

Camera roll three, camera roll nine, take nine.

[BEEP]

What kind of choices do you think that you had in that life that might have helped you survive or helped others survive?

I don't know that I had choices. I'm trying to think. I honestly think that I survived by luck. I think I was lucky. I must've been somewhat optimistic, I think. Maybe. I think that the fact that I protected myself sometimes may have been helpful. But I must say that I my life, at least as I see it, did not give me any opportunities for choices.

I tried not to hurt anybody while I was there. I don't remember. I know that there were things going on. Not everybody-- we had a Kapo and this Bergen-Belsen, where I worked this last time, who was a real bitch. I didn't have an opportunity maybe to do that. But I don't think I would have. I never stole anything from anybody, no matter how hungry or no matter how desperate I was.

I did not do certain things. I think I had a very-- I think I must have had a good upbringing. But I don't know that this necessarily helped me survive.

What kinds of spiritual resistance did you see? Or was there none?

Well, in the beginning, I probably believed in God, as my father did. I think that I lost that after the Auschwitz people came in. But I think that-- as I said, I think that I remember that my father said to me, that last Yom Kippur at home during the holidays, that he said at one point, maybe all of us won't survive, but I hope that you will. I remember he said, and there'd be somebody left.

I don't know whether that gave me some feeling that somebody should be left from our family. I don't know whether that gave me the strength. I think that perhaps the fact that I had [? Frida ?] was very helpful, because we had each other. And she did for me, and-- I did everything I could for her, and she did everything could for me. And maybe that gave us strength.

We got along better than some sisters did in the camp. That doesn't mean that they weren't sisters who got along, who didn't stay close. But we really supported each other. I think that may have been helpful. I can't think of anything else, really.

Did people pray? Did they--

Some did. I think [? Frida ?] always did. [? Frida ?] was more of a believer than I. I think I had a difficult period for a while there. But she was more, I think, steadfast in her belief, I think.

Can you tell about when you worked sorting the panties [INAUDIBLE].

Right. Right. That last job of mine I worked, believe it or not, the Germans were losing the war, and they were still-- in Bergen-Belsen, we were still sorting clothing. They were taking inventory. And the work that I did, which permitted me to have that bunk and maybe a little more food was precisely that kind of work. But the way I could help myself, because there wasn't really that much to eat, was that I had a right to wear a pair of panties, maybe, and a slip or a sweater and maybe a skirt under my uniform.

And stockings. Now, if I went to work in the morning-- and it was bitter cold-- and I didn't put on a pair of panties or I didn't put on something under my uniform, and then during work if I could slip it on and put it on, then I would bring it back to the barrack and I could barter it, sell it to somebody for something. But the Kapo was a real-- she was Jewish, but she was a bitch, as I said. And she didn't permit it, but she didn't like me much, either.

I think she was dumb. She wasn't very-- I don't think she knew how to read. She was she was an illiterate. Maybe I was

too bright for her. My Polish was too good. I don't know. But she really, she picked on me. I also looked like a Musselman. That may have been against me. In other words, I looked like a walking-- I was a walking skeleton. And so she would check me.

And if she saw that I didn't have a pair of pants on, I couldn't bring a pair of panties home. She would beat me up. So it wasn't a tremendously successful thing for me. And besides which, I didn't work there very long, because I got sick again. And I came down with paratyphoid. And these were the last weeks of the camp. And if anybody ever tells you that you cannot survive without food for a long time-- I don't think that we were given any food in that camp towards the end of the occupation for the last 10 days.

People like I. I'm not saying there were some people who were still able to get around. I didn't get any food for close to 10 days. I rarely had water. That's why I don't understand how I survived. But I made it without food for all this time. [? Frida ?] did come when she could when I was so sick. And she brought me water. And she was with me. I think that this may have been extremely helpful. She was with me that last night before the liberation.

She brought some water. And I think she may have brought me an aspirin or something. I had a very high fever. And that following day, the British came and we were liberated.

