

OK, you were about to tell me a story.

Yeah. We were working in the factory 12 hours, night or day. And since they promised us they would give us one extra portion for night work, I had nothing better to do at night, so I was working nights. But the Sunday afternoon was free for everybody as far as you can. You sit on your mattress as long as there was a mattress. By the end, then there were not anymore. So a group of Dutch women, because that's how I came was in this, those were my friends, we sat together and talked about lots of things.

So one day I have never forgotten. We were thinking, when we come home-- we didn't say if any more because we knew in the factory there was no gas and we would not be gassed. If we would get sick, that's another story. So we thought we would come home. What would be more difficult, to find your children or your husband?

Now, everybody was very frank. You didn't tell stories in such situation. And we were maybe 12 or 13 women. Most of them had children in hiding, not all, but most of them. And obviously-- I think it was 13-- when we were finished telling what would be harder, I think you the answer. Because only one woman said, I love my little boy and if I don't see him again, it's very difficult, but if my husband is not there I will lose my mind. She was the only one. She did, after the war, she did.

But all the others said-- they had more than one child, very often. So they said it's a piece of-- you lose your husband, is terrible. That's your best friend. It's the closest person you have. But losing a child is physically in every way very, very painful.

Now let's go back--

Yeah.

--to the selection. What did you notice about the selection, the age groups, and tell me a little more about that.

At first the age groups-- you see, you don't have a long chance to look what's going on there. It's not right in front of you. You have to walk a little. But you are stopping before-- you're stopped before you come closer. You don't know what's going on. But it is a little older-- older people. I would think-- we had one old lady. She was 10 years older than I was. So, she was in her middle 40s. An extremely good looking woman. And there was no question, she came with us. And she came out at the end.

But the women with children, when they had children, there was no help. They had to go, both. But you are so short in contact, what's happening. You go to the other side, and you only think, oh, they are with the children, they will be taken care of. That's what we thought, all of us.

So, when we got away from this place where we lost practically everything, practically, and when we came to, at night, then to a barrack, we-- there was hardly any room. We were 10 people in one six-people bed, bank, whatever you call it. And we all had to lie one side. And we all were deadily tired from the trip and all that. So, we all did sleep, but it wasn't long, maybe three or four hours when the light went on and we had to go to the famous roll cars.

And they were every day. And they were every day as painful. That didn't change. But after a few weeks we got some work to do. But it was not the work that they kept us for. We found that out later. We had stupid things to do. We had to go to the so-called woods and cut out some grass and put the grass in front of the soldiers' houses that they could have flowers in front of their houses, things like that. It had nothing to do with what we thought.

And then after--

What did they have in mind for you?

But then one day we-- while we were in this first--

Birkenau.

No, no. No, no, in the first--

Work camp.

Not the camp, but the--

Registration area.

No, where the barracks were, in a barrack, two times afterwards what we knew by then who shall live and who shall die. And two of those-- they were just-- the whole barrack, every barrack, was for a day, a lot of times, you couldn't get out because something was happening in the other barrack. We didn't know what. So we were all locked in.

So when we were asked to get out and all the others were inside, then we knew what was happening. And Mengele was always there. I don't know why he came always to us. Because there were at least 24 doctors who did the same thing.

So, we had to take our dress off, put it over our arm, outstretched arm. And in the nude, we had to walk in front of Mengele. And Mengele said, this or this, also. The one place you had to go back into the barrack, into a certain room, and the other you go to another place. The other place was always-- once in the barrack, they were picked up very soon. And they were killed that same day.

So this was how they cleaned it out. People who, after a week, or two weeks, or three weeks, started to get very thin and very down, very down, they took those. So the third time when they did it, he counted out 300 people. And those 300-- and Mrs. Frank was with me at that time. She wasn't in the same barrack, but I mean she was in the 300, with Anne-- with Anne-- but the other daughter, I didn't see.

So we came in to another place, barrack. And we spent the night there. And the next morning, Mrs. Frank and her younger daughter were gone. And somebody told me that she did not go without Margaret, her older daughter. So she thought the same way we thought, we are going to work, around amount of 300.

So she disappeared. And she must have gone into any other big barrack. And nobody knew who she was and nobody cared. And by that time, we all already had all kinds of lice and things, so it made no difference. So we were going this same day then by train to Czechoslovakia. That was a factory who had asked for 300 people. This is the way it was. I mean, we didn't know, but many books about the system that the German took into their factories people, because they had no men anymore. So they took women.

And there had to be a place ready where those people could stay. And a lot of factories were given-- taken away from their owners in Czechoslovakia and around. And some German trustees come. And they take over the factory. And they get all those people to work. And they pay so much. They have to pay for the food of those people. It was about \$0.50 a day. So they had workers. But certainly, I don't think that the workers were worth one cent. But that's beside the point. And so we worked. And I got my night shift. And we were working 12 hours without food in between.

