

My name is Alli Bock Itzkowitz. I was born in Troitsk, Uralskaya Gubernia. This is deep, deep Russia. But when I was one year old, my parents moved to Lithuania. And we lived in Memel, Memelgebiet. That was German-occupied territory that they lost it, and it belonged to Lithuania.

I went to school there. It was a democratic country. We were very free to do whatever we want to. My daddy was in the wholesale jewelry business, and we were doing very well. I had lots of German friends till 1938.

We heard talk about Hitler all the time on the radio. We had lots of people from Germany that came and stayed in our house. Well, they had already the war broke out, and they-- we kept them there for a week or two till they got papers, and they went to Australia, or South Africa, or America, wherever they went. And we never believed that that would happen to us. But in 1938, more Germans used to come to our house and tell my father to leave.

So he moved his wholesale business to Kovno, Lithuania. That was the capital of Lithuania, Kovno. Well, we had a beautiful house there. We had a good life there. And my mother didn't want to leave. She said she's going to stay there because she couldn't believe that anything what we heard could happen to us. But in the last minute, when we saw that it was the end, so we forced her, really, in the train to come to Lithuania.

Well, in Lithuania there was a lots of people that came. It was hard to find a place to live. But since one of my sisters was married and lived there, we found an apartment. It wasn't the same thing like it was in Memel, but it was a place to live.

How did the family and the people feel while this was happening?

Well, there was mixed feelings. See, some went to different places. Some went to little towns. They nearly got destroyed because they left everything. And they couldn't find new jobs and new places. You know, my daddy was in the wholesale business, in the wholesale jewelry. So he traveled. He still had some towns to go to and make business.

But other people that had factory or something, they had money, yes, but they couldn't find a new position. It wasn't that easy to start all over again. But a year later, the Russians came in. They marched in with the tanks overnight. So we were happy to see them because we were afraid, if they wouldn't come then the Germans would come in. So we kind of felt protected.

But then they gave us trouble. They took the business away from my father right away. They came, they put seals on our door, and they told him it belongs to the people, not to us anymore. But he had a profession. He was a jewelry man. So he went back on the bench to make rings, make repairs. But some other people were lost.

But they didn't complain that they didn't make a living or something. They had hope. So until the Russians, they came overnight and took the rich people away and sent them to Siberia, too, so you weren't-- you didn't know which way was the best way.

So you didn't know who to trust.

Well, we knew that the Russians are going to do it. You know, because you heard so many things. But you don't believe what you hear, so you always had a doubt. But they did come at nights with trucks and give them 10 minutes to pack up everything. And those people went to Siberia, but their life was safe. I mean, unless they froze to death or hunger to death. But nobody took a gun to their head and shoot them.

But a year later, the war broke out, and the Germans came in. Well, then we're really in trouble. We started to run. And we thought we could get to the Russian border and go over to the Russian side.

What did you expect when the Germans came in? Why did you run?

Well, we knew-- we heard on the radio what they're going to do to us. Everybody knew that they had built concentration

camp. We didn't believe whatever was said. You know, nobody in his right mind could think-- because they believed in Germany, a disciplined country, that they would do what they do. But anyhow, we were afraid because I was a child when I heard on the radio that, in 1945, you only going to see the Jew in the museum.

Alli, do you remember how the fear affected the family? Could you tell us how the family was affected?

Well, the only one that I think was strong in our family was my mother, that held it together. I think my father, really, he hoped. He was an optimist. And he didn't admit it, but I think somehow, at some point, I have seen him where he was just fallen apart.

Can you tell us about that?

It happened one night. We were running away. And we came to a point in Lithuania where the people told us we couldn't go because, on the border, we wouldn't get through. And the Germans were bombing the whole highway to the border. There was bombs falling all the time.

We lived with a Jewish family that he knew from before. And they told all the Jewish people-- the Germans said all the Jewish people have to go in a synagogue and stay there. They give us bread and water. For some reason they let us go. They didn't shoot us. So we went on the road back to home.

Well, there was no place, so we slept in the woods. We slept on stones. And all of a sudden, my father started to shiver-- we all laid on top of him-- started screaming and hollering. There was nothing wrong with him. He just felt like he's dying.

So we laid on top of him. He was cold. And we rubbed his forehead. We did everything we could. Well, in the morning he kept on going again. And we came back to Kovno. It was a hard road because the Germans were shooting at us. And there was nobody to guide us, to tell us where to go or how to get back in.

When your father was trembling and falling apart and all of you were--

Laid on top of him--

--lay on top of him--

The whole family, yeah.