Can you talk about-- do you remember older people being in the camps? Like your parents age? Did you know many of them? Or were there very few of them?

There were not many older people in Bergen-Belsen. There were certainly not many old-- there was one girl, who I am still friendly with, who came to [? Graben, ?] to the labor camp from Auschwitz. And she was from my husband's city, from [? Lodz. ?] And her name is actually-- she's alive, the girl is alive. Her name's [? Lucia ?] [? Karow. ?] And she came with her mother to our camp, and this was a novelty. There was a girl who came to camp with her mother. Now, she buried her mother in Bergen-Belsen.

But her mother was with her in [? Graben. ?] This was the only woman that I remember who was my mother's age. And my mother was 43 when she died, when she was killed. So this woman may have been maybe in her early 40s. And that was old. In our camp, she was the only one that age. And I don't remember many in Bergen-Belsen.

Now, there were some Russian women in our camp. And some of them may have been older. But again, not that much older.

So in general, who lived and who didn't live? Did we just run out? We have one minute.

OK. Well, that's hard to tell. After the war, I suppose, there are some statistics. There are some people who survived. I had one cousin who survived with his two sons. And he must have been in his 40s. But that was rare. I think the very young didn't make it. And not just the very old, but people-- often, perhaps, mothers didn't make it because-- my mother was a very pretty woman, and she probably looked quite young.

But she went-- I'm sure that she didn't want to be separated from her two, from my sister and my brother, who were children. So often women who were older, older meaning who had children, if they were in their late 30s or even if they were in their early 30s, if they had children, they went with their children. And if they were older, they didn't have a chance.

[INAUDIBLE].

[BEEP]

I just want to go back and finish that thought about who had a chance to live and who didn't from an age standpoint.

Well, then my feeling is that only people who were able to go to work. And even then, it depended very much on what the demand was. In Auschwitz, there were times when they sent the whole transport into the ovens without any

selection. In other words, there was no demand for workers, and they would just be sent in.

For instance, when I think about the man, the head of our ghetto, about whom many bad things can be said-- after all, we can say that he collaborated with the Nazis. In other words, he worked with them. But I think that I am alive-- now, if this is not a choice. But he did see to it that a lot of young people from our ghetto, from our area, that they were sent to Germany to work.

And so I didn't go through Auschwitz. I may not have made it through the selection. And I went to a labor camp. Now, many of us didn't survive the labor camps, either, because of the death march and the concentration camps. But there was that chance given. And I always feel that this [? Marin, ?] who had such dirty hands, may have saved some kids, some young people.

Now, I hate to ask you this. And you can just tell me you won't do it if you can't. But we ran out before you finished telling about [? Hela. ?] And I would like you to tell that story again if you can.

Sure. Sure. I'll try not to cry. OK. I had a bunk. I told you I started to work, so I had a bunk which I shared with another girl. And I had typhus and typhoid. And I was at this point well. I had gotten over both. And one evening, my friend [? Hela ?] came to see me. [? Hela ?] was her name. Helen in English. [? Hela ?] was not as close to me as [? Frida, ?] but she was a good friend.

She was a good friend of mine. And she was a very lovely, gentle girl. Really lovely. Very sweet, and I was very fond of her. And she was in this death--

Let's just wait until he comes down, because he's going to walk through the back.

[BEEP]

And [? Hela ?] was really a friend of mine, and I was extremely fond of her. And she was really sweet and gentle. She came over that evening, and I could see she was sick. She was feverish. And she said to me, Bella, would you let me sleep on your bunk tonight? I'm really sick. I don't feel well, and I would like to sleep on a bed. Would you please let me sleep with you?

And I looked at [? Hela, ?] and she looked very sick to me. And I was very scared. And I was afraid that I'm going to get sick. And I said to her, [? Hela, ?] I am sorry, but I can't let you sleep on my bunk because I get sick. And I said to her, please forgive me. I can't let you do it. And she said to me-- she was very lovely. She really was a nice, decent human being. She said to me, it's OK, Bella, I understand.