We have only a tiny bit. Define for me kapo.

The kapo is a prisoner. And he's in charge of a group of people. I knew what the first K was. The apo is from police. I know what the K was, but I have forgotten that. But they had to keep the-- the men-- there was were men-- really under, because the man had sometimes hard work. Impossible work for them because they were so weak.

OK, we have to reload. Mrs. Waterford, when you were in the work camp, in the factory, there was an incident where an SS came up and asked you about your crimes.

Not an SS.

No?

No.

Just tell me that story as though I don't know it.

Yeah. We had all kinds of different work. That was still in Auschwitz. Was it? Yeah, I think so. No, I don't no.

It doesn't matter.

Yeah, that was, yeah.

The point is--

Yeah, we had to do-- we had something with the two wheels. How do you call those?

A cart.

A cart? OK. And we had to collect in there stones or something. And so we walked by one of the German women, whatever they were, in uniform. And any time you had to bring this in, and come back, and you walked by. So I thought she looked very nice and young. And I said to her, this is good work we are learning here. We can use it when the war is over.

And she looked-- and because I spoke German. And she said, yeah, that's right, that's right. So, I came back the next time. And she said-- I said, how do you like your work? Oh, it's OK. It's OK. They hated it in the village. There was nothing going on for the young girls.

And then she came back. And she said, don't you like it? I said, I wasn't asked. She said, what do you mean, you were not asked? You were a criminal. Look at your clothes. I never thought of that. I said, those are not my clothes. And I was not a criminal. I'm a Jew. So she went-- she took about two steps back. And this was all. She didn't know. That's what they knew, that we were criminals. And we looked it and we smelled it. I don't-- what this.

I said one more thing the next time I came by. A friend of mine, she came with her little cart. And I said, look at this lady. Her father is one of the richest men in Amsterdam. And she has an MD. Oh, she said, don't tell me such stories. So, they didn't want to know it was true.

Tell me-- there was a time after liberation when you were hungry and you walked up to a Russian soldier, tell me that story.

The war was over at the place where I was on the 9th of May. That was the last say could be, because the Germans were still doing something. So, the gate was open. And the eight Germans who were in there for 1,200 women-- by that time we had maybe lost 150, who died. And we buried them with our hands. There was nothing.

And I opened-- I walked out. The place itself was terribly, terribly dirty. And there was nothing functioning anymore. There was no food for days. And I mean full days, no food. And everybody had diarrhea and never made it. So, it was very, very dirty. And so when I walked out, the first thing I saw were the-- the flower, the little white flower, in May. Under a tree, there are little white flowers. They are here in the United States too.

May flowers.

Not may flowers-- May flowers? Yeah? And I hadn't seen that. So I threw myself in them, and I smelled them, and they were wonderful, fresh. It was wonderful. So I went into town. Because we were always, every day, going through town. And the people there knew us.

And I went into a sausage store I had seen every day. And I always wanted some of his sausage. So I walked in, dirty, and all I was, and smelling. And I said I would like-- I said in German too, I would like to have some sausage, I wonder if you could give me one. He said, no.

So I walked back into town, really into town. And here was a Russian. And he had a piece of black bread in his own hand and he had a chicken leg in his other. And he was a very tall guy. And I said something like that. And he looked at me. And I said, here? He gave it to me. He understood me perfect. Oh, it made me so sick. The next night, I was terribly sick. Shouldn't have done that, naturally. But who can say he wouldn't do it, would think of that what could come later.

But I didn't stay long. The director of the factory came without his pin that he belonged to the Nazis, in a blue suit-- blue elegant suit. And he thanked us for all our work. And he told us we had to wait until the International Red Cross would come, and pick us up, and bring us to our countries. Now, the International Red Cross had been there just before Christmas.

And the rumors, what they had in their trains, what they came with was tremendous. Everybody knew all the things were for eating in their train. And we got-- the first day we got some sugar, loose sugar. But we had nothing to put it in. So we had it in our filthy, smelling hands. And we ate it. And the thing that came right after that was a can of sardines. And it was one can. And it was opened. It was for two people. This was it.

The next Sunday we got peas in some kind of a so-called soup, I don't know. But there were four women who came with that in green uniforms. And they marched with the woman who was in charge. But we had to stand in fives, as always. And I was in front. I wanted to be in front.

And they were telling the-- the woman who was in charge was telling her, you look at those people, they are so filthy. And they don't want to take showers. We showed you the beautiful new showers we have. You saw how clean it was. They don't go in. She forgot to say that they don't-- it wasn't open. They couldn't go in. And that's what you have when you have Jews. They don't want to wash themselves. They are filthy dirty.

