Changing film. Camera four is up. Sync take four is up.

[BEEP]

Can you tell me about the time when there were two kids among 180-- I don't know where, which camp this was-- and how the SS were having a debate over what to do with you while you were alive?

Oh. Well, this particular incident happened when we were taken from Starachowice to the Ostrowiec Lager And I guess people from Ostrowiec Lager needed more workers for the iron works that they had in brick factories. So the people that were in charge had heard that-- from Botsohov people were taken to Starachowice. So they were trying to get their own from the same town, whatever was left, back to Ostrowiec Lager.

And they came with the truck, and they announced that so many, so many people they need to take back to Ostrowiec Lager. They need more workers. So my mother was one of them on the list. And there were two children involved, also. Myself and another child that were from Ostrowiec originally, that were in Starachowice. So we got on the truck, also.

And for some reason the camp commander, the German, counted us as one, because we were part of this group that came originally from Botsohov. When we came to Ostrowiec Lager, the German at that camp did not want any children. And he didn't want us two. And he didn't want to have anything to do with counting us as one, because he felt that he had enough as it is.

So here we're standing, the whole transport, and the two of us are taken to the side with a German ready to execute us. And these two Germans, the one that brought us and the one that is supposed to accept us-- you would think we were cattle or something-- were arguing, should these two children be shot, or should we be let into the camp as one person? The German that brought us defended us by saying, well, in our camp-- which wasn't exactly true-- the children carry messages.

They peel potatoes. And the one that was supposed to accept us said, I have enough children. I don't need this. And so it was going back and forth, until finally, I guess the one that brought us one out the argument. And they decided to let us into the camp. It's these kind of situations that I cannot believe myself that happened to me and that I have survived.

I guess the answer in my mind is that, because as these incidents came up, they were in my favor and I survived. But how many children had gone maybe through a hundred of these situations, and one of them was not in their favor and they're not with us anymore? So I consider myself very fortunate to have survived. Because out of fate, I suppose. That's the only way I can rationalize it for a reason for surviving.

What were some of the things that you witnessed as being in work camps before you ended up being transported to Auschwitz?

Well, one particular incident was-- I have seen a lot of dead people around all over. And I guess when you see so many, it doesn't really make that much of an impression. One of the times in Ostrowiec Lager, I was in the outhouse in the bathroom, which was on the corner of the area where-- like, it was a big area in the center of the camp. And then all the barracks were around it, mostly, actually, on two sides. And the outhouse was at the corner.

And I happened to have gone into the outhouse. And all at once, there was a commotion. And everybody is rushed into their barracks, because that's where they were supposed to go. And I got stuck in the bathroom. Well, I got up on the seat, and I looked out of the little window on the top. And what had happened is some people tried to escape, and they were caught. And I guess they were wounded. And there was some shooting going on.

And they got about, I think, four people to dig graves just outside of the wire, of the fence of the camp. And they brought these people that tried to escape, that were shot already. But they were not dead. And they made the other Jews bury these people that were not really dead yet. And they were begging not to be buried, that they're still alive.

That they should do something to kill them. But they didn't do anything. They just buried them alive. And these people had to do it or else-- these poor people that were picked to do it, because otherwise they themselves would have wound up dead. There was a very, very traumatic experience. I can still hear them screaming.

Do you want a break now?

No, I'm fine. I am fine.

Tell me how your parents-- how do you think your parents had the foresight, somehow knew and somehow managed to rescue both their daughters?

My father was a very protective parent. And there was a lot of unrest going on. Because I heard stories that actually they weren't planning of having me, either, since I was born in 1935 and there was already talk of war. So I wasn't actually a welcome addition at this particular time. But I came, and they accepted me. And I think I brought him a lot of joy.

Anyways, my father made arrangements. For instance, we had an aunt in Brazil that, if for some reason we are sent to parts of the country and we don't make it back for one reason or another, that there was a gentile left with information to get in touch with my aunt. And she would take my sister, especially, because she was sure that my sister would survive. That my aunt will take my sister and this particular man to Brazil as a reward for getting in touch with my aunt.

If for some reason my father and mother don't survive, that was one of the things that my father arranged. My father arranged from my sister's being with a family that had a piano and that made sure that my sister would get continuous education-- that was his foresight, also. He wanted to make sure that her education goes on, because it was very important to him.

And he was-- I heard a story. My sister has a mark on her forward, a burn mark on her forehead. You have to understand that our homes, although we lived very comfortably, we did not have any running water. We had water standing in the corner of the kitchen. A wood barrel with water that a man brought every day and filled up the water for us. So eating fruit without being washed was unheard of in our house.

And it wasn't just washed with water, but it had to be washed with boiling water. And my sister wanted an apple, and my father went to wash the apple with the boiling water from the kettle. And she pulled on his sleeve, and it spilled and it burned her. So even in those days my father was so protective of us that he wanted to make sure that we grow up healthy and that everything that we eat is clean and without any germs. So he really had a foresight. He was very, very protective of us.

We're just about to run out. I won't make it even through a question.

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]

[BEEP]

Can you describe the transport to Auschwitz and the arrival there?

I remember being shoved into cattle cars. It was very crowded. And my mother maneuvered me over to the wall of the car, because that gave me a chance to breathe. You see, being little-- I mean, that was in 1944. I was about 8, and I was small. I'm not really that tall now, but I was undernourished and skinny. And so here all I could see was the people's feet, actually.

So it was a little bit hard to breathe. And my mother maneuvered me over to the wall of the car, and that's where we stood. We were squeezed in, and we were given two pails. I think one was for water, and the other one was for elimination. I'm not quite sure, but I just remember those two pails. And they shut the door with a bang, and the train

started moving.

And I think we were on the go for about four days. I'm not sure how much, but we did stop on the way. And I remember either people leaving the train and getting water, or Poles bringing water to the cars, to the cattle cars. I don't remember. But I know that we were given some water and some bread. Oh, but when the train started, then we all had to sit down at the same time. Because one person could not sit and another stand.

You couldn't breathe. You were on the floor, and you had all these mess of people around you. So we all sat down. And then when some people wanted to stand up, we all had to stand up at the same time. I was little, and I would be picked up to look out of the window. Because there was a little window in the cattle car with the steel grates on it. And they would ask me to point out landmarks, because we really didn't know where we were going.

Being that we were coming from a working camp, we were told that we were going to another working camp. We really did not, of the conversation that I remember, that we were going to Auschwitz. Not that I knew what Auschwitz meant. But the story was at the time that was going around is that we were going to another working camp. And on the way to Auschwitz, the train did stop a couple of times. And the doors opened and we were replenished with some water.

And then finally, very early in the morning-- it was just about dusk-- we arrived in Auschwitz. And again, I was picked up. And I was starting to give the people the landmarks around. And people started screaming and crying. And I suppose they realized where we were. I didn't know. Didn't mean to me anything.

Then finally the train came to a stop. The doors opened. And screaming, raus, raus. Get out, get out from the train. When I came to the platform, it was very, very foggy. Could hardly see anything. And slowly, as the fog lifted was to the left of me that I saw a fence-- well, straight ahead of me there were fences that I've never seen before. Because they were rounded off with electric wires. I didn't know what that meant.

But to the left of me-- in fact, I tried to recollect it when I was there this spring, but I couldn't make it out-- I saw this big fence covered with blankets. And people would peek out to see this transfer coming up. And as the fog lifted a little more, we saw the chimneys. These huge, enormous chimneys with the smoke billowing from them. That was my first glimpse of Auschwitz.

We were taken off the cars, the cattle cars. And we stood on the platform, or sat down on the platform with our little bundle of clothes, whatever we had left. As we arrived, for 24 hours without any bread, without any water, without any anything. It was in the summer, 1944. I guess they didn't quite know what to do with us at this point. Should we go straight into the crematoriums, into the ovens? Or if we should be let into the camp.

Because we did come what they call an iron paper. We're from a working camp, so we should not have gone through a selection. And also, Mengele was sick or had a cold or something, so he wasn't available to do his usual selections. So we were waiting for 24 hours. And then finally, the decision was made. There wasn't too many transfers that came in without a selection. We were one of them.

I'm saying that only from what I have seen after I came in and I saw what was happening to all other transports that I'm saying it. I have no history or information of actually what had happened before I came to Auschwitz. The decision was made for us to be allowed to go into the camp, and we were given then something to eat. And they gave us the number. We were all given numbers.

And the people that were peeking through the blankets from that area, and what we called Kanada-- the people that came to help the transports get off the trains, get off the cattle cars and help with the selection and take all the clothes and everything else or tell us what to do. We were very surprised that the few children-- there weren't many of us, but the few that did come with the transport were given numbers and were allowed to get into the camp. So that's how we got into Auschwitz.

The men were separated from the women. And my mother and I were taken to [NON-ENGLISH] we used to call it. It's BIIb Lager. And we stayed there for a few months. Oh, wait a minute. Before we went in, we were taken in to be

showered and bathed. Because we were, I guess, full of lice and dirt. So the clothes, everything was taken away from us. We were taken into a big hall. And in a row, kind of moved on completely naked.

And this was actually the first time that I have seen my mother completely naked. And all the other women. I've never seen it. And they were just standing there and kind of holding their hands together. And the Germans were walking back and forth with their little whatever you call it that they were hitting with-- a leather strip-- if you didn't move fast enough. And we kept on moving down the line.

The only thing that was left for us was the shoes. We were allowed to keep our shoes. But the shoes we had to immerse in some kind of a liquid and go on into a huge room where water came down from the ceiling. It was the shower. We were shaved completely. Hair shaved off. And we came out on the other side of the building. At least, that's what it seemed like. I don't know. Maybe we went in a circle. I don't know.

It's not standing anymore, so I couldn't find out exactly. And we were each thrown a piece of cloth. And it seemed that it worked out that the tall woman--

Let's stop and reload. We just ran out.

[BEEP]

OK. Why don't you describe registration and what that involved.

