

Were you-- OK.

[BEEP]

Explain to me what happened to the people who were hiding you when you were arrested.

Now, the woman whose house this was was not seen after the man must have been downstairs. I did not see her. She and her children were not there. She never said goodbye or anything.

The only one who came was the seamstress. And I had a pin, a coral pin I was very much attached to. And I put it in her hand when we said goodbye. So she was gone.

But I went to her with my daughter after the war-- was one of my first visits to go there with the train and visit. And the first thing she said, I'm sorry, but the Germans told me I could use all your things-- that means bedding and blankets and everything we left there, because we went without anything.

We knew we would be killed. So why should we take something with us we would not need? And maybe one day we could get-- some way escape, and this would be just not necessary. So we went without anything. So she-- that's what she said to me.

And at that moment I was so-- it was so upsetting to see the house and all again. I forgot that she said-- I said, forget about it. I had no bed. We had-- my daughter and I, we had nothing. But I said, it's OK.

Afterwards I thought, why would the Germans say that she could take all that? The only reason could be that she told them, and that she got money for it. Because that's why [INAUDIBLE] take all your children because they got the money for each head. But I don't have any proof. I only didn't go any more there, not ever. But that I think that they would give it to her.

Sometimes I think maybe it wasn't even true. Maybe she used it and it was gone in the meantime, or she stole it. I don't know. But I didn't go there anymore.

OK. Now, describe for me the transport to Auschwitz, and also the things that you and your husband did, the cutting up of the money, the little bits of resistance that you did.

I like to talk about this experience with the students. Because I most-- I always go to universities, and sometimes to schools who are just next year going to the University. I don't know. And I tell them that, I say that very, very clear, and maybe it seems not absolutely necessary, but you should know, because hardly ever anybody has talked about it or has written about.

We were arrested, and we were brought to Amsterdam. That's where we originally lived. And we were brought to the Gestapo, which is the-- was the police of the SS. And we were separate, taken into another room, and we were asked.

We found both-- after we found-- both of us did-- what I wanted to know the most. Who brought us coupons? Because I just had got new coupons for the food. And it was-- must have been lying there. They did never find the people who did every month, enough for the nearly 20,000 Jewish people who were in Holland underground, who had to be-- had to have it. Otherwise, they couldn't have lived.

So [? that's what they ?] asked both of us, and we didn't even answer. And who brought us-- who brought us the coupons, and who looked after us, and who brought us to where we are? Those were the questions first. And we didn't answer.

So this took a few hours, and then we were brought to the regular jail in Amsterdam, which doesn't exist anymore. We found it. I found it looking afterwards that it was a very nice place. I could have stayed during the whole war. It was

clean and nice. But we were only there about two nights, and then we went to the camp, which did all the train-- the trains all going to the East went to-- how could I ever forget that name?

Westerbork?

Westerbork. Thank you. Westerbork. The train took us to Westerbork. Westerbork, when I saw it, it was, as I said, in August of '44, was not what I had expected. It was huge. It was huge.

And I saw the Jewish police for the first time. I didn't know that something like this existed, and the women in greenish uniforms, Jewish women. And we were there only three nights, when at the same time in Holland, they know that the Allies were trying to come into the southern part of Holland to get the Germans out. That was known. We didn't know sure, took a long time until I understood what it all was.

And the men working on the trains had arranged with whoever that they would start to put the work down the moment they were knowing that the Allies were coming. So the Germans knew that there would be no trains going, [INAUDIBLE] did in three days empty, practically, all of-- say that again.

Westerbork.

Westerbork. Gee, I have a block. In three days, there were only about 400 people left from the thousands and thousands. So we were in the first train which went, as we found out, not when we came there, but maybe a day or two later, that we were in Auschwitz.

So the trains were the regular, as I understand, the regular cattle cars. There were no seating in there, nothing. It was naked. And the only thing was a little thing like this for maybe 175 people to use. And otherwise people had a tremendous amount of luggage. They took anything with them what they thought-- because they had been quite some time in this camp.

And they-- they took sewing machines with them-- everything. And there was-- well, really couldn't-- you could not sit on the floor. You had to stand. And we had to stand three days and four nights. And that little basket where you-- for the-- whatever had to be used couldn't be used anymore. You couldn't even get to it.

