

565

00:33:49,990 --> 00:33:53,310

because he was, as I told
you in the beginning,

566

00:33:53,310 --> 00:33:56,090

he was in forced labor camp.