

A Simone Schwartz

Why don't we start again with these questions that I've got in front of me.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Past	4	01:01:00:25	

The first one I've got is I just wanted to talk to you a little bit about your past, where you were born and what you remember about your town and your family life when you were growing up. This is all pertaining to before the Holocaust. Okay - so your earliest memories prior to the Holocaust. Just relax, talk to me, look at me and let's just have a conversation.

I was born in Poland, 80 kilometers from Vilna. It was a beautiful place, 5,000 inhabitants - 1/2 Jews and 1/2 Gentiles. We were five children at home. Mother and father. He had a store - a shoe store, we had a cow. It was very comfortable at home. We were not rich - we had plenty to eat and we were considered rich because we had plenty to eat. And we went to school, my parents worked in the store. We had one maid at home - she lived with us and it was good memories. I had a lot of friends, we played after school. I was going in the morning to public school, this was grade school - I don't know if you call this public or grade school - in the afternoon I went to a Hebrew school and on the weekends, especially Friday, Friday 12:00 was already we preparing - my mother - and help at home was preparing for Shabbos and Saturday we didn't do anything. We went to the synagogue, we played with friends and Sunday the store was open again and we had a good time.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Childhood	4	01:01:02:50	

It sounds like you had a really nice childhood - your early childhood. Give me your age at this point in time - how old were you?

I was born - should I when I come out I didn't start something I should have put my name and how old I was.

We're going to have a professional narrator who will do that for us, but for my own curiosity - the time you just described, a very positive time in your childhood, how old were you?

I was born in 1927, September 8 and I was the youngest from the girls of five children. I had a little brother. My oldest sister was sent away to another city to college. We didn't have a college in our town and my third sister didn't like school, she was going for a trade school, she was learning how to sew and a beautiful city - as a matter of fact people used to come to us for vacation from bigger cities where it was the landscape, the, how do you say it - the forest - was very pretty and I remember

at home we used to have our own milk because we had a cow, we had our own cheese, my mother used to make our own cheese and I have good memories of my childhood.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Anti-Semitism	4	01:01:04:53	

Now I want to ask you a little bit about at what point that started to change and you started to remember feelings of witnessing anti-semitism towards the Jews in your community and when, just in general, things started to change. How old you were and what you remember feeling.

I remember in school that I was different. In Polish, and I will say this in English, we were called the Christ Killer. And I couldn't understand it why, but when I came home, my mother told me that the Gentile people believed that we killed Christ. What else did you ask me?

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Anti-Semitism	4	01:01:05:43	

About how old were you when you remember this starting to surface - these feelings?

Nine, eight - I remember that I was different because I had to go - my other classmates did not go to our Hebrew School. I went with my sister. We went to a Hebrew school. So I knew that I was different and we didn't eat certain things. Like pork, we did not eat and when I used to compare and talk to my classmates what did you eat and they used to have different things than we ate so I felt different.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Child's feelings about being different	4	01:01:06:33	

Did you want to be like everyone else seemed to be or were you proud of the fact you were unique?

At that age I was very proud of my heritage. My mother instilled in us that we should be proud whoever we are.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Anti-Semitism	4	01:01:07:02	

Okay, so you were first recall feelings like this through your school? Do you remember feeling other type of anti-semitic

behavior around you? Do you remember feeling other ...?

I remember that at the corner they used stay - young boys - polish boys and used to say this is a Jewish store - don't go there shopping - my mother used to say that look that they are standing at the corner and telling customers not to come into us. I don't remember in what year it was, but I remember that.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Hitler/Nazis	4	01:01:07:51	

Can you tell me a little about where you were living and when you remember first hearing about Hitler and the Nazis?

I was Krevow and my father was very concerned what is happening in Germany. It was in the papers that they are killing some Jews and they were expelled from some Institutions I understand. They were not allowed to practice their profession. Like professors or doctors or they lost their jobs and this was in the paper. Then families came to us - it was in '39 - German families came to us and we had to take them in. And natural they had a different culture than we did. In '39, maybe I should not get ahead of myself. The Russians came to us and invaded Poland. The Germans didn't have time to come to us. The Russians came in 1939. And we were very worried. But we didn't expect them to come to us til much later, like in 1941 they came to us.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Beginning Invasion	4	01:01:10:00	

We were talking about - it sounds like the majority of information you were getting them might have been through newspapers and you heard it through your father.

My father, neighbors that the situation in Germany is very bad, but we didn't think they are coming to us because we knew that the Russians came to us.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
Beginning Invasion	4	01:01:10:42	

So, it's interesting at that point you still felt like somehow you would be immune to what was happening all around you.

That's what we thought. Immune is that they'll will spare us - yes? It will not affect us. Very worried because we knew the German Jews came to us. They lived with us. As a matter of fact, one family stayed in our house and they were telling us what was going on in Germany, but they thought they found a safe haven and we thought that it's not going to be that bad like in Germany, we are going to be immune to that, that's what we thought.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:11:28	

When did you first realize _____ and how did you realize it?

How did we really realize that is when they invaded in '41 - in 1941 when the Nazis came to us.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:11:43	

So this was when they occupied your town?

Yes.

Can you describe and tell me the experiences from that?

It was devastating. They right away it was a lot of noise, they came to the house and with the worst kind of language fafluckta yuda - that means you are a damn Jews, we are going to kill you all and there was a lot of beating going on and the first day they took out six young men and the shot them at random. I saw it. With my own eyes I saw that - they were even not buried - they were left lying in a ditch and I think they were 16 because - the reason I know who it was - it was friends of my oldest sister. And they were shot. So then we really found out what the Germans are capable of doing. We were putting on yellow arm bands that we should be identified as Jews, we stopped school right away - there was no school. We couldn't walk on the sidewalk, we couldn't play outside, we were ordered to stay at home and be quiet. The windows was never opened, we never went near the window, you were warned not to do that, so that's when we find out what the Germans are capable of doing. Now a lot of people ran for the partisan - you know what the partisans are in the woods. My middle sister who was at that time I was 11, 13, 15, she was 15, she ran to the partisan and she was killed right away. All the young people who went in the woods - there's another name for the woods - in the forest - a big forest, we had beautiful forests, they were all killed right away.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:15:00	

Why did you decide not to run?

I was very young and I was very attached to my parents. It came to us a young couple, a polish couple and asked us that they are going to take us - just two sisters, me and my other sister who lives now in Israel and she will take care of us and she will hide us in the attic. I started crying and my mother started crying and my sister and mother said forget it. We all going to stay together. And that's why I didn't run anywhere. But very shortly, we didn't stay too long in our house, a ghetto was

formed and we were forced to go to a ghetto. But I think I am going to fast I remember I stayed a couple of weeks in my own home and the Nazis used to come every night, knocking with sticks and with guns and ask us young, two young sisters, me and my other sister, two young children, to undress everything and should stay in front of them and they beat us, they pulled out hair and then they left and come again and again.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:17:05	

Were your parents in the house?

My father, we had a back door and he saw this for the first time he ran away and he spent in the street the whole night and he came back - they were looking for him and when he came the second the night and they did the same thing, they told us to undress, they didn't tell my mother to undress, just me and my sister to undress naked in front of them - they stayed for hours. I didn't know why what did they want - for hours and they say to my father if you will ever run away again, they pointed the gun at his face and he has never done this again.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:18:18	

Were you raped by these men?

No. They how you say it - pulled on me and my sister. At my age, in '41 I was 11 - I was developed very well - I think stopped growing after everything. They just pulled me - you know - at my breast and so was my sister, she was two years older than I was. And first one Nazi and then the other one.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:19:11	

Now this happened?

Before left for ghetto. Before I left

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:19:20	

Was there anything else you remember that happened before you left the ghetto that you want to share with us?

They came and they asked for whatever we have. Gold, diamonds - we didn't have any diamonds, but we had gold pieces, I don't what you call this in English, but my mother sewed it in everything in the clothes and they didn't find anything, but they beat my mother and father because they say we don't have nothing. We are poor Jews, but they say you have a store, you bound to have money. My mother and father was beaten until they were bleeding. On their faces, on their head. There was a lot of looting going on from the we had on the right side some polish people and I

thought they were really good friends, but there was a lot looting - they walk into the store and took away everything from us.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:20:56	

Being a little girl, seeing all this happen around you, what was the ____?

Devastating. I couldn't believe - you read about it, you hear about it, but you don't think that one human being to another one can do this to you. And I don't think - it's already 45 years - I don't think I overcame the trauma, but I lived through the war.

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:01:21:44	

I wonder if anyone does. That type of trauma. What you experienced. Okay, so you were getting ready to be taken to the ghetto - can you tell me about when you were being taken to the ghetto and what happened?

I think it was a few weeks that the Germans had loud speakers outside and we were told to take our few belongings and we are going to go to a ghetto - nothing will happen to us if we obey their orders to do what they tell us to do. To march out from the house and you marched and you stayed for quite a few hours counting us - how many people. Because we lived in the mainstream in this little city. And we stayed for hours and they called us we should go to the ghetto. We went to the ghetto, we had to rooms I think. At that time it was just my mother and I, my little brother, my youngest - he was younger I think 5 years than I was and my sister and it was another family with us. My father became very sick and when we asked for medicine we did not get any and he died in ghetto. He died in ghetto it was no funeral. They told us go on - we didn't have any car, we had buggy and horse. I don't know how my mother obtained this buggy and horse from, I don't remember that. But we had to do it ourselves and he was thrown in a hole with no rituals - nothing and we came home and ...

Topic	Tape	Location	Length
	4	01:00:24:40	

What about life in the ghetto - you hear about the starvation, the treatment. Can you tell me about your experiences and what you saw in the way that people were treated?

Worse than dogs. Worse than dogs. We didn't have any food - there was every day going on shooting - everyday. And we were frustrated, we sat at home and we how do you say it - our fate - we talk about fate - what will happen now next - it comes to me now something. We were asked to walk for hours, we walked with little suitcases, we walked our little town, the town was from where my grandparents were.

We had to walk for hours. We walked with little suitcases. We walked a little town. The town was where my grandparents were. We didn't go to the house, we weren't allowed to go anywhere. But we walked over there. And a lot of shouting was going on and whoever couldn't walk - I think we walked for maybe a whole day - I don't remember how many kilometers it was, but some people didn't survive and when they fell down they were shot instantly. They were not buried, there were ditches and they were, with the Nazi's boots - you know they had such high boots, they were pushed into the ditch and we marched on and then we came back - we came back and when we came back we walked at night. And a short while, I don't know how many months we were, not much, not too many months we were taken to a concentration camp.

LOCATION 00:27:15

Question: For about how long a period of time were you in the ghetto?

Answer: In the ghetto - I would say 4 months - maybe not that but I think 4 months we stayed over there. But everyday was counting in the morning, at night?

LOCATION: 00:27:39

Question: Did you understand what was happening to people?

Answer: Well there was always a radio going on and it was that we believed that the Russians are not far and the Americans are not far and they will, we hope, we hope that we are going to be liberated. We lived in hope. For a while, I don't know how many months

LOCATION: 00:28:05

Question: And at this point, your entire family stayed together except for your father, who passed away?

Answer: My father passed away, my oldest sister was not with us - should I go on what happened with my oldest sister?

Question: Is that the sister that went into the woods?

Answer: Partisan?

Question: Yes.

Question: No that is another sister. You heard about her. But the oldest sister was not at home, she was going to school in another city, but when the Germans neared to this

place that she was the Russians took all the young people deep in Russia. So she was not in a concentration camp. She was in Russia all the four years while I was in a concentration camp, she was in Russia. So it was just my mother, my other sister and my little brother.

LOCATION: 00:29:14

QUESTION: Can you describe how you were taken from the ghetto to the concentration camp?

Answer: They told us we were going to be alright and we were walking to the nearest train and we walked for days because where we lived it was not close a train station and we walked I don't remember how many days we walked, but we walked with the Nazis, they mostly were having the little jeeps you know what I am talking about, a jeep like the soliders are having, the commandant and the big shots - they had cars to drive in - that's what I am talking about. But the plain solider was walking with us until we came to a train. The train was cars - what do you call this - for cattle and you were pushed in there, we had to make everything fast, if you were able to walk, whatever they told us was okay. They were beating you here, they were beating you there, but if you were able to go and march, keep up with everybody, you were okay. And those by walking couldn't walk, they fell down and they were shot. So I came to the train with my sister and with my mother and with my little brother. My mother, I don't remember how old she was, when you are young you think your parents are old, but I think my mother was 40 maybe younger than that, but she was keeping up, I remember we were walking, you didn't stay together in one line, in one row, r-o-w, we tried to separate because they didn't want to have a whole family - they knew people, but they didn't really know who is who - you know what I am trying to say - who belongs to whom. So I was with my sister and my mother was with the little brother. So when we get to the train we were all together in cattle cars made for cattle - you know what I am talking about - c-a-t-t-l-e. We were pressed like sardines - hot - I remember it was so hot. I don't know how we survived. There was no water, there was no food for days. We did pack I think, we took some belongings, very little, little suitcases and bags and we had some whatever we had at that time to eat, I don't remember. So but on the train, there were a lot of people who did not survive and the train didn't stop, they were throwing out by the Nazis as the train was moving. Some of them went by themselves, who didn't want to live, they had a notion and they were afraid that they are going to the gas chamber. So some of them jumped on their own, but some of them were dead and they were thrown out of the train.

LOCATION: 00:34:22

Question: Were you told about what to expect when you got to the camp, before you got there, in other words

Answer: We knew what to expect?

Question: Yes, somewhat?

Answer: Maybe because I was very - they told us that you were going to work and if we were going to obey their orders - they didn't speak in a voice that you could understand them, but they were screaming at you and how they say it - you be okay, you are going to work you are going to be okay.

LOCATION: 00:35:07

Question: Did you believe them at the time?

Answer: Not really. But life was so precious that sometimes your mind works that you want to believe what they tell you. But deep down you knew something - you saw so many deaths in front of your eyes at such a tender age.

LOCATION: 00:35:33

Question: Were traveling on the train for days with no food and no water - what happened next?

Answer: We came to Estonia - you know where is Estonia - Latvia. The city was I think Riga - R-i-g-a and first of all they take us and that was heaven - we didn't understand - they told us they would give us a shower because we were so dirty and so they did shower us - that's true, but they always asked where is your money, gold, silver - not silver, diamonds. They had a feeling it is sewn in the clothes, so they took all our clothes away. They shaved our head - everyone of them were shaved and they gave us a two piece suit - like for a man. White and blue stripes. I had pants and I had a shirt and this I believe I wore - I don't know how it didn't fall apart - I wore this for the four years that I was in that concentration camp. The stripes, this blue and white and I wore this all through the years, filthy, lice. That's what I had and after we showered, I am running away from so many things.

LOCATION: 00:37:53

Question: What are you running away from?

Answer: Not to remember. But after I had my suit on, my outfit, and they took us to barracks made specially for us. We had bunks. I think it was two story and I was holding on to my sister and my mother was holding on to the little brother, but she couldn't because the men were separated

from the women, so my mother came later on - I saw her that she is coming and we were close by. I slept upstairs, my sister was downstairs in the bunk and next was my mother. And I remember they did give us pieces of bread and to this bread you had to hold on because it was stole from you. The inmates were so hungry, that when they ate up they wanted another piece, so if they saw you left it not hidden under your pillow, you didn't have a pillow, you had straw, you had straw under your head, so the first piece of bread was stolen from me, but then I got smart and I never kept my piece of bread that people could see it. I ate right away and if I was not hungry, when you are in so much problems and so much when you are scared, you really cannot eat, you are so dry you needed water and we didn't have water. But at night we had soup, the soup was water and sometimes you found a potato or a beet or something was in it, but it was mostly water, so this was heaven.

LOCATION: 00:40:26

Question: Did you have people dying of starvation?

Answer: Dying is not the word. Every day dying of natural causes, dying by being killed just for sake of killing, did I say it right. It was everyday they rounded up some people or somebody tried to escape. For one person, it was taken 10 people and killed in front. They always wanted us to see what was going on. We were witnessing the killing. Do you know what I am talking about?

LOCATION: 00:41:14

Question: What was going through your mind when this was happening? How did you rationalize this?

Answer: How did I? They didn't like us - they didn't like any Jews. And they wanted to eliminate us. They have succeeded. Six million Jews and I believe wholeheartedly it was more than six million Jews killed. More in Russia than people don't have an account than they came into Plescow, what else do you call this - they went in - Minsk, Pinsk, they killed a lot of Jews off. So they wanted to eliminate us and I through my mind was - I wish I would not be a Jew and I know it's terrible to say that, but I envied - if I saw a light in a window and I saw people walking and going about their business, I would and I would say why was I born a Jew. And I didn't believe in G-d. And I still question - I shouldn't say that. I did not believe in G-d.

LOCATION: 00:42:58

Question: Can you, keeping in mind that the people that will see this tape, sometimes don't believe the things that

happened in the camp really happened, can you share some of your other experiences while you were in the camp?

Answer: You mean what did you learn from that?

Question: No - what you witnessed, what you saw? What types of execution went on - were you exposed - did you see any experiments with human lives going on? I think, and as you go through these descriptions remember, we are addressing some people who question whether this really happened - so that it's the point for bringing back these memories.

Answer: I did not witness any experimentation. I did witness piles of bodies in Bergen-Belson. Corpses, dead corpses, that they were as high as at least three stories and this was not one pile, it was Bergen-Belson was a very big concentration camp. And it was many and I saw this every day. I was lucky that I was working. I looked healthy and maybe I don't know I was fighting that if they asked who wants to go to work I was to work and I worked on a farm in Bergen-Belson. Bergen-Belson, Germany. And I always found something to eat. Always was a potato, always a beet, whatever it was I picked up and I ate that. So if anybody questioned that if a Holocaust happened, it happened. I was there.

LOCATION: 00:45:22

Question: Were you in more than one concentration camp?

Answer: I was in a lot. I was in Riga, Estonia, I was in Plescow, that's Russia, I was in Shtuthoff, I was in Shtouardt, Calfering - by Dauchau and I was in Bergen-Belson. My last one, I was liberated from Bergen-Belson. What I have witnessed if I wouldn't see this with my own eyes, I could not believe that. That one people could do to another one, the tortuing, the beating, the humiliation, what I went through. Seeing in front of my eyes. Shooting people, going without food and being screamed at, being beaten every day, everyday, there was German ladies that used to take us to work. They used to get a kick out of it to slap us to pull us, slap me on one face and the other face, one cheek to the other cheek. At that time already I didn't have any hair - it was shaved off - everything, but beating on my head, kicking me. It's unbelievable what the human race can do to other people.

LOCATION: 00:47:47

Question: Were you with your family the entire family - the first camp you were in? Were you still in contact with your mother?

Answer: No. In Shtutgardt, as I said, the men were always separated. They were counting to take us to another camp, from Shtutgardt we went to Calfering in Germany, that's by Dauchau. My mother said to us, you go on and maybe over there is a different, maybe I could still through a little hole, my little son. That's my brother. But, as we were standing, of course, they didn't make it quick, they made everything long, maybe I thought it was long. You are standing for hours in the streets, in the ghetto. I wasn't a ghetto, it was a concentration camp. They were took away, I saw another transport and they took away my mother and in another was my little brother. How did I found out? Some people told us. And they were pushed in the sea. Thrown in the sea. My little brother and my mother. And then they took us and we always - I was talking to my sister, maybe we will survive, but this is the end now. I thought so long I cursed my day I was born. It's unbelievable. And at night, night fell and you were packed again in a train, you were always going by train, by train, in pushcart, a ride to work pushcard for cattles again, the same thing, beating, screaming. Now when we came to Calferring, it was a small , just girls, young girls. We always with Hungary, from Germany, everyone had a different culture. We were conversing. I would sit close with my sister and they didn't believe that we had survived. We were very weak, weak. Dirty, filthy. But then when we came to Calferring, I will never forget it - we had a better suit. Food was if you had something to eat, that's all we were thinking about was something to eat, most of the time, all of the time. Whatever happens shall happen, but if we would have something to eat, we would okay. The stomach was so weak. I don't know how I went to work. I really don't. I was working on a highway for many years - many years, at least two years two and one half years on a highway unloading sand and under the rails when a train goes is wood, what do you call this and under the wood, you had to shovel gravel or sand, what is that, but you had to make it very fast.

LOCATION: 00:52:14

Question: Is this why your life was spared - because you were a hard worker?

Answer: Yes.

Question: And the same holds true for your sister?

Answer: My sister.

Question: The two of you stayed together the entire time?

Answer: The entire time - that will come later.

Question: Okay, so it is you and your sister and you have been moved to the camp that was primarily for the young women?

Answer: My first camp was Riga. Then was Plescow, _____, then was Shtutgardt, then was Calferring and from Calferring I was in Bergen Belson. Bergen Belson was my last one and I was liberated from there in '45.

LOCATION: 00:54:22

Question: We are going to talk about your liberation and ask you some questions about that as well. But I wanted to know if there was anything else you wanted to share about your experiences in the camp - you said you were finding food on your own ...

Answer: My saving myself, or what is a better word, my salvation and my sister's is because we worked. And by working we always found something. A potato, or we saw a trashcan, by going through the trashcan I got a lot of beaten up - I was beaten up - how do you say it - I was beaten up terrible that I was bleeding and so was my sister. We were going through the trashcan to get what it was in there I don't remember. We got a lot of beaten for that. But beaten was a way of life for us. We were beaten whatever we did. We were on a roll call twice a day - did I say it right - roll call - you were lined up in wooden shoes and we stayed up for hours, so we were beaten up whatever we did. So maybe we were not afraid. As long as they didn't shoot us, but everyday was shooting going on and that's what they showed us. But I think I won a couple of SS - I don't remember their names, I remember the way they looked - they say to me you are not Jewish - you don't look Jewish. You have red cheeks, you have blonde hair - you are a poopyen, poopyen means you are a beauty and G-d knows I did not, and that I think - whenever he was on he didn't beat me. He didn't, as a matter of fact he gave me a piece of bread - he was throwing, nobody was watching, he had a little cannister they were cannisters what it is - for water, and some food, a canteen. And he threw me a piece of bread - I remember that.

LOCATION: 00:54:30

Question: Were there any other things you did that spared your life? Did you make contacts with some people who helped you at all?

Answer: The outside world? In the camp there were who was cooking there was a German Jew - an older man and he was telling me - he was old - maybe to me to a young child, to a young person and you see an older man, but I thought he was old, old, old - and he gave me a better portion of food and

he told me, if we are liberated, we will get married. And as a matter of fact, he wanted to marry me. He gave me a better portion - it was not as watery - he gave more potato inside whatever it was - bread - he gave me a piece of more bread in the soup and I think that helped me. I remember him.

TAPE 2

LOCATION: 00:54:56

Question: I want to ask you another question about the concentration camps before we move on. In my research I heard a lot about different methods of annihilation and I was wondering if you could tell me, in the camps you were in, was it primarily that people were shot, were there other methods and how were the bodies disposed of and so forth, can you talk about this?

Answer: Yeah. There was a lot of ditches and we were asked to dig ditches very deep. As a matter of fact it was some man's function. Their work was to dig ditches for those people who were always killed. There was no crematorium where I was except I really don't know if it was in Bergen Belson, because in Bergen Belson, they were not buried, they were in front of everybody to see. They were piled up the corpses was piled up, but like in Plescow, in Riga, they were digging the holes to throw them in. And what else did you ask me - you asked me something else.

LOCATION: 00:02:43

Question: So, the method of annihilation, how people were killed ...

Answer: Is the shooting them - I saw that with my own eyes. They were shooting blank ...

LOCATION: 00:02:55

Question: So that the bodies were never burned?

Answer: Never burned, they were never burned. They were just thrown in - the Nazis ordered the men to throw them in because it was no - they killed them so many that it was not enough holes so they were doing again and again and again digging holes to throw them. And a lot of them were just lying just like that.

LOCATION: 00:03:44

Question: Do you remember some of your feelings before each time a selection took place? What you were feeling?

Answer: I was really numb. That's why maybe now I cannot go to a funeral. My feelings was that we will never survive, we are going to be next and seeing that I am still today scared of everybody. Very mistrustful of people.

LOCATION: 00:04:34

Question: Did you every make any attempts to escape?

Answer: No.

Question: Why?

Answer: I didn't know where to escape because we were in barbed wire - did I say it right? We had electric fences. Especially Bergen-Belson was an electric fence and Shtutgardt and the rest of them was high fences - what do you call them that they stick out the fences - when you put your hands you got electrical shock.

Question: You weren't aware of any people trying to escape?

Answer: Yes, Yes a lot of people - some people, now if one or two escaped, 20 were killed for that. I knew that people were planning, were talking, they did it, they were caught. Most of them were caught. You know when some of them went to work and I am trying to think now how did they run away we had so many dogs. There were so many SS, but they did run away and most of them were caught and killed. And instead of just one or two escaped 20 were killed. For one person, as far as I knew it, 10 were killed.

LOCATION: 00:06:19

Question: Can you tell me about a typical day in camps for you? First of all, when you woke up in the morning, what you were sleeping on, where you sleeping, what you would do for most of the day and kind of describe if you can?

Answer: We were awakened very early - 6:00 a.m., I think, every bit of it. We slept on straw and we were washed right away - nobody came in to tell us, but it was loud speakers outside that you should come outside and form a row. A role call - you know I am talking about - and we stayed for hours over there. And there was couples - couples is from Jewish people they took people who was in charge of giving us the bread and they were, they told us to come for the piece of bread. So we came and we ate the piece of bread and we had to line up again. You had to look straight, you couldn't turn your head, if you turned your head some whatever you got a lot of beaten. And if we didn't go to work, there was

nothing to eat and nothing to see, you had to stay in the barracks. There was fighting going on amongst the inmates and some of them you made friends, were close with you were this one say and this one says the English are here and this one says - it was a hearsay that we are going to be liberated. We really didn't believe that. If you were sick, don't ever say that you are sick. If you are sick you are pulled out in a ditch. That's why you are not sick. And if a _____ looks you in your eyes you better, you were afraid to smile, but at least make like that. No laughing, no saying nothing. And don't look them straight in the eyes. What else did you ask.

LOCATION: 00:09:15

Question: That covered it. I was asking just about more of the experiences in a typical day while you were in the camps.

Answer: You were mostly waiting and lying down, mostly you were lying down if you didn't work, waiting when the loudspeaker come you flauflucta you damn Jews come and get your food. And you were running, you were lined at the kitchen. We had little cups and they gave us and you have to make very fast. And that's how we finished eating. We stayed again - we were called to be counted - I think at least 2 hours we stayed, after we finished the soup, we had to stay again lined up and it was cold, you were freezing, shivering, but you had to stay til you were told to go in back and lay down. Nothing else to do, but lay down on your cot. On the straw. That's all. In the middle of the night some times they came in if they were mad at somebody or themselves, as I look back now I think they were mad maybe with themselves. They were hitting us. Hitting with big sticks, going through counting, again counting and a lot of beating.

LOCATION: 00:10:52

Questions: Do you have nightmares about the camp?

Answer: Nightmares? There is not a night - I have a _____ that I got a hold of it and this and you know you are seeking for words that you want to say and it doesn't come to you. And I got a hold of a poem that do you know something when I wake up from a nightmare, I don't know why I have to tortue myself, that I go through this poem. Do you want me to read this to you? Do you mind?

Question: Please do.

Answer: And it helps me. And this describes it in short everything what I have seen and I wake up in the morning screaming and as I open my eyes it's only a nightmare. So

this I have to say and this will sum up what I feel in my heart, because you asked me if I have - what did you ask me - if I have nightmares.

By day I can escape, but often at night when I sleep I return to where the shadows are long and the darkness is ____; you know what that means - do you understand me. I return to where the earth is mingled with ashes, with innocent souls. I lie still amongst the corpses, eerie silent and cold. I feel boots marching, I hear rifles shooting. I wake in terror and shake. I return to where electric fences keep the walls away. I lie silently on my bunk, hungry all day, shrill screams ____ the air. Doesn't anyone care. I wake in terror and shake. I wake to where the room smells acrid and it smells, it smells. The doctor is in white, strapped to the icy table. I shiver with fright, a 1,000 eyes are watching. I wake in terror and shake. I return to where flames leap to heaven and smoke covers the sky. (I saw this in Bergen-Belson - I don't where the smoke came from - they had so many corpses, that they did burn - I didn't see that.) I sit quietly on the ground and watch so many die. The stench of death in every breath. I wake in terror and shake.

I saw this poem. Some people are so good with words. This when you ask me do I dream about it - every night I dream about it. Why - it's 45 years that I have tried to block out my experiences and I can't for the life of me, I can't block out my experiences, what I went through.

Question: That poem was beautiful - it really was. So you use that to help you through the memories you had to face yourself.

LOCATION: 00:15:37

Question: Let's talk about how you have held all this in for so long and why. Why did you choose to keep it inside?

Answer: I wanted to go on with my life. I wanted to rebuild a life for myself, for my husband and for my children and not to talk about it. And that's the way I thought that I will survive, because after liberation I felt just as bad. I was liberated and I felt I don't have nobody. I didn't have a place to go I didn't know what to do with my life til I meet my husband.

Question: _____ how you felt about and you did?'

Answer: Until I find my husband. The Germans were always telling us, if we should lose the war - you will be killed and hope and pray for us that we are not going to lose the war. That's what we were told always by the Germans, if we lose war. One morning we wake up and it's very quiet. At

6:00 nobody came shouting at us. And we waited, I think, 2 or 3:00 and we were afraid in a way we thought nobody's screaming, nobody's yelling. And at that time, maybe they didn't know we were so weak already that we didn't know what to think. We didn't come out from the barracks. But on the loudspeaker, came out a voice - You are Free - come on out. We didn't believe it. We thought that somebody, the Germans put up a Jew. But we didn't come. But there was a lot of knocking on the door. Most of these people couldn't walk already - it was so bad. Couldn't walk - so the English people, we were liberated by the English soldiers. The first thing came on - you are free you can go wherever you want to go. We didn't move. So they came into the barracks and they disinfected us with some kind of powder they were spraying in us. That would get rid of lice. I don't know if it went away, but maybe for themselves they did it. That's what they did. And they gave us food. They brought us food - a lot of food I remember. It was a big truck. As weak as we were, we were running - I don't know how we did it to the truck and we were fighting amongst one another. And they assured us there is plenty of food for everybody, but we didn't know. They took us away in trucks to a cleaner camp. I think it was a few hours - they didn't let us stay in those barracks where it was so much filth and so much urine and so much I don't want to say it - in the barracks. They sprayed us, they gave us to eat and they took us away to a cleaner place in barracks. We were still in barracks and they told us you can do now whatever you want to do. We didn't know what to do. But we were free - we were free by the English troops. We were liberated by the English, but the Russians were there too.

Question: And that was in Bergen Belson?

Answer: That was in Bergen Belson.

LOCATION: 00:21:11

Question: And the name of the camp you were taken to? The barracks you said.

Answer: It was the city of Bergen Belson.

Question: Do you think that they did that and cleaned everyone up and got _____ so it would look like the Germans hadn't done the damage they'd done to everyone?

Answer: That I don't know. I didn't think that way. I was thankful that they wanted to do something for us and to give us food. They cleaned us right away.

LOCATION: 00:21:44

Question: Were you angry at the Americans and Russians and all the other countries that took so long, seemed to have sit passively by when all this was happening? How did you feel about it taking so long to get help?

Answer: Anger is not a right word. I wanted to talk about Russian a little bit, but think I am going to talk a little bit too much. Let it go like that. I want to tell you something here. You asked me if I was angry. One thing I put it down someting I have to tell you. As I am starting to talk about my experience in the camps, I realized that the flame of remembrance must be perpetuated to education of future generations. For history must never repeat itself.

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LOCATION: 00:23:04

Question: Okay. Tell me that now by keeping that down and keeping your eye contact with me. This is obviously why you are sharing this with us, because you don't want to see it happen again. Tell me, in your own words now, without looking at those notes, how you feel about this. It has a lot more impact when ...

Answer: Why people didn't come to our rescue?

Question: Well and what you just said about we can't forget.

Answer: I think people knew about it. Especially President Roosevelt you knew about it and maybe it was a bad war going on and we didn't have a state and nobody cared about us. We were the forgotten people. And that's why it happened. But I feel, ___ as I look back now - I am 62 years old. Deep down I cannot say people are not good, people are good. The ignorant people are not good. People who are uneducated. If somebody will tell them that somebody is not good - find out why he is not good. Make a point to learn about their heritage, about their religion and then decide if a certain people are good ornot good. And the only thing what I want to say another thing is Jews were really not united. We shouldn't have never, at that time, I don't know, waited until somebody will help us. The American Jews should have helped us. Or they didn't know it - I don't know about it. Or they didn't want to be involved, but they must. Wherever there is a Jew in this world, he must never forget to help him and not just Jews, Jew and Gentile. We cannot live in this world for ourselves. We must be concerned with other human beings.

LOCATION: 00:25:53

Question: That's incredible after all you have been through to find that kind of strength and courage and caring of other people - it really is. I didn't ask you something and

I hope this isn't too upsetting - I don't know how the story ended with your sister. The sister you were together with and worked with - is she ___?

Answer: When we were liberated, she felt as bad as I was. We didn't have nowhere to go and we felt all along. She was two years older than I was. She begged me, we should go back home to find out if there is somebody left. There must be somebody left. I begged her and I have never talked about it, if somebody is alive we'll find them through newspapers or somehow I don't want to go back to the same place that I have such bad memories. Let's stay here and go on with our lives. She didn't want it. She said, I have to go.



SIMONE SCHWARTZ

Answer:

I don't want to go back to the same place that I have such bad memories. Let's stay here and go on with our lives. She didn't want it. She said I have to go. I will have to leave you. And after I found out then I will come for you. We will go to Israel or we will come back. She came home and she met a man, she was very sorry that she in her letters that she went back because live over there was very terrible, but she married and she had two children and after I think 5 or 6 years, she moved to Israel and she lives in Israel and I live here.

LOCATION: 00:28:25

Question: I want to ask you to take an opportunity - you mentioned to me before that it was really important to you to say something creative and insightful when you children take the opportunity to watch this. Can you talk to me for a minute as if I'm going to be them watching you when they see this tape and tell me what you want to tell them about your experiences. If there is one message that you really want to get across from what you went through to tell your children and their children? Did that question make sense?

Answer: It makes a lot of sense. A lot of sense. I have to read a few words that I just - I don't know if it will apply to that, but I have to say it because there are some things I have to / We survivors are aging and before we entrust the legacy of remembrance to the next generation, we must tell our story. / I was among the fortunate who came to the U.S. to rebuild our lives, create new families, through our children. / We tried to be emotionally strong but as we age the memories have become more vivid and haunt us in our dreams. I have an urgent need to teach my grandchildren, to keep our going, to never let such a tragedy happen again. There is something else I have written down that - it is hard sometimes for me and I don't have it. Did you ask me if people would see this program - did you ask me that? And did I answer or I didn't. I survived four years in a concentration camp. It was worse than hell.

29:20
29:40
31:15
29:54
30:15
31:15

LOCATION: 00:31:19

Question: Can you tell me this without using the paper. It just has so much more _____. I know it's hard for you and I know you spent time on that, but just tell me how you feel.

Answer: I still remember the killings. I remember 6 million martyrs. Did I say it right. Do you know what I am talking about? But the annihilation of European Jewry must never be forgotten. Never be forgiven. But I have forgiven. It's a strong word.

LOCATION: 00:32:07

Question: Forgiveness - and how you have managed to cope and how you look at ___ today - _____ can you share some of that with me?

Answer: You have to forgive because if you don't forgive people you are really hurting yourself very much. Hitler came to power, he was a sick man. And there were weak people who followed him. They were ignorant, most of them uneducated and they did what Hitler told them. But there must be a lesson to that. Not to listen what somebody tells you to do. People are people. If you don't like him, don't associate with him, but don't kill him brutally, don't gas him, don't torture him.

LOCATION: 00:33:34

Question: Tell me know, I am one of your grandchildren or one of your children, tell me the one thing, if I am only going to remember one thing, about what you experienced, what do you want me to remember? If I am only going to remember one thing or a lesson about your experience?

Answer: Yes, there was a Hitler. And your grandmother was in a concentration camp and I survived, I was the lucky one, but you must go on with your life and be involved in whatever capacity you can and to see who our leaders are, who our governors are and to speak up for your rights. It is everybody's duty to be involved and help other human beings. Very important. And take an active role in your government. Directly or indirectly.

LOCATION: 00:35:36

Question: At what point, you said that today you still have a problem trusting people with the horrors and nightmares you experienced. Can you tell me about what its taken in you to still go on and enjoy your life and live a full life and so on? What its taken, how difficult its been at times and where you searched within yourself to do it?

Answer: I worked in a place that I work now for 19 years and I have tried always to work harder than anybody else. I don' know why. I wanted to be loved. I felt whatever I did I didn't do right. In my head was put in at such an early age that I am unworthy, I am dirty, my religion is not good, that what I was led to believe - that I am no good. And even now in my married life I tried always to better myself and yet and don't get me wrong, I love Gentile people, I lived with them for so many years now as neighbors, I always felt that they are better than I am. I envied them. I envied them because I felt that they never went through and they should never go through the atrocities what I went through and they had normal childhoods, maybe it was envious, a normal childhood - do you know what it means to take a trip to school, to see the Washington Monument or go to the Whitehouse when a teacher takes you. That's why when I see an uneducated person and they always blame somebody else the establishment. I say don't blame nobody, just go to school and better yourself and you will be just as good as anybody else. But you see, I say this for somebody else, but with me I couldn't shake it. I could not shake it all through my life til now. Sure I go on and I try to be busy, but something is missing - the four years that I have spent in the concentration camp. I am not

the same. Don't ask me why. 23

LOCATION:

Question: Is there one memory from the time in the camps that haunts you more frequently than anything else?

Answer: It haunts me the killings, the shooting, the beating, the starvation. Not to throw away so much food - cannot be thrown away from my house. I appreciate it if I have hot water, still today, if I have hot water and I can shower and I think I am in seventh heaven. Some people are better than others dealing with problems. It was in me I don't know what is it. And yet people think wherever I go, whatever I do I put on a smiling face and very seldom I think when was it I was with a neighbor of mine she said I don't know you were in a concentration camp. You are such a marvelous person. Yet, I try not to think about it in the daytime and at night I cry and I cry alone. Is there an answer to that.

LOCATION: 00:40:65

Question: They want to know what you were called as a child in the camps? Were you a number?

Answer: A number.

LOCATION: 00:41:07

Question: Using that can you share some of the thoughts in your mind, your self-taught, that you used to get from one day to the next?

Answer: You mean now in my everyday life or in concentration camp?

LOCATION: 00:41:28

Question: Then. What did you say to yourself to get to move from one day to the next and to look at the things you saw and then still turn away and be able to go on?

Answer: Well I dreamed a lot. I dreamed a lot ___ what are other people doing. Under the rainbow - what is going on over there? Will I ever see a normal world, will I ever be free? Will I ever be like people are walking through the streets and I am peeping through the, we didn't have windows, we had little, I don't what you call it, but you can see the ___ that people sometimes. Will I ever be able to see a world other than just the barracks? I did not believe that.

LOCATION: 00:42:27

Question: Now I am just going to ask, let me take a quick look at my questions to make sure that - do we want to find out about her decision to come to America and - Are there any other ways today that your life has been affected by your experiences during the Holocaust?

34
Answer: My life, I try not to dwell on it. I try to block out everything. I have lost my husband a year and a half and I live alone, I have a lot of time on my hands now to think about it and I try really not to think about it, I try to be busy. I work, I go to lectures, I walk a lot. Stay in the library a lot. They know me by my first name and I try to be busy.

LOCATION: 00:44:12

Question: Do you think you ever try to escape, run from the memories, and now it's almost as though you are facing them?

Answer: My whole life I have run from my memories, I always run from my memories. And I think that's why I survived, maybe I came out a stronger person. I run away always from my memories and I worked all my life - I had to work, raise a family, help out my husband and I tried not to dwell on that. But the memories at night was terrible. My husband used to wake me up in the morning, sometimes he was screaming, sometimes I was screaming. Sometimes I was just wet, the whole time different.

LOCATION: 00:45:08

Question: Was your husband in a camp also, how did you meet your husband?

Answer: I met him in Bergen Belson. He comes to look for his sister and I was close by his sister. I knew his sister and he met me and the minute he ... he was living in Biawite, Bavaria, in Germany and he asked me, believe it or not, after a few days he asks me to come with him and I went. I was all alone. I had a low esteem of myself that if somebody showed me kindness and he was like a father figure to me, he was eleven years older than I was. I went with him and after I think a year, we married in '46. And I that's the way I met my husband and we lived for 42 years - he had memories. He ran away from concentration camp. And he lived as a Polack, as a Gentile man - you know what I am talking about. The only thing he had privileges, they showered - he was not filthy as I was. And whenever he had to go to the shower - you know Jews are circumcised, and he ran very quick and he had towels and he covered himself up with the towel and he was not caught. And he was liberated as a _____ and he worked - Polish people had better treatment than we had. Gentile people had better treatment than we had. They had - their clothes was changed once a month they changed and he worked in this place where the clothes was changing.

LOCATION: 00:47:51

Question: I read in a lot of the research I did, that often when you are taken into a camp, you were given a number and a marking your body. Did you every experience anything like that?

Answer: I was a number I wore right up here, but on my this was in Auschwitz -

Question: You were in Auschwitz?

Answer: I was not in Auschwitz - that's why I don't have a number. But when I was liberated I got documents that it was

found in Dachau from the first day to the end of the war, for four years, I got all papers, all the dates, the years where I spent it, what I did, all the papers were sent to me, they found me and it was sent to me here in Richmond, VA. I have the papers.

LOCATION: 00:49:08

Question: You said that ____ 6 million Jews were killed. Can you tell me how you feel about that and first of all why do you feel that way? Why do you think the history is wrong?

Answer: That it was just 6 million Jews. Because what had happened in Russia, they were digging, it was no crematorium, except Babi Yar and Babi Yar and I don't think they kept an account, how many Jews were killed. I feel here like it was the Polish Jews the Hungarian Jews and friends, it was kept how do you call this in English, kept they knew it, we were always counted and the Germans found how many Jews, but in Russia, they had a hard time with the Russian fighting and they did not keep a count. They did not keep the census and that's why the number is not accurate - it was killed much more.

LOCATION: 00:50:38

Question: Of all the camps you were in and there were several, does one of them stand out as particularly worse than the others?

Answer: Hell - Bergen Belson.

Question: What makes Bergen Belson different than the other camps?

Answer: You see in the other camps, they were killing the Jews and they were in a ditch. They were in the holes. And I didn't see this on an every day basis. In Bergen Belson everyday basis. In Bergen Belson it was in front of my eyes the minute I opened my eyes. The corpses - to see a corpse - I am laughing - I tried all my life to laugh and forget it. The corpses, to see corpses in front of you, you know a dead man, and that is something that I cannot forget.

LOCATION: 00:51:47

Question: Did you cry when it happened - when you saw it happening?

Answer: I don't think I had so many tears - I cried all the time. At night now, but seeing everything in front of your eyes and your afraid to cry. You were afraid to cry. Because you had to show you are strong and not to complain. Don't you dare to complain - don't you say to nobody. ~~Question: Did you cry when it happened, when~~

~~Question: You~~