So after a few hours, it was very, very bad already. But it didn't change, and we were going and going. And two or three times, they opened the doors, and the people all yelled for water. And they didn't understand the situation. They thought they would be brought water.

Soldiers came in and took our whatever-- if we had rings on or something. And then they wanted money. The second time I know they wanted money, and we didn't give them money. We give them just some change or whatever. We didn't.

And we arrived after all that time probably in physical and in other kind of ways changed. We had changed into another person. And when we arrived, there was a little something which looked like a station. And there was a name of-- not Auschwitz. It starts with a B.

Birkenau.

That's right. Birkenau. B-I-R. Birkenau-- never heard, never seen. Birkenau is German, and it's the name of a tree. Not "A" "U" but "Birke." And when we got out, jumping down, the people wanted to keep their luggage.

And then there started the first fighting between Jewish prisoners, who had blue and white striped uniforms, who took all that that they brought away fast-- had to go very fast, because it was a very long train. It's impossible to think how many people were there. We asked one time one of those prisoners who didn't even answer when we asked, where are we? Because we had never heard Birkenau.

All right. Wait. We have to reload.

[BEEP]

Just tell me the incident on the train, why you did it.

We had money in a money belt, both of us. We always carried it. Since we went underground, we had both half. You never knew. So we took that out at night, and we cut bill after bill. I don't know anymore how much it was, but it was all the money we had. And I don't know.

So we tried to put it into very small pieces. I don't know why we bothered, because the floor was not good. So we did that all. It was the hardest job. I guess it was harder to make the money with working than to get rid of that weight, because it hurts. But we thought they shouldn't get it. Because the soldiers, they kept the money. This was the thing they could be allowed to keep.

Because afterwards, the luggage-- that was a big thing. That was the biggest. The whole camp waited for that for each train, that they got food, and they got clothes, and they got jewelry and anything. And the people who worked in that department, they were-- after a few months, they were changed and killed.

And when they were found selling those things, and they did. I don't know how they did it, but they could change it with anything, which was some place available. I never knew how much was available in Auschwitz. If you had something-- I found it only out by the reading, by all the books I have in German and in English.

Tell me how you asked them where you were.

Yeah. I asked one of those blue and white striped, where are we? He didn't answer-- didn't answer. They were glad that the food came, but they did-- they were Jewish, just like us. And they came one day like that, too. But in the meantime, they had a very good job. Everybody would have given his right hand to have such a job.

OK, tell me about the selections. Why did you-- are the shoes making too much noise, [INAUDIBLE]? Her shoes?

Mine?

Yeah.

Oh.

Yeah. That's fine.

OK.

Tell me about the selection.

It was-- when we came out, we were separated, men and women. And so I was-- in the train, there was a woman standing next to me the whole time. And she had a child, like our child.

And she said, when we were arrested, somebody said we should take our children. And we took our children out of the places where they were hiding. And gee, I thought that could have happened maybe to us. But we didn't even consider that.

So this woman and her little girl and I, we were in one row walking up when we saw the end, which was very, very long, because the whole train are long. We had to go, and we saw at the end a man, an extremely well-looking man-- this I have never forgotten-- in his uniform, very elegant.

And when we came, the three of us, and he asked me, is this your child? And I said no. He made a move to the mother and the child to go this way, and to me this way. That was all.

And I was with other people finding out after a while that they were the ones who were supposed to go to work eventually, and that was the reason they looked comparatively young. I wasn't young at all. I was in my middle 30s. I was one of the oldest, because they were very young.

And we came to a place where there had been some trees. There were no trees in Auschwitz anymore. There were just some leftovers. I don't know. So there, we were told to wait. And then there I saw my husband, and my husband was also on this good side. And we talked for a long time. We always thinking that we would be together.

Then they called the women into a large building. We were very close to this building. And we-- and that was the last time I saw my husband ever. And I do not know when or where he died. There is a chance now to find out. That's new.

Because the government kept all those things, I don't know for whom, where it is known. I don't know-- thousands and thousands of names, or millions of names are in there, and the Red Cross will take care of it. It will take maybe 10 years. So I told my daughter she should do that. I would not be living any more until this answer would come.

So we were in there, and the first thing was that we were lined up, and long tables. And behind there there were girls, young girls, all had black hair, looked very, very nice. Their hair was just perfect. And all of them were wearing black silk dresses, but not the same. They were obviously handmade the way they liked it.

And I thought those were German. They were not. They were prisoners. And they put the name in a book, and maybe those books are now open to us, and they gave you the tattoo. And then you went to another part in this huge building, and there were more of those women, the same type. And they said we had-- fast, very fast. It was always fast, fast, fast, fast. We had to undress completely.

And with that undressing, I had a wedding band-- somebody overlooked it there. And she just put it with her hand out, and it was gone. I still thought they were Germans. They were not. They were prisoners like we. They were only younger and probably and longer there, long experience. They knew.

So I had very good shoes on, walking shoes. I must have kept them for that day. And with us in the train was Anne Frank, her mother, her father, and her sister. And when I saw them again in this hall, there was a mother and the two girls.

Now, I knew the Franks very well. I didn't-- I did not know that they were still alive. When they were disappearing, at the time when we all were invited to come to the train, they had prepared, and they had this well-known house ready for them to go in.

We didn't know that that was. They were all of sudden were not there anymore, and we only knew two things. Maybe they had gone to Switzerland. Some people had a chance, or they were underground. And here, I saw them then for the first time.

Mrs. Frank had very-- shoes like mine, too. And one of the girls said to her, I would like to have your shoes. I heard it. And she said, no, no. I need my shoes. And she said, I give you mine-- was a funny way. And she said, no, no. She said, I bring you every day soup for your two girls. Let's change shoes, and she did. She never got any soup.

So another girl came to me and wanted my shoes, and I didn't want any soup. I said, no, no. I don't give up the shoes. I should have thought by that time that there must have been prisoners. Otherwise, they would have just taken them away from the [INAUDIBLE]. But they leave me alone.

And I had those shoes, oh, at least half the winter. They were still-- I mean, I could wear them, but they were not so good anymore. But yeah, the next half of the winter I had no shoes. But we were then been-- when we were naked, and we got shaved-- our hair and body and on the head.

And then we were brought into the shower, which was a regular shower. We didn't know about other showers. And then we were outside. It was September. It was about the 8th of September, something like that. And we were wet. We had nothing-- towel or anything.

And then they threw each of us a dress. They didn't look for the size, and they didn't look for if it was wool or if it was a thin, summer material. You got one dress. And then you had to try to find somebody who wanted to change with you and-- the size and with material, maybe.

And by that time, we had never been allowed to go to the toilet-- latrine, it was called. We were not allowed to go to the latrine or anything. So we were brought into a--

Let's reload.

It gets faster [? in ?] [? this. ?] [? Yes. ?]

[BEEP]

I want to ask you some general questions about your sense while you were in various camps. It doesn't-- you don't have to be camp-specific. Did you ever catch a glimpse of your reflection?

Of my what?

Reflection. Did you ever see what you looked like?

No. There were no-- was no mirror. No. We looked at each other, and the ones without hair, so you know you looked like them, and that was all.

Can you tell me what sensory things you remember, like sounds or smells or the things that made the biggest impression on you?

The biggest impression was the chimney, which was very close to the barrack where we were. And that was spewing fire, fire, 24 hours. In the daytime, you only saw the smoke. At night it was fire.

And about the third or fourth day, I started to walk around. We didn't work. We couldn't stay in our barrack. We had to be out. So I just started to walk around. And why I approached a man, the only man I saw, to tell me where we are, I don't know.

He was well-dressed, comparatively. He was a prisoner, and he spoke Polish. And I couldn't speak Polish. And I asked him where we were, and he said, Auschwitz. He knew that. And I say, what is this? And he said, you see, you cannot get out of Auschwitz any other way but through this chimney. This is our trip to heaven.

And I thought, I don't know what kind of a man this is. I thought about it later much more, because there was no man walking around. It must have been a prisoner who was quite a high rank. Prisoners had very high ranks. This you don't know when you are there because they don't come to you.

But the-- he must have been there to look for a girl. This is the only way that-- the only interest they had to walk through a woman's camp, and there was a new group just had come, and there were certain ages anyway.