That must have been a terrible thing, to see your daddy.

Well, at that time, we were all so afraid. And I couldn't really tell you-- and we were dead inside. See, there were so many emotions going on.

What do you mean when you say you were dead inside? Can you tell us more?

We were just numb, numb. You know? With numb, you didn't feel any hunger. You didn't have any feeling. We were just going like sheeps. Everything was dead in us.

Who was in your family at this time?

Well, at this time it was my older sister, with her husband and her child, and it was my middle sister, and it was Harry. My mother didn't go with us. She stayed because she said she doesn't have the strength to make that trip to the border. She said she's going to stay home and take care of our belongings.

So she stayed in Kovno?

She stayed all by herself. She was a very strong woman. She didn't give in. But she said, you all go.

When you got back to Kovno, was she still there?

She was still in the house. She was the strongest one then. But then we had to go to the-- the Germans came. We had to go to the ghetto.

Which ghetto?

In Kovno ghetto. That was Kovno ghetto. And we had some friends that found an apartment for us. You know, they lived about-- in one room, in one kitchen, lived a whole family. We were lucky. We had two rooms and a kitchen that we shared with the different people that lived there.

But you see, then you had to leave everything. You brought something, and it was a chaos.

Tell us about that chaos in the ghetto?

See, one was trying to get a wagon to bring some things over. And the Lithuanians stole things from you, and you didn't say anything. You were glad you could get some of it over. But it wasn't so bad till they put us all in, and they built a fence around us, the Germans.

Do you remember when that was?

That was in 1941. By '42, they fenced us all in. And then--

Why was that so bad? Tell us why that was [CROSS TALK].

Well, that's what I want to tell you. We had-- every Monday and Tuesday, they surrounded one section and took the people out. You never knew when they're going to-- you had no way of knowing anything. We woke up in the morning, and the section-- they picked younger people, older people. You didn't know which side was the right side or the good side, where to live was the right place.

They had different places that the people disappeared overnight. They took them out. We lived close by the fence. And I remember that I heard at night like it was a fog. And I heard a sound. And we didn't know what it was, and you couldn't see anything through the windows. So we all climbed in my mother's bed on top of her because she was the one that is going to protect us.

Well, we found out later that that was the night when they brought some French Jews. And they put them to the ninth fort, where they killed them all. In the morning we heard tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick, but we didn't know what it was. They killed all those French Jews. They told them they're bringing to the ghetto, and they put out a fog so we wouldn't see anything. The Germans put out a fog. Whatever it was, you couldn't see anything.

Then I remember this. They came in, and they ask for 10,000 people. Well, the Jewish committee wouldn't give him 10,000 people. So they surrounded us, and they picked people. And we stayed in a big lot, all the people. And there were Germans then, and left, right, left, right. So we stayed, and we figured out that that side is bad. The left side is bad because they picked older people and younger people. The right side is better because they pick the strong people.

And we had to go five in a row. And we stayed there all day long. And I remember, first we were afraid of my sister because she had a little child. We saw her going to the left side. Then we went also. They told us how to stand because so my parents would look younger. So we went five in a row. My sister, Harry, me, and my parents from both sides, they let us go to the good side.

Well, the other sides, we heard again in the morning, tick tick tick tick tick tick. They took them out, and they killed him on the ninth fort.

So your sister went to the bad side?

No, we all went to the-- the whole family went to the good side.

OK.

But for my older sister, her in-laws, they were two older people. They went to the bad side.

Do you remember what that was like, when you saw that happen, the in-laws go to the bad side?

Well, you were so scared, it was-- you were so scared, you were so afraid, you was-- you couldn't even think right anymore. You were still thinking this is the good side, this is the bad side. But that was just a reaction. Everything was dead in you. Because in fact, my father went through. And after he got through, he had a boil on his leg. And he never felt it the whole day. But the minute he was on the good side, all of a sudden he couldn't move his leg anymore. It wouldn't move.

So you were numb except for the fear?

Tremendous fear. And those faces, and those SS, and their commanders, how strong they were. They were just like dynamite, steel in their eyes. I looked at the eyes from that German. It was like blue steel, cold, no feelings. I mean, there was no emotion, no feelings.

So they looked strong, and you felt very weakened.

We felt like we were just like, well, in a cage. We had no control over anything. They could do whatever they wanted with us. And then I remember, when they had a-- they took all the kids away from the parents. And we were in hiding. We were hiding because we didn't know who they're going to take. So we found out the next day, we had a place in the cellar where we hid.

Was this very long after?

Well, they always give you about six months. Then something else came up. Well, when they took the kids away from the mothers, and the mothers were screaming, so they had dogs that tore the mother apart. And I knew one woman that-- I worked in the washeteria there. And one woman hid her baby in a basket. And we put clothes on top of there, you know, sheets and clean clothes on top of the baby so that they wouldn't see or hear anything.

Well, they came all over the next day, checking. But they didn't find that baby. But they took 90% of the children away, and the old people.

And where did they take them?

They put them in wagons. But we found out later where they took them. They said that they drained the blood from the kids and gave it to the soldiers that needed it.

How did you find this out?

Well, we found out lots of stories when we came to the concentration camp. We found out what happened to lots of our people that were taken before and never came back. They wrote some on the walls. They wrote their names down. They have never seen before.

So then [SIGHS] the war came closer. And the Germans liquidated the ghettos.

But before they did this, what was daily life like in the ghetto?

Well, we went to labor camps. You know, to the airport. I went to the washeteria to wash their clothes. Some ironed their clothes. Some mended their outfits. You know, they give us different things to do.

What was your father doing?

That is interesting. He was going to work, too, like we did. You know, with a shovel. He wasn't doing jewelry in the ghetto. He was just doing what-- to do work. But they were more for the younger people. They wanted us to work.

And how did you get food?

Well, that is another story. They gave us a ration. But that wasn't much to live on. So I went to work. So when I went to work, I wore the yellow star that we all had to wear. I took off the star. They didn't know I was Jewish.

And if I didn't go on the roads where they could really see me, I went on side roads. And I sold different things that my father had, some watches, some tablecloths, different things we didn't have any use for. I sold it, and I brought whatever they gave me, bread or butter or what, and I brought it in the ghetto. It wasn't easy to bring in because sometimes they caught you, and they took it away from you.

But that was our daily life. I don't say that I wasn't afraid. But there was a big family, and we wanted to eat.

Alli, why did you take the star off? Tell us about that.

They wouldn't know that I was Jewish.

So you were being rebellious?

Well, you see-- well, no. With the star, I couldn't go no place. They would have arrested me or shot me. And in fact, if they caught me, I would have been in trouble without it, without the star. But I just had little streets, put the scarf on, took it-- and just went like I'm a Lithuanian.

Were you numb at those times also?

Very numb. Numb, terribly numb. But somebody had to do it. My older sister did it. Well, she had a husband and a child. And I did it. My middle sister started doing it, but she couldn't do it. She was too much afraid.

And then you had to carry all this. Sometimes I carried 30 or 40 pounds of potatoes on my shoulders. I took potatoes, carrots, whatever they gave me.

Did you feel good when you were able to do that for the family? Did that help you?

Well, I can't really tell you what I felt. But I just could not go to work and see that-- I could do it not doing it, but I was afraid because I was risking my life every time I was doing it. And there was plenty of people that were arrested and beaten. And they told us that too.

And I did some crazy things sometimes.

Such as?

Well, like one time I came into the fence where they let us in. There was a Jewish man, and he said, Alli, he said, you can't bring anything in because they're watching that fence real good. And a big shot from the German was there. But I had a dozen eggs, and I wanted a dozen eggs. So I put it right on the side. And then when he checked me over, I didn't have anything. I reached back with my hand and got the dozen eggs and went through. It was a dozen eggs, and I risked my life for a dozen eggs.

I don't know why you do the things. It just comes like this to you. And I was risking my life many times. But everybody else that went and got food did the same thing. But sometimes it was easy, and sometimes it was very hard.

Maybe you were strong like your mother in a way.

[SIGHS] Well, I don't know. She was strong in other ways because, I tell you why. When the Germans came, and they surrounded the ghetto and we went to the hiding place, the first thing, she put us all in that hiding place. She was the last one to go in. She brought water. She brought dried bread. She brought a candle. She always thought about those things.

Well, I don't think I could do it. I couldn't think it. I was numb.

You were a child. She was an adult.

Yeah. I couldn't think about it.

Yeah. But you weren't laying down shivering. You were out there helping the family.

Well, I was risking my life, even when I was in the concentration camp. Well, life in the ghetto, it wasn't that bad. But in the concentration camp, I don't really think I was worried about them killing me.

Alli, let's go back to something. You talked about the liquidation of the ghetto.

Yes.

Would you tell us your memories and experience?

Yes. Well that was-- we went first in hiding. We thought we can hide, and the Russians are going to come in and free us. But the Germans said, ahead of time, that before they leave they're going to burn that ghetto down. Well, when we went to the hiding places, the hiding places could just have so many people. But everybody came in. So you couldn't breathe anymore. There was no oxygen left.

Where were the hiding places?

Well, in different buildings, underground. You know, the cellar. It wasn't-- they could have just found it anyhow, but there were so many of them so they wouldn't. But you see, we couldn't breathe anymore. And then we didn't have enough food to last. So finally, we decided to crawl out of it. And we crawled out of it because it was impossible. I couldn't even breathe.

So the Germans then took the people that came out, that we were the-- we was-- I think the last transport was our transport that they put in the trains. But after we left, I found out later, they did burn the ghetto down. And my cousin and his wife burned alive because when you ran out of the hiding place, they shoot you. They did shoot the people.

So you had a choice of not being able to breathe, or--

You couldn't breathe. There were too many people. And you can't tell nobody to leave. They made it just for so many people in there. Maybe one hiding place was for 60 people, and there were 200 people inside. There was no oxygen. It wouldn't do no good either because they burned the ghetto down, and they shot you so anyways.

But when-- and first thing, we were all very hungry. So when we came, they took us with train, and they took us to Stutthof. Well, there were men and women in the train. You know, they put us in like cattle. But when we came to Stutthof they said--

Tell us about that train ride. Do you remember it?

The train ride, that is the first time that I have to admit I knew that we have no rights at all. Because in our wagon that we were in, there was the leader from the Kovno ghetto, Dr. Elkes, a very brilliant man. And he controlled that ghetto. And he made deals with the Germans. You know, he tried to anyhow.

And he asked the German a question. And when the German didn't want to answer, he hit him with the end of the gun. And when he came back, he said to me, Alli, it is lost. We have nothing anymore. Because he told them, I'm doctor Elkes from the Judenrat, and he gave him his title. And he just, "damn Jew," and hit him with something. So he knew right then, he had no say about anything.

And they had bread and water in the train. There was no air. And there was a little window that they opened up.

And then they took us with a little-- they came to Stutthof, and they said-- they told men separated, women separated.

You know, it sounds like everyone that you believed in that was strong became nothing, the doctor, your father.

Well, I saw how they treated him. Well, my father got back to his humor. He always had hope. See, he was an optimist. He believed it's going to get better. My mother knew the-- saw the end. She saw it but what she believed in the Germans much more than my father did. See, because she believed in them, she thought they would never do it.

Going back to the train ride, was your family in that train together?

My mother, my father, Harry, and me, yes.

Were in the train.

Yeah. Because my older sister, she had a child, and we knew what happened to children. So she was in a hiding place with her child, in Lithuania. Overnight she went out with the child. And she was hidden someplace in a little town, Yurburg. There was a lot of Jewish people that went in the same place.

So your older sister did not make that trip with you on the train.

No, she didn't.

Do you remember the last meeting with her, or the last time you saw her?

The last time I know because she took the child away.

Can you tell us about that last time you saw her?

Well, she had a five-year-old child. And there are some more women with children that we-- they all had to pay plenty money of it. It cost lots of money, because the people to take him there, you know, that they risked their life to. And I thought for sure that she's going to make it. That's what we thought, that they are hidden and they're going to make it. But they didn't because they made a big mistake.

When they were hiding and at night they went out, they found two German soldiers. So they thought they're going to capture them. And when the Russians are going to come in, they're going to hand them over to the Russians. Well, those two German soldiers got free at night. They freed themselves and went out and pointed out to them. And the Germans came. And they put a bomb inside that hiding place.

That killed my sister automatically. And then the rest of the people, they took out and they shot them.

How did you find out about this?

Well, my brother-in-law went-- was on the way to meet my sister. He could never make it. So when he made it, they told him, the Lithuanian told him what happened, the people, because he was looking for his child. So they told him what happened.

Did you learn of this before you left the ghetto?

No. I didn't know anything about it. And that I'll tell you later, that I went back and I found it all out.

OK. Take us back to the train ride, and you now arrived at the camps.

Yes. And they separated men, separate women. And then we walked and walked. And then they had some little wagons where you take coals. And they put us in those little wagons. They're just coal wagons. You see, that's when I realized there must be a gas chamber there. It was like little wagons, like a train ride with little wagons. And they took us to Stutthof. And there was thousands of people on a big, big lot.

And we saw fences around. And there we saw some people with a striped clothes that was Hungarian, shaved heads. They looked like children. They were very young and very little. And all they ask us is for a prayer book. They wanted prayer books.

And then they put us all in. Then they opened the gates, and they put us in the concentration camps. How many people was there? Many people. They gave us these little bunks to sleep on.

Do you remember when this was?

Well, that was in 1943. I was freed in '44. Yeah.

Tell us what life was like in the bunk and in the concentration camp.

There was no life. It felt more like death than life. But what I saw, pyramids of shoes. I have never seen that in my life, pyramids of shoes. They're like buildings. And I started asking, what are those millions of shoes doing there. I didn't realize that at that time, that that was from the shoes from the people they killed, pyramids after pyramids.

Well, we were not long, then they start separating people to go to labor camps. So they took my mother away from me. And--

Do you remember when that happened? Can you tell us about that?

Well, that happened about six, seven weeks after we got into Stutthof. They took 1,000 women in a group. We had to line up, and they separated 1,000 women, another 1,000. And the other one that were older or that didn't look to them that they could do the job, they put it on the left side again. And then they took me away from my mother.

My sister had a different number, so they took me away from her either. So they had-- we had numbers. They give us numbers. It wasn't tattooed on our hand, but we all had numbers.

So then we went to Poland.

Do you remember the last time you saw your mother?

Yes. I remember the night that we knew what would happen. It didn't happen that night. And I was afraid. I slept with her in the same bunk. And she was crying to me. I was crying all night. We were crying. And she said, I raised four kids, and I don't have anything anymore. They're going to take you away from me too.

We were both laying in tears. And I have never had that feeling I had that night. And I thought, God Almighty, if there is a god, and you see all those troubles, why don't you do anything? I would rather be killed with her than leave her

there by herself.

First they took her husband and her child, Harry. Then they took Rosa away from me. Now they took me away from me. But that woman fought still, because I heard later that every time when she was there and they tried to get the people to put in the gas chamber, she hid in the ceiling till the last time. They caught her, and they gassed her in the gas chamber.

Did you say goodbye to your mother that night the way you wanted to?

No. I could never say that. I could never say that. And then I saw her through the fence. She was holding her hand and looking at me and looking at my sister.

Is there anything that you wished you could have said to her or done that you didn't do that night?

No. I just wanted to tear everything apart. When they took her away from me, I went back, and I felt like tearing everything apart inside. The girls had to hold me back. I felt like I had the strength of an ox, and I just wanted the ox. And I want to tear everything. I was-- there was something in me that I felt like I had to take those beds down or do something or I would explode.

There was many women that probably had that same feeling one time or another. They tried to calm me down. And then when I-- I didn't have no feelings at all, when I came-- after I lost my mother, I said you can do with me whatever you want.

So you felt like giving up at that point?

Yeah. I said do with me whatever you want because the labor camp, there was so much fear. And there were some Germans that talked to me in German. And they told me, I don't hate you because you're a Jew. I hate you because that is my command. See, I spoke German. They used to speak German to me when nobody saw, because they were afraid.

And the food they gave us was not enough, so I tried to get by by going on the underground, the cables that they laid. And I got some Polish people, even German people that lived there. They helped us.

Polish?

Yeah.

You knew you weren't going to see your mother again. You were angry. You were furious.

Oh, terribly, terribly angry.

And then you felt like you didn't care anymore. And then what happened to how you felt?

Well, that-- then I think everything was dead in me. But in fact, there was sometimes airplanes coming over our head. I don't know if they were English or American. And the Germans used to tell us to turn off the light or lay down because they're going to throw bombs. It didn't bother me. I stayed and watched them.

I said, well, go ahead. Finish it once and for all because how long-- you had no hope at all. They took all the hope away from you. You just knew it was a matter of time. Are you going to die, or are they going to send you back to Stutthof and put you in the gas chamber?

You had a strong spirit.

But that's what I tell you, what happened. When the Russians-- no, when the Germans came at night, and they told us we had to pack up, I had a dream. I don't know if it means anything. But I think that is the night my sister died. I woke up in the middle of the night. And my sister had bread and onions. And she gave it to me and to my brother. And I said,

Rosa, don't give it away because that is your food. That's all what you have.

She said, well, no. You take it and Harry take it. I think that was the night that she died.

Why?

Because I never dreamt. We were so tired that we fell asleep. We had no-- no dreams at all at night. And all of a sudden she came to me. And I got up, and I screamed, and I said my sister died. And I had a piece of onion in my hand.

When was this?

While we were in the labor camps.

In the labor camp. This is before Stutthof?

No, from Stutthof they sent us to the labor camps in Poland.

OK.

You know, to lay the cables.

Right. Do you remember which camp you were in?

Well, the camp really didn't have a name. It was between Torunik in Poland.

So you were still with your brother?

No, no. The brother was separated from me. The brother was with my father. I was by myself. And that same morning--

Going back to that dream--

Yeah.

It sounds like you dreamt somebody still cared about you and was taking care of you. Somebody gave you food.

Yeah. I found that onion in my hand, and I started screaming. And two hours later, they woke us up that we're marching.

Why were you-- tell us about the screaming. Do you remember that? What was happening to you?

Well, when I found-- when I had that dream, and I haven't dreamed about her, I said I know she was trying to give me a sign because I saw me and Harry walking and her disappearing slowly. I say my sister died. She just went away from me.

So you lost somebody else.

Yes.

Another loss.

But then I did have feelings, what I thought I didn't have.

Sure. Every once in a while, the feelings would come out.

Every once in awhile, yes. But in many ways, I was numb because one German hit somebody. And instead, she took her

hand away, and I left my hand. And my fingers got this black and blue and this swollen. And everybody screamed next to me. And I didn't feel anything. And then I looked at my hand. It was this swollen, and it was blue.

And I didn't feel. I said, what is it? Don't I feel anything anymore? I didn't feel it.

Why were you hit. What happened that you got hit?

He hit that girl because she wasn't going fast enough or she wasn't-- there was no reason why they hit you. I was lucky they didn't hit me. So I had my hand out, so it came right here. And I didn't feel anything. It was all dead in me.

But I knew that I had feelings because when they woke us up two hours later, and they told us to get ready, we're marching. And we marched. But you see, we had no radio. We don't know what is going on. All we saw is about 100 airplanes on top of us.

So when we saw the airplanes, we figured that must be all Russian or English or Americans. So I figured they're running away.

You know, it sounds to me like you struggled with am I dead or alive while all this was going on. And part of the time you felt dead, and every once in a while you realized you weren't dead.

That's what it is. Because I'll tell you why. When they started coming, and we went through the woods, so the Germans wanted to hide. Guess who ran before them. Me. All of a sudden I wanted to live because I saw freedom coming.

And I ran so fast, you wouldn't believe how fast I ran. And the Germans ran too, but they didn't care anymore because then they knew that they're in trouble.

So finally they put us from place to place. We saw Germans on horses. And we could see-- but you walked for three or four days without food. And I don't know how the sick people walked because everybody wanted to walk. Everybody wanted to live till finally they put us in a camp, where Polish workers used to be. And they moved them out.

So when we got up in the morning, there was no more Germans. We found them later. They shot themselves, the SS. But I was liberated by the Russians.

When?

In 1944.

Remember what month?

April.

April?

Yeah. The Russians liberated us.

You know, Alli, you told us earlier, when you saw the pyramids of shoes, you couldn't believe it.

No.

Didn't know what it was.

No.

Were there other things that you saw that you couldn't believe, you couldn't understand, besides those shoes?

Well, those shoes were so-- you see, you walk in and you see the little places where you sleep. But those shoes were just like pyramids. Well, I didn't see anything else because it was all electric wired. You heard millions of stories, millions of people telling you things.

What were some of those stories you heard?

Well, we found-- we went looking for names. So we found those names from the first 500 people that they took away from the ghetto. They took them to labor. They never showed up. So we found their names.

When we talked to people, each one had different stories to tell. See, we went to the bathrooms. I never saw the gas chambers. But they told us there's gas chambers in Stutthof. I found out later that my mother was gassed there. So I don't know if the same chambers that they took us to take a shower were gas chambers too.

So when you went to take a shower--

Well, I didn't-- well, I didn't realize it at that time because we just came in. That, I didn't realize it, that that was a shower. They took the soap away from us, everything. So they gave us their soap because they looked on the soap, if you have diamond inside or whatever it is. They looked for everything.

They took your clothes away. They give you their concentration camp clothes.

OK. You know, one of the things that I'm not clear about is what happened to your father. When did you see he was [CROSS TALK]?

Well, my father was separated from us. And he went to Dachau with my brother. Well, he was liberated by the Americans. He wasn't liberated by the Russians. But he told me how he survived. He was a jewelry man. And he used to sit with a candlelight and a little nail file and do jewelry for them from the golden teeth from the Jewish people that they took out. I never saw those golden teeth. But the Germans took them, and they brought them to my father. And he made rings for them.

So this way-- and he told them, if you keep my son alive, I'm going to work for you. If you take my son away, you might as well kill me. So they really protected my brother. And they gave him extra food. So whatever he got, they gave some to my husband, and he gave to Harry because Harry was a young boy. He wanted to eat.

When did your father tell you this?

Well, when I came in 19-- you see, I was liberated by the Russians. And they put me to work too, so it wasn't so easy to come to the American zone. But when I came in '47, my father lived in Munich. And he-- see, and that's what I want to tell you. I didn't know about my sister, so I went back to Lithuania. And there I found out that they killed my sister and her child in that bunker where they were hiding.

I didn't know all those things. Well, I found out from my father. But when I went to Kovno, there were some people that I met. And they told me that Harry and my father is alive, and my husband is alive.

When did you get married?

In the ghetto, just before they separated us-- 1944.

And who did you marry?

Julius Itzkowitz.

Did you know him from before? Did you just meet him in the ghetto?

No, I met him in the ghetto. Lots of my friends that I knew from before, I never seen them again in the ghetto. Some of them ran away over the border to Russia. And some of them, when they took out 500 well-dressed men, and they didn't read it right. They thought well-educated men, so they took all the--

So you were married in the ghetto before you went to the camp?

Yes.

Can you tell us about the wedding and your courtship and what that was like?

Well, I met my husband. He worked with the Jewish police. So he came at night-- the Jewish police in the ghetto. So he came to check if I had the papers that I went to work because they checked if you went to work. So I met him. And he had our location to check every day.

So we started talking. And one of his friends I knew from way before. So every time when he came, he stayed 10 minutes, 30 minutes, longer than he's supposed to. So then when I worked-- where I worked in the washeteria, he watched the washeterias, you see, if you didn't take any goods out that didn't belong to you. So I used to talk there, over there. And that went on, maybe for a year.

So before we were-- we had our plans to go in a hiding place, just like my sister. So I wouldn't go with him in a hiding place unless I was married. So the thing is, my middle sister and me married the same day.

You just go to a rabbi, and he makes the brokhe. There's not much ceremony.

Were you happy?

Afraid of everything. How can you be? You don't know what tomorrow-- you live in fear. You live in fear. Maybe some people don't feel it like I did. But I was always afraid. I went to get food, and I went in the concentration camp to get through this aisles to get food, but I was always afraid. Because first thing I was afraid, you don't know what the German-- they can make experiments out of you if they catch you. How do you know how many people did they hang for going after food? Not about women, but they did hang men.

So we always lived-- sometimes people said they were hungry. I had more fear than hunger.

So when you were relating to your husband-to-be--

Yes.

--there was a lot of fear, rather than being relaxed and happy. There was not the normal love--

No, there was no relaxation. There was--

Can you tell us more about the emotions between you and your husband-to-be during this period? Because when we in America think of a young couple being together before they get married, it's wonderful. And you didn't have that.

Well, I was in love with my husband because I wouldn't have married him. And I'm sure he was in love with me. But there was just not too many moments that I wasn't afraid. I was always afraid.

What did you used to talk about with him when you had this time together?

If there's going to be a world, if we're going to live. We knew-- my husband used to say, somebody is going to make it. You don't know how or who. He always had hope. But then something happened again, like the day-- I was just-- before I got married, three four weeks, they took my husband's parents away, and they took the children away. See, there are so

many mixed emotions.

Can you tell us a little bit more about the decisions or the thoughts that went through your mind that caused you to get married then?

Well, we figured that if we go in a hiding place, you see, then we go together. And we hoped for life. That was the reason that my sister got married. She thought she's going to take her husband and I'm going to take my husband. My husband-- my daddy was the one that had the money to pay for it, for the hiding places. Because you had to pay for people. And the whole family was ready to go.

In fact, that was a time when we were ready to leave the ghetto. That was just before they liquidated the ghetto. And we were supposed to go out in the middle of the night. And we were staying over homes that were closer to the fence so we could go out when they tell us when to go. And my father had to give them, you know, gold pieces for it.

Well, we were all ready, and the place is set. And all of a sudden we heard tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick tick. The group that went before us, they sold us out. There was a group-- I don't know how many people. They let them go through the fence, and then they were standing on a hill and killing them all.

So the Jewish police came right back and said, lay down. Don't leave the house. Stay there till the morning because they sold us out.

Who sold you out?

Well, that was the Germans that said that they would open the fence and let us go out for so many gold pieces. And the people, they probably had them set up, every half an hour a different group, because they thought this German will let us go through. Well, the group just ahead of us got killed. So they knew that we'd been sold out.

We gave them the gold pieces. But a little bit farther from where the fence was, they were sending, Germans with machine guns, and killing everybody.

Did you see that?

No, but I-- one girl that got killed was a friend of mine. And her mother was with me in the same camp. And she told me. She said you were all lucky.

What happened to your sister who got married on the same day?

She died in a concentration camp. She had typhus.

With you?

That's what they-- that is the one that I dreamed about. She died. Well, she had a different number, that they put her in a different labor camp.

And what happened to her husband?

Her husband was with my papa. But he couldn't take it. He died. He was not strong enough.

Alli, do you still have dreams that bother you, that you wake up upset?

Well, the only thing that bothers me is my sister's little boy. That comes back to me all the time.

Can you tell us about that?

Because you see, they shot him. And he was a four-year-old child. But when I see-- what was he guilty of?

How does it come back to you?

When I see children, it comes back to me. He was a wonderful child. He was the only grandchild my mother had. That bothers me, bothers me a lot.

Do you get numb still?

Sometimes I do. Yes. Sometimes I get emotional. And sometimes I get mad.

Did you know this four-year-old? Did you see him?

Oh, god, yes. He lived with us. He played with us.

Tell us about him. Tell us what kind of kid he was.

Well, my sister lived in the ghetto not far from us. Even before, when we lived in Kovno, we didn't live far. And he was a little boy, just a little boy that used to tell me-- he spoke Russian-- Alli, come hide. The Russians are shooting. That's when the war brought out, the Nemec, the German are shooting.

And that kid was so smart. When he saw Germans, he hid under the pillow.

Did you ever pick him up and hold him?

Oh, god, yes.

Tell us about that.

Well, I saw-- the last I remember, when he was standing there with his coat on, his little hat on, when they left. And he told us all goodbye. And it nearly broke our heart. And that's the last we saw of him-- blue-eyed, blonde hair, beautiful child.

Did you wish that you, yourself, could have done more for him?

Well, no. Because I'll tell you why, because I saw-- he didn't know what was milk in the ghetto. And I tried to get him milk. I tried to get him the eggs. I tried everything in the world that that child wouldn't-- would have all the things. No. No, for this child, anybody. When we were running, and there was a bomb fall, everybody grabbed that child and laid on top of it.

So he was really special.

He was special, yes. He was the only grandson my mother had, only nephew I had. And that child was so quiet, like he knew what was going on. He never cried. He never complained. He never said anything.

He was really precious to you.

Yes. And that, for a long time it didn't bother me, but it started bothering me lots. Well, I feel sorry for my sister too. I don't say I don't because they died young. They both died young. My sister was in Switzerland. She didn't have to come back. But she said she wants to live with the family or die with the family. So she came back on the last train.

She came back from Switzerland?

Yes, Rosa was in Switzerland. No, she came back to the-- to Memel so she can get my mama out of the house. My

mama didn't want to leave the house.

What was she doing in Switzerland?

Well, we sent her on purpose there so she wouldn't have to come back.

With her husband and her child?

No. Then she wasn't married. She was a young girl then. The oldest one was married. Luba was married.

How did she get selected to be sent to Switzerland rather than the others?

Well, the older one was married. You see? And Rosa was the middle one. And she just happened to be-- at that time she liked to go on vacation, and we had connections with Switzerland. So she just happened to be there. So my father wanted her to stay there because we saw what was coming.

When was this?

In 1939, even before we left Memel. But she wouldn't stay. She came back home. See, the people that sent their kids out to make a new life did better than the one that kept them all together. We stayed all together.

You mean the family stayed all together, and that was a mistake.

That was a mistake, yeah. That was a mistake. Well, you didn't know at that time that that is a mistake. So we stayed all together. There's lots of family they send one-- my older sister could have married and gone to Israel. My mother said, no. She lives where we live. She stays where we stay. See, we stayed together.

How do you know? Because my mother believed in the Germans. She thought that could never happen.

So the child was Luba's son?

My older sister, yeah, Luba's son. The child was Luba's son.

And how old was-- what year was Luba born in?

Well, Luba was eight years older than me. So it had to be in 1913.

And then there was Rosa?

Rosa, 1915, two years.

And then you?

And then came Harry.

And then Harry after you.

Yeah.

When you were liberated by the Russians, how did you feel?

Well, that was a joke too. They liberated us, and they they told us where to march to the Ciechocinek, that this is a point where all the displaced persons come together. I asked them for food, they didn't have any food.

He says, well, go into some houses or some warehouses and get you some food. So we had to walk for two, three days, again sick, well, till we came to--