Registration was that first, after the 24 hours, they decided to let us in to the camp without a selection. And we were all given the numbers. And the few children that came also were given the numbers, which was very unusual. And we were shown or told to go into a huge building where we were undressed, completely undressed. And we were allowed to keep our shoes. That was the only thing.

We were completely shaved and kept moving in line towards that I later found out was the showers. There was a lot of crying from the people because I guess they knew that it might not be just a shower. For me, I was shocked to have seen for the first time my mother completely naked. And everybody else around me. And they were kind of trying to hide from all these Germans that were walking back and forth and disregarded all this mass of women completely naked.

We were encouraged or pushed into going into this room where there was shower heads in the ceiling, and water came down. And we got our showers. And then it seems to me-- I don't know if I'm right-- we came out on the other side of the building. We had to dip our shoes in some kind of a liquid to disinfect that, too. So we were pretty clean once we got out of there. At the other end, we each received a piece of clothes, a dress.

And it was as if it was set up that a tall woman would get a real short dress, and a little woman would get a long dress. And they weren't willing to switch, because obviously it was more favorable to have a longer dress, because it was more protective. And with everybody feeling so upset going into the building and crying and not knowing what is waiting for us all, when this group came out at the other end, everybody started laughing.

Because they looked at each other, and they saw what they looked like with the shaved heads and the pieces of cloth over them. It was so comical, in spite of all this horror that was going around us, that the women started laughing. And that really was comical. And then we were told to go into a-- we were led to a barrack in Lager B. It was called [NON-ENGLISH] which is actually BIIb. But I guess either in German or Yiddish it is [NON-ENGLISH]

And I had tried to ask my mother what block we were in when I went to Auschwitz this spring, but she said she wasn't quite sure if it was 16 or 17. But it really didn't matter. Nothing much is left of it. We were a few months together in that block. I contracted the measles-- child's disease-- and I was taken to the hospital. It was a rather severe case. My mother came to visit me every day.

And I was on the higher perch of the bunk beds. And like always, she was always there throwing up-- because there was an opening between the ceiling and the wall. When it came down like this, there was an opening. And she would throw

bread up to me. I guess I kind of expected it from her. So I don't know how long I was in the hospital, but not long enough.

Because when the nurse in the hospital heard that there was going to be a selection in the hospital, she discharged whoever was able to possibly walk. I still had all my spots on me, and I had, I guess was still running a fever. But she discharged me. And the procedure was that you left the hospital, which was at one end of the camp-- and that was in the winter-- and you would go down the center of the camp, and they would let off whichever block you came out of to go into the hospital.

Well, mine was pretty much at the other end of the camp. When I finally made it into the barrack and some of our friends and my mother took one look at me, hear me they couldn't, because I've lost my voice. So I couldn't talk at all. And according to the people, they-- it's their favorite story to talk about me, how I looked at the time-- I was green, and I couldn't speak. And none of them believed that I was going to survive. Well, I came into care into the barracks and stayed a couple of days.

And there was another selection. There was a selection for-- they kept us very clean and very healthy-- for a skin disease. It was called [POLISH] in Polish. I really don't know what it is. Some kind of enzyme. And they had a special block for that, too. So they mistook-- and that would come up on the wrists and under the arms, little pimples, and they had a special medication for that. But you had to go to that block.

Well, they mistook my spots from the measles for that disease. And they yanked me to go to that block. And every time you were selected into a certain area, these were the areas that had the selections to go into the gas chambers if they didn't have enough people that were coming in in a transport. I mean, these were the first that were selected. So when you went anywhere out of the ordinary, it was bad. So when I was going to be taken to the [NON-ENGLISH] block, my mother wouldn't let me go by myself, so she came along with me.

So again, she endangered her own life for a maybe of saving mine if any way there was a possibility. Because at this point, really, it didn't really matter if she was there with me or not. She would just be one more person that would be in the same situation. But she went along with me. We had difficulty getting out of that block, because instead of the spots going away with this medication, it spread because it became infected. And on top of it, I caught pneumonia, so I was coughing.

And through some miracle, I got through a selection by holding whatever dress I had-- we had to parade in front of the doctor to see that we have no more spots on us, and I had a whole infection under my arm. So I would put that dress over this shoulder and squeeze through. And I got out of that block with my mother. We came back to our regular block for a short time. And we were separated. I was taken into the children's block.

Now, during the time that I was with my mother-- and every morning at 4 o'clock we were still standing for the Appell, where we had to be counted till about 9:00, when the sun came out. And then we were, again, put into the block. Occasionally the Blockalteste, the woman that was in charge of the block, felt sorry for the couple of kids that were there, and she would allow us to wait inside the block and come out as the Germans got closer, as Mengele got closer to count us.

Occasionally, there were rumors, for instance, that they were needing more people for the crematoriums, because it was getting slow. The transports were coming in slow. So what was on our mind, what we shared with the children-- I didn't share that with my mother-- was finding places where to hide. In Auschwitz, where to hide. Under a blanket? They would find it, because they would strip the beds.

There was nowhere to hide in the barracks. But the barracks-- the barrack that was next to ours was a place where--

Wait, let's-- We have to reload. Boy, that was quick.