But this was very clear when he told me what-- I understood it, but I didn't tell my-- the people I was with. It wasn't necessary. It was enough I knew it, and we were not even sure. But this was not changing. The roughest time was the two daily-- that we had to be counted at about 5 o'clock or so in the morning. We don't know. Our watches were long gone.

And when we were awakened, we [INAUDIBLE]. The way we are, we didn't have to wash, or we didn't have to change clothes or shoes or whatever. We had to come to roll call in the morning and in the evening. And that roll call never, ever-- and I guess if you have talked to other people, never, ever functioned.

If they had 976 on their book, there were maybe 850, or the other way around. And then the girl who had to do that, she was the older, the elder, of the-- she was a prisoner of this barrack, she got more and more nervous. Because very short, short of that, one of the officers or so-- I don't know what they were.

I don't know anything-- difference in uniforms. I never learned it before or after the war. I was never interested. But he was something higher. And he got very angry that it never came out right. So then they had to search the whole barrack. And as I said, in every barrack were about 1,000 people.

So some people were hiding. At that time we had straw mattresses, which was luxury. So they were hiding under that in the corner, and if you are-- it's on the third floor up there, it's very difficult to climb up there and to find the people. Some people had died.

But I know that one time I knew I had scarlet fever because it was in the camp in Holland. So I knew looking at my stomach it was scarlet fever. And I was afraid that somebody would see me, that they would do something with me, which I wouldn't probably like.

Still have not exactly taken it that everybody who was sick would be killed. I think that took a little longer that it goes into one's brains. But I stayed always in the corner in the third part under a mattress. And I saw them searching, but they never came up there. It was the first illness I had there. There's no-- there was no so-called clinic or whatever.

What acts of resistance did you see in the camp of any sort?

Nothing. Nothing.

What about mental resistance?

How do you assist mentally in such a case? The only way to live, to be-- don't even [? say live ?]. The only way to be is to do what is asked from you. And it is stupid as a one person to do something.

That is-- because the woman who is in charge of the barrack is the first one who will punish-- be punished. So she will do something that you don't do, because she's afraid also.

No, I thought it would be-- I don't know, and I've never read that anything like this happened in the barracks or anything like that. Never. I haven't read any. And I have all those, besides the ones I have read and [INAUDIBLE].

What about religious or spiritual resistance?

There's no resistance. This is not a resistance, but I saw on Jewish holidays some women who knew, who kept the dates, to pray. That's not a resistance. This is for people who are very religious natural. I did not see any resistance in that camp and later on where we were in the factory. One time in the factory, but that was-- it was not person-to-person.

What was that?

A woman walked out at night, New Year's night. And the guys-- we had four soldiers for the whole camp and four women soldiers. That was all. And I guess they were drunk also.

And she thought it was snowing so much she could go out, and she went out. And she thought-- she knocks on a house and says when she comes from. She was-- they would take her in, they called that she was there. That was all. That was all I saw.

So she escaped, and then got recaptured?

Mm-hmm.

Was she punished?

She was sent-- officially, it was said she was going to a larger camp than that in the factory. But I know she was alive afterwards. So she didn't do anything anymore. They couldn't send them any more to Auschwitz. There was no burning or anything anymore after November the 1st, 1944.

What do you think keeps you alive? What choices do you make while you're in the camp?

Now, at first, I think the greatest and the most important choice if you want to live, that you do want to live, that you do anything which makes it possible to live. And I was not in doubt I was-- that I wouldn't live. I thought I will, which is stupid. But I was convinced.

So at first, if you are in a large group of people-- I was always short. I make myself shorter to be in the middle, not in the front, not in the back. I stand so that the others are taller.

I haven't had experience in that, but I thought there is something because people in some way who stand in the first row or on the last row, they were picked for things which maybe were not very pleasant that you don't know of. This is instinctively. That's all I can say-- not smartness. Instinctively, you say I don't want to be seen. They don't [INAUDIBLE] see me.

What other choices do you think helped you?

I think that the most important thing was my child, that I wanted to come back to my child. So what I did for it, I cannot take any credit. I did as little as possible to-- that somebody would say, oh, that woman, and everybody knows. That was not-- I didn't.

But this was important. I was always thinking of my child, of my husband, where he would be. May I tell a little story?  
A Sunday afternoon--

Wait. Let's reload because we're-- we only have 10 seconds.

OK.