And that woman did not come-- the woman who walked by did not come up and ask why don't you wash yourself. They believed everything. So this is the International Red Cross, who has now all that-- where my husband died and all that. I don't know when I will ever get it.

How does your experience make you feel about humankind?

Oh, I believe, like Anne Frank said, if you-- I don't know if you remember when you read it. I believe that people are basically good, I do, honestly. People are basically good. If they do those things, there are stronger-- stronger things come up in their life which makes it more important to be a good Nazi, because they have a good time. And as a man, you can have any woman you want. And you get beautiful uniforms and everything. So, a lot of people fall under that and fall with it. No, I think basically we are good. I believe in it.

Do you see survival as an achievement?

No, I don't, no. I don't think that I did anything more than any awake and sincere person would do. I try not to fall into the eye of the enemy. And I don't do dumb things maybe I think I have to do because it's so bad here. But that wouldn't make any sense. What is one life? When they kill them, 24,000 in 24 hours, every day, what is one life? Nothing. So, no, I thought afterwards when I have my child, I am needed.

I've asked-- I think I've asked just about everything. Did I--

OK, Mrs. Waterford what were your losses and what were the things you gained from this?

Naturally, the losses is that I lost my husband. And it took me 13 years to get married again. And even after that time, every night I had nightmares that he maybe would come back and what I would do in this case. I never told him. But it

was terrible, this thought. I hadn't thought so much about that before I was really married. But this is the great loss.

And I have learned what people like me, like you, like anybody can do to each other. And there is nothing they cannot do. They'll do anything. This I have learned. But it isn't-- basically, they are not-- they don't come into the world covered with sin. I hope that nobody's religion is in any way against what I say. But I believe that we are good and only want to be good. A lot of things prevented that we are not good.

And if there are things involved to other people, this is the greatest-- the greatest terror I can think of. Because we were really degraded in every way, even-- even lying that we don't want to wash ourselves, we love to go around stinking like that. All those things, nobody would-- with a normal way of thinking would do that.

But all the people who worked for the fascism, they did it wonderfully. They just-- they don't have to be belonging to them, but it was wonderful to know that there is a group or a large element of people who are lower than I am, than we are. That's wonderful. Don't help them to get up.

No, this I have learned. And it makes me very unhappy. But one person alone cannot do that. And people who have gone through exactly the same things I have, and they talk about-- I guess you know better than I do, because I'm never together with any people who have the same experience. The thing is that they are crying, crying, look what's done to me, look what is done to us. That's terrible. I know it. I know everything. I know it.

And when I speak to the students, I never talk about violence. They can see enough violence on TV. They don't need me. I do not say that. I say what Anne Frank says, that I believe that. And I think it has helped me through my whole long life afterward. And I find it absolutely wrong only to talk what happened to me. And I lost my father, my mother, my 16 cousins, or whatever. It is terrible.

But it's terrible to listen to it also. Can't we make peace with ourself? Can't we? That we accept that it has existed. And it has. But you cannot carry it with you all your life. You have to say, yes, it has existed. And I will, every time when necessary, when I see it's necessary, talk about it, but now I have a new life. And I want to make the best in my new life. This is what I tell the students, the women.

Now, just tell me, seeing the patch of Lilies of the Valley, as though you didn't tell me before.

OK. When I walked out of the gate, the gate was open. And our people have-- the German people have left and left their uniforms all there. And I was not interested in taking a uniform home. But the people really wanted it. And very close to the entrance was a big tree, which I never had seen. And under this tree were the Lilies of the Valley, so beautiful, so white. I had forgotten that something like this existed. There was no way of bending down and rip them off. I wouldn't do that. So I put myself into them. And I still feel this feeling, wonderful.

And one other thing, describe for me Dr. Mengele.

Now, I talked about Mengele. And I didn't know that he was the head of the people, the head of the doctors, and that he had fantastic ideas, what he thought he could solve medically, and he would be a big man, the greatest man ever. Because he had so much material. He said it himself, how much material he had to find out what's wrong with twins, and how can you maybe change the color of the eye from one color to another of a twin. I mean, those were very important.

But he really thought this would be, what he was doing was really searching for help. But there's nothing, not one thing-- and for many people he killed because absolutely on the-- cutting this out and cutting that out, there's nothing in that he found anything new.

What did he look like?

I said before, and I will always say, excellent looking man, very friendly looking. And I mean, he didn't talk, or loud. He used just the only question, asking me if that was my child, and that was all. But if you don't know what he is, and it

takes you about 20 years until you really know who he was and who all the others were. There are a lot of books in there about the doctors. And they all go to the museum. And then I learned. I learned a lot of things afterward, so much.

Thank you.

We have to do one other thing.

Yeah.

We have to record just the sound of this room. So you just have to sit very quietly and not move.