She just walked away. And she just walked away. I know that she died that night. And I know now that maybe she knew she was dying. I don't know. She wanted to die with dignity maybe, and I didn't let her. And I never forgave myself for it. I never did.

And you talked about liberation, the sugar and the socks.

Yeah, OK. That's right. It's nice to end on a more cheerful note. Well, I remember a few things about liberation, which was wonderful. I remember I was sick. They took the sick people first. They took us to hospitals. They quarantined us, because they were afraid that we would spread the disease. But I was lucky.

First of all, because I was so sick-- the British felt sorry for the inmates. We were hungry and walking skeletons, and they gave us their food rations. And I don't know whether this is recorded, but this is the truth that a very high percentage of inmates in Bergen-Belsen died because they were given food that they had no business eating. There was dysentery. Apparently, because the food was so rich.

Well, I couldn't eat it. So that was lucky. I was taken out of the camp. And I do remember a few things that were so memorable. I remember, sick as I was, that as the truck on which I was-- I don't know, these were not ambulances-- but

I was comfortable. As it was leaving Bergen-Belsen, I could smell the fresh air. There was such a difference between the horrible stench of Bergen-Belsen, that I remember that I just took a deep breath. In was such a wonderful feeling.

And I also remember something else. Because DDT is not allowed anymore. But they sprayed me with DDT, and it was just great. Because all the movement, all the itching, all the-- stopped. All the lice that were killing me, that were biting. All of it stopped, and I was at peace. It was a wonderful feeling. I am forever grateful to DDT.

And then I remember I was in the hospital. I don't remember how long I was there. I remember that I do remember being pretty upset when I took a look at myself, because I really was a skeleton. But one of the soldiers, who must have carried me maybe from the barracks or something, remembered me. Or maybe he came to see who survived. Some of us didn't survive even the hospital.

But he came to visit me. And I think that he may have been a German Jew, because I remember speaking to him German. And that was possible. He may have been in England and volunteered or was taken to the army and fought in Germany. So anyway he brought me. But he was a British soldier, so he came in the first time, I think, to see that I'm alive. He was glad to see.

And he asked me what I want. And I remember I asked for two things. I wanted warm socks, because it was May, and I was freezing. My feet were always cold. And I wanted sugar. So he came the following day or two days later and brought me a pair of knee-length socks and a little bag of sugar. Maybe it was a quarter pound, maybe less. And I do remember two things I put on the socks, and I was very unhappy.

I was crying because I didn't have any calves. And the knee-length socks wouldn't hold. There was nothing to hold them up. And then I took the sugar, and I literally poured it into my mouth. And he got so upset that he went to see the nurse to ask, you know, whether I didn't do myself some harm. And I think the nurse told him that I was just craving sugar. And so that was it.

I think I asked you everything. Thank you very much.

About God, and if you want me to, I can tell you that I did have a bit of a [? Din ?] [? Torah, ?] which means like a case with my God. And for a long time I really didn't want to have anything to do with religion. I was Jewish because I had survived as a Jew. But I went to see my sister in 1959 and I walked the streets of [NON-ENGLISH] and went to the kibbutzim and went into a synagogue in Jerusalem, I came back and I started to study.

I started to learn Hebrew again. Which I had Hebrew before the war and during the war. And I studied the Torah, and I studied Jewish history. And I really became-- I switched. I was thinking of maybe becoming an accountant. I was also good with numbers. But I decided to go into Jewish education. And I made peace with God. Because I decided that God was not responsible for Auschwitz, that we are free to make our choices.

That's what man is. Man is free to do the right thing and do the wrong thing. We were taught what is right and what is wrong. And Auschwitz was the creation of evil men. And I don't think God is responsible for Auschwitz. Men is.

Let's put on